

Neighbors

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APRIL 2022

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REGIONAL NEWS

Historical Society meetings

SHOW AND TELL is the theme of the Cass County Historical Society program in April. Some items from the past have been, oxen training yoke, yoke for carrying buckets of water, shaving mugs, old telephones, antique art, antique wood working tools, and more. So bring some relic of historic interest and share with the group. This will also be the annual meeting of the corporation.

The next Cass County Historical Society meeting is planned for Tuesday, April 12 at 7 pm in the Council on Aging building on Decatur Rd and M60 in Cassopolis.

The May 17 meeting will be at the Wakelee Methodist Church on Dutch Settlement St. The topic will be, "Wakelee - A Railroad Boom Town." The speaker will be Allen F. Butchbaker who spent his youth in the Wakelee area and has family dating back into the mid 1800's who lived there during the boom years. Meetings are free and open to the public.

Tree and Plant Sale

The Cass County Conservation District has announced the start of it's annual tree and plant sale, including native small deciduous trees, shrubs including Spicebush, Paw Paw, Eastern Red Bud and Winged/Dwarf Sumac, along with Arrowwood Viburnum, Highbush Cranberry, Redosier Dogwood, White Flowering Dogwood and American Hazelnut. Native plants that are available include the red Cardinal Flower, Creeping Jenny, Ironweed, Lead Plant, Butterfly Milkweed, Swamp Milkweed and White Turtle Head.

Conifers, which are evergreens, are well-suited to use in windbreaks. Available conifers include Canaan Fir, Norway Spruce, Northern White Cedar/ American Arborvitae, Eastern White Pine and White Spruce.

They also have deciduous, or broad-leaf trees. The varieties for sale are good replacements for the Ash trees that were decimated by the Emerald Ash Borer, and include Black Cherry, Chinkapin Oak, Red Maple, Sugar Maple, Tulip Poplar and White Oak.

For those of you always wanting to try your hand at raising fruit, try Royal Empire Apple, Gale Gala Apple, Gibson Golden Delicious Apple, Honeycrisp "Royal Red" Apple, Macoun Apple, Whitney Crabapple, Blackgold Cherry, Stella Cherry, Montmorency Tart Cherry, Autumnstar® Peach, Redhaven Peach, Columbia Red Anjou® Pear, Bartlett Pear, and Early Italian Prune/Plum, and Stanley Prune/Plum round out the fruit tree offerings.

The district is taking orders through April 12, with pick-up east of the Cassopolis COA on April 28 by appointment only; more pick-up appointments and walk-ins are welcomed on Friday, April 29 from 9 am to 4:30 pm and Saturday, April 30 from 9 am until noon. Pre-orders must be picked up on sale days unless arrangements are made. Delivery is available for an extra fee. Orders will be filled on a first come, first serve basis, and supplies may be limited.

For more information and being able to click on their complete sale flyer, be sure to check out their website at: <http://cassccdistrct.org> or call them at 269-445-8641, extension 5.

ATTENTION:

Cass County Residents

FREE

Used Passenger Tire Collection



Cass County has received a grant for the collection of used passenger car/pickup truck tires (no semi or tractor tires)

NO APPOINTMENT NECESSARY

PROOF OF COUNTY RESIDENCY IS REQUIRED

WHEN:

Wednesday, April 27, 2022
from 3 pm to 7 pm or until two trailers are loaded

WHERE:

Cass County Road Commission
340 N. O'Keefe St., Cassopolis, MI
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REGIONAL EVENTS CALENDAR

April 12 - Cass County Historical Society Annual Meeting SHOW AND TELL, Cass County COA building, Cassopolis

April 27 - Cass County household hazardous waste collection and free tire collection, 5 - 7 pm, Cass County Road Commission, Cassopolis, no appointment necessary, proof of residency required for tire collection, 445-4420.

Cass District Library This month's programs

April 4 - April 28 - Infant and Preschool Story Time; Monday: Infant ; Tuesday: Preschool Story Time - Edwardsburg Branch - 11 am; Wednesday: Preschool Story Time - Mason/Union Branch - 10 am and Howard Branch - 1 pm; Thursday: Preschool Story Time - Main Branch - 11 am

Tuesdays at 1 pm - 3 pm; Let's Play Mahjong, Edwardsburg Branch. Learn this ancient Chinese tile-based game. All skill levels are welcome.

Tuesdays at 2:30 pm - Create and Connect Hour, Edwardsburg Branch. Spend an hour with other teens and tweens expressing yourself with games and art at the Edwardsburg Branch every Tuesday afternoon. Intended for ages 12-17.

Fridays at 10 am - Play, Learn, Grow; Edwardsburg Branch. Join other 3-6 year olds every Friday morning for some free play time to inspire growth and learning, while increasing social skills, fine motor skills and early STEM skills.

Week of April 4 - Unicorn Fantasy Fun Week, Howard Branch. Celebrate unicorns all week leading up to National Unicorn Day on April 9! Read the featured children's book "It's Ok to Be a Unicorn!" by Jason Tharp together at the library. Create your own shrinky dink charm to clip on a bag or use as a key chain. Activity sheets of games, unicorn drawing instructions, and scratch art pictures will also be available.

April 4 - 11 am - Cookies and Canvas* Main Branch. Kick the spring

break boredom and enjoy a sweet treat while you paint! Join us for Cookies and Canvas to show off your creative side. Space is limited and registration is required. Contact Stephanie at (269) 749-1384 for more information and to register.

April 5 - 11 am - Movie Morning, Main Branch. Kick the spring break boredom and join us for a morning movie and popcorn!

April 5: 1 - 3 pm - Super Smash Brothers Tournament, Edwardsburg Branch. Spring into break at the Edwardsburg Branch by participating in a Super Smash Brothers Tournament on the Wii! Snacks will be provided and a prize awarded to the winner. Program intended for ages 10-18.

April 5 - 5 pm - Medicare Q&A, Edwardsburg Branch. Join us at the Edwardsburg Branch for a Q&A session with Adrienne Glover from Cass County Council On Aging.

April 6: 1 - 3 PM - LEGO Build Along, Edwardsburg Branch. Spring into break at the Edwardsburg Branch! Join us to watch a LEGO movie and build along with this fun program. A snack will be provided. All ages are welcome.

April 8: 4 - 6 PM - Family Board Game Night, Edwardsburg Branch. Spring into break at the Edwardsburg Branch by spending time with the family playing games. Games and snack will be provided.

April 11 - All Day - Stuffed Animal Clinic and Spa Edwardsburg Branch. Stop by Edwardsburg Branch with your stuffed pet to celebrate National Pet Day. Participants can examine, treat and pamper their stuffed pets throughout the day with this pretend play activity.

April 12 - 6 pm - Wildflower Seed Bombs* Howard Branch. Give back to the earth with these easy-to-make seed bombs. Participants will blend together scraps of construction paper, water, and wildflower seeds, then form small balls or press into molds. After the seed bombs are dry they can be planted when the time is right. As the seed bombs receive sun and rain, the paper will eventually compost and the seeds will germinate. Registration is required. Call (574) 314-6454 or visit any branch location to register.

April 13 - 1 pm - Craft Club: Springtime Bunnies and Carrot Softies* Main Branch. Join us at the Main Branch to hand-stitch a sweet little bunny

with a companion carrot softie! Space is limited and registration is required. Supplies will be provided. Contact Stephanie at (269) 749-1384 for more information and to register.

April 14 - 1 pm - Dinnerware Bird Feeder* Edwardsburg Branch. Attract some feathered friends to your yard this spring with this dinnerware bird feeder. Registration is required. Intended for 18+ attendants. Call (574) 314-6454 or visit any branch location to register.

April 14: 5 - 7 pm - Young at Art, Main Branch. We are gathering our community to share in the artistic expressions of young children in Cass County. Please join us as we have snacks, view artwork and create some art to take home! This celebration recognizes April as the national Month of the Young Child (MOYC), a time for all of us to promote a healthy, promising life for young children and their families in our community.

April 21 - 10 am - More Than a Book Club, Edwardsburg Branch. The Women of the Copper Country by Mary Doria Russell is a fictionalized story about the real Anna "Big Annie" Clemenc, an early labor movement activist from Calumet, Michigan. Join us for the discussion of this Great Michigan Read selection presented by Michigan Humanities.

April 21 - 6 pm - BINGO Night, Main Branch. Win prizes and enjoy playing BINGO at the library! Join us at the Main Branch for a family game night.

Week of April 25 and May 2 - Mother's Day Cards, Mason/Union Branch. Stop by the Mason/Union Branch to create a Mother's Day card for someone special.

April 28 - 6 pm - Essential Oils for Health* Howard Branch. Learn about essential oils and health benefits of using them topically. Participants will create three different essential oil products to take home along with recipes and information about the oils used at the program. Recipes include a roll-on blend for blemishes, a roll-on blend for cuts, scrapes, and bruises, and a calming moisturizing hand cream. This class is recommended for teens and adults. Registration and payment are required. Cost is \$5 per person. Call (574) 314-6454 or visit any branch location to register.

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LAKE LIFE WITH JANE

Sharing the delights of April

by **Jane Boudreau**

Happy April, Neighbors! I hope everyone is getting out more after months of hibernation. We don't have much furniture out on the patio, but I love to pull an old plastic Adirondack chair out into the sun (when we have it), a good source--and only source of vitamin D. And the dogs bask in it as well when they aren't rolling in the grass or something worse. Sadly, as soon as the sun passes over the trees westward, it gets chilly. We have logs burning in the fireplace soon after coming in. I can't complain. Fall and spring get a bad rap with their unpredictable weather. Just put on a few extra layers and look for signs of flowers popping up or the beautiful colors of the leaves changing and you will feel a bit more lighthearted. Works for me.



Before I go much further into the delights of April, I wanted to share a photo I took in mid March right outside my great room. At first I thought they were herons, but then The Diamond Lake Facebook peeps pretty much agreed they are sandhill cranes. Isn't this awesome? Just out there prancing around on the ice like nobody's business. So, if inquiring minds want to know, sandhill cranes mate for life, however if one partner meets its demise, they will find another partner, hopefully not through the Internet. They only weigh between 10-15 pounds, live and nest in the wetlands, preferring marshy weeds and reeds which they use to make their nests. The female averages laying about three eggs which hatch approximately thirty days later. The little hatchlings are called colts. The cranes migrate south in the winter. They can fly long distances at once, sometimes 400 miles in one day, reaching up to 35 mph at times. They mostly return back to the same area in the spring, if not the same nest. They can live as long as 20-30 years in the wild and as long as 100 years in captivity. Isn't this interesting? Maybe you have heard their large screeching (or screaming as I think). That means they are calling for their mating partner. Or it could



be me when my hubby is late for dinner. I've been sorting through my veggies seeds, there are some that really don't mind cold weather, actually do better in it such as radishes, carrots and some lettuces. I plant these as I really use them a lot. Last year I planted carrots in mid May, actually a little late, and I didn't have any big enough to pull until September. Okay, stew it is! I have a lot of shade in my yard so I do a lot of container planting so I can move them around to catch the rays. I can plant my seeds in about 3 minutes For containers I would suggest you keep them out of the wind, yet in a place where they get at least 6 hours of sun. Has anyone ever tried those self watering pots? With the money and time we invest in having a pretty garden, deck, or patio-maybe they are worth the money. Lawn care is important now, too. I've always had crab grass and it's a tough



one. When it sprouts you only make it worse by trying to pull it...the seeds spread everywhere and you get even more. The key is to get it as soon as it emerges ... usually April or May in our area. I use a crab grass preventer by Scotts. If you want a natural solution to the problem, you can dig it up at a very



early stage as well. I also use a 'Spring' weed and feed in May. If you want to get outdoors more and work on your lawn, regular raking eliminates the dead grass and leaves room for the new grass to grow. Good exercise, and of course, that dose of Vitamin D.



Easter is arriving late this year. I was curious as to how this particular Sunday comes differently every year. Well, in a nutshell, Easter is calculated to occur the first Sunday after the first full moon after the spring equinox, which fell on March 21 this year. Make sense? It's time to 'springify' indoors, too. I love this old wicker basket I found at a yard sale, it moves around the house. I lighten things up with linen table runners and tablecloths, lighter curtains, or maybe just some inexpensive sheers. A few pastel throw pillows, and a new houseplant or two, and you will feel lighter yourself. Randomly, are you a fan of dried flowers? I can't get enough of them. These beauties are called Blue Globe Thistle. They dry very well and then I plant the seeds in the spring. But I really love having them in the house to brighten things up until May. You can bring in many varieties of flowers in the fall; lavender, peonies, hydrangeas, celosia, larkspur, and if you live on a lake, don't forget to cut a few stalks of cattail to display in a tall container. I also think that synthetic florals and plants are looking much more realistic and are perfect for places that don't get a lot of sun; a little nook or corner that just needs something organic and fresh. I recently bought an artificial olive tree and have it in a corner of my family room. At first I cringed at the idea--I mean is anyone foolish to think that I'm growing olives in my family room in the Midwest?! I guess I wanted to take the work out of having to water, fertilize, and sometimes lug it outdoors as I do a lot of my larger plants. This guy just sits there humbly, never asking for anything.

I thought I'd pass on some recipes for goodies. I posted this recipe a few years ago but it is so darn easy and I know you'd have a lot of fun doing it with your kids or grandkidlets. Desserts are one thing that change quite a bit from year to year on holidays around here. Do not mess with the traditional turkey, ham or roast beef, but new desserts are fun to try. Many of my guests bring cheese-cake, cupcakes and pies. I like to make cookies. Grab and go. Great for those kiddos. This is the best sugar cookie recipe I've ever used. I don't know what it is but they are crisp on the outside and soft on the inside. I use a store bought frosting, vanilla or butter cream, and tint portions so I have a rainbow of cookies. Top them with malted milk eggs or M&M's. A winner!



Best Sugar Cookies Ever
Ingredients:
1 c butter
1 1/2 c sugar
1 egg, beaten
2 1/4 c flour
1/2 t baking powder
1/2 t salt
1 t vanilla
1/4 c sugar for rolling

Directions:
Cream together butter and sugar until fluffy. Add egg and mix until combined. Add flour, baking powder, salt and vanilla. Beat well. Scoop dough by tablespoons and form into balls. Roll in sugar and place on a parchment paper lined baking sheet about 1 1/2 inches apart. Bake at 350 for 8-10 minutes. When cool, frost and add decorations.

These beauties are simple and you can make them year round by decorating them differently for other occasions. How easy can it get? You may want to double the recipe, although 1 or 2 of these cookies are quite enough for little ones.
Chocolate Dipped Oreo Cookies
Ingredients:
1 package of white almond bark (or white chocolate bars)
1 package Oreo Cookies
Icing, sprinkles, or any sort of decorations of your choice
Directions:

In a large bowl melt almond bark in your microwave in 15 second intervals, stirring in between. Do not overcook...if you do add a teaspoon or so of vegetable oil to smooth out. Using tongs, dip each cookie in the almond bark and place on parchment paper. Smooth out any of the tong marks with a spoon. When almost cool, decorate with icing (I used the store bought. Another great idea is to pick up a few of those plastic squeeze bottles with the pointed tip. You can find them at craft stores. Thin out store bought frosting with water and go for it!). Sprinkles are a nice touch, too, especially in pastel colors for spring.

I wanted to add a couple of recipes that just make you feel light and healthy and ready for spring. These are not complicated although they may not be anything you've made in the past. Let's try something new. They may become a regular on your table or a Go To when you have company. And look at this color!
Cream of Spinach Soup

Ingredients:
1 pound fresh spinach, stems trimmed
1 bunch of green onions, tops and bottoms trimmed and roughly chopped
3 c chicken broth
1 t nutmeg
Pinch of salt & pepper
1 c heavy cream plus 1/4 c for swirling

Directions:
In a large saucepan bring spinach, onions and broth to a boil. Lower heat to a bubble and let simmer 10 minutes, stirring occasionally until spinach is tender. Turn off heat, add nutmeg, cream and S&P. Let cool for a few minutes. Puree in batches in a blender or food processor until smooth. Return to saucepan and gently reheat. Pour into serving bowls and swirl a teaspoon or so of the remaining cream on the surface of the soup. Serve immediately.

Tomato, avocado & black bean salad
A final recipe that is as colorful as it is healthy. And don't forget delicious. No salad should be boring. Have this for lunch or dinner with some good bread topped with herbed butter. * This recipe serves 2 as a side salad so you may want to double for more.

Ingredients:
1 English cucumber (seedless), diced
1 c black beans, rinsed
1 1/4 c corn

Continued on next page. See:
JANE

BUSINESS & FINANCE

The Farm, Part I

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

Farming is practiced throughout the world and has been for centuries. The term “farm” did not always have the same meaning it has now. Before the 16th century, farmer was a term more commonly used to signify a debt collector or a person who rented property to others. By the end of the 16th Century use of the word “farm” essentially meant what it does today. Farming is a noble profession and an absolute necessity to our survival.

Whether the farm supplies crops for making different foods or animals to provide meat and eggs for our diet, the amount of work involved is monumental. How often do you get up at the crack of dawn and again at the end of the day to tend the livestock? Do you have to defend your job against coyotes, fox or other predators? Farm operations run 24-7 and the farmer is always on call. Many of your friends and neighbors are farmers as is reflected in these statistics from the United States Dept of Agriculture.

As of 2017, there were 747 farms in Cass County with an average size of 266 acres. Total farm acreage in Cass County was 198,515 acres. Cass County is a major producer of pigs and hogs. In fact, we are the third highest county in Michigan and we are ranked 126th in the nation as well for pork production.

You may think a farmer has nothing to do in the winter but that is a very busy time for the farm. Maintenance on all the equipment and barns and other out-

buildings is handled then since there is no time for that during the planting or harvesting times. Not to mention taking care of the unavoidable “honey-do” list.

Also, bills must be paid, supplies and seed has to be ordered and parts for tractors and other equipment need to be on hand for quick repairs that inevitably need to be done when there is very little time.

Farmers are, by necessity, different kind of people. Intelligent, dependable, humorous, dedicated and family-oriented just to start. I found the following interesting farm facts and sayings for your entertainment. As you will see, keeping a positive attitude is a must for any farm family.

In 2017, the average debt of a farm was \$1.3 Million.

96% of all farms are owned by families. There are 2,204,792 farms owned by families in the US.

Farm Sayings

No farmers, no food, no future.

Fences should be horse high, pig tight and bull strong.

It isn't the farm that makes the farmer; it's the love, hard work and character. The 3 seasons of farming: before harvest, harvest, after harvest.

Sowing is not as difficult as reaping.

Producing more, conserving more, improving lives.

If you find yourself in a hole, the first thing you gotta do is stop digging.

Old farmers never die; they just go to seed.

If we estimate dignity by immediate usefulness, agriculture is undoubtedly

the first and noblest science.

“No race can prosper until it learns there is as much dignity in tilling a field as in writing a poem.” Booker T Washington

And a few smiles to enjoy along the fence row:

What did the mama cow say to the baby cow?

It's pasture bedtime.

What kind of milk do brown cows produce?

Approximately 10% of people said chocolate. HaHa

How many miles of flight does it take

for a bee hive to make a pound of honey? 55,000 miles!

How fast can a pig run a mile?

Surprisingly in 7 minutes! The average runner (human) runs it in 7 to 10 minutes.

The next time you run into a farmer, tell him thanks for the food we have on our tables.

Next month we will look at farm insurance and how different it is from a home policy ... and we will see what is the same. Check it out here next month when we present Part II of THE FARM

JANE

Continued from previous page

- 1 red pepper, seeded and diced
- 1 c cherry tomatoes, halved
- 1/2 c tightly packed cilantro, chopped
- 1 lime, juiced
- 1 avocado, seeded and diced
- S&P

Directions:

Place the cucumber, beans, corn, red pepper, tomatoes and cilantro in a bowl. Squeeze the lime juice over and toss well. Gently fold in the avocado and S&P. Enjoy!

*I mentioned the addition of bread and herbed butter to accompany the salad. Herbed butter is simple. Simply bring a stick of salted butter to room temperature. Add 1 to 1 1/2 t of your favorite dried herb such as basil, oregano, dill or tarragon. Your choice. Cream the herbs well into the butter in a medium size bowl. Chill for 10 minutes. Shape the butter in a log and refrigerate until ready to serve. Slice pieces of



the butter log into 1/4 inch pieces and arrange on a small plate to pass at the table. You will feel like the ultimate hostess. You can also keep it on hand smushed into a small bowl to have a zillion ways.

Happy April and have a Blessed Easter.

Jane Boudreau is a writer, blogger and newspaper columnist for your local Neighbors as well as The Reporter in Chicago. She divides her time between Diamond Lake, Chicago, and the mountains of North Carolina. She does her best with cooking, gardening, decorating and giving pushy advice. Contact her at blindy9@yahoo.com

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OUR CHILDREN

Hit the road, Jack!

by **SANDY FLEMING**

Spring and summer are nearly upon us, and many families will hit the road for family vacations of various shapes and sizes. Many more will WANT to hit the road, but schedule or finances may not line up for a full vacation this year. No matter which circumstance your family is in, there are fun vacation activities you can do with the kids that will promote learning and make memories to last a lifetime.

Ideas for Traveling Distances

Put the kids to work as soon as you start to plan your trip. They can do all sorts of planning (and learning) if you arm them with a few maps, travel guides, or even supervised internet time. What sorts of places do they want to visit? How can they get more information about them? What kind of budget will the family be sticking to? Help them with the math to calculate your car's typical mileage and figure out how much gas is likely to cost to get you all from point A to point B. Have them plan out how long to be on the road, where you will stop for meals and rest, and how you will be moving on the next morning. And even if the trip is imaginary or planned for far, far in the future, these are great skills to help them develop to manage in life when they are grown. It's perfectly fine to plan a dream trip in this way. In fact, planning imaginary trips like this is a common school project, so your child will be gaining valuable how-to experience that will directly translate into better grades!

Be sure to play loads of car games (or airplane, train, or bus games as the case may be). These hone all sorts of thinking and memory skills. Need a few ideas that suit wide age ranges? Try playing Car Bingo. Make up Bingo cards for all players that have items often seen from the windows as you travel. See which observant kid can be first to get a traditional line bingo, four corners, or even a blackout! Play Twenty Questions and I Spy. Pick a novel that everyone will enjoy hearing, or maybe a classic like Alice in Wonderland or Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone, and read it aloud, one or two chapters at a time. My personal favorite is The Phantom Tollbooth. It's loaded with opportunities to use great expressions and sound effects as you read. Enlist your older kids to help with the reading or try to find books on CDs to listen to when you need a break.

Once you are in the midst of the fun, try to take some time out each day for academics. You could each write a paragraph or two about what you've seen or done, play a family game after you've had a day of sightseeing, or have

the kids plan and create a video log of their travels. Catch up on checking the mileage your car has been getting, or update the vacation budget.

And after the trip is over, don't forget to have the kids evaluate it overall. They could write up a quickie report, take one last look at the budget and the actual expenses to compare the real spending to the planned spending, or organize and caption the family photographs. Somewhere along the way, you should ask them how they thought the trip went and if they'd like to do another trip someday. They should explain why or why not and tell what they liked and didn't like. It's also important to learn to explain how to improve things for the next outing. They will get valuable experience with analysis and you'll get great information about how to keep them engaged next time.

Ideas for Short Excursions

No time or money for a longer trip this year? Check out these ideas for a shorter expedition!

• **Visit a park!** There are parks nearby to nearly everyone. Check your local area, your county, your state, and even the National Park system. There are lots of things to see and do in a park. Kids love the playgrounds, and they'll get their daily dose of healthy exercise there, too. Try setting up your own "exercise trail" through the park, or take advantage of trails that are already set up. Take a hike. Some parks even have naturalists or other staff members who lead free or inexpensive programming. There might be a summer camp option, too, for kids of school age. Parks also offer many other types of activities, too, like Frisbee golf, picnicking, and more. Anytime you can engage your kids in planning and preparing for an outing like this, you are building both academic and life skills.

• **Check out the museums!** Nearly every town has one. You can learn about local history, locally famous individuals, or find out about the history of major businesses. Some museums offer tours on a schedule, while others allow visitors to explore on their own. Museums might be indoors or outdoors, free to inexpensive to a bit pricey, but they all have some interesting things to offer. The local community college may have a museum or activity center for kids, as well. Put a learning twist on your visit by having the kids predict what they will see and do at the museum, and summarizing the activity when they have visited. Make connections from the museum's topic to your daily life. For example, do you use the products made by the business you learned about? Do you know someone who knew the person from the past? Lots of museums also change their displays regularly and update their collec-

tions, so don't be shy about visiting again and comparing and contrasting what's happening in the museum.

• **Take advantage of the local library!** Maybe this is the year to get library cards for the whole family (or renew them if it's been a while since your last visit). Libraries are a huge community treasure that is vastly underutilized. They're not just about books anymore! Your local library may have a summer reading program for all ages with prizes and games along the way. Watch their calendar for story times and great events, too, like speakers or hands-on learning times. There's something there for all ages. Libraries also now have vast digital collections, audio collections, and sometimes even toy and game collections that you can use to supplement your own.

• **Grow your own fun with botanical gardens and nurseries!** Next sunny (or not so sunny) day, head over to the local nursery to browse, or visit a nearby botanical garden. Observant students can learn to tell the difference between common plants, how to tell a healthy one from a not-so-healthy specimen, and much more. Engage the brain with counting, comparing, and observing.

• **Hit the zoo!** There are countless ways to keep learning at your local zoo, and the admissions are usually quite easy on the pocketbook. Just watch the extra spending (like for snacks, meals, rides, and the like) and you'll be good to go. Be sure the kids are focusing on each animal and reading the available information. You might want to pick an animal or two that you know will be on display and have them research about it ahead of time. They could create a poster or brochure about the creature, and then see if the zoo's information measures up to their own. Did they include facts not on the zoo display? Does any of their information disagree with that provided by the zoo? Why might that be? What could cause such discrepancies?

• **Try geocaching or letterboxing!** Both hobbies are inexpensive and will get you out and about in your local area and beyond. These games are giant, international scavenger hunts. Millions of people world-wide participate. The general idea is that someone or a group of people have hidden a small "treasure" on public land somewhere near you. It might be in a cemetery, in a park, or even on a roadside. Your job is to follow the longitude and latitude coordinates to find the right spot, then find the hidden cache. You'll get bragging rights and perhaps a small trinket for your troubles. Letterboxing is a bit easier, and more appropriate for younger kids. Geocaching can be done at a wide array of levels of difficulty, so you can find something that is right for

your group. Information about both activities is easy to find on the internet, and both will get you out and about. You can participate around your local area, or take the game on the road and look for geocaches wherever you happen to be heading.

Activities for Any Trip

No matter where you are headed, or even if you're just traveling around your own neighborhood, there are tons of things you can do to keep the kids engaged and learning. Try these on for size!

Set up a scavenger hunt. Make a list of things to find, or if you wish, things to photograph. Challenge the players to be first to collect everything on the list.

Be an ecology star. As you move through your environment, look for places and ways that Mother Nature is changing the planet. These could be signs of erosion, weather changes, or wind damage. Also look for ways that people are changing the environment. These could be things like trash or pollution, water drainage, and so forth. Either way, find a way to leave the area better than you found it.

Can you measure up? Take along a ruler or a tape measure and take some measurements of things outdoors. How big around is the tree? Which one is the biggest around the trunk? How long is that leaf? What is the biggest leaf of that variety that can be found? What is the smallest?

Collect some rocks. With permission from the property owner, if you're on someone's property, see how many different kinds of rocks you can find. Don't take any from park lands, either, but you could make a virtual collection by snapping photos.

Look for signs. Can you tell that someone or something has passed through the area recently? How do you know? Look for tracks, droppings, broken branches, trash, or remains of a meal. Who or what has been there before you?

No matter if you're traveling miles and miles, or staying close to home over the next few months, find ways to become more active in your world. Observe, think, and learn every day. Read, write, and do math every day, too!.

Sandy Fleming is a private tutor, writer, and educational consultant living in Edwardsburg. Be sure to check out her website at <http://www.learningnook.com> or over at <http://sandyflemingonline.com>. Looking forward to connecting with you!



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FIELD TRIP



COLDWATER, MICHIGAN is a small town in Branch County, on US 12 along the Indiana/Michigan state line, two counties east of Cass County. Coldwater was incorporated as a village in 1837, then incorporated as a city in 1861. It was designated in 1842 as the county seat of Branch County. Several seasonal annual festivals are held in Coldwater, ranging from a January Ice Festival to the Apple Fest held in September. Among the attractions are the Tibbits Opera House. Built in 1882 it is the second-oldest theater in Michigan. The Wing House, built in 1875; it is now a historical museum, and the Little River Railroad offers rides behind a 1911-built steam locomotive, departing from the city's historic 1883 depot. Coldwater is widely known for its many antique shops, and according to local legend, if you were to spend five minutes in every booth of the local antique store, you would have to spend between three and four days to visit them all.



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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.

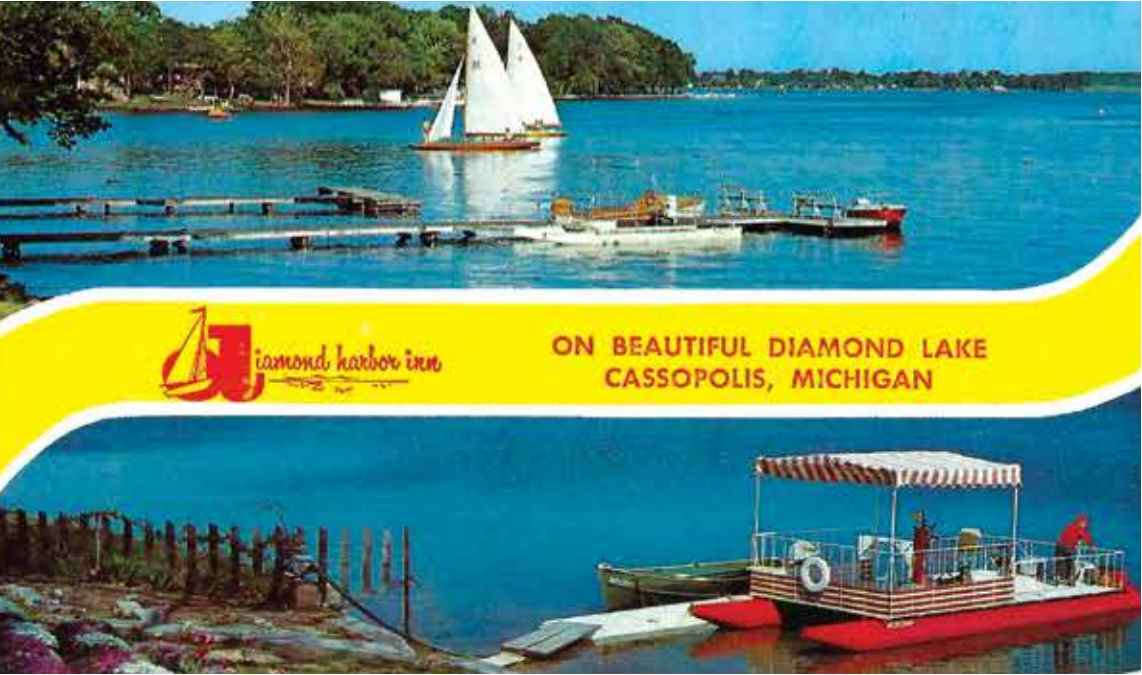
Jerdon has recently used many of his postcards featuring the Sister Lakes area in a book written by RL Rasmussen. The book, which retails for \$19.99, is in its second printing by the

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

Later winter wildlife spotted

*Provided by Cass District Library
Local History branch*

Bob Conrad of St. Joseph captured the image of an American kestrel near the intersection of Cleveland Avenue and Linco Road back on January 16. While kestrels can be found throughout Southwestern Michigan all year long, they are most commonly found from fall through spring when populations from farther north spend the winter.

During the summer months, kestrels can be difficult to find due to the fact their preferred breeding habitat of open areas, or partly open areas adjacent to unmowed fields where mice and other rodents can be found, are becoming scarce.

The kestrel is one of three species of falcons that inhabit Southwest Michigan. The other two are the merlin and the peregrine falcon. Recent DNA analysis shows that falcons are more closely related to songbirds than they are to other raptors.

Brad Anderson of Bridgman photographed a red-shouldered hawk near his home bird feeding station on March 4. The red-shouldered hawk is the woodland counterpart to our more common red-tailed hawk of the open country.

Both the red-shouldered hawk and the red-tailed hawk are members of the genus (family) of hawks, characterized by their large, bulky size, broad wings and large, rounded tails.

The red-shouldered hawk is most plentiful in Southwest Michigan during their spring (April-May) and fall (Sept-Oct) migrations. The species nests among our larger forest tracts, often found living in the same woods with the pileated woodpecker and barred owl.

Many of our red-shouldered hawks migrate to the south east states for the cold months, but some hardy individuals stay here for the entire winter.

Eileen Chapman of Royalton Township submitted a photo of a herd of white-tailed deer browsing for food on her property, taken February 19.

In Chapman's photo we can see a single antlered buck. Generally speaking, in Michigan, white-tailed deer lose their antlers between January and March, occasionally as late as April.



Top left: American kestrel, on January 16, 2022, along Cleveland Avenue near Linco Road by Bob Conrad of St. Joseph. The kestrel can be found throughout the year in Southwest Michigan, but is more plentiful in winter when populations that nest farther north come to our region for the cold months.

Top right: Red-shouldered hawk on March 4, 2022 in Bridgman by Brad Anderson.

Lower photo: White-tailed deer browse for food in the yard, February 19, 2022, of Tom and Eileen Chapman of Royalton Township. By the end of March, the buck in this photo will have shed his antlers.



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LOCAL HISTORY

1843 Schoolhouse is oldest in Cassopolis

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

School built on Rowland Street, Cassopolis in spring 1843 is still in use as private residence in 2022, and is the oldest documented structure to have survived the pioneer era in the village of Cassopolis.

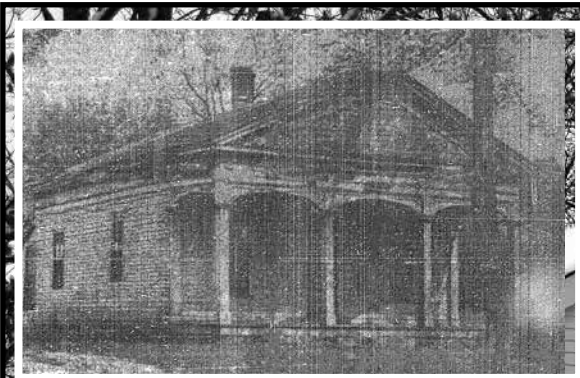
In 1843 the small village of Cassopolis had a population of just a few hundred inhabitants, having been platted just 12 years before, and was still just nothing more than a clearing in the woods. During the 1840s, Cass County was still in its pioneer era, with bears wandering into the village at night. Villagers had to be careful not to be out in the woods after dark, or they would find themselves surrounded by wolves. The majority of buildings within the village were constructed out of logs,

From 1831 until 1843, the children of Cassopolis were taught in log cabins and for a year or two, inside the old 1842 courthouse, which later housed the Cass Opera House, still later the Gem Theater. The 1842 courthouse built by Harper was razed in 1968.

According to county histories, construction began on the first frame building built specifically for educational purposes within the Village of Cassopolis, in the spring of that year on the east side of Rowland Street on lot 8, block 1 north, range 2 east. The lot had been donated to the school district by Captain Joseph Harper. Cass County histories also report Harper acquired the lot in from a bet he had with Jacob Silver, on the result of the Presidential election of 1840 in Pennsylvania (electoral votes went to winner William Henry Harrison), donating it to Cassopolis school district (LaGrange Township District Number 1) in 1842.

Although there is no documentation of who built the Greek Revival style school, it was probably Captain Joseph Harper as he was not only a village resident and a contractor, but he also had recently completed building the Cass County courthouse in 1841-1842, of similar design.

In 1936 the Cassopolis Vigilant ran a story about early one room schools of Cass County and mentioned that George W. Allen of Calvin Township possessed the 1844 Cass County school inspectors



Cassopolis School built during the spring of 1843, located on the east side of Rowland Street on lot 8, block 1 north, range 2 east. The date this photograph was taken is unknown, as is the photographer. The old Cassopolis school house, serving LaGrange township school District #1 from 1843-1857, taken on March 11, 2022. It has served as a private residence since the mid-19th Century.

report book. From that book it was learned that during 1844 the school year varied among rural districts of Cass County. Some districts ran only three months out of the year while others ran four or five months. The current whereabouts of this school inspectors report book are unknown.

It was noted from the school inspectors report book that in 1844, LaGrange Township School District #1 (Cassopolis) contained 127 children between the ages of 4 and 18 years, but that only 90 of those children, 70%, attended school. The LaGrange Twp. District #1 was in session for 8 months during 1844.

The 1936 article goes on to say: "This district raised \$152 that year for building purposes, having built the first free school the previous year. The building still stands on Rowland street and was used as a school until 1857."

When the building ceased to be used as a school, it was occupied "as a dwelling house". The 1860 wall map of Cass County shows no structure present on lot 8, block 1 north, range 2 east, but that is a rare error on the part of the cartogra-

pher. There is no mention in any of the county histories of the building ever being moved off of its original site. The building is shown, with an addition on the south side of the original structure, on the 1872 atlas of Cass County. The 1936 Vigilant article states the building: "still stands on its original foundation."

The original Greek Revival style portico shown in the older, undated photo probably lasted until the middle 1920s, for a porch is shown on the building on the 1925 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map. However, the porch shown on the 1925 map may not be the original portico.

There are several buildings in Cassopolis that date from this time period, but none can be documented to have been built during a specific year, as is the case with the 1843 school house, now a private residence on Rowland Street, Cassopolis.

Classes were held in the building between 1843-1857, just 14 years, but it was a period of remarkable change in the country. I can envision students and teachers alike discussing political topics of the day such as manifest destiny; the

Mexican-American War; the Oregon boundary dispute, and of course the issue of slavery. Classes were moved to a new school building the year before the famous Lincoln-Douglas debates of 1858, and four years before the Civil War.

There were 6 American Presidents in office while the building was in use as a school: John Tyler, James K. Polk, Zachary Taylor, Millard Fillmore, Franklin Pierce, and James Buchanan.

I would like to thank library patrons Steve and Dan Parsons for bringing this building to my attention.

In the March 2022 issue of Neighbors, I featured a photo of a cobblestone filling station located at the corner of O'Keefe and State Streets, Cassopolis. There has been interest in that photo, and would ask readers to come forward if they are aware of any additional photos of that filling station, or the D-X Gaffill station (now the Sinclair station) on Broadway. Please email me at jwuepper@cass.lib.mi.us or call the Local History Branch Library at 269-357-7823. Thank you.

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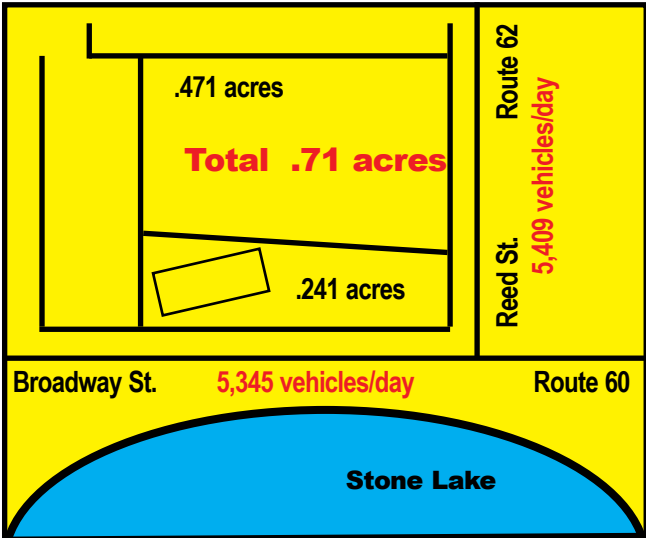


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THE LAST WORD

by Phil Vitale
aka sailorphil

First day of spring frees a hope in my soul



Most likely, no one is ever going to confuse me for a woodland sprite or some mythical, elf or a flitting fairy nymph even if I were to go a cavorting, prancing and dancing out through the woods on the first day of spring. And most likely, at nearly 70 years of age, considering I am a white haired, arthritic and bulky hulk, disfigured by the years of self abuse I've enjoyed nearly non-stop from the days of a misspent youth to my current lechery, and even if I did the tiptoeing thing through the forest on a spring day, no one would be likely to appreciate the vernal visage for anything other than the comic relief it would probably have provided.

I can only imagine my neighbors' relief this year when the first day of spring spectacularly arrived and bathed the countryside with warm sunshine, balmy breezes and not a single gray cloud to blot the brilliant blue sky overhead, especially since despite the sudden end to our winter-long malaise I somehow managed to overcome the temptation to cavort, prance, dance and bounce in bombastic bacchanalian boldness.

I'm pretty sure it wouldn't have been pretty, and at the very least hardly as poetically potent as that glorious spring day. Cool at the start, by mid morning I'd already shed my stocking cap and gloves, unzipped my down jacket and crammed my wool scarf into my pocket as I ambled along the back roads with my walking partner (and wife of 51 years), accompanied by a hoard of spritely singing morning birds. Around 10 am a small herd of does, startled by our approach, turned tail and deer-hopped from the edge of the field we were passing, almost magically disappearing among the yet dull winter-brown branches of the bordering woods.

Noon neared, and as we started descending one of the hills that surround the lake where we live, the only movement visible to my eye was the gentlest of wrinkles of wind rippling along the otherwise glossy surface that bounced blue sky reflections through the thin, moss-scented air. Closer to home cooing doves erupted into flight at our approach, light-winged robins flitted

among the branches and unseen woodpeckers joined the rhythms of spring with staccato frenzy, filling the air with their rat-a-tat rigmarole. Down at the lake a lone seagull circled low, scanning the surface for an unsuspecting minnow to seize as a mid-day seagull snack.

I usually don't care much for seagulls. Aside from their amazing displays of aerobatic prowess, they are otherwise petty creatures, stealing food when they can, loudly squawking raucous and ear-shattering shrieks, and leaving fecal marks of gooey, white blobs all over my boats, pier and on the dark-stained deck more prominent than the neighbors' dogs' territorial piles around the perimeter of my still-pale yard.

Despite my admitted prejudice toward Johnathan Livingston and his ilk, today the seagull over the lake soared and looped with a grace and charm that gave me pause, and as she wheeled across that spring morning I almost palpably felt the veil of pandemic-inspired dread lifting from my weary and winter-worn shoulders.

Like the rest of the world, I'd be lying if I were to say the two years of our shared zombie apocalypse had been anything a dismal psychic smudge as I gracelessly age and speed into my oft-predicted dotage. Months of masks, quarantines, social distancing, protocols, canceled events, empty shelves, inflation, political divisiveness, and a general breakdown of civility have scarred my soul so thoroughly it's sometimes hard to remember how beautiful and pleasing life once was to me.

Maybe I'm being naive; maybe I'm grasping at straws and seeing false visions in the clouds; maybe I'm blinded by my own desires and weariness, but that seagull out over the lake aroused in me a sensation of hope I haven't felt in many a day.

Like everyone else, I've had a lot of dark days during the last couple of years as pandemic pranced through our lives. Dozens of long anticipated events were forced to be canceled. Several pleasure trips and diversions were ultimately denied. Socialization at even some of the most basic levels was minimized, and overall, the imposed isolation brought an abysmal, abasing and abjectly mind-numbing boredom.

As I write this I'm just days away from a sailing

adventure, an adventure that was planned (and arranged to the nth degree) two years ago ... only to be shattered with the onset of the plague, then re-planned (and again arranged to the nth degree) last year ... only to be again shattered.

This year they're say I can go.

Third times' a charm, they say.

My bags are (once again) packed. The arrangements are made as well as they can be made. I've read the travel protocols, bought trip insurance, loaded my vaccination card onto my new cell phone, and packed an ample supply of masks. The boat is chartered, the provisions ordered, and on Thursday morning of this week I'm off to take the mandatory pre-travel Covid test.

I'm ready to go.

Again.

In the last two years, my hopes were cruelly dashed just days before my departure for the trip I'm desperately hoping will finally come to fruition this year,

Maybe that seagull was last week a harbinger not just of spring, but of a renewed hope.

Maybe she was a herald of the end of my malady and my protracted pandemic PTSD.

Maybe that seagull was a sunshine promise for fair winds and a following sea.

Maybe next week I'll find myself sailing the Sir Francis Drake Channel, the wind in my hair and my long darkness lifted.

Or maybe next week I'll find gooey, white blobs all over my boats, pier, dark-stained deck and my soul.

What a horrid thought.

But I'm trying to be positive here.

I'm trying to share some good hooey-hooey.

So whether I get to go sailing or not, I will promise one thing that I'm sure will lift the spirits of at least my nearest neighbors, if not the entire county.

Whether I get to go sailing or not, I promise that first day of spring-like weather or not, under no circumstances are you ever, ever going to see me cavorting, prancing and dancing out through the woods.

That just ain't gonna happen.

Be well everyone, and have hope for better days.



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