

# Neighbors

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NOVEMBER 2022

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A regional newspaper serving Cass County, Michigan and the surrounding area, and distributed at homes and businesses in Dowagiac, Cassopolis, Edwardsburg, Vandalia, Jones, Marcellus, Decatur, Union, Sister Lakes, and Three Rivers, with mail delivery at homes on 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

**Chamber Jingles**

The Cass/Vandalia Chamber of Commerce will host Chamber Jingles on Thursday, December 15 at Marketplace Theatre Company. This is a FREE event for all ages! Live music, sweet treats, hot chocolate, bonfire, and live Alpacas! Bring your family for photos with the Grinch and Santa!

Non-perishable food donations will also be collected at this event. From now through December 21, please consider contributing to the Cass/Van Food Drive. The Chamber is collecting non-perishable food for those in need. Donations can be dropped off at G.W. Jones Bank, Bolt Laserworks, or CHT USA, in Cassopolis. Get the details and directions at <https://cassvanchamber.com/chamber-outreach/>. The Chamber will also accept cash donations for this initiative.

**Health Department changing**

The Van Buren/Cass District Health Department (VBCDHD) has transitioned to appointment-only clinics for COVID-19 and Flu vaccines.

With the high demand for COVID-19 and seasonal flu vaccines, the department changed to appointment-only clinics on December 1, with walk-ins accommodated on a case-by-case basis and as time permits on the specific clinic days listed below. To ensure VBCDHD maintains the value of being accessible, approachable, and authentic, appointments can easily be made online at [www.vbcassdhd.org/covid-19-vaccines](http://www.vbcassdhd.org/covid-19-vaccines) or over the phone at 621-3143.

Clinic times for both locations are as follows: Lawrence: Every Monday and Thursday, 9 - 11 am and 1 - 4 pm;



**Christmas at the Bonine House** will run through December 14, from 1-6 pm daily. The Victorian Bonine House, home of Quaker abolitionists James E. and Sarah Bogue Bonine, is all dressed up for Christmas and invites you to enjoy holiday cheer, as well as the history of this house and the Underground Railroad in Cass County. The Bonine House is located at Penn Road and M-60 in Vandalia. Parking and entry are free, and tour guides are available. Santa and Mrs. Claus will visit on Saturday and Sunday, December 10 and 11. More information can be found on [www.urscc.org](http://www.urscc.org)

Dowagiac: Every Monday and Wednesday from 9 - 11 am and 1 - 4 pm;

If you are someone you know is homebound, contact Disability Rights by phone at 800-288-5923 or TTY: 517-374-4687 or their website at [www.drnmich.org/contact/](http://www.drnmich.org/contact/). If you live in Cass County, call Cass County Council on Aging at (269) 445-8110. If you live in Van Buren County, call Senior Services of Van Buren County at (269) 468-9476.

For more information on COVID-19 vaccines, Flu vaccines, or vaccine series, visit the VBCDHD website at <https://vbcassdhd.org/covid-19/> or the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services website at <https://www.michigan.gov/coronavirus/resources/covid-19-vaccine>. To find a vaccination clinic near you, visit <https://www.vaccines.gov/>.

**Cassopolis wins statewide community excellence award**



The Village of Cassopolis was voted the winner of the 2022 Community Excellence Award (CEA)—the most prestigious Michigan Municipal League community honor.

Since 2007, the CEA has been the League's most prestigious community award. It's also affectionately called "The Race for the Cup" because the winning community gets a large trophy and bragging rights for the year. The CEAs are sponsored by the Plante Moran accounting firm.

"On behalf of the entire League, I want to congratulate the Village of

Cassopolis on receiving this year's Community Excellence Award," said Barb Ziarko, the president of the League's Board of Trustees and Sterling Heights Councilmember. "They truly transformed their community with a variety of impressive projects that created a vibrant, sustainable, and exceptional community to be proud of. I would also like to thank everyone who submitted their projects this year. These projects are so important for Michigan's communities. We are so proud of what everyone across our state has accomplished."

This year's competition had 14 entries, and all were award worthy. The League would like to thank and recognize all the projects that were entered this year: Birmingham, Caro, Cassopolis, Farmington Hills, Ferndale, Grand Rapids, Ironwood, Meridian Township, Pentwater, Royal Oak, Southfield, Tawas City, Traverse City, and Vassar.

"We would like to thank MML, Plante Moran of course, and we would like to thank everyone who realizes that just because you are small and rural you can still be exceptional," said Emilie LaGrow, the village manager of the Village of Cassopolis. "We would like to thank our residents and our council for believing that we can do it. Our staff is phenomenal. It is a beautiful thing to see all of the hard work come to fruition and the community really embrace what happened and the changes, and truly love where they live. It's the best reward ever. This [the cup] is pretty great too."

For additional information contact the League's Matt Bach, assistant director of strategic communications, at (734) 669-6317 and [mbach@mml.org](mailto:mbach@mml.org).



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# REGIONAL EVENTS CALENDAR

Through December 14 - **Victorian Bonine Home Christmas cheer**, Penn Rd. & M-60, Vandalia; with visits from Santa and Mrs. Claus Dec. 10, 11. [www.urscc.org](http://www.urscc.org)

December 15 - **Cass/Vandalia Chamber Jingles**, Marketplace Theater, Cassopolis, free

## Cass District Library

### 12 Days of Christmas Book Bags

**Main Branch** - Bag Pick Up: December 12-14

Countdown to Christmas with books, crafts and activities! Bags are available to Cass District Library cardholders and are limited to one bag per family. Registration is required. Bags can be picked up at the Main Branch from December 12-14. Contact Stephanie at 866-808-7323 ext. 106 to register.

All Month - **Disguise a Gingerbread Person**  
**Edwardsburg Branch** - Kids, tweens and teens are invited to pick up a gingerbread template to disguise as anything but a traditional gingerbread person! Make it Christmas-themed, into your favorite book character or whatever you'd like. Bring the finished product back to the Edwardsburg Branch to be displayed throughout the month of December.

Week of December 5 - **Metal Ornaments**  
**Howard Branch** - Create your own rustic metal Christmas ornament! Customize the DIY ornaments with basic craft supplies like paint, markers and cotton twine, or create personalized ornaments by adding hand lettering. Available while supplies last.

### T'ai Chi Classes - Mason/Union Branch

December 5, 12, 19 @ 11 am

Join Alyse Knepple at the Mason/Union Branch for T'ai Chi, a series of gentle physical exercises and stretches. Four weekly classes which will cost \$40..

December 8 - 5:30 pm - **Holiday Centerpiece Workshop**, **Main Branch**

Participants will create a holiday centerpiece using fresh cut greenery and embellishments. All materials will be provided. Registration and payment required. Cost is \$10 per person. Call Stephanie at 866-808-7323 ext. 106 or stop by any branch to register.

### Holiday Craft

**Mason/Union Branch** - Week of December 12

Stop by the Mason/Union Branch for a children's holiday craft take and make kit. Kits are available while supplies last.

Macrame Ornaments

**Edwardsburg Branch** - December 15 - 5:30 pm

Participants will create two ornaments for their tree or gifting out of mason jar bands, macrame cord and adorned with wooden beads. Simple, trendy and fun. Registration is required for this program. Call 866-808-7323 ext. 113 or stop by any branch to register.

### Winter Charm Bracelets

**Howard Branch** - Week of December 19

Pick up a winter charm bracelet kit while supplies last! This bracelet makes a great gift or a perfect holiday craft for all ages.

### Charcuter-Wreath

**Main Branch** - December 20 - 5:30 pm

Elevate your kitchen skills for the upcoming holidays! Learn how to cut, fold and arrange a variety of food items to create a seasonal charcuterie wreath. Space is limited and registration is required. Cost is \$10 per person and includes a serving board, box and food to create a full charcuterie board to go. Call 866-808-7323 ext. 113 or visit any branch to register.

### Holly Jolly Holiday Party

**Main Branch** - December 22: 5 - 7 pm

Join us at the Main Branch for pictures, puppets and ponies! We will be starting the evening with a performance of "George the Dragon" by Roz Puppets at 5 pm. Afterwards, sit on Santa's lap for a family photo.

Meet and pet Santa's four-legged helpers from Whitney's Magic Minis before heading home for the holidays. This is a free event.

## Dowagiac District Library

December 8 - **Story Squad**, 5:30 - 6:30 pm, Due to capacity limits in our children's programming room, we kindly ask that only children 6-9 attend the program. Parents and younger children will be asked to enjoy other areas of the library during this time.

December 10 - **Saturday Story Time**, 10:30 - 11:30 am.

December 13 - **Preschool Story Time**, 10:30 - 11:30 am.

December 13 - **Read & Share Book Group**- Readers Choice Winter Theme, 1 - 2pm. To sign up email us at [dowagiaclibrarystaff@gmail.com](mailto:dowagiaclibrarystaff@gmail.com)

December 13 - **Teen Tuesday: Teen Cooking 101\***, 3 - 4 pm. \*Registration is required for this event. Sign up in the youth department by Friday, December 9.

December 13 - **Library Board Meeting**, 6:30 - 8:30 pm

December 16 -- **Story Squad**, 5:30 - 6:30 pm

December 17 - **Saturday Story Time**, 10:30 - 11:30 am

December 19 - **OMG Book Club for Tweens**, 3 - 4 pm

December 20 - **Preschool Story Time**, 10:30 - 11:30 am

December 20 - **Teen Tuesday: Arts & Crafts**, 3 - 4 pm

December 27 - **Preschool Story Time**, 10:30 - 11:30 am

December 27 - **Teen Tuesday: holiday charades**, 3 - 4 pm

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# BUSINESS & FINANCE

## Does it matter who lives in my house?

### Questions on Homeowners Insurance

By **Andrea Bailey**  
Kemner, Iott, Benz Agency

**M**any people have the misconception that as long as they purchase a homeowners policy, it doesn't matter who or if anyone lives in the home. To understand a homeowners policy, it is helpful to first understand who and what a homeowners policy covers. Two basic requirements for a homeowners policy are:

- 1. The individual named on the policy (Named Insured) is usually the same person named on the deed as the owner.
- 2. The individual named on the policy (Named Insured) resides in the home.

### What happens to my homeowners insurance if I rent out my house?

The house has become a non-owner occupied home and no longer qualifies for a homeowners policy. You will need a dwelling fire policy. Don't be confused by the name of policy. A standard dwelling fire policy covers more than just fires, including lightning, wind, hail, and vandalism. It is important to discuss what perils are included in a dwelling fire policy as they are not as broad as a homeowners policy. You will also want to know if there is coverage for other structures such as a detached garage, contents, liability and medical expenses. Your tenant's contents and liability are not covered under your policy. They will need renters insurance.

### What if my son lives in the home and doesn't pay rent?

Whether you collect rent or someone is living

in the house rent-free, the home is still non-owner occupied requiring a dwelling fire policy. Again, the individual(s) living in the house will need renters insurance for their contents and liability.

### When I sold my house I told the new owners they won't need to purchase homeowners insurance until my policy expires. No rush since the house is insured, right?

Wrong! In this case, neither of the basic requirements of a homeowners policy are being met. The new owner needs to have homeowners insurance in place when they close on the purchase of the home.

### I inherited my mother's house. I am covered as long as I keep paying her homeowners insurance, aren't I?

Again, this is not the case. If you are living in the home, you will need to get a homeowners policy in your name. If someone else is occupying the home, a dwelling fire policy would be appropriate. If the dwelling is vacant, you will need to purchase a policy that will provide coverage for a vacant dwelling.

### Our home is now deeded to our trust. Do we need to make any changes on our homeowners policy?

Yes, you have changed the name on the deed. You may be able to add the trust as an additional insured to extend coverage for the home, leaving you as Named Insured to protect your contents. In addition you have not taken away liability coverage from the individuals or the trust.

### If I open a Bed and Breakfast in my home, do I need to make any changes on my homeowners policy?

Homeowners policies were never intended to

cover business exposure. Whether you are opening a bed and breakfast, selling designer handbags, operating a day care, teaching piano lessons, have an in-home office, or any other type of business, your homeowners policy has limited coverage for your business property and no liability insurance for your home-based business.

### What if you are in an assisted living facility for a period of time?

Your home may be considered vacant whether or not you intend to return to your home. Most companies will not cover vandalism and malicious mischief after the home has been vacant for thirty days. Another loss that may not be covered is damage caused by a water leak which may not only cause water damage, but also mold and mildew. Most homeowners policies have a "vacancy clause" that can be triggered if the homeowner is gone for an extended period of time. If this happens, the homeowner could violate the terms of their contract and some or all coverage may not apply in the event of a loss.

### You have been appointed executor of an estate. The dwelling is vacant. Will there be coverage if you keep paying the homeowners insurance?

There is more than one issue here. Not only does the named insured no longer live in the home, the home is also vacant resulting in the issues mentioned above.

In summary, don't assume that because the homeowners premium has been paid, you have nothing to worry about. Contact your insurance agent and be honest about the situation. It doesn't make sense to pay an insurance premium if there is no coverage when there is a loss!

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# FOR THE TABLE

## How to build a showstopping snack board

by **Julie Frank**

Owner, **Ploughman's Market & Deli**  
Cassopolis, MI

**T**his holiday season gather your family and friends around a board overflowing with delectable snacks. The trend of arranging small bites on a platter or board is an entertaining must. Snack boards are my favorite way to entertain and are so easy to assemble. And best of all, you can fill the board with a variety of foods to satisfy even the pickiest eater. There are no rules when it comes to assembling snack boards; think brunch board, dessert board, or even a bloody mary board!

Here are a few tips on how to assemble a classic charcuterie board, or the easier to pronounce namesake, a meat and cheese board:



- **Choose your base.** A cutting board, piece of slate, cake stand, or a holiday platter are all great choices. If you would like to include a dip or a cheese topper, choose a couple of small bowls. Four ounce jelly jars work great and are inexpensive.

- **Choose your cheese.** Classic charcuterie boards typically include soft, semi-soft, and hard cheeses. Popular choices for a soft cheese are goat cheese, brie, or Camembert. The latter two are ripened cheeses made from cow's milk. Camembert has a slightly stronger flavor compared to brie and both pair perfect with a crusty baguette. Semi-soft choices include cheddar, Havarti, pepper jack, fontina, smoked gouda, or blue cheese. Aged Gouda, Parmesan, Gruyere, Manchego are all great choices for hard cheeses. You could also include a cheese spread or dip. I have a simple recipe for feta dip below. Depending on the size of your board, I recommend three to four cheeses. For my board, I chose Camembert, English Cheddar, and 100-day aged Gouda. Be adventurous, opt for a cheese you haven't tried before.

- **Choose your meat.** Salami, prosciutto, baked ham, summer sausage, and pepperoni are good choices. Hard boiled eggs or deviled eggs are non-meat protein options. You could also include bite-size, cooked, appetizers such as pigs-in-a blanket or chunks of grilled sausage, anything that can be eaten at room temperature. You might include cooked bacon (baked and topped with brown sugar is delicious!) or jerky. I usually buy pre-sliced meats for stress-free assembly. My board



includes dry salami, peppered salami, and spicy capicola.

- **Choose your accompaniments.** Use your choices here to fill in your board. A combination of cut vegetables, fruit (dried or fresh), olives, marinated artichokes, pickled vegetables, nuts, crackers, sliced bread, mustard, and honey nicely complement your meat and cheese. I like to include a cheese topper, which elevates soft cheeses to a new level. I included apricot habanero on my board. Camembert, with a dollop of apricot habanero jam is heaven on a baguette. Pepper jelly and fig preserves are delicious cheese toppers and readily available in your grocery store.



Now to assemble. I usually cut some of the cheese and leave some in large chunks for my guests to slice. On my board, I cut the cheddar into planks to stack. Cutting into cubes or traditional slices are all possibilities. If your meats are not pre-sliced, I recommend cutting thinly or if you have a whole, but small, salami you could place it on the board



whole and allow your guests to cut. Cut your vegetables and fruit in thin slices or bite-size chunks. Once your food is all sliced, it is time to put it all together.

Place your larger items on the board first, such as bowls and chunks of cheese.

Next, layer your meat slices or other proteins so that they curve around your cheese and bowls or frame the edge of the board. Choose a few items to stack for height, similar to how I stacked the bread and cheese on my board.



Alternating cubes of summer sausage and cheese on a toothpick is a fun way to assemble meat and cheese. Everyone loves food on a stick! Finally, fill in with your accompaniments. If you do not have room for the crackers or bread, include them on the side in a basket or additional platter. Ensure you have a few small utensils or tooth picks arranged around the board so your guests can easily grab the snacks. Enjoy!

### Creamy Feta Dip

This dip is a snap to put together and is delicious on bread, pita, or as a vegetable dip. Here is a base recipe for the dip and several ideas for add-ins, the variations are endless. I topped mine with a drizzle of extra virgin olive oil, chili flake, and oregano.

#### Ingredients

- 6 ounces of feta
- 2 ounces of softened cream cheese
- 2 Tbsp sour cream
- 1 clove of fresh garlic, minced
- 1 Tbsp red wine vinegar (or freshly squeezed lemon juice)
- A few grinds of black pepper and kosher salt to taste (start with a pinch, feta has a good amount of salt)
- ¼ tsp of dried oregano or basil (whichever you prefer)
- 1 tsp of honey (optional)

Place ingredients in a food processor or blender and mix until combined into a spreadable dip. If your spread is too thick, add a teaspoon of olive oil at a time until you get the desired consistency. Serve chilled or at room temperature.

#### Add-ins

Increase the amount of honey to a tablespoon and add in ½ cup of chopped and toasted walnuts.

Sliced olives, Greek black olives or green Italian olives are good choices.

Chopped sun-dried tomato, start with a tablespoon and adjust to taste as they have very concentrated flavor

¼ cup of chopped roasted red peppers

A tablespoon of Calabrian chili paste and increase the honey to one tablespoon. This is my favorite!

Sliced green onions (2-3 TBS) and 5 slices of cooked and crumbled bacon. Omit the oregano and basil.

The add-ins can be added and buzzed up with the other ingredients or stirred in afterwards, depending on the texture you desire. Store leftover dip covered and refrigerated for up to 7 days.

*Julie Frank grew up in the restaurant business starting as a dishwasher in her mother's restaurant making \$1.25 per hour. She left the family business and went into education for over twenty-five years. Julie has returned to her roots to open Ploughman's Market, Bakery, and Deli in Cassopolis, Michigan. She lives in Dowagiac, Michigan with her husband and a mischievous German shepherd.*



FIELD TRIP

Scotland



According to the Internet, Edinburgh, Scotland is about 3,641 miles from Cassopolis, Michigan, a distance that makes it a difficult field trip if you don't have some serious travel time (and maybe a few frequent flier miles) in your hip pocket. But if you have the time and the miles to spend, aside from maybe a canceled flight or two and a lot of walking in busy airports, you won't regret the trip. From the pubs along the Royal Mile to the stark but beautiful Scottish Isles to the rainy highlands and the mysterious Loch Ness, a trip around the gem of the United Kingdom is a veritable garden of sensory delights. Scotland has a unique and richly evolved cuisine (by all means try the Haggis and the beef cheek, and they tell me Scotch whiskies are second to none), an abundance of amazing castles, palaces, monuments and historic buildings, and a country-full of lush green fields where legendary heroes hewed their places in history with ferocious broadswords and axes. No matter where your interest might lead you or what time of year you go (November sports a bit of a chill and rain), Scotland promises to be a vacationers' delight.





# FIELD TRIP





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# OUR CHILDREN

## Family holiday gift guide

by **SANDY FLEMING**

I hope you haven't blinked ... the Christmas holiday gift-giving season is here. Do you have a plan? Have you made a budget for the family yet? It's easy for holiday spending to get out of control when we "fly by the seat of our pants" and give in to holiday hype about what is needed to make the season "perfect" for our loved ones.

One budget area that can quickly spiral out of control is the gift-giving category. We all see something really neat and think how much our kids would love it or would benefit from it, and snap it up right away. Before we know it, the credit card bills due in January are way over our heads, and we find ourselves scrimping for months just to get them back under control.

Avoid this pain by making a holiday budget NOW if you haven't already done so. How much money do you want to spend during this holiday season that is over and above your usual weekly or monthly budget? Don't forget to account for presents for the family, presents for neighbors, friends, colleagues, and service providers, stocking stuffers, extra holiday foods, traveling, and even incidentals like gift wrap, stamps, cards, and Christmas donations to your favorite charities. Add in special events that you'll need to pay for, like concerts, plays, or special meals out with the family or friends.

Planning a party? Factor in the expenses for extra food and drink and perhaps entertainment. Add these all up and compare the total to the amount of money you want to spend this month. Chances are good that the two not only don't match, but that your December-January expenses will far outweigh your usual spending totals.

Now, it's decision time! Most of us have a finite amount of money to spend during the entire year, and hopefully we saved a bit from previous months. Do you want to allocate some of these savings to your celebrations? That's perfectly fine if you can afford it, but it should be the plan rather than the afterthought.

If the anticipated spending is far above the available money, avoid the trap of spending money you do not have by using credit. Instead, make every dollar count by watching for sales, buying less expensive options, and stretching your dollars. One area that truly is discretionary spending is the amount of money you spend on gifts. We have a lot of choices here, and many of them turn out to be even better than seeing who can shower the most expensive gifts on the other person. In the area of gift-giving, sometimes less can be a whole lot more!

### Party Gifts and Gift Exchanges

Many of the gifts associated with events have a dollar limit on their cost. Be sure you stick within this price range. Not only will it be better for your family bottom line, it will also help event organizers keep things fun and fair for all. Try shopping at your local dollar store or discount store, or even your local resale shop to find something useful, silly, or personal for your intended recipient. Sometimes wrapping can be a creative exercise all by itself, too, and can add to the fun and flavor of the gift.

Need party favors or want to fill goodie bags? For kids, go nuts with old-fashioned candies that they aren't



likely to have every day. Try stickers, balloons, and other small toys that are inexpensive but popular with the age group. Your local party store may have small gifts in sets where you can buy 8 or 16 at a time.

Favors or gift bags for teens are a bit tougher, but not impossible to do on a budget. Try gift cards or gift certificates to favorite fast food restaurants, gas stations, or dollar stores. You might be able to get a deal on gift cards for movie theaters, bowling alleys, or other popular destinations. Check on the cost of downloadable music, too. Sometimes songs are less than a dollar.

Adults may appreciate a jar with ingredients to a favorite treat, such as brownie mix or hot chocolate mix. Small gift cards (like the \$5 variety), small household gadgets, or even coupons for services you could do for them at a later date, like babysitting or yard work. Gift baskets with a personalized theme are another idea; just be careful to stick to the assigned or allowable budget.

### For Babies and Toddlers

Useful gifts, like clothing that they outgrow so quickly or age-appropriate toys are great ideas. So are blankets, night lights, small/safe flashlights, unbreakable mirrors, and teethingers. Books are a must, and you might also want to look into a subscription to an age-appropriate magazine, such as Cricket's BabyBug or Highlights' Hello. These keep on giving long after the holiday is over since they arrive like clockwork in the mail box and start the fun all over

again.

### For Toddlers and Preschoolers

Older young children are still easy to buy for. Their wants and needs change so rapidly that you can usually find older-kid versions of the toys that they already have. Books and learning games take center stage in many families. Be sure you know the parents' preferences about electronic gizmos, but older toddlers and preschoolers can learn from and benefit from a variety of high-quality apps and devices, and parents sometimes appreciate the high-engagement value of these things for times when they need to occupy the child for a few moments while they take care of family business or get chores done.

Check out early games, too. Commercial games like Hi Ho Cherrio, Candyland, and Chutes and Ladders can usually be fun for even young preschoolers. A few family games, like Uno, can be played early as well. There are also card-holder devices that can help little hands manage handfuls of playing cards. Don't forget dominoes – kids can build with them and arrange them long before they can play actual games with them, but the game rules are often simple enough that kids can match the similar patterns when someone else helps them keep score, or simply take turns until someone runs out of pieces.

Puzzles, both the jigsaw variety and the three-dimensional kind, are important for developing foundational academic skills. Don't forget coloring, painting, modeling dough or clay, colored pencils,

color books, lacing boards, lotto games (where kids match pieces with an underlayment with the same picture on it), bingo games, and wipe-off boards and markers.

### For Young Elementary Kids

Keep the books coming! Look for early readers, controlled vocabulary books, and easy readers for kids who are learning to read, and remember to pitch at least some books well above the learn-to-read level; kids always need to have stories read to them as well as learning to read for themselves. Think about non-fiction books as well as fiction books, maybe something related to a topic of interest or a budding hobby. This is another great time for magazine subscriptions, too. Look for a magazine that is on an interesting topic or a more general one like Highlights High Five that will have stories and activities on an array of topics.

Games should still be a hit, too. Look for games themed around popular book or television characters, and games that are take offs on familiar games, like Old Maid or Rummy. There are also an array of games that are games of skill and strategy, like Connect Four and Don't Break the Ice. Kids' coordination is growing and it's fun to challenge these new-found skills.

Early elementary kids are often into collecting sets of toys, so find out if your intended recipient is into Barbies, Minecraft, or Hot Wheels. Building toys are another favorite for most. Look for blocks, Legos, Tinker Toys, and the like. Fidget toys can be a hit, as well. Is the child a member of an organized group? How about paying for a membership or shopping for desired uniform pieces, handbooks, or accessories?

### Older Kids and Teens

Party games are usually a great idea for these folks. DVDs of popular movies or shows, music subscriptions, or subscriptions to an appropriate streaming service are also ideas. Books that will help further an interest or hobby, magazines related to an area of interest, and music are likely to be popular, too, as are gift cards to movies, bowling, gas stations, dollar stores, or restaurants.

### Anyone, Everyone, and Families

With so many trying to minimize clutter, you might want to consider some of these ideas for nearly anyone. This way, there's nothing to wrap but a wealth of happiness and memories to be made. Check these ideas out:

- Tickets to events
- Movie passes or theater tickets
- Golf, bowling, rock climbing, or other sports venue passes
- Money for summer camp or classes/lessons
- Gifts of time or service, like babysitting, cleaning, car repair
- Memberships to museums, zoo, botanical garden, theme park, state or national parks
- Gifts that can be used up like fruit baskets, coffee, desserts, wine, craft kits or supplies

\*\*\*\*\*

**Sandy Fleming is an author and educator living in Edwardsburg. Check out her websites at <http://learningnook.com> and <http://sandyflemingonline.com> for learning and parenting ideas!**



# 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.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

## Old postcards hold genealogical information

Provided by:  
**Jonathan Wuepper,**  
Manager of the Local History Branch  
Cass District Library  
jwuepper@cass.lib.mi.us

This month I would like to feature a postcard of the LaGrange Township Public Library, taken in 1909. What is significant about this particular copy of the postcard is the "b-side", or reverse side, because of the information it holds.

The LaGrange Township Library now serves as the Local History Branch of the Cass District Library. We have other copies of this postcard in our collections. However the copies in our collections are either blank on the "b-side", or have an earliest date of 1910 postmarked on the back.

So when the copy of the postcard featured in this month's Neighbors recently appeared on the Internet, I took note that the back was postmarked October 8, 1909. Why is this important? Because the building was built beginning in the fall of 1908 and finished in the spring of 1909. That means the photo had to be taken sometime between the middle to late spring of 1909, or during the summer/early fall of 1909.

Here is a transcription of the handwriting:

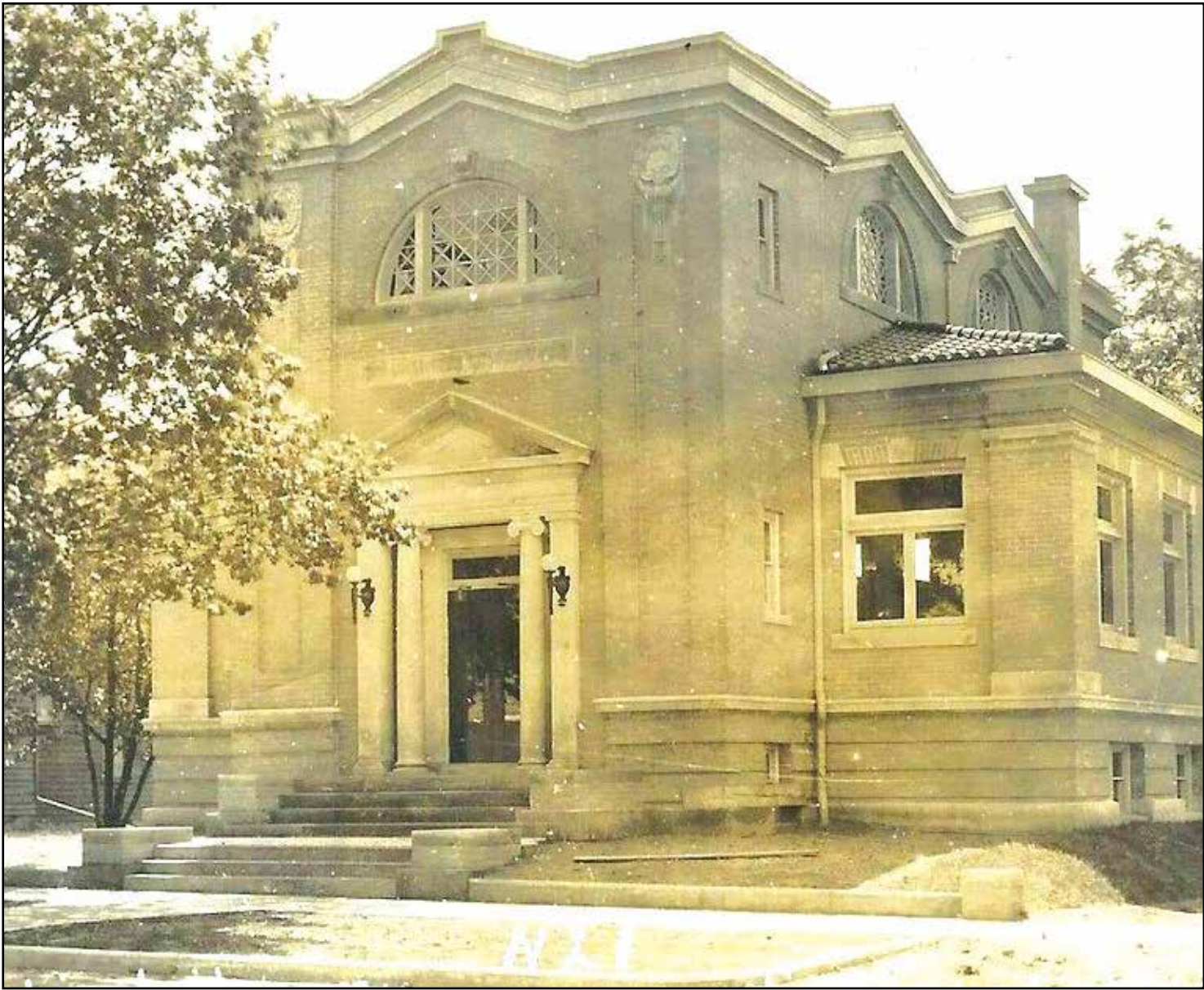
"Oct. 8, 1909

Dear Blanch We are visiting at Fay's aunts. They keep a fine Hotel here in Cassopolis. Fay's Aunt + Uncle came through with us in the auto. Hope you are well - Myrtle.

(Addressed to)  
Mrs V.M. Riegel  
Waterville, Ohio"

While I have been unable to identify the surnames of Fay and Myrtle, nor the names of Fay's Aunt and Uncle (most certainly not Fairfield & Mrs. Goodwin), I have been able to track down information on Blanch and Vernon M. Riegel.

Blanch Riegel was born Blanch Mears to William Mears and Frances Taylor Mears on July 21, 1883 in Paulding County, Ohio. On November 9, 1901 Blanch married Vernon M. Riegel in Wood County, Ohio.



By 1910 they had settled in the town of Waterville, Lucas County, Ohio where Vernon was employed as a school teacher. By 1910, Blanch had given birth to three children. Their names and ages according to the 1910 US Census were: Ormington, age 6; Alice, age 3; and Paul, 2 months.

Vernon M. Riegel was the Marion County, Ohio school superintendent and eventually became the Ohio Superintendent for Public Instruction. He lived until age 98 and died in 1973.

Blanch Riegel died in 1959 presumably in Ohio. Not much is known about her later years.

This is an example of the historical information you can pull off of an old postcard.



LaGrange Township Free Public Library, Cassopolis, Michigan. Now serving as the Local History Branch of the Cass District Library. Photo taken 1909.

Postcard side "b" Showing postmark on Oct. 8, 1909 at 1:30PM, Cassopolis, Michigan, address and message.



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# NATURE NOTES

## Winter visitors spotted in SW Michigan

*Provided by Cass District Library  
Local History branch*

Contrary to popular belief eastern bluebirds are year-round residents over the southern half of Michigan's lower peninsula, south to the Atlantic and Gulf coasts. On October 27 Brad Anderson of Bridgman captured an image of a female eastern bluebird exploring an old nest cavity in a dead tree. In the cold months, eastern bluebirds will use empty tree cavities and bluebird boxes for shelter against the elements. Several bluebirds may occupy the same winter cavity roost sight at once, each bluebird benefiting from the other's body heat.

Bluebirds that spend the winter as far north as southern Michigan will transition from a summer diet made up of mostly insects and other small invertebrates such as worms, spiders, etc. to a winter diet made up primarily of berries. The species is particularly fond of berries of the staghorn sumac (a shrub) and poison ivy (vine or shrub).

Eastern bluebirds are found throughout Michigan during the spring and summer months, but populations in the Upper Peninsula will have gone south by mid-to late November. Most eastern bluebirds north of the Muskegon to Bay City line will have also receded southward by early December, although a relatively small number may be found there throughout the winter. High mortality in winter eastern bluebird populations over southern Michigan and other parts of the species winter range is caused by prolonged exposure to extreme cold and deep snow.

On Saturday morning, November 12 while waiting for the Mason Jar Cafe to open, I spotted a peregrine falcon sitting atop an electrical pole along Water Street in Benton Harbor.

The peregrine falcon is not only the world's fastest bird, but is the fastest animal on Earth, and can reach speeds up to 180+ mph when diving mid-air for its prey. The individual I saw on November 12 was likely a southbound migrant, however the species is starting to be reported locally more frequently during the winter months since the mid-20th Century when it had a near brush with extinction. The use of the popular pesticide DDT accumulated in peregrine falcons' bodies from the 1940s through the 1960s, resulting in severe egg shell thinning and reproductive failure.

Since the banning of DDT in the early 1970s, the peregrine falcon in addition to other bird species, has slowly recovered and we now see them more often in migration and occasionally as winter residents.

Joy Bancroft of Lincoln Township submitted a photo of a juvenile bald eagle taken November 4 as it perched in an eastern white pine along the Lake Michigan shoreline. Bald eagles take four calendar years from their first year of life before they acquire their famous white head and tail feathers.

Please report your sightings to Jonathan Wuepper to [wuepperj@gmail.com](mailto:wuepperj@gmail.com)



**Top left:** Female eastern bluebird on October 27 checking out a possible roost cavity Warren Dunes State Park. Brad Anderson.

**Top right:** Peregrine falcon. Courtesy US Fish & Wildlife Service.

**Bottom left:** Two male eastern bluebirds on October 27, 2022 at Warren Dunes State Park by Brad Anderson.

**Bottom right:** Juvenile bald eagle on November 4, 2022 perches along the shore of Lake Michigan, Lincoln Township. Photo by Joy Bancroft.



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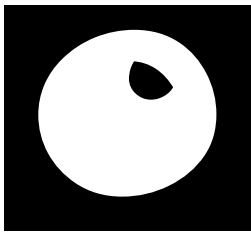
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# THE LAST WORD

by Phil Vitale  
aka sailorphil

## Ok, maybe a little cantankerous sometimes



nce upon a time, a very long, long time ago, I met an older gentleman who had the most delightful collection of cartoons, cut-out newspaper headlines and small, wooden or plastic signs that he arranged haphazardly across the top of his desk.

Most were simple and large enough for passers-by to be able to enjoy. A lot of the message hinged on wordplay, using a lot of puns. Some were profound, others perfunctory, and still others yet were profane. A few were literary. More than a few were downright dirty.

Most of the messages have faded from my memory over the years (like I said, it was a very long, long time ago), but there are a few I remember quite distinctly. Unfortunately there is only one of the group that I committed to memory that is suitable for a family paper. It was a wooden, stand-up sign that had printing on both sides. On the front was emblazoned the words "The Secret to Living to 100 Years of Age. (see answer on the back)" On the back was a snide message that read, "Make it to 99 and then be very careful for a year."

Needless to say my friend from way back then was a bit of a joker at times.

Sorry to say that he didn't heed the advice. He died well before he reached 100. Even more sorry to admit that I don't expect I'll ever be in a position to take that particular advice either, even though I long ago reached that magical age that consideration in the cold light of dawn leads me to believe that I'm now older than I ever thought I'd be.

Old enough to have several times re-evaluated my feelings on getting old; on the concepts of aging, morbidity and mortality, and after having spent some time with what even I (at my advanced age) consider to be old people, I have come to the firm conclusion that although I haven't set a specific age as my ultimate goal, I'm pretty sure that I don't want to live to be 100.

I know for a fact that I already have enough aches and pains, and that another 30 years of longevity won't ease those. And I know for a fact that there are multi-

ple body parts and systems that are in decline, most notably my vision, hearing and short-term memory (hey, did I mention that my vision and hearing are both shot and that my memory isn't very good, either?). Now I'm not ready to check out yet, but at my age a guy starts thinking back on how close he might be to that time and agreeing that getting old is not for sissies.

Here's an example. Last summer my wife and I went to my 52nd high school reunion, and I was stunned by the number of old people who were there. I knew a lot of them (at least I seem to remember that I might have known some of them a long, long time ago). Everyone seemed to be having a good time. We ate our low-sodium, high-fiber meals, bragged about our kids, shared pictures of our grandchildren, shouted to one another across the table about the places we'd been, the people we'd met, the jobs we'd held. We reminisced about absent classmates, most of whom had already shuffled off their mortal coils, and we passed around our "cheater" reading glasses so we could read the agonizingly tiny type on the programs someone had left on the table. At the end of the evening, after we'd said our good-byes and made promises for reconnections we all knew would never be arranged, there was a chorus of audible moans and creaking bones as we rose from those tiny, hard-bottomed chairs they'd forced us to use, and we danced out of the hall to the music of the clickety-clacking stressed aluminum in a parade of geriatric walkers, and the squeaking of poorly oiled wheels on the brightly colored Rollators leaving the room.

"Well, it was fun to see all those people," I told my wife as we waded through a fading geriatric mist of Old Spice, Avon Sweet Honesty, and Aqua Velva. "But I'm really glad we don't look as old as all of them do."

For some reason she thought that was funny ... and I told her I didn't agree that I've become cantankerous. Irrascible maybe. Irritable perhaps. Ill tempered that evening, for sure, but hey, I'd been hoping for steak and fries instead of tasteless Bland-o-Rama casserole with a chewable antacid chaser for dessert ... hell, I paid nearly \$50 for that meal and it wasn't any better than what they serve on AARP night in the basement of the assist-

ed living wing at the Venus Di Milo Arms Nursing Home where I sometime go to shoot pool.

So, anyway, getting back to that wooden sign my old buddy had on his desk, the sign I mentioned earlier about living to be 100 years old. For some odd reason that sign popped into my head the other day when I was on my way to my annual welfare check for Medicare (people my age spend a lot of time both going to the doctors' office and then talking about it later). I was still chuckling about it when I sat down with the nurse (a comely young lass who looked younger than my granddaughter, and who I suspect wasn't as old as that one pair of wool socks I still wear on cold mornings).

Our conversation became a bit stiff during a routine memory test, where she tossed out three unconnected nouns and asked me to remember them. After about 20 minutes (the time it took to review my prescriptions), she asked me if I remembered the words. Unbeknownst to her, both my wife and my mother in law had completed their wellness check the week before, and after hearing them both recite the same three words from their tests, I'd written them down and stuck the paper into my wallet; a paper I promptly produced along with a description of my recent acquisition of ESP.

Although they were the same words she'd given me to remember, she was visibly not amused, but she carried on well enough with the evaluation until she'd had enough of my geriatric humor and walked out.

I didn't know it would make her *that* mad, but when she asked if I was having any problems with my meds, I couldn't resist paraphrasing an old joke.

"The latest one the doc prescribed is giving me lot of gas," I told her with a straight face.

"They should have told you that might be a problem," she replied. "I'm sorry."

With just a trace of a grin I quickly shot back, "Don't apologize to me young lady, you should be apologizing to the people who were behind me in the check-out line yesterday at Walmart."

And out she went, just like that ... young people don't seem to have much of a sense of humor these days.

Ok, maybe a little cantankerous sometimes ...



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