

# Neighbors

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**APRIL 2023**

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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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Neighbors is published monthly from March through November.

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**FIELD TRIP: Sailing in the British Virgin Islands - pages 9-11**

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**Spring is  
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the weather  
... hopefully!**

# Regional News

## Spring Rummage & Bake Sale

First United Methodist Church, 326 N Lowe St. in Dowagiac will host a spring rummage and bake sale on April 28 & 29, Friday - 9 am to 4 pm and Saturday - 9 am to 3 pm

Saturday will feature a 1/2 price on marked items, a bag sale -- \$4/bag and a special buy-2 bags-get-3rd-bag-free.

Sale items will include furniture, clothing-all sizes, extra long twin mattress-new condition, and more.

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

## Butterflies Blooming

The annual Fred & Dorothy Fichter Butterflies Are Blooming exhibition at Meijer Gardens is the largest temporary tropical butterfly exhibition in the nation. About 7,000 tropical butterflies from around the world fly freely in the Tropical Conservatory.

Butterflies Are Blooming, will run through April 30 at Meijer Gardens in Grand Rapids; [www.meijergardens.org](http://www.meijergardens.org)

## Dowagiac area events

The Dowagiac Chamber of Commerce has released information on the following events in 2023:

**Memorial Day Parade**, May 29, 10:30 am - Noon

**Music in the Park**, June 1, 7:30pm - 8:30 pm

**Dowagiac Farm & Artisan Market**

June 3, - October 14, 9 am - 2 pm

**Dowagiac Home & Garden Tour**, June 24, 9 am

## Hydro makes pledge to Cass Kickstart to Careers

John Giczewski and Dylan Cromell of Hydro presented an initial donation as well as a multi-year pledge to the Cass Kickstart to Careers program. Accepting the donation are board members Margie Yarger and Jim Ward. Cass Kickstart to Careers establishes and funds savings accounts on behalf of all incoming kindergarten students in Cassopolis Public Schools, provides additional financial incentives throughout the school years, and provides financial literacy training. Upon graduation, the students can use the funds for higher education and to further career education. Hydro is committed to the success of the Cassopolis community and fostering educational opportunities for the next generation of leaders.

Cass Kickstart would like to thank Hydro Aluminum Metals USA, Midwest Energy Communications, Edward Lowe Foundation, Kemner Iott Benz, Porky's Party Place, and over 100 individuals and small busi-



nesses who support Cass Kickstart's mission of helping children attain post-secondary education by increasing financial capacity and educational expectations.

To learn more about Cass Kickstart to Careers visit our website at [www.casskickstart.com](http://www.casskickstart.com). Donations can be sent to Cass Kickstart, P.O. Box 63, Cassopolis, MI 49031.

**Summer in the City Festival**, July 14, - July 15, 10 am - 5 pm

**Steve's Run**, July 14, 6 - 9 pm

**Ed's Open Header Cruise**, July 27, 5:30 - 8:30 pm

**Rod & Roll Classic Auto Show**, August 19, 7 am - 4 pm

**Under the Harvest Moon Festival**, October 14, 10 am - 4 pm

**Christmas Open House Weekend & Theta Mu Craft Show**, November 10, 11, 10 am - 5 pm

**Small Business Saturday**, November 25, 10 am

**Candlelight Christmas Parade**, December 1, 7 - 9 pm.

For more information on these events, visit <https://www.dowagiac-chamber.com/events/upcoming-events>.

**Beckwith Theatre 2023 season**

The Beckwith Theatre, 100 New York Ave., Dowagiac, has announced its 2023 season. This year's shows are:

**Sylvia** by A. R. Gurney on April 14 - 23 - A man deals with a mid-life crisis, not by falling in love with a younger woman but with a dog he befriends (played onstage by a woman).

**Jeeves in Bloom** on June 2 - 11, adapted by Margaret Raether - The nearly perfect valet Jeeves and his comically flawed employer Bertie Wooster get entangled in comic situations both romantic and financial.

**An Inspector Calls** on July 21 -







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# Regional News

30 by J. B. Priestley - A classic, compelling mystery, which moves us to examine our consciences and remember to look after one another.

**The Outgoing Tide** on Sept. 8 - 17 by Bruce Graham - In a summer cottage on Chesapeake Bay, Gunner has hatched an unorthodox plan to secure his family's future but meets with resistance from his wife and son, who have plans of their own.

**Second Samuel** on Oct. 27 - Nov. 5 by Pamela Parker - In the small, Southern town of Second Samuel

residents seem to care about each other until the town's shocking secret is revealed and they are driven to examine what caring really means.

Tickets are \$15 per person for all events and are reserved by calling the box office at 269.782.7653. Season tickets are available for \$60.

For more information visit BeckwithTheatre.com. or call 782-7653.

**Ernest Hemingway's grandson to lead writers retreat in Michigan**  
WALLOON LAKE, MICH. - The

grandson of literary giant Ernest Hemingway will lead a special retreat in Northern Michigan this spring aimed at guiding writers in honing their craft.

Writer and journalist John Patrick Hemingway is to be the special guest and moderator at the second annual Walloon Lake Writers Retreat, a three-day event on April 13-16 at Hotel Walloon in Walloon Lake, the Northern Michigan village where Ernest Hemingway spent his summers as a child.

Retreat highlights include talks and writing leadership sessions lead by John Patrick Hemingway and other published writers, a guided caravan tour of nearby Hemingway locales hosted by the Michigan Hemingway Society, access to unique locations around Walloon Lake for private writing time, a group dinner, networking and collaboration, and more.

For package details and reservation information, contact Hotel Walloon at hotelwalloon.com.

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# Regional Calendar

**Cassopolis Main Street Summer Band Lineup**  
**BEACH BASH @ STONE LAKE BEACH**  
 (+ Food trucks, beer garden, kids area, kayak rentals, and fireworks!)  
**Friday June 2**, 3-5, 7-8 DJ H2, 5-7 Starlord, 8-11 Blammo  
**Saturday June 3**, 3-5, 7-8 DJ H2, 5-7 Zero, 8-11 Ultrafab  
**ROCK THE BLOCK SUMMER CONCERT SERIES @ STONE LAKE BEACH** (+ Food trucks & beer garden)  
**Saturday, July 15**, 5-7 Top Secret, 8-11 The 1985  
**Saturday, Aug. 12**, 5-7 Head Honchos, 8-11 TBD  
**Saturday, Sept. 9**, 5-7 Roosters, 8-11 Memphis Underground  
**Saturday, October 7** (@Cass County Fairgrounds), 5-7 Dart Board Compromise, 8-11 P.S. Dump Your Boyfriend

**April 14 - 23, June 2 - 11, July 21-31, Sept 8 - 17, Oct. 27 - Nov. 5 - BECKWITH THEATRE PERFORMANCES**; see page 2 for details.

**April 15 - Mark's Ark Animal Adventure & Petting Zoo**, 2-5 pm, Marketplace Theatre, Ross Beatty High School, 22721 Diamond Cove St., Cassopolis

**April 28, 29 - First United Methodist Church of Dowagiac Spring rummage and bake sale**, 326 N. Lowe St., 9 am - 4 pm Friday, 9 am - 3 pm Saturday, 782-8551.

**April 29 - Karaoke**, 7 pm, Marketplace Theatre, 114 S. Broadway, Cassopolis, 235-9747

**May 5, 6 - 62ND ANNUAL MLSA CONFERENCE**, Protecting and Restoring Michigan's Lakes and Streams. Crystal Mountain Resort in Thompsonville, MI. <https://mymlsa.org/mlsa-events/annual-conference-2023/>

**May 19 - Karaoke**, 7 pm, Marketplace Theatre, 114 S. Broadway, Cassopolis, 235-9747

**May 19, 20 -SPRING VINTAGE, ANTIQUE, AND CRAFT MARKET**, Michiana Event Center, 455 East Farver Street, Shipshewana, IN, <https://www.michianaevents.com/event/spring-vintage-antique-and-craft-show>

**May 27 - The music of Lennon & McCartney**, 7 pm, Marketplace Theatre, 114 S. Broadway, Cassopolis, 235-9747

**June 9 - Lip sync contest**, 7 pm, Marketplace Theatre, 114 S. Broadway, Cassopolis, 235-9747

**June 10 - Kalita - master of magic & escape**, Marketplace Theatre, 114 S. Broadway, Cassopolis, 235-9747

**June 17 - Lip sync contest**, 7 pm, Marketplace Theatre, 114 S. Broadway, Cassopolis, 235-9747

**June 24 - Elton John, Billy Joel tribute**, 7 pm, Marketplace Theatre, 114 S. Broadway, Cassopolis, 235-9747

**June 30 - Karaoke + Contest (country music theme)**, 7 pm, Marketplace Theatre, 114 S. Broadway, Cassopolis, 235-9747

**July 8 - Beach Boys Tribute "Captain Mike Show,"** 7 pm, Marketplace

Theatre, 114 S. Broadway, Cassopolis, 235-9747

**July 14, 15 - Straight Up 80s variety show**, 7 pm, Marketplace Theatre, 114 S. Broadway, Cassopolis, 235-9747

**July 28 - Karaoke + Contest (classic rock theme)**, 7 pm, Marketplace Theatre, 114 S. Broadway, Cassopolis, 235-9747

**July 29 - Savage Mike acoustic duo w/vocals**, 7 pm, Marketplace Theatre, 114 S. Broadway, Cassopolis, 235-9747

**July 31, 2023 - August 6 - CASS COUNTY FAIR**, info tba

**Aug. 5 - John Denver tribute**, 7 pm, Marketplace Theatre, 114 S. Broadway, Cassopolis, 235-9747

**Aug. 25 - Karaoke + Contest (1990s theme)**, 7 pm, Marketplace Theatre, 114 S. Broadway, Cassopolis, 235-9747

**Sept. 22 - Karaoke**, 7 pm, Marketplace Theatre, 114 S. Broadway, Cassopolis, 235-9747

**Oct. 27 - Karaoke + Contest (costume contest)**, 7 pm, Marketplace Theatre, 114 S. Broadway, Cassopolis, 235-9747

### Cass District Library

**Money Monsters Learn about Careers & Money Monsters Start Their Own Business.** All Locations beginning April 3. Stop by any branch to pick up April's Money Monsters free books and activities for children while supplies last! The Money Monsters are a group of creatures who are new to our universe. That means they need to learn about many important things like school, friendship, and

financial literacy. This month, Money Monsters explore careers they may want to have when they grow up and discover that being an entrepreneur can be fun, but it isn't always easy.

**Great Start: Young at Art student artwork** will be on display at the Main Branch during the month of April.

**T'ai Chi**, 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.

**Infant Storytime, through April 27**, Mondays: Mason/Union Branch - **10 am**. This program provides opportunities to have social interaction and to develop a love of reading. Each week will feature singing, bouncing and dancing centered around a theme. Infant Storytime is designed for children birth-2 years old. Storytime will run for through March 6

**Preschool Storytime, through April 27**; Tuesdays: Howard and Edwardsburg Branches - **11 am**; Wednesdays: Mason/Union Branch - **11 am**; Thursdays: Main Branch - 11 am. \*Note: Preschool storytime will not take place April 6 at the Main Branch.

This program provides opportunities to have social interaction and to develop a love of reading. Each week will feature new stories, crafts and activities centered around a theme. Preschool Storytime is designed for children ages 3-5 years old.

**Knotted Necklace Workshop**, Main Branch, **April 12 - 5:30 pm**. Learn how to take strips of jersey fabric and turn them into a statement necklace that will add casual sophistication to any outfit. Registration is required. Call 749-1384 or stop

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# Regional Calendar

by any branch to register.

**Around the World: Yurtfolk Music Program**, Howard Branch, **April 13 @ 6 pm**. Join musical duo Yurtfolk to explore music, stories and folk dance from around the world. We'll sing in different languages and dance! We'll also learn about some very unusual musical instruments.

**Earth Day Craft: Tote Bag Take and Make**, Howard Branch, **Week of April 17**. Celebrate Earth Day with a fun coloring project that helps kids create unique, reusable tote bags they can use instead of disposable plastic bags. Each bag features an eco-friendly message and image such as "Go green," "Happy Earth Day" and more. Tote bags are available while supplies last.

**Savage Readers**, Main Branch, **April 18 @ 9 am**. Enjoy a 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.

**Village Book Club**, Edwardsburg Branch, **April 20 @ 5:30 pm**. Join us for a monthly book discussion at the Edwardsburg Branch. This program is intended for adults.

**Dowagiac District Library Make & Share Cookbook Club**, **April 6, 5:15 - 6:30 pm**. April is Choose Your Own Cookbook Adventure. Visit the library's cookbook section. Choose a cookbook and check it out at the front desk. Take it home and discover a new recipe to try, then bring it in to share at our April meeting. The Make & Share Cookbook Club is held on the first Thursday of the month at the Library. To reserve your spot, call the library or email (Attn: Erin) at dowagiadistrictlibrarystaff@gmail.com

**Story Squad. April 6, 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. Due to capacity limits in our children's programming room, we ask that only children 6-9 attend the program. Parents and younger children will be asked to enjoy other areas during this time.

**Saturday Story Time, April 8, 10:30 - 11:30 am**. Saturday Story Time is held on the second and fourth Saturdays of the month and features the same books and crafts from our Tuesday Preschool Story Time for those who are unable to make it to the library during the work week. It is geared toward children 3-5 years old, and focuses on developing early literacy skills and fine motor skills through listening to stories and participating in fun-filled age appropriate crafts and/or learning activities.

**5th Annual Library Fandom Fest, April 8, 11 am - 6 pm**, Mendel Center. Celebrate your fandom at Fandom Fest! Sponsored by nine area libraries. Play video game tournaments, tabletop games, wander artist alley, make something geeky, win a cosplay contest, and more! Admission is FREE. Keep updated on our FB page.

**Preschool Story Time, April 11, 10:30 - 11:30 am**. The Dowagiac District Library offers this weekly story time each Tuesday. 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\* April 11, 3 - 4:pm**. No Bake Oatmeal Cookies.\*Registration is required. Sign up in the youth department by Friday, April 7. Teen Tuesdays are for

teens 6th through 12th grade, and meet in the Pokagon Room on the second level of the library.

**Story Squad, Thursday, April 13, 5:30 - 6:30 pm**. Due to capacity limits in our children's programming room, we kindly ask that only children 6-9 attend the program. Parents and younger children will be asked to enjoy other areas of the library during this time.

**Preschool Story Time, April 18, 10:30 - 11:30 am**. The Library offers this story time each Tuesday. Preschool Story Time is geared toward children 3-5 years old.

**Teen Tuesday: Arts & Crafts, April 18, 3 - 4 pm**. Marble Magnets: Make a practical gift using clear flat marbles, cardstock, mod-podge and magnets. Teen Tuesdays are for teens 6th through 12th grade and meet each Tuesday in the Pokagon Room on the second level of the library.

**Story Squad, April 20, 5:30 - 6:30 pm**. Children 6-9 are invited to join Story Squad. 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.

**Saturday Story Time, April 22, 10:30 - 11:30 am**. Saturday Story Time is held on the second and fourth Saturdays of the month, and features the same books and crafts from our Tuesday Preschool Story Time for those who are unable to make it to the library during the work week. It is geared toward children 3-5 years old.

**OMG Book Club for Tweens, April 24, 2023, 3 - 4 pm**. April Book: House Arrest by K.A. Holt. April is National Poetry Month, so this month's selection is a book written in verse. From

copyright page: The OMG Book Club is a book club for tweens 9-12 years old. The club features an OMG (Outstanding Middle Grade) novel each month. Tweens 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 Monday of the month. For more information, stop by the Youth Services desk located on the second floor of the library. You may also email Melissa, the Youth Services Coordinator, at mphillips@dowagiadcl.org with any questions you have.

**Preschool Story Time, April 25, 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: Candy Games, April 25, 3 - 4 pm**. Dowagiac District Library (map) Book Spine Poetry: Teens will celebrate National Poetry Month by creating original poems by using the titles of books found throughout the library. 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, April 27, 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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# Business & Finance

## Spring? Give me a break!

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

**S**pring is here ... or so they say. Some are preparing to head down south for Spring Break and the rest of us are anxiously awaiting the social media flood of pictures from all of those people. Spring also brings us rain, flowers, storms, birds, spring cleaning and the anticipation of summer.

Spring cleaning and the anticipation of summer go hand in hand with me. I want to get all of the stuff done that needs to be done, so I can enjoy the things I want to do all summer. I am kind of a medium temperature person, so I have a small time frame to get things done. Too cold in the winter and in the summer, if it's hot, my enjoyment comes from a pool/lake/ocean or riding my motorcycle.

My spring-cleaning to-do list has matured with me. When I was younger, it was mainly switching winter to summer clothes and some random yard work. Now, I have a bigger list, not just because I have more stuff now, but also because I think like an insurance person.

Reducing the chance of a claim and in turn, saving money on insurance is a pretty good motivator. My



spring cleaning now includes some spring maintenance things to check on as well.

Here are some things that I have added:

- Clearing gutters of leaves and

debris

- Making sure windows are sealed to keep AC costs lower
- Checking the sidewalk and driveway for cracks and repair them to reduce a guest tripping and falling

- Cleaning my dryer vents
  - Checking washing machine hoses
  - Replacing air filters
  - Trimming and pruning trees and bushes
  - Cleaning my car thoroughly
- Hopefully, I have a good window of time to get these things done along with planting flowers and cleaning up the yard. Once all of that is done, I will need a Break from Spring.
- Be Safe

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# For the Table

## It's maple syrup season!

by **Julie Frank**

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

**M**aple syrup season is in full swing across Michigan, with several communities hosting festivals in its honor. I have fond childhood memories of helping my grandpa collect syrup on his John Deere tractor. We would bring the filled buckets back to the sugar shack, where the magic would begin. The sap would be slowly heated until the water evaporated, concentrating the sugar and maple flavor.

About midway through the process, Grandpa would reach into the simmering vats of sap, dip out some of the steaming liquid, and fill our paper cups. This once-a-year treat was slightly sweet with just a hint of maple. Delicious! Here are a few ways to enjoy the season's bounty.

### Chicken & Waffles

A southern classic, this can be enjoyed for breakfast or dinner. Grab chicken from your local deli or the freezer section along with your favorite waffle mix and you have a quick, semi-home-made meal. If you dare to make the waffles from scratch, here is a super easy recipe.

#### Ingredients:

4-6 chicken strips, cooked  
For the waffles:  
2 cups of all purpose flour  
2 tsp baking powder  
1 tsp baking soda  
1 tsp salt  
2 eggs  
1 ½ cups buttermilk  
4 Tbsp melted butter  
4 Tbsp vegetable oil  
½ cup of finely chopped green onion,



white and green parts for garnish

#### Sauce:

1 ½ cups of pure maple syrup  
¼ cup of butter  
3 Tbsp bourbon  
6-8 drops of hot sauce

#### Directions:

**Waffles:** Mix flour, baking powder, soda, and salt together. In another bowl, mix eggs, buttermilk, butter, and oil. Whisk wet ingredients until combined. Add in the dry ingredients and mix until combined. For best results, allow the waffle batter to sit for 20 minutes. Cook waffles according to your waffle maker instructions. During this time, prepare the sauce.

**Sauce:** In a small saucepan, combine all ingredients. Over medium heat, bring

to a low boil and boil for 3 to 4 minutes. Reduce heat to low and keep warm while you cook the waffles.

To assemble, place one or two chicken strips on each waffle and drizzle with the sauce. Don't skip the sprinkling of green onion, it adds a needed savory note.

### Maple Raspberry Dressing

This dressing uses a store bought raspberry vinaigrette as the base. It pairs well with fruit and nut salads or roasted vegetable salads. My favorite is a combination of diced pears, dried cranberries, cinnamon pecans, and a crisp spring mix. Try it drizzled over grilled and sliced chicken or pork.

#### Ingredients:

½ cup of prepared raspberry vinaigrette, store bought  
¼ cup olive oil  
½ cup pure maple syrup  
2 Tbsp Red wine vinegar  
1 Tbsp Dijon mustard  
2 tsp. Dried tarragon  
¼ cup frozen raspberries, pureed (with seeds removed if desired)

#### Directions:

Whisk together ingredients. For best results, allow dressing to chill in the refrigerator for a day before serving. Note: the addition of frozen raspberries is optional but it does give the dressing a stronger raspberry flavor. To make the puree, blend frozen raspberries in a blender or food processor. Don't have a processor? Then just use a fork and mash the raspberries. You can push the puree through a fine mesh strainer if you do not want the seeds in your dressing.

### French Toast Casserole w/Blueberry Maple Syrup

This baked casserole is a wonderful use of stale bread. Milk and eggs combine

with the bread to make a custardy breakfast treat. Real maple syrup infused with blueberries puts it over the top! You can prepare it the night before, put it in the refrigerator, and bake it in the morning.

#### Ingredients:

8 cups cubed hearty white or sourdough bread (stale bread works great)  
8 eggs  
¼ cups of heavy cream  
1 ½ cups of milk  
½ cup of sugar  
2 tsp vanilla extract  
2 tsp ground cinnamon  
½ tsp kosher salt  
3 tbsps Turbinado sugar to sprinkle on top (optional)

### Infused Maple Syrup

#### Ingredients:

1 cup frozen blueberries  
2 Tbsp water  
½ tsp lemon zest  
1 Tbsp lemon juice  
2 Tbsp of sugar  
1 cup of real maple syrup

#### Directions:

For the casserole: Place the bread cubes in a 2 ½ quart casserole dish coated with cooking spray. In a separate bowl, whisk the eggs, cream, milk, sugar, vanilla, salt, and cinnamon until combined. Pour the custard mixture over the bread cubes. Press the bread cubes down with a spoon until the custard soaks the bread. You can either bake the same day or cover and place in the refrigerator overnight. If you want to bake the same day, allow the casserole to sit at room temperature for 30 mins to ensure the bread is fully hydrated by the custard.

**To bake:** If refrigerated, take out and allow to sit at room temp for at least 20 minutes while the oven preheats. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Sprinkle sugar over the top of the casserole, if using. Bake the casserole for 45 minutes or until set. Serve with the blueberry infused maple syrup.

For the sauce: Combine frozen blueberries, water, lemon juice & zest, and sugar into a small saucepan. Cook until the blueberries thaw and begin to release their juice. Then add in the maple syrup and allow to steep on low heat for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally.

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



# Our Children

## Why do I have to learn this stuff?

by **SANDY FLEMING**

**W**hy Do I Have To Learn This Stuff? Nearly every parent has heard this question from teens and even younger children. The language may not always be so polite, but the question is real. Kids wonder why they have to work so hard in school to learn things that don't seem to have immediate application in their lives.

The usual answer of "Learn it so you can get good grades" or "Learn it so you can pass this class" is not particularly satisfying, and usually not very motivating. This is especially problematic when the ADULTS are not actually sure of the rationale or the reasons to learn these things. I mean, who hasn't wondered when or where they will possibly use some of the higher math concepts, the halting Spanish from a year in high school, or the obscure idea from History class?

Knowing the reasoning behind the curriculum may or may not help your child. He or she probably does not have the reasoning capacity to understand anyway, particularly if the question is coming in middle school or younger. Kids just don't do much in the way of abstract reasoning or planning ahead, and they are notorious for ignoring potential consequences. However, understanding the importance of the various activities in school may help YOU to understand why they are important. That, in turn, will help you to find a way to motivate your kid to do whatever is needed. It's a proven fact that parents who do not value education do not support their children as well, and the kids from these families often are not as successful academically. So let's lay some groundwork right now. Read on to find out some of the reasoning behind the various types of learning and tasks that are required of students.

### Math Reasoning

Let's get a big one out of the way first. Who hasn't struggled to understand the "new" way that math is being taught?? You know darn well how to add, subtract, multiply, and divide, and then your student comes home with homework that seems like Greek. Instead of using traditional algorithms to solve the problems, there they go adding from left to right instead of right to left, or dividing using lattice division instead of traditional long division strategies. And what's more, sometimes they actually get the problems wrong if you show them how to do it the "right" way, even if they get the

right answer because they used an "incorrect" method to get there.

Frustrating, right?

It helps to have a little bit of background about the perceived changes. Social media is fond of complaining that Common Core Standards are to blame, but this is simply not true. All Common Core did was to set a goal that students end up with a deeper understanding of the concepts than what was expected years ago. In the past, teachers were satisfied with rote learning – memorize it and you were done. This did form a good foundation for later, more abstract math learning in high school and beyond for some students, usually the ones who were talented at math in the first place.

However, vast numbers of students ended up stuck at the literal level in math, unable to function at those more abstract levels. This was fine when life in general was simpler. All you needed to do as an adult was to keep your checkbook balanced and avoid overdrawing your bank account. You needed to measure enough to do simple home maintenance, and so forth. Nowadays, though, many jobs have moved beyond this simple level of math. So our society needs more people capable of understanding algebra, trig, and even some beginning calculus.

The schools have responded by trying to help children gain that deeper understanding at earlier ages. Instead of blindly memorizing math facts and learning processes to do things like long division and partial product multiplication, the teachers try to instill an understanding of why these methods work. It's not even really a change; it's just more noticeable. A good example is "algebraic thinking" that crops up even in the kindergarten curriculum. Us old fogies did this too. Remember the problems you had where you had to find a missing number from a problem, like  $3 + \_\_ = 10$ ? THAT takes algebraic thinking to solve. So it's not all that new. We just didn't call it that back in the day. Once we name it, it sounds a whole lot scarier than it really is.

And why do so many math problems ask students to "explain their reasoning"? It seems like it's just extra busy work, but in reality, it's an effort to help students gain that deeper understanding of why math works the way that it does. Step beyond the rote memorization with your students, and encourage them to greater understanding.

### Exercising the Brain

Like nearly any other part of your body, your brain needs regular exercise,

too. You exercise your brain when you think through problems, use logic, and try to understand the world around you. Often, some of the less-immediately-useful parts of school are brain exercises in disguise.

Memory is a good example. We all have a capacity for remembering things, and that capacity varies from person to person. But just like even a person with low muscle tone can improve their performance with the right types of exercise, people with less memory capacity can improve their performance with practice and work. It's a way to make the most of what you have. So you will see a lot of memory exercises throughout the school curriculum, from memorizing poetry to committing a speech to memory. It's hiding in nearly every class. Some classes have more of it than others, and some teachers make it more of a priority than others, but it's always there somewhere.

Another good example is logical thinking skills. This is another area where we all have different abilities, but that can be improved with practice. Look for logic exercises all over science classes – every time students do an experiment or watch a demonstration and are asked to describe what they saw and the effects that it had on what they were observing. The Scientific Method is a perfect example. It's steps to pinpoint a question, set up a way to get the information, make observations, analyze data, and draw conclusions. Making inferences while reading is another. In that process, students need to take clues in the text, put them together, and draw conclusions based on evidence.

And of course, there is comprehension. Talk about a critical skill in life! You've seen activities go by that address reading comprehension – the ability to understand and remember what you read – but comprehension permeates the school curriculum in many other forms. Comprehension skills cover listening comprehension as well as reading comprehension. People need to be able to take in and process and act on information both by hearing it and by reading it. Think of following directions, gathering up information from meetings, reading assembly instructions, following recipes, and much more. People need comprehension to get through adult life tasks, and the school activities are often working to build those skills.

### Learning Employment Skills

Finally, even the less-exciting, more-difficult tasks at school are building the kinds of skills that people eventually

need to be good employees. Everyone at a job, no matter what job it may be, needs the kinds of skills nurtured at school. Examples include attendance, respect for authority, professionalism, and interacting appropriately with peers. Adults who do not develop these skills do not usually do well in job settings, either. Completing an assignment to the best of your ability, taking pride in your work, and turning the finished product in on time are important, no matter what the class or content of the lesson. The skills your student learns in this area (or does not learn in this area) will make or break their experience on their first jobs.

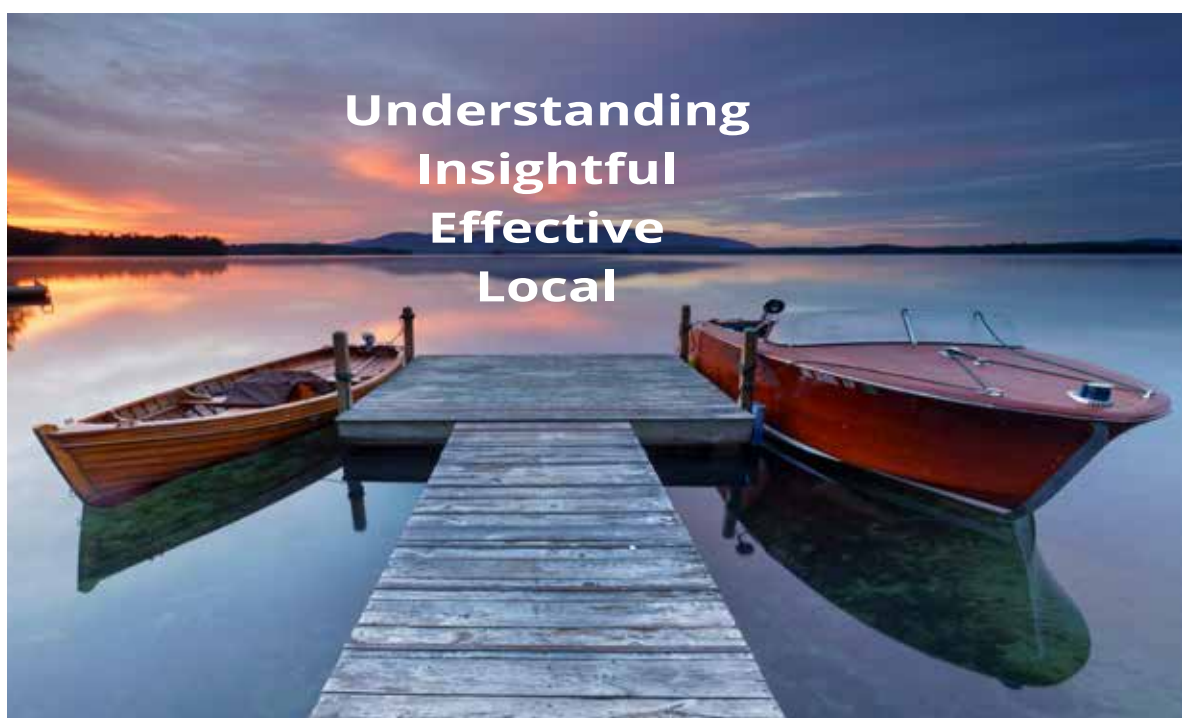
Everything from the way they treat the teachers and staff and peers to how they dress will impact their eventual success. Often, employers can tell which students did not do well in school based on their behavior. They are not looking at whether the employee can read/write/do math as needed, or if they have a solid background in science, social studies, or a foreign language. They are watching to see if they are reliable, if they take initiative, if they know what to do when something doesn't go right for them, and if they have problem solving skills necessary to get the job done. These skills are all honed each day and with each assignment at school.

### The Bottom Line

This list just begins to scratch the surface of what your students will be learning from their school experience. Even when the assignments are tough, and maybe especially when they seem to be meaningless busy-work, students learn valuable skills, exercise their brains, and discover the fortitude to keep going anyway. I'm sure we've all experienced job requirements that made no sense to us at times. We follow them anyway, because that's how you keep the job. In the same way, help your child see the value of the exercises from school. They may struggle to make connections to life as they currently envision it, but you and I know that each task teaches critical skills that all adults need to master. Help them along by pointing this out in a way that is appropriate to their age level. We may not always understand the academic purpose of the assignment, but rest assured that there ARE purposes, and that the work is teaching far more than facts and figures.

\*\*\*\*\*

Sandy Fleming is a private tutor and writer in Edwardsburg. Check out her websites at <http://learningnook.com> and <http://sandyflemingonline.com>.



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# Field Trip

# Sailing in the BVI



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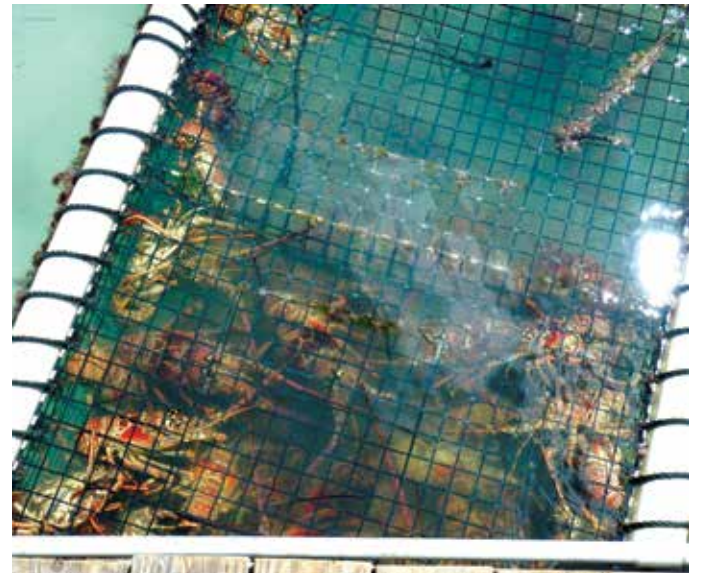
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# Historic Postcards

## Historic postcards depict rich scenes of area's past

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

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

thousands.

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

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

of Commerce.

For more information or to get a copy of Jerdon's book, visit the website: [www.arcadia-publishing.com](http://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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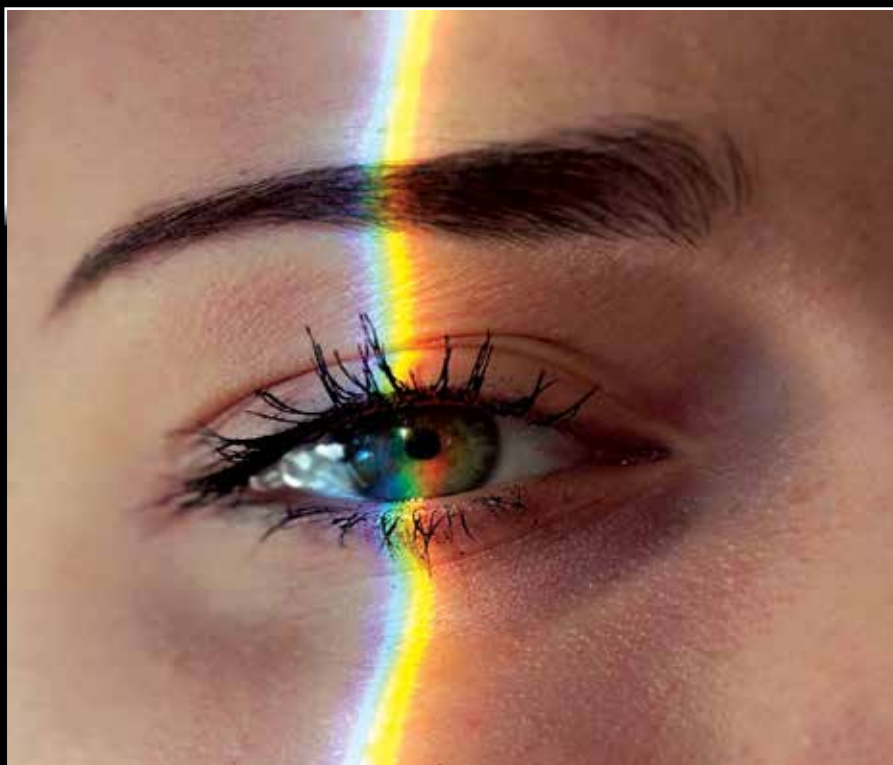
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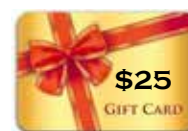
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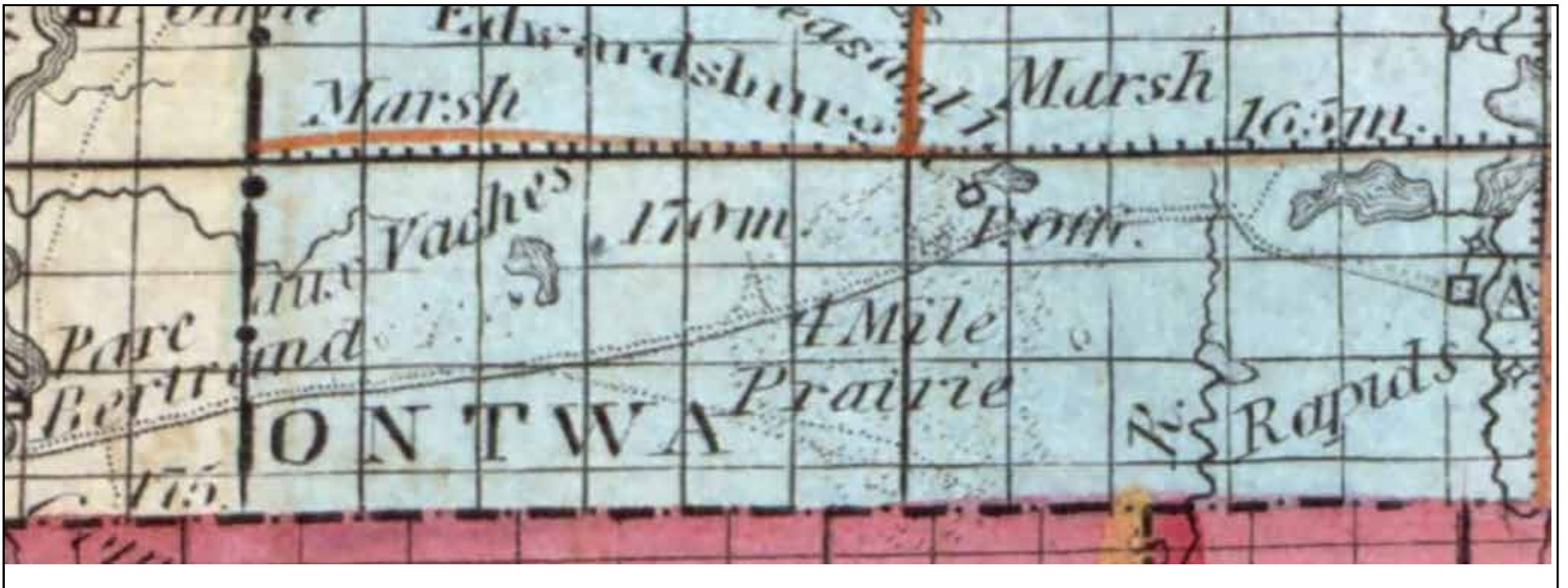
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# Local History

## Four mile trail and Edwardsburg



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

**ABOVE:** Screenshot of Four-Mile Prairie, Edwardsburg & Ontwa Township, Cass County, Michigan Territory, 1836. From "An improved edition of a map of the surveyed parts of the Territory of Michigan" by John Farmer. Courtesy Michigan State University Libraries. Public

domain. Full image can be found at: <https://d.lib.msu.edu/maps/12>. Milton Township is not shown as a separate township because it was not organized until 1838 and until that time it was attached to Ontwa for tax purposes.

In July 1828, General Land Office Deputy Land Surveyor William Brookfield marked the section line between sections five and six of Ontwa Township, which ran straight through Four Mile Prairie. He remarked of the land along that section line south of Pleasant Lake in his field notes: "Land elegant & super, excellent."

That month, Brookfield and his survey crew were not only establishing the square mile section lines within Ontwa Township, but also noting the landscape, soil appearance, tree species, etc. of the area. This information has been instrumental in recreating the pre-settlement vegetation of Michigan. Detailed pre-settlement vegetation county maps can be found at <https://mnfi.anr.msu.edu/resources/vegetation-circa-1800>. These were constructed from the original field notes by the Michigan Natural Features Inventory and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

A month after Brookfield's survey crew departed Ontwa Township, in August 1828, the first permanent settlers of European descent, the Ezra Beardsley family, arrived at Four-Mile Prairie, via the old Chicago military

road (which had been an Indian trail, and is now US-12). Major Abraham Edwards also arrived that year, and that family consisted of the parents and twelve children.

Over 50 years later, Abraham Edwards wrote of his families first days at the edge of the prairie: "Here on the margin of a beautiful lake and in view of the prairie, finding a log cabin vacant, that had been built by some adventurer, and afterward abandoned, we took up our abode and I assure you the first night's rest in the cabin was one of the most agreeable in my life. The next morning a wagon was got up to ride out and show the children the prairie. It was then one vast flower garden, and the astonished children were constantly exclaiming as we passed along, 'oh! how charming, what beautiful flowers!'"

The origin of the name "Four-mile Prairie" comes from the fact that it reached approximately four miles in length from north to south. Its southern point reached into the extreme northern part of Harris Township, St. Joseph County, Indiana. The Princess Way Industrial Park in Granger is located where the south end of the prairie existed.

The treeless prairie acreage in Ontwa and Milton Townships was purchased and plowed up very early in the history of the county. Records indicate that by 1832, only 80 acres remained unsold out of the 4410 total acreage comprising Four Mile (Beardsley's) Prairie.

Because Ezra Beardsley was the first actual settler on the prairie, it was often referred to as "Beardsley's Prairie" on many maps and history books.

At least two early sources claim the village of Edwardsburgh was laid out in 1829, but officially the plat was not recorded until 1831. The original spelling includes an "h" at the end of "burgh", but this spelling is not consistent over the first thirty years of the village's existence. After the Civil War, the "h" seems to have dropped from "Edwardsburg". The village was named after Alexander H. Edwards, who platted the original village.

The location of Edwardsburg had many advantages to it, as told by this early newspaper item published at Niles. During the mid-1830s

For the Gazette and Advertiser.  
**EDWARDSBURGH.**  
 This prosperous village is regularly laid out, and pleasantly situated, at the east side of Beardsley's Prairie—frequently called Four Mile Prairie, from its size—The location is directly upon the National Road running from Detroit to Chicago, and might properly be called the Ten Mile Centre, it being ten miles from Niles, and a similar distance from South Bend, Mishawaka, Cassopolis, and Elkhart. The village consists of about fifty buildings, including taverns, stores, mechanics' shops, &c. About twenty new buildings are under contract, or open for contract, to be built the ensuing season. The fertility, salubrity and picturesque grandeur of the Prairie is not surpassed by any other in Michigan. There remains but a small quantity of public land in this vicinity, and property increases rapidly in the village and vicinity. No country better rewards the industry of the farmer than the lands adjacent to Edwardsburgh. C.

Clipping from the Niles Gazette and Advertiser, March 5, 1836, giving a description of the eight-year old settlement of Edwardsburgh, Michigan Territory.

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# Nature Notes

## Wood ducks and song sparrows sighted

*Provided by Cass District Library  
Local History branch*

The drake wood duck is perhaps the most stunning of all the waterfowl species native to Southwest Michigan. One such duck was photographed March 9 at the Chris Thompson Preserve located just west of Warren Woods State Park, off Warren Woods Road by Brad Anderson of Bridgman.

After the mallard, the wood duck is the most common duck species that nests in Southwest Michigan. It nests solely in tree cavities, sometimes as high as 40 to 50 feet off the ground. Wood ducks will also nest in boxes made especially for the species. An average of 12 eggs are produced in a clutch, but over 30 in one nest have been reported. The higher nest egg totals are believed to be the result of more than one female wood duck using the same nest.

Look for wood ducks in water among wooded swamps, floodplain forests, ponds and marshes not far from wooded areas. During the breeding season I often observe wood ducks nesting high up among the American beech and sugar maples of Warren Woods State Park, and trees along the St. Joseph and Paw Paw Rivers.

Wood ducks feed on the seeds of several species of trees and shrubs along wooded shorelines. Wood ducks will also feed on wild grapes and berries in the forest, but they are particularly fond of acorns, beechnuts and formerly chestnuts which they are able to crush with their powerful gizzards. The species also eats insects, small fish, frogs and other small invertebrates.

By late September, most wood ducks will have departed Michigan for their wintering grounds of the Southeastern US, although a few individuals usually stay in our area on areas of open water. Spring migratory wood ducks begin to arrive in Southwest Michigan by early to mid-March with the bulk of the population arriving in late March and early April. Nesting begins immediately.

Brad Anderson also provided a photo of a song sparrow, taken March 1 as the bird perched in a Colorado blue spruce in his yard. The song sparrow is one of the most abundant, evenly distributed songbirds in eastern North America during the breeding season. The species prefers brushy habitat, especially near water, as well as thick ornamental shrubs.

Song sparrows are easily identified by sight by their heavily streaked breasts with a spot in the center. Both the male and female song sparrows look alike, a feature which is common in all of the true sparrows. Song sparrows feed on both seeds and insects. The species is present all months of the year in Southwest Michigan, but most individuals depart south for the cold months.

Song sparrow nests are usually made beneath layers of grass, or brush piles and are constructed from grass, bark, forbes, leaves and lined with fine materials. Two to three, occasionally four, broods are raised each season in Michigan. The same nest site is often reused during the season.

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



*Top and above left: Drake wood duck, March 12, 2023 at the Chris Thompson Preserve, Chikaming Township. Photo by Brad Anderson.*

*Above right: Song sparrow perched in a blue spruce in the yard of Brad and Hannah Anderson of Bridgman, March 1. Photo by Brad Anderson.*

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# The Last Word

by PHIL VITALE  
aka SAILORPHIL

## What do you want to 'be' when you grow up?

**M**

y grandson Dominic asked me not long ago, while distracted from a family dinner (something that happens only rarely when food is placed in front of his 16 year-old gaping maw), what I had wanted to "be" when I was his age. Since Dom's a pretty interesting and intelligent, but occasionally glib kid who's fond of idle banter and bad puns, and since Dom's questions are frequently loaded (he is often in search of straight man for a setup punch line), I was a bit leery of answering.

My first reaction was to respond with equal guile and tell him that at 16, what I most sincerely doubted I'd ever "be" was ... 17, but a mere moment's reflection suggested that he'd most certainly have questioned his grandfather further, which would have led to an uncomfortable family discussion (is that redundant?) of my somewhat difficult and admittedly misspent youth.

So I played it straight and told the truth (to quote Twain, "When in doubt tell the truth. It will confound your enemies and astound your friends.").

I told him that at 16, I had wanted to be a writer.

Apparently that wasn't the answer he was looking for but he played along and asked me to elucidate, most likely hoping he could steer the conversation back to his setup and catch me with one of his own zingers.

So I launched into an Alice's Restaurant kind of meandering but true story about being a writer and about the time I met a somewhat snobby high school principal while I was partying with a group of friends and family at a rather sleazy bar in northern Michigan. This big-fish-in-a-small-pond kinda guy (who was even more over-served than I), asked me after a short but strained conversation, what I did for a living.

Back then being a writer, especially being a newspaper writer, didn't have the stigma it has come to have accumulated in current times, and as I was pretty damn proud of having made my way into the field and to be actually getting paid for it, so I told him what I did.

"I'm a writer," I half shouted at him across the table in the smoke- and booze-stench-filled room.

Mistakenly, this guy started laughing, and then, pointing me out to his friends, proclaimed loudly, "Hey everybody, I've used this guy's trucks!"

Not being of my generation, Dominic needed that to be explained, but once it was, he enjoyed the pun.

Flipping the board around, I asked him what he wanted to be now, at 16 ... and what he hoped to be when he was my age.

I could tell by the way he bit his lip (and was that an eye roll?) that he couldn't imagine living to be my age in the first place, and further that he was resisting the easy "age" jokes that were flowing through his brain, but distracted from his initial quest and forced onto the defensive, resist he did, popping out a pat, predictable answer ... predictable at least for a spectacularly pubescent 16 year-old male who's interests seem to lie more with U-Tube (and other, not-to-be-mentioned) videos on his gaming laptop, the daily physical distractions of his swim team, and that anonymous but cute girl in one of his classes who he's not really interested in because he's not really ready for all that yet.

He said he didn't know.

Now, that's one of my favorite answers of all times (once again, to quote Twain, "I was gratified to be able to answer promptly and I did. I said I didn't know."), but I wasn't ready to let him get off so easily, so I pressed on.

And in true Dominic fashion, he amazed me.

His only partially focused and distinctly rambling answer ranged from various positions in the pharmaceutical industry to mechanical engineering opportunities to some level of professional work in the legal or the medical fields (his father had been desirous of being a medical professional before his premature death).

"Or maybe I'll just become an auto mechanic," he said with a wry smile, no doubt anticipating that I might try to discourage him from what he was considering to be a less noble and somehow less desirable profession.

I doubt I surprised him when I launched into yet another lengthy story (to quote Jimmy Durante, "I got a million of 'em.") about a "letter to the editor" I once read in my hometown newspaper (do they still have those?), that started a furor or local flavor.

Seems the writer of this letter, a guy who lived in my hometown, was an auto mechanic, and he had decided to write to the editor to try to improve society by convincing other parents that their children should only associate with their "own kind" (in this case, the children of other auto mechanics). He reasoned that as a mechanic himself, he could understand and commiserate with their concerns, that he knew (most) mechanics to be honorable and fair people, and he was comfortable with his kids hanging out with their kids.

However, the writer continued, all parents would do well to keep their children from associating with the children of both lawyers and doctors, reasoning that since lawyers spent a considerable time of their working hours in the company of criminals, and that since doctors spent their time in the company of communicably diseased patients, the children of these people were most likely to be influenced by and/or to infect his own children with the more undesirable attributes of their parents' professional careers.

Then I told Dom about my recent colonoscopy, which had happened to have taken place just a few days after I had some work done on my car because a wheel had somehow come loose from the hub.

When you think about it, I told him, in both jobs there's good job security. There are always loose ends that need looking into, so we need good people to do the work. And in the end, even though the doctor made a lot more money that day, I'm pretty sure I'd rather have been the mechanic. Dominic laughed and agreed, then he doubted aloud that what I had said was a true story.

Hey, I'm a writer, I replied, and again quoted Twain. "Truth is the most valuable thing we have. Let us economize it."

In a world where you can be whatever you want to be, Dominic, be good. And quit messing with gramps.



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