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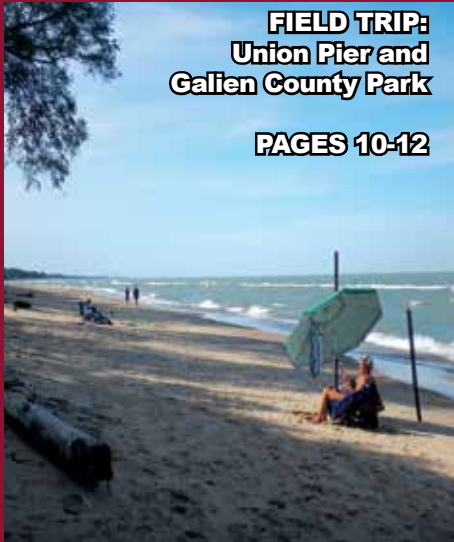
A regional newspaper widely distributed in Dowagiac, Cassopolis, Edwardsburg, Vandalia, Jones, Marcellus, Decatur, Union, Sister Lakes, Three Rivers, Elkhart and Mishawaka, with home delivery at Diamond, Eagle, Birch, Corey, Donnell, Indian, Magician, Shavehead, Baldwin, Long, Dewey, Cable, Juno, Christiana,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



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FIELD TRIP:
Union Pier and
Galien County Park

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REGIONAL NEWS

Holiday Bazaar

A Holiday Bazaar will be held on Saturday, November 6, from 8 am - 2 pm at Our Lady of the Lake Church Social Hall & Narthex, 24832 US Highway 12 E. in Edwardsburg

The event will feature 80 + talented crafters, homemade baked goods and candies, unique gifts & seasonal decorations, chances for door prizes for the first 250 visitors, breakfast, lunch, and snacks.

For more information see facebook.com/ourladyholidaybazaar.

Cass County Historical Society

Events for this fall by the Cass County Historical Society are:

FALL FESTIVAL, 1-4:30 pm, October 3, the historic Newton House, 20689 Marcellus, Highway, Decatur, many fun-filled events, such as a tour of the historic Newton House, free food, petting zoo, games for children and adults, special music, hay ride through Russ Forest, vendors of special crafts and more/

PROGRAM on October 19, ORDINANCE OF 1787, 7 pm, Dr. John Geisler, Retired WMU Professor, to be held at Cass District Library, M-62 Cassopolis

CHRISTMAS OPEN HOUSE, November 7, 1-4:30 pm, a Christmas decorating display will be at the historic Newton House, 20689 Marcellus Highway.

For more information about the Cass County Historical Society, contact Allen F. Butchbaaker, 269-244-8479 or allenbutchbaker@gmail.com.

Speaker scheduled

One more speaker is scheduled at the Edwardsburg Area Historical Museum this year.

Thurs., Oct. 21, 7 p.m.—Jeff Duck — Jeff Duck has the fisherman’s dream job. The Edwardsburg native, a professional fishing guide out of Port Alsworth, Alaska for nearly 20 years, will share highlights of that work as part of the Hooked on Fishing display. He will speak on the similarities between fishing in Michigan and Alaska and share photos of his experiences.

No amateur before the camera, Duck was a part of a documentary by the Discovery Channel, has appeared in an episode of River Monsters, and can be seen in professional videos on fishing for northern pike and rainbow trout. He heads tours for individuals as well as professional photographers in day trips in the Bristol Bay Region, an area covering thousands of miles south of Anchorage. While his focus is on five species of salmon, northern pike, rainbow and lake trout, steelhead and the graying, he also conducts tours of glaciers and volcanoes.

Fall rummage and bake sale

A fall rummage and bake sale will be held Friday, October 8 and Saturday, October 9, from 9 am to 3 pm both days at the First United Methodist Church, 326 N. Lowe St in Dowagiac.

The event will feature Fall and Halloween items, inside and outside decor, many sale items, not displayed at previous sales., bake sale -- all home-made items.

Any questions, please call Darlene Trussell at 269-782-8551.

Underground Railroad Society wins Humanities Award

The Michigan Humanities Council (MHC) recently presented the Underground Railroad Society of Cass County (MI) the award for Outstanding Humanities Organization 2021 at their awards ceremony in Mackinaw City. MHC presented the plaque and certificate to URSCC saying "Over the past ten years, URSCC has worked to fulfill its mission to research and educate about the Underground Railroad in Cass County, and to restore three UGRR related buildings as focal points for telling the compelling story. Over 400 members and an eight member Board have brought to life the critical story of a central juncture in the Underground Railroad."

URSCC president Mike Moroz, treasurer Cathy LaPointe and docent Cindy Yawkey traveled to Mackinaw City to accept the award. Mike thanked MHC for the great honor, for their support for Underground Railroad Days since 2013, and for their recent grants from H.O.P.E. funds, which have helped non for profits keep their doors open during the pandemic. More about URSCC and the Underground Railroad in Cass County MI can be found on www.urscc.org

Deer management program

St. Joseph County Parks will implement a deer management program at Bendix Woods County Park in New

Carlisle this November.

Bendix Woods County Park consists of 195 acres with 27 acres dedicated as a state dedicated nature preserves, a classification given to high quality ecosystems. Review and approval for the deer management program was required by the Division of Nature Preserves of the Indiana Department of Natural Resources. The district biologist for the Division of Fish and Wildlife assisted in the assessment.

The deer management hunt will take place on November 27 and 28, 2021. Bendix Woods County Park will be closed to the public on these dates.

To emphasize deer population reduction, the management program will be an antlerless hunt.

Three hunters, plus one alternate will be selected by a lottery to participate. Hunters must possess an Indiana Bonus Antlerless License. The deadline for applications is October 6. A mandatory meeting with park staff is required. Meeting will be held October 27 at 6pm at the Bendix Woods Nature Center.

The decision to implement a deer management plan was based on several factors: (1) the staff observed more deer and deer trails within the park property, and have observed increased damage to key indicator plants species such as trillium and other fauna; (2) the staff wants to act proactively, to protect the forest ecosystem and the nature preserve.

More information and Hunter Application Forms are available at www.sjcparks.org.

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REGIONAL NEWS

ment a second deer management program at Bendix Woods County Park in New Carlisle this December.

The deer management hunt (muzzle loader) will take place on December 4 and December 5, 2021. Bendix Woods County Park will be closed to the public on these dates. To emphasize deer population reduction, the management program will be an antlerless hunt.

Three hunters, plus one alternate will be selected by a lottery to participate. Hunters must possess an Indiana Bonus Antlerless License. The deadline for applications is October 15. A mandatory meeting with park staff is required. Meeting will be held November 3 at 6 pm at the Bendix Woods Nature Center.

The decision to implement an deer management plan was based on several factors: (1) the staff observed more deer and deer trails within the park property, and have observed increased damage to key indicator plants species such as trillium and other fauna; (2) the staff wants to act proactively, to protect the forest ecosystem and the nature preserve.

More information and Hunter Application Forms are available at www.sjcparks.org

Reservations Fall Group Hayrides

Groups are invited to enjoy the fall beauty of Bendix Woods on a two-hour tractor-drawn hayride. Reservations for the 2021 season are available through November 7. Timeslots begin at 1 pm, 3:30 pm, 6 pm or 8:30 pm. The fee for

private party hayrides is \$120. for up to 80 people. The fee includes tractor-drawn hayrides and a campfire at the hayride site. A picnic shelter or building is NOT included. However, on a limited basis, and with an additional fee, you can rent a nearby shelter or building.

St. Joseph County Park staff continues to take precautions to protect the health of our employees, guests, and the community from exposure to COVID-19 by following CDC guidelines. In the case that St. Joseph County Parks must cancel your party due to COVID-19 restrictions; you will receive a full refund.

To schedule a group hayride please call 574/654-3155. Reservations are confirmed only when payment is received. For more information visited the website at sjcparks.org.

Bendix Woods County Park is located on Timothy Road in New Carlisle, IN.

Under the Harvest Moon

Under the Harvest Moon, presented by the Greater Dowagiac Chamber of Commerce will be on Saturday, Oct. 9 from 10 am to 4 pm. Dowagiac's fall festival celebrates Michigan's fall. At the heart of the event will be a display of new and vintage farm tractors, an open-air marketplace of fall produce, Michigan handmade products and sweet delicacies, as well as street entertainment and family events.

Scarecrows on Parade is returning to downtown Dowagiac in anticipation

of Under the Harvest Moon.

Businesses in the central business district will display their entries at their front entrances or within their window displays. Companies located outside the downtown and public entries will be displayed on downtown lampposts.

Winning entries will be announced the day of the festival. For a complete set of rules and regulations, contact the chamber of commerce.

Vendors of handmade products, antiques and collectibles, along with growers of fall produce who would like to participate in the festival's open-air marketplace can do so by calling the chamber at 782-8212 or by contacting Phillipson at vphillipson@dowagiac.org.

Owners of vintage farm tractors who would like to display their equipment are also invited to join the event by calling the Chamber.

Decatur murder is subject of novel

One of the most enduring Michiana murder stories involves the cold-blooded killings of Henry and Esther Morris at their farmhouse near Decatur in 1879. The murderer took Morris's best horse and rode through the night to South Bend before disappearing there. What has rarely been examined is the decade of litigation involving alleged fraud and forged mortgages which the Morris family were subjected to prior to the murders.

When the murders happened, the community was convinced that Milo D.

Matteson, or someone closely associated with him, was behind them. He probably had his eye on the rich farm ground where the Morrisses were first settlers since the death of father Dolphin Morris in 1870. In 1872 the lawsuits commenced, dealing with high-interest mortgages which the Morrisses claimed were forgeries. In fact, Milo Matteson had an alibi the day of the murders, having gone to church with his wife (which voices in the community described as unusual) and spent all afternoon socializing in the foyer of the Duncomb House. Milo Matteson settled out of court after the murders, getting only about 14 percent of his claims, and left Decatur.

The trail, which Michiana native William G. Kohler researched for 10 years, led to an additional unsolved murder in Rockford, Illinois, polite society in frontier Gunnison, Colorado, and affluence in the Golden Age of Chicago. Along the way, Kohler located a never-before published picture of Jenny Bull, the hired girl who discovered the dead body of Henry Morris, having slept through the murders and all 6 gunshots. The volatile nature of the prime suspect is also examined, including a pistol-whipping of a pupil's father and the choice given to one man to be shot or drowned.

"A Trail of Money and Death: Matteson and the Morris Murders" is available on amazon.com.

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REGIONAL EVENTS CALENDAR

October 3 - Cass County Historical Society Fall Festival, 1-4:30 pm, Newton House, 28689 Marcellus Highway, Decatur, 224-8479, allenbutchbaker@gmail.com

October 8 & 9 - Fall rummage and bake sale, First United Methodist Church, Dowagiac, 9 am - 3 pm both days, 782-8551

October 9 - Dowagiac Under the Harvest Moon Festival, 10 am - 4 pm

October 19 - Cass County Historic Society meeting with Dr. John Geisler on the Ordinance of 1787, Cass District Library, 6:30 pm

October 21 - Edwardsburg Historical Society presentation by Jeff Duck on fishing in Alaska, 7 pm

November 6 - Holiday Bazaar, Our Lady of the Lake Catholic Church, Edwardsburg, 8 am - 2 pm, facebook.com/ourladyholi-

daybazaar.

November 7 - Cass County Historical Society Christmas Open House, 28689 Marcellus Highway, Decatur, 224-8479, allenbutchbaker@gmail.com

November 27 & 28 - Deer management hunt, Bendix Woods County Park (South Bend).

December 2-5 - Barn Swallow Theatre presents

Annie, 7:30 pm (2 pm on Dec. 5)

December 4 - Deer management hunt (muzzleloader), Bendix Woods County Park (South Bend).

EDITOR'S NOTE: Due to the pandemic all events are subject to change or cancellation. Please check with event organizers prior to attending any events.



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CASS LIBRARY EVENTS

October 2021 Programs - Cass District Library Programs

Spooky Scavenger Hunt, Edwardsburg Branch, All Month; Drop in at Edwardsburg Branch all month long for a Spooky Scavenger Hunt. All ghosts and ghouls welcome!

Hocus Pocus Book of Spells

Workshop* Main Branch, October 5 - 5 - 8 pm (Night 1), October 12 - 6 - 8 pm (Night 2), Do you love Halloween? Are you a fan of the movie Hocus Pocus? Join us at the Main Branch for two evenings of advanced crafting of the Book of Spells. Program is recommended for ages 18 and older. "Don't wait 300 years" to create your very own Halloween 2021 keepsake. Total cost for two evenings of crafting is \$5.00. Space is limited and registration is required. Payment is due at registration. Visit any branch or call (574) 314-6454 to register.

Fall Storytime, October 5 - November 18; Mondays. Infant Storytime - Mason/Union Branch - 10 am, Wednesdays, Mason/Union Branch - 10 am, Howard Branch - 1 pm; Thursdays, Main Branch - 11 am, Edwardsburg Branch - 1 pm. This program provides opportunities to have social interaction and to develop a love of reading. Each week will feature new stories, crafts and activities centered around a fall theme. Designed for chil-

dren ages 3-5 years old and their caregiver.

Adult Craft Club* Main Branch, October 13 - 1 pm. Join us at the Main Branch for a monthly craft club! Space is limited and registration is required. Supplies will be provided. Contact Stephanie at (269) 749-1384 for more information and to register.

Magic Gemstone Trees, Edwardsburg Branch, October 14 - 3 pm. Try your hand at sculpting a wire tree with leaves made of precious natural gemstones. Accompanying this program will be a short documentary on how gems are made and how they're used - traditionally and non-traditionally.

Fall Leaf Sun Catchers* Howard Branch, October 14 - 6 pm. Create a fall leaf sun catcher at the Howard Branch. Let the autumn sun make these shining examples of your creativity! Space is limited and registration is required. Visit any branch or call (574) 314-6454 to register.

More Than A Book Club, Edwardsburg Branch, October 21 - 10 am and 6 pm. Join us for a discussion of Yellow Wife by Sadeqa Johnson. An immersive page-turning tale of Phelby Delores Brown, who lived a sheltered life on a plantation in Virginia. Her mother's

position as a healer, shielded young Phelby to the truth of the world. Once she was given her freedom on her 18th birthday she began to see things differently.

Spice It Up! Edwardsburg Branch, October 27 - 5 pm.

Join us for National Cookbook Month by stopping in at the Edwardsburg branch for a cookbook and a spice kit. Create a recipe from the cookbook using the spice and meet up October 27th at 5 p.m. to share your recipe. Covid restrictions prevent us from sharing prepared dishes during the program at this time. Ages 13 and up.

Leather Earrings Workshop* Howard Branch, October 28 - 6 pm. Join us at the Howard Branch to create a pair of custom leather earrings. Participants will have a variety of patterns and shapes to choose from. All tools and supplies will be provided. Space is limited and registration is required. Call (574) 314-6454 to register.

Library Spooktacular, Main Branch, October 29 - 6 pm. Calling all ghouls! Join us for Library Spooktacular. There will be trick-or-treating and an outdoor movie behind the Main Branch on Friday, October 29 starting at 6 pm. We will be showing "Monster House" at dusk. Wear your favorite costume, collect treats

and stay for the show. This event is weather permitting.

TeenTober, October is TeenTober, a nationwide initiative from the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) that rallies teens to spend time participating in programs at their local library all month long! Celebrate with Cass District Library by attending one or all of these teen specific programs.

- Pythonic Page Puzzles - Kick off TeenTober by completing floor-sized puzzles from the covers of past and present young adult and graphic novels. Edwardsburg Branch - October 5 - 3 pm Howard Branch - October 7 - 5:30 pm
- DIY Halloween Shirt Workshop - Join us at the Main Branch to create your very own Halloween-themed shirt including spooky designs and fall colors! Please bring your own black t-shirt or sweat-shirt and we will provide all other materials. Main Branch - October 18 - 6 pm
- Creepy Canvases - Calling all monster fans! Join us for our Halloween-themed Creepy Canvas program. We'll be painting our favorite characters from spooky books, scary movies, and haunting stories. Edwardsburg Branch - October 26 - 3 pm

*Registration required. Call (574) 314-6454 to register for programs.



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LAKE LIFE WITH JANE

Under the spell of a gorgeous day

by **Jane Boudreau**

Hello Neighbors! I hope that by the time you open this paper you are having cooler days. The lack of humidity makes our September days so much sweeter. Dare I say I wish for an Indian Summer while under the spell of those gorgeous days? The dappled sun and slight nip in the air make me want to be outside longer. In the city I'm not too far from a university and high school. When I relax on my patio I can hear the football games; the announcer, marching band and crowd cheering. There is something very still in the air that makes this possible. Have you noticed this? Sort of magical.

Last week, before I even went into the house, I took a walk down the dock. I was elated to see cattails near the shore on the side of the dock where we once tied up our now gone pontoon and my husband's fishing boat. I think they are as beautiful as anything you can see amongst the lily pads and wild grasses. I love them indoors in a large vase as well in a tall urn. No water and a bit of hair-spray to keep the seeds from shedding that cotton candy. A little aside...I was recently reading that a good amount of wild grasses are very poisonous. Who knew? Check sources or read up on the internet.

I have some native plants growing here as well. I think so many of these can be invasive so I'm keeping an eye on them! The lily pads were every where in Diamond View Bay where I live. They are beautiful but also protected. But they have become invasive along with a lot of other plants and weeds. On areas where the warier shallow along shore-lines, it's a lot of work to keep your beach and swimming area manageable and pretty. I hope the right people address this problem no matter which lake you live on.

For now, I look at the water and I know I won't be swimming again for months, or sitting on the dock catching some rays, but there are so many other beautiful ways to enjoy the country and I'm going to do it! If you know of any fall festivals in our area, please send me an email, I'd appreciate that so much. But I give kudos to Neighbors for keeping us on top of all the events and festivals. My family really love fall at the lake. Check out the gorgeous and abundant pumpkins at Dussel's, one of my favorite spots.



Morning Glories grow profusely everywhere in my gardens...give them something to climb vertically and they will take over horizontally. I love the pretty heart shaped leaves to fill in spaces where I like a little privacy and in other spots to make some shade, like the railings around my porch where the dogs like to snooze. Come mid September the velvety flowers open for a few hours a day. Not so much for me in the morning but late in the afternoon when the sun is going down in the west and lights up my yard. The blooms say, "Hello you!"

Fall makes me want to bring it's bounty indoors-it doesn't get any cheaper



than that. I love decorating my mantel seasonally and I keep it very simple; colorful apples and pears in a basket, whimsical pumpkin candles and dried flowers in a simple glass bottle. It doesn't take much to get that cozy feeling indoors.

For the pumpkins you display outside on your porch, deck, patio...wherever~~~ you might remember my tip from last year. Spray some Pledge furniture polish on them. I don't know exactly why this repels critters like squirrels and bunnies. The scent? The slippery feeling? All I know is it works for me on my pumpkins in my walnut tree forest yard. And they look great, too! Just remember to add more after it rains.

Now, on to recipes...

Savory chicken breast sandwiches



This is a nice juicy sandwich that I like to serve on a toasted English muffin, or between 2 slices of good crusty bread. The marinade will make it tasty enough that you won't need any sort of condiment but for maybe a nice piece of iceberg lettuce. Serve it with potato chips or fresh fruit. Lunch or dinner, it's fantastic!

For the marinade:

- Ingredients:
1/2 cup olive oil
2 T balsamic vinegar
3 cloves chopped garlic

- 1 T peach or apricot preserves
Juice of 1/2 lemon
1 T vegetable oil
2 boneless chicken breasts cut in half horizontally ... like book pages
Chopped chives (optional)
4 English muffins or good French or Italian bread

Directions:

Mix the marinade together in medium size bowl. Reserve 2 tablespoons and set aside. Add sliced chicken breast and let marinate 30 minutes or overnight. Heat oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Remove chicken from marinade (discard marinade). Add the chicken to the oil being careful not to splatter. Ouch!

Cook chicken approximately 5-6 minutes per side or until they reach a temp of 160 degrees. Remove from skillet to a platter. While still warm brush the reserved marinade on to each breast and top with chopped chives if you'd like. Serve on the muffins or bread with a piece of lettuce, onions, mozzarella cheese ... whatever suits your fancy.

Serves 2

Warm Bacon and Blue Cheese Dip



This is a hot dip your guest will remember, and if you bring it to a gathering, everyone will want to know the recipe. Be like me. Don't hand it out. It's yours. Guard it with your life. Unlike I have just done here.

Ingredients:

- 2 8 oz packages of cream cheese
2 T half & half
7 pieces of cooked bacon, coarsely chopped (reserve 1 T)
1 T chives
2 cloves of garlic, chopped finely
4 oz blue cheese
2 T chopped walnuts

Directions:

Beat cream cheese and half and half in a mixer until somewhat smooth. Stir in bacon, garlic and blue cheese. Spread in a medium size casserole or pie dish. Top with chives, garlic and blue cheese. Sprinkle walnuts and remaining bacon pieces over and bake at 350 for 20 minutes. Serve with crackers, pita chips, or small toast squares. Be prepared for compliments.



Autumn Almond Bark

So for those of you who like easier recipes, two down, one to go. Are you with me? And believe me, this is time consuming for me to write but actually not difficult--it just has a lot of ingredients. I love you all. Please don't line your bird cage with this page.

Ingredients:

- 12 oz. semi sweet chocolate chips
16 oz white chocolate or vanilla almond bark
1 1/2 t dry pumpkin pie spice
1/4 c dried cranberries roughly chopped (Usually found in your produce dept.)
1/4 c pumpkin seeds
1/4 c raw almonds
1/4 c candy corn chopped roughly
***Substitute anything you like

Directions:

Microwave the dark chocolate in 15 second intervals in your microwave, stirring each time until smooth. Do not overheat or you will have to start over. Sometimes you can add a little shortening to smooth it out but it's tricky.

Line a baking sheet that has sides with parchment paper. Pour the dark chocolate mixture over the baking sheet and spread with a spoon to cover as much of the sheet as you can. Place in the freezer to chill about 15 minutes.

Continued on next page. See:
JANE

LAKE LIFE WITH JANE

JANE

Continued from previous page

Melt the white chocolate with the pumpkin pie spice mixed in. Do it much like the dark chocolate in 15 second intervals. When at room temperature spread over the chocolate. While still soft gently add the cranberries, pumpkin seeds, almonds and candy corn, just sprinkling over randomly. Place in freezer for another ten minutes. Remove and break the whole mess into random pieces, I like to do small and large pieces, Store in plastic bags in the refrigerator until ready to share. This is fine at room temp for quite awhile but refrigerate if it starts to look sticky. Enjoy!!

Summer of course is gone, but one of the things so many in my family have enjoyed is golfing at the courses and country clubs in southwest Michigan. Beautiful and challenging. When my son was just eight years old, we would drop



him off for the day at Diamond Lake Golf Club. I am so proud to say that this experience led him to become a professional golf instructor going on 14 years now. He's had four hole in ones in his rather young life and that's insane. I

recently told him that my good friend and neighbor, Tom Steinbach, scored a hole in one at DLGC in the seventh hole with his driver. When I shared this with my son, who still plays this course, he was like, "Incredible! I played that hole 500 times!" Even more awesome, Tom got his hole in one on a par 4. I don't know if any of you golfers know that a hole in one is a million to one odds. So what I have to say is: applause for my friend Tom, applause for a challenging golf course right here on Diamond lake, and just one of the many here in our area, and never give up that challenge of scoring the big one! What a great way to spend time with company, friends, clients, or your younger kids. And really ... how about that plaque!!!

So there we have it for October. Are all of you guys ready with your scissors to cut out recipes? I'm at our little place pretty much all the time enjoying the mild days outside and tidying up my garden. It's peaceful watching the elusive blue herons, the turtles sunning themselves on our shore station, that become very indignant as I go about my yard

work (plop, plop, plop into the water they go when this strange intruder comes near).

I'm cleaning up my garden tools and hoping that I'm not too late in planting bulbs for next spring. Don't forget to store your clay pots in your garage or shed, they'll crack in cold temps. They can be stacked with bubble wrap or newspaper to help them come apart in the spring. Wow--just a little advice on gardening and more on golf in this October edition. But I think it helps us look forward to a wonderful spring, 2022!

Until November,

~Jane

Jane Boudreau is a blogger and newspaper columnist. She is a longtime resident on Diamond Lake and a home in Chicago and cozy place in the mountains of North Carolina. All photos are original and are property of Jane Boudreau. Please do not use without permission. You can email her at blndy9@yahoo.com.

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The housing market in southwest Michigan

In August, the Cass County housing market sales dropped 7 percent in overall sales of all housing types due to a 32 percent decrease in sales of waterfront houses.

The overall number of houses sold in August 2021 was 62 compared to 67 in August 2020. Sales of waterfront homes decreased by 8 houses (17 vs. 25). Non-waterfront house sales increased by 7 percent (45 vs. 42).

In August, the overall average selling price decreased 7 percent to \$271,298 from \$291,204 in August 2020. The overall median selling price at \$226,501 decreased 3 percent from \$209,000 in August 2020.

The average selling price for waterfront homes rose 5 percent to \$519,765 from \$495,560 in August 2020. The median selling price for waterfront homes jumped 12 percent (\$464,000 vs. \$416,000).

In August, the average selling price for non-waterfront houses increased 5 percent to \$177,433 from \$169,563. The median selling price jumped 10 percent to \$171,000 from \$155,950.

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

There was one house included in the bank-owned or foreclosed as a part of all closed transactions in August for 2 percent of all transactions. The same percentage occurred in July. The highest percentage in August previously was 16 percent in 2016.

For comparison, there were no bank-



owned or foreclosed homes as a percentage of all transactions in August. This was the best percentage in 2021 and for the last five years. In January, the rate was 4 percent. The previous lowest percentage in August was 1 percent in 2020. The highest percentage in August was 36 percent in 2009.

Across all of the SWMI, for the second month sales dropped 19 to 20 percent behind from a year ago. Selling price made moderate increases year-to-date. Selling prices in August did not set any records except for the year-to-date selling prices when compared to previous years. The market manages to continue to do well even with a 26 percent drop in inventory of houses for sale.

In August, at 363, the number of houses sold fell 20 percent below the 455 houses sold in August 2020. Year-to-

date, the number of houses sold at the end of August was 2495, up 13 percent over August 2020 (2495 vs. 2203). This scored a new sales record in the year-over-year sales records since 2006. For the last six months, the year-to-date sales have set records over previous years..

Selling prices declined slightly for the first time in 2021, and August selling prices did not surpass prices in August 2020. The average selling price in August 2021 was \$307,860 compared to \$324,302 in August 2020, for a 5 percent decrease. In July 2021, the average selling price was \$351,131, or 13 percent higher than the selling price in August. Year-to-date selling prices at the end of August did set records in the year-over-year comparison. The year-to-date average selling price in August 2021 rose 14 percent over August 2020 (\$319,151 vs. \$280,370).

The median selling price in August 2021 slipped 2 percent to \$230,000 from \$235,000 in August 2020. Year-to-date, the median selling price climbed 9 percent (\$225,000 vs. \$206,000). The year-to-date median selling price also set a new record price in the month of August in the year-over-year comparison.

The total dollar volume plummeted 24 percent in August 2021 (\$111,753,405, vs. \$147,557,780). With the number of sales at higher prices, the year-to-date total dollar volume set a new record for the dollar volume at the end of August (\$796,283,722 vs. \$617,655,862). The year-to-date total dollar volume rose 29 percent.

The inventory of houses for sale fell 26 percent from a year ago (952 vs. 1285), bringing the inventory of houses for sale to a 3.4-months supply of inventory available for buyers. This is the highest inventory level this year. At the end of August 2020, the market had a 5.9-months supply of houses for sale. For comparison, in August 2009, there were 3821 houses for sale and a 17.8-months supply of inventory.

Nationally, the Freddie Mac mortgage rate in August was 2.7, down slightly from 2.88 in July for a 30-year conventional mortgage.

This data reflects home sales across Allegan, 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®.

BUSINESS & FINANCE

Medicare annual election period

By **Dean R. Johnson**
djohnson@kemneriottbenz.com
 Kemner, Iott, Benz Agency

Medicare, Medicare Supplement Policies, Medicare Advantage Plans and Medicare Prescription Drug Plans are sometimes referred to as “Medicare Alphabet Soup.”

The first hurdle many people face with Medicare coverage is simply understanding the various parts and how they fit together to provide the best medical coverage for you.

Original Medicare has two parts; Part A which covers inpatient care and for most people does not have a premium. Part B covers outpatient care and for most people it has an \$148.50 monthly premium for 2021, this premium could be lower or higher depending upon your income. This monthly premium will be deducted from your social security benefits or if you are not receiving social security benefits, you will be billed quarterly by Medicare.

Medicare Prescription Drug coverage is provided by insurance companies. These Plans are known as Medicare Part D. From the list of the drug formulary approved by Medicare, the insurance companies must offer at least two drugs for each medical condition. Each insurance company will publish their own drug formulary. These formularies will vary and the co-payments you pay out of pocket will vary as well as the premiums will vary. The average premium for 2021 was about \$35.00 per month. In order to decide what drug plan offers the most savings for you and covers your drugs, your insurance agent is able to provide you with a report showing what plan would save you the most money.

Medicare has deductibles and co-payments that can quickly add up. For example, Part A for your inpatient services pays 80 percent for the approved Medicare procedures and has a \$1,484 deductible for each admittance in 2021.

Part B for your outpatient services pays 80 percent for the approved Medicare procedures and has an annual deductible of \$203.00 in 2021. Insurance companies offer a Medicare Supplement Plan or Medigap Plan to pay for some or all the deductibles and co-payments not paid by Medicare. Medicare has approved plans referred to by the letters A through N. The premiums will vary from Plan to Plan based on the coverage,

age, and location. In our area, Plan G seems to be the most popular plan. If you are 65 years or older and apply for one of these plans when you are first eligible for Medicare, the insurance company must accept you and cannot charge an additional premium for pre-existing conditions. Remember if you have Medicare because of a disability and are under 65 years old, some areas of the country will not have a Medicare Supplement Policy to offer you, however you would be eligible for a Medicare Advantage Plan.

Medicare Advantage Plans are known as Medicare Part C. The difference is that rather than adding a Medicare Supplement Policy and a Medicare Part D Policy with Original Medicare, the Medicare Advantage Plan replaces the coverage of a Medicare Supplement Policy and Medicare Part D policy and pays instead of Medicare for your Part A and Part B services and usually your Part D services. You must be enrolled in Part A and Part B of original Medicare to qualify for a Medicare Advantage Plan.

The Medicare Advantage Plan must cover all Part A and Part B medical procedures approved by Medicare. These plans with Part D coverage will have their own Drug Formulary. Additionally, these plans can cover other services not covered by Original Medicare, including services for hearing, dental, and vision as well as fitness club memberships and allowances to purchase over-the-counter products.

Medicare Advantage Plans usually have medical services covered by health-care networks (like employee group health plans) such as a PPO's or HMO's. In our area, the PPO networks are much larger and give you more choices for you to choose providers than the HMO networks in our area, which are much smaller and more limited. The networks in our area have been very stable, meaning that the providers are staying in the networks for long periods of time.

What can I do during the Annual Election Period (AEP) starting October 15 through December 07?

1. If you have original Medicare with a Medicare Supplement Policy and Part D, you can change your Part D to another Part D; or you could enroll in a Medicare Advantage with a Part D for an effective date of January 01.

2. If you have a Medicare Advantage Plan with a Part D, you could enroll in a different Medicare Advantage Plan with

The first hurdle many people face with Medicare coverage is simply understanding the various parts and how they fit together to provide the best medical coverage for you.

a Part D.

3. If you never had a Part D plan, you could enroll in a Part D plan with an effective date of January 01. You may have to pay a penalty, usually about 40 cents per month for each month you were eligible to enroll and did not enroll.

4. If you only had original Medicare, you could enroll in a Medicare Advantage Plan or you could enroll in a Medicare Supplement Policy, however the Medicare Supplement policy would be medically underwritten and you could be declined based on your health issues. However, the Medicare Advantage plan is a guarantee issue policy, meaning no medical underwriting.

What can I do during the Open Enrollment Period (OEP) starting January 01 to March 31, 2022

1. If you already have a Medicare

Advantage Plan, you can switch to a different Medicare Advantage plan or to Original Medicare.

In summary, Medicare Advantage Plans have smaller premiums than Medicare Supplement Policies, but require co-payments when receiving medical services, whereas the Medicare Supplement policies will cover most if not all of your costs for your medical services. The average monthly premium for Medicare Supplement Policies in our area in 2021 was about \$155 monthly. The average premium for the Medicare Advantage Plan in our area vary from \$0 to \$74 monthly. The \$0 Medicare Advantage Plans for 2022 are now typical Medicare Advantage Plans available with or without Part D coverage and special needs plans. These \$0 premium plans for 2022 cover all Part A and Part B approved Medicare services and most for 2022 include coverage for prescription drugs, routine dental and vision as well as hearing aid benefits. These \$0 premium plans for 2022 have improved substantially for the coming year.

Please do not rely exclusively on TV commercials for Medicare information, that is an area where a lot of people make wrong or bad decisions based on limited information they receive. It is, however, a time to do business with people you know and trust so you can receive good information to make a good decision. We are here in the community and look forward to working with you.

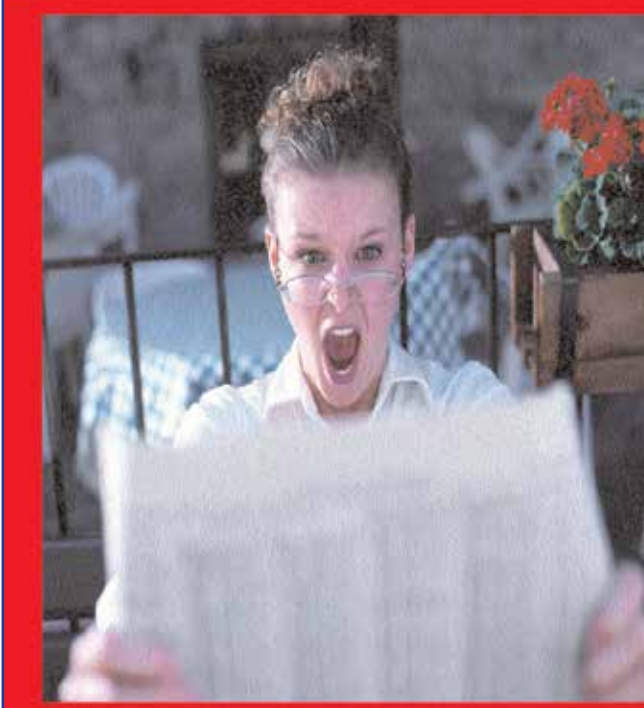
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OUR CHILDREN

Helping a reluctant learner

by **SANDY FLEMING**

School has only been in session for a few weeks, and already I am hearing parents say “My child has lost television/video games/their phone, and their grades are STILL bad!! What more can I do?”

My first question to those parents is, “Has this strategy worked for you in the past?” The answer is invariably “No.” So why are we still trying it? One definition of insanity is to try the same strategy and expect different results. It does not work! Let’s look at some other options.

Effective Rewards and Consequences

First of all, if this is truly a behavioral issue, it’s important to understand some basic concepts about behavior management. People (kids included) do not behave in a vacuum. There are always reasons for behaviors. Find out what is rewarding the behavior you want to change, and disrupt that process. It’s also important to find things your child wants to work for and will motivate change in their behavior.

Positive outcomes are far more powerful than negative ones. Behavior is more likely to change if you set up a situation where your child or teen is rewarded with something they value than if you punish the transgressions. Some may argue that this seems like bribery, but look at how we as adults act. Many people are motivated by money (a reward that we value). Still more are motivated by social acceptance, by gains in power or prestige, and so forth. So there is absolutely nothing wrong with attaching an attractive reward to the behavior you want to see. In fact, it is far more likely to be effective.

On the other hand, negative outcomes sometimes motivate us to avoid some actions. We don’t want to get fired or go to jail, for example. But I’m sure your experience is like mine in that you’ve seen lots of people who risk those negative outcomes to get something they want. If we apply this to the kids and their school behavior, they may well be willing to risk losing the phone or the video games if the reward they perceive is stronger for them.

Now let’s think about what might be rewarding the lower performance. Can we disrupt this process? Kids may value free time, comfort level, peer approval, or easy tasks more than they fear losing their coveted phone. We’ll look at each one in a moment, but for now, what rewards can you offer for effort/compliance that will be more important than the rewards they already get from the undesirable behavior? This is a list you will have to make for your own circumstances, but remember that the rewards often are not tangible. One of the most powerful is positive attention and time spent with parents. Another is your approval. Time is usually more valuable to kids than any money or gifts you could give. So make a plan to turn off the phone, turn off the television, put down the work, and spend quality time with the kids.

Now, let’s look at how to disrupt



those other possible things rewarding the poor performance.

Free Time

The easy solution here is to make it a requirement that a certain amount of time is spent each day on improving school skills, regardless of the homework load. Homework is done first, then extra learning activities are added on to fill the time. Suddenly, there is no extra free time if there is no homework. This can help immensely with the free time reward. No matter what, a specified time will be spent on school pursuits. Many kids decide they might as well bring home the homework, and even if they don’t, their skills improve through practice, and better grades usually follow. Most professional organizations recommend 10 minutes per grade level, so your third grader should spend 30 minutes daily. Your eleventh grader should be working for nearly two hours daily.

Peer Approval

Sometimes kids have a real fear of “looking smart.” This can be a tough one to combat, but the answer is usually found at home. Check your own actions- do you always show how much you value education? Are you engaged in learning intentionally and when the kids can see you? This could be taking classes, reading nonfiction books, keeping up with real news (not social media), and the like. Do your actions show that you prioritize education? Kids are expected to attend school daily, unless ill. You don’t take random days off for family outings or because someone slept in or because it’s a birthday.

And for younger children, at least, you do have some control over the peers your child chooses to associate with. Limit contact with the ones that have a poor attitude about school, and encourage interaction with those who have a good attitude. Welcome nearly all friends into your home, but be rigorous about which homes you allow your child to spend time in. This way you can be more in control of the activities and conversations.

Comfort Level and Easy Tasks

This is probably the primary reason for kids who seem to have attitude problems related to school. People often make the assumption they are lazy and just don’t want to work or be challenged. Within my experience, that is not the case. It may look that way on the outside, because that’s far more socially acceptable than “I tried and I can’t do it.” Kids perceive that it is better to be a bit rebellious and naughty than to be thought stupid. Some kids don’t know how to face challenges. These children usually have had life events smoothed over for them by family members and get frustrated at the first hint of trouble. Solve this problem by encouraging a growth mindset. Wipe negative phrasing out of everyone’s (parents’ and children’s) vocabulary. Instead of “I can’t,” say “I haven’t learned how yet.” Instead of “I’m frustrated,” say “I’ll take a break and then try another way.” You get the idea. When kids say (or hear) negative things over and over, they truly begin to believe them.

And finally, many, many kids truly are having trouble with material they need to learn for school. There can be lots of reasons, none of which include the words “can’t learn.” It’s possible they just missed mastering a concept or two a while back that is critical to managing with the new skills. It’s possible they are not in the habit of reading directions or looking at the grading rubrics provided by the teacher. It’s possible they are doing the homework and forgetting to turn it in. It’s possible they were absent for a day or two, then neglected to do their make-up work or quizzes. One thing leads to another and before you know it, the grades are as low as they can go, and they have lost their phones.

So here are simple steps to combat this problem BEFORE it gets out of control.

- Nearly all districts offer access to a parent grade book, like Powerschool. Use it. Check grades daily if need be. If you see a missing assignment, insist that it be completed that day.
- Watch your student log into their

virtual classroom environment and look together to see what homework is assigned. Make a plan to get it done.

- Help students learn to make a timeline of milestones for larger projects so they are not left until the last minute.
- Have your student use a planner or assignment calendar. Check it daily with the student.
- Check to make sure your student has finished assignments AND followed the directions after each homework session.
- Help your student organize so that assignments to be returned are in their proper place the night before.
- Implement a system where if the grades are in acceptable territory, you back off with restrictions and requirements, but if the grades are below what you consider acceptable (usually C or D level), then you have the option and plan to step in and provide more guidance and structure. Don’t wait until the student is failing several classes to act.
- Stay in close contact with your student’s teacher or teachers. Most can be emailed, and then can respond to your questions quickly.
- If you see signs that your student is not learning the material (homework takes hours, test grades are consistently low, etc.), get in touch with the teacher right away and see what you can do to be more supportive.

- And if the student continues to have trouble with grades in spite everyone’s best efforts, consider getting some extra help for your student. You do NOT have to spend the entire school year fighting with your student, and your student does NOT have to have their phone privileges revoked for months at a time. There are more effective ways to get kids to bring their grades up. Why not get this school year off to a better start by providing the structure and support that your child needs to be successful!

Sandy Fleming is a writer and private tutor in Edwardsburg. Visit her websites at <http://sandyflemingonline.com> and <http://learning-nook.com> for more ideas about helping children succeed with learning.

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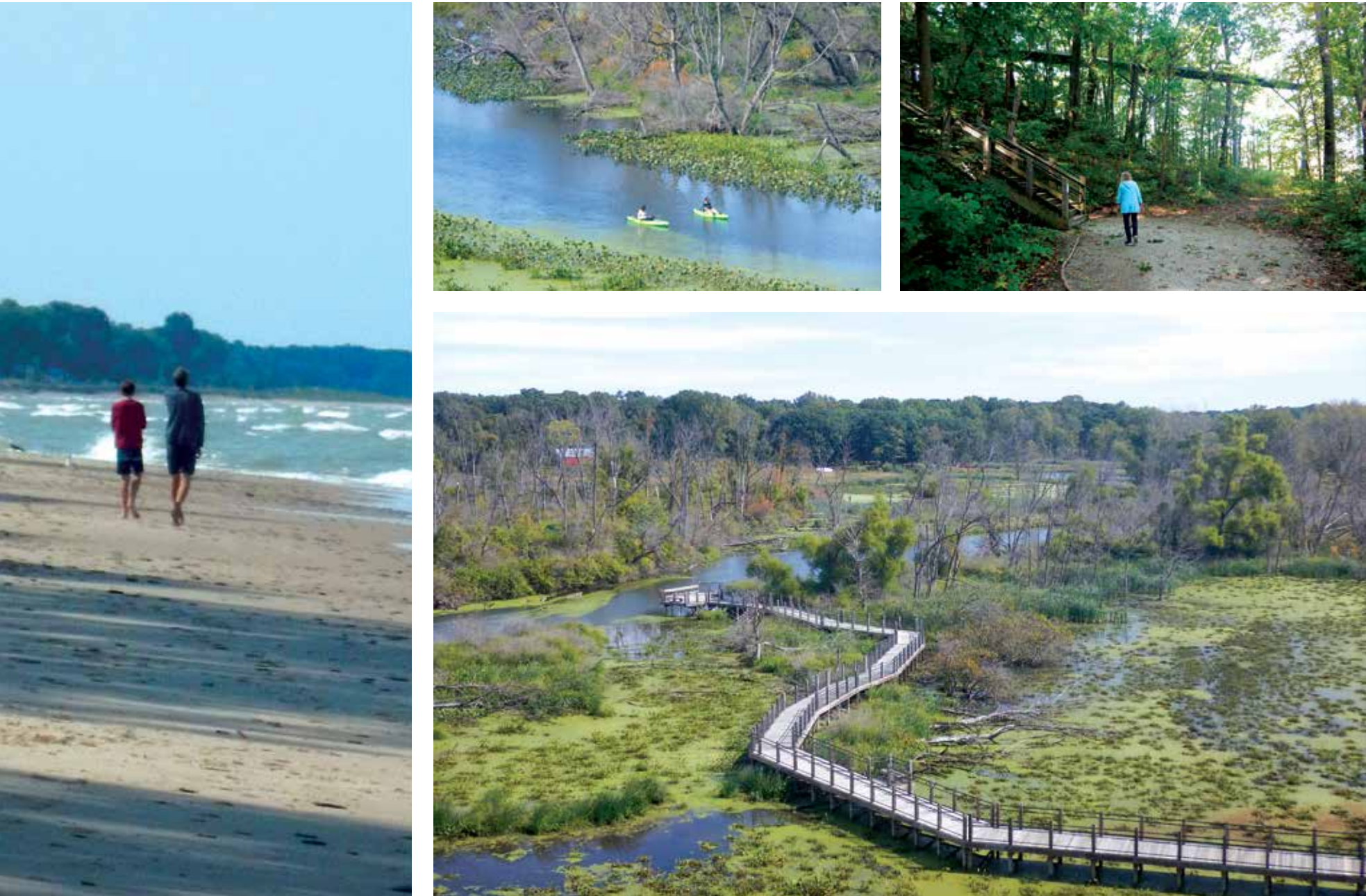
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HISTORIC POSTCARDS

Historic postcards depict rich scenes of area's past

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

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

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

publisher, Arcadia Publishing.

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

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

In this edition of Neighbors we have selected postcards showing images of 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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NATURE NOTES

Early autumn birds sighted

*Provided by Cass District Library
Local History Branch*

Adult male ruby-throated hummingbirds have already started departing northern portions of their breeding range for their winter range, which extends from southern Florida, and central Mexico south into Central America.

On August 26, Brad Anderson took a nice photo of an adult male ruby-throated hummingbird as it perched on a black cherry tree near a hummingbird feeder. Anderson says this male was challenging any hummingbirds that appeared in the vicinity of the feeder, and there were quite a few young birds around making the task rather difficult.

Only adult male hummingbirds have the ruby throat feathers, also known as gorget feathers. Adult male hummingbirds of all 300+ species do not take part in raising of young, or the construction of the nest. These duties are performed solely by the adult female hummingbird. Therefore, of the species of hummingbirds that migrate, the adult males hummingbirds depart their summer ranges before their female counterparts, or before the young hummingbirds that hatched in the current calendar year. The only species of hummingbird which breeds in eastern North America is the ruby-throated hummingbird.

In Michigan adult ruby-throated hummingbirds start to consume extra calories for the long migration southward as early as July. Migration of adult male ruby-throated hummingbirds may begin as early as late July and peaks in August. By late August and early September the majority of adult male ruby-throated hummingbirds have departed Michigan although a few may linger into October. Adult females and young of the year generally depart by late September and early October. Of course these dates are approximations.

Bob Conrad of Lincoln Township photographed two of our largest herons side-by-side on August 21, as they foraged in a pond along Hollywood Road in Royalton Township. A great blue heron is seen in the left of Conrad's photo. It stands at nearly four feet tall, and its wings measure six feet from wingtip to wingtip. The great egret is slightly smaller, measuring three and a half feet tall. Its wings measure four feet, three inches from wingtip to wingtip.

The great egrets feathers were much sought after during the 19th and early 20th Centuries by plume hunters, which led to their near extinction. The passage of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act in 1918 helped in their recovery. The great egret is generally more common south of the Michigan state line, but has been extending its range northward for several decades.

Great egrets show up in Southwest Michigan during April and May from



Top left: Adult male ruby-throated hummingbird on August 26, 2021 in Bridgman, guarding a feeding area from other hummingbirds. Photo by Brad Anderson.

Top right: Great blue heron and great egret forage in a small pond along Hollywood Road in Royalton Township, August 21. Photo by Bob Conrad.

Bottom photo: Merlin on August 26, perched on a dead snag along Lake Michigan shoreline at Warren Dunes State Park. Photo by Brad Anderson of Bridgman.

their wintering grounds, represent overshoots that retreat south to nest. Although there are scattered records of great egrets nesting in southern Michigan, as of yet none have been confirmed nesting in Southwest Michigan. The species becomes more difficult to locate during June, but as July progresses egrets and herons begin to wander away from their nesting grounds and local sightings begin to increase. Great egrets that nest to our south are known to travel north after nesting. Great egrets as well as great blue herons congregate in local area marshes and other shallow wetlands in late summer and early fall. I have seen upwards of 20 great egrets at once at the Three Oaks Wastewater Lagoon on

Schwark Road in past years during the fall. Another good area to look for herons and egrets is the Topinabee Lake Preserve, owned by the Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy, located off Portage Road north of US-12 in Bertrand Township.

Most great egrets vacate Southwest Michigan by early October, but some linger through the end of the month, and occasionally into November. Great egrets have been found regularly into December and January in Southeast Michigan around the Monroe Power Plant in Monroe, where warm water is discharged. Last winter three egrets lingered into December along the Grand River at Spring Lake, Ottawa County.

Brad Anderson found a merlin at Warren Dunes State Park on August 26. The merlin is a species of falcon that is about the size of our more common American kestrel. The merlin nests throughout north in Canada and northern Michigan, and is an uncommon fall migrant through our region. It winters to our west and south. However, merlins are extending their breeding range southward and we are slowly starting to see more winter records of the species in the Great Lakes Region, including Southwest Michigan.

Anderson says that this merlin harassed crows and gulls before it lit on a dead snag in the park and posed for a few pictures.

LOCAL HISTORY

Cass County one room schools

Provided by **Jonathan Wuepper**,
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In 2001, Kenneth Hartman of Dowagiac compiled "Cass County One Room Schools", a three-ring binder full of information of every known one room school in the county. Each township had its own chapter in the book, and within each chapter, each school was listed including pertinent information such as name, address, township, school district number, section number, year which the school closed, etc.

Hartman's research on Cass County one-room schoolhouses is invaluable to the casual researcher and genealogist. Sadly, Kenneth Hartman passed away in 2012, thus additional information on Cass County's one-room schools must be published elsewhere.

I recently came across an article titled "The Primary Schools of Pokagon Township" written by J.H. Emmons, published in the July 5, 1860 edition of the Cass County Republican newspaper, published at Dowagiac. The information in the article would have fit nicely into Hartman's book. I've retyped an abridged version here. The author of the article "J.H. Emmons" is more than likely James H. Emmons. According to the 1860 US Census, James H. Emmons occupation was that of school teacher in Pokagon Township.

In the July 5, 1860 edition of the Republican he wrote: "Permit me through your paper to give those interested in our educational interests, a short statement relative to the condition of the schools of this township from observations recently made. We shall give the names by which the schoolhouses are known, not by the number of the District.

First, Peavine, taught by Miss Nancy Emmons of Pokagon. This School has eighteen pupils, and is in good working condition. The District is building a new house at an expense of \$400 which will soon be ready for use.

(\$400 in 1860 is worth \$13,156 in 2021. Also of note is that the Peavine School is shown on the 1860 plat map, at the 1/2 mile point just north of the southern section line of section 10, also being the north border of section 15. This building would soon be replaced by a new schoolhouse located 1/4 mile west on the south side of Peavine Road, in



Mayflower School, 1896. Located in section 7, Pokagon Township, on the north side of Indian Lake Road. This photo was taken 36 years after the article "Primary Schools of Pokagon Township" appeared in the Cass County Republican. The building appears to be Greek Revival style, the common architectural style of the 1840s-1860s. This school building was likely built during the 1860s. Photo courtesy MIGenWeb.

section 15.)

Second, Dewey's, number of pupils 28. This school is under the care of Miss Annette Carroll of Niles. This is Miss Carroll's first attempt at teaching, yet we think she is doing remarkably well, both in governing and improving her pupils.

(The Dewey schoolhouse was most likely named for Jonathan Dewey, who owned the land surrounding this schoolhouse in section 13. In the 1860 plat map, this schoolhouse is located in the southwest corner of section 13. By the late 19th and into the 20th Century, the Dewey Schoolhouse was known from its location of Dillman Street, one half mile west of Wilbur Hill Road. In 1860, Dillman Street had not been constructed. It does show up on the 1872 plat atlas, but the "new Dewey" schoolhouse had not been built. It is also worth noting that teacher Annette Carroll of Niles was just 16 years of age according to the 1860 US Census, enumerated on June 19, 1860. On that date she was staying in the home of R.J. and Hannah Dickson on Hampshire

Street.)

Third, Townline S.H. This school has 30 pupils, and is taught by Miss Maria Smith, of Pokagon. Miss S. is a teacher of some experience, and is evidently alive to the work of 'training the young minds to shoot.'

(The Townline schoolhouse is listed on the 1860 plat map of Cass County, just inside Pokagon Township on the southeast corner of California Road and M-62. Those roads did not have those names during that time. The schoolhouse does not appear at, or near, that location on any subsequent plat maps. The Townline School is absent from Kenneth Hartman's book.)

Fourth, May-Flower, situated 3 miles north of Sumnerville; Pupils 30. This school is now under the care of Miss Sarah Wagner of Dowagiac. We think it would be difficult to find a school better disciplined than this.

Fifth, Lake Champlain, (also known as Champlain) pupils 36; taught by Miss Helena Elenwood. Miss E. is a good teacher.

Sixth, Collin's S.H. (aka Sumnerville School in Hartman's

book) situated 1 and 1/2 miles east of Pokagon village. This school is taught by Miss Melissa Jones of Pokagon, and numbers 38 pupils, and like every other well disciplined school is progressive. Miss Jones has natural abilities to govern as well as acquired to teach. This is her first experience in teaching.

Seventh, Sumnerville, 7 and 1/2 miles S.W. of Dowagiac. This school is the largest school in the township; it numbers 60 pupils and is taught by Miss Mary Rathburn, of Jefferson Township. She is an experienced teacher, having taught five terms in other portions of this County.

(Note that the location given by Emmons for this school is quite perplexing. Seven and 1/2 miles southwest of the 1860 village limits of Dowagiac is into Berrien Township, Berrien County. There is no school house in the vicinity of Sumnerville on the 1860 plat map.)

The full article by J.H. appears in the Cass County Republican, July 5, 1860 issue available on microfilm at the Local History Branch of the Cass District Library.

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THE LAST WORD

by Phil Vitale
aka sailorphil

Forget QAnon ... this is a real conspiracy!



he universe has conspired against me ... again. For nearly 70 years I have been a holdout, proudly standing my ground against the rise of technology and the wobbling world that has moved from tin cans and string to the dreaded cell phone.

My kids tell me I'm at best old fashioned, at worst, a Luddite, an anachronism, the last human being on earth who not only doesn't have a cell phone, but who is still using a real phone that plugs into the wall ... they see me as a dying breed, a gunfighter who still slings a six shooter in a world that now yawns at laser battles as routine.

I've rarely held a cell phone in my hands; and on the few occasions when one has been forced upon me, the results were seldom good. I've talked on my wife's cell phone a couple times but the signal usually fades before I have been able to complete my call, and I've never texted a single lol (although I've been forced to learn some phone acronyms in self defense).

Guilty, your honor.
At first I resisted because the coverage was almost non-existent where I live. People who visited talked about how few "bars" they got (although I was quick to name half a dozen bars that I frequent regularly without any problems aside from the residual morning after fuzzies and the inherent fear that I have almost certainly been eroding my liver).

Plus, I don't live in a world where my presence, my counsel is sought on a 24/7

basis ... the people who want to talk with me, who need to get in touch with me, pretty much know how to find me ... and I have learned over the years that the vast majority of the calls and messages left for me at my home are much more important to the people (or computers that made the calls than they are to me.

I mean, how many Medicare Advantage packages, vinyl replacement windows and bogus credit card offers can one person possibly want ... not to mention the daily barrage of offers to join class action lawsuits, donate to the police or firefighter's benevolent fund or request to answer a recorded, brief political phone survey, followed by a high-pressure request to send funds to some political party or candidate.

After a while, not having a cell phone became a badge of both honor and amusement to me, and a nuisance to my family and friends. I still hear from people who are angry at me when I fail to respond to their text (which they ignorantly sent to my home phone which doesn't receive texts), or call them back (even though they didn't leave a message and the message on my home answering machine says "this is not a cell phone and we do not have caller ID).

"Everyone has a cell phone," people always tell me in exasperation.
"Everyone but me," I rebelliously reply.

Ok, I will admit that in the past couple of years the universal conspiracy has forced me to find a couple of good uses for a cell phone (and my wife take considerable glee in pointing these uses out to me whenever I avail myself of them ...

through her phone).

First and foremost, like the eight-track tape and the Dewey Decimal System, the universe has decided that road maps are stone tablets in a post-transistor society, and simple geographic navigation, finding my way to a restaurant, hotel or new area, when I'm not in front of a Google-equipped computer now absolutely requires the use of global positioning satellite technology, and the best (and most cost effective) way to use GPS is via a cell phone.

Ok, I've used my wife's cell phone on trips and aside from some horrific pronunciation on street names in foreign countries, it's worked out ok ... we got where we needed to be without misreading a map and having to drive through Chinatown in a city in Wisconsin as we have been known to do in the past.

But I'm skeptical of many of the changes that are being forced on me in the cell phone world.

Here's a couple examples ... I recently tried to renew my season tickets to the Broadway plays we like in South Bend, season tickets we've had off and on for nearly 50 years ... only to be told that the tickets from now on will be issued only as "E" tickets. I called the number on the letterhead, and after being told to go to the FAQ section of the website ... which led me back to the phone, where I called again, dialed "1" for English, sat through a laundry list of options, the last of which directed me to stay on the phone (for about 25 minutes) to talk to an agent. When the agent finally answered, as politely as possible, I asked how I was supposed to bring my computer to the

ticket line so they could see my "E" tickets. The agent laughed and I was told that I should just put the tickets on my phone ... and then I explained that if I put the tickets on my phone they'd be in my kitchen and wouldn't get me into the theater ... he laughed again and told me to bring my phone to the theater, but he didn't have an answer when I asked where I could get 35 miles of phone line ... Eventually I had to compromise by agreeing to paying an "added" fee to have them actually mail me physical tickets.

And from what I'm hearing about air travel, particularly to foreign countries, I'm guessing that in the near future I'm going to have to have some sort of vaccine proof ... which I'm just guessing is going to be a phone thing ...

Which I'll also probably need to show the E tickets to get on a plane to get there, E directions for getting a cab, GPS for walking around and in all likelihood some sort of phone app for insurance, passport and immigration.

So I've decided that this year for Christmas I'm going to get a phone ... and since I recognize that pretty much everyone younger than me already knows how to use the blasted things, I'm certain I'll have to convince one of my children or grandchildren to come over and set it up and teach me how to use it.

Because unless I'm mistaken (which happens with increasing frequency) no one has developed or marketed an app for children and grandchildren.

Yet.
I hope Google and Facebook don't read this ... I kinda like seeing my children and grandchildren.



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