

Neighbors

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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

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

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To contact Neighbors
(269) 228-1080
(269) 476-1680

www.cassneighbors.com
sailorphil@philvitale.com
Brazilstein@gmail.com



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Field Trip:

The colors of
Autumn
Pages 9-11

Regional News

Holiday bazaar in Cass

St. Paul Lutheran Ladies Circle at Cassopolis, Michigan will be hosting their Annual Holiday Potpourri Bazaar on Saturday, November 11, from 9 am to 2 pm. The bazaar is held at the church located at 305 West State Street in Cassopolis. The church is handicap accessible.

The bazaar will feature area crafters, a bake sale, used book sale, 'White Reindeer table' and the 'Best Lunch' in town, carry outs will be available. No admission – bring your family and friends for some holiday shopping and lunch.

Contact Jenny Bischoff for more information and to rent a space, at 269.782.7484 or email jennybischoff@hotmail.com.

Dark Sky viewing

On Friday, November 10 and 11, Dr. TK Lawless International Dark Sky Park will stay open for dark sky viewing, weather permitting. Guests are invited to bring blankets and chairs, and kick back and gaze at the starry sky.

Cassopolis Farmers Market

On Saturday, November 11 and 25, The Vault will host an indoor farmers market from 10 am to 1 pm. Find a variety of local farmers and artisans, changing each market. The Vault is located at 105 Broadway St., Cassopolis.

Old-fashioned Christmas

'I'll Be Home for Christmas' is the theme of the holiday display at the Edwardsburg Area Historical Museum. The display will run from Nov. 3 until Dec. 16, when the museum closes for the

winter months.

Display Volunteers Judy Montgomery and Laura Jamrog plan to decorate the museum's tree with tinsel, tinsel garland and old-fashioned lights if possible. They also will stage a small scene from the museum's Eastlake parlor set with a soldier mannequin and his wife. Toys will adorn the tree skirt and many trimmings of pine will be included. The museum is receiving several hundred holiday cards with envelopes that feature a cover of poinsettias by the late Jill Boepple, a museum member, volunteer, and artist. These will be sold in packages of five or 10 cards during the holiday display.

The museum is open from 1 to 4 pm Tuesdays through Fridays and 11 am to 2 pm on Saturdays.

Fernwood Gardens events

A POP-UP! Butter Bakeshop & Handsewn Fiber Arts event will take place at Fernwood Botanical Garden 13988 Range Line Road in Niles on Saturday, November 4 from 10 am to 5 pm.

Get ready for a unique holiday shopping experience at the POP-UP event featuring the renowned Butter Bespoke Bakeshop along with twenty other curated vendors.

Fernwood Members get a free entry - all others may have to pay an entry fee.

Fernwood will also host LIGHTS at Fernwood from November 24 - January 6, 2024 from 6 - 9 pm

LIGHTS will magically illuminate evenings at Fernwood once again with a professionally designed show featuring two extraordinary light tunnels, three warm fire pits, a fun winter craft station,

nature-inspired light sculptures, festive music, and sounds, and more!

Visitors will make bright memories during the most magical garden lights Southwest Michigan offers this holiday season while enjoying hot chocolate, other seasonal drinks, snacks, and festive light-up merchandise for all ages!

Dowagiac Christmas Open House

On November 9, from 10 am - 5 pm Dowagiac shopkeepers offer special activities and cheer as they present their finest in holiday merchandise during Christmas Open House Weekend, Ascension Borgess-Lee Hospital and the Chamber will host the Dowagiac Christmas Celebration. Enjoy the relaxed pace of holiday shopping, the way it used to be.

Additionally, Theta Mu hosts their annual craft show at Dowagiac Middle School Saturday from 9 am to 3 pm.

Small Business Saturday

Celebrate Thanksgiving with friends and family. Then make the pledge to shop local on Small Business Saturday, November 25 beginning at 10 am.

Dowagiac welcomes everyone to specialty shops and restaurants to celebrate and support our friends and neighbors, and our locally-owned businesses.

Candlelight Christmas Parade

Kris Kringle returns to Dowagiac on Friday, December 1, in the Candlelight Christmas Parade from 7 to 9 pm, presented by Ascension Borgess-Lee Hospital, the Dowagiac Chamber of Commerce and the City of Dowagiac. In anticipation of the grand procession, South Front Street downtown is closed

to through traffic at 4 p.m. The parade steps off at Front and Main streets, heading north on Front Street then circling the downtown.

Niles-Buchanan Thanksgiving Run

The Niles-Buchanan YMCA will host a Thanksgiving Day Run on Thursday, Nov 23, beginning at 8 am at the Niles-Buchanan YMCA, 905 North Front St, Niles. For 40 years the Niles-Buchanan YMCA has hosted a Thanksgiving run in the community. It has become a tradition for many people who live or visit the Niles-Buchanan area at this time of year.

For more information contact the YMCA at 683-1552.

Ice Time Festival

On February 3, from 9 am to 4 pm, the Dowagiac Ice Time Festival will celebrate winter fun downtown. Watch ice carvers as they create works of art before your eyes. Gather 'round the campfire for warm and chocolaty s'mores and taste restaurant samples in our annual Chili Crawl. Be sure to arrive early for the Out of Hibernation promotions offered by downtown specialty shops.

The Chamber of Commerce hosts the winter arts festival. For more information call 782.8212.

Second Samuel at Beckwith

The Beckwith Theatre Company, 100 New York Ave. Dowagiac will present Second Samuel, a play by Pamela Parker on November 3 and 4 at 7:30 pm and on November 5 at 2 pm.

South Georgia, the 1940's, and a sleepy little town called Second Samuel. What had been called the Great Depression was quickly fading into mem-







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Regional News

ory. The war had been won, and the election was now over. The folks in Second Samuel were ready for things to settle down and get back to normal. Except—this was the summer Miss Gertrude passed away, and deep dark secrets were about to be revealed. Nobody could have imagined how the death of one sweet little old lady would turn the entire town upside down, leaving everybody in Second Samuel wondering if anything would ever be normal again!

For tickets visit https://buy.ticketstothecity.com/venue.php?org_id=733

For more information contact the theatre by email at BeckwithTheatreMI@gmail.com or call 269-782-7653.

B.R.A.V.O. Award honors winners

Cass County B.R.A.V.O. Award Celebration Kicked Off 4-H Week Kicking off National 4-H Week, the Cass County B.R.A.V.O. Award celebration was held Sunday, October 1, honoring the recipients from the 2023 Cass County Fair. Found only in Cass County, Michigan, the B.R.A.V.O. Award is one-of-a-kind; started in 2003 by 4-H Agent Neil Kenter and Patty Dohm. It was formulated to take the place of the dwindling Dowagiac Merchants' Award which had been in place for at least 40 years.

This award is given to 15 4-Hers that have exhibited a still exhibit project at the Cass County Fair that two teams of judges have deemed the very **Best Recognized Achievement, Validated Outstanding (BRAVO)**. This award does not have to be a Best of Show (the top award for still exhibits at this fair), although it can be. It goes much deeper



Front Row: Abigail Baker, Noah Devries, Wren Cultice. Back Row: Cade Parsons, Chloe Dennis, Isabelle Sullivan, Cheyenne Wilson.

than that ... it is a reflection of the person who created the project and embodies the 4-H motto to "Make the Best Better." Maybe they struggled horribly with the project in some way, but instead of giving up, pushed forward to accomplish what they set out to achieve; maybe they overcame an obstacle along the way, whether it was physical or emotional. Or maybe their character and personality showed through during their face-to-face interview that helped to illustrate their project even more than usual.

From those nominations a second team of judges selects only 15 recipients for the award. These projects are then moved to a prominent display area in the center of all the exhibits and awarded a special B.R.A.V.O. rosette. The recipients are treated to a presentation at some point after the fair where they are awarded a crystal trophy and enjoy a short program.

This year, recipients heard from Rennie Witham, past 4-H Coordinator for

Cass County who encouraged them "To continue to do things that you love and believe in, and believe in yourself."

The B.R.A.V.O. Award is totally dependent on the support of local individuals and clubs. This year's sponsors include: North Red Hill 4-H Club, Mechanicsburg 4-H Club, Charles & Bonnie McCarthy, Scott & Terri Wyman, Rennie Witham, and Patty Dohm.

This year's B.R.A.V.O. recipients are: Abigail Baker - Penn 4-H, project; Myleigh Borsman - 5-H 4-H, Creative Sewing; Levi Bryan - Cowboy Up, Gift Wrapping; Wren Cultice - Quality Kids & Critters, Jigsaw Puzzle; Chloe Dennis - Legacy 4-H, Construction & Engineering; Noah Devries - Legacy 4-H, Construction & Engineering; Harmony Dohm - 4-W 4-H, Blueberry Pie; Noah Krager-Legacy 4-H, Photography; Quianna Murray-T.E.A.M., Youth Memory Album; Cade Parsons - Penn 4-H, Cartooning; Adrian Sedlar- 4-Kids 4-H, Other Crafts; Isabelle Sullivan - Kids-n-Kids, Tin Punch; Ann Thomas - M-40 Hustlers, Fairy Garden; Zoey Wilds -Creative Kids, Glass/Plastic Craft; and Cheyenne Wilson -4-W 4-H, Sand Art.

DLA recognizes Cass Kickstart

On October 9 at the board meeting of Cass Kickstart, Joannie Murray of the Diamond Lake Association presented a check for \$1,500 to Margie Yarger, Board President.

The Diamond Lake Association is focused on overseeing the health and safety of the lake, including water quality, invasive weed control, boater education and certification. In addition, since



2022 "Diamond Better" has been the focus of the association by promoting community events on the lake and in the Village of Cassopolis. Through these volunteer efforts in 2023 they were able to donate a portion of event proceeds to Cass Kickstart to Careers.

Cass Kickstart to Careers was organized to create, promote, support, and fund child savings accounts for students of the Cassopolis Public Schools. They work in conjunction with the schools to provide an environment that sends a message to all students that they have the potential and the support needed for academic success and economic mobility. Children's savings accounts are long-term, incentivized savings accounts that provide our children with a pathway towards long-term educational attainment and economic empowerment. Run by a volunteer board, Cass Kickstart partners with other local organizations including Circle Federal Credit Union and Southwestern Michigan College. Several area businesses and individuals have made a five year financial pledge to Cass Kickstart.

If you would like to become a supporter of Cass kickstart, contact a board member at info@casskickstart.com. Additional information can be found at www.casskickstart.com.

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AREA EVENTS

Nov 3, 4, 5 - Second Samuel, Beckwith Theatre Company, 100 New York Ave., Dowagiac, 7:30 pm on Nov. 3 and 4, 2 pm on Nov. 5, 782-7653

Nov 4 - POP-UP Butter Bakeshop & Handsewn Fiber Arts, Fernwood Botanical Garden, 13988 Range Line Rd., Niles, 10 am - 5 pm

Nov 9 - Dowagiac Christmas Open House weekend, 10 am - 5 pm, D

Nov 10, 11 - Christmas Open House Weekend & Theta Mu Craft Show, 10 am - 5 pm, Dowagiac, <https://www.dowagiacchamber.com/events/upcoming-events>

Nov 10, 11 - Dr. TK Lawless International Dark Sky Park open for night viewing

Nov 11 - St. Paul Lutheran Church, 305 W. State St., Cassopolis, annual **Holiday Potpourri Bazaar**, 9 am - 2 pm, 782-7484, jennygischoof@hotmail.com

Nov 11, 25 - Indoor farmers market, The Vault, 105 Broadway, Cassopolis, 10 am - 1 pm

Nov 23 - Niles-Buchanan YMCA Thanksgiving Day Run, 683-1552

Nov 24-Jan 6 - LIGHTS at Fernwood, Fernwood Botanical Garden, 13988 Range Line Rd., Niles, 10 6-9 pm

Nov 25 -Small Business Saturday, <https://www.dowagiacchamber.com/events/upcoming-events>

Dec 1 - Dowagiac Candlelight Christmas Parade, 7 - 9 pm

Dec 2 - Christmas in Cassopolis
Dec 10 - Candlelight Christmas Parade, 7-9 pm, Dowagiac, <https://www.dowagiacchamber.com/events/upcoming-events>

Jan 13 - Miss Dowagiac Scholarship Pageant, 7-9 pm, <https://www.dowagiacchamber.com/events/upcoming-events>

Jan 27 (2024) - Stone Lake Fishing Tournament

Feb 3 - Ice Time Festival, Dowagiac, <https://www.dowagiacchamber.com/events/upcoming-events>

CASS DISTRICT LIBRARY November Programs 2023

For a complete list of June programs and events at the Cass District Library branches, visit their website at <https://www.cassdistrictlibrary.org/events-programs/>

T'AI CHI WITH ALYSE KNEPPLE, MASON/ UNION BRANCH, MONDAYS: 11 am. Join Alyse Knepple at the Mason/Union Branch for T'ai Chi. T'ai Chi is a series of gentle physical exercises and stretches. Alyse will offer a free introductory class, followed by four weekly classes which will cost \$40.

LEGO @ THE LIBRARY, EDWARDSBURG BRANCH, NOV 4: 9:30 am -

12:30 pm. Patrons ages 5-17 are welcome to put their building skills to the test. Come to the library the first Saturday of every month for an open build time with the library's LEGO bricks and elements.

BOARD GAMES AND BAGELS, NOV. 4, 11, 18, 10 am - Noon. Kids, teens, and families are invited to drop in any Saturday morning for a board game bonanza! Card games and puzzles are available too, or bring your own to play with others. Bagels will be provided!

AFTER-SCHOOL MAKER, EDWARDSBURG BRANCH. 2nd & 4th MONDAYS: 2:30 pm. Enjoy creative expression through arts and crafts! Whether it be an art project, STEAM activity or mixed media craft, materials will be available for you to express your creativity and explore your artistic pursuits! Intended for ages 12- 18.

GEAR UP FOR BACKYARD BIRD FEEDING, MASON/ UNION BRANCH, NOV. 6, 6 pm. Learn about the backyard birds that will be visiting your feeder this winter! Mix up a batch of suet dough for a make and take treat for your avian visitors. This program is open to all ages. Allergen note: suet dough contains peanut butter.

ADULT CRAFT CLUB*, MAIN BRANCH, NOV. 8, 1 pm. Join us each month for a new craft project at the Main Branch. This month make a DIY felt leaf wreath, perfect for indoor decor! Registration is required, please contact Stephanie Knepple at 269-749-1384 to register.

LIFE AS A SUBMARINER: VETERAN'S DAY PROGRAM HOWARD BRANCH, NOV. 10, 10 am. Have you ever wondered what it's like to live on a subma-

rine? In honor of Veteran's Day, join us for an informative presentation by Jim Braden. Learn about his life and times aboard the USS Casimir Pulaski. All ages are welcome!

VILLAGE BOOK CLUB, EDWARDSBURG BRANCH, NOV 16, 5:30 pm. Village Book Club meets every third Thursday of the month at 5:30pm. Join us for a book discussion of The Round House by Louise Erdrich in honor of National Native American Heritage Month. Contact Molly Harwood at 574-314-6454 for more details.

HOLIDAY MARKET, MAIN BRANCH, NOV. 18, 9 am - 1 pm. Enjoy an afternoon of holiday shopping and browsing at the Third annual Holiday Market! Join us at the Main Branch to see what local area vendors have to offer this holiday season. If you're interested in being a vendor at the holiday market please contact Stephanie Knepple at 269-749-1384 for more details.

SAVAGE READERS BOOK CLUB, SAVAGE BEAN COFFEE CO., NOV. 21, 9 am. Enjoy a fresh cup of coffee and book discussion every third Tuesday of the month! Join Savage Readers Book Club hosted by Cass District Library and Savage Bean Co. This month we will be reading The Authenticity Project by Claire Pooley. Please contact Stephanie Knepple at 269-749-1384 for more details.

MANDALA PAINTING*, EDWARDSBURG BRANCH, NOV. 30, 5:30 pm. Get creative while learning mandala art! Participants will create a mandala using a stencil, paints, and mandala dotting tools. This class is intended for teens and adults. Registration is required, please call 269-487-9214 to register.

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Regional Calendar

Dowagiac District Library November Programs 2023

Make & Share Cookbook Club, Nov. 2, 5:30 - 6:30 pm. The Make & Share Cookbook Club is held on the first Thursday of the month. Make a recipe from the monthly cookbook selection, then join us at the library for a recipe share & book discussion. In November, we are making recipes from the cookbook *Half Baked Harvest: Every Day* by Tieghan Gerard. To reserve your spot, call the library or email (Att: Erin) at dowagiaclibrarystaff@gmail.com

Preschool Story Time, Nov 7, 10:30 AM - 11:30 AM. The Dowagiac District Library offers this weekly story time each Tuesday at 10:30 am. Preschool Story Time is geared toward children 3-5 years old and will focus on developing early literacy skills and fine motor skills through listening to one or two stories and participating in fun-filled age appropriate crafts and/or learning activities.

Teen Tuesday: BINGO, Nov 7, 3-4:00 pm. BINGO! "B-4" you say BINGO is boring, give it a try! Winners receive snacks and/or candy prizes! Teen Tuesdays are for teens 6th through 12th grade and meet each Tuesday at 3 pm in the Pokagon Room on the second level of the library.

Story Squad, Nov 9, 5:30- 6:30 pm. Children 6-9 are invited to join Story Squad, a new book club where an age-appropriate novel will be read aloud with a discussion to follow. Kids are encouraged to attend weekly so they won't miss part of the story!

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.

Preschool Story Time, Nov 14. The Dowagiac District Library offers this weekly story time each Tuesday at 10:30 am. Preschool Story Time is geared toward children 3-5 years old and will focus on developing early literacy skills and fine motor skills through listening to one or two stories and participating in fun-filled age appropriate crafts and/or learning activities.

Teen Tuesday: Teen Cooking 101*, Nov 14, 3-4 pm. Quesadillas: Teens will be making quesadillas this month. Great as an after school snack or a meal. *Registration is required for this event. Sign up in the youth department by Friday, November 4. Teen Tuesdays are for teens 6th through 12th grade and meet each Tuesday at 3 pm in the Pokagon Room on the second level of the library.

Story Squad, Nov 16, 5:30-6:30 pm. Children 6-9 are invited to join Story Squad, a new book club where an age-appropriate novel will be read aloud with a discussion to follow. Kids are encouraged to attend weekly so they won't miss part of the story!

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.

TBR Book Club for Teens, Nov 18, noon-1 pm, November Book: *The Ballad of Songbirds & Snakes* by Suzanne Collins, *The Hunger Games* prequel! This story takes place before the events of the original *Hunger Games* trilogy and it follows President Snow before he was president, while he is a teen, during the 10th annu-

al *Hunger Games*. You do not have to read the original trilogy in order to enjoy this story! Read it now before the movie comes out on November 17! The TBR (Teen Book Review) Book Club is for teens 13-18 years old. The club features a YA (young adult) novel each month. Teens register and pick up their copy of the month's selection at the beginning of the month and then meet and discuss the book on the last Saturday of the month. For more information, stop by the Youth Services desk located on the second floor of the library.

Preschool Story Time, Nov 21, 10:30-11:30 am. The Dowagiac District Library offers this weekly story time each Tuesday at 10:30 am. Preschool Story Time is geared toward children 3-5 years old and will focus on developing early literacy skills and fine motor skills through listening to one or two stories and participating in fun-filled age appropriate crafts and/or learning activities.

Teen Tuesday: Arts & Crafts, Nov 21, 3-4 pm. Rock Painting: We will be painting rock with a fall theme. Teens will be able to paint their rock with a design of their choosing. Teen Tuesdays are for teens 6th through 12th grade and meet each Tuesday at 3 pm in the Pokagon Room on the second level of the library.

Preschool Story Time, Nov 28, 10:30-11:30 am. The Dowagiac District Library offers this weekly story time each Tuesday at 10:30 am. Preschool Story Time is geared toward children 3-5 years old and will focus on developing early literacy skills and fine motor skills through listening to one or two stories and participating in fun-filled age appropriate crafts and/or learning activities.

Teen Tuesday: S.T.E.M., Nov 28, 3-4 pm. Teens will be using their S.T.E.M. skills to build

a Da Vinci Bridge with popsicle sticks. Teen Tuesdays are for teens 6th through 12th grade and meet each Tuesday at 3 pm in the Pokagon Room on the second level of the library.

Story Squad, Nov 30, 5:30-6:30 pm. Children 6-9 are invited to join Story Squad, a new book club where an age-appropriate novel will be read aloud with a discussion to follow. Kids are encouraged to attend weekly so they won't miss part of the story!

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.

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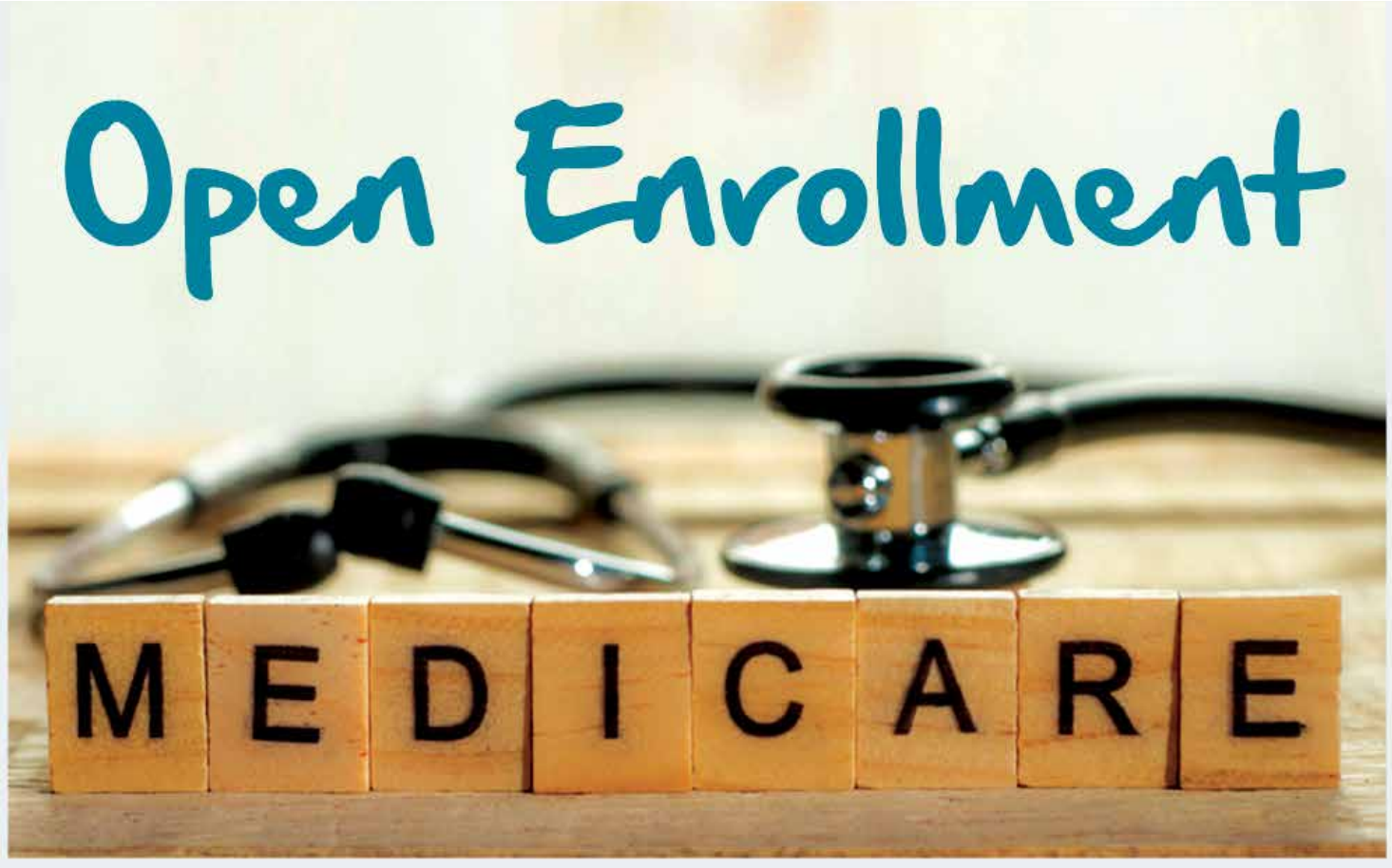
It's open enrollment time

By **Kerry Davis**
Kemner, Iott, Benz Agency

It's that time of year when we talk about health insurance ... open enrollment time. For some, that can be an intimidating thought. For that reason, it often gets set aside to look at when we have more time, and then we end up scrambling to make quick decisions that could end up being quite costly.

Following are some tips to navigate the healthcare enrollment process and to avoid common mistakes:

- Take time to review all the options. There could be HMOs, PPOs, and/or high deductible plans.
- If there is a network of providers, make sure your primary care physician and any other specialists you regularly see are on the list.
- Estimate your healthcare needs- this would include your medical history, your children's medical needs or even that you may be planning to start a family in 2024.
- Review the plan details carefully- beyond the simple monthly premiums, make sure to consider the out-of-pocket maximums, copays and deductibles. Paying a higher monthly premium could save you money down the road or if you are healthy all year, spending less monthly may be the way to go for you.
- Remember to check prescription drug coverage, especially if you take prescription medication regularly. Make sure the plan covers them and look at the pricing.
- Avoid enrollment errors by making deadlines and updating information.



- Consider a Health Savings Account or Flexible Spending Account if they are available.
 - Dental and vision are sometimes separate, so you may have to check in to those individually.
- Like most insurance, health insurance is not always something we like to

think about or make decisions on, but it's necessary at the same time. We obviously can't predict everything that may happen to us in the upcoming year, but we can make a plan for the things we know for sure. There is no right answer, and our circumstances may change year to year. You know you the best. That is why it is

important to start early. Don't wait until the last minute to begin researching and comparing plans. Remember, our health may be influenced by age, diet, exercise habits and stress. We can't stop the aging part, but we can be less stressed by being more prepared to make informed decisions.

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For the Table

Thanksgiving basics from the archives

A Thanksgiving table wouldn't be complete without a few favorite recipes from the past. Here are a few of our favorite basic recipes!

Honey-Glazed Turkey



Total Time Prep: 25 min. Bake: 3-3/4 hours
Makes 20 servings (8 cups stuffing)

Ingredients

1 turkey (14 to 16 pounds)
Glaze:
1/2 cup honey
1/2 cup Dijon mustard
1-1/2 teaspoons dried rosemary, crushed
1 teaspoon onion powder
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon garlic powder
1/4 teaspoon pepper

Stuffing:

1/2 cup butter, cubed
2 cups chopped onion
1-1/2 cups chopped celery
12 cups unseasoned stuffing cubes or dry bread cubes
1 tablespoon poultry seasoning
2 teaspoons chicken bouillon granules
1 teaspoon pepper
1 teaspoon dried rosemary, crushed
1 teaspoon lemon-pepper seasoning
3/4 teaspoon salt
3-1/4 to 3-3/4 cups boiling water

Directions

Preheat oven to 325°. Place turkey on a rack in a shallow roasting pan, breast side up. Tuck wings under turkey; tie drumsticks together. Bake for 2 hours. In a small bowl, mix glaze ingredients; brush over turkey. Bake 1-3/4 to 2-1/4 hours longer or until a thermometer inserted in thickest part of thigh reads 170°-175°. Baste occasionally with pan drippings. (Cover loosely with foil if turkey browns too quickly.) For stuffing, in a Dutch oven, heat butter over medium-high heat. Add onion and celery; cook and stir until tender. Add stuffing cubes and seasonings; toss to combine. Stir in enough boiling water to reach desired moistness; transfer to a greased 13x9-in. baking dish. Bake, covered, for 1 hour. Uncover and bake until lightly browned, 10-15 minutes longer. Remove turkey from oven; cover loosely with foil and let stand 15 minutes before carving. If desired, skim fat and thicken pan drippings for gravy. Serve with turkey and stuffing.

Honey-Glazed Turkey Tips

How do I make my turkey golden brown?

The caramelization of the sugars in the honey glaze will naturally help make the turkey golden brown in this recipe.

But you can also apply a layer of fat (olive oil, canola or vegetable oil, or softened butter) across the skin of the entire turkey prior to baking to roast it up golden and seal in moisture at the same time. While a golden bird is just one of the results you're after, check out our full guide to find even more tips on how to cook turkey to perfection. Can I change the flavor of the glaze?

You can easily switch up the flavor of the turkey's glaze to your tastes! Keep the salt and pepper as the base seasonings, then experiment with different spices and spice blends in place of the garlic powder, onion powder and rosemary. Try swapping in molasses for the honey for a deeper, richer flavor, or go for a honey-citrus glaze or an herb-glazed turkey too. How do you thicken or thin the glaze?

One quick, easy way to either thicken or thin a glaze is to apply heat. If the glaze seems too thick, place it in a saucepan over low heat, stirring until it is of a thinner consistency that will be easier to brush onto your turkey. On the other hand, if the glaze is too thin, heat the mixture over low to medium heat until it gently bubbles and evaporates a bit, stirring constantly (so it does not burn) until the liquid has reduced a little and reaches the desired thickness.

Nutrition Facts

7 ounces cooked turkey with about 1/3 cup stuffing: 464 calories, 14g fat (6g saturated fat), 133mg cholesterol, 794mg sodium, 32g carbohydrate (9g sugars, 2g fiber), 51g protein.

Duo Tater Bake



Total Time Prep: 40 min. Bake: 20 min.
Makes 2 casseroles (10 servings each)

Ingredients

4 pounds russet or Yukon Gold potatoes, peeled and cubed
3 pounds sweet potatoes, peeled and cubed
2 cartons (8 ounces each) spreadable chive and onion cream cheese, divided
1 cup sour cream, divided
1/4 cup shredded Colby-Monterey Jack cheese
1/3 cup 2% milk
1/4 cup shredded Parmesan cheese
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon pepper
topping:
1 cup shredded Colby-Monterey Jack cheese
1/2 cup chopped green onions
1/4 cup shredded Parmesan cheese

Directions

Place russet potatoes in a Dutch oven and cover with water. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat; cover and cook until tender,

10-15 minutes. Meanwhile, place sweet potatoes in a large saucepan; cover with water. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat; cover and cook until tender, 10-15 minutes. Drain; mash with 1 carton cream cheese, 1/2 cup sour cream and 1/4 cup Colby-Monterey Jack cheese.

Drain russet potatoes; mash with the remaining carton cream cheese and 1/2 cup sour cream. Stir in the milk, Parmesan cheese, salt and pepper.

Spread 1-1/3 cups russet potato mixture into each of 2 greased 11x7-in. baking dishes. Layer each with 2 cups sweet potato mixture. Repeat layers. Spread with remaining russet potato mixture.

Bake, uncovered, at 350° until heated through, about 15 minutes. Combine topping ingredients; sprinkle over casseroles. Bake until cheese is melted, 2-3 minutes longer.

Nutrition Facts

3/4 cup: 236 calories, 12g fat (8g saturated fat), 38mg cholesterol, 246mg sodium, 25g carbohydrate (7g sugars, 2g fiber), 5g protein.

Spiced Cranberry Sauce



Total Time Prep: 5 min. Cook: 30 min. + chilling
Makes 2 cups

Ingredients

1 package (12 ounces) fresh or frozen cranberries
1-3/4 cups sugar
1/2 cup water
1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon ground allspice
1/8 teaspoon salt
1/8 teaspoon ground ginger
1/8 teaspoon ground cloves

Directions

In a large saucepan, combine all ingredients. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat; simmer, uncovered, until the berries pop and mixture is thickened, about 30 minutes. Cool. Transfer to a serving bowl; cover and refrigerate until chilled.

Sweet Potato Pie

Total Time Prep: 30 min. Bake: 50 min. + cooling
Makes 8 servings

Ingredients

Dough for single-crust pie
2 medium sweet potatoes (about 1-1/2 pounds), peeled and cubed
1/3 cup butter, softened
1/2 cup sugar
2 large eggs, room temperature, lightly beaten

3/4 cup evaporated milk
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon ground nutmeg
1/4 teaspoon salt
Whipped cream, optional

Directions

Preheat oven to 425°. On a lightly floured surface, roll dough to a 1/8-in.-thick circle; transfer to a 9-in. pie plate. Trim crust to 1/2 in. beyond rim of plate; flute edge. Refrigerate while preparing filling.

Place sweet potatoes in a medium saucepan; add water to cover. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat; cook, uncovered, until tender, 13-15 minutes. Drain potatoes; return to pan. Mash until very smooth; cool to room temperature.

In a bowl, cream butter and sugar. Add eggs; mix well. Add milk, 2 cups mashed sweet potatoes, vanilla, cinnamon, nutmeg and salt; mix well. Pour into crust. Bake for 15 minutes. Reduce heat to 350°; bake until set or a knife inserted in the center comes out clean, 35-40 minutes. Cool on a wire rack. If desired, serve with whipped cream. Refrigerate leftovers.

Sweet Potato Pie Tips

Can you freeze sweet potato pie?

Yes, you can freeze sweet potato pie. Keep in mind that the texture may change slightly. To freeze a pie, let it cool completely before tightly wrapping it in a few layers of plastic wrap. Then, wrap it in foil or place the pie in an airtight freezer container. You can freeze this sweet potato pie for up to 3 months. To thaw the pie, place it in the refrigerator overnight.

How do you reheat sweet potato pie?

If reheating the pie directly from the freezer, place the frozen pie on a baking sheet (brush off any frost) and heat at 300°F for 40 to 50 minutes. If your sweet potato pie has thawed from frozen in your refrigerator, place the chilled pie on a baking sheet and bake at 300° for about 30 minutes. In both cases, insert the tip of a knife into the center of the pie to see if the pie has warmed through.

Nutrition Facts

1 piece: 372 calories, 18g fat (9g saturated fat), 86mg cholesterol, 300mg sodium, 48g carbohydrate (25g sugars, 2g fiber), 6g protein.



Our Children

Help for low grades

by **SANDY FLEMING**

Most families are receiving the first progress reports or report cards of the year in early November. How is your student doing? Grades are a pretty good indicator of how well your student is keeping up with his or her peers in learning. If everything is in the A-B range, there are likely no big concerns at this time. However, if you see lots of Cs, or worse, lots of Ds and Fs, then it's time to take some action to help.

There are lots of possible reasons for low grades, and the first step is to find out what is going on. Go directly to the sources, and ask both your student and the teacher about why the grades are below expectations.

Possible causes include:

- The student does not understand or remember the concepts.
- The student is not turning in homework or class work on time or at all.
- The student does well on homework but has a hard time with tests.
- The student is not studying adequately outside of class.
- The student is not following directions or finishing tasks
- The student is struggling with foundational skills that are needed for present learning.
- The student has an undiagnosed condition, like ADHD or a learning disability, that is interfering with learning. Notice that one thing that is not on this list is motivation/behavior. Within my experience, EVERY student wants to succeed, at least at first. It's only after months or even years of repeated failure that the motivation goes away and the student's behavior becomes troublesome.

The knee-jerk response to low grades is to punish by taking away devices or privileges. The kid got an F? Take the cell phone away! Two Ds on the report card? No TV for the next 9 weeks! Chances are good that if your child has had worrisome grades, you have tried these strategies. Did they work? If the subsequent report cards are acceptable, then wonderful and grand – you have one of the rare students who can pull themselves out of a slump.

However, you have likely removed privileges before, right? And the grades are still low? Or they go up for the next report card, then drop again like a yo-yo? Let's try some new strategies, then. They will take a bit of work on both your part and the part of your student, but they are well worth the time and energy. Even if it takes a few marking periods to turn things around, choose some of these strategies to try.

Monitor Performance at Home

Most districts have a version of the online gradebook, especially for middle and high school students. Younger kids may be using a planner. Keep a close eye on which assignments are missing, and which have low grades that are not zeros. Find out what the concepts were and help your child practice them more at home.

One strategy to help get the work home to do it is to require 'homework time' no matter what, every day. Set a specific amount of time that your student is expected to work on academic tasks, put it on a schedule, and enforce it. Set the time up so that the first prior-



ity is to complete any outstanding work from class, and then provide him or her with additional practice, like time on a learning site like Khan Academy or worksheets that you can print out from the Internet or a grade-level workbook from your favorite bookstore. Once kids realize they have to do "work" at home each night no matter what, it sometimes magically motivates them to bring assignments home when needed. They might as well get the school grades! The flip side – when you do not require daily work time – means that students are rewarded for neglecting their assignments. If they forget their assignments or supplies, they get free time as an immediate reward. Break that cycle, and your student might become more consistent about turning in homework.

Another helpful strategy is to provide checklists and other visual tools to reward students when they accomplish school tasks. There is a whole group of skills called executive function skills that are required for success in school. These are things like planning, setting goals, remembering the order of steps in a process, and so forth. Sometimes these skills are not yet developed in students. You can help by providing a framework for success. Give your student a written checklist of what needs to come home each night. Use a sticker or a star chart to mark off when the student accomplishes this task, and reward success over time. Help your child stay organized with folders, and make sure all needed materials are gathered and packed before bedtime instead of before the bus in the morning.

Success with Homework

When homework is a struggle, it's easy to just throw in the towel and give up. Here are some ideas to help the homework become a tool for success instead of a nightmare.

Set up a homework routine that is enforced daily without fail. This should be a time when an adult can monitor, especially for younger students.

Go over the directions for the assignment together. Have the student rephrase them to tell you what he or she is supposed to do. If it's a big assignment, like a presentation or a report, help your student set up a timeline for milestones along the way to completion,

like research, organizing, drafting, and proofreading.

Avoid doing the problems for the student. It's easy for kids to make a habit of saying they don't quite understand, and need you to work one more problem as another example. Before you know it, they have not managed to do a single practice problem on their own. Instead, if your student needs more examples, try making up similar problems or finding them on the Internet. Practice on these non-school-assigned problems, then have the student complete the actual assignment independently.

Teach some study strategies. Kids are often in overwhelm mode with assignments like "learn these 20 vocabulary words." Simple strategies like making flashcards or highlighting text can help them take action to improve their own performance.

Make a habit of having your student tell you, or better yet, write down a few sentences about what was learned in each subject that day. You can even do this several times a week. There will be multiple benefits! You will keep up with the content so you can guide your student. Your student will be calling the information back and so better remember it. If he or she writes it down like a journal, the record will serve as a mini study guide to prepare for the next test.

Keep It Moving with Fun and Games

Homework time does not have to be boring! Try having the students set challenges for themselves, like finishing 10 problems in 30 minutes. Can they break their old record? Or race to complete a task of your own in the time allotted for their work.

Take breaks from homework every half hour or so. A brain break should be short – 3 to 5 minutes of stretching, solving a puzzle, playing with a fidget toy, or something similar. Then get right back to work.


If there are multiple tasks to be done, assign a number to each, then roll a die to see which should be done next. You can also flip coins or pull playing cards. Any tool to randomize the choice will be fine because it will eliminate the paralysis of "I don't know where to start!"

Save five or ten minutes at the end of homework time to play learning games. They abound on the Internet, and there are also many, many apps for phones and tablets. In addition, you can play games such as math fact war, where you turn over playing cards and either multiply or add them to see who has the highest total. Just make the time count for academic practice as you play.

Get Extra Help If You Need It

No one wants kids to struggle endlessly through 13 years of school! If your child is still having trouble after you've giving helping at home your best shot, it's time to talk to the teacher. Get suggestions from him or her. If the situation does not resolve in a few more weeks, it may be time to request an evaluation from the school to see if your student will benefit from specialized education services. No one should be spending every waking minute on homework and still getting failing grades. In fact, no one should be spending every waking moment on homework at all. It's a red flag that your child needs help, and you can be your child's best advocate.

Sandy Fleming is a private tutor and writer in Edwardsburg. Get more ideas to help students learn at her websites: <http://learningnook.com> and <http://sandyflemingonline.com>



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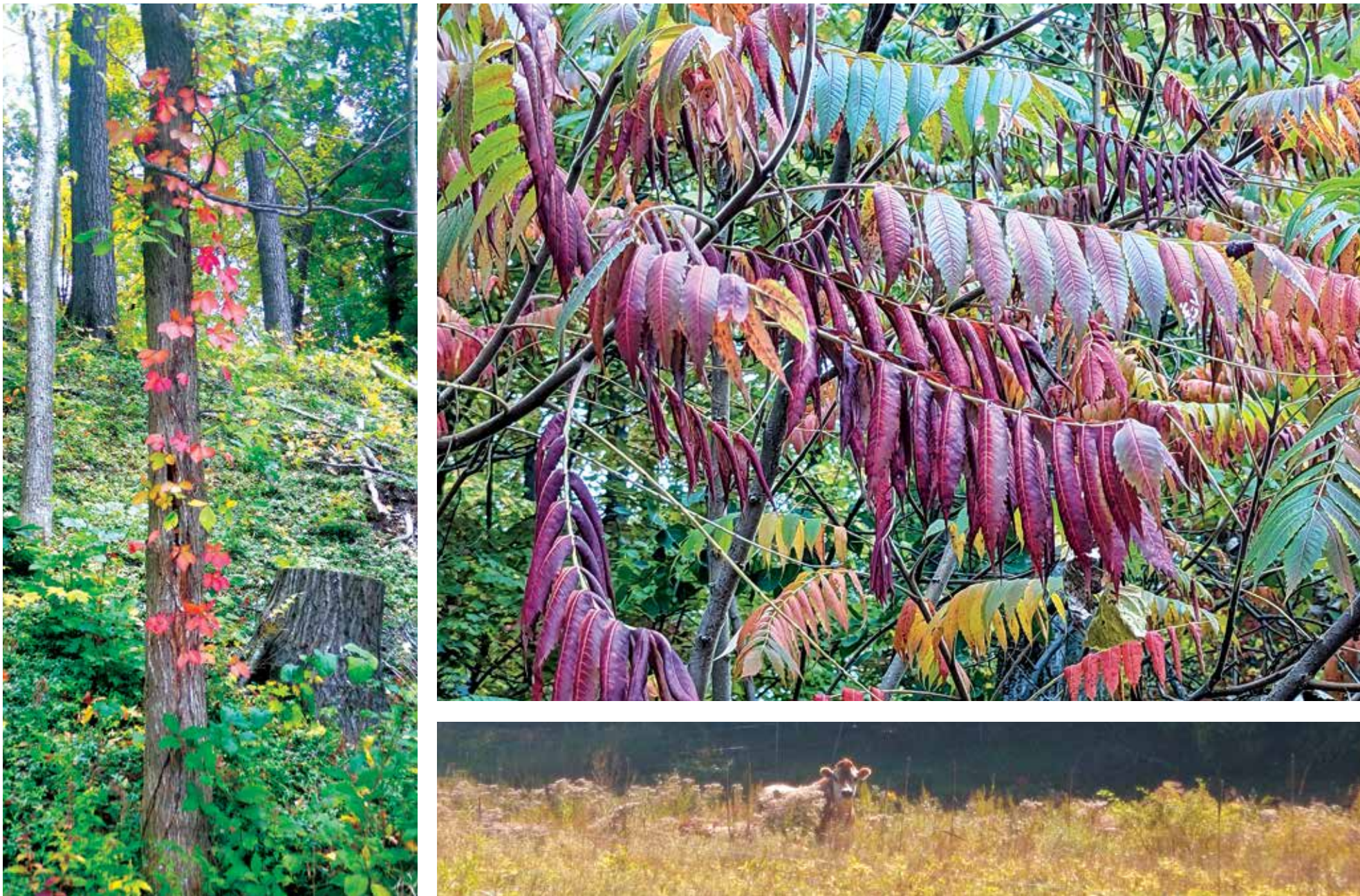
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Historic Postcards

Historic postcards depict rich scenes of area's past

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

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

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

in its second printing by the publisher, Arcadia Publishing.

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

For more information or to get a copy of Jerdon's book, visit the website: www.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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Nature Notes

Fall wildlife visits southwestern Michigan

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

During the afternoon of September 16, a seemingly injured American bittern was found by several individuals near the entrance of the Edgewater Dunes development in St. Joseph. According to Nancy Hourigan who lives near to where the bittern was found injured, people stopped and "Moved it to the garden (from the road) at the subdivision entrance." The bittern was then taken to West Michigan Wildlife Center in Grand Rapids.

Allyson Swanson at the West Michigan Wildlife Center reported the bittern had no broken or fractured bones. Swanson says the bittern was then transferred to the Wildside Rehabilitation and Education Center near Eaton Rapids that is better equipped for larger birds.

After the bittern had been sent to Wildside Rehab, it initially would not take food, but eventually began eating on its own, according to Darlene Smith who works at the facility. Smith says the bittern "is doing very well" and will be kept at the facility over the winter during which time it will fully regain its strength and body mass and be released in the spring.

American bitterns are in the heron family and are smaller than a great blue heron and larger than a green heron. The species prefers cattail marshes in which to forage for food and nest, and it often conceals itself among the cattails in a cryptic pose by pointing its bill upward.

The American bittern that was found injured in St. Joseph was undoubtedly a southbound migrant and not a resident bird. The species was much more common in our region during the early part of the 20th Century. In "Michigan Bird Life" (1912) by Walter Barrows, the American bittern was called "one of the most abundant of our waders, and well known to every gunman who hunts snipes or ducks." In the 1970s I recall viewing the species for the first time in a cattail marsh in the area that is today the Harbor Shores development of Benton Harbor. The American bittern has practically disappeared as a breeding species from the southern half of the Lower Peninsula primarily due to habitat loss.

The average fall departure date of the American bittern from Berrien County is not known due to so few fall records. Statewide most American bitterns begin migrating south during September and migration continues into October. There are old records of the American bittern being shot for sport in the St. Joseph Benton Harbor marshes in November during the 1870s and 1880s.

The species winters in the southeast US and Mexico.

Jim Bluschke of St. Joseph Township reports that a gray tree frog has been living inside his grill cover for the past six weeks. Every time Bluschke uses his grill, which is three or four times per week, he relocates the frog to the concrete slab next to the garage. But then the frog crawls up the brick wall of Bluschke's house and remains there until he recovers the grill (and it cools

Right: American bittern, found stunned, on September 16 near the entrance to the Edgewater Dunes development in St. Joseph. It ultimately wound up at the Wildside Rehabilitation and Education Center near Eaton Rapids where it continues to recover. Photo by Nancy Hourigan of St. Joseph.



Above: Ruby-throated hummingbird inspects an orange fungus growing out of a wooden lawn chair arm, September 18, Lincoln Township. Photo by Steven Ruff.

Below: Gray tree frog, October 2, on Jim Bluschke's brick wall, St. Joseph Township. Photo by Jim Bluschke.



down).

Gray tree frogs can be gray, green or brown and can change between various shades of either of these colors. Come late October or early November, this species will hibernate in leaf litter or rotten wood. Gray tree frogs come out of hibernation in southern Michigan during April after warm rains.



As of this writing the last reported ruby-throated hummingbird in Southwest Michigan this fall was a single individual present on October 15-16 at the hummingbird feeders of Brad and Hannah Anderson, Bridgman. I am interested in receiving any hummingbird reports after October 20 from Southwest Michigan. Hummingbirds present in our

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region after October 20 are noteworthy because they may be a species other than our common and expected ruby-throated hummingbird. Please provide a photo if possible.

Please report your wildlife sightings to Jonathan Wuepper at wuepperj@gmail.com.

Local History

A brief history of Prospect Hill Cemetery

Provided by Jonathan Wuepper
Manager Local History Branch
Cass District Library

According to the "History of Cass County" by Walter Matthews (1882), the first death within the village of Cassopolis was that of Jason R. Coates, occurring on August 7, 1832. He was killed when the horse he was riding became unmanageable, running away with him, dashing Mr. Coates against a tree.

Immediately after Mr. Coates' death, a village lot was chosen and set apart by Elias B. Sherman for a burial place.

I recently visited the grave of Jason R. Coates and family and photographed the granite monument marking the site which I have included with this article. It is located near the south boundary of the original portion of Prospect Hill Cemetery.

The original portion of Prospect Hill Cemetery is roughly two acres in size and is located southwest of the intersection of Cemetery and Disbrow Streets. Many pioneer residents of the village and LaGrange Township are buried in this portion of the graveyard. At the time of the establishment of the original portion of the cemetery, Cemetery Street represented the northern limit of the village boundary.

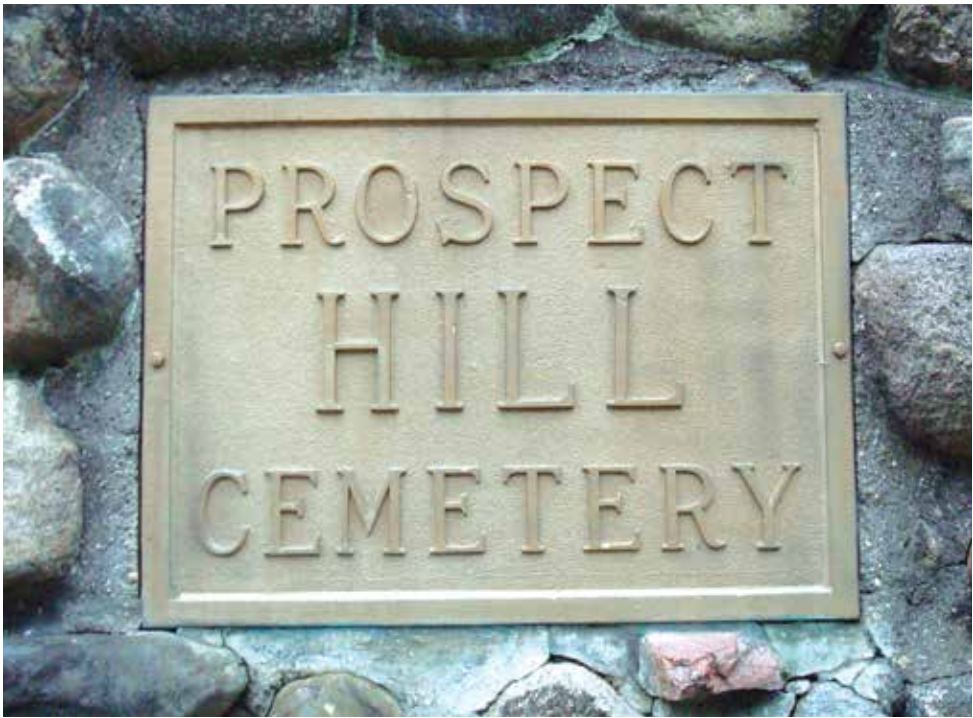
The village of Cassopolis grew slowly and so did its cemetery in the years preceding the Civil War. Matthews notes: "the burying-ground was enlarged subsequent to 1840, by the addition of several lots, donated by the Court House Company."

I found an interesting item related to the subject of the cemetery, while scanning issues of the "National Democrat" newspaper on microfilm, published at Cassopolis, dated July 12, 1864:

Notice is hereby given to all who are interested in the burial ground in the village of Cassopolis, that a meeting will be held at the Court House on the evening of the 18th of July, for the purpose of considering what shall be done to protect the graves of the dead.

MANY CITIZENS.
Cassopolis, July 11, 1864.

In the following week's issue of the "Democrat," dated July 19, 1864, it was reported in part that the meeting was:



Above: Bronze plaque at the entrance to Prospect Hill Cemetery. The rock pillar on which it is placed has a twin on the other side of Cemetery Street. Photo by Jonathan T. Wuepper, October 17, 2023.

Above right: Monument stone for Jason R. Coates (& family), first death in Cassopolis, August 7, 1832 and first burial in Prospect Hill Cemetery. Photo by Jonathan T. Wuepper, October 17, 2023.

Right: Prospect Hill Cemetery Outhouse. Built 1870s. Photo taken in 1980 and used in the book: "Historical Reflections of Cass County" by the Cass County Historical Commission. Photo in archive collections of Cass District Library.

called for the purpose of doing something to prevent the burial grounds from being converted into a pasture lot, and being desecrated by the cattle and hogs remaining about and overturning tombstones and destroying shrubbery &c. It was found that in attempting to organize a cemetery corporation there would be some difficulty about the title and some other legal questions, a committee was therefore appointed, consisting of A. E. Peck, Rev. E. B. Sherwood, S. F. Anderson — Morse, and D. M. Howell to secure a deed of the ground if possible, and keep the fence in repair in the meantime, and to meet at the Court House next Monday evening at early candle light.

No information could be found regarding subsequent meetings in 1864 regarding the cemetery. All historical accounts indicate that the cemetery did not come under the control and management of the village until 1879.

More additions to the cemetery were made in 1879 when the village purchased three and a quarter acres from E. Ritner Graham estate. In about 1900, 40 acres was added to the northeast side of the cemetery being purchased from Esco P. Wagor. Around the time of World War One, or just after, the "Lyle Addition" was purchased which comprises the cemetery's southwest portion. In April 1942, Mr. & Mrs. Isaac R. Shurte donated five acres on the west side of Prospect Hill Cemetery.

When you enter Prospect Hill Cemetery from Cemetery Street you will pass two pillars constructed of rock on either side of the street. On both pillars are bronze plaques that read: "Prospect Hill Cemetery". According to the Cassopolis Vigilant, when these pillars were constructed in 1924, they were "tubed for electric lighting", but I have never seen a photograph of them sporting lights.

Finally, the longest lived person buried in Prospect Hill Cemetery is Mary



Earnest who died on June 25, 1871 at the age of 109 years and 7 months. She also holds the distinction of being the oldest born person buried in the cemetery, having been born in colonial Pennsylvania during late 1761 before the founding of the United States.

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Local Real Estate

The housing market in Cass County

In Cass County, housing market sales declined in September, while the selling prices decreased over 21 percent for waterfront houses.

When we refer to all or overall housing types, we combine results for waterfront and non-waterfront houses. In total, 37 houses were sold in September 2023 compared to 67 in September 2022, for a 45 percent decrease. Separately, waterfront house sales fell 41 percent (10 vs. 17), and non-waterfront house sales dropped 46 percent (27 vs. 50).

Year-to-date, sales of all housing types declined 12 percent (399 vs. 455). Waterfront house sales tumbled 23 percent (94 vs. 122), and non-waterfront house sales slipped 8 percent (305 vs. 333).

The overall average selling price in September dropped 5 percent based on the lower selling prices of waterfront houses compared to September 2022 (\$360,598 vs. \$381,351). The overall median selling price in September at \$235,000 decreased 20 percent from \$292,000 in September 2022.

The average selling price for waterfront homes plunged 21 percent to \$562,800 from \$711,870 in September 2022. The median selling price for waterfront homes fell 15 percent (\$563,250 vs. \$660,000).

In September, the average selling price for non-waterfront increased 6 percent to \$285,709 from \$268,975 in September 2022. The median selling price dropped 17 percent to \$195,000 from \$233,750 in September 2022.



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

In Cass County, two bank-owned or foreclosed homes were a part of all closed transactions in September. This raised the percentage of foreclosed homes to 5 percent from 3 percent in August. The highest percentage in September previously was 14 percent in 2014.

For comparison, the number of bank-owned or foreclosed homes as a percentage of all transactions stayed at 3 percent, the same as in August. It was at 0 percent in September 2022. The highest percentage in September previously was

37 percent in 2009.

Across SWMI, the housing sales level continued to stay below the sales level in September for the last ten years. September was the ninth consecutive month for sales to fall behind in the same month of 2022. Selling prices set records for reaching the highest price in September, comparing back to beyond the peak years to 2006.

The extremely low inventory of houses for sale fell 7 percent below the level available a year ago (830 vs. 895). With the lower sales volume, the months-supply level increased slightly to 5.0 from 4.1-months supply from a year ago for homebuyers. For comparison, in

September 2010, there were 3574 houses for sale for a 17.3-months supply of houses.

The increasing interest rate continued to restrain sales. The Freddie Mac mortgage rate in September was 7.30, up from 7.18 in August for a 30-year conventional mortgage. In September 2022, the rate was 6.7; in September 2021, the rate was 3.01.

September house sales dropped 18 percent from August 2023 (259 vs. 315). This September, house sales crashed 24 percent from September 2022 (259 vs. 339).

Year-to-date, 2119 houses sold in September, compared to 2524 houses in September 2022, for a 16 percent decline in sales.

The average selling price in September 2023 increased 7 percent to \$365,279 compared to \$340,600 in September 2022. Year-to-date, in September 2023, the average selling price rose 6 percent to \$357,233 from \$336,150 in September 2022.

The median selling price in September 2023 at \$282,950 rose 12 percent from \$252,000 in September 2022. The median selling price, year-to-date, increased by nearly \$15,000 (\$259,450 vs. \$245,000).

The total dollar volume in September 2023 dropped 18 percent compared to September 2022 (\$94,454,730 vs. \$115,463,412). The year-to-date total dollar volume fell 11 percent (\$756,720,984 vs. \$848,468,979).



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And now winter is coming ... keep breathing



here was a morning not long ago when I woke to a sense of absolute dread. It was somewhere around 5 am, the house was dark and still, and the only sound I heard was the low whine of the furnace pumping heat against the morning chill.

Outside my bedroom window everything seemed quiet, the wind wasn't blowing, there was no rain (or snow) falling, and a thin layer of clouds diffused the glimmer of the waxing moon.

Everything seemed to be as it should be.

Except this nagging itch in the back of my brain telling me something was amiss.

I climbed out of bed and did a quick walk about the house, checking to see that all the doors and windows were closed and locked, that no one had broken in during my sleep and stolen the silverware or raided the liquor cabinet. Check, check, check. All secure.

I probably should have gone back to bed, but I knew I'd not get back to sleep despite the way-early hour. I pushed the button to start the coffee brewing, plopped in front of my computer and checked my emails. Nothing troubling there, just the routine morning news, a couple spam messages offering me special pricing on orthopedic shoes, cheap airplane tickets to places I had no interest in visiting and discounts on adult incontinence and arthritis products I had no need for. The usual.

Two cups of coffee later, after I'd taken the handful of morning pills, three of which the doctor promises will lower my blood pressure and reduce my cholesterol, and the other three he prescribes to reduce the side effects of the first three, I found that I'd run through nearly all of my wake-up routine, and I was then sitting in the recliner in my living room, looking out at the dark lake as the reflections of the lights across the lake danced and shimmered across the barely rippling water.

Worrying about something I couldn't quite put my finger on. Something unusual. Something ominous.

Ok, it wasn't Godzilla kind of ominous or even lost kitten ominous, but something was nagging at me, disturbing my chi and threatening to spoil my breakfast if I couldn't get a grip on it soon.

My wife got up and poured herself a cup of coffee, picked up her phone and began flipping through her morning routine. We exchanged a brief "good morning" knowing that anything more would strain our relationship until she's got at least a couple of cups of coffee under the belt of her bathrobe, and slowly and quietly we waited for the sky to lighten.

Seconds, then minutes ticked by. Lights began to pop on as neighbors rolled out of bed into the morning, no doubt filling their coffee cups and shaking off the nighttime cob webs just like we were doing.

It should have been an ordinary, uneventful morning, and it most certainly would have been except for the awful sense of dread that was clinging to my psyche.

Something was afoot, I felt, but my foot was still asleep and I just couldn't step into the day until I figured out what was going on.

I wondered over to my desk and checked my calendar, thinking that maybe I had forgotten something important.

Hmmm. Let's see ... help a neighbor take down the mast on his sailboat; work with another neighbor to get his water heater drained and button up his cottage for the winter; maybe blow some of the leaves off the deck and work on stowing my outdoor furniture in the shed and garage ... pretty ordinary weekend day.

Nothing scary in sight, except maybe the hideous Halloween decor splattered all over my weird neighbor Pat's entryway and drive.

Nothing too scary ... except for the fact that my morning dread was turning into an October obsession. My palms were sweating, my teeth were itching and my hair ached.

I shouldered through it as best I could. I brushed my teeth, showered, dressed for the day and started pulling the fixings for our usual Sunday morning veggie omelettes out of the fridge; maybe a delicious and nutritious morning meal would help me shake it off, but alas, after the eggs were eaten, the table cleared and the last of the toast crumbs had been brushed onto the carpet, the feeling lingered.

It was maddening.

Finally somewhere just before 8 am, Mr. Sun decided to finally climb out of his celestial night chamber and

make an appearance, and the sky began to brighten, the indistinct features of the multi-colored panorama slowly beginning to reveal themselves.

And then finally, as dawn began to dawn, it dawned on me what horrid catastrophic occurrence was looming that had so unnerved the last of my crumpled nerves.

Sometime overnight, somehow almost miraculously the world had changed, and I'd slept through it.

Somehow, without my knowledge or consent, fall had fallen right past my house, and there was a light coat of frost on the rail of my deck.

Frost? Already? Winter is coming.

Wasn't it just yesterday that summer arrived, and we were putting the pier into the lake and launching the boats and firing up the grill and icing down the coolers and rolling out the sun umbrella? Wasn't it just yesterday that we kicked off the sailing season, and wasn't it just yesterday when we walked past the farmer on the south side of the lake and waved as he was planting his corn and soybeans? Wasn't it just yesterday we were setting out the squirt guns and Frisbees for the kids to play with in the lake as they splashed away the horrific daytime heat waves that were sure to come?

And now there was frost on my deck.

Now winter is coming.

I'd almost rather be facing that Godzilla (or at least be looking for that lost kitten) than be looking ahead with dread at the days and weeks and months of snow and ice and air so cold it feels like snorting razor blades every time I try to breathe through my nose.

"Keep breathing," I think to myself, silently willing the panic to abate. "Find the bright side," I rationalized, even as I thought it, I was recognizing the thought as a canard, as hyperbole, sophistry.

There is no bright side I knew. Winter is coming.

But I live in Michigan, and in Michigan we roll with winter. And we wade knee-deep through the snow with winter. And we slide off the road into the ditch with winter. And we shovel our drives and we lace on our boots and we don our earmuffs and we wrap our throats with wool scarves and we blow hot breath across our frozen fingertips when they start to sting.

Winter is coming I told myself. Keep breathing.

See you all next spring.



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