

# Neighbors

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A regional newspaper serving Cass County, Michigan and the surrounding area, and distributed at homes and businesses in Dowagiac, Cassopolis, Edwardsburg, Vandalia, Jones, Marcellus, Decatur, Union, Sister Lakes, and Three Rivers, with mail delivery at homes on Diamond, Eagle, Birch, Corey, Donnell, Indian, Magician, Shavehead, Baldwin, Long, Dewey, Cable, Juno, Christiana, Painter, Paradise, Stone, Buck, Lewis, Big & Little Twin and Bair lakes

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

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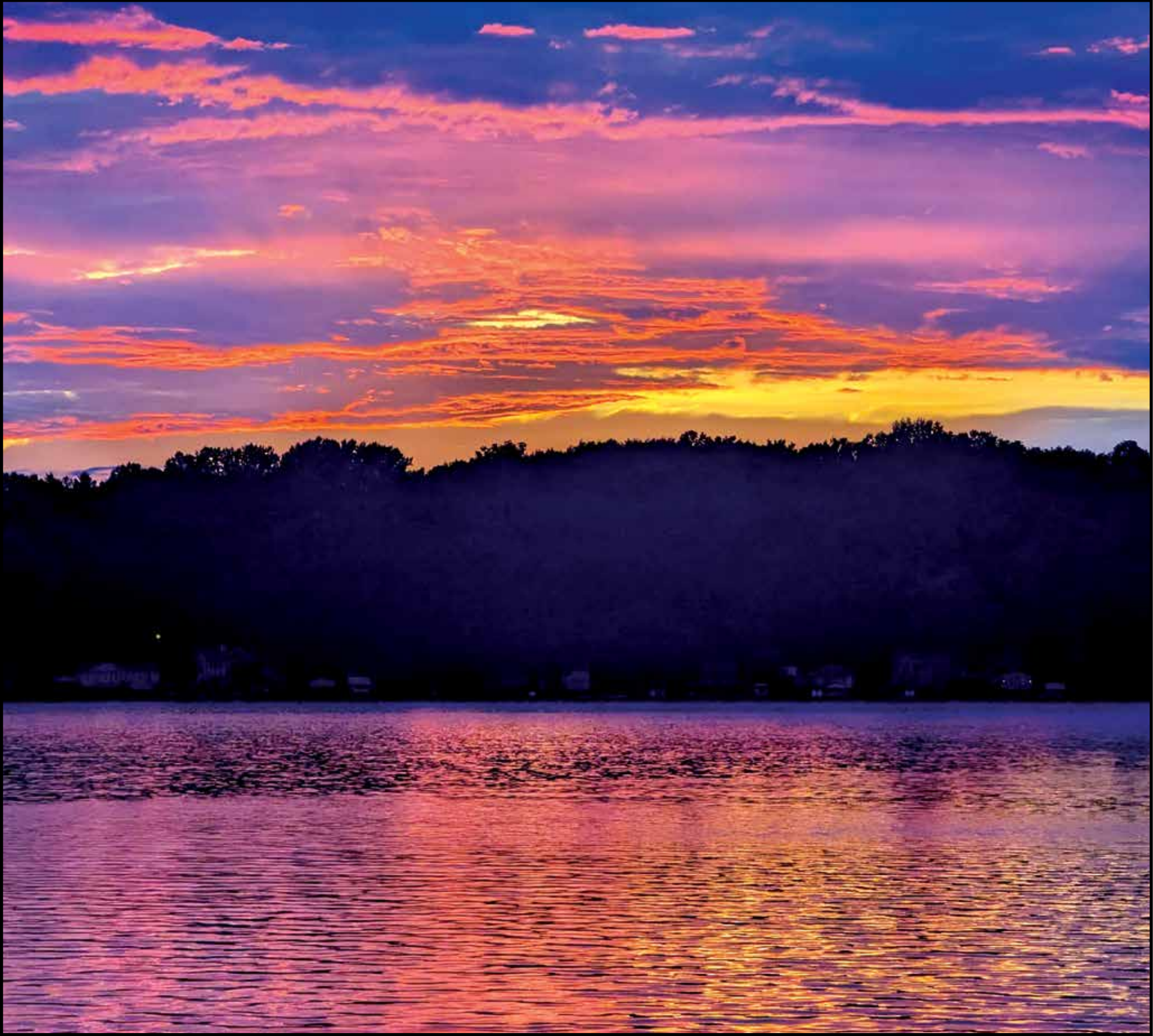
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## Field Trip: The Carnegie Center for the Arts/W. R. Monroe Museum



# Regional News

## Cass County CROP Walk

Representatives of churches across the county are planning for the Oct. 5 CROP Walk to support local food pantries and Church World Service (CWS) global programs. This year's theme, "Chickens, Beans, and Big Dreams" aptly describes the work of CWS programs, like providing sustainable farming practices (drought resistant beans and water access) to prevent failed harvests caused by climate change.

This year's event will be held at the Cass County COA pavilion in Cassopolis, register at 1:30 pm, walk at 2 pm. All are welcome to join, including dogs, to meet other Christians across the county and to help provide chickens, beans, and big dreams for our neighbors near and far. For more information or to obtain sponsorship forms, contact edwardsburgpc@gmail.com or call (269) 663-6815.

## Christmas program at CUMC

All community women are invited to the musical performance "Christmas by Candlelight" by singer and pianist Jonathan Clough at Cassopolis United Methodist Church (CUMC) on December 8 at 6 pm. Dessert will be served prior to the program. RSVP to Liana at 445-3107 or Char at 268-7066

## Sauk Trail Fest in Edwardsburg

There will be Pokagon Band dancers and drummers in native regalia, a historian from the Potawatomi Nation, and reenactors who demonstrate what life skills were like along the Sauk Trail from the years 1650 to 1750 at the "Sauk Trail Festival: Echoes of Our Past" at the Edwardsburg Area Historical Museum from 10 am to 4 pm. on Sat., Sept. 27.

The museum is located at 26818 W. Main St. (U.S. 12) in Edwardsburg.

A schedule for the day will be made available soon, but a major focus will be the native dancers and drummers from the Pokagon Band, and presentations by Cecil Wilson, Pokagon Band historian, who will speak on the origin of the Indian. Several booths will occupy the grounds, where reenactors will give the public a look at skills and tools for things such as spoon making, carpentry, and tools and other objects traded in the 1600's and 1700's. An archaeological dig will be set up for children.

At Pleasant Lake, the public will be given rides in the Sarett Nature Center's voyageur canoe to demonstrate what water travel was like more than 400 years ago.

There is no admission charge.

## Fall rummage & bake sale

The First United Methodist Church, 326 N Lowe St, Dowagiac, will have a fall rummage and bake sale on October 10 from 9 am - 4 pm and October 11 from 9 am - 3 pm.

Saturday will feature a bag sale, buy 2, get 1 bag free. Items for sale will include fall & harvest decor Halloween items, tools, books, furniture, kitchenware, clothing, beds and more.

For more information call Darlene at 782-8551.

## Beckwith Theatre announces local playwright's festival

Beckwith Theatre Company (BTC) is now accepting submissions for its Second Annual Local Playwright's Festival, featuring 10-minute plays from talented writers across southwest Michigan and

northern Indiana. The festival will showcase eight selected works during performances scheduled for February 6-8, 2026.

The festival serves multiple purposes: celebrating regional theatrical talent, connecting local playwrights with theater communities, and supporting BTC's Capital Campaign. All proceeds from the performances will benefit the theater's capital fundraising efforts.

### Submission Requirements

Playwrights residing in Berrien, Cass, Kalamazoo, St. Joseph, and VanBuren counties in Michigan, and Elkhart, LaPorte, and Saint Joseph counties in Indiana, are eligible to submit up to four plays each. This year's submissions must incorporate one of five specific themes or props:

- Plays about or featuring senior citizens
- Plays centering around a paper bag filled with \$3,000
- Plays featuring a cat tower as a central set piece
- Plays incorporating a bean bag chair
- Plays using a woman's hat from the 1920s-1930s era

All plays must be performable in 10 minutes or less, require five or fewer actors, use minimal set pieces and props, and fit within a 12-foot by 12-foot performance space.

### Festival Format

The festival will present two acts, each featuring four 10-minute plays. Performances will be Friday and Saturday evenings and a Sunday matinee during the first weekend of February 2026. Three plays will be pre-set for each act, with brief setup time for the fourth play between performances.

### Important Dates

■ Entry Deadline: October 13, 2025, by

1:59 PM

- Selection Notification: November 1-7, 2025
- Technical Rehearsals: February 1-5, 2026
- Performances: February 6-8, 2026

### Submission Guidelines

All entries must be submitted digitally to btcplayfestival@gmail.com in PDF or Microsoft Word format. Scripts should be formatted in 12-point Courier New or Aptos Mono typeface and not exceed 11 pages (excluding title page). Playwrights must submit two separate files: one containing the play script and another with a title page including contact information.

A three-person panel will evaluate submissions based on feasibility, dramatic essentials, story/plot development, mood and genre clarity, character development, dialogue quality, and overall theatrical merit. Selected playwrights will receive two complimentary tickets to each performance and may be recognized publicly during the shows they attend.

Beckwith Theatre Company is located at 100 New York Avenue in Dowagiac, Michigan. For more information, visit [www.beckwiththeatre.com](http://www.beckwiththeatre.com) or contact the theater at 269-782-7653.

## Cass County Historical Society Lecture & Event Series

The Cass County Historical Society has announced the remainder of its 2025 lecture and event series. Events include:

**Newberg One Room School House - SEPT. 16, 6:30 pm, 13020 Born St, Jones.** Visit the 1856 one-room schoolhouse for a unique opportunity to hear firsthand memories from former students who attended this historic school.







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# Regional News

**Annual Fall Festival – Newton House - OCT. 11, 11 – 3 pm,** 20689 Marcellus Hwy., Decatur, MI 49045 (Adjacent to Fred Russ Forest Park). Come to the annual Fall Festival at Newton House, a free, family-friendly event featuring kid’s activities, pie-eating contests, puppeteers, free snacks, house tours, wagon rides through Fred Russ Forest Park with Civil War reenactments.

**Christmas at Newton House – DEC 6, 1 – 4 pm.** Experience the magic of the season at historic Newton House, beautifully decorated for the holidays. This exclusive, ticketed event offers a festive escape in a historic setting. Watch our FB page and website for more details!

For more information, email - ccmi-historicalsociety@gmail.com or visit [www.ccmihistoricalsociety.org](http://www.ccmihistoricalsociety.org).

**Cass District Library names Korenowsky new director**

The Cass District Library has announced the appointment of Christopher Korenowsky as its new Library Director. Korenowsky will succeed Barbara Gordon, who departed from the library in June after more than six years of service.

Korenowsky has over 20 years in library leadership and administration. Most recently, he served as chief of operations at the Detroit Public Library.

The Cass District Library is a 5 branch library system with ranches located in Cassopolis, Edwardsburg, Howard, and Mason/Union.

**Lerner Theater events listed**

The Lerner Theater in Elkhart will host the *World Ballet Company*: The Great Gatsby on Friday, October 3 at 7

pm. Tickets are on sale now at \$89, \$75, \$55 or \$39 plus fees.

For more information see <https://worldballetcompany.com>

The theater will also host *Steven Curtis Chapman’s SPEECHLESS ’25 Tour* on Sunday, September 21 at 7 pm.

VIP Package includes Early Entry, VIP Tour Laminates, Exclusive VIP Poster and \$5 Steven Curtis Chapman Merchandise Voucher with early shopping access. For tickets and information visit <http://www.thelerner.com/>

Additionally, the city of Elkhart and The Lerner Theatre will present *Celebration Under The Stars* featuring *Kool & the Gang* and *special guest, The Commodores* Saturday, September 6, at 7 pm. This is a free performance, presented by The Elkhart County CVB.

The Lerner will also present *Mutts Gone Nuts: Unleashed!* on Friday, November 14, at 7 pm.

Come see the world’s most talented four-legged performers in a funny, comedy dog spectacular! The all-star lineup includes a Guinness World Record holder, an America’s Got Talent fan favorite, and a host of rescue dogs that will dance, their way into your heart.

All-In Price: \$44.75, \$39.10, \$30.90, \$22.60. Tickets are on sale now.

For details on events visit <https://thelerner.com>.

**Valpo Art Barn Fall Classes**

Connect with your creative spirit at a class and be inspired by the Art Barn’s beautiful foliage and grounds this fall.

Here are upcoming classes for 2025.

**Adult Classes**

*INDEPENDENT STUDY*, Thursdays, 10 am-noon, September 4-25, Ages: 18+

*COLORED PENCIL*, Mondays, 6-8 pm, Sept 8-22, Ages: 18+

*GUIDED AUTOBIOGRAPHY: RECORDING YOUR ARTIST JOURNEY*, Thursdays, 1-2:30 pm, Sept 11-Oct 30, Ages: 18+

*PAINTING WITH PASTELS: ADV/INTER*, Wednesdays, 6:30-8:30 pm, Sept 17-Oct 8, Ages: 18+

*INTRO TO CROCHET*, Thursdays, 5:30-7:30 pm, Sept 25-Oct 30, Ages: 14-Adult

*ART WITHIN REACH 65+ CLASS: ART JOURNALING*, Fridays, 10 am-noon, Sept 26-Nov 7, Ages: 65+

*Introduction to Gouache Painting*, Saturdays, 10 am-noon, Sept 27-Nov 8 (no class 10/25), Ages: 16+

*INDEPENDENT STUDY (October 2025)*, Thursdays, 10 am-noon, Oct 2-30, Ages: 18+

*Figure Drawing*, Tuesdays, 7-9 pm, Oct 7-28, Ages: 18+

*Hand Building II*, Fridays, 6-9 pm, Oct 10-Nov 14, Ages: 18+

*BEG. COLORED PENCIL*, Mondays, 6-8 pm, Oct 13-Nov 10, Ages: 16+

*WATERCOLOR BASICS*, Wednesdays, 11 am-1:30 pm, Oct 15-Nov 19, Ages 16+

*EXPRESSIVE CHARCOAL DRAWING*, Wednesdays, 6-8 pm, Oct 15-Nov 19, Ages: 16+

*CERAMICS OPEN STUDIO*, Wednesdays, 4-8 pm, Oct 22-Dec 3 (no class 11/26), Ages: 18+

*WHEEL THROWING II*, Thursdays, 6-9 pm, Oct 23-Dec 4 (no class 11/27), Ages: 18+

*INTER/ADV. COLORED PENCIL*, Mondays, 6-8 pm, Oct 27-Nov 10, Ages: 18+

*DRAWING: ALL LEVELS*, Tuesdays, 6:30-8:30 pm, Nov 4-25, Ages: 16+

*INDEPENDENT STUDY*, Thursdays, 10 am-noon, Nov 6-20, Ages: 18+

*DRAWING PORTRAITS*, Tuesdays, 6:30-8:30 pm, Dec 2-23, Ages: 16+

*INDEPENDENT STUDY*, Thursdays, 10 am-noon, Dec 4-18, Ages: 18+

**Children/Youth Classes**  
*SEPT CREATIVITY LAB*, Saturdays, 10 am-noon, Sept 6-27 (no class 9/20), Ages: 5-9

*OCT CREATIVITY LAB*, Saturdays, 10am-noon, Oct 4-25, Ages: 5-9

*CERAMICS FOR KIDS*, Saturdays, 10 am-noon, Oct 4-Nov 8, Ages 6-9

*YOUTH CERAMICS*, Saturdays, 1-3 pm, Oct 4-Nov 8, Ages 10-14

*NOV CREATIVITY LAB* Saturdays, 10 am-noon, Nov 1-22, Ages: 5-9

**Guest Artist Workshops**  
*CAPTURING BIRDS IN OILS* with Jim Swanson, September 6-7, 9 am-4 pm, 2-day workshop, Ages: 18+

**Seasonal Workshops**  
*FALL FAMILY WORKSHOP*, Saturday, 1-4 pm, Oct 4, \$15 adults, \$5 children, All ages (under 18 with a parent)

*HOLIDAY GLASS WORKSHOP*, Saturday, 10 am-1 pm, Dec 6, \$85/person, Ages: 14+

*UPCYCLED HOLIDAY FAMILY WORKSHOP*, Saturday, 1-4 pm, Dec 13, \$15 adults, \$5 children, Ages: 6+ (under 16 with a parent)

**Partner Program**  
*HUMANE INDIANA WILDLIFE: FESTIVAL OF OWLS*, Porter County Expo Center, Saturday, 9 am-4 pm, Nov 15, All Ages, FREE

The Art Barn is located at 695 N 400 E, Valparaiso, IN. For more information or to register visit <https://artbarnschool.org/> or call (219) 462-9009.

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# Regional Calendar

### MISC. AREA EVENTS

**SAUK TRAIL FEST**, Edwardsburg Area Historical Museum, September 27, 10 am-4pm.

**WORLD BALLET COMPANY: THE GREAT GATSBY** - October 3, 7 pm, Lerner Theater, Elkhart, \$39-\$89, <https://worldballetcompany.com>

**Church World Services CROP WALK** to support local food pantries, Oct. 5, 1:30 pm, COA Pavilion, Cassopolis, [edwardsburgpc@gmail.com](mailto:edwardsburgpc@gmail.com), 663-6815

**CHRISTMAS BY CANDLELIGHT** music program and dessert, Dec. 8, 6 pm, Cassopolis United Methodist Church, RSVP 445-3107 or 268-7066

**FALL RUMMAGE & BAKE SALE**, Dowagiac First United Methodist Church, October 10 (9 am-4pm) and 11 (9am-3 pm). 782-8551

**CHRISTMAS AT THE BONINE HOUSE** - Dec 1-14, 1-6 pm.

**BECKWITH THEATRE LOCAL PLAYWRIGHT'S FESTIVAL**, Feb 6-8, 2026; entry deadline Oct. 13, 2025 782-7653

### DOWAGIAC EVENTS

[www.dowagiacchamber.com/events/upcoming-events](http://www.dowagiacchamber.com/events/upcoming-events)

**UNDER THE HARVEST MOON FESTIVAL**, October 11, 10 am - 4 pm

**CHRISTMAS OPEN HOUSE WEEKEND & THETA MU CRAFT SHOW**, November 14, 15, 10 am - 5 pm

**SMALL BUSINESS SATURDAY**, November 29, 10 am

**CANDLELIGHT CHRISTMAS PARADE**, December 05, 7 - 8 pm

**ICE TIME FESTIVAL**, February 07, 2026, 10 am - 4 pm

**CASS CO. HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWBERG ONE ROOM SCHOOL HOUSE** - SEPT. 16, 6:30 pm, 13020 Born St, Jones.

**ANNUAL FALL FESTIVAL** - OCT. 11, 11 - 3 pm, Newton House, 20689 Marcellus Hwy., Decatur,

**CHRISTMAS AT NEWTON HOUSE** - DEC 6, 1 - 4 pm.

**EDWARDSBURG MUSEUM SEPTEMBER 27- SAUK TRAIL FESTIVAL: ECHOES OF THE PAST**

**OCTOBER 16—SPEAKER: OWEN WRIGHT, 7 pm. OCTOBER 31— WITCHES ON THE PORCH**

**NOVEMBER 4-DECEMBER 13: DISPLAY: "TIS THE SEASON."**

**DECEMBER 4-CHRISTMAS TREE LIGHTING**, 5:30 pm, followed by open house.

**DECEMBER 13: MUSEUM CLOSES UNTIL SPRING 2026**

### CASS DISTRICT LIBRARY

**04 Sept Storytime**, 11 am - noon, Main Branch

**04 Sept DIY Mod Podge Adults Bookmarks**, 2 - 3 pm, Howard Branch

**06 Sept Young Inventors Kids**, 10:30 - 11:30 am, Howard Branch

**08 Sept T'ai Chi with Alyse Knepple Adults**, 11 am - noon, Mason/Union Branch

**08 Sept Artistic Adventurers Kids**. Main Branch

**15 Sept Homeschool Hangout Kids Teens**. 1 - 2 pm, Edwardsburg Branch

**15 Sept Cardio Drumming Adults**, 5 - 6 pm, Howard Branch

**16 Sept Savage Readers Book Club Adults**. 10 - 11 am, Savage Bean Coffee Co.

**16 Sept Storytime**, 11 am - noon, Edwardsburg Branch

**16 Sept Storytime**, 11 am - noon, Howard Branch

**18 Sept Storytime**, 11 am - noon, Main Branch

**18 Sept Village Book Club Adults**, 5:30 - 6:30 pm, Edwardsburg Branch

**22 Sept T'ai Chi with Alyse Knepple Adults**, 11 am - noon, Mason/Union Branch

**22 Sept Artistic Adventurers Kids**, 11 am - noon, Main Branch

**22 Sept Cardio Drumming Adults**, 5 - 6 pm, Howard Branch

**23 Sept Storytime**, 11 am - noon,

Edwardsburg Branch

**23 Sept Storytime**, 11 am - noon, Howard Branch

**23 Sept Teen Space: Candy Sushi Teens**, 3 - 4 pm, Edwardsburg Branch

**25 Sept Storytime**, 11 am - noon, Main Branch

**25 Sept Intro to Medicare Adults**, 6 - 7 pm, Edwardsburg Branch

**26 Sept Historic Walking Tour Adults**, 9 - 11 am, Local History Branch

**26 Sept Historic Walking Tour Adults**, noon - 2 pm, Local History Branch

**29 Sept T'ai Chi with Alyse Knepple Adults**, 11 am - noon, Mason/Union Branch

**29 Sept Artistic Adventurers Kids**, 11 am - noon, Main Branch

**29 Sept Cardio Drumming Adults**, 5 pm - 6 pm, Howard Branch

**30 Sept Storytime**, 11 am - noon, Edwardsburg Branch

**30 Sept Storytime**, 11 am - noon, Howard Branch

**02 Oct Storytime**, 11 am - noon, Main Branch

To see September events visit <https://www.cassdistrictlibrary.org/events/>

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# Regional Calendar

**DOWAGIAC DISTRICT LIBRARY PRESCHOOL STORYTIME.** TUESDAYS: 10:30-11:30am. 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.

**MAKE & SHARE COOKBOOK CLUB.** (THURSDAY, September 4); 5:30-6:30 pm. September's Book: My Mexican Kitchen by Eva Longoria. Create a recipe from the monthly cookbook selection, then join us at the library for a recipe share & book discussion.

**S.T.E.A.M FOR TWEENS.** (WEDNESDAY, September 3); 4 pm. Children ages 8-12 are invited to join this science program designed to engage young minds to think like a scientist. Space is limited, please register by calling 269-782-3826 or email (att: Pam) at dowagiaclibrarystaff@gmail.com.

**ADVENTURES IN BOOKLAND BOOK CLUB FOR KIDS.** (WEDNESDAY, September 10); 4-5 pm. September's Book: Rise of the Earth Dragon by Tracey West. The Adventures in Bookland Book Club is for kids 6-8 years old. For more information, stop by the Youth Services desk located on the second floor of the library.

**SIP & SHARE BOOK CLUB AT SISTER LAKES BREWING.** (WEDNESDAY, September 10); 6-8 pm. September's Book: All Rhodes Lead Here by Maria Zapata. Join us for the Sip & Share Book Club at Sister Lakes Brewing Company. This event is being held at Sister

Lakes Brewing Company 92500 CO RD 690 Dowagiac, MI 49047. For further information, please call Erin at 269-782-3826 or email erin@dowagiacdl.org.

**LITTLE BEAKERS.** (SATURDAY, September 13); 11 am-noon. Kids of all ages are invited to join us for Messy Time Fridays throughout the summer. Please wear older or play clothes. We're often in direct sunlight, so please remember to put sunscreen on before leaving the house. In the event of inclement weather, Messy Time may need to be canceled. If in doubt, please call us at 782-3826.

**CRAFT NIGHT AT THE LIBRARY.** (THURSDAY, September 18) 5:30-6:45 pm; Craft TBD. For further information, please call Erin at 269-782-3826 or email erin@dowagiacdl.org.

**THE INKWELL EXPLORERS BOOK CLUB FOR TWEENS.** (WEDNESDAY, September 24); 4-5 pm. September's Book: Hunted by Skye Melki-Wegner. The Inkwell Explorers Book Club is for tweens 9-12 years old. For more information, stop by the Youth Services desk located on the second floor of the library.

For more information on these events, visit <https://www.dowagiacdl.org/events>.

## MARCELLUS TOWNSHIP WOOD MEMORIAL LIBRARY

To see September events visit <https://www.marcellus.michlibrary.org/>



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# Lake Life with Jane

## Welcome, it's September!

by **Jane Boudreau**



**Jane's Morning Glories**

**H**ey Neighbors! Welcome, it's September. Need I tell you that? Of course I do. Because for the past 15 years, I have been starting my column with, "Hey Neighbors." So what shall we talk about this month? Well, the roads are emptier. Kids have gone back to school so it's very quiet during the week. But the weather is still sunny and hot, and the lake and town are still alive and kicking. Family and friends come up to visit on the week-ends, and it's not time to put away the golf clubs or lawn mower yet.



**Jane's Diamond Lake Garden**

Speaking of lawns, you might know I run the circuit from one place to another, so it's hard to have a thriving garden in any one place, but honestly, if I could add another section to my column (or fit), it would be called Horrific Garden Mistakes with Jane. I started gardening at the age of six when my German grandfather, a hulking man at that time, took my wee little hand in his when we went to visit, and led me around his backyard, which was filled with every type of flower imaginable. It was a kaleidoscope of colors and shapes, but he always stopped at the zinnias; they were his favorites. And those he would cut and tie with a piece of string for me to bring home. One year, he gave me a packet of Morning Glories, which I planted in the rugged, brown dirt next to our front porch trellis. And, you guessed right, they wound their way up, bloomed in September, and made a believer and gardener out of me.

I have a few places I call home, and I'm very fortunate. I have a garden that is something you'd see in the English countryside. Not a weed in sight if I can help it. Is that a need for stability in one's life? Like having perfectly matched socks in a drawer or spices arranged alphabetically? And then deep down I know I'm a crazy free spirit, always up for anything, running around the lake ... no one but my friends knowing I'm Jane ... And I have the wildest, free-flowing, secret garden here on Diamond that, sadly, is a little neglected. But fear not, Diamond Lake will be my forever home. I feel Papa's hand, and I'm leading him.

### September Signature Drink

This month I bring to you the Painkiller. Have you ever heard of it? I so much enjoy this segment of my col-

umn, as not only do I get to try a new-to-me drink, but my research is incredibly interesting! As the story goes, the drink was created at the Soggy Dollar Bar in the British Virgin Islands. The name of the bar came about as it had no dock, and patrons had a bit of swimming to do to and fro; thus, currency was usually very much damp when exchanged. But I digress. The Painkiller is typically made with Pusser's Rum, which is a dark brown rum made from five rums, and tends to offer notes of nutmeg, cloves, tobacco, caramel, and leather. Using dark rum also makes the Painkiller different from a Pina Colada, which usually uses a lighter rum. This may be more info than you need, so without further ado, here's how to make this rich and refreshing drink to enjoy as the warmer days wane.

### Painkiller Ingredients:

- 2 oz. Pusser's rum
- 4 oz. pineapple juice
- 1 oz. orange juice
- 1 oz. cream of coconut\*
- Garnish: nutmeg, preferably freshly grated
- Garnish: pineapple wedge

### Directions:

Add the rum, pineapple, orange juice, and cream of coconut to a shaker with cubed ice and shake vigorously but briefly to combine. Strain into your most festive glass and grate nutmeg over. Garnish with a pineapple wedge and serve with a straw.

\* Don't mistake cream of coconut for coconut cream. Cream of coconut is a thicker, sweeter version. You can find it by the mixers.

### Jane's Imaginary Book club



The book club was ready for a good mystery or suspense novel, and this turned out to be a psychological thriller that made my head spin. In *Sometimes I Lie*, Amber Reynolds wakes up in a hospital after being in a car accident. She's in a coma, can't move or speak, yet she can hear everything around her. She's convinced that something sinister happened and that her husband may have been involved. The book flips back and forth from the present to the days leading up to the car crash, as well as to flashbacks of her disturbing childhood, all from her perspective. Soon, it seems there are a slew of people who may have wanted Amber dead, and her own secrets emerge slowly, making us wonder if she might have been running from danger. This was definitely the book that got me out of a reading slump. I had been reading a novel that I just couldn't get into, and it's a hard call to put it aside once you've invested time (or over 150 pages) into it. However, I finally tossed it and picked up this one. Yes! Good move. This is an older book by Alice Feeney. It has made a resurgence since her latest release, *Beautiful Ugly*. I think I'll be checking that one out next.

### Cioppino

In keeping with the spirit of summer, or warm evenings and dinner while the sun has some rays left, I thought a couple of seafood recipes would fit the bill. I'm a big fan of shellfish, having spent a lot of time on the Upper East Coast, so Cioppino, or Fisherman's Stew,

is something I look forward to making in the warmer months. Play with it and use the fish that you enjoy.

### Cioppino



### Ingredients:

- 4 T unsalted butter
- 1 sweet onion, diced
- 3 celery stalks, sliced
- 1 small fennel bulb, cored and diced
- 3 small red potatoes, scrubbed and diced
- 2 T tomato paste
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 t dried oregano
- 1/4 t crushed red pepper
- 1 c dry white wine
- 1 28-oz can San Marzano petite diced tomatoes
- 32 oz. vegetable or chicken stock
- 1 bay leaf
- Salt & Pepper
- 1/2 lb. mussels, scrubbed and debearded
- 1 lb. cod or halibut, cut into 3/4 inch pieces
- 1/2 lb. shrimp, peeled and deveined
- 8 large sea scallops
- 2 T chopped fresh parsley

### Directions:

- Melt butter in a large Dutch oven over medium-high heat and add onion, celery, and fennel. Cook until tender, stirring occasionally, about 8 minutes.
- Stir in tomato paste, garlic, oregano, and red pepper flakes until fragrant, about 1 minute.
- Stir in wine, diced tomatoes, potatoes, broth, and bay leaf. Bring to a boil, reduce the heat to a simmer until flavors have blended, about 15 minutes, and season with salt and pepper to taste.
- Stir in clams and mussels. Reduce the heat to low; cover with a tight-fitting lid and cook until the clams and mussels are just starting to open, about 3-4 minutes.
- Stir in cod or halibut, shrimp, and scallops. Reduce the heat and cook until everything is cooked through and the clams and mussels have completely opened, about 3-4 minutes. Discard any that haven't.

### Serves 6

### Salmon with Creamy Tomato and Basil Sauce

You will love this dish with pan-seared salmon, crisp on the outside and tender on the inside, covered in a velvety cream sauce that bursts with the colors and flavors of summer. Take a walk out into your garden, you might have most of the ingredients right there!

### Ingredients:

- 4 (6 oz.) salmon fillets (skin on or off)
- 1 T olive oil
- 1 T oil from sun-dried tomatoes
- 2 T Butter
- 3 cloves garlic, minced

- 1 t dried Italian seasonings
- Pinch of crushed red pepper flakes
- 1 1/2 c cherry tomatoes, halved
- 1/4 c dry white wine
- 1/2 heavy cream
- 1/3 c mascarpone cheese
- 1/3 c Parmesan Reggiano, grated
- 1/3 c sun-dried tomatoes
- 3 cups tightly packed fresh baby spinach
- 1/4 c tightly packed basil plus more for serving
- 2 T fresh lemon juice
- Salt and fresh ground pepper

### Directions:

- Pat both sides of the salmon fillets and season well with salt and pepper.
- Heat 1 T olive oil and 1 T oil from the sun-dried tomatoes in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the salmon skin side down and cook for 4-5 minutes, pressing gently so the skin stays flat. Flip the fillets over and cook the other side approximately 2-3 minutes more until the top turns opaque. Remove to a plate.
- Reduce the heat to medium and melt 2 T butter in the same pan. Add the garlic, Italian seasonings, and red pepper flakes. Cook, stirring constantly until fragrant, about 30-60 seconds. Add the halved cherry tomatoes and season with a bit of salt, then sauté until they begin to burst, about 3-4 minutes.
- Deglaze the pan by pouring in the white wine, using a spatula to scrape up any brown bits. Cook for about 1 minute or until the liquid has mostly evaporated.
- Stir in the heavy cream, mascarpone, Parmesan, and sun-dried tomatoes. Season with a pinch of salt and pepper and let cook 2-3 minutes until slightly thickened.
- Add Spinach and basil. Stir until just wilted. Add the juice from 1/2 a medium lemon and stir well. Taste the seasonings and adjust to your taste.
- Plate the salmon and generously ladle the sauce over. Garnish with extra basil, lemon wedges, and black pepper. Enjoy immediately with pasta and crusty bread.



So this winds it up for September peeps. We will be in full mode for fall next month, so no further hanging on to the vestiges of summer, we can no longer lie ... but isn't fall pretty on the lake? All the beautiful trees reflecting on the water? Wait Jane! Save it for next month! See ya then!

**Jane Boudreau is a writer, blogger, and newspaper columnist who lives on Diamond Lake, as well as in Chicago and Asheville, NC. You can contact her at [blindy9@yahoo.com](mailto:blindy9@yahoo.com)**



# Our Children

## When school seems overwhelming

by **SANDY FLEMING**

Everyone, adults and children alike, have moments or even whole days, when the world seems to be spinning out of control. Usually, people find their balance and continue on through life's demands with few ongoing problems until the next stressful time. But what if every day seems to bring a host of impossible challenges? What if common tasks seem so far out of reach that you just want to give up? Sadly, this is how some children feel when it comes to school.

School can be an incredible source of stress for kids, no matter if they are beginning the journey in the lower elementary grades, moving through the middle grades, or tackling the challenges of secondary school. It can even affect college-aged students or adults! As with other parts of life, occasional stressful times are normal, but if your child (no matter how old!) seems to be in constant overwhelm mode, it's time to do something to ease the situation.

### Keep Communication Lines Open

Stress and anxiety thrive on quiet and secrecy. Kids may not realize these feelings are normal at times and blow them far out of proportion. They also may fear that their parents or other adults in their lives might look down upon them if they seem like they can't cope. And we ALL are good at hiding what we perceive to be negative feelings.

The cure for this, of course, is to talk with your children regularly. And I mean really talk, not just give them directives like "Finish your homework" or "Clean your room." Superficial questions won't do the trick, either. "How was your day at school?" may not open many doors for communication, either.

The first trick to fostering the kind of communication that can uncover serious or ongoing problems is to be available. It's easy for kids to perceive that we are "too busy" to hear their worries. We crowd our family times with electronics (TV, social media, gaming, and more) and sometimes kids think they take a distant second place to these things. It's almost never intentional, but the feelings are there, all the same. "Of course I would stop my game to talk to my child" isn't good enough, especially if you respond to their overtures with "Give me just a minute while I reach this next goal in my game, then you can have my attention."

Instead, make time for talking by carving out family times when electronics are banished for everyone. This could be family dinner, a snuggle time before bed,

a quiet time around the table in the morning, or a family board game night each week. Plan times when you can take each child aside alone by offering "dates" that they will enjoy that do not involve electronics. Drive them (one at a time!) to a special dessert out together, or take a walk with each of them in turn. It's only when you make time to actually talk with them in a give-and-take conversation, especially in private times when no one else can overhear that you might catch glimpses of what is really going on inside their hearts and minds.

### Be Observant

Stress and anxiety usually make themselves known through behavioral and health changes, though. Watch for changes in appetite (eating more or less than usual), changes in sleep patterns, and changes in physical well-being. Stressed-out children often have far more than their share of stomach aches, headaches, rashes, and other nebulous forms of malaise. They just don't feel good, and they often lack the words or capacity to explain what is wrong. Does your child get "sick" a lot with no fever or other signs of illness, especially when it is time to get ready for school? Does your child suddenly go to his or her room far more often than usual? Does he or she start avoiding activities that are usually favorites, or turning down opportunities to try new things? These can all be signs of a stress overload somewhere in the kid's life.

Perhaps most importantly (and easiest to overlook or misconstrue), kids struggling with anxiety and stress often start to act out in unexpected ways. They cry more frequently, have tantrums, slam doors, forget to do routine tasks or chores, become defiant, or even start hitting, kicking or biting. These responses are often passed off as behavior problems, and met with disciplinary actions. However, if you find your normal responses to the poor behavior just don't seem to be "working" and the child's behavior is not improving, it's time to look a bit deeper for possible causes. Anxiety and stress are high on the list.

Watch too for changes in attitudes and emotions. Does your child seem to be losing emotional control more often than usual? Are there increased outbursts of temper? Does your child suddenly refuse to do things that normally they don't fight about? Children who refuse to get ready for school, neglect to bring home their homework, refuse to do tasks, or begin to lie about things like this may be responding to additional stress that they just don't know how to manage otherwise.

### What Do They Have to Be Stressed About, Anyway?

We often view our children's lives through the lens of maturity and adult experiences. We know that dealing with that one teacher at school will be a short-lived situation. After all, the child will move on the next year and will be out of that classroom, anyway. Plus they have to learn to manage in relationships with people they don't like, right? It's a part of the adult world. Or, they only have to be in the scary situation for an hour or so per day. It's not like it's their entire life. If they would only do the assigned work, they would be ready for that stressful test. These are all very adult ways of looking at the world.

We forget that the skills to deal with the stressors are not built-in. We forget that their brains are not finished products yet. Doctors have found that brains don't completely mature until people are in their mid-twenties! Your eight-year-old is a long, long way from having the mental tools to deal with stress and the coping skills to minimize anxiety. They need help.

And did you know that even exciting, "good" events are stressful? Holidays and vacations cause changes to routines. Playing on most sports teams involves competition and winning and losing. Parties and social outings bring pressure to conform with the group, sometimes in unacceptable ways. So yes, they have a lot to be stressed about. Learning to manage stress and anxiety is a big part of growing up, but they look to adults to help them along the way.

### How To Help

By now, you've probably noticed that simply telling kids to calm down or telling them they don't need to worry isn't particularly effective. Here are some ideas to try instead:

- Teach relaxation strategies, like deep breathing or positive self-talk.
- Be available to listen and offer advice IF IT IS WANTED.
- Encourage physical activity and fitness. Exercise is a proven stress-killer.
- Make sure they have the foundational skills to accomplish the task at hand. This means making sure their academic skills are at grade level, there's a plan for building needed skills before the test, and so forth. If you find gaps, get some help to address them.
- Encourage appropriate risk-taking in play.
- Encourage developing hobbies and other recreational pastimes that do not involve electronics (in other words, in addition to video games).
- Keep a consistent routine at home

with regular meal times, homework times, bed times, and wake up times.

- Keep adult worries away from the kids. I'm not saying to be dishonest with them, but remember that they are children and sharing major financial stresses to the family, relationship challenges, or other adult worries may be too much if it doesn't affect them directly.
- Be intentional about teaching skills that will eventually be needed for successful adulthood, like how to care for the house, how to cook and plan meals, how to manage finances, and how to interact with the world in age appropriate ways.
- Model taking actions that will mitigate whatever you are worrying about, like planning carefully, writing down pros and cons for a decision, and making preparations that will make a task successful.

Keep your eyes peeled for signs that your child might need medical help for anxiety, too. These include persistent negative feelings, persistent bad dreams, sudden and extreme behavior challenges, difficulty concentrating, and consistent minor physical complaints. If the stress doesn't seem to be getting more manageable with improvements to your routines and support at home, talk to your child's medical professional to get an evaluation.

There is absolutely no reason to allow your child to suffer and fall behind when help is available.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Sandy Fleming is an educator, private tutor, and writer living in Edwardsburg. Check out her websites at <https://learningnook.com> and <https://sandyflemingonline.com>.**

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# 'bout boats and boating

## Engine winterization for boats, a comprehensive guide

By RUSTY COLLINS

I know summer isn't over yet, but as the boating season winds down, proper boat storage and engine winterization becomes critical to ensure your boat remains in peak condition when spring arrives. Neglecting this process can lead to costly repairs and reduced engine lifespan. Here's a step-by-step guide to help you winterize your boat's engine effectively.

### 1. Stabilize the Fuel

Fuel degradation can cause serious issues over the winter. Add a marine-grade fuel stabilizer to your tank, then run the engine for about 10-15 minutes to ensure the treated fuel circulates through the system. This helps prevent varnish buildup and corrosion. Fuel issues are the #1 contributor to engine problems in our market.

### 2. Flush the Engine

For outboard and inboard engines, flushing with fresh water removes dirt, and debris. Attach a flushing device (like "ear muffs" for outboards) to a garden hose, start the engine, and let it run for 5-10 minutes. For raw water-cooled inboards, follow the manufacturer's guidelines.

Inspecting thermostats on smaller outboards has become part of our winterizing routine. Small mussels and rocks can live in the cooling system thermostat and checking them just leads to less issues next season.

### 3. Change the Oil and Filters

Old oil can contain contaminants that damage your engine. Warm the engine to help the oil flow out easily, then drain the old oil and replace the oil filter. Refill with fresh oil suitable for your engine



type, checking manufacturer recommendations.

### 4. Protect the Cooling System

Drain any remaining water from the cooling system to prevent freezing damage. Replace it with marine-grade, non-toxic antifreeze. Run the engine briefly to circulate the antifreeze thoroughly.

Doing this process on our outboard engines isn't necessary to protect the engine block from freezing. But antifreeze helps protect rubber components during the dry season, as well as any remaining water in the lower unit is now protected from freezing. Some engines have fuel and oil coolers that can hold small amounts of water. Outboards and antifreeze do have a purpose!

### 5. Fog the Engine

Fogging oil protects internal engine components from corrosion. Spray the



fogging oil into the carburetor/intake manifold for EFI engines while the engine is running, following the product's instructions. Replace spark plugs at this time.

### 6. Check Belts, Hoses, and Clamps

Inspect for any signs of wear, cracks, or looseness. Replace damaged parts as needed to prevent issues when reactivating the engine.

### 7. Battery Maintenance

Disconnect the battery and store it in

a cool, dry place. Keep it on a trickle charger or check and recharge it periodically to maintain its health.

### 8. Final Inspection and Storage

Wipe down the engine, check for leaks, and ensure all caps and covers are secure. Store your boat covered in a dry, sheltered area to protect against the elements.

Check all wiring harnesses for any signs of rubbing or corrosion.

Storing your boat indoors is always superior to shrink wrapping. If you're able to protect your investment by storing indoors, it will greatly improve your resale value and overall boating experience!

### Conclusion

Proper engine winterization is key to prolonging the life of your boat's engine and ensuring trouble-free operation when boating season returns. Always refer to your engine's owner's manual for specific recommendations, and consider consulting a professional if you're unsure about any step.

Having a trained professional maintain your engine is always a great choice! Ensuring our boat is dry before entering storage is equally as crucial. Mold and mildew can form, making our spring season a lot harder than it has to be.

If you have any questions regarding servicing your engine for storage please give Boat Butler a call at 269-476-2222

**Rusty Collins is general manager of Boat Butler Marine. Contact him at [rusty@boatbutlermarine.com](mailto:rusty@boatbutlermarine.com)**



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# Field Trip



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Three Rivers, MI

The Carnegie Center for the Arts/WR Monroe Museum at 107 North Main Street in the historic Carnegie Library building in the center of downtown Three Rivers was originally the Three Rivers Public Library. Completed in 1904, the library was funded by Andrew Carnegie, who had contributed funds to build over 2,500 libraries around the world. Designed by A.W. Rush, the library had a Romanesque flavor with its pink granite fieldstone of the west and east facades, windows trimmed in red Lake Superior sandstone, and lilac slate covering the west gable and wrapping around the pillars of the recessed second floor windows.

In 1978, the Three Rivers City Commission decided that it was necessary to move the Public Library because of structural problems with the building. The Three Rivers Woman's Club saved the Carnegie building from being torn down by leasing the building from the City of Three Rivers in 1979 and began restorations.

The building was renamed The Carnegie Center for the Arts, and held its grand opening in 1980, showcasing art work from the children of St. Joseph County. Since then, the Carnegie Center's programming includes a variety of established programs for children and adults. In 1992, the two adjacent buildings forming the corner on Portage and Main St. were donated to the center. The completed Carnegie Center for the Arts featured its first exhibit in the W.R. Monroe Museum in June 1997. Now, the Carnegie Center in its 43rd year, hosts an array of amazing exhibits and concerts.

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# Historic Postcards

## Historic postcards depict rich scenes of the past

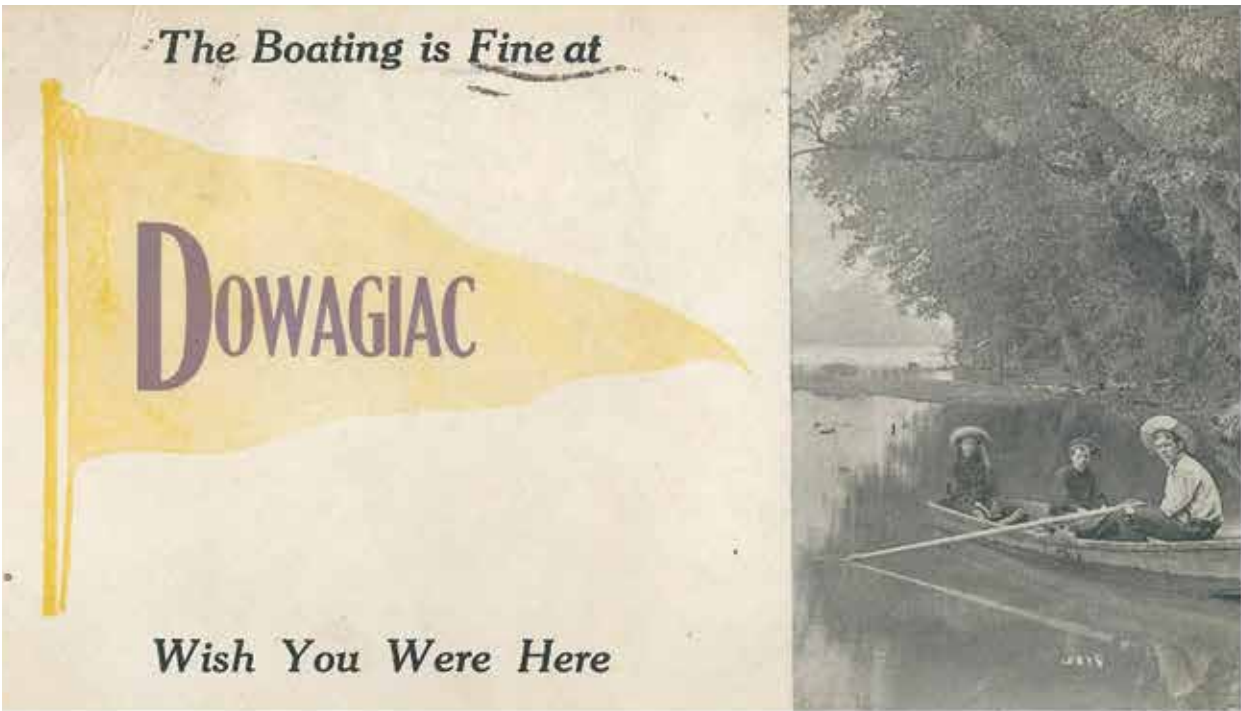
In this issue of Neighbors, Jerdon Real Estate of Dowagiac, owned by Floyd Jerdon and his son Tom, has again provided antique postcards of a few of the many lakes and towns in our area.

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 used many of his postcards featuring the Sister Lakes area in a book written by RL Rasmussen. The book, which retails for \$ \$39.95, is in its second printing by the publisher, Arcadia Publishing.

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

For more information or to get a copy of Jerdon's book, visit the website: [www.arcadiapublishing.com](http://www.arcadiapublishing.com)



In this edition of Neighbors we have selected postcards showing images of various places around Cass County. In future issues, we will couple additional

cards from one or more of the area's lakes with views of nearby communities, lakes and countryside.

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# Nature Notes

## Local nature sightings in the summer of 2025

by Jonathan Wuepper  
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Josh Duis of Niles captured a photo of a male dickcissel on July 15 as it perched on a fence along Basswood Road at the Forest Lawn Landfill in Three Oaks Township.

One of the last bird species to arrive in Southwest Michigan from their wintering grounds is the dickcissel. Dickcissels are a species of finch that during spring and early summer, and males look like a cross between an eastern meadowlark and a male house sparrow. Dickcissels are about the size of a house sparrow and prefer grassland areas, and are at the northeastern edge of their range in southern Michigan.

Dickcissels are more common on the Great Plains and prairies to our west. In our region there is a cyclical abundance from year to year, related to food source availability. During some years the dickcissel is quite uncommon or nearly absent while it can be abundant in their preferred habitat in other years. The diet of the dickcissel is made up of grain, grass and forb seeds in addition to insects.

Dickcissels usually arrive in Southwest Michigan in mid to late May. In some years the majority of the population does not arrive here until early June. During years that they are scarce, the best places to find dickcissels in Berrien County are hayfields and grasslands in the southern part of the county. In years when dickcissels are abundant they can be found locally on any area of large, unmowed field such as the prairie restoration area at Sarett Nature Center.

Dickcissels have just one brood each year consisting



Left: Dickcissel on July 15, at the old Forest Lawn Landfill, Three Oaks Township. Photo by Josh Duis of Niles, Michigan.



Center: American white pelican with marbled godwit and willets, June 29 at New Buffalo. Donald Estep.



Right: Tiger swallowtail butterflies on August 5 at the home of Steve and Linda Frappier of St. Joseph

of an average of four eggs. The male does not take part in the rearing of the young.

Most male dickcissels quit singing by late July and depart Michigan during August. There are few fall records of dickcissel from Southwest Michigan because after males quit singing they are difficult to detect.

The winter range of the dickcissel ranges from Mexico south to the northern part of South America.

Difficult to define as to whether it was a late spring migrant or early fall migrant was a single American white pelican found by Donald Estep on June 29 at New

Buffalo.

American white pelicans nest in the prairie potholes of the Great Plains during May and June. Fall migration during July and August. As a result of their increasing population, observations in Southwest Michigan have increased in both frequency and numbers.

On August 5, Steve and Linda Frappier of St. Joseph found three tiger swallowtail butterflies drinking nectar from ornamental flowers. Tiger swallowtails are fairly common in Southwest Michigan.

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# Local History

## A Cass County pioneer and Civil War veteran.

by Jonathan Wuepper  
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The subject of this month's article is Benjamin Franklin Thompson who was born on April 7, 1844 in Kent County, Delaware to William S. and Mary Parsons Thompson.

According to both obituaries, brothers Benjamin F. and William A. moved to Cass County, Michigan in October 1853. Their younger brother John Thompson died in 1927 and his obituary says he too came to Cass County in October 1853, adding "he came to Michigan with his mother".

Father William S. Thomson apparently came to Cass County earlier, in about 1848 settling on section 16 of Milton Township, along the Chicago Road (now US-12).

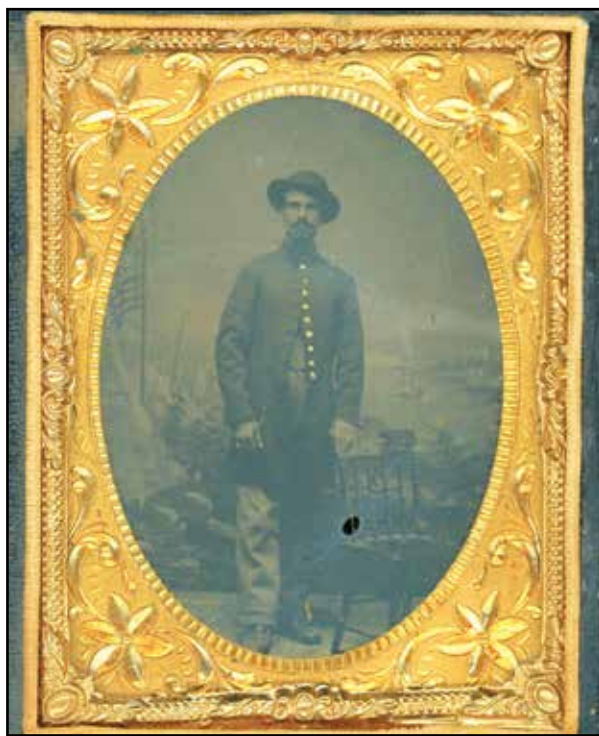
Sixteen-year-old Benjamin F. Thompson was enumerated on August 5, 1860 in the 8th US Census, living with James B. Smith and family (also from Delaware), located about a mile southeast of the William S. Thompson residence. The census listed Benjamin's occupation as "farm laborer".

On Friday, August 15, 1862, Benjamin F. Thompson enlisted in Company M of the 4th Michigan Cavalry, in Milton Township for a duration of three years. Interestingly, military records give Benjamin's age at that time as 19 years old, but he was in fact only 18 years old. The portraits of Benjamin F. Thompson featured in this article were taken during this part of his life. Benjamin was mustered into service August 29, 1862.

The 4th Michigan Cavalry was organized at Detroit. Company M was commanded by Emory M. Plimpton of Niles; First Lieutenant, Hiram F. Beals of Dowagiac, Cass County and Second Lieutenant, Aaron Rowe of Niles.

After three weeks of drilling and training the 4th Michigan was sent to active duty on September 26, 1862 in Louisville, Kentucky. The 4th Michigan Cavalry's first serious engagement was in October 1862 against Confederate General John Morgan near Stanford, Kentucky.

The 4th Michigan Cavalry fought in many battles and skirmishes in 1862-1864. The Detroit Free Press, February 19, 1864 listed Benjamin F. Thompson as one of the Michigan soldiers in hospital on February 9 at Murfreesboro, Tennessee.



*Left: Ferrotypes of Benjamin F. Thompson in his 4th Michigan Cavalry uniform. Brass buttons on his coat have been hand-colored. Photographer unknown. Credit: Edwardsburg Area Museum.*



*Right: Ferrotypes (tintype) of Benjamin F. Thompson, circa 1860s. Photographer unknown. Thompson looks to be around 18 years old at the time his likeness was captured here. Credit: Edwardsburg Area Museum.*

B.F. Thompson was promoted to Corporal on January 1, 1863. On June 20, 1864, Corporal Thompson was wounded at the battle of Lattimer's Mills, Georgia and was again sent to the hospital. The wound was apparently serious because on November 11, 1864 at Detroit, Corporal B.F. Thompson was discharged due to disability. This ended Thompson's military career, and he was not with the 4th Michigan Cavalry on May 10, 1865 when they captured Confederate President Jefferson Davis near Irwinville, Georgia.

On February 15, 1866 in Ontwa Township, Benjamin F. Thompson united in marriage with Margaret Salinda Howard (1844-1908), daughter of George

H. Howard who owned 160 acres of land in section 18 of Ontwa Township.

The name of B.F. Thompson's bride is somewhat confusing. In official records I have her name(s) listed as Linda M.; Salina M.; Malina M. and Margaret Thompson.

Benjamin F. and family moved into a Greek Revival home just north of and across the road (now M-62) from George Howard. This home still stands today.

Benjamin F. and Margaret had three children: Pilny Howard Thompson (1868-1870); Bertha Florence Thompson Hicks (1871-1970); and Walter Jay Thompson (1878-1900).

Margaret Salinda Howard Thompson died on January 26, 1908 at age 63. Benjamin F. Thompson died on November 26, 1924, age 80. All are buried in the Edwardsburg Cemetery.



*Greek Revival-style home built for George T. Howard on Beard'sley's Prairie in the 1850s. Sadly, in recent years the home has fallen into disrepair. Credit: Google images, September 2023.*



*Home of Benjamin F. Thompson and family, 1866-1924. Originally built for Elias Fleming Parsons and family. Elias F. Parsons died in October 1865. Photo by Jonathan T. Wuepper, August 5, 2025.*

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## Summer's over ... wait 'till next year



And then, suddenly, it's September. I suppose I shouldn't be surprised, but I can't help but feel a little cheated. Seems like just a couple of days ago when I was out in the barn where I store my pontoon boat for the winter, tugging on the tarp and folding

it up for the short ride to the lake. I was wearing a sweatshirt, I remember, because the late spring air was cool, but I shed that as soon as I got out into the sun.

I splashed the boat at the landing and I motored across the lake, the sun washing across me, warming my old bones as I looked toward the east shore where I was headed to my dock.

"Gonna be a great summer," I remember thinking.

In retrospect, that's what I get for thinking, I guess.

At first the summer resisted. Cool, wet, un-summer like days were hardly the kind of weather that made me anxious to strip down to my summer swimming togs and jump into the boat ... let alone into the water.

Maybe I jumped the gun a bit, I remember thinking at the time, "Come on Mother Nature, bring the heat. Let's get this summer stuff started!"

Note to self: Be careful what you wish for.

Not sure exactly when Mom "N" responded, but she did so in spades. All of a sudden, there it was, sizzling summer. Bloody hot. Ugly hot. Damn hot.

Day after day the sun jumped into the sky like it was Richard Simmons jumping into a Pilates video (the exercise, not the Bible guy). Day after day the morning dew evaporated into steamy ghost-like wisps, and my morning fitness walks turned from pleasant warm strolls through the countryside into a scene from a military desert survival training film.

By the time the calendar finally showed summer had officially arrived, I'm pretty sure I had already seen parched cactus plants poking up in the sun-bleached weeds along Sears Street. Where I usually see tiny, new-born turtles, baby frogs and tiny garter snakes wandering across the dirt of the unpaved Prang Street on their way to the spring-fresh springs and ponds down in the valley, I had heat-induced hallucinations of a Death-Valley-landscape where my horse with no name

was stepping carefully over scaly, grizzled lizards and dessicated, earth-toned rattlesnakes that were slithering across the too-dry, sun-baked road, and the largest hatch of early-summer deer flies I or any of my neighbors have ever seen swarmed and buzzed and bit off chunks of my moisture-starved skin, leaving gigantic, angry-looking, itchy welts. Day after day after day.

I did the best I could. Took the pontoon out a few times to get into the lake in hopes of cooling off, but when the water temp melted the glass and burned the mercury out of my thermometer, and the big-toe test blistered my foot, I left the boat tied to the pier for a while and retreated into the air conditioning, pulling the window shades and hiding from the heat more than I hid from last fall's hoarfrost and last winter's frigidity.

By the Fourth of July the corn stood taller than I, but the drone of the irrigation pumps and the constant spit, spit, spitting of the sprinklers kept the stalks from withering like my sun-scorched spirits as the heat wave refused to wave goodbye and my health-walking fitness routine flagged and sagged, and I found myself couch potato-ing into an out-of-shape, heat-baked lazy spud.

By early August the lake's water had evaporated so much that I was forced to take the rudder off my sailboat just to get it off the lift; where the usual three-foot depth had receded to ankle-top level, I was forced to drag the keel across the rocks lining the bottom ... and I had exaggerated mental images of dinosaurs writhing in boiling tar pit and of flowing lava melting the fiberglass and igniting the lines holding the daggerboards.

Just when I thought it couldn't get any worse, Mother Nature kicked me a different way, and the heat wave broke. Sort of.

It was late August. Wally World was filled too soon with back-to-school and Halloween displays, and farmers' crops were fully mature and begging to be harvested. It was the time of year when in more usual years hound dogs would be napping and panting in the cool dirt under the porch to escape the ravages of summer.

The air conditioner stopped when the nighttime temps dropped into the low 60s, and the mini-split I installed in my bedroom to make it tolerable enough for summer slumber unexpectedly slid early into September mode, belching out waves of warm air over my sleeping body an hour or two before the sun stuck its ugly face

over the trees across the road and nudging me out of the blissfully cool somnambulism of my fitful, temperature-disturbed, half-asleep night-wandering.

Fully wakened on those days, I dressed in a new uniform. Shorts, sandals and sleeveless tees begone; cooler temps dictated jeans, socks and sweatshirts. Cooler mornings, fresh air, back outside for a walk ... until mid morning when the temps were back into the 80s and the sweat was soaking my face and my shirt was sticking to my body like I'd been hit with a blast of riot-busting, fire-hose spray from a water cannon.

By the time I'd gotten home the furnace had reverted from heat back to AC and the asphalt and the boards on the deck were threatening to melt the rubber off the bottom of my tennies.

"Uppa U.S." my Italian grandmother used to call the northern Midwest when the wildly fluctuating weather patterns caused the HVAC to switch from heat to cool on the same back in her day (I wonder if she even realized the auditory pun that her accent was producing; I know the hoodlum, street-gang kids I ran with got it as they snickered at the cleverness of their own adolescent humor).

"Gonna be a great summer," I remember thinking back when I first put the boat in the water.

Not so much as it turned out.

Now, here it is, the start of September, and I'm getting ready to pull the boat, winterize it (thanks Rusty), tarp it and drag it back to the barn for winter storage.

Of course I can't blame the weather for my less-than-satisfactory review of the summer of 2025, nor for my unhappiness at how things turned out. Life was not kind to me this year. In addition to the bloody-hot, deer-fly-filled season that made the very act of simply being outdoors unpleasant, the loss of both of my brothers in a six-week span and a lingering bout of chronic bronchitis afflicting my wife (and thereby afflicting my sanguinity and sanity) have even spoiled the indoors for me this year, leaving me less physically fit and nearer total mental and emotional bankruptcy.

And now, suddenly, summer's over. I never really liked September. Still don't. And I definitely feel like I got cheated out summer this year.

Oh well, like we say about the Cubs come August most years ... "Wait 'till next year."



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