

Neighbors

JUNE 2024

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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

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Neighbors is published monthly from March through November.

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Field Trip:
Dutch Creek
Farm

Pages 10-12

Regional News

Cassopolis summer events

The village of Cassopolis has announced the following summer events:

Rock the Block – July 13 (Stone Lake Beach)

Beer garden. Music: 7-10 pm The 1985 Food Trucks: Taqueria Don Chepe (Mexican), Curly Q's BBQ (SWAT (Sweets & Treats), Cottage Inn (Pizza).

Rock the Block – AUG. 17 (Stone Lake Beach)

Beer garden, Music: 7-10 pm The Heavy Load. Food Trucks: Taqueria Don Chepe (Mexican), Dine and Dash Specialty Meats (BBQ), Roundbelly's Pizza (Woodfired Pizza), SWAT (Sweets & Treats).

Ghouls Night Out – October 5 (Cass County Fairgrounds)

Beer garden, Fall family fun (pumpkin carving, haunted barn, etc.). Music: 4-9 pm DJ Butters Pro. Food Trucks: Taqueria Don Chepe (Mexican), Drive Thru Q (BBQ), Cottage Inn (Pizza), SWAT (Sweets & Treats).

Beckwith to present The Seafarer

The Beckwith Theatre in Dowagiac will present the play The Seafarer by Conor McPherson, directed by Rich Franz.

After losing yet another job, Sharky has returned home to Dublin to build a new, sober existence with his cantankerous elder brother, Richard, recently blinded in a drunken accident. It's Christmas Eve and the drinks are flowing as old friends convene for an annual game of poker. This year, an immortal

stranger from Sharky's past arrives, raising the stakes to eternal consequence.

Performances will be June 7 and 8 at 7:30 pm, and June 9 at 2 pm Tickets are \$15 (Reserve online at www.beckwiththeatre.com/box-office)

The Beckwith Theatre Company is located at 100 New York Ave. in Dowagiac, MI 49047

For more information see www.beckwiththeatre.com, call 782-7653 or email BeckwithTheatreMI@gmail.com.

Bring some magic to a child's life

The Cass County CASA annual event will take place June 21 at 6 pm at the Southwestern Michigan College Matthews Conference Center.

Dinner will include Sweazy Q BBQ, drinks and silent auction. Magicians Kevin Wilson, Emcee Allison Hayes will perform. Tickets are available at <https://cass-county-casa-inc.square.site>

Hacienda fundraiser

The Edwardsburg Area Historical Museum will hold its annual Hacienda fundraiser on June 19 at the Mishawaka Hacienda Restaurant on Grape Road. Participants must produce a coupon, available at the museum or from members, before ordering a meal. The restaurant will donate 20 percent of the proceeds to the museum. Coupons also can be presented that day for gift cards for later use.

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

Diamond Lake sailing program

This summer, the Diamond Lake Yacht Club will host a series of classes and events from June 24 through AUG. 1 to help introduce sailing to area residents of all ages. Small class sizes for children age 7 - 16 will be held Monday through Thursday, and evening classes and private lessons are available for adults. All classes will be held at the Diamond Lake Yacht Club, 21268 Shore Acres in Cassopolis.

Among the programs are:

KinderSail (Ages 5-6), July 1- 4 from 10 am to noon. Kindersail is a four-day session designed to give the youngest sailors (ages 5- 6) an easy, safe introduction to sailing. This two-hour per day course provides great exposure to sailing while starting to teach them fundamental sailing and safety skills. Program Cost: \$150 per student.

Morning Sail Camp* (Ages 7 -10), Monday – Thursday 9 am - noon. This class is in the morning to take advantage of the generally lower wind speeds for younger sailors. In this class, youth sailors learn the basic skills to sail a small boat independently. Sailors are taught the parts of the sailboat, the points of sail, capsiz recovery, and basic knot tying. Program Cost: \$160 members/\$200 non-members.

Afternoon Sail Camp* (Ages 11 to 16), Monday-Thursday 1-4 pm. In this class, youth sailors learn the skills to sail a sunfish single handed or a 420 with another sailor or improve their skills on an Opti. Program Cost: \$160 members/\$200 non-members.

Open Sail Camp* (Ages 7 to 16), Monday-Thursday 1-4 pm. All classes are focused on fun as opposed to racing. In this class, youth sailors learn the skills to sail an Opti, sunfish or a 420 with another sailor. On shore they will be taught how to correctly rig their sailboat, launch and then sail the craft.

Program Cost: \$160 members/\$200 non-members

Fun Sail (Open to all ages), Wednesday from 6-8 pm at the DLYC waterfront. Program Cost: Members \$32, non-members \$40. Signing up for multiple sessions is encouraged.

Wind and Wine cruises (18 and over, only those 21+ will be served an alcoholic beverage), Tuesday 6-8 pm. Class Size: 8. Program Cost: \$64 for members, \$80 for nonmembers. Weekly Wind and Wine cruises are held throughout the summer.

Private Lessons (open to all ages), Monday 6-8:0. Program Cost: Members \$64/person, Nonmembers \$80/person
For full details on all of the classes, and registration information, visit <https://www.diamondlakesailing-school.com/>

*** The DLYC is offering a limited number of scholarships for youths who need financial assistance to attend. Please contact Louis Csokasy at lcsokasy@comcast.net or Jackie Comeau Bankowski at jcmgm@aol.com for details.**

Dowagiac Farm & Artisan Market

The city of Dowagiac will host a Farm & Artisan Market on Wednesdays

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Regional News

and Saturdays until October 5, from 9 am - 2 pm on the grounds of the Dowagiac Area History Museum, 201 E. Division Street

Beginning in September, the market will be held only on Saturdays. The Dowagiac Farm & Artisan Market features the produce and fruit, grown in Cass and Berrien counties, along with artisan booths of handcrafted merchandise.

To register for commercial space at the market, contact Steve Arseneau via email at sarseneau@dowagiac.org or call 783.2560.

Ed's Open Header Cruise

Join fellow vintage auto enthusiasts, friends and family of the late Ed Kazlauskas, for the seventh annual Open Header Cruise on July 25, from 5:30 - 8:30 pm.

The Open Header Cruise coincides with Dowagiac's Music in the Park concert Series, held at the Dowagiac Library Event Pavilion at 206 Main Street. The concert gets underway at 7:30 pm.

All proceeds benefit the Cass County Cancer Service. For more information or to receive a registration form contact event organizer Curt Rohdy at 269-782-2524.

Rod & Roll Classic Auto Show

The annual Dowagiac Rod & Roll Classic Auto Show, organized and hosted by the Dowagiac Chamber of Commerce since 1990, will take place on Front Street in the Central business District-downtown on AUG. 17, from 7 am - 3 pm with classic cars and music. Show cars arrive between 7 and 10:30 am.

Under the Harvest Moon Festival

Dowagiac's fall festival celebrates Michigan's glorious autumn on October 12 from 10 am - 4 pm.

Hosted by the Dowagiac Chamber of Commerce, this event showcases vendors of handmade and artisan product, Michigan-grown produce, and antiques, and features activities for families.

Dowagiac Christmas Open House Weekend & Theta Mu Craft Show

The Dowagiac Christmas Open House Weekend will be November 14 - 16 from 10 am - 5 pm. Shopkeepers offer special activities and cheer as they present their finest in holiday merchandise during Christmas Open House Weekend, Ascension Borgess-Lee Hospital and the Chamber are proud to host the Dowagiac Christmas Celebration. Enjoy the relaxed pace of holiday shopping, the way it used to be.

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

Candlelight Christmas Parade

The Dowagiac Candlelight Christmas Parade will be December 6, from 7-8 pm. In anticipation of the grand procession, South Front Street downtown will be closed to through traffic at 4 pm. The parade steps off at Front and Main streets, heading north on Front Street then circling the downtown.

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. 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.dowagiacchamber.com/events/upcoming-events>

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.

Bubble gum, toys highlight season

Life in America's small towns conjures up baseball games and other team sports, board games, jacks and marbles, apple pie, bubble gum, bobbers, hot dogs, denim, t-shirts, and bicycles. There is no shortage of those items in the Edwardsburg Area Historical Museum's first exhibit of 2024, Small Town Americana, which debuted in May.

Drawing on the museum's inventory and items loaned by museum members, the spirited display, which celebrates small-town life, runs through July 13. It will be followed by two other exhibits, Edwardsburg 1900-1920, which opens July 16 and closes on Halloween (Oct.31), and Christmas in Toyland, from Nov. 5 through Dec. 14.

The last two are still in the early planning stages, but display chairs Laura Jamrog and Judy Montgomery will pull items from the museum inventory for Edwardsburg 1900-1920. That exhibit will showcase the collection of Edwardsburg photos taken by George Andrus of The Edwardsburg Argus in the first two decades of the 20th Century. George and Charles Andrus, along with their grandfather, Henry Andrus owned the Argus. The collection of about 350 photographs, was donated in four large binders by Charles Andrus' son, Dean,

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Regional News

soon after the museum was founded. They are images of people, buildings, streets, animals, and businesses, mostly in the Village of Edwardsburg. They will be complemented by various documents and items such as sheet music, and utensils, as well as mannequins outfitted in popular clothing styles from those decades.

The last exhibit, Christmas in Toyland, will be a colorful exhibit that will be, as Jamrog said, "all about being a kid again." All Christmas trees will be decorated, with toys everywhere throughout the museum rooms.

The museum will close on Dec. 14, and re-open in mid-May, 2025.

Dussel to speak June 30

Farmer/grocer/landscaper Mark Dussel of Cassopolis will speak at the Edwardsburg Area Historical Museum on general gardening and floral landscaping practices on June 20. The program is at 7 pm. There is no admission charge.

Dussel grew up in Penn Township on a 250-acre family hog farm on Quaker Street, which he still farms along with his own 140 acres on Dutch Settlement Street and additional leased cropland.

A 1985 graduate of Ross Beatty High School, Cassopolis, he started farming as a young boy. After graduation, he worked in a van conversion factory until he was 21, then married and began farming full-time. In 1997, he purchased the market and greenhouses in Cassopolis that today bear his name and in which he sells his own beef and several produce items he grows. He employs five farm and greenhouse workers, although the number can swell to 20 during the summer months. His landscaper, Gloria Chavez of

Decatur, has been with him for 30 years and oversees the greenhouse operations. Dussel is a supporter of the museum's perennial plant sale. His wife, Kristy, the company bookkeeper, is a teacher at Horizon Elementary School in Granger. The couple has three sons and two young granddaughters.

Cass County Historical Society Lecture and event series

Unless otherwise stated, there will be a short business meeting at 6:30 pm with lectures or tours beginning at 7 pm.

JUNE 18, 6:30 pm - Join us for a tour and lecture at Smith Chapel, 3009 Redfield Road, Niles. This was the first Methodist Church in Southwest Michigan. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, Smith Chapel is a wood-frame late Victorian church built in 1840.

JULY 16, 6:30 pm - Edwardsburg and Cass County Historical Societies' Show 'N Tell of artifacts, family heirlooms and tools. Bring your treasures to the Edwardsburg History Museum, 26818 Main Street, and share their history or have one of our experts weigh in! A short lecture will follow on George Redfield.

AUG. 17, 1-3:30 pm - Red Brick Schoolhouse on the corner of M-62 & Brick Church Road will host BACK To SCHOOL and BACK In TIME: Celebrate the Red Brick School and One-Room School Houses in our area. Come see what schools were like in the 19th and early 20th century.

SEPT. 17, 6:30 pm - A celebration of

trains at the Dowagiac Depot, 200 Depot Drive. Train models, photos, and historic memorabilia will be on display as well as a juried artist show. Refreshments and speakers from the Historical Society and the Blue Dart Art group.

OCT. 13, noon - 5 pm - Annual Fall Festival - Newton House. Come to the Fall Festival at historic Newton House, 20689 Marcellus Hwy., Decatur. This is a free, family-friendly event featuring kids' activities, artisan vendors, free snacks, docent-led house tours, wagon rides through Fred Russ Forest Park with Civil War Reenactments and lectures.

Outdoor Adventures

St. Joseph County (IN) Parks is taking registrations for Outdoor Adventures

summer nature camps at St. Patrick's County Park in South Bend.

Six camps are offered for children entering kindergarten through 8th grade. The camps are scheduled for:

- June 18: Survival Skills (ages 11-14)
- June 24-28: Nature's Superheroes! (ages 5-6)
- July 2: Escape Room: The Eradicator (ages 11 -14)
- July 8-July 12: Wonders of Water (ages 10-11)
- July 15-July 19: Fun is Natural (ages 8-9)
- July 22-July 26: Treasure Hunters (ages 6-7)

For more information, or to request registration materials, please call 574/654-3155, or visit www.sjcparks.org.

It's Hot Out!
Don't Leave Your Pet in the Car!

- 90°**: Even if the temperature outside is only 70°, the inside of your car may be as much as 20 degrees hotter!
- 102°**: On an 85° day, it only takes ten minutes for the inside of your car to reach 102°.
- 120°**: Within just 30 minutes, the car's interior can climb from 85° to a scorching 120°.

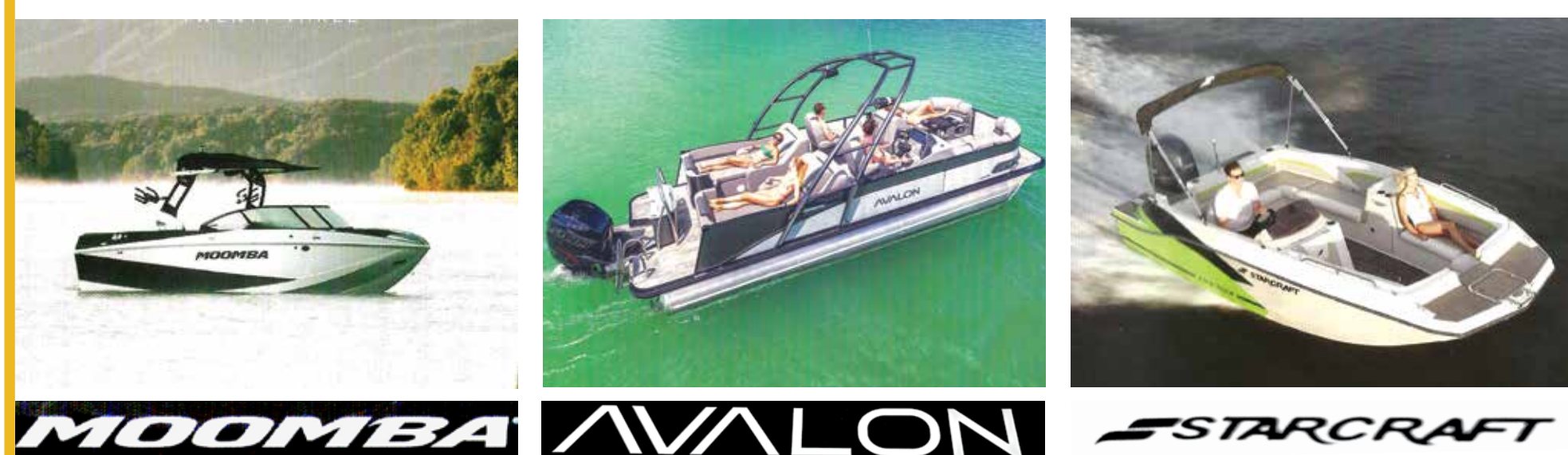
A car can overheat even when the window has been left cracked an inch or two. Young, overweight or elderly animals, or those with short muzzles or thick or dark-colored coats are most at risk for overheating. Shady spots offer little protection on hot days, and move with the sun.

Many states and local governments have laws that prohibit leaving an animal unattended in a motor vehicle under dangerous conditions, which includes hot days. Your car could be damaged or you could be charged with a crime.

ASPCA

If you see an animal trapped in a car on a hot day, try to locate the owner or call 911! Stay by the car until assistance arrives.

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Regional Calendar

AREA EVENTS

JUNE 7-9 - The Seafarer, Beckwith Theatre, Dowagiac, 7:30 pm Fri & Sat, 2 pm Sun, 782-7653, BeckwithTheatreMi@gmail.com

JUNE 13-15 - Three Rivers Water Festival

JUNE 15 - Coldwater Strawberry Fest & Craft Show

JUNE 18 - Cass County Historical Society tour and lecture at Smith Chapel, 3009 Redfield Rd., Niles, 6:30 pm

JUNE 18-22 - Sturgis Fest

JUNE 19 - Hacienda fundraiser for Edwardsburg Area Historical Museum, any Hacienda restaurant

JUNE 21 - Bring some magic to a child's life, Southwestern Michigan College, Dowagiac, <https://cass-county-casa-inc.square.site>

JUNE 24 - AUG. 1 - Diamond Lake Yacht Club Summer Sailing program, <https://www.diamond-lakesailingschool.com/>

JUNE 28 - Fireworks, Dowagiac Municipal Airport, 9:30-11 pm

JUNE 30 - Mark Dussel presentation on gardening and floral landscaping practices, Edwardsburg Area Historical Museum

JULY 12-13 - White Pigeon Days

JULY 13-14 - Underground Railroad Days, Vandalia

JULY 13 - Cassopolis Rock the Block summer concert series

JULY 16 - Edwardsburg & Cass County Historical Societies Show 'N Tell artifacts, Edwardsburg History Museum, 6:30 pm, ccmihistoricalsociety@gmail.com

JULY 18 - Tour of Smith Chapel, Niles 6:30 pm, ccmihistoricalsociety@gmail.com

July 19, 20 - Dowagiac Summer Festival & Dowagiac BBQ competition, 1-7 pm

JULY 19-21 - Centreville Covered Bridge Day

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

JULY 25 - Ed's Open Header Cruise, 5:30 pm,

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

JULY 31-AUG. 3 - Colon Magic Week

AUG. 4-10 - Branch County Fair, Coldwater

AUG. 12-17 - Berrien County Youth Fair, Berrien Springs

AUG. 15-17 - Bluegill Frolic, Marcellus

AUG. 17 - Cass County Historical Society "Back to school, back in time," Red Brick Schoolhouse, Cassopolis, 6:30 pm, ccmihistoricalsociety@gmail.com

AUG. 17 - Cassopolis Rock the Block summer concert series

AUG. 17 - Dowagiac Rod & Roll Classic Auto Show, 10 am - 4 pm, Front Street

AUG. 31 - Fireworks, Lions Park, Sister Lakes

SEPT. 15 -21 - St. Joseph County Fair, Three Rivers

SEPT. 17 - Cass County Historical Society celebration of trains, Dowagiac Depot, 6:30 pm, ccmihistoricalsociety@gmail.com

SEPT 15-21 - St. Joseph County Grange Fair, Centreville

SEPT 26-29 - Four Flags Area Apple Festival, Niles

SEPT 21 - Apple Fest & Craft Show, Coldwater

OCT. 5 - Ghouls Night Out, Cass County Fairgrounds, 4-9 pm

OCT. 12 - Under the Harvest Moon Festival, Dowagiac

OCT. 12 -Harvest and Wine Festival, New Buffalo

OCT. 13 - Annual Fall Festival of the Cass County Historical Society, Newton House, Decatur, ccmihistoricalsociety@gmail.com

NOV. 14-16 - Dowagiac Christmas Open House Weekend & Theta Mu Craft Show; open house 10 am - 5 pm, craft show Saturday, 9 am - 3 pm

NOVEMBER 30 - Small Business Saturday, Dowagiac

DECEMBER 7 - Christmas in Cassopolis

CASS DISTRICT LIBRARY

JUNE 5 - Cameron Zvara magic and comedy show, 1 pm, Mason/Union Branch, Edwardsburg,

JUNE 8 - Super Fun Color Run, to kick off kick off our Summer Reading Program or Cass District Library, COA track, Cassopolis, 9 am

JUNE 8 - Cemetery preservation workshop, Prospect Hill Cemetery, 115 Cemetery St, Cassopolis, 11 am

JUNE 8 - Grandparents/Special Friend Day, noon, main branch, sponsored by Cass Schools PTO

JUNE 10 - Father's Day card making, 9 am, Mason/Union Branch

JUNE 11 - Michigan Notable Author Tour: Abra Berens, 6 pm, main branch

JUNE 13 - Bubblepalooza: bubble party, 3 pm, Edwardsburg branch

JUNE 18 - Roz Puppets Presents The Mystery of Cacklewood Forest, 11 am, Edwardsburg branch, 2 pm Howard branch

JUNE 19 - Big Truck Day, 10 am - 2 pm, main branch

JUNE 25 - Potawatomi Zoo to You, 5:30 pm, Edwardsburg branch, June 26, 1 pm, main branch

JUNE 29 - Explore the basics of fishing, 10 am, Howard branch

For a complete list and description of events visit the library's website at <https://www.cassdistrictlibrary.org/events-programs/>

Dowagiac District Library

TUESDAYS IN JUNE - Preschool Story Time, 10:30 am

JUNE 5 - STEAM for Tweens-Summer Break escape room, 4-5 pm

JUNE 6 - Make & Share Cookbook Club, 5:15 pm

JUNE 10 - Teen matinee Monday, 3 pm

JUNE 11 - Preschool Story Time, 10:30-11:30 am

JUNE 11 - Teen Tuesday: Arts & Crafts, 3-4 pm, Bird Seed Ornaments

JUNE 13 - The history of Southwest Michigan Wine, 5:30 pm

JUNE 14 - Messy Time Friday! Making a craft stick flag, 11 am

JUNE 18 - Preschool Story Time, 10:30-11:30 am

JUNE 18 - Teen Tuesday: Game Day, 3-4 pm

JUNE 19 - STEAM for Tweens-Fingerprint Fun4-5 pm, Register by June 17 at (269) 782-3826 or email dowagiaclibrarystaff@gmail.com

JUNE 20 - Heated Tropes Book Club-Beach Read. Email dowagiaclibrarystaff@gmail.com or call 782-3826

JUNE 21 - Bubble painting, 11 am, 782-3826

JUNE 24 - TBR Book Club for Teens, 3-4 pm,- June Book: My Blood Approves by Amanda Hocking

JUNE 25 - Preschool Story Time10:30-11:30 am

JUNE 25 - Teen Tuesday: Taste Test Challenge, 3-4 pm

JUNE 25 - The Nicomachean Ethics by Aristotle (1st half), 5-6 pm. To sign up, email Matt Weston at [mweston \[at\] dowagiadcl.org](mailto:mweston[at]dowagiadcl.org)

JUNE 26 - TBR Book Club for Teens, 3 pm, June Book: My Blood Approves by Amanda Hocking

JUNE 27 - Women's Self Defense Awareness Class with 3rd Coast Training, 6:30 pm

JUNE 28 - Messy Time Fridays! Color Changing Playdough, 11 am

JUNE 29 S- Story Sketching-The Wizard of Oz (1st Session), 10 am.

For a complete list and description of events visit the library's website at <https://www.dowagiadcl.org/events>

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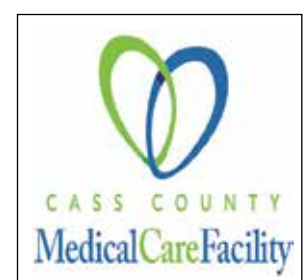
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Business & Finance

Summer fun, let's keep it that way!

By **Kerry Davis**

Kemner, Iott, Benz Agency, an Acrisure Partner

With the arrival of summer, we find ourselves busy with outdoor activities. Whether it be boating, riding off road vehicles, camping or any other number of summer activities, it is important to know if you have coverage in the event of a loss.

Will my homeowners policy cover my watercraft? The coverage on your homeowners policy is very limited, if there is any coverage at all, whether you are using your watercraft or storing it during the off season.

What type of coverage do I need? You will need liability coverage. Liability protects you if your watercraft injures someone or damages someone else's property. Depending on the value and age of your watercraft, you may want coverage for physical damage. If your boat is damaged by vandalism, theft, fire, flooding or an animal, comprehensive coverage will likely apply. Collision insurance provides coverage for damage if you collide with another boat or other obstacle. You will want to ask about on-water towing – having this on your watercraft insurance can prevent an unexpected expense. Remember to ask about your trailer and any permanently attached equipment as well as any other accessories.

Will my homeowners policy cover my ATV? "Off roading" has become popular whether you are climbing the dunes, riding Michigan's Off Road Trails, or 4-wheeling on private property. Most homeowners policies do not provide any coverage whether you are using your ATV or storing it in the garage.

What type of coverage will I need for my ATV? As with watercraft, you will need liability coverage to protect you should you injure someone or damage someone else's property. Also, depending on the value and age of your ATV and trailer, you may want to insure it for comprehensive and collision coverage.

What about my RV? Once again, don't assume your automobile or homeowners insurance will cover your RV. You may have liability coverage extended from the vehicle you are using to tow your RV. Once again, whether you are using the RV or storing it, you must purchase additional coverage if you desire physical damage coverage on the unit.

Does your motor home policy cover your towed vehicle? Will your insurance cover towing your motor home, your truck and trailer, or will they leave your trailer behind and how far will they tow you?

If I keep my jet ski at my parent's lake house, may I add it to their homeowners policy? Probably not, the person to whom the item is titled and/or registered must purchase the insurance in their name. Be honest with your insurance agent when insuring any item. Remember that you are purchasing insurance to protect you in case of a loss. Most likely you will have to provide documentation such as a title showing who owns the unit in the event of a loss. Don't put yourself in the position of being told you have no coverage if you have a liability or physical damage loss with any of your summer "toys."

Can I get a discount for taking a safety class? Many companies offer discounts to those who have completed an approved

safety class. Whether or not a discount is available, remember to put safety first. Be sure the proper safety equipment is being used such as life preservers when boating and helmets when riding ATV's. Driving a motor home, or pulling an RV, has more in common with driving a semi truck than you might realize. Don't let someone who is inexperienced or not properly trained operate your recreational vehicles. Never allow the use of any recreational vehicle by anyone who is tired, overheated, under the influence of alcohol, drugs, or medications as they will impair reaction time and judgment, two essential skills for safe use of any recre-

ational vehicle.

Is there anything else I should do? Keep your recreational vehicle in proper working order. Maintain regular tune-ups before, during and after using your vehicle for the season. Make sure your boat's gas tanks are vented and bilges are free of vapors, oil, waste and grease. Check your RV and ATV's tires, brakes, steering, and suspension. Be aware of the dangers of carbon monoxide. Be sure and contact your insurance agent. Don't find out after you have a loss that you have inadequate or worse yet no coverage on your recreational vehicles. Have a fun and safe summer!

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
- S.E.A.T.
- Cardio Challenge
- Tai Chi
- H.I.L.I.T.
- Yoga



Cass County COA
Enhancing Life

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Lake Life with Jane

It's June; let the games begin!



Helloooooo Neighbors! It's June so let the games begin! Although I suspect that many of you are recovering from your Memorial Day Holiday. The first of the big three. I'm not really happy about this whole cicada situation thing but I hear that a whole lot of scientists and nature lovers are just wetting their pants over it. I'm still jumpy over my spring stink bug massacre. For two weeks straight I went from room to room as they flew to sunny windows thinking they were going to escape my quick hands armed with Kleenex. And don't be deterred by that stink, I have no sense of smell anyway with all my spring allergies. Just grab those stinkers tight, they put up a struggle, then flush them down the toilet. I go from room to room periodically all day long stalking them. At night, they head for your lamps. That's when I get jumpy ... now they are coming for me. I'm just sitting there reading or on my laptop and I'll hear a sharp tap, and I know it. has. landed. I'm up and down every ten minutes. Once I tried not flushing the toilet until I had a full load(!), but those little jerks can swim and crawl right up the side of the bowl. Anyway, just sitting here waiting for the next wave of terror to come with the cicadas.

I thought we'd talk about entertaining styles this month. It's been a long time since we've had a full on bash with multiple coolers, chicken, burgers, and slabs of ribs going on the grill, and guests bringing side dishes. Even though we are empty nesters and our home seems like it takes a lot to keep up with inside and out, we can't seem to accommodate our own kids and their kids anymore in spite of pull out couches, inflatable beds, a small guest house, and tossing two kids into a twin bed. But I digress. Lake life is meant for enjoying time outside and nothing beats dining al fresco.



Depending on the occasion and the size of your group-anywhere from you and your partner, to a party of six to eight, to a nice size crowd. The above picture was a very casual, impromptu back-

yard party I planned. Lots of color, inexpensive summer serving pieces and glassware from the likes of HomeGoods or Hobby Lobby, not the oh so average red Solo cups, and if you are looking for a great summer drink that serves a crowd, try White Sangria. I should share my favorite recipe next month, which is actually my daughters. For the rest of the guest tables, I had colorful tablecloths.

Tip: keep an eye out for twin size sheets in the teen/dorm section of stores like Target and Walmart. Although thin, they can be anchored down by citronella candles, vases with pretty pebbles at the bottom for weight, filled with bright flowers. We had some fun games for the kids and adults and later a bonfire with the traditional s'mores. Key takeaway here: light those citronella candles a good three hours before dusk so the scent permeates the air. You also want to have some yard lights on to keep watch over those kiddos and like a moth to a flame, the mosquitoes may head that way!



(Photo Credit: Better Homes & Gardens)

This looks like a slightly larger bash with a bit of a retro style. I like the layout and the various uses of different items to set the meat, cheeses and fixings on. But wait! Let's hope those burgers are hot off the grill and the cheeses are fresh from the fridge. Finally, I can't stress enough, get yourself as many of those net food covers to place over your bowls and platters to keep the flies and ants and other unwelcome guests off. I buy them on Amazon in bundles of assorted sizes. Do yourself a favor and do some quick diameter measurements of your trays, bowls, plates, etc. I think I get a kick out of grossing my readers out every summer by sharing this little tidbit. Every time a fly lands it pisses. So when it lands on your bowl of potato salad and you see it rubbing it's creepy little hands together, it's really laughing at how stupid you are for not covering your food.



I helped a friend set up a small engagement party a few summers ago. It was a nice mix of natural elements and elegance. I love the juxtaposition of that. I have a huge collection of dishes. As a longtime lifestyle blogger, I often set up tablescapes not only for holidays but just to get readers to think outside of the box and maybe use things they have around the house. Vases can be recycled bottles

wrapped with scraps of fabric. The flowers can come from your garden. I have several sets of china that I've gotten for a song at estate sales, two sets of silver, and well over 100 pieces that I buy in bundles at antique stores. I'm also a sucker for napkins, the older the better. I'll also buy them new and wash them several times with mild soap and vinegar as a fabric softener. As far as all the dishes? I have an extra guest room in the basement where I store all my holiday decorations and I started to buy sets of everyday dinnerware sets to use in my tablescapes. Then I found that if I had a neutral dinner plates without a pattern, a salad plate with color or a pattern could create a multitude of different looks. Add in different napkins, and don't get me started on napkin folds-I have a whole book on them, and a box of napkin rings that could fit in my carry on bag. I wonder if I had tea parties when I was little. I'm a little weird about dishes, don't you think? We had a small wedding but I eventually got Grandma's china. Who's grandma, I don't know.

Now for some summertime recipes that you can eat outdoors, Paper plates and a roll of paper towels passed around is totally acceptable.

So first up I have Asian Sticky Spare Ribs. This is the first time I had or made spare ribs! You can serve these as dinner for four, or an appetizer for six. While they are braising, cook up some rice and make a salad or some sliced, refreshing cucumbers. This sauce is sweet, tart, spicy, and sticky, of course!



Asian Sticky Spare Ribs

Ingredients:

2 lbs. pork spare ribs (ask your butcher to slice them individually and then cross-wise into 3 pieces)
1 T dry sherry
3 T cider vinegar
2 T dark soy sauce
4 T sugar
5 T water

Directions:

Place the ribs in a large heavy saucepan. Mix together the sauce and pour over the ribs. Bring to a boil, stirring well. Lower heat, cover and simmer for about 45 minutes until tender. I didn't make many modifications to this recipe other than slightly increasing the measurements of the sauce along with some additional water. Cooked too low, it was going beyond 45 minutes, cooked too high, the sauce was getting very thick. I chose to thin it out with the extra sauce. I only made them once for dinner. I now make them often for an afternoon appetizer and a good cold beer!

This is a great summer recipe to make as you can be outdoors with the gang instead of stuck in a kitchen. You

can even prep outside if you want. If you have never tried grilling fruit and tasting that perfect caramelizing of the sugars, you haven't seen anything yet!



(Photo Credit: Cooking for Keeps)

Grilled Peach and Prosciutto Pizza

Ingredients:

1 lb. store bought pizza dough
olive oil
3 cloves garlic, thinly sliced
1-2 cups fresh mozzarella, thinly sliced
1-2 peaches cut in slices around pit
12 thin slices of prosciutto
1/3 cups fresh basil, roughly torn
1/4 c balsamic vinegar glaze

Directions:

Flatten the dough into a disc on a well floured surface. Slice in half and form each half into a flat shape. It doesn't have to be perfect.

Set your grill at medium heat and arrange the peach slices on the uppermost rack. Brush one side of each pizza dough disc with olive oil. Lay that side down on the grill. Grill for 2 minutes with the lid closed.

With tongs, flip the pizzas, they should be golden brown with grill marks. Brush this side with olive oil and check on those peaches which should be gently sizzling but not burning, and flip if they are lightly browned but not charred on the bottom. Grill for another 2 minutes with the lid closed. Remove the pizzas to a wood cutting board and the peaches to a small plate. Then top each pizza with an equal amount of peaches, garlic, prosciutto, mozzarella and basil. Drizzle balsamic glaze over. Finally, add salt and pepper to taste. Wait for the oohs and ahhs!



(Photo Credit: Unknown)

This is such a refreshing salad and I'm always looking for something out of the ordinary for summer when we really get into our salads. You can double or triple this if you are having guests for lunch or dinner. It's easy to assemble and super fresh. I love the sweetness of the melon with the saltiness of the prosciutto. I found this on Pinterest and

Lake Life with Jane

changed it up quite a bit. As usual, I forgot to take a photo. Enjoy!

Melon, Prosciutto & Arugula salad

Ingredients:

- 1 small cantaloupe melon
- 2 T lemon juice
- 1 t honey
- 1/4 t Dijon mustard
- 1 T olive oil
- 4 c arugula
- 4 oz fresh mozzarella pearls or pieces
- 3 oz prosciutto, roughly torn (I actually use about 6 oz as it is sooooo good!)

Directions:

Use a melon baller to portion out melon or simply slice and cut out 1 inch pieces. (Perfect for lazy and un-fancy people like me).

In a small bowl whisk together lemon juice, honey and mustard. Gently whisk in olive oil. Season with salt and pepper. Gently mix with arugula. Add melon, cheese, and prosciutto, toss and serve. Serves 4-6



I've been into doing the signature drink for quite awhile and I'm sort of chuffed to say that sometimes my signature drink becomes the drink of choice for the evening. I'm not much of a mixed drink sort of person, just the boring beer and wine, a Summer Shandy, heck, I don't know what I'm pulling off the shelf anymore. So at restaurants I'll try something that sounds so absolutely like nothing I would have had five years ago and I'm loving it! My friend and neighbor, Diane, makes the best martinis. She has so many different ones up her sleeve. I had a Lemon Drop Martini about fifteen years ago at Woodfire in Dowagiac, it tasted like Lemonade. I was ready to order another but our table was ready and I went back to my original white wine. So about two summers ago Diane asked me if I wanted to try a cucumber martini as she's making one herself. I'm watching the whole process. All that time and effort and she strains out about three ounces of murky yellow stuff into the classic Martini glass. We go outside. We talk. Diane is an up and down person. She takes a sip and goes over to pinch a dead bloom off her geranium plant. She sits. She takes a sip. We talk. She gets a call on her cell phone and walks away to talk for about three minutes.

Did I mention I'm a fidgeter? I've actually tried to sit on my hands. So all this time that Diane has been getting up and down and her damn martini no longer looks all nice and chilled, mine is empty. In fact it was empty after she pinched off the dead geranium bloom. Diane returns. "That's not how it's done, Jane."

Prosecco Margaritas

This is a nice big batch recipe that is perfect for celebrating and entertaining and who doesn't love mixing up a pitcher rather than individual drinks? Best part? You can prepare most of it ahead. I like that I can sip one anytime I want to have my own little signature drink. Weak or strong, one is enough, there's a lot out there to try!

Ingredients:

- 3 oz tequila
- 3 oz orange flavored Cointreau
- 4 oz simple syrup
- 8 oz freshly squeezed lime juice
- 1 bottle (750 ml) chilled Prosecco
- Coarse salt for rimming glass, fresh lime wedges or wheels

Directions:

To make ahead: In a jar add the tequila, Cointreau, simple syrup, and fresh lime juice. Place in the fridge to chill several hours before serving. If you'd like salted rims, run a cut lime wedge around the rim of each glass and dip the rim in onto a small plate of coarse salt. If you'd like lime rounds, slice them up and place them in a plastic container in the fridge.

To serve: Add ice to prepared glasses. Give the margarita mix a good start, combine and divide amongst the glasses. Top with the Prosecco. Add lime garnish and enjoy!

And we are up and running with Jane's Imaginary Book Club. This month's chosen book is *The Idea of You* by Robinne Lee and is now a movie. You may have seen clips or Anne Hathaway making the rounds of the talk shows. I hear people don't like her, fans and fellow actors, but I think she is a great actress

in movies and on Broadway and most of all I love her taste in designer clothes. I've really studied her ability to go from all girly and giggly to sophisticated intellect. Again, I digress. I'm not going to tell you what it's about



(Don't you hate when you read the reviews on Amazon and someone gives page by page run down of the book from beginning to end? Pleassssse, just your thoughts hunnnny). The movie must have gotten everyone to pick up the book which was published in 2017 and now it can't be put down, everyone wants to know what happens next but don't want it to end. All those women crying into their rose wine. I think I'll have the Prosecco Margaritas because we all know the book clubs really get down to the debate when everyone's buzzed and bloated on cheese and crackers. Now this is just my own Imaginary Book Club but I'm happy to share titles and reviews. Please share yours by sending them to my email below. If you read this one, please share and let me know if I can use your first name in my column if it's relevant.

See you all next month!

~Jane

Jane Boudreau is a writer, blogger, and newspaper columnist who resides in Chicago, Diamond Lake, and Asheville, NC. All photos are by Jane Boudreau and cannot be used without her expressed permission. You can contact her at blndy9@yahoo.com

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Our Children

Lazy, hazy, crazy days of summer

by **SANDY FLEMING**

It's nearly here- SUMMER VACATION! Kids will get a chance to relax and take time off from formal studies and hopefully the pace of family life will slow down just a bit so things aren't so hectic. And predictably, the kids will soon be complaining of boredom, or perhaps occupying themselves more than is healthy with video games, computers, and other screens. You'll need some plans to make sure their days are happily and healthily occupied for the next few months. When boredom strikes, or when you feel they need a change of pace, try some of these options.

Take Advantage of Summer Programming

Many organizations offer summer fun programming to help avoid the doldrums. Getting out and being with others is a great cure for loneliness, too. Take a close look at your local library's summer program offerings – there's something there for all ages. Arrange to visit the library regularly, and make sure everyone has a library card. One great way to keep their minds active is to encourage reading. The library probably has a reading incentive program as well as a number of special events that you can participate in.

But don't stop there! Watch the calendars of other organizations, too. Museums, zoos, parks, bookstores, and even some other businesses have events and activities throughout the summer. There may be groups meeting to take tours, do trips, and other exciting diversions. You can find out about these treasures on the organization's website, or by following their social media pages. There may be clubs to join, day camps, or other thematic activities.

And of course, many kids look forward to attending camps. Camp is usually a huge boost to maturity and independence. Campers learn to manage on their own, to make friends, and often get to pursue their interests in a supportive environment. They usually gain a whole new appreciation for nature and the outdoors, too. Look into organizations such as Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, the Y, 4-H, and your local churches. You can also check organizations that help children with various types of challenges, such as those with medical problems, family differences, and more. Chances are very

good that they offer a camping program and they may even have financial aid to help families afford the program if you ask. As a former camp counselor and a camp director, and as a parent of campers, I can tell you tons of stories about the growth children have demonstrated, and the deep friendships and social network that have come from many, many seasons of being involved in camp.

Summer activities also provide a chance for children to fly "solo," without a parent or family member nearby. This is hugely important for their development, and good for you as well. Let them try out their wings and gain new skills by participating in activities where you drop them off and pick them up later.

Pick a Project

There's an entire branch of education called "project-based learning," and with good reason. When children take on, plan, and complete projects, they practice a host of practical academic skills in a motivating and fun fashion. They also learn a lot of life skills, such as setting goals, responsibility, persistence, perseverance, interpersonal skills, and more. The trick is for the kids to pursue a project that is important to them. It's got to be meaningful to be successful. See if you can coax them into a project related to their interests and something that they perceive will benefit them over the long haul. Look at their career interests, their hobbies, or the sports they enjoy. Any of these areas could provide fodder for a project! This exercise is sort of like the times your boss has asked you to set goals for yourself at work – get the kids thinking about how they can improve or accomplish something that will seem important to them.

Once you've convinced them to take on a project, there are a few hints to make the most of it academically. See how you can tie in reading, writing, math, research, and similar school-related skills. You also want to engage the kids in the planning phase, which will ultimately help with goal-setting, prioritizing, and organization.

- Make a written plan for the project. Start with written goals, then break them down into actionable steps.
- Make a timeline and commit to finishing steps on schedule. Give plenty of wiggle room for the fun things that are certain to come up, but make a completion date part of your goals and each of

the action steps.

- Plan lists of materials. Make a budget.
- Keep a log about what was accomplished on the project each day or week. This could be written, but it could also be a video or a recording. Document the effort!
- Celebrate milestones, large or small. Be sure to help your child nurture that all-important sense of accomplishment.

Do Science Together

Arm yourself with a selection of age-appropriate simple science experiments to pop out during the summer months. You know the ones - they are often called kitchen science or home science, and the internet and libraries are full of them. Stock your pantry with the basic supplies needed for each of them, and designate (or grab from the second-hand shop) some dishes and utensils that can be used to advance scientific knowledge without disrupting your kitchen too badly.

Treat at least some of your experimental activities as formal science, where the kids make a hypothesis, set up the experiment, take measurements and gather data, put the information into a chart or graph, and analyze it. Have them create a science-fair-like presentation to show what they've learned. Many science projects are demonstrations – we know exactly what will happen. These are great and have their place to help kids learn, but try for some true experiments, too. This way the kids will learn how to control variables, how to isolate the exact aspect they are looking at, and more. True experiments are when you change just one aspect of the situation and see what happens.

Science activities not only teach kids more about how the world works, but they also exercise observation and reasoning skills. When kids make hypotheses about what they think might happen, they are planning ahead and predicting outcomes. These are crucial to many other pursuits in life, including getting jobs done at work and leading a productive and happy adulthood. So you can see there is a LOT of value to "doing science" with kids of all ages.

Plan a Fantasy

Even if you don't have much spare change to come and go on, kids often can exercise their imaginations as well as

their minds by making plans for a fantasy. This can be a fantasy room makeover, a dream vacation, or an "as soon as I am able" life or career goal. Much like the project-based learning, it will be important to spend some time setting goals for the trip or the redecorating or the goal. It's tough to get where you want to go if you don't have the destination in mind!

Fantasies begin with dreaming up possibilities and then doing research to discover how others have done the same thing or traveled the same road. Kids will need to educate themselves about possibilities so they can take their dreams to reality someday.

Try having youngsters (of any age!) make a timeline for their futures. What do they want to be doing or achieving at times they consider to be milestone ages? One key to being mentally healthy and happy is the ability to make plans and look forward to exciting things. It actually doesn't even matter if they ever choose to pursue those activities – the planning and the dreaming are the important parts. Kids who envision themselves in different places and circumstances have the best shot at actually taking the bull by the horns and getting where they ultimately end up wanting to go in life.

The Most Important Things

No matter how you encourage the kids to engage the gray matter this summer, just remember that mental exercise is important! These ideas will help your youngsters see the connections between what they worked so hard to learn in school and living the kind of lives they want to live. Each activity will help in its own way. And importantly, the mental gymnastics will help slow or eliminate the "summer slide" that happens for far too many students. Keep the brains active! Don't let your kids bury themselves in screens or have reason to gripe about boredom. The answer is right on top of their shoulders – the most wonderful and powerful tool we have to take charge of our own destinies.

Sandy Fleming is a private tutor and writer living in Edwardsburg. Grab some practical ideas for school and life success at her websites: <https://learningnook.com> and <https://sandyflemingonline.com>.

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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.

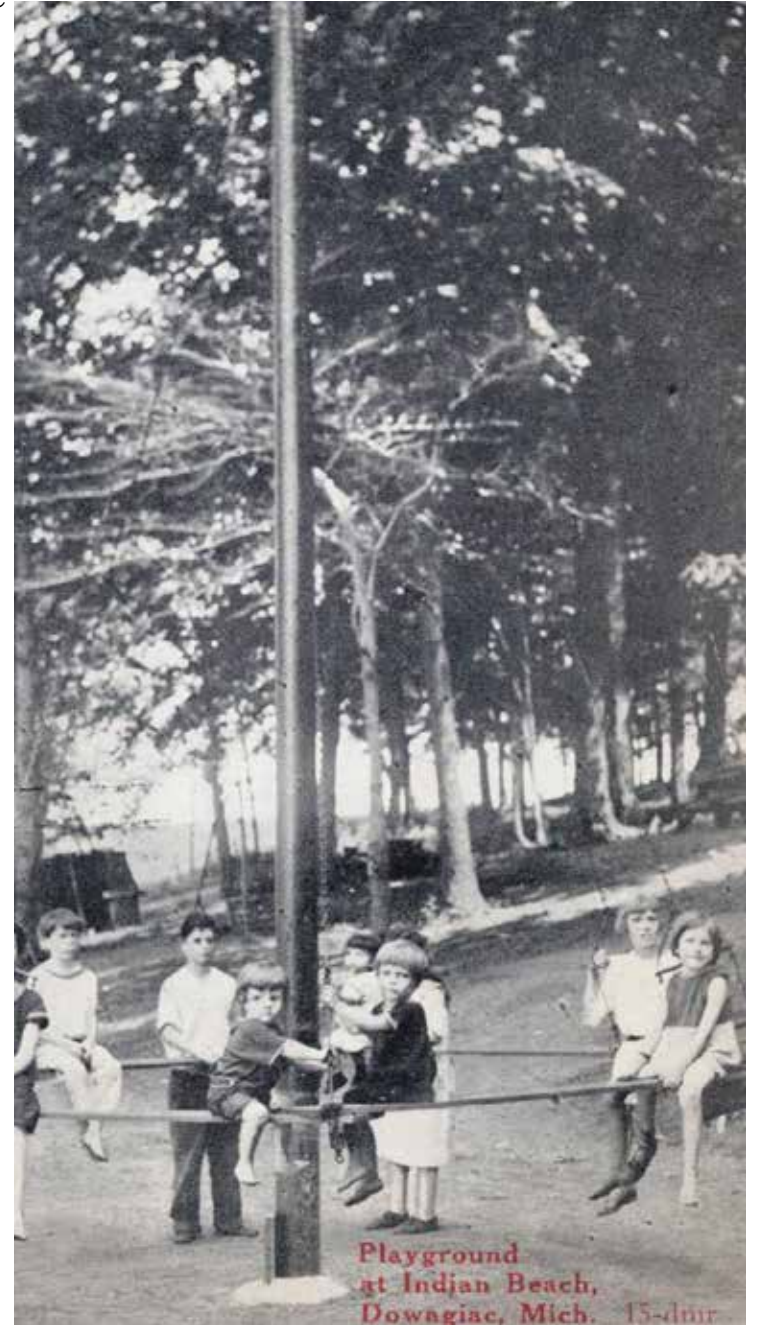
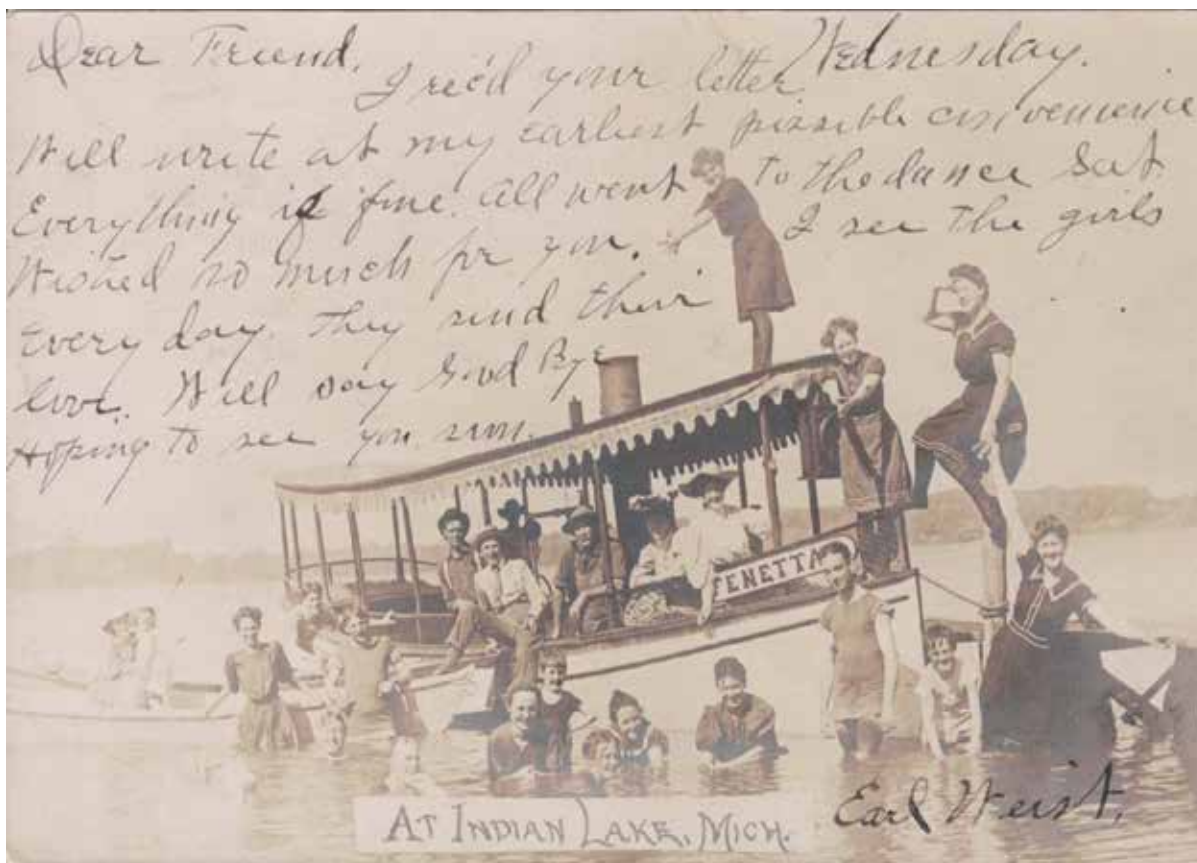
The book, which retails for \$19.99, is in its second printing by the publisher, Arcadia Publishing.

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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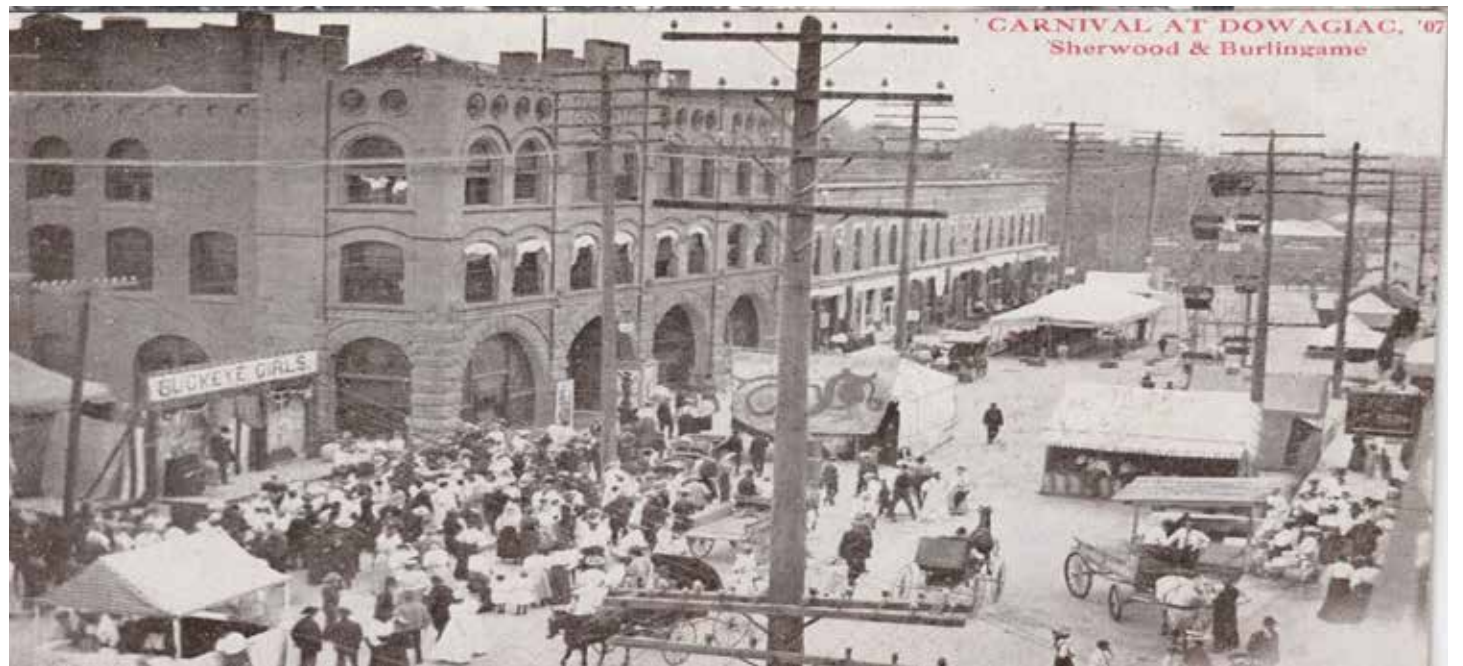
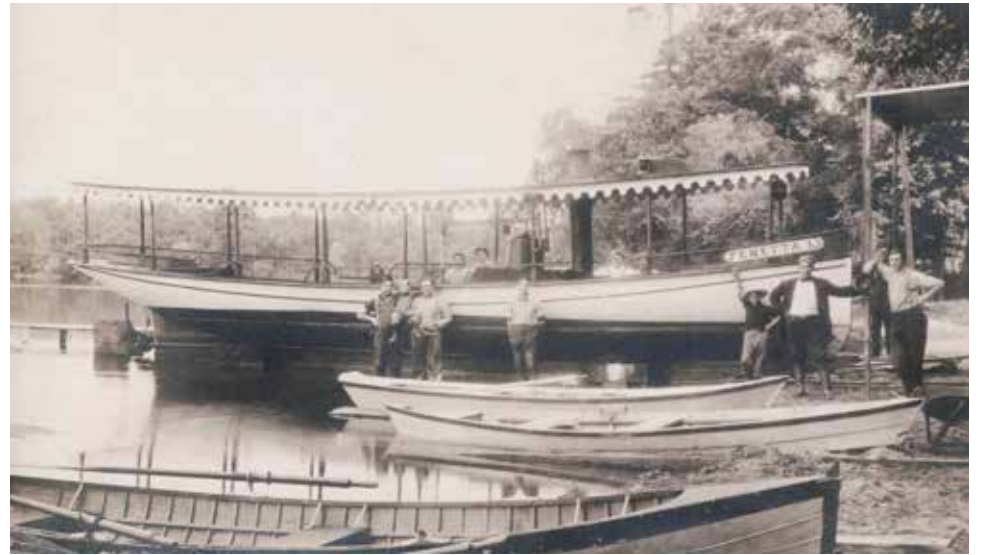
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Nature Notes

Baltimore oriole, grosbeak, water snake

Provided by

Jonathan Wuepper

Manager of the Local History Branch

Cass District Library

jwuepper@cass.lib.mi.us

Dave and Debbie Bach of Coloma Township have a motion sensor camera mounted on a bird feeder. With that camera the Bachs have captured some nice images of popular bird species such as rose-breasted grosbeak and Baltimore oriole.

The male rose-breasted grosbeak seen at the Bach's feeder was photographed on April 27. On average, the first rose-breasted grosbeak is reported each spring in Berrien County on April 24. I can't find a verified record of rose-breasted grosbeak arriving in Berrien County earlier than April 20. The bulk of the population arrives in May and many thousands of rose-breasted grosbeaks continue migrating northward into northern Michigan and southern Ontario. Migrants arrive in northern Michigan in mid-May, about two weeks after they appear in the southern part of the Lower Peninsula.

Rose-breasted grosbeaks nest over a good portion of the eastern United States, north of the Ohio River and the Mason-Dixon Line. The northern portion of the rose-breasted grosbeaks breeding range is southern Canada. The rose-breasted grosbeak prefers woods with both canopy and understory trees and shrubs. The species does well in second growth forests, in addition to orchards, parks and small woodlots especially near water.

Fall departure starts during August and by mid-September we start to see a gradual reduction in rose-breasted grosbeak numbers in Southwest Michigan. On average, the last reported sightings in Berrien County of rose-breasted grosbeak each fall occur on October 8. A few linger until late October, rarely to November. There are a couple of winter records of the species for Berrien County, including one reported in December 1995 near Berrien Springs.

Rose-breasted grosbeaks overwinter in Mexico, Central America and northern South America.

The Bach's also submitted a photo of a male Baltimore oriole taken on May 5 at their feeder. Baltimore orioles will drink from hummingbird feeders, and will eat slices of citrus fruit, especially oranges, especially upon their arrival in Southwest Michigan from the tropics when their fat is low.

On average in Berrien County the first spring arrival of a Baltimore oriole occurs on April 21. Occasionally the species is seen here by April 10.

Like the rose-breasted grosbeak, the bulk of the Baltimore oriole population arrives in Southwest Michigan during early to mid May. Many individuals continue northward, but the species is common here during the breeding season.

Before they were virtually wiped out by Dutch elm disease, the Baltimore oriole preferred the American elm tree in which to build its nest. Other commonly used trees are sugar maple, silver maple, willows and apple trees.

Fall migration of the Baltimore oriole begins in August and we usually see the last of the species each year in



Above right: Male rose-breasted grosbeak on April 27, also on the feeder owned by Dave and Debbie Bach of Coloma Township.

Above left: Male Baltimore oriole on May 5 at the feeder of Dave and Debbie Bach of Coloma Township. From a mounted motion censored camera on the feeder.

Below: Northern water snake in Warren Dunes State Park, Lake Township. Photo by Brad Anderson



Southwest Michigan by September 14. Occasionally individuals linger until October 1. There are a handful of late November and early December records of Baltimore orioles from Southwest Michigan, but local observations after October 1 are considered rare.

Baltimore orioles winter in Florida and Mexico, south to northern South America.

On May 6, Brad Anderson photographed a northern water snake in Warren Dunes State Park, Lake Township.

Northern water snakes are common over most of the eastern US and southern Canada. They are common throughout the Lower Peninsula and eastern Upper Peninsula of Michigan. As its name suggests, the species prefers to be near water. It feeds on small mammals, reptiles and amphibians.

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Local History

The J. K. Ritter family in Cassopolis

Provided by Jonathan Wuepper
Manager Local History Branch
Cass District Library

Cass County historians know the Ritter family as a prominent family during the pioneer era, and later J.K. Ritter as the owner of the First National Bank in Cassopolis.

Recently, a carte de visite of David M. Ritter caught my eye and prompted me to do some research on the man.

A carte de visite is a small paper photograph usually glued onto a thicker paper card. The size was usually 2 by 4 inches. Card de visites became very popular in the United States and elsewhere by the early 1860s, serving a purpose similar to that of calling cards.

On the front of the scanned original card we see David M. Ritter, who looks to be in his early 40s.

David M. Ritter was born in 1823 in Indiana to John and Sarah (Lybrook) Ritter. John and Sarah were married in Ohio on September 5, 1816 and soon moved to Indiana where David was born. David had siblings named Hannah, Henry and Eve.

In 1828 the Ritter family moved from Indiana to Berrien County, Michigan. When the Ritter's reached what is now Elkhart, Indiana, baby Eve died.

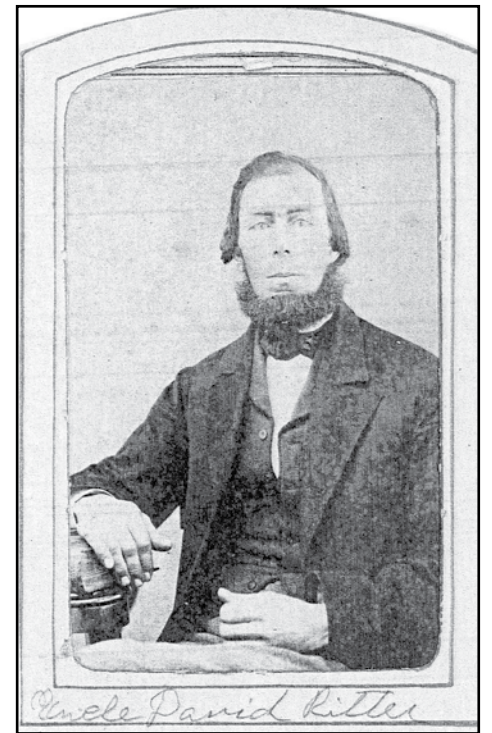
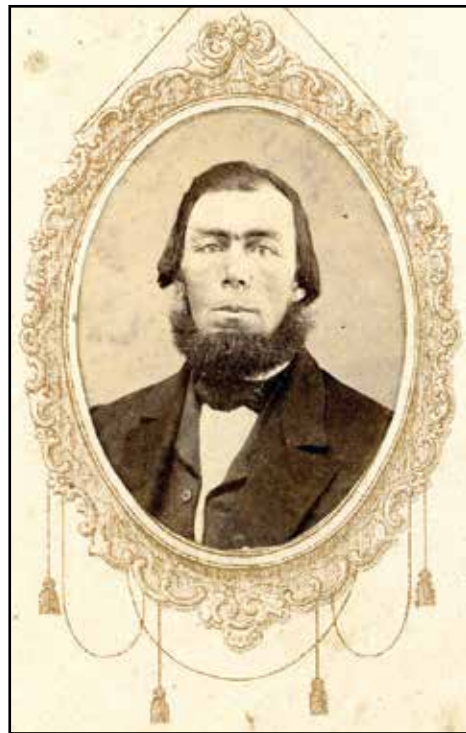
The Ritter family settled in October 1828 north of Niles, Berrien County and moved to LaGrange Prairie, LaGrange Township, Cass County in August 1829. Joseph K. Ritter was born to John and Sarah in Berrien County on May 7, 1829.

Before the Ritter family had resided in Cass County one month, tragedy struck. In the early morning of August 31, 1829 lightning struck the log house occupied by the Ritter's. John Ritter was killed instantly, severely injuring Sarah. At the time of the lightning strike, there were no nearby hospitals and doctors were scarce.

Sarah Ritter never fully recovered from the lightning strike and passed about five years later on January 23, 1834. Interestingly, none of the other occupants of the log house at the time of the lightning strike were injured. After Sarah's death the children lived with their grandparents for a while before Hannah Ritter took over household responsibilities.

David M. Ritter married Melinda Reniston on February 24, 1846 in LaGrange Township. The couple had three children: Jasper J., William and Joseph A. The youngest Joseph A., died in 1861 at age 7 or 8.

David M. Ritter and family farmed 240 acres in sections 7 and 8 in LaGrange Township. About 40 acres of



Left: Carte de visite of David M. Ritter, taken circa 1862-1865. D.M. Ritter was a LaGrange Township farmer and his extended family was quite prominent during Cass County's first 150 years. Credit: Cass District Library.

Center: Scan of the reverse of the card de visite of David M. Ritter. There is no documentation in the US Census or county histories of Dowagiac photographer H.B. Leckenby. The two cent US Internal Revenue stamp with George Washington's portrait in blue ink was first issued in 1862. Credit: Cass District Library.

Right: Scan of a photocopy of a larger card de visite of David M. Ritter. The original is not part of the collections of the Cass District Library.

their farm was originally tallgrass prairie and the rest was originally oak savanna.

According to the 1860 US Census, David M. Ritter and family resided in LaGrange Township, Cass County.

In June 1863, David M. Ritter registered for the draft, but was never called to serve. When he registered, he listed his residence as LaGrange Township.

On August 4, 1865, David M. Ritter died. Since death records did not start until 1867 in Michigan, we do not know his cause of death. There is no mention of his death in area newspapers of the day. We do know from Probate files, that David M and family at the time of his death, resided in Silver Creek Township.

David M. Ritter buried at Riverside Cemetery, Dowagiac, next to his wife, Melinda (died 1896) and young son Joseph A (died 1861).

On the back of the carte de visite, there is a two cent Internal Revenue stamp featuring the portrait of George Washington in blue ink. This stamp was first issued in 1862. Since David Ritter died in 1865 we can deduce the carte de visite was taken between 1862 and 1865, putting David Ritter in his early 40s at that time.

On the back of the photo it states:

"Photographed by H.B. Leckenby, corner of Front and Commercial St, Dowagiac, Mich."

Interestingly, I can find no mention of "H.B. Leckenby" in the US Census records, Cass County history books, newspapers of the period, or the

Michigan State Gazetteer 1863-1864. There were at least two other photographers located near that intersection during the late 1850s to early 1860s.

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here are probably a thousand reasons why people hate and fear snakes. If you're a religious person you've undoubtedly heard about that apple thing that one snake did to Eve. Then there are a lot of literary references shaming snakes, and labeling them sneaky,

slimy, slithering, in-the-grass terrors waiting to jump up and bite your ankle just for being there and having the audacity to walk by their icky-looking snake holes.

I have several friends who react badly at the mere mention of snakes, and many of them opt to perform some seriously exotic dance moves at the sight of an asp as harmless as a garter snake in their yard.

I remember an incident several years when Jerry, a good friend of mine (a guy who was about six feet tall, 275 pounds, a guy who drove bulldozers and graders and heavy, earth-moving equipment for a living) went wild in his garden, gyrating and high-stepping and squealing like a little girl when he saw a snake.

Then there was the time in Tennessee when a pal who was accompanying us on a houseboat trip waded ashore to loose the mooring lines, then ran back across the top of the water (I swear his feet never even got wet!) screaming about a huge, black snake ... and wouldn't believe us when my wife went over to finish the job and returned with a snake-looking inner tube.

Ok, I'll give them all some slack in the deepest, darkest fear department; I understand irrational fears (don't even think about asking me to climb a ladder or do some work up on a roof, but that's another story).

One of the first times I met my next-door neighbor, Bad Patty (RIP Patty), she was beating on my door in hysterics, screaming at the top of her lungs, "Help, there's a wild animal in my house!" Not knowing what to expect I grabbed the large chef's knife (my shotgun was upstairs) and ran over to see what had frightened her so ... and found a golf-ball-sized toad in her living room (my frequent retelling of that tale became something of a legend here at our lake).

And I can't even begin to count the number of times I've seen people (literally) freak out over what every lake-house owner knows to be relatively ordinary spi-

ders and multi-legged crawlies (one of my friends has nicknamed my pontoon boat the "Adams Family" boat because of the spiders and extended webs that appear when we haven't brushed them away for a few days).

I guess when you live in the country or at a lake, you kind of get used to those sorts of things.

But I didn't always live here. I grew up in a city, and in the city I grew up in, we had mice, and much to my sainted mother's chagrin, occasional rats. I remember my pixie-sized mom chasing a rat around the enclosed back porch one day with a cast-iron frying pan.

And I still have occasional (bad) dreams about the time the manager at the grocery store I worked at in high school rounded a bunch of us up to chase rats out of the fenced-in area where the produce department clerks dumped rotting lettuce and potatoes and tomatoes because it was full of rats.

And as a sailor I've spent a lot of time at waterfronts in harbors in different parts of the world ... and I admit most harbors and waterfronts have their share of rats (except for the harbors on the island of Jost Van Dyke, which suffers a large population of mongooses, but all of those rat tales are for another story). At any rate, I've experienced rats, and although I don't get all little-girl-squeamish when I see one, I don't particularly like them, and I'll always do my best to stay clear.

So imagine my surprise the other day when I went out to start my grill and had a close encounter with one.

Ordinary day, getting ready to fix some dinner. I'd just grilled the day before so I wasn't expecting anything out of the ordinary. I pulled the cover off the grill, popped open the lid and ... voila ... I came face to whiskers with a goodly sized rat nibbling at the burned burger bits that still clung to the grate.

Must have startled the rat as much as he startled me, because he immediately retreated under the grates down by the burners. No problem. Close the lid, turn on the gas and punch the igniter button.

He found his way out.

Quickly.

Ran between my feet (ok, I might have danced a quick jig but I never squealed once) and hightailed it across the neighbor's yard like a thief in the night.

I let the grill burn quite a while, then Cloroxed the hell out of it. Bubonic wasn't on the menu that night.

So like I said, when you live in a place where wild critters live, you encounter them once in a while. But in nearly 25 years of living here, that was the first rat I'd encountered, and I hoped the last.

But that wasn't to be.

The next day I went to my little Rubbermade storage shed to get a gas can so I could fill up the tank on the pontoon, and what do I find when I lift the lid?

A rat staring back at me.

This time, because the shed was full of gas cans, I didn't light anything ... ok, I lighted out across the road, but I didn't squeal.

Twice in two days was twice too much.

But wait, there's more.

Two days later I was walking with a friend, and five houses down the street we walked past what was left of a rat that had found the bottom of a passing car's tire. My friend and I looked it over to make sure it wasn't a mutant chipmunk or a muskrat (we have those here too, my grandkids call them "Elon") and agreed that, yes, it was a rat. Shortly after that I got a message that yet another neighbor on the lake had posted on Facebook that he'd caught a rat in a live trap.

Four rats in a week? You gotta be kidding me!

I haven't really had nightmares, but my sleep has been just a bit off lately. I mean, those weren't Harry Potter rats, these were creepy, more like Steven King rats. It doesn't take a body long to look at them, and when you've seen one, you've seen enough of 'em.

"We're Menard's bound," I told my wife that day. "Rat control aisle."

So here we are, ready. The special, Not-Purina Rat Chow is armed, placed and aiming to fix matters, hopefully for good (I put the pellets in places other critters can't get to, with a small sign that says "Rats Only").

My beloved spouse is taking it well. She's never been squeamish about things like snakes, spiders or even rats, but I'm pretty sure it made an impression ... last night as we were leaving to go to a dinner party at a neighbor's home, I asked her if we needed to lock the door since we were only going to be gone a couple hours.

"Of course we do. We don't want any rats to get in," she said. "I don't know how to make rat...atouille."

Now I gotta live with that, too.

Oh rats!

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