

Neighbors

MARCH 2024 **NOW IN OUR 21ST YEAR** **FREE – Take one**

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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Fall Road Trip:
The Natchez Trace Parkway

Mississippi, Alabama, Tennessee **Pages 9-11**

Regional News

COA Easter Egg Hunt, Craft Show

The COA Lowe Center in Cassopolis will host it's first-ever outdoor Easter egg hunt beginning at 10 am on Saturday, March 23. From 10 am to 3 pm, you can visit the Spring Fling Craft show featuring crafts by local artisans. For more info call 445-8110.

Glass Menagerie at Beckwith

The Beckwith Theatre Co. in Dowagiac will present the play The Glass Menagerie by Tennessee Williams on March 15 & 16 at 7:30 pm, on March 17 at 2 pm, on March 22 & 23 at 7:30 pm, and on March 24 at 2 pm.

Beckwith Theatre Co. is located at 100 New York Ave, Dowagiac. For more information or tickets visit <https://www.beckwiththeatre.com/>

Easter Eggstravaganza

On March 23, the city of Dowagiac will host an Easter Eggstravaganza from 10:30 am-12:30 pm at Dowagiac City Hall park and the Dowagiac Train Depot. While waiting for the egg hunt, which will begin at noon, families can visit the Easter Bunny in the train station, participate in lawn games and decorate the sidewalks with chalk. The traditional Be a Bunny Costume Contest returns, for kids, three prizes will be awarded: Best Overall, Most Colorful and Most Original.

Cabin Fever rummage/bake sale

A Cabin Fever rummage/bake sale will take place at the First United Methodist Church, 326 N Lowe St, Dowagiac, on March 15 and 16, from 9 am-4 pm Friday, and from 9 am-3 pm Saturday.

Saturday will feature a bag sale -

\$4:00/bag or Buy 2 bags, get 3rd bag free Bake Sale: Homemade candy and baked goods, also gluten-free items, furniture, clothing, kitchen, home decor and more.

For more information call Darlene Trussell at 782-8551.

Dowagiac Memorial Day Parade

The city of Dowagiac will host a Memorial Day Parade May 27 from 10:30 am-1 pm. Gather outside Dowagiac City Hall for the ceremony, which will feature a speaker and performances by the high school and Kalamazoo bagpipe bands. The Memorial Day Parade will proceed to Riverside Cemetery for Veterans' services. The Masons of Peninsular Lodge #10 hosts this long-standing tradition.

Dowagiac Music in the Park

This summer, gather downtown from 7:30-9 pm on Thursday evenings for Dowagiac's Music in the Park concert series. Concerts will be held at the Dowagiac District Library Event Pavilion on Main Street, and are an event of the City of Dowagiac's Downtown Development Authority.

For event information visit https://www.cityofdowagiac.com/arts_recreation/entertainment/summer_concert_series.php. Note in 2024, there will be no July 4 concert.

Dowagiac Home & Garden Tour

On June 22 from 11 am-5 pm, the Dowagiac Chamber of Commerce Home Tour Committee home & garden tour showcases the architectural diversity and unique character of Dowagiac..

Pre-sale tickets are available through June 22 for \$15 per person. Pre-sale tickets are only available online. Tickets

will be sold in person only the day of the event,until 3 p.m., at the Dowagiac History Museum and are \$20 per person.

The tour starts at the Dowagiac Area History Museum 201 E. Division. Participants can pick up their wristbands and maps at the museum. No one will be allowed to enter tour homes without a tour wristband. If you prepurchased your ticket, you will need to present your purchased ticket on your cell phone OR a printed copy the day of the event in order to receive your wristband.

For tickets visit <https://www.dowagi-acchamber.com/events/upcoming-events>

Cass County Fair July 28-Aug. 03

The 172nd annual Cass County 4H Fair will be held at the fairgrounds in Cassopolis from July 28. For more information call (269) 445-8265 or visit [MyCassCountyFair.com](https://www.MyCassCountyFair.com)

Festival, BBQ, Steve's Run

Dowagiac's second annual barbecue competition featuring an amateur division sanctioned by the Kansas City Barbeque Society will be held during the annual Summer Festival July 19 & 20 from 1-7 pm.

This community celebration is a family-friendly event, with music, children's entertainment, games and rides, and food trucks. Families can browse summer sales and the booths of artisans. In addition, Southwestern Michigan College's annual Steve's Run will start downtown Friday evening.

COA partners with AARP Tax-Aide

The Cass County Council on Aging (COA) has partnered with the AARP Foundation Tax-Aide to offer in-person

and virtual tax assistance to anyone, free of charge, with special focus on taxpayers over age 50. Tax-Aide volunteers are trained and IRS-certified.

Appointments are limited; to schedule call 445-8110.

COA upcoming programs, bus trips

The Cass County COA has scheduled the following programs and bus trips for area residents.

March 16 you can visit **Maple Row Syrup facilities in Jones** to see the modern way of making maple syrup. The trip, which will leave at 8 am and return around noon, costs \$8, which includes transportation (breakfast is available to buy). Space is limited and registration is required.

April 12, a **Red Cross hands-only CPR class** will be presented at 9 am at the COA Front Street Crossing in Dowagiac, and at 1 pm at the Lowe Center in Cassopolis. Registration is required.

April 17 from 10 am to 2 pm the Lowe Center in Cassopolis will host a **Blacksmith workshop**. Only cotton clothing can be worn, a blacksmith apron and safety glasses will be presented. Cost is \$15; registration is required by April 10.

A **tour of Shippshewana Amish artisans and workshops** will take place on Wednesday, May 15, leaving at 8 am and returning around 5 pm. Cost is \$85, and includes transportion, admission, tour guide's fee and full-course Threshers lunch. Space is limited and registration is required.

To register for any of the events call 445-8110.









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Regional Calendar

AREA EVENTS

MARCH 15, 16, Cabin Fever rummage-bake sale, First United Methodist Church, 326 N. Lowe St., -Dowagiac, 9 am-4 pm Friday, 9 am-3 pm Saturday,

MARCH 15-17, 22-24, The Glass Menagerie, Beckwith Theatre, Dowagiac, times, tickets, information at beckwiththeatre.com

MARCH 16, COA bus trip to Maple Row Syrup facility in Jones, 8 am - noon, \$8, register at 445-8110

MARCH 23, COA Easter Egg Hunt and Spring Fling Craft show, Lowe Center, Cassopolis, 10 am-3 pm, 445-8110

MARCH 23, Dowagiac Easter Eggstravaganza, 10 am-12:30 pm, <https://www.dowagiacchamber.com/events/upcoming-events>

APRIL 12, Red Cross CPR class, 9 am, COA, Dowagiac, 1 pm, COA Cassopolis

APRIL 17, Blacksmith workshop, 10 am-2pm, COA, Cassopolis, \$15

MAY 27, Dowagiac Memorial Day Parade, 10:30 am-1 pm, www.dowagiacchamber.com/events/upcoming-events

JUNE 22, Dowagiac Home Tour, www.dowagiacchamber.com/events/upcoming-events

JULY 28-AUG. 3, Cass County Fair, Cassopolis, MyCassCountyFair.com

CASS DISTRICT LIBRARY
<https://www.cassdistrictlibrary.org/events-programs/>

MONDAYS: 11 am, T'AI CHI WITH ALYSE KNEPPLE, Mason/Union, Free introductory class, followed by four weekly classes which will cost \$40.

MARCH 6, ROSS BEATTY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT ART SHOW, Main, 5:30-6:30pm.

MARCH 8, 15, 22, FRIDAY FILMS, Howard, Noon-1 pm, Film Schedule: 3/8: Camp Forgotten, 3/15: The Orphan Trains, 3/22: What Plants Talk About.

MARCH 9, MEET PETE THE CAT, 10-11 am, Mason/Union, 269-357-7821 to register.

MARCH 13, ADULT CRAFT CLUB, Main, 1 pm, contact Stephanie at 269-749-1384 or visit any branch to register.

MARCH 14, FAMILY NIGHT: PERSONALIZED BOOK BAG, Edwardsburg, 5:30 pm, All supplies provided. Call 269-487-9215 or visit any branch to register.

MARCH 19, SAVAGE READERS BOOK CLUB, Savage Bean Coffee Co., Call 269-749-1384 for more details.

MARCH 19, GREAT NORTH AMERICAN ECLIPSE BY RICHARD BELL, 6 pm-7 pm, Edwardsburg

MARCH 19, STORYTIME, 11 am-noon, Edwardsburg, Howard

MARCH 20, STORYTIME, 10-11 am Mason/Union

MARCH 21, STORYTIME, 11 am-noon, Main

MARCH 21, VILLAGE BOOK CLUB,

5:30-6:30 pm, Edwardsburg

MARCH 25, TEEN MAKER MONDAYS, 2:30-3:30 pm, Edwardsburg

MARCH 26, GREAT NORTH AMERICAN ECLIPSE BY RICHARD BELL 5:30-6:30 pm, Main

MARCH 26, STORYTIME, 11 am-noon, Edwardsburg, Howard

MARCH 27, STORYTIME, 10 am-11 am Mason/Union

MARCH 27, PICTURES WITH THE EASTER BUNNY, 4:30-6:30 pm, Main

MARCH 28, MARCH IS READING MONTH: FAMILY BLANKET FORTS, 6-8 pm, Main, Call 269- 749-1384 to register.

MARCH 28, IF THESE WALLS COULD TALK: RESEARCH YOUR OLD HOUSE, 6-7 pm, Local History Branch

MARCH 28, STORYTIME, 11 am-noon Main

Dowagiac District Library
<https://www.dowagiacdl.org/events>

March 6, STEAM for Tweens-Leprechaun Genetics, 4-5 pm. Children ages 8-12 Register at (269) 782-3826 or email dowagiaclibrarystaff@gmail.com

March 7, Make & Share Cookbook Club, 5:15 -6:30 pm. To reserve call the library or email dowagiaclibrarystaff@gmail.com

March 11, Computer & Tech Help, 10 am-noon.

March 12 , Preschool Story Time, 10:30-11:30 am. Children 3-5 years old

March 12, Teen Cooking 101*, 3-4 pm
*Registration required.

March 16, Presentation by The Michiana Paranormal Society, Noon-2 pm.

March 18, Computer & Tech Help, 10 am-noon.

March 19, Preschool Story Time, 10:30-11:30 am.

March 19, Teen Tuesday: Arts & Crafts, 3-4 pm.

March 20, STEAM for Tweens-Crystal Rainbows, 4-5 pm. Register by March 4 at 782-3826 or email dowagiaclibrarystaff@gmail.com

March 21, Heated Tropes Book Club-Unfortunately Yours, 6-6:45 pm, 782-3826.

March 25, Computer & Tech Help, 10 am-noon.

March 25, TBR Book Club for Teens, 3-4 pm.

March 26, Preschool Story Time, 10:30-11:30 am.

March 26, Teen Tuesday: Scavenger Hunt! 3-4 pm.

March 26, Silas Marner by George Eliot, 5-6 pm. Email mweston@dowagiacdl.org

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Business & Finance

Spring cleaning your insurance policies

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

Now is as good of a time as any to start spring cleaning. We all know it is too early to be able to do the outside spring cleaning, so a good place to start is in the comfort of your own home with spring cleaning your insurance policies. It's always good to review what you have, what you may need or what you no longer have.

While reviewing your policies, there are some common mistakes people make. Below are some of those along with a short explanation of each.

■ Failing to update policies reflecting changes in their life. This could include moving or a new mailing address. It also could include purchasing new property-jewelry, real estate, 4 wheelers, etc. Also, make sure your vehicles are correct, especially if you've purchased or sold a vehicle during the term.

■ Choosing the most inexpensive policy without regard to what it is covering. Most of us don't like to 'waste' money on insurance when the majority of the time, we don't use it. One thing I have found is that the few dollars you may save doesn't compare when you have a claim. If you haven't chosen the correct limits or coverages, this could come back to haunt you in the case of a loss.

■ Assuming the coverage is adequate without reassessing needs. If you have had the same house insurance coverage since 1995, you will want to make sure

your limits are still sufficient. Some policies have an automatic increase, but even then, the housing and construction market have taken such a sharp increase the last few years, you will want to make sure your home is covered for the current replacement cost.

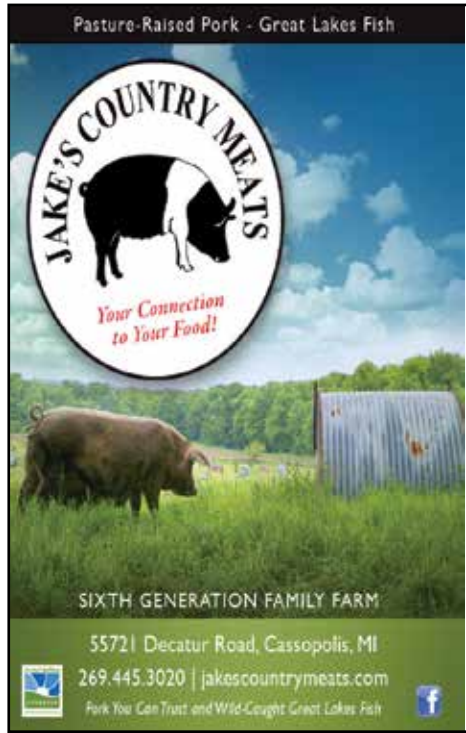
■ Not understanding the terms and conditions of their policy. This one is important as it can result in denied claims. Insurance policy reading and understanding can seem like a daunting task, but knowing what you have covered, the deductibles, and what is not

covered is important when it comes to a claim.

■ Not shopping around for better rates or coverage options. We all love the 'if it ain't broke, don't fix it'. However, every couple years, it is a good idea to get some other quotes. Independent insurance agencies, like ours, have a variety of companies that may be able to offer other options. You may find a better deal, with either a cheaper option or at least more coverage for what you're paying now. You may also find that your current insurance is the most competitive option,

but at least you will know you are in a good place.

To avoid these mistakes, it is important to regularly review your policies and update them as needed. Your insurance agent should be able to help you fully understand the terms and conditions. In addition, they can help ensure you are getting the most comprehensive coverage for your needs at the most competitive price. If you are looking for a new insurance agent, please give Kemner Iott Benz a call at 269.445.2425 or visit us at www.kemneriottbenz.com.



Get Fit, Stay Fit

The Cass County COA has outstanding fitness centers at both locations. Each center offers a variety of cardiovascular fitness machines and weight training equipment as well as In-Person and Zoom Fitness Classes. Trained instructors provide assistance, advice and class instruction to help you meet your fitness goals.

- Balance, Stretch & Stability
- Cardio Challenge
- H.I.L.I.T.
- S.E.A.T.
- Tai Chi
- Yoga

Cass County COA
Enhancing Life

Lowe Center
60525 Decatur Rd.
Cassopolis, MI 49031

(269) 445-8110
www.CassCOA.org
facebook.com/CassCOA

Front Street Crossing
227 S. Front Street
Dowagiac, MI 49047

The Housing Market in Cass County & SWMI

The housing market in Cass County in 2023 fell behind sales in 2022. In December sales were up by three house. Selling prices soar for waterfront houses in December. Year-to-date selling prices were within 10 percent of prices in 2022.

Year-to-date sales of all housing, including waterfront and non-waterfront locations in Cass County, decreased 10 percent over sales at the end of 2022 (523 vs. 578). Waterfront house sales declined 20 percent (113 vs. 142), and non-waterfront house sales slipped 6 percent (410 vs. 436).

The overall average selling price in 2023 saw an 8 percent decrease from 2022 (\$305,228 vs. \$332,430). The overall median selling price at \$222,000 decreased 1 percent from the \$225,000 median price at the end of 2022. In December 2023 the average selling price increased 12 percent over December 2022 (\$273,168 vs. \$243,534).

The year-to-date average selling price for waterfront homes slipped 10 percent to \$571,363 from \$634,062 in 2022. The year-to-date median selling price for waterfront homes grew 6 percent (\$502,500 vs. \$473,675). The average selling price in December 2023 for waterfront homes was \$712,700 up 102 percent over the \$352,500 average selling price in December 2022.

For non-waterfront homes, the year-to-date average selling price decreased less than 1 percent to \$232,025 from \$234,191 in 2022. The year-to-date median selling price at \$190,000 was 2 percent higher than the \$186,250 at the end of 2022. In December the average selling price was \$191,774, 17 percent lower than the \$230,961 average selling price in December 2022.

The median price is the price at

which 50% of the homes sold were above that price and 50% were below.

Only two bank-owned or foreclosed houses in Cass County were a part of all closed transactions in December. The highest percentage in December previously was 27 percent in 2015. There were twelve houses total for all of 2022 in Cass County.

Across all of SWMI, there were eight bank-owned or foreclosed homes as part of all transactions in December, which was 4 percent. This was the highest percentage during 2023. For most of 2023 the percentage was 2 percent.

Previously, SWMI experienced a four-year burst of housing sales from 2016 until 2020. Then Covid and a dwindling supply of houses for sale starting in 2021 and through 2022 took its toll on the local housing market. In 2023, sales continued declining reaching the lowest level in ten years. At the end of 2023 housing prices climbed to the highest level on record since 2013.

The inventory of houses for sale across Allegan, Berrien, Cass, and the westerly 2/3 of Van Buren Counties at the end of 2023 dropped 4 percent from 2022 (637 vs. 662). At the start of 2023, the inventory had sunk to 3.3-months supply, grew to 4.9-months supply in August and the year ended with 4.0-months supply. For comparison, in 2013, the year started at 9.5-months supply, maxed at 12.6-months supply in June and fell to 8.4-months supply at the end of the year.

Mortgage rates rose from 6.13 in January and, at the end of the year, were 6.61. The rate peaked in October at 7.79 for a 30-year conventional mortgage.

The number of houses sold each month in 2023 from January until

November was lower than the same month in 2022. Average and median selling prices each month in 2023 were higher than the same month in 2022 for ten months, with exceptions of January and February.

In December 2023, the number of houses sold increased 13 percent compared to December 2022 (188 vs. 167). Year-to-date, sales in 2023 fell 15 percent to 2786 from 3262 in 2022.

The average selling price in December 2023 at \$305,580 was 2 percent higher than the average selling price of \$299,574 in December 2022. The highest selling price in the year-over-year comparison reached \$377,156 in 2021.

The year-to-date average selling price of \$355,918 climbed 5 percent over 2022 (\$338,495) setting a new record in the year-over-year comparison.

The median selling price for December 2023 was \$233,501, which grew 7 percent above the \$219,000 median selling price for December 2022.

The year-to-date median selling price of \$260,000 was a 6 percent increase over \$245,000 in 2022 and also set a new record in the year-over-year comparison.

Additional market highlights include the number of houses sold each year stayed above 3000 for the last ten years. Then in 2023, the number of houses sold in the year dropped to 2786. Since 2013, the average selling price in SWMI has increased 98 percent (\$355,918 vs \$179,636).

The yearly total dollar volume in 2023 decreased 11 percent (\$977,632,482 vs. \$1,104,172,661).

The numbers reported for local sales include residential property in Allegan, Berrien, Cass, and the westerly 2/3 of Van Buren Counties. They should

not be used to determine the market value of any individual property. If you want to know the market value of your property, please contact your local REALTOR®.

Neighbors

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Lake Life with Jane

Thinking of warmer days ahead

Hey Neighbors! We're back! Maybe seeing this in your mailbox or grocery store has you thinking of warmer days ahead. I'm hoping these photos I took on Diamond Lake will get you in the mood.

This year will make it 35 years since we fell in love with our home here on a little bay and never looked back. We still go back and forth between here and Chicago and another place we have down in Asheville, NC. Have to squeeze some mountain air in. I highly recommend it!

I believe I took this sunset picture hanging off my balcony risking life and limb. Look at those clouds. They were definitely saying something to me.

March isn't the prettiest month in town and it usually has only one main event on the calendar~ St. Paddy's Day, unless you count President's Day for the sales and the day off from work. But this year we have an early Easter, March 31. I was scratching my head at all of the candy eggs, ducks and baskets in the stores at the end of January when I was scavenging for Godiva Chocolates to give myself for Valentine's Day. Thankfully, chocolate is always in style and remember; you can freeze it so hit up those aisles when it goes on sale.



If you are new here to my column, and I have just returned from a short break having been let out early for good behavior, I'm just your average lake girl that likes to meander along month to month rambling on about everything; gardening, decorating, entertaining, cooking, crafts, shopping and whatever seems frivolously newsworthy. I'm not as easy or fun as scrolling through Pinterest, but I do this for the people who still like to read books and magazines in print, who pick up the Times and read it at least until they come to the crossword puzzle, and those who accumulate scraps of paper, business cards and paper clips in one messy pile on the kitchen table.

So while March is going to have many days of the same cold temps, rain and gloom, there's not a whole bunch to do, at least not what I want to be doing, so maybe it's time to get going on what we can do before our noses lead us outdoors.

The first thing I like to do is tie up old ends. If you haven't had yourself a good long vacation (and you deserve it), get going! Did you know that March is the best month to buy luggage? Would I make this up? Keep that in mind if you have any other summer trips on the horizon. Other March sales include cleaning supplies which makes perfect sense and is oddly well timed if you want to get a head start on this whole keeping yourself busy and productive til summer thing.

You might have snoopy weekend guests in a few more months. I actually



had someone go into the medicine chest in one of my bathrooms and start tossing out expired products. I mean, shame on me for having my own expired Tylenol, but the nerve. And then a few summers ago my daughter told me I needed to go around our pedestal sink and toilet with an old toothbrush. Apparently I don't do well with bathroom hygiene. Or the bathrooms I should say. I'm good.

I also noticed when I was doing my periodic check of monthly sales that golf clubs are marked down in March. That's a huge incentive to get some of your people with testosterone to jump into the game of pre-spring cleaning. More tips next month ... garden tools make the April sales list. Isn't that clever?

A friend and I were talking about the recipes I have in my column every month. I try to keep them seasonal, and if I can come up with something a little special for a holiday I'll throw that in. What we were debating was whether or not readers were more interested in appetizers or salads during the summer months, given the amount of time we entertain. Both have evolved considerably and I love to come up with something different every time I'm inspired, yet we can get stuck in the same old groove or see the same rotation. Can I have your thoughts? It will never be either/or. Weigh in through my email address below.

I remember when I first started writing this column a zillion years ago I was in a certain floral shop in a certain town. I saw a stack of Neighbors on the counter as the nice lady rang up my assortment of dried flowers and candles. I asked if she read Lake Life with Jane and if she liked it. She replied, "Yes, I do read it. The recipes though ... I wish we could just have the old church recipes back."

I think you could hear me swallow hard. I went home, my brain swirling with images of jello molds, Salisbury steak, pineapple upside down cake, things with Campbell Cream of \$*** soup! Funny thing is, we are making all of those things now (not the jello molds so much), just different versions. Now I've got myself thinking - how about a jello recipe for April?

Now onward to some March-appropriate recipes.

Dutch Baby Ingredients:

3 T butter



1/2 c flour
1/4 t salt
1 T sugar
1 c milk
2 eggs
1 1/2 t vanilla

Directions:

Preheat oven to 400. In a medium size bowl whisk together the milk and flour until smooth, then add the eggs, salt, sugar, and vanilla. Set aside. If you have a cast iron skillet, this would be the optimal way to make this. If not, a 9 inch round cake pan will work. Place the butter in the pan and into the oven and watch carefully until it just starts to bubble. Remove and add the egg mixture, return to the oven and bake for 15-20 minutes until edges are crispy. Do Not open the oven door until it's ready - it will deflate!

One skillet serves four nicely with some fresh fruit. I like to add a small sheet pan of sausage patties to the oven at the same time as the crepe/pancake. Your toppings are totally up to you; maple syrup, jam, melted chocolate, and my personal favorite: a squeeze of lemon and lots of powdered sugar. Enjoy!

Spicy Marinated Shrimp Ingredients

1/2 to 1 lb jumbo shrimp
1/3 c packed cilantro, roughly chopped
1/4 c fresh lime juice (2-3 limes)
1/4 c olive oil

1 T honey
1/2 t chili powder
Canola oil for cooking
S & P
Thai noodles (optional)



Directions:

Blend all of the ingredients except the shrimp in a food processor. Place the shrimp in a large zip lock bag and pour the marinade over. Place in refrigerator for no longer than 10 minutes or the shrimp will actually 'cook' in the acidic ingredients.

Heat 1 tablespoon of canola oil in a skillet or grill pan. You can also do this on an outdoor grill. Place each piece on a wooden skewer and grill 1 minute on each side until lightly charred.

As I've said, you can serve this in so many ways. I am looking forward to having this as an appetizer for company over a bed of lettuce, it's great at room temp. Something cool to counteract the spiciness would be a yogurt dip with cucumber slices or tortillas and a salsa Verde. Here I served it as a main dish over Thai rice noodles, but fettuccine is fine also.

Cheese & Onion Herb Spread



1 c. shredded Asiago (or Parmesan) cheese, divided
2 c. finely diced yellow onion
1/4 c. plain Greek yogurt
4 t. olive oil, divided
2 T. minced garlic
2 t. dried rosemary or 2 T fresh
Salt and pepper to taste

Directions:

Sauté onions in 2 t. olive oil over medium heat for about 5 minutes or until soft. Set aside.

In food processor or blender combine beans and yogurt. Pulse until smooth. Add S & P, remaining 2 t. olive oil, garlic and rosemary and 1/3 c. Asiago cheese. Pulse until smooth and creamy.

Transfer bean mixture to a shallow ovenproof dish. Top with half the onions, half the remaining cheese and then repeat. Bake at 450 for ten minutes. Serve hot or at room temp with crackers, toasted bread or crudités. YUM!!!!

And that's it for the March 2024 edition of Neighbor's. Next month I'll have some early gardening season tips as well as some indoor decorating ideas to help transition your home from the winter blahs to spring fever! And a Jello mold. Maybe. See ya then!

Jane Boudreau is a writer, newspaper columnist, and blogger who divides her time between Chicago and Diamond Lake. You can reach her at blndy9@yahoo.com

Our Children

Make the most of National Reading Month

by **SANDY FLEMING**

Even if you don't have kids, you would have to hide under a rock to miss the fact that March is National Reading Month each year. The purpose, of course, is to encourage everyone to read. Count on librarians to have ready answers about why this is so important.

The good people at Markham Public Library made a list of ten benefits of reading more:

- **Reading is free entertainment!** Especially in these expensive times, reading is one of the least expensive (or even free) ways you can beat boredom.
- **Reading helps you set a great example for others.** With its many benefits, it's no wonder that parents want to encourage the habit. Even if you don't have kids, children still see you out and about. If you are waiting for something, riding instead of driving, or enjoying a warm afternoon in the park, consider how you can influence others to read just by doing it yourself.

- **Reading is a stress-buster.** Fiction's purpose is to pull us away from the everyday world with its stresses and pressures and give us a little break. Reading something pleasant or entertaining will distract you for a little while and then allow you to tackle your problems with renewed energy later on.

- **Reading provides brain food.** It stimulates your mind and helps you grow. You'll be untangling someone else's thoughts, sentence structure, organizational patterns, and language. That's a lot more invigorating than living with your own thoughts day after day.

- **Reading can improve sleep habits.** Your body winds down for bedtime because of a series of clues that you can control. Getting into the habit of reading for fifteen to thirty minutes before bed allows your body to physically relax and moves your brain away from stresses of the day. If you make it a habit, it will become a signal that will trigger the chemical changes that come before a good night's sleep.

- **Reading builds concentration and focus skills.** There aren't many activities that require us to stay focused and attentive, but reading is one of them. The more you read, the more practice you will get with controlling distractions and staying on task. That's important for everyone, no matter what else goes on in your life.

- **Reading improves literacy.** It's almost a given: the more you read, the better you read. In addition, the more you read, the better you write and communicate in general. Reading builds all of the skills related to language and communication. These are foundations for success both at home and at work.

- **Reading increases knowledge.** When you read (whether it's fiction or nonfiction), your brain is soaking up information. There's a reason that "well-read" is a synonym for being smart. You learn a wider array of words, you discover general knowledge and facts, and you learn about cultures. Read nonfiction and you will be a more educated person. Read fiction, and you will develop your imagination and creativity. It's a win-win situation.

- **Reading can boost your motivation.** Choose uplifting reading material,



photo by andrea piacquadio, pexels

and you will find that your attitudes and feelings will brighten as well. You might read about someone who has faced and overcome the same challenges as you have now. You could read advice that you'll act on to improve your life. You might find inspiration from a book. There's an old saying: Garbage In, Garbage Out. It means that if you fill up with junk, you will have junky outcomes. The opposite is also true. If you feed your mind with reading, it's like tending a garden. You will soon grow productive and beautiful thoughts.

- **Reading can improve empathy.** As you read, you naturally put yourself in the narrator's or author's shoes. You learn about their lives, their priorities, and their struggles. In this time of division, you can be a force for coming together. Read to learn more about people and cultures you understand and also about people and cultures you do not understand. The more you know, the more you will be able to see more sides of any issues. This is important in politics, but it's more important in life because we share this world with so many. You'll find we are more alike than different.

Of course, these are not ALL of the reasons to read, but there are enough of them there that impact lives that I think everyone will agree it's important. It's also likely not the priority in your life or in the lives of your children that it should be. National Reading Month is the perfect time to build habits and routines that encourage reading for everyone in your household. Get started with some of these ideas!

Finding Time for Reading

- With crowded schedules, I can hear you asking "WHEN???" The answer will be as unique as your household and your life, but finding that time is critical. If you have kids, it's even more important because you need to make sure you're reading to them as well as with them. Check your daily schedule for time-wasters and for corners of time that are still available. You might need to substitute reading in for a less-productive activity, like watching television or playing video games. While these

forms of recreation are important, they don't give the huge benefits of reading.

You won't need to give up all of your time to watch or play, just make it a priority to read first, for a minimum of 30 minutes.

- Try your own version of DEAR. It stands for "Drop Everything and Read." It can work well for families to have a prescheduled time when everyone is home that you all know will be devoted to reading. It's like making an appointment with yourself. You wouldn't skip a medical appointment or an appointment with the hairdresser, so don't allow yourself to skip these appointments, either.

- Set a goal. Simply saying that you want to read more or read more with your kids is not good enough. Instead, do a quick few days of "research" to find out how much time you currently spend on average with reading material that is non-work or school related. Set yourself a specific amount to increase that each day or week. Set a date to have this accomplished by. For example, if you find you are reading an average of five minutes daily, set a goal to increase that average to fifteen minutes by the end of the month. Then make it a priority, just like exercising or brushing your teeth!

- Use corners of time when you usually just fret about boredom or wasting time. Keep your reading material with you to peruse while you wait for appointments, while you stand in line, or while you are on hold for calls. Keeping your reading available and accessible will help you increase your reading time.

Coaxing Reluctant Readers

- When you spend time as a family reading, have someone read a small portion of a book out loud. Read enough for the story to get going and stop at an exciting point. Leave the book (with a bookmark where you left off) in an obvious, visible spot. Chances are good that someone will be intrigued enough to pick up the book to find out what happens next.

- Remember that reading is reading, no matter what the format. Comic books, graphic novels, short stories, and any other form of printed material counts. Sometimes reluctant readers do best

with joke books, "snippet" books that have short sections of just a paragraph or two, or other alternative types of literature. It's ok! The goal is to get them reading!

- Keep books, magazines, and other reading material lying around. Making reading physically accessible will increase the chances of people in the house taking some in.

- Read text at the right level. The complexity level of reading that is enjoyable for most people is well below what their level of schooling would indicate. It's fine for your fifth grader to want to read beginner chapter books. It's OK for your spouse or partner to enjoy young adult fiction. Help everyone find the right level with the Five-Finger Test: Turn to a page in the middle of the book, preferably with lots of text. Read out loud. Put a finger up for each word that is hard, misread, or stumbled on. If you run out of fingers on one hand before the end of the page, the book may be too difficult to enjoy on your own.

- Try alternative forms of reading. Sometimes reluctant readers will engage in some version of partner reading, where you read a paragraph or a page, and then they read a section. Sometimes you can alternate speaking parts in conversations (funny voices are a bonus!). Sometimes it helps to read the same text in unison at the same time.

- Choose reading that is highly engaging. Pick texts that are about areas of interest, about people in very similar or very different situations, or about dreams or career goals.

- Look for "high interest-low vocabulary" books and texts. These are written with reluctant readers in mind, and use several different strategies to make reading more meaningful.

However you tackle the challenge, try to get everyone in the household reading more. You all will reap lifelong benefits!

Sandy Fleming is an educator, tutor, and writer living in Edwardsburg. Visit her website at <https://learning-nook.com> for a large selection of learning ideas!

Field Trip

The Natchez Trace Parkway is a scenic, historic, 444-mile recreational road (and state park) that travels through parts of three states. It roughly follows the "Old Natchez Trace," a travel corridor that runs from Natchez, Mississippi, Alabama and into Tennessee.

In early America the "trace" was used by American Indians, "Kaintucks," European settlers, slave traders, soldiers, and future presidents.

Today, people can enjoy a leisurely scenic drive (the maximum speed limit is 50 mph), as well as hiking, biking, horseback riding, and camping.

Last November my wife, Sandy, and I decided to drive the highway, camping our way through the deep south before the weather made camping undesirable even that far south.

We got onto the highway just south of Nashville, Tennessee and wound our way, eventually to Natchez ... and what a cool trip it was.

We spent just over a week exploring the route's attractions

Our first stop was at Tishomingo State Park, not far from Tupelo, the birthplace of Elvis Presley. Located in the foothills of Appalachian Mountains in northeast Mississippi, the park is widely regarded as Mississippi's most scenic state park. It is named for Chief Tishomingo, a renowned war chief of the Chickasaw nation.

After that, we roamed, stopping wherever we liked (there was hardly anyone else on the road or at the attractions, ending up at Natchez, Mississippi, where we spent a couple nights of blissful relaxation, punctuated by a trip into Natchez to see the historic waterfront, to marvel at the paddle-wheelers docked there, and to walk around the city with a couple stops for a quick drink and a nice southern dinner before moving on.

Eventually we drove across the state to Biloxi, then into the Florida panhandle before heading back north through rural Alabama, Tennessee, Kentucky and Indiana. For info on the parkway, see <https://www.nps.gov/natr/index.htm>



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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

Northern shrike, snowy owl seen in area

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

The northern shrike is a regular but uncommon winter songbird in Southwest Michigan. It is about the size of our blue jay, with gray, white and black colored feathers and has a distinctive black mask across its face. Shrikes are equipped with a short, stout, hooked bill designed for catching prey. Northern shrikes feed on small birds, rodents, amphibians (in summer) and insects. Because the shrike lacks talons, it has adapted by impaling its prey on thorns, small, sharp twigs, and barbed wire. Because of this feature, shrikes have adopted the nickname "butcher bird."

Geoff Malosh of Maumee, Ohio photographed a northern shrike on January 27 in Arlington Township, Van Buren County. There have been at least three northern shrike reports from Berrien County this winter: One on December 19 reported on the New Buffalo area Christmas Bird Count; one on January 1 in Weesaw Township, reported by Lisa Schaller of Bridgman, and one on January 3 in Eau Claire, reported by multiple observers.

In winter, the northern shrike prefers open, scrubby areas, especially old fields and orchards. The summer range

of the species is found among the semi-open coniferous forests in northern Canada and Alaska. The species is also found in Eurasia.

The northern shrike typically arrives in Berrien County around November 20, although it has been recorded as early as late October. They depart Michigan for their northern nesting grounds as early as February, and are rarely seen locally after mid-March.

Shrikes seen after March 20 in our region must be identified with care as the similarly appearing loggerhead shrike arrives from its southern wintering grounds at that time. The loggerhead shrike has become rare in southern Michigan and has not nested here in years.

A snowy owl was discovered on January 11, sitting on an open field on the south side of Linco Road near the intersection of Totzke Road, Baroda Township. The bird was initially discovered by Mary Jo Canaday of Berrien Springs, and was subsequently seen by several observers through January 12, but was not relocated after that date.

Snowy owls nest far to our north among the arctic tundra of Canada, Alaska, Russia and Scandinavia. During some winters when the lemming population of the north crashes, snowy owls will irrupt southward into the northern US. This winter has not been one where snowy owls have been easy to find. In fact, the owl located by



Top photos: Northern shrike on January 27, Arlington Township, Van Buren County. Photos by Geoff Malosh of Maumee, Ohio.
At left: A snowy owl, January 11, on the ground south of Linco Road, Baroda Township. Found and photographed by Mary Jo Canaday of Berrien Springs. It was seen by several observers through January 12 but was not relocated after that date.

Canaday is the only report of the species locally. Linco Road, from Totzke Road west to M-139 (Niles Road) is a reliable location in which to find the species. The Lake Michigan shoreline is another reliable place for snowy owls. Snowy owls prefer the large open areas

such as the fields along Linco Road which resemble the treeless tundra of the north.

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

Local History

Dr. Sweetland

Provided by Jonathan Wuepper
Manager Local History Branch
Cass District Library

Dr. John B. Sweetland (1834-1899) was a prominent resident of the village of Edwardsburg during the 19th Century. Most local historians are aware that he built and occupied a large home near the shore of Pleasant Lake within the village until his passing in 1899. Not only was he a well-respected doctor in the village, but he was also the owner-editor of the Edwardsburg Argus from 1879 until his death in 1899.

Dr. Sweetland was born July 4, 1834 in Tompkins County, New York to James and Frances Sweetland. His father died in 1862 in New York and his mother died in 1863 in Edwardsburg, probably in the house located at the southwest corner of Main Street, aka US-12 and First Street.

In 1859, John Sweetland entered medical school in Buffalo, New York and graduated with honors in 1861. That same year he drove from New York to Edwardsburg, Michigan, and occupied the house at the corner of Main and First Streets. In August 1862, Dr. Sweetland enlisted in Company M of the 4th Michigan Cavalry at Niles. In October 1862, the 4th Michigan Cavalry engaged Confederate General John Morgan at Stanford, Kentucky and drove his forces to Crab Orchard taking many prisoners. One source says: "From this time to the end of the year (1862), the Forth was constantly on duty, taking the advance of the Union forces from Nashville, Franklin,

and Lavergne ... meeting the enemy almost daily."

In September 1863, Dr. Sweetland was discharged from the 4th Cavalry and accepted an appointment as U.S. Medical Cadet in Louisville. He was discharged at the expiration of his term in October 1864 and returned to his home at First and Main Streets, Edwardsburg. He served as a practicing physician in the village from his return from the war until his death.

A map of the village of Edwardsburg published in 1872 shows his residence still at the corner of First and Main Streets. But the 1882 history of Cass County has a sketch of John B. Sweetland along with his recently completed residence north of Main Street, near the shore of Pleasant Lake. He remained at that location until his death on February 19, 1899.

Dr. Sweetland was an ardent Prohibitionist, advocating for the banning of alcoholic beverages. He was elected in 1874 to the Michigan House of Representatives, serving 1875-1876.

Upcoming Program-Workshop at Local History Branch Library, Cassopolis. "If These Walls Could Talk: Researching Your Old House." March 28, from 6-8 pm. Learn how to uncover your house histories, including who built them and when, their architectural styles, and the stories of the families who called them home. Robert Myers, Director of Education for the Historical Society of Michigan, shares what you



Top: 1980 photograph of house located on the southwest corner of Main Street (aka Chicago Rd, US-12) and First Street, Edwardsburg, Michigan. Credit: Cass District Library.

Left: Same house circa 1910s. Note the unpaved sidewalk in the foreground. Credit: Andrus Collection.

Bottom left: Copy of a photograph of Private Dr. John B. Sweetland, of Edwardsburg who lived in the house circa 1861-late 1870s to early 1880s. Sweetland joined Company M of the 4th Michigan Cavalry in 1862, serving as a doctor. He was discharged in 1863 and went to Louisville, KY where he served as a doctor in the regular US Army until 1864. Photo dates from 1863-1864. Photo credit: Edwardsburg Area Museum.
Left: Sketch of Dr. Sweetland, early 1880s and house near Pleasant Lake. From History of Cass County, Michigan (Matthews 1882).



need to know. Program is FREE, but REGISTRATION for the event is required. Contact Jonathan Wuepper at 269-357-7823, or jwuepper@cass.lib.mi.us to register.

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he truth is that I've never been a great warrior. Not my thing. I've been in my share of fights. Won a few, lost a lot more (I've always believed that "No one ever wins a war," as did British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, and "Violence is the last refuge of the incompetent," according to Isaac Asimov).

More than once in my youth I woke up with bloody knuckles, a bunch of ugly bruises, scratches, some stitches, even broken bones and busted teeth. Admittedly, a lot of those were from battles I'd won. Most weren't.

"You need to pick your battles better," people always told me.

This past winter I got into an epic battle I wish I'd avoided. Woke up the next day with scabs, bruises, aches and pains, cussing myself for not walking away, not writing the check and letting someone else battle.

As an old man you'd think I would have taken a pass on this one. Told my wife before it started that I didn't want to get into it ... she laughed. She scoffed. She made that spousal "tsk-ing" sound with her tongue. She did everything but double dog dare me.

Baiting me, I thought, but like a chump, I waded in.

Ok, I guess some explanation is in order. I'm sorry if I led you to believe that my adversary in this great battle was another human being, or even some evil demon risen from the depths of the darkness to do me evil. In this case my opponent was a bathtub, or more precisely, a bathtub faucet and its evil diverter valve.

And in this particular battle, that fiendish faucet and valve left me a bleeding, hurting, moaning mess.

It started innocently enough, I guess. For months (years my wife says), I'd been ignoring the stuck lever that diverts water from the regular faucet up to the shower. I knew it was likely corroded with lime and mold and crust, and that if I just spent a bit of time I could have taken the faucet and valve assembly off the tub, cleaned it properly, checked it out with a few simple tries, lubed it properly and replaced the whole shebang.

Letting it sit for those many months (years my wife says it was), probably wasn't the best war strategy, in retrospect, but since procrastination is one of my better

traits, I did what I do well, I procrastinated for months (years my wife says), and to my continued surprise, the problem simply resisted healing itself.

So anyway, about a fortnight before Christmas this past winter, following about a fortnight or two (is there a word for two fortnights?) of my wife's urging, I decided to tackle the project one December Friday morning.

This won't be that hard, I told myself. Simple job, I said. Just do it.

What can go wrong?

Even though I was pretty sure I knew what I was doing, I did the 21st Century equivalent of research just to be sure. I watched a You-Tube video of how to fix a stuck shower diverter. It showed two simple fixes, one involving WD-40, the other being a mechanical fix

Both looked pretty simple. What could go wrong?

But it quickly became apparent that the WD-40 option would probably have worked if I'd tried it back when the problem first presented itself.

Hindsight being 20-20, I switched to Plan B.

But Plan B, to my chagrin, involved something that seemed akin to actual plumbing, a word that the dictionary definition does publish alongside my photo.

There's no other way to say it, I suck at plumbing.

I come by it honestly. My father sucked at plumbing ... I once saw him get so frustrated while he was trying to stop a kitchen sink leak that he literally ripped the handle off the sink with his bare hands, gashing his palms, flooding the kitchen, and significantly enriching the coffers of a local plumbing company.

He wasn't much of a warrior either, I guess.

Meanwhile, while I reminisced and fretted, my bathtub faucet project lay in wait.

At first I attacked it with a screwdriver, just like the You Tube video had shown. I jammed it into the faucet, gently twisted it upside down and examined the diverter. Yep, stuck alright, but I already knew that.

Step 2: remove the faucet by loosening the set screw and twisting it loose. Not easy, but check. Faucet off.

Step 3: find a way to free the diverter valve.

That's where the plumbing decided to fight back, mounting such a defense that after failing at every one of the 8,792 ways You Tube suggested I could free the valve, I decided to use the famed Menard's cheat.

I took the whole damn thing in a bag to the plumb-

ing desk at the local hardware and begged advice.

As good hardware clerks are all trained to do, they showed me a replacement faucet/diverter assembly.

"Nothing to it," Clerk Branden told me.

Two hours later I found myself back at the hardware, the mangled and no longer "new" assembly in a bag I clutched in my bruised and bleeding hands.

With a voice hoarse from my screams of anguish and through frustration-clenched teeth I sang to Clerk Branden the now epic tale of my loosing battle with my arch enemies, the gods of plumbing.

Obviously Branden had heard many such laments in his tenure at the plumbing desk, and patiently waited until I unwound. He slowly opened my bag of plumbing debris, peered inside with the reverence of an Irish wake visitor, made the same annoying "tsk-ing" noise my wife had mentioned to me earlier, and began taking a physical, metaphysical and emotional inventory.

After a brief pause he raised one finger.

"I think this might be defective," he said with a straight face. "Let's get a different one."

When the air cleared of the black and blue steam that hissed from my ears, I found myself exiting the store with a new package containing an assembly nearly identical to the one I'd already destroyed that day.

I was glad my cardiologist wasn't watching or my next ride in any vehicle would surely have been in one with flashing red lights and a siren.

Skeptical though I might have been, I acquiesced.

All the way home I thought of Albert Einstein, who is said to have defined insanity as doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result.

To my astonishment, 20 minutes after arriving, the now newly named "damn thing" was installed and working properly. I immediately sought out my wife (who was sitting in a recliner playing solitaire on her phone). I told her the job was done.

"See," she deadpanned and "tsk-ed" again "I told you it wouldn't be that big a deal." My eyes blurred. My head buzzed. My fingers bled.

You need to pick your battles better, I reminded myself as I resisted a number of primal urges.

Like I said at the very beginning of this sad, sad story, I've never been a great warrior. Not my thing.

And obviously, neither is plumbing.

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PEGGY GONYON
Lakefront Buyer Specialist

269.445.8876
Peggy@TheLakeLife.com



MATT DELANO
Lakefront Buyer Specialist

269.445.8872
Matt@TheLakeLife.com

The
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69150 Sunset Boulevard • Union, Michigan 49130

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