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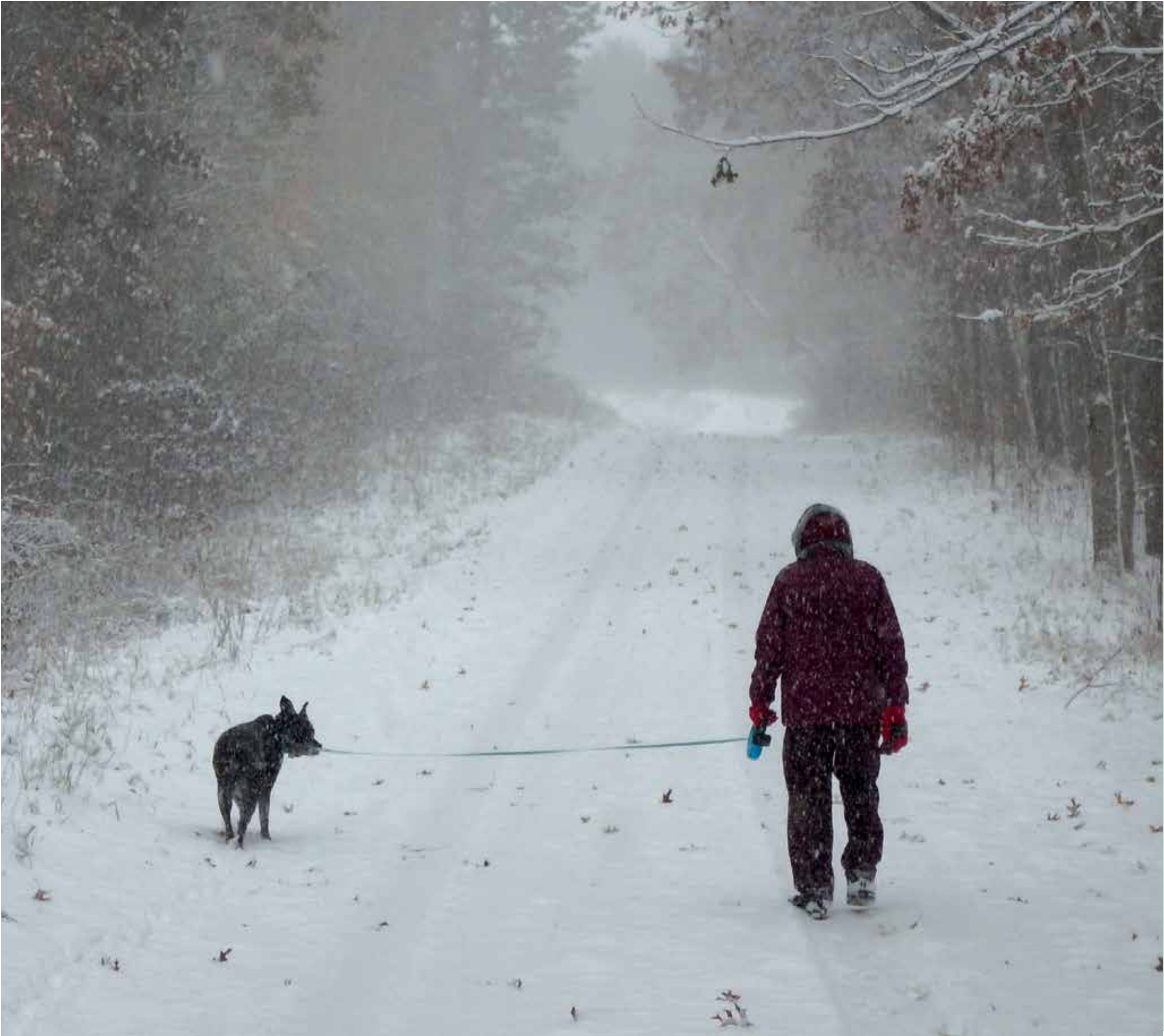
December 2019

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# NEIGHBORS

[HTTP://WWW.CASSNEIGHBORS.COM](http://www.cassneighbors.com)

A regional newspaper freely distributed in Dowagiac, Cassopolis, Edwardsburg, Vandalia, Jones, Marcellus, Decatur, Union, Sister Lakes, Three Rivers, Elkhart and Mishawaka, with home delivery at Diamond, Eagle, Birch, Corey, Donnell, Indian, Magician, Shavehead, Baldwin, Long, Dewey, Cable, Juno, Christiana, Painter, Paradise, Stone, Buck, Lewis, Big & Little Twin and Bair lakes



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Neighbors is published monthly from March through December.

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# REGIONAL NEWS

**Cookie walk, holiday decor sale**  
The First United Methodist Church at 326 N. Lowe St. in Dowagiac will host a cookie walk and holiday decor sale on Saturday, December 7 from 9 am to 3 pm. The event will feature a wide variety of homemade cookies, candy, and fudge, some Gluten-free homemade baked items, and Christmas décor will include new and gently used items. For more information call 782-8551.

**A Christmas Carol at Beckwith**  
The Beckwith Theatre Company will present the holiday classic "A Christmas Carol," based on the story by Charles Dickens, with script by Lynn Stevens on six occasions, Thursday, Dec. 5 at 7:30 pm, Saturday, Dec. 7 at 7:30 pm, Sunday, Dec. 8 at 2 pm, Friday, Dec. 13 at 7:30 pm, Saturday, Dec. 14 at 7:30 pm, and Sunday, Dec. 15 at 2 pm.  
The Beckwith Theatre is located at 100 New York Ave., Dowagiac.  
Tickets are \$15 (call 269-782-7653 for reservations)  
You can also join the cast and crew in downtown Dowagiac for the Candle-light Christmas Parade on Friday, Dec. 6 at 7 pm.

**Cass buliding to display art**  
The Cass County Administration Building will be the site of The Cass County Regional Gallery, sponsored by the Cass Area Artists in conjunction with Cass County. It will be open to all artists 18 years of age or older residing in Cass, Berrien, Van Buren, Kalamazoo and St. Joseph counties in Michigan and Elkhart, LaPorte and St. Joseph counties in

Indiana.  
This is a no-entry fee; no-commission fee exhibit For artists, this is an opportunity to have their art seen in a public space on a daily basis at absolutely no cost to them. The first exhibit will run from January 17, through April 17. Entry will be first come - first serve (there is a lot of room available!), entry forms and information is available at <http://www.cassareaartistss.org>.

**SCORE accounting seminar**  
The Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE) will host Small Business Accounting 101 on Thursday, Dec. 12, from 5:30 to 7:30 pm at the Francis Branch of the St. Joseph County Library, 52655 North Ironwood Rd. in So. Bend. Registration begins at 5:30 pm, workshop begins 6 pm.  
Topics that will be covered include how to select the best legal structure for your business, how to read a profit and loss statement, determining the best accounting system for your business, income tax rules, gross margin and why it is important, direct costs versus selling, general & administrative costs, the difference between earnings and cash flow.  
To register or for more info call 574-310-8097 or visit [ncindiana@scorevolunteer.org](mailto:ncindiana@scorevolunteer.org).

**Barn Swallow Theatre**  
The Barn Swallow Theatre's Christmas play is "Ho! Ho! Ho! The Santa Claus Chronicles." Performances will be December 12-14 at 7:30 pm, and December 15 at 2 pm. For more information, please see the website [www.barn-swallowtheatre.com](http://www.barn-swallowtheatre.com).

**Run for the trees**  
Michigan's first-ever Happy Little 5K/Run for the Trees virtual race is set for spring! No matter how you reach the finish line – walk, run or hike – you pick the pace and the place, anywhere in the state's great outdoors. Just be sure to complete your 5K within the 10-day window that encompasses two full weekends, plus Earth Day (April 22) and Arbor Day (April 24).  
Registration opens Jan. 1 and will be capped at 1,000 participants. Every participant will get a Happy Little T-shirt, a commemorative bib number and a finisher's medal. The best part? Your virtual race will make a real difference – all race proceeds support tree-planting efforts at state parks throughout Michigan.

**When: April 17-26, 2020**  
**Where: Anywhere in Michigan's great outdoors**  
**Cost: \$34 (all proceeds go to state park tree planting)**

For more info go to <https://www.michigan.gov/dnr> and type "run for the trees" into the search bar.  
**Innertubing party reservations**  
St. Joseph County (IN) Parks is accepting reservations for Private Innertubing Parties for January, February and March at Ferrettie/Baugo Creek County Park and St. Patrick's County Park.  
Parties of 1-99 people may reserve either park for \$175 for two hours.

Parties of 100-300 may reserve Ferrettie/Baugo Creek County Park for \$325 for 3 hours. All innertubing parties include innertubes, a warming room, fire, tables and chairs, and staff supervision on the hills. Not recommended for children three years of age or younger.  
Call 574/654-3155 to reserve your private party.  
Innertubing hills are located at Ferrettie/Baugo Creek and St. Patrick's County Parks. The tube hills will be open, Saturdays and Sundays 11 am to 5 pm, throughout the season. The cost is \$4 per person plus a vehicle gate fee. Innertubes are provided as available, and sleds and toboggans are not allowed. A warming room is provided, and food concessions are available for purchase.  
Cross-country ski rental is available at St. Patrick's County Park. Cross-country ski rental will be available Wednesday through Sundays, 11 am to 4 pm. The cost is \$5 per adult trail fee, \$4 per youth trail fee, plus a vehicle gate fee. Ski rentals are available for \$10. Trails are groomed throughout the week.  
Snowshoe rental is available at Ferrettie/Baugo Creek County Park on weekends and holidays from 11 am to 4pm, snow conditions permitting. The cost is \$3 per person plus a vehicle gate fee. Snow shoeing is a great way to enjoy winter sights and sounds.  
If conditions are favorable all winter sports will be open daily December 26 through January 5.  
For more information regarding winter sports call St. Joseph County Parks at 574/277-4828 or check our Facebook page for the latest updates.



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# REGIONAL EVENTS CALENDAR

December 5 - Holiday Paint Party - Cass District Library Main Branch, 6 pm; paint, brushes and stencils provided. Adults only, \$10 per person due at registration, 574-314-6454 ext. 113.

December 5, 7, 8, 13-15 - A Christmas Carol, Beckwith Theatre, Dowagiac (see page 2 for times), 782-7653

December 6 - Candlelight Christmas Parade, 7 - 9 pm, Dowagiac, 782.8212

December 7 - Christmas open house at the Log Cabin Museum in Cassopolis

December 7 - Cookie walk & holiday decor sale, First United Methodist Church, Dowagiac, 9 am - 3 pm

December 7, 8, 14, 15 - Christmas at the Bonine house, 1-6 pm, Penn Rd. at M-60, Vandalia

December 7 - DIY Sock Gnome - Cass District Library Edwardsburg Branch, 10 am; bring two pairs of crew socks or longer. Rice and other crafting materials supplied. Registration required, 574-314-6454 ext. 113.

December 9 - Build a Gingerbread House, Cass District Library Main Branch, 6 pm, Age 12 and under.

December 10 - DIY Leather Earrings, Cass District Library Edwardsburg Branch, 6 pm, all tools and supplies provided, 574-314-6454 ext. 113 to register.

December 12 - 15, Barn Swallow Theatre Christmas Play Ho Ho Ho The Santa Claus Chronicles, 7:30 pm (2 pm on Dec. 15), 22334 US-12, Edwardsburg, 28-6672, <http://www.barnswallowtheatre.com>

December 12 - SCORE workshop on small business accounting, 5:30 - 7:30 pm, Francis Branch of St. Joseph County Library, 52655 N. Ironwood, So Bend, 574-310-8097, [ncindiana@scorevolunteer.org](mailto:ncindiana@scorevolunteer.org)

December 16 - Holiday Centerpiece Workshop, Cass District Library Main Branch 6 pm, all materials provided,

\$5 per person. Registration required, 574-314-6454 ext. 113, no refunds.

December 17 - Cinnamon Stick Ornament, Cass District Library Howard Branch, 6 pm, all materials will be provided. Registration required 574-314-6454 ext. 113.

December 19 - Holiday Centerpiece Workshop, Cass District Library Main Branch, 6 pm, all materials provided, \$5 per person. Registrationis required. 574-314-6454 ext. 113, no refunds.

December 21 - Holiday Bake Sale and Live Music, Cass District Library Mason/Union Branch, 9 am - 1 pm, proceeds benefit the Cass District Library.

December 23 - Cookies and Cocoa with Santa, Cass District Library Main Branch, 1 pm,free family event. All ages are welcome

April 17-26 - Happy Little 5k/Run for the Trees virtual race, \$34, [michigan.gov/dnr](http://michigan.gov/dnr)

*A Family Tradition -*

*Christmas at the Bonine House*



Sat/Sun Dec. 7, 8, 14, 15 1 - 6 pm

Penn Rd. and M-60, Vandalia, MI

Come and visit the Victorian home of James E. and Sarah Bogue Bonine all dressed up for Christmas by members of the Underground Railroad Society of Cass County. Santa, Mrs. Claus and elf Jingles will be there for kids of all ages.

*A wonderful way to start the holiday season.*

Parking and admission are free, donations are most appreciated.

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# PASTA ITALIA CON CHEF DONATO

## Chicken saltimbocca & butternut squash gnocchi

by Chef Dennis Bamber

**T**he term saltimbocca means "jump in the mouth." The combination of the sage and prosciutto creates a flavor that will have your taste buds hopping.

There are several variations of this dish from Rome, and usually it is found on menus in restaurants made with veal. Here we use chicken pounded very thin, and the flavor is still there and very tasty.

I served it with homemade butternut squash gnocchi, but mashed potatoes, polenta, or just by itself works well also.

### INGREDIENTS

2 Chicken breasts cut in half lengthwise and pounded under saran wrap to about 1/4" thick

2-3 sage leaves per piece of chicken

1 very thin slice of prosciutto per chicken piece

1 thin slice of provolone cheese sliced very thin per chicken piece

4-5 tablespoons of butter

2-3 tablespoons of olive oil

1/2 cup white wine

1 cup chicken broth

1-2 cups of flour

5-6 cloves of peeled garlic, smashed with flat side of a knife.

### DIRECTION

1. Salt and pepper the chicken, lay flat, put 2-3 sage leaves on top, put a slice of prosciutto, then a thin slice of the cheese. Roll up jelly roll fashion and secure with toothpicks. Dredge in the flour and shake of excess flour.

2. Add oil, butter, garlic to skillet. Turn to medium high. When it starts to bubble, add the chicken with thongs, and brown all over.

3. Add the wine, bring to a boil for 2-3 minutes then add the stock, cover and cook about 10 minutes.

4. Take lid off, reduce the sauce to about half. Serve chicken and spoon sauce over the top.

5. I added the boiled, cooked Gnocchi



to the skillet as i was reducing the sauce and served it with the chicken but this is optional.

### Butternut Squash Gnocchi

#### INGREDIENTS

For the gnocchi:

3 lb butternut squash\*

1 Tablespoon extra virgin olive oil

salt & pepper

1/2 teaspoon salt

2 egg whisked

4 cups flour plus more for rolling

1 cup Parmesan Cheese plus more for sprinkling

4 Tablespoons butter



1 clove garlic minced

7-8 leaves fresh sage chopped

salt & pepper

### DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 400 degrees.

Slice the top off squash, then cut in half lengthwise and remove seeds with a spoon.

Place squash halves cut side up on a baking sheet then brush with extra virgin olive oil and season liberally with salt and pepper.

Roast for 50-60 minutes, or until a knife inserted into the thickest part of the squash meets no resistance.

When squash is cool enough to handle, scoop the flesh from the peel and place in a food processor. Process until very smooth (or whip with a mixer).

Place squash in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the dough hook (or just mix in a large bowl by hand) add in whisked egg and salt. Add flour, 1 cup at a time, and knead until the dough pulls away from the side of the bowl. Add 1/2 cup of parmesan cheese and knead until combined. Turn out onto a heavily floured surface and knead until dough comes together. Dough will be sticky, just keep flouring hands lightly.

Remove large chunks of the dough then roll into a rope and cut into 1 inch sections to form the gnocchi. Place onto a wax paper, cover until ready to boil.

**For the Sauce:** Melt butter in a large skillet over medium heat, then

add garlic and sage. Cook until garlic is just starting to turn golden brown, be careful you do not want to burn your garlic.

**To cook gnocchi:** Bring a large pot of water to a boil then salt lightly. Add 1 cup gnocchi at a time to the salted, boiling water, then cook at a gentle boil until gnocchi float to the top, about 2 minutes. Cook 2 minutes more after gnocchi rises to top. Transfer using a slotted spoon or spider to your sauce. Cook remaining gnocchi then add to the sauce.

Serve with extra parmesan cheese on top. Enjoy.

### ~Buon appetito

**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.



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# LAKE LIFE WITH JANE

## Focus on the day & real meaning

by **Jane Boudreau**

**H**appy December Neighbors! I usually start my last column of the year with Ho, Ho, Ho, but I thought it might sound a little more stress free and less chaotic thinking if we just focus on each day of the month, take it slow, and get those good feels and the real meaning of Christmas, we will all be good.

I'm sharing a lot of recipes as these are all tried and true. I'm not going to bog you down with ideas and tips for the holidays, you have plenty of magazines for inspiration, traditions, and some sure fire ways of handling holidays. We are all so different, we have to take into consideration the size of our families, our homes, our budget--- it's just not straight across the board for everyone. For entertaining and holiday dinners, it doesn't matter if you set a buffet with everyday dishes, paper plates and Solo cups for a crowd, or a dining room table filled with good china and crystal wine glasses ...when family and friends gather around it's all about the love and feelings of festivity, along with a grateful heart.



I've gone over the top with decorations some years, and I've also gone super simple. One year I went to a gathering at my sister in law's home and her Christmas tree and holiday touches were very simple and lovely, and in just the perfect places without causing sensory overload. I went home that night and started removing everything I had decorated with for the holidays that I now deemed excessive. I pared down and I felt lighter in my heart.

If you have a lot of family and friends visit, or host a holiday gathering, a lot of decorations can not only go unnoticed, but also feel stifling and make a space visually crowded. I've also looked for the beauty in imperfection. I had been wanting a tall, skinny tree and after a lifetime of having live trees, I actually started looking at artificial trees. But when it came down to the wire and I had to make a decision, I made a trip to my local nursery and what before my eyes should appear, but a tall, skinny and very imperfect tree. And this is the picture of it. I didn't bother to use my beautiful handmade tree skirt, I wrapped a heavy knit throw around the base of the tree. I even went lighter on my ornaments so there was more space to see through the branches of this Douglas fir which we named The Grinch Tree.

I was looking online for some outdoor decorations ideas. Hubby has no desire to hang lights and I've simply had a wreath on the front door each year and that's about it. I came across this picture which I thought would work with my porch light as well as the two lamps on each side of the garage. The beauty of it is it will look festive during the day and spectacular at night with the lights on. My hubby suggested I get artificial greens so I can use them every year and I thought that was a great idea. I think this photo pretty much shows how to create the look--go for it! I am.



This is another look my daughter created. I've done outdoor greenery in an urn that I use for each season. What I'd like to note here is that you can pretty much use any sort of container make an arrangement like this. A simple basket like this, an old metal pail, a flower pot. If the container isn't tall enough, you can make it have more height by setting it on an old stool, a small stepladder, an overturned clay pot, or even some stacked bricks. I've also found if you tie the stems together near the bottom of said greenery, you can get a fuller look. If this was something I'd do, I would probably add some faux red berries and pine cone picks. Just more color and a nature look to make it pop from afar.

I'm going to go full on with some recipes in this column. They are all tried and true but I can't take credit for all of them. I love to create recipes of my own, and while I'm not a professional photographer, I've done pretty well sharing said recipes and photos. So I have a few great recipes found at different websites and I think you will like them not only during the colder months, but with the upcoming holidays.

I've kept it pretty simple as I know so many of us follow tradition, certain recipes, and our own schedules. I'm sharing some quick and simple desserts, two can be made ahead and refrigerated for several days, another can be made ahead of time and assembled when you are ready to serve. These would make a nice addition to a container of homemade holiday treats! And then I have two side dishes that I think would be super tasty even for your fussiest eaters. Starting with desserts, (who said "Eat dessert first"?)

### Pecan Snowballs (Via Pinterest)



#### Ingredients

- 1 cup unsalted butter, softened to room temperature
- 2 cups confectioners' sugar, divided
- 2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
- 2 and 1/4 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 cup finely chopped and pecans

2/3 cup sprinkles

#### Instructions

In a large bowl using a hand-held mixer or stand mixer fitted with a paddle attachment, beat the butter for 1 minute on medium speed until completely smooth and creamy. Add 3/4 cup confectioners' sugar and beat on medium high speed until combined and creamy-looking.

Scrape down the sides and bottom of the bowl as needed. Next, beat in the vanilla extract on medium-high speed until combined. Switch to low speed and slowly add the flour. The dough will look dry and you may not think the flour will fully combine. Once all of the flour is added, turn the mixer up to high speed. The dough will come together. Finally, beat in the pecans. At this point, you can beat in the sprinkles as well.

Cover the cookie dough tightly and chill in the refrigerator for at least 30 minutes and up to 3 days. (If chilling for 3+ hours, make sure you let the cookie dough sit at room temperature for at least 30 minutes before rolling into balls. The cookie dough will be very stiff after being in the fridge that long.) Preheat oven to 350°F). Line 2 large baking sheets with parchment paper or (Always recommended for cookies.) Set aside. Pour the remaining confectioners' sugar into a shallow bowl.

Scoop or roll 1 Tablespoon of cookie dough per cookie. Roll into a ball and place on the baking sheets, at least 2 inches apart. Bake the cookies until golden brown on the bottom edges and just barely browned on top, about 15 minutes.

Allow the cookies to cool for 5 minutes on the baking sheet, then very gently roll them in the confectioners' sugar to coat completely. Place the cookies on wire racks to cool completely. Once completely cooled, roll in confectioners' sugar again. This is when the sugar will really stick!

I love that this recipe is so simple and quick and can be made in just one bowl!

### Apple Pie Bites



#### Ingredients

- 1 sheet of puff pastry, thawed
- 1 1/2 c chopped apples, peeled if desired
- 2 t sugar
- 1/4 t cinnamon
- 10 vanilla caramels, unwrapped
- 3 T heavy cream
- 1 c chopped pecans, toasted if desired
- Sea salt flakes

#### Directions

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. On a lightly floured surface unroll the puff pastry. Use a finger dampened with water to smooth out any cracks in the folds. Roll pastry out to a 15 x 10 inch rectangle. Cut into 24 squares--I use a pizza cutter, about 2 1/2 in. squares. Fit each square into a 1 3/4 inch muffin cups

Stir together apples, sugar, and cinnamon. Spoon into pastry-lined muffin cups and bake about 15 minutes or until pastry is golden. Cool 5 minutes in pan and then

carefully remove bites to a piece of parchment or waxed paper.

Heat the caramels and cream over very low heat until melted. Drizzle bites with caramel sauce, sprinkle with sea salt and top with pecan pieces. Makes 24 bites. Photo and recipe credit: Magnolia Journal.

These would be great to bring to a party when you want to contribute to the sweet table. You might even ask the host if you can pop them in the oven for 15 minutes to serve warm

### Strawberry Shortcake Mini Trifles



I really love these little desserts. My first time having one (and I went back for a second), was at my daughter's engagement party at a beautiful home in the Old Town neighborhood of Chicago. They were served in champagne flutes and had little silver spoons inserted. Well I say skip that Fancy Nancy stuff and use clear plastic cups (you find a variety of sizes at a craft store) and clear plastic spoons.

#### Ingredients

- 1 loaf of pound cake, store bought or homemade
- 2 c fresh strawberries, washed, trimmed, and sliced
- 12 strawberries for garnish
- 3 1/2 c granulated sugar

#### Cream Layer

- 2 c heavy cream
- 6 oz. cream cheese
- 1/2 t vanilla
- 3/4 c sugar

#### Topping:

- 8 oz. Cool Whip or your favorite whipped cream

#### Directions

Cut the pound cake with a serrated knife in small cubes, approximately the size of a dice. Set aside. Place the sliced strawberries in a large bowl and add the sugar. Toss gently but thoroughly, and let rest for about 10 minutes.

Meanwhile combine the ingredients for the cream layer in a large bowl, and then blend with an electric mixer at medium speed for 2 minutes.

Spoon a heaping tablespoon of the filling into a plastic or glass cups (guesstimate the amount). Add a layer of strawberries (guesstimate again), making sure some are pressed to the sides for the look in the photo. Add another two layers in the same manner, then top with whipped cream and a strawberry. Keep in the refrigerator until almost ready to serve to and let them sit at room temp for about 10 minutes to get the full flavor. Makes approximately 12 desserts.

Continued on next page. See:

**JANE**

# BUSINESS & FINANCE

## How's your insurance knowledge?

By **Charlie Retherford**  
Kemner, lott, Benz Agency

As you begin the New Year, take some time to increase your insurance knowledge. Insure.com recently completed a country wide survey using the following misconceptions:

***I should purchase insurance coverage for my house based on the real estate market value.***

Your homeowners policy normally insures you home for the rebuilding cost (materials and labor). This can vary depending on the market in your area. If the market value is higher than the rebuilding cost, much of the real estate value is in the land. In today's housing market, many people are able to purchase a home for less than the rebuilding cost. This being the case, your homeowners policy will insure for more than the purchase of the home. By insuring your home at the "rebuilding" cost, you should qualify for replacement cost to cover the expense to replace your home and personal property, instead of "actual cash value" coverage, which will only cover the depreciated value.

***Red cars cost more to insure because they get pulled over for speeding more.***

The color of your car may reflect your personal taste, but it does not have

a direct impact on your car insurance rate. Some of the things that do affect your premium are your driving history, your claims history, your insurance score, and the year, make, and model of your vehicle.

***If I cause an accident with extensive damages to others, my auto insurance company can cancel me immediately.***

The truth is an auto insurance company cannot immediately cancel your auto insurance. However, they have the ability to not renew your policy at the end of your current policy period as a result of too many tickets or accidents. If a company decides to not renew your policy, they are required to mail a written notice stating the reason for nonrenewal at least 30 days before the expiration of your current policy.

***Small cars are the cheapest to insure.***

Typically small and mid-size SUVs and minivans are less expensive to insure. An accident with a small car will result in more damage, causing more repairs, as well as more injuries which in turn results in higher insurance rates for small cars.

***The Affordable Care Act (ACA) allows health insurance companies to base rates on medical conditions such as heart disease, cancer, high***

***blood pressure and diabetes.***

The Affordable Care Act prohibits health insurers from basing rates or requiring a waiting period due pre-existing conditions. Although there is no waiting period for pre-existing conditions, enrollment in the ACA is required during the Special Election Period (SEP). The SEP is from November 15, 2014 through February 15, 2015. Some exceptions to enrolling during the SEP are relocation to another state, marriage, divorce, having a baby or adopting, losing employer coverage, and turning 26 while still on parent's policy. If you qualify for an exception, you have 63 days from the day of the event to enroll.

***Comprehensive auto insurance covers everything and anything.***

Comprehensive includes coverage for damage to your car for broken glass, fire, weather, vandalism, theft and hitting an animal.

***Thieves prefer new cars.***

Car thieves sometimes take newer models to resell them in America with a counterfeit vehicle identification number or ship them overseas. In truth, car thieves prefer older cars from longstanding model lines such as a 1996 Honda Accord or a 2006 Ford F-150 pickup. The majority of stolen vehicles go to chop shops. Because the parts can be used on a variety of models, this makes older

vehicles popular with thieves.

***If my friend borrows my car and has an accident, their insurance will pay for the damage.***

Your friend's insurance will not pay for the damage to your car. Your insurance pays when someone else drives your car. If you do not carry coverage for physical damage to your vehicle, you most likely will be left with a damaged vehicle.

***The Affordable Care Act requires me to take the health insurance plan offered by my employer.***

The ACA requires almost all Americans to purchase health insurance but doesn't say where they must get it. However, if you choose to purchase your own health insurance, you will not qualify for a subsidy.

***My out-of-state speeding ticket will not follow me home.***

This information will follow you and can result in points on your driver license. In addition, your unpaid speeding ticket in Florida will prevent you from renewing your license in Michigan.

When you have insurance questions, refer to a credible source. Insure.com is an on-line source you may find helpful. By contacting your insurance agent, you will be able to get the answers to your questions as well as making any necessary changes in your existing coverage.

### JANE

*Continued from previous page*

#### Grinch Kabobs



These are so simple to make and the photo pretty much shows you how. They are a great addition to your desert buffet, or even for a holiday breakfast or brunch. You need to use picks longer than a toothpick, but ones that have a pointed end. I use regular wooden shish kebob sticks cut in half, using just the end that has a point. Judge the length by the size of your fruit.

##### Ingredients

- 1 large bunch of green grapes
- 2 bananas
- 2 pints of strawberries
- 1 small bag of mini marshmallows

##### Directions

Using wooden skewers, start threading the fruit on first with the grape, pushing it down to the bottom, then the banana slice, and finally the strawberry. Top with a mini marshmallow. Try to have them so the skewer doesn't show. Sharp kitchen scissors are recommended. Keep refrigerated until ready to serve.

Now we are on to a few side dishes. I find the few I'm sharing here to be a little outside of the box, but many don't like a change of tradition. So while I always

have a bowl of corn on the table, perhaps a good 'ol green bean casserole, I also make another veggie dish that may be delicious to some and totally gross to others, I'm talking about asparagus, Brussels sprouts, beets, etc...So here are a couple of jazzed up "Adult" side dishes.

#### Parmesan Prosciutto Brussels sprouts



I think this is such a pretty dish although maybe not for everyone. It makes me curious to dive into and discover some new tastes. I've made a few converts with this side dish! Finally--I hate starting a recipe only to find I didn't take note of the cooking time. Allow yourself an hour for these and I don't recommend reheating them.

##### Ingredients

- 1 lb. Brussels sprouts
- 2 T butter
- 2 cloves of minced garlic
- 1/4 c grated Parmesan cheese
- Salt and Pepper
- 2 slices of Prosciutto, chopped into small pieces \*

##### Directions

Preheat oven to 300 degrees. Trim ends of Brussels sprouts, remove loose or brown outer leaves. Slice each one in half lengthwise and place them in a large bowl. Melt the butter and pour over the Brussels sprouts. Add the Parmesan, garlic, and a generous amount of salt and pepper. Stir to combine. Spread the seasoned Brussels sprouts

over a parchment paper lined baking sheet, trying to keep some space between them, they crisp up that way rather than steam. Place in the oven and let bake for 40 minutes until they are just starting to brown.

Turn the oven temperature up to 350. Chop the prosciutto and scatter over the veggies and gently push them around with a spatula. Shake the pan and return to the oven and roast an additional 10-15 minutes. Serve immediately or cover with foil and keep warm in oven.

Prosciutto can be found usually near your cheese or packaged lunch meat section. You will only be using 2 slices so you can use the additional to simply add to scrambled eggs, a quiche, and my favor-



#### ite, wrapped around a slice of cantaloupe. Sweet and Spicy Roasted Carrots

This is such a beautiful and earthy vegetable dish arranged on a pretty platter. It's simple to make and I think you'll be making it a holiday staple.

##### Ingredients

- 8 medium sized carrots (I like to find a variety as they look so colorful), root end trimmed
- 2 T brown sugar, packed
- 5 t melted butter
- 1/4 t cinnamon
- 1/8 t salt
- 1/8 t ground cloves, optional
- Dash of cayenne pepper
- 2 T chopped pecans, toasted if desired\*

##### Directions

Preheat oven to 425 degrees. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

Arrange the carrots in a layer on the pan, overlapping if you need to. Cover with foil and roast 30 minutes or until just tender but not soft.

Meanwhile mix together the remaining ingredients in a bowl except for the pecans. Remove the carrots from the oven and pour the spices over. and gently mix together. Return to oven for an additional 10 minutes. Top with pecans and serve immediately or cover with foil and keep warm.

\*I like to roast nuts as it brings out the natural oils and takes them to another level. It's very simple. Place them in a dry skillet over medium heat, tossing every once in awhile until fragrant, or about 3 minutes Ta da!!

As I said at the beginning of my column, it's December but Christmas does indeed play a big role all month. You may feel stressed by the insane amount of shopping, decorating, wrapping, cooking and baking, and plain tired if you have to travel or go to a ton of parties. I, for the most part, can't shake the stress off easily. I try to compensate by doing whatever I can ahead of time. I have a long To Do list but over the years I've learned to delete a lot when my time or energy is running out. Don't set your expectations too high nor be a people pleaser by wanting your home or get-togethers perfect. When you are relaxed, your guests are relaxed.

If you are lucky to spend the holidays with your family, then you are truly blessed. My heart is filled with love for my husband, four kids, and 5 grandchildren. My daughter just gave birth to Lucy June on November 15 and I'm all goo goo over her. This is a photo of her big sister Madelyn, three years old. taken last year on Christmas morning. Doesn't it say it all about this season?

Sending warm wishes to you and yours this holiday season and many, many blessings!

~Jane

***Jane Boudreau is a blogger and writer who lives on Diamond lake, in Chicago, and at a little mountain retreat in North Carolina. All photos are taken by Jane unless noted. Recipes are original but for those reprinted from other sources.***

# OUR CHILDREN

## 23 things to do instead of more screen time

by **SANDY FLEMING**

**M**any parents are committed to minimizing screen time for little ones in light of the increasingly scary studies coming out of the medical community about the problems it can cause. But what can you do instead? Here are some ideas to jumpstart your creativity for every age group.

### For Infants

Yes, it's tempting to use media to help your child calm down or to fall asleep, but it's definitely not wise to do so. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that babies birth to 18 months do not have ANY screen time at all, other than video chatting with family members. Screen time ranges from watching television to using phones, tablets or computers. So what can you do instead?

The most important thing you can do with your baby is talk. A lot. Babies need all of the language experiences they can get in order to learn to talk themselves, and eventually, to read and write. So parents and caregivers should keep up a running monologue with their children most of the time. Explain what is going on. Describe what you see. Sing songs. Read stories. Tell tall tales. You can even read from adult magazines or books (no violence or adult things, though, even if they don't understand yet-just a good habit to build). The important thing is that baby is hearing words, phrases, and sentences, as well as the sound of your voice.

After just a few weeks, your baby will be interacting with you and responding to the things you say and do. Encourage that give and take. It's one thing that's missing from most screen interactions, and we know that it's crucial to their mental development. Perform finger plays and do silly dances. Play peek-a-boo and splash in the bath. Every interaction that you have with your baby will help form a foundation for learning.

It's also fun to provide your little one with sensory experiences. Give him or her new things to look at, interesting things to touch, and even safe things to smell. Let them hear many kinds of music and other sounds. All of these things will help the baby form the neurological connections that make learning happen. So turn off the TV or the tablet and get moving! There's a lot to do!

### For Toddlers/Preschoolers

Between 18 months and age 5, the AAP recommends limiting screen time to no more than one hour per day (remember, that's shorter than most movies). Watch with the kids and interact with them while they are watching. Choose high quality programming that is intended for the age group. Help them understand and interpret what they are seeing, and remember they are quite likely to mimic the things they see and hear.

What to do with the other waking hours? There are loads of things you can do to have fun with kids now that they can walk and talk and are becoming a bit independent. Most of the classic children's activities, like lacing, puzzles, sorting, and building, are crucial for later academic learning. There is a whole collection of skills called readiness skills, and your toddler and preschooler are ready to embark on this grand adventure. Encourage lots of motor activities. The big muscles will become more coordi-



nated when you play with balls, jump and run, dance, wrestle, and throw things. The small muscles will get in on the action when you draw, paint, cut, use playdough, lace things, and do puzzles. Here are a few fun ideas:

- Use lengths of butcher paper, all taped together, to make a large floor mat of paper. Draw roads and other main details of a town that are scaled to one of your child's play sets that has people and cars. Let them get in on the fun by coloring and adding their own details, then use the cars and buildings from the play-set to make a 3D town to play with. The play mat can be rolled or folded for storage, and when it gets tattered, just make a new one.
- Use household furniture and other items to make an obstacle course. Set up chairs and tables to go over, under, around, and through. Hang lengths of string or yarn from the underside of a table to feel like a cobweb curtain. Put pillows on the floor to walk on. Make a tunnel with blankets to experience crawling through a dim space. Use your imagination!
- Bring a story to life by dressing up, using props, and acting out the plot. Now, take off with the characters and setting and imagine other adventures together to act out.
- Use a loud-ticking timer. Send the kid(s) out of the room while you hide it. Bring them back in and have them use their ears to locate the timer before it rings. Start with a nice long time to search, and gradually shorten the time.
- Use an item that is unique and small in the room. A ball of colorful yarn works well, but so will a sock or nearly anything else. Have the kids hide their eyes or leave the area while you hide it. When they come back, have them search for the item, but instead of getting all excited and announcing the item's location (or pointing or squealing or reacting at all), have them sit in a predetermined area and quietly say "Huckle, Buckle, Beanstalk." This game really encourages self-control as well as visual observation skills.
- Play simple children's games, such as Hi Ho Cherry-O, Candyland, and Chutes and Ladders. Don't have those around? Try using a deck of playing cards to play Slap Jack or Crazy Eights. Get a set of dominoes and build with them, or play matching games.
- Use your computer or phone's recorder or video and record yourselves singing your favorite songs.

### For Elementary School Kids

The American Academy of Pediatrics doesn't set screen time limits for this age group, but suggests that parents monitor screen usage to make sure that kids are not using screens instead of getting adequate exercise, sleep, social time, or family time. Their suggestions include setting "media-free" times of day, such as an

hour before bedtime or family meal times, and not allowing screens in the bedroom. You can also set up a system where screen time is an earned privilege-use it as a reward for completed chores, good grades, or other important positive behaviors. Remember that the habits kids build at this age will set the stage for their habits as teens and adults. Help them learn to make healthy choices! What to do to fill those non-screen time hours? (And yes, there should be hours each day to fill, especially on school breaks.) Here are some ideas to try:

- Play more complex board and card games, like chess or checkers, Old Maid, Solitaire (with real cards), Monopoly, and other classics you remember from your own childhood.
- As the kids grow up, teach the games that are popular with your (or your parents') social circle, like Euchre or Bridge. Play Bingo, play Uno, play Risk. You can even try Dungeons and Dragons!
- Encourage the kids to build and invent. Provide lots of toys with parts, like Legos and building blocks. They will combine sets to come up with entire worlds!
- Do some kitchen science experiments, like making the baking soda-vinegar volcano. When you do these, encourage the kids to use what they've learned about scientific method- make a hypothesis, set up an experiment to answer a question, make observations (especially measurable ones!), and reach conclusions.
- Plan things. Plan parties, trips, new kinds of games, and whatever else you can think of. Planning helps children learn critical skills for school and adult life. It also helps them learn to set goals and figure out how to attain them.
- Let them earn money. Choose some household chores that are within their capabilities, and set a pay rate. Help them set up a bank account and a home savings bank. Help them make financial goals and figure out how to achieve them. There's nothing so sweet as picking something you want, saving your money, and finally getting to buy it.
- Write! Keep journals, write stories, write letters, make lists, write down goals, just write. You can start a family story where each person adds a few sentences on paper in turn. You can start a family history scrapbook with narratives on each page. You can create a family newspaper.
- Do good deeds. Help the kids pick out a charitable activity and support them as they participate. It's always important to give back to the community, and the habits they build in this area when they are young will last a lifetime. They can raise money for a cause, collect canned goods or pet supplies, make crafts for table decorations for a nursing home, or whatever seems appropriate. Most care facilities will allow you to bring the kids in to play games or read with the residents or even to "adopt" a grandparent. You can brighten someone's day with very little effort.
- Have the kids invent new games. They'll need to think about supplies, make a game board or cards or both, figure out the rules and write them down, and experiment to see what works and what makes games fun.

### For Middle and High School Kids

By this time, young people should be making their own decisions about their media diet, and if things have gone well up to this point, they are making smart decisions. They'll be able to use screen

time for research and information, for communication, and for entertainment. Of course, you'll still need to step into parenting mode if they get out of balance. Screen time still should not replace exercise, face-to-face social engagement, sleep, family time, and so forth. Moderation, like in most things, is the key. Help them by setting limits when you need to and gradually giving them more control and responsibility about how they use the screens in their lives. By this age, they should have loads of ideas about what to do when not engaging with the media, but in case they need some prompting, here are a few activities and ideas.

- Have a scavenger hunt. Make a list of things to find around the house or out in the yard or even neighborhood. See who can be first to gather them up. One twist that uses technology is to do a photo scavenger hunt. Take pictures of everything on the list.
- Keep on doing good deeds. Pick a cause and raise money or collect goods. Visit the care facility. Offer yard work help to elderly neighbors. The possibilities are endless.
- Teach the kids to do all the things they will need to do to take care of their own homes and families eventually. Start small, with household chores, cooking, laundry, and the like. By the time they graduate high school, make sure you've provided them with instruction and experience for bigger chores, like painting rooms, deep cleaning, and other once-in-a-while tasks.
- Help them learn to manage their money. They need a bank account by this age, so talk to your bank about setting up a savings account if you haven't already done so. Help them understand the complicated parts of adult finances, like credit cards, checking accounts, loans and taxes, too. Money management skills are some of the most important skills you can teach them, and a huge gift heading into adult life. And if you need help yourself with these skills, your bank probably has programs you can use together.
- Play lots of family games. The kids likely will have expressed preferences by now, so help them collect their own copies of the ones they really enjoy to take with them when they leave home.
- Encourage extra-curricular activities and hobbies that meet their interests. Check your school, local library, the community college, the local Y, and anywhere that young people gather. The pastimes they learn to enjoy during the teen years are likely to be with them for a lifetime.
- Challenge the older kids to create their own "escape room" where players must solve puzzles within a time limit to win a prize. It works well if each puzzle's answer becomes a clue to the next puzzle. Let them try it out on neighborhood kids or other family members.

Once you get going with any age group, it's easy to find fun without digital media. In this day and age, you'll need to be intentional about teaching kids to use their digital time wisely. The answer is not to just take away the screen time, but to teach the youngsters how to have fun and be productive without the constant need to be online or gaming. Now is the time to start teaching those crucial healthy habits that will last a lifetime.

\*\*\*\*\*  
*Sandy Fleming is an educational consultant and tutor living in Edwardsburg. Find more fun ideas to help kids learn at her website: <http://learningnook.com>.*

# 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.

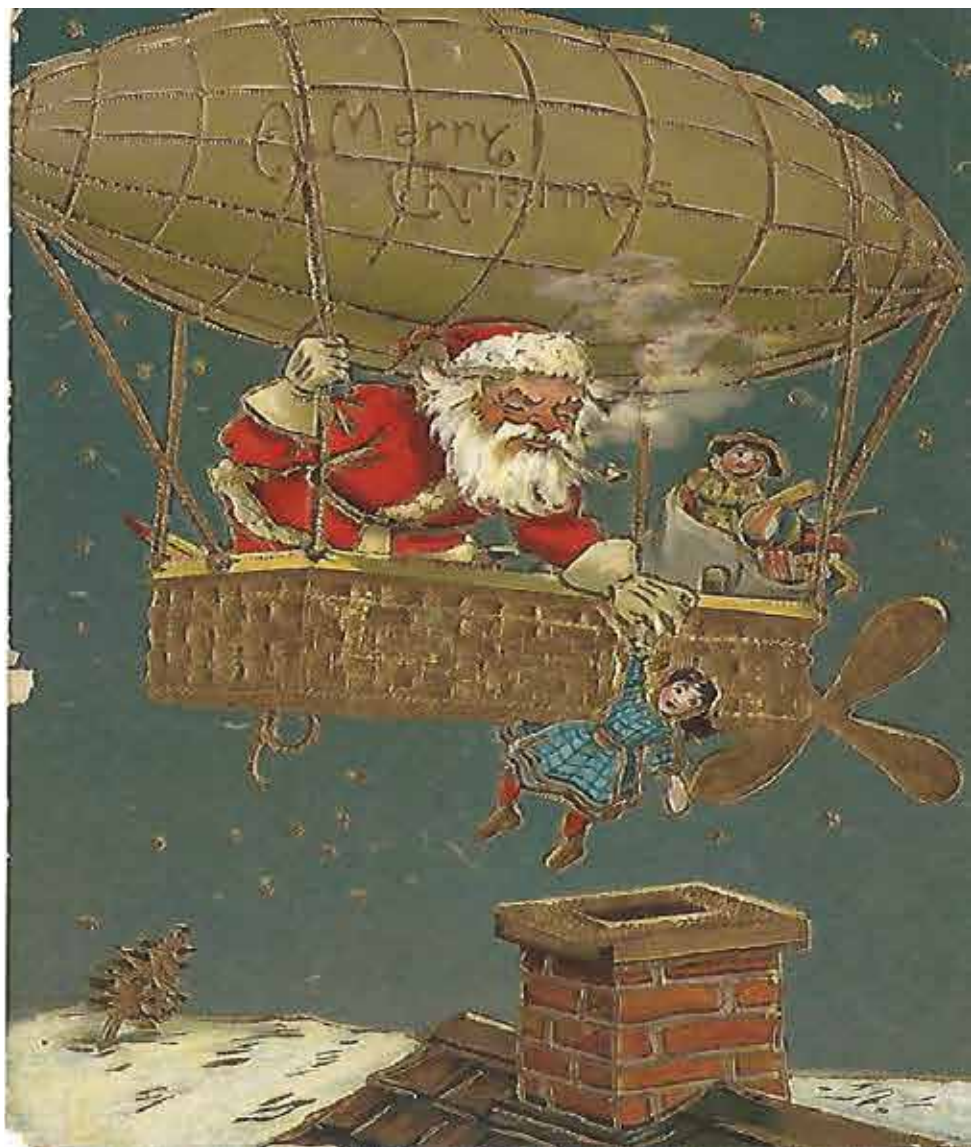
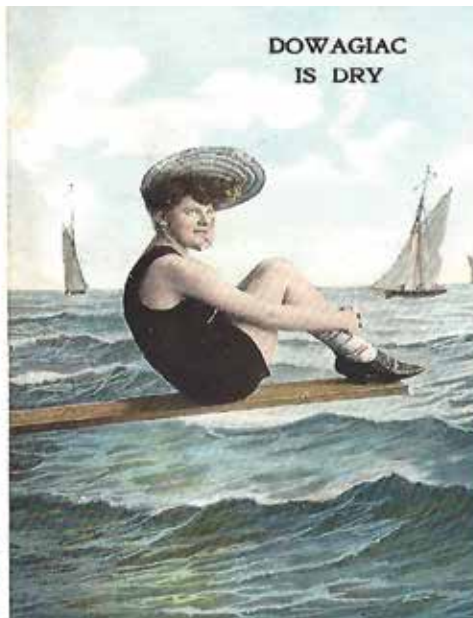
Jerdon has recently used many of his postcards featuring the Sister Lakes area in a book written by RL Rasmussen. The book, which retails for \$19.99, is in its second printing by the publisher,

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](http://www.arcadiapublishing.com)

In this edition of Neighbors we have selected postcards showing images of various places around Cass County. In future issues, we will couple additional cards from one or more of the area's lakes with views of nearby communities, lakes and countryside.



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# LOCAL HISTORY



**Above: Christopher C. Allison, who took the Ambrotype photo of the Village Square back in 1861. He owned the National Democrat newspaper from 1863-1918, from which I found the information pertaining to the 1861 photo.**

**At right: View looking northwest of Cassopolis Public Square, 1860-1861, by Christopher C. Allison. New information found regarding one of the oldest known views taken not only in Cass County, but in all Southwest Michigan. Reproduced here from a scan made from a plate in "A Twentieth Century History of Cass County, Michigan" by Lowell H. Glover.**



## Cassopolis Public Square, 1861

**Cass County: Now and Then  
by Jonathan Wuepper,  
Cass District Library  
Local History Branch**

Like many, I have always been intrigued by old photos, and in particular, old photos taken outside of a studio setting showing views of our towns, roads, rural homes, etc. This month we are re-running a photo, originally featured in Neighbors about 2006, depicting one of the oldest known views taken in Cass County, or anywhere in Southwest Michigan, showing the Cassopolis Public Square looking northwest from near the intersection of State and Broadways Streets.

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We are featuring said photo again because new information has been found by yours truly, Jonathan Wuepper, of the Cass District Library's Local History Branch, pertaining to who actually took the photo, why it was taken, and what is depicted in the photo.

First let me explain that the Cass District Library's Local History Branch recently received a cache of old newspapers published in the 19th and early 20th Centuries in Dowagiac, Cassopolis, and other local towns, which there are no other copies known to exist. The library sent them to Central Michigan University for microfilming, being completed in the fall of 2019.

While inspecting a reel of microfilm of miscellaneous Cassopolis and Dowagiac papers, I found the issue of the National Democrat (published in Cassopolis) dating from April 27, 1911. On the front page was the photograph featured here, along with an article titled "Cassopolis Fifty Years Ago" by Lowell H. Glover, which provides a vivid and detailed view of the village of Cassopolis during the start of the Civil War. Glover is best known today for compiling and editing "A Twentieth Century History of Cass County, Michigan" (1906). Incidentally, Lowell Glover was an attorney occupying a law office the site of the Local History Branch Library. The brick office was auctioned off and moved in 1908 to make room for the LaGrange Township Library (now serving as Local History Branch Library). Thus, Glover likely compiled and edited his book on the site where I am writing this article!

The caption under the Village Square photo in the April 27, 1911 edition of the National Democrat reads:

"This engraving was made from an ambrotype taken by C.C. Allison in 1861, and illustrates Mr. Glover's article "Cassopolis Fifty Years Ago." The camera stood where the "C.E.V." grocery store now is, and where was located at that time a photographic car. The camera was pointed a little west of north, and the picture shows quite a stretch of board sidewalk on the east side of Broadway, the longest and best sidewalk in town at that time. The view was taken for the purpose of catching the movers who had stopped of getting information as to their route. It shows, however, "the fort", now the city laundry, and beyond the Union Hotel as described in Mr. Glover's article."

Explanation and notes regarding the information in the 1911 photo caption:

Ambrotype photographs became popular in the US during the middle 1850s,

replacing the Daguerreotype, which was popular in the 1840s and early 1850s. It was still the industry standard by 1860, at least in the Great Lake States. For additional information on these photographic processes, consult Google.

"C.C. Allison" is Christopher C. Allison, born September 21, 1840 in Blackberry Township, Kane County, Illinois. Sometime during the 1840s or early 1850s, C.C. along with his family moved to Cass County, Michigan, because in 1855 he worked as an apprentice for the National Democrat. He purchased the Democrat in 1863 and ran it for the next 55 years.

It is believed that C.C. Allison, at the time the photo was taken, lived in a frame house located on the northwest side of the intersection of State and Rowland Streets. The Allison house is no longer extant, having been torn down to make way for a county jail (also no longer standing) by 1879.

According to the 1860 US Census, Christopher Allison's occupation was listed as "Ambrotypist". The proximity of Allison's home put him right in the middle of town, next to the courthouse and where two main north-south streets intersect. This was an excellent location for keeping up with the latest court proceedings, political and social gatherings and general news, and of course to take ambrotype photographs.

The spot on which Allison's "photographic car" was located when he captured the image is today covered by the Law Office of Peter Karłowicz, which was built as a bank in the middle 20th Century. The "C.E.V." grocery store preceded the bank building, owned by Charles E. Voorhis, and occupied this site by about 1872.

C.C. Allison very likely had a photographic studio within his home where people came to have their likeness taken, he also had a "photographic car", being a

wagon modified to transport photographic equipment. Some such wagons also contained small dark rooms so that photos could be developed in the field. Allison likely traveled in the countryside during warm months with his photographic car and took portrait photos inside the car or in a special tent put up for such purpose.

When C.C. Allison died in 1920, and a competing newspaper, the Cassopolis Vigilant, a Republican slanted paper, wrote a wonderful obituary for their longtime competitor. This is but one example that although different political parties had heated arguments in those days, there remained respect and civility toward one another, traits lacking in today's political atmosphere.

The "movers" to which the caption refers to are a family moving from one location, probably from one rural farm homestead to another.

The "fort" is the brick building, seen in the left hand side of the photo. One shutter is visible. The "fort" was the nickname of the recently completed (1860) "fire-proof" Cass County records building. After the county sold this building it housed a steam laundry and served as a Masonic Hall. The building is still standing (in November 2019) and houses the Turtle Lodge.

The Union Hotel is visible in the middle background of the photo showing two windows with white trim. In 1860, it was owned by "M.J. Baldwin" according to a map and business directory of the village published that year. From the photo it appears to be a frame Greek Revival style building. The Goodwin Hotel occupied this site later in the 19th Century.

Finding such detailed information on one of the areas oldest known photograph is certainly a treat! I will be back in March 2020 for another year of historical articles for Neighbors.

# NATURE NOTES

Provided by Cass District Library  
Local History Branch

Brad Anderson of Bridgman captured an image of a hermit thrush on October 20, at Warren Dunes State Park. This common spring and fall migrant through Southwest Michigan can currently be seen among our forests and parks, being most abundant in October and early November.

The hermit thrush is one of dozens of songbird species which migrate through the region which overwinter in the southern US. Like the yellow-rumped warbler, featured in last month's column, a small residual population of hermit thrushes overwinter in southern Michigan, but our state is not generally considered part of either species winter range.

Similar appearing species to the hermit thrush are the Swainson's thrush, gray-cheeked thrush, and veery. All are generally brownish and have black spots on white background on their chests. Only the hermit thrush has a distinctly rufous, reddish colored tail, contrasting with the brown tone of its back.

The other species of brown thrushes have already vacated the US and Canada for Latin America where they will overwinter. The only brown-colored thrush, the hermit thrush, is present this far north by late October and early November.

Of note this week was a late scarlet tanager seen in its fall plumage, at the birdbath of Brad and Hannah Anderson in Bridgman on October 23. The Anderson's sighting of this neo-tropical migrant is likely to be the last in Michigan until late April 2020. On average the last sighting each fall of scarlet tanager in Berrien County is September 27. Occasionally we see them into the middle of October and thus the sighting on the 23rd is well beyond the average last date.

A red-shouldered hawk was photographed on October 25, perched on the backyard deck railing of Donald Schneider of Royalton Township. Red-shouldered hawks are found in or near mature woods, and the presence of the species is a good indication of a healthy, mature forest ecosystem. Many migrate south of our area for the winter, but I have seen the species locally during all months of the year.

An adult bald eagle was seen on October 29 in Shoreham by Margie Morphy of Royalton Township. A photo was obtained showing the eagle was an adult told by its white head. Bald eagles do not acquire their well-known white heads and tails until their fourth year of life. During their first through third year of life, bald eagles have brownish heads and tails.

By early November, eastern bluebirds have left the Upper Peninsula and most of the northern half of the Lower Peninsula of Michigan until spring. The majority of eastern bluebirds over winter in the south-eastern US, north to our area.

Brad Anderson of Bridgman recently took some nice images of a male eastern bluebird at Warren Dunes, accompanying this column. The male eastern bluebird sports a rusty colored chest, which is much duller on the female, as is the bright blue on the male's back, being a gray washed look on the female.

During the warm months eastern bluebirds eat primarily insects and worms



**Top left: Hermit thrush at Warren Dunes State Park, October 20, 2019. Top center: Red-shouldered hawk perches on the deck of Donald Schnieder of Royalton Township, October 25, 2019. Top right: adult bald eagle photographed by Margie Morphy of Royalton Township.**

**Center left and right: Male eastern bluebird at Warren Dunes State Park, November 2019 by Brad Anderson. Bottom left: Very late female ruby-throated hummingbird at the feeder of Madeline Johnston of Berrien Township. Bottom right; Golden-crowned kinglet at Warren Dunes State Park on October 28. Photo by Brad Anderson.**

and switch to berries and fruit during the cold months. Recently I saw a flock of eastern bluebirds in Royalton Township feasting on berries of the poke weed plant, which are poisonous to humans.

Dick Schinkel of Oronoko Township flushed a ruffed grouse on his property last week, which is one of only two reports of the species I am aware of in Berrien County in 2019. Another ruffed grouse was reported earlier this year on March 12, seen at Chikaming Township Park by Don White of Union Pier.

The ruffed grouse is a game bird species in the same family as turkeys, quail and pheasants, being found in many northern states and Canada. It was once found throughout the Great Lakes region, and is still common in the Upper Peninsula and northern Lower Peninsula, but has nearly disappeared from the south half due to habitat loss.

Ruffed grouse prefer young forest habitats, or in other words, areas that were fields and are reverting back into forests. Aspen and birch are both important trees in the lives of ruffed grouse, but are generally not found in numbers needed to sustain the needs of ruffed grouse in the

south half of the Lower Peninsula.

Madeline Johnston of Berrien Township has had a female ruby-throated hummingbird visiting her feeder since November 1, present through at least November 10.

Photos of the bird were sent to Allen Chartier of Inskter, who is the director of Great Lakes Hummernet, which is an organization studying hummingbird migration in our region.

Chartier says that in addition to the hummingbird at Johnston's feeder, there are currently ruby-throated hummingbirds in Jackson and Monroe Counties.

Finally, Brad Anderson took a nice

photo of a golden-crowned kinglet at Warren Dunes State Park recently. The kinglet is about the size of our black-capped chickadee and generally nests to our north, although I have seen them during the breeding season locally among thick stands of evergreen trees, where they prefer to nest.

Both the golden-crowned kinglet and its

close relative the ruby-crowned kinglet pass through Southwest Michigan in good numbers every spring and fall.

The ruby-crowned kinglet passes through in the fall during September and October and the golden-crowned kinglet during October and November. However a residual amount of golden-crowned kinglets remain here during winter. They don't visit feeders, but can be found among mixed flocks of chickadees, tufted titmice and white-breasted nuthatches in wooded areas on cold winter days. Ravines, wooded river bottoms, especially among tangles of green brier vines are good places to find the species in the dead of winter.

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# THE LAST WORD

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## Where's that genie in the bottle when you want one?



don't think I'd be exaggerating to say that there's never been a 12 year-old boy who ever watched a firetruck blast down the street, lights flashing and siren wailing, that wasn't awed by the stern-faced firemen who got to ride on the shiny red truck, their axes and pike poles ready as they casually scanned the street ahead for today's first glimpse of smoke and fire and danger that was just ahead.

Having once been that 12 year-old boy (ok, it was a long, long, long time ago), I can still remember what ran through my brain as I covered my ears and screamed as loud as I could, "that's the coolest thing I've ever seen. Maybe someday ..."

So when my buddy Joe called a week or so ago, there wasn't a chance in hell that I was going to refuse the offer of joining him and his crew and riding along to shoot some pictures on his last day of work before he retired from a 40-year career as an inner-city Chicago fireman.

If I'd had more time to think about it, I'm sure I would have been a bit more nervous. In the 20 years I've known Joe, I've heard a lot of his horror stories about the fires, the dangerous (and sometimes the comically stupid) situations they'd faced. I'd even heard that the crew he worked with had been extras in the Hollywood blockbuster movie "Backdraft."

"Now or never," he told me on the phone. "Last day is next Friday."

So there I was on Friday morning, in a firehouse on the corner of Pulaski and West End with one of the guys outfitting me with a fire coat and boots, showing me where I'd be sitting in the truck, explaining how the alarm system worked and where I could sleep and where we would eat and reassur-

ing me with an ease and calmness that any and every one of them were going to make absolutely sure that I didn't do anything stupid that day ... like getting myself killed.

"Welcome. Make yourself at home," they told me, and for the next 24 hours I got to see and live through an adventure that was beyond even the most vivid imaginings any 12 year-old could have conjured. I got to be there. I got to hear the alarms, to struggle into the bulky gear, to fumble my way into the truck and see the flash of the lights and hear the screaming siren and the blaring horn as the truck wove in and out of the Chicago traffic.

Granted, a lot of what I experienced was pretty mundane. There's a lot of down time between runs, and the crew fills the hours with matters of routine ... washing down the trucks, sweeping and mopping the floors, cleaning the bathrooms and kitchen, cooking and washing dishes ... all of the jobs an outsider never thinks about ... and I never once heard an order being given ... they all knew what needed to be done and they did it.

Being young men (most of them looked to be between 30 and 45, although even the older-looking guys were in just-outta-the-weight-room shape, compared to the white-haired, chubby old guy who was going to be riding along) ... I was ready for the bantering, the joking around, the sports talk, card games, and even for a couple of good-natured slap fights ... the kinds of things you'd expect to see anywhere a bunch of good friends hang out.

"I hope we catch a fire for Joe's last day," one of the firefighters told me. "I hope he can go out with a really good day."

But as the hours crept by it didn't look good. Not that the alarm didn't sound (and yes, it's loud enough to shake the fillings

out of your teeth ... and no, you won't sleep through it no matter how tired you might be), it went off pretty regularly ... but, alas, the calls were what the crew referred to as "BS calls." False alarms. Help get an old woman down the stairs so she could go to a doctor's appointment. Gas leak. Overheated car engine beside a boarded up and abandoned building in a neighborhood that was in some places so gritty and run down dangerous it would have to be cleaned up to be called a slum.

"It's usually a lot busier than this, especially on a Friday" they told me. But not that Friday.

The most excitement during the daylight hours came from the steady stream of visiting firemen from other houses who dropped by to wish Joe well ... and from the most idiotic bureaucratic boondoggle I've ever seen, involving a mis-typed work order for a brake job that had confused truck 26 at Joe's house with truck 36 down the street ... and ended up with the crew having to completely strip all the gear and accessories off the behemoth (and believe me, they carry a LOT of gear), not once but twice as they waited for a replacement rig and the world's largest tow truck to arrive.

When the dust settled from that mindless fiasco, we all joined in what I can only describe as the best prime rib dinner I've eaten anywhere in the world (yes, it's true that firemen are amazing cooks), followed by a few hours of lounging in overstuffed chairs in front of one of the half dozen or so TVs that seemed to be on all day and night.

As the early evening wore on I found an out of the way sofa, settled in and let the nervous energy of the day drain into a deep sleep for a couple of hours, until ...

BBBBBBRRRRRAAAAAHHHHHHH

The alarm brought me to my feet in an

instant. Active fire, came the shout over the radio ... commercial building at the corner of ..." I didn't hear the end of the announcement. I ran to the truck, pulled on the coat and jumped into my seat ... those young, joking kids I'd had dinner with were replaced by a team of seasoned, life-hardened professional first responders who were ready for whatever the situation called for. They were trained. They were experienced. They were ready.

And despite being a senior-citizen civilian on my way to a dangerous situation, having spent a few hours among these incredible guys made me pretty comfortable ... I knew that they had this.

This was what they did, every day, and I could tell that they are damn good at what they do.

The fire turned out to be a bit of a disappointment. Small fire, never even saw flames. Lots of smoke. Firefighters broke down a door and climbed on the roof and sprayed everything with the hoses, and got it all over in an amazingly short time.

And the next morning at the last walk-out ritual send-off for Joe (complete with bagpipes and a long, solemn salute from two rows of his peers) I was overcome with appreciation for the remarkable experience I'd just had. I'll never forget it.

Thanks Joe for sharing your last day. Thanks to the crews of Truck 26, Engine 95 and Ambo 10 for putting up with an old curmudgeon like me and allowing me to get a glimpse into your remarkable lives.

In retrospect, if I could have three wishes for that day, I'd wish there'd been a dalmatian (I love dogs), I'd wish Joe's last fire could have been a bit more interesting, and I'd wish I could do it again sometime.

Oh well ... fire's out, shift's over.

Now let's go have a beer.



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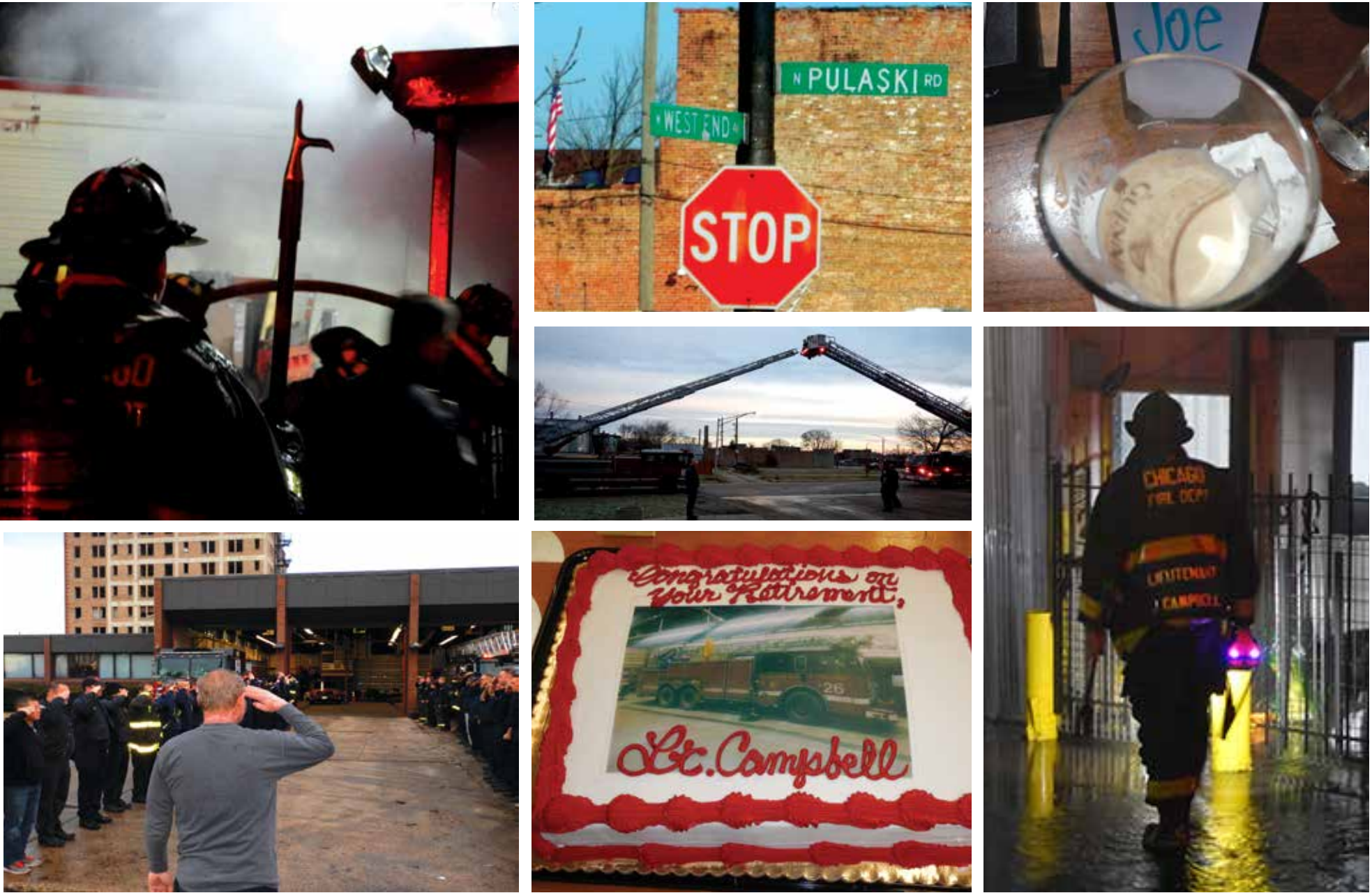
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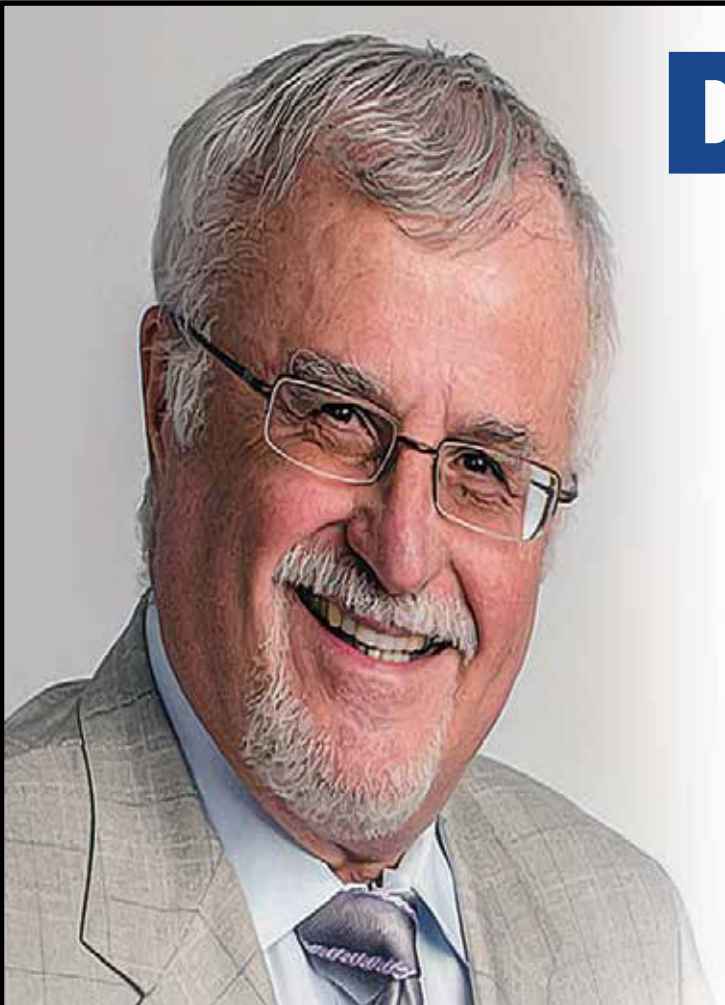


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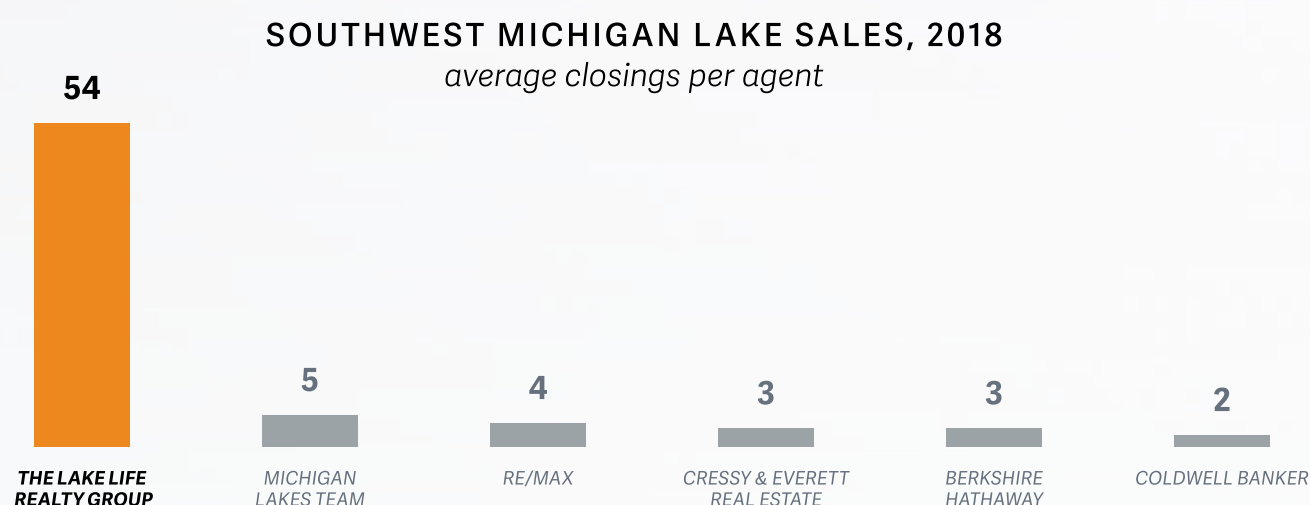


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