

Neighbors

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

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

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

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



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Field Trip:

Hall of Heroes

Elkhart, IN
Pages 10-12

Regional News

Ghouls Night Out

The village of Cassopolis will host **Ghouls Night Out – October 5 at the Cass County Fairground's** 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).

Twelve Angry Jurors

The Beckwith Theatre Company will present the play *Twelve Angry Jurors* adopted by Sherman L. Sergel, directed by Susan Plee.

Twelve Angry Jurors is a heightened courtroom thriller that puts you on the edge of your seat while powerfully exploring what it means to live in a democracy.

Performances will be Friday, and Saturday September 13 and 14 at 7:30 pm, Sunday, September 15 at 2 pm, Friday, and Saturday, September 20 and 21 at 7:30pm; Sunday, September 22 at 2 pm.

Beckwith Theatre Company is located at 100 New York Ave in Dowagiac

Tickets are \$15 online at www.beckwiththeatre.com/box-office. For more information see www.beckwiththeatre.com, or phone 782-7653.

Fall Rummage & Bake Sale

The First United Methodist Church, 326 N Lowe St in Dowagiac will host a fall rummage and bake sale on Friday, October 11 & Saturday, October 12 from 9 am to 3 pm both days

On Saturday there will be a bag sale; \$4 each, buy two/get third bag free

The Bake Sale will feature home-made baked goods & candy, gluten free

available. The rummage sale will have furniture, clothing, home decor, kitchenware, fall & Halloween decor & much more.

For more information call Darlene Trussell at 782-8551.

Bag a bat, banana split

St. Joseph County (IN) Parks will be hosting an evening with the "bats" at St. Patrick's County Park on Thursday September 5 beginning at 7:30 pm in the Harvest Room of the White Barn. The presentation will address bat species found in Indiana and the presenter will demonstrate how bats are evaluated after being removed from a mist net for scientific data. Afterwards participants will also enjoy a bat-nana split while watching bats exit the Red Barn.

Program fee is \$5/person.

For more information or to register call 574/654-3155.

St. Patrick's County Park is located on Laurel Road, north of Auten Road in South Bend.

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.

Fall Festival at Newton House

The Cass County Historical Society is excited to announce its annual Fall Festival on Sunday, October 13 from Noon to 5 pm on the historical grounds at the Newton House, 20689 Marcellus

Highway, Decatur.

Join them for complimentary cider, popcorn, apples, and cookies while enjoying a variety of activities including hayrides, a petting zoo, and yard games.

They will be holding their second annual kids costume contest, and new this year, their first kids pie-eating contest. There will also be guided tours of the Newton House, live music and a silent auction. Local artisans will be showcasing their talents, and Civil War reenactors will be on site with a cannon firing demonstration.

The group also welcomes Dowagiac native and author Ron Kirkwood, who will be in town for readings and autographs of his new book on Gettysburg's George Spangler Farm.

For more information, visit the Facebook pages for either the Newton House or the Cass County Historical Society.

Dowagiac Farm & Artisan Market

The city of Dowagiac will host a Farm & Artisan Market on Wednesdays and Saturdays until October 5, from 9 am - 2 pm on the grounds of the Dowagiac Area History Museum, 201 E. Division St In September, the market will be held only on Saturdays. The market features produce and fruit grown in Cass and Berrien counties, along with booths of handcrafted merchandise.

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.

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, bobbys, 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.

Edwardsburg 1900-1920, closes on Halloween (Oct.31), and Christmas in Toyland, from Nov. 5 through Dec. 14.

The last two are still in the 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

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Regional News

their grandfather, Henry Andrus owned the Argus. The collection of about 350 photographs, was donated in four large binders by Charles Andrus' son, Dean, 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 through-

out the museum rooms.

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

Hazardous waste collection

The Cass County Board of Commissioners will host a used passenger tire and household hazardous waste collection from 3 to 6 pm, September 25, at the Cass County Road Commission, 340 N. O'Keefe St. With proof of residence in Cass County, people may drop off used tires from cars and pickup trucks, as well as a myriad of solid waste materials ranging from chemicals to electronics.

There is no cost to drop off tires. No semi- or tractor tires will be accepted.

Those wishing to get rid of hazardous waste may drop off up to 300 pounds per vehicle. After 300 pounds, there will be a charge of \$1.74 per pound. Electronics, small appliances, metal items and anything steel will be accepted at no charge.

No appointment is necessary for either event. Contact the Cass County Administrator's Office at (269) 445-4420 with any questions.

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.


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.


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Regional Calendar

AREA EVENTS

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 13-15, 20-22 - Twelve Angry Jurors, Beckwith Theatre Co., \$15, performance times at www.beckwiththeatre.com, 782-7653

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

SEPT 21 - Apple Fest & Craft Show, Coldwater

SEPT. 25 - Cass County passenger fire and household hazardous waste collection, 3-6 pm, Cass County Road Commission44-4420

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

OCT. 11, 12 - First United Methodist Church fall rummage and bake sale, 9 am - 3 pm, 782-8551

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

NOV. 30 - Small Business Saturday, Dowagiac

DEC. 7 - Christmas in Cassopolis

CASS DISTRICT LIBRARY

**Registration Required*

T'AI CHI WITH ALYSE KNEPPLE, MASON/ UNION BRANCH, MONDAYS: 11 AM. Free introductory class, followed by four weekly classes; cost \$40.

CARDIO DRUMMING*, HOWARD BRANCH. MONDAYS: 6-7 PM. Bring a bucket, exercise ball, drumsticks and 1 to 2 lb weights. Free, but a gratuity of \$5 is encouraged. Registration required, call Howard Branch Manager Rhonda at 487-9214.

TAROT 101 WITH RUTH NODEL*, MAIN BRANCH, SEPTEMBER 4: 5-7 PM. Ruth Nodel from Healing Heart Psychic Services will explain the process of using tarot cards. Registration and payment of \$5 is required. Call Stephanie Knepple at 269-749-1384 to register and for payment options.

YOUNG INVENTORS. HOWARD BRANCH, SEPTEMBER 7: 10:30 AM. Young Inventors is ideal for adventurous individuals aged 7-14.

TEEN MAKER MONDAY, EDWARDSBURG BRANCH, SEPTEMBER 9: 2:30 PM. Intended for ages 12-18..

ADULT CRAFT CLUB FLOWER SUN CATCHER*, MAIN BRANCH, SEPTEMBER 11: 1 PM. All supplies provided. Registration required, contact Stephanie Knepple at 269-749-1384 or visit any branch to register.

WHAT ARE YOU READING NOW? BOOK CLUB, HOWARD BRANCH, SEPTEMBER 14: 11 AM. Adults of all ages are welcome to join us for a group discussion about books.

ART CONTEST RECEPTION, MASON/ UNION BRANCH, SEPTEMBER 14: 1- 2 PM. Create an original work of art that reflects a family-friendly theme using any medium. Print your name, age and phone number on the back of your entry. Entries can be any size up to a standard poster (22"x 28"). Prizes for each age category. Entries must be turned in at any branch by September 7 at 1 pm, or September

10 by 5 pm at Mason/Union. Reception at Mason/ Union Branch September 14, 1 pm. Age Categories: Preschool - Kindergarten, Grades 1-2, Grades 3-4, Grades 5-6, Grades 7-8, Grades 9-12 and Adult.

HOME SCHOOL HANGOUT, EDWARDSBURG BRANCH, SEPTEMBER 16: 1 PM. This program is open to youth ages 5-12. All materials will be provided.

SAVAGE READERS BOOK CLUB, SAVAGE BEAN COFFEE CO., SEPTEMBER 17: 10 AM. Contact Stephanie Knepple at 269-749-1384 for details and the current month title.

VILLAGE BOOK CLUB, EDWARDSBURG BRANCH. SEPTEMBER 19: 5:30 PM. Join us for a lively book discussion of Lessons in Chemistry by Bonnie Garmus. Contact Molly Harwood at 574-314-6454 for more details.

EVENING PAJAMA STORY TIME, HOWARD BRANCH, SEPTEMBER 19: 6:30 PM. Pajamas are highly encouraged!

HISTORIC WALKING TOUR*, LOCAL HISTORY BRANCH, SEPTEMBER 20: 10 AM. Guided historic walking tour in Downtown Cassopolis in collaboration with the Cass County Council on Aging (COA). Ten historic stops and will be led by Local History Branch Manager Jonathan Wuepper and Ky'sha Mitchell-Johnson from the COA. Registration required, call Ky'sha at 269-445-8110.

MAGIC WORKSHOP WITH MR. DUDLEY*, HOWARD BRANCH, SEPTEMBER 21: 11 AM. Attendees will receive guidance, learn a few tricks, and take home a goodie bag to help enhance their magic skills. This workshop is intended for participants under 18 years old. Registration required, call the Howard Branch at 269-487-9214.

CHIPS AND A CHAPTER, HOWARD BRANCH, SEPTEMBER 24: 4-4:30 PM. This program is intended for ages 8-12.

INTRODUCTION TO MEDICARE*, EDWARDSBURG BRANCH, SEPTEMBER 24: 6-7 PM. Financial Advisor Ryan Lannigan will provide an overview of the ABC's (and D's!) Of Medicare. Registration required, call the Edwardsburg Branch at 487-9215 to register.

TEEN FANDOM, EDWARDSBURG BRANCH, WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 25: 2:30 PM. Each month we will discuss a different fandom and have a related activity or craft. Intended for ages 12 to 18.

LOVE CREEK NATURE CENTER PRESENTS: BACKYARD BUGS, EDWARDSBURG BRANCH, SEPTEMBER 26: 5:30 PM. Learn about bugs with Love Creek Nature Center! This program is intended for ages 5 and up.

DIY WOODEN PUMPKINS*, HOWARD BRANCH, SEPTEMBER 26: 6 PM. Space is limited and registration is required, contact the Howard Branch at 269-487-9214 to register.

HISTORIC WALKING TOUR*, LOCAL HISTORY BRANCH, SEPTEMBER 27: 10 AM. Guided historic walking tour in Downtown Cassopolis in collaboration with the Cass County Council on Aging (COA). Registration required, call Ky'sha at 269-445-8110 to register.

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

Dowagiac District Library Make & Share Cookbook Club September 5, 5:15- 6:30 pm. In September, we are making recipes from the cookbook Heirloom Kitchen: Heritage Recipes and Family Stories from the Tables of Immigrant Women by Anna Francese Gass. To reserve your spot, call the library or email (Att: Erin) dowagiaclibrarystaff@gmail.com

Yoga at the Library, September 7, 9:30 AM 10:30 AM. The class is lead by certified group fitness instructor Addie Heidenreich. Bring some water and

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Regional Calendar

your yoga mat. For information or to register call 782-3826 or email erin@dowagiadl.org.

Teen Matinee Monday, September 9, 3 PM - 5 PM. Teen Matinee Mondays are for teens 13 through 18

Preschool Story Time, September 10, 10:30 AM. Geared toward children 3-5 years old

Teen Tuesday: Game Day! September 10, 3 - 4 PM For teens 6th through 12th grade.

80s Music Bingo Night, September 12, 6-7 PM.

Teen Matinee Monday, September 16, 3-5 PM. For teens 13 through 18.

Preschool Story Time, September 17, 10:30-11:30 AM. Geared for children 3-5 years old.

Teen Tuesday: Taste Test Challenge, September 17, 3-4 PM. Teen Tuesdays are for teens 6th through 12th grade.

Heated Tropes Book Club-You Choose, September 19, 6-6:45 PM.

Teen Matinee Monday, September 23, 3-5 PM. For teens 13 through 18.

Preschool Story Time, September 24, 10:30-11:30 AM. For children 3-5 years old.

Teen Tuesday: Write On! September 24, 3-4 PM. For teens 6th through 12th grade.

The Classics Book Club-The Scarlet Pimpernel by Baroness Orczy, September 24, 5-6 PM

Southwest Michigan Reads-Tobin Buhk, September 24, 6:30-8:57 PM. Join Tobin Buhk, Michigan freelance author specializing in historic true crime, at Arclight Brewing Company in Watervliet! Free and open to the public. A book signing will follow Buhk's presentation. Food from Hendo's BBQ will be available for purchase beginning at 6pm.

TBR Book Club for Teens, September 25, 3-4 PM. September Book: A Study in Charlotte by Brittany Cavallaro. For teens 13-18 years old.

Adventures in Bookland Book Club for Kids, September 25, 4-5 PM. September Book: Mercy Watson to the Rescue by Kate DiCamillo. For kids 6-8 years old.

The Inkwell Explorers Book Club for Tweens, September 26, 3-4 PM. September Book: The Bad Beginning by Lemony Snicket. For tweens 9-12 years old.

Teen Matinee Monday, September 30, 3-5 PM. For teens 13 through 18.

Monthly Spice Club-Chai Spice Mix, Tue, Oct 1, 2024 9 AM - Tue, Oct 15, 5 PM, Pre-register to claim your spices. Sign up lasts for Two (2) weeks. These are given on a first reserve basis. Once registered, you can pick your take home kit on the First Tuesday of each month.

Preschool Story Time, October 1, 10:30-11:30 AM. For children 3-5 years old.

Teen Tuesday: BINGO, October 1, 3-4 PM. For teens 6th through 12th grade.

STEAM for Tweens-Robotic Articulated Hand, October 2, 4-5 PM. For ages 8-12. Register by September 30 at (269) 782-3826 or email (att: Pam) at dowagiadl.org

gmail.com
Make & Share Cookbook Club, October 3, 5:15-6:30 PM. In October, we are making recipes from the cookbook Cravings: Hungry for More by Chrissy Teigen. To reserve a spot, call the library or email (Att: Erin) at dowagiadl.org

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

Marcellus Township Wood Memorial Library

First Thursday Book Club, Sept 5. Noon - 5-7 PM

Home Arts Club Bake Off, Sept 6, from 5-7 PM

Book Care & Repair Workshop, Sept 14, 2-5 PM. Registration required

Comic Book Workshop for ages 6-15 Sept 19, 4 PM

Community Read: Book of Lost Friends, Sept 19 6 PM

Southwest Michigan Reads: Tobin Buhk, Sept 24 at 6:30 PM - at Arclight Brewing Company, Watervliet

Virtual presentation on A Trail of Money and Death by William G. Kohler Sept 26, 5 PM - at the Marcellus Twp Library.

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Business & Finance

Seasonal business changes - adjusting your insurance for fall

By **Kristen Goodwin**
Kemner, Iott, Benz Agency, an Acrisure Partner

Seasonal Business Changes - Adjusting Your Insurance for Fall

As the leaves start to change and the weather becomes cooler, businesses face unique challenges and opportunities.

Ensuring that your insurance coverage is aligned with these seasonal shifts can help protect your operations and lessen risks. Following are some key areas to consider:

1. Review Coverage for Outdoor Events

- **Liability Coverage:** Fall often brings a variety of outdoor events, from festivals to corporate gatherings. Ensure your liability coverage is adequate to protect against accidents or injuries that may occur. A Special Event policy is always an option for these events and would be a separate policy with separate limits, so it would not affect your normal business insurance.

2. Seasonal Workers

- **Workers' Compensation:** If your business hires seasonal workers to manage increased demand, confirm that your workers' compensation insurance covers temporary staff. This is crucial to protect against any claims that may arise.
- **Documentation:** Ensure all seasonal employees are properly documented and their payroll is included in your insur-

ance policy to avoid any gaps in coverage.

3. Fluctuating Inventory Levels

- **Property Insurance:** Many businesses experience changes in inventory levels during the fall. It's essential to review your property insurance to ensure higher inventory levels during peak times are adequately covered.
- **Policy Limits:** Adjust your policy limits if necessary to protect against potential losses, ensuring your business remains safeguarded against unforeseen events.

4. Property Maintenance

- **Weather Hazards:** Fall can bring heavy rains and early snowfall, which may cause property damage. Conduct regular inspections to identify potential hazards such as leaks or weak structures.
- **Insurance Coverage:** Verify that your property insurance covers weather-related damages. This can include protection against water damage, roof collapses from heavy snow, and other seasonal risks.

5. Business Interruption Insurance

- **Disruption Coverage:** Evaluate your business interruption insurance to ensure it covers potential disruptions caused by seasonal changes. This coverage can help protect against lost income if operations are halted due to weather or other seasonal factors.

- **Contingency Planning:** Have a contingency plan in place to minimize downtime and ensure continuity of operations. This can include alternative work arrangements or backup locations.

6. Liability Insurance

- **Slips and Falls:** With the change in weather, slips and falls become more common. Make sure your liability insurance is up to date to cover any accidents that may occur on your premises.
- **Premises Safety:** Enhance safety measures around your premises, such as installing non-slip mats, clearing walk-

ways of debris, and ensuring proper lighting.

Regularly reviewing your insurance coverage can help ensure your business is protected against the unique risks that come with seasonal changes. By taking proactive steps, you can safeguard your operations and maintain peace of mind throughout the fall season.

If you have specific questions or need tailored advice, consulting with an insurance expert can provide additional insights and recommendations



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.

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EXCEPTIONAL FINANCING OFFERS AVAILABLE



Our Children

On the road to adulting

by **SANDY FLEMING**

It's really tough to think about, especially if your child is an infant, preschooler, or even elementary student, but they are ALL going to grow up someday. We actually have just 18 short years to help them grow from helpless infants to functional adults. The total time is 157,680 hours. Sounds like a lot, but don't forget that they are likely sleeping 52,560 hours (or more!); leaving 105,120 hours. Another 15,210 hours are usually spent in school, leaving 89,910 hours. Knock out time for sports, extra curriculars, time with friends, and even the basics like eating and showering take up even more time. When it's all said and done, we parents are left with something like 75,000 hours to work with, or a bit over eight and a half years' worth of time.

And what all are we trying to teach them? Here's a partial list of practical skills: how to care for a house, how to cook, how to manage budgets and money, how to start, build, and maintain positive relationships, how to work hard and get things done, how to relax and have fun in positive ways, how to care for their own health and well-being, how to show respect to others, how to be productive citizens, and I'm sure I missed a bunch of other things. Holy cow, that's a TALL order! Creating competent, decent, functional human beings in just over eight and a half years takes a lot of time and attention.

Fortunately, kids learn multiple lessons from the same activity. They also learn from the examples of their parents, other older family members, teachers, and other adults in their lives. So while the task may seem daunting, remember that kids are designed to learn these things in the time given and parents are (mostly) equipped to teach them.

How can you make the process easier? Simple! Remember that nearly every waking moment in your kids' lives is a great time to teach something. In fact, you are likely teaching even in the moments when you don't intend to be teaching. The question is "Are you teaching what you intend to teach?" Here are some tips to maximize the time you have together so that hopefully, everything falls in place for the kids as they grow up. Keep your eyes on the prize, so to speak, or at least on the end goal: Kids who grow into decent, competent, functional adults who can care for themselves and their family. Here's how to make the most of your time together at each age and stage.

Birth to Toddlerhood

This is the time when the foundations for later learning are being laid. Talk to the kids as much as you can. They may

not understand this very minute, but they are forming connections in their brains that lead to later understanding. And language is one of the most important skills to help them do everything else as they grow! Keep up a running, one-sided conversation. Describe everything, explain everything, and tell them about how much you care. You can also read to them from day one (or even before!). Early on in the process, it doesn't even matter what you read – you can read books that interest you or magazine articles, or even textbooks! As they start to show interest in what you are reading, shift over to books intended for babies. These will have bright colors, bold, clear photographs, naming words and other simple language, and will likely be made of something sturdy like cardboard or cloth that baby can handle safely. Let them turn the pages, and take turns pointing to things. Let them pretend to "read" to you.

Very young children are also forming emotional bonds and the foundations for becoming a member of the family. Play games as soon as baby is able to respond, even if it's just a smile or reaching for something bright. Later, try peek-a-boo, clapping games, and all of the traditionally fun ways to occupy babies. Above all, keep your interactions as positive as possible. Smile and laugh together, and take care of the baby's needs as soon as possible so that he or she learns that the world is a safe, loving, and comfortable place. The more secure and loved and attended you can make your baby feel, the better!

As babies grow into toddlers and preschoolers, they also need to learn the beginnings of respect for others, understanding that others have needs that might come before theirs, and how to interact in positive ways with family members and friends. They learn to control impulses and develop skills like having conversations, taking turns, and even helping others and understanding the feelings of those around them. Help them along! Explain things, enforce rules and guidelines, and be consistent. Keep routines in your schedule and help them learn that the world is a predictable, safe place.

Remember to read loads of stories out loud, to converse (more than just telling them what to do but honest, give-and-take conversations), and to play all the traditional childhood games and activities. There's a reason kids do lacing and coloring and puzzles and stacking. All of these activities (especially the non-digital variety) are building important skills for the future.

School-Aged Kids

School-aged kids are starting to inter-

act with people outside of the family, and even people outside of the family's influence, like teachers and school friends. You can continue to help them on the road to adulting in many ways during these first years of school.

Keep talking! The more talking and language you can squeeze into their days, the better. Read aloud as long as they will let you, even if it's just a teaser to a book you let lay on the table after you give them a taste. Hold regular family discussions about important family business and about what's going on in the world outside of your home. This is the age when attitudes about public institutions like school, religion, other cultures, voting and civic awareness, and so forth are being formed. In fact, one study indicated that kids form a lot of their basic beliefs about the outside world and their place in it around the age of 10 or 12.

Remember that your actions speak far more loudly than your words. Little ones imitated you when they started to learn about family life, and they continue imitating you as they spread their wings and head out into school and their social lives. Make sure your example in the way you speak, the way you act, and what you express about other people is something you would be proud to have them imitate.

In particular, keep a positive front up (even if you don't feel that way!) about education, school, homework, teachers, and the school administration. So many students that I see with poor attitudes about learning and school are simply echoing what they hear and experience at home. Be sure to keep communication lines open with the school, and be sure to build homework and learning time into your schedule after work and school. Be careful not to set up self-fulfilling prophecies, like "There's no way I could do the math you have! I always hated math" or "Of course he's having trouble with reading – his dad and grandfather also had a terrible time learning to read." Instead, if you see differences between what your child is learning and how he or she is progressing that worry you, talk to the teacher or talk to another professional. Get to the bottom of the challenges early, and put them on the path to success.

Around the house, the chores and expectations should be increasing. Consider having them clean up after themselves in all areas, learn to cook and do laundry, have them vacuum and clean regularly, and any other chores you can think of. You might want to introduce the idea of doing extra work to earn extra money – kids always want spending money, and this is a good way to build both financial understandings (like you must have the money before you spend it) and work ethic (you

need to put effort into getting the things you want).

Talk about career possibilities, too, and what it takes to get there. At these ages, the career goals are usually pretty broad, but you can start to offer experiences like talking to a doctor or a construction worker to find out what his or her job is like. Lay the groundwork for the idea that someday the kids will be living on their own and will be responsible for their own lives. Your job is to teach them how now!

Middle and High School

By the time the kids reach age 12 or so, our time as parents is almost up! Put the finishing touches on teaching your children the finer points of living a productive and responsible adult life. Teach the details of finances and how to be healthy with money. Keep talking – you'll be guiding them in the nuances of navigating relationships and friendships. Keep being the positive example in all you do. Even though they SAY they want to be away from you and out from under your authority, they are still watching you deep down inside. Your influence and example still matter very much to them. They are now aware enough to see you managing the difficult parts of life as well, and they notice how you support loved ones and friends through tough times.

Think carefully about what they know how to do around the house. Make sure you've given them the tools they need to run a household successfully. Hopefully by the time they leave, they will know how to do the day to day chores and also how to manage the big items, like painting, simple repairs, and deep cleaning.

One more area to start practicing at this age is dealing with the business side of life. Set up bank accounts and have them begin to call or email offices to set up appointments and get information. Have them order food in restaurants, call to find out about business hours or costs, and so forth. The more they do these things, the more confident they will be when it comes time to do them on their own.

Young Adulthood

If we parents do our jobs right, we will launch a fully-formed adult sometime after high school. This newly-minted independent person should have the tools needed for success and also should know how to get any information that he or she is missing. We can know that we've made the most of these few short years of childhood when we see our babies grow into healthy and happy people.

Sandy Fleming is an educator and writer living in Edwardsburg. Check out her websites for loads of practical ideas to help kids (and adults!) learn! <https://learningnook.com> and <https://sandyflemingonline.com>.

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Lake Life with Jane

Happy September!

Happy September! This time of year may not be considered summer but it sure isn't fall, so don't go having your boat hauled back into storage, or hang up your kayaks. There's still much more time on the water, lolling on the beach, burgers on the grill and hanging out with friends and neighbors. But it's eerily quiet during the week; the absence of kids mostly. The summer playlist or background noise of their laughter coming through my windows as they would walk, ride their bikes, scooters or golf carts street-side past my house is making me a little melancholy (baby). My kitchen window looks out at the road so I get to see all of this; the dog walkers, runners, families strolling, people I know, people I don't know, people trying to look in my windows ... anyway, it's just more quiet - but fear not, summer isn't quite over and fall hasn't quite begun so let's just stay in the moment.



Like that little man behind the curtain in *The Wizard of Oz*, ignore all the screaming, bright orange and yellow fall and Halloween aisles popping up in all the stores. It's marketing plain and simple and although we know it, these are some of the ways we get sucked into throwing away the remainder of our summer and most of the cash in our wallet. We think: a) Let's just buy this crap now and not worry about it later. b) Can't pass up a "buy 1 get 1 free" (even if the price is inflated 3x more than it will be if you wait). c) All my friends and neighbors have their homes decorated so pretty for the fall season and I have to keep up with the Joneses. d) When I see something new pop on the shelves I can't help myself, I have to grab it before everyone else. I'm helpless. Are you any of these? I have FOMO big time in all areas of my life, I cannot lie. I've gotten better about it since I've learned how to have interesting and meaningful conversations with myself, sometimes out loud if no one is around. But rushing the seasons is not in the game plan for me. Case in point: These Million Bell Petunias I found at Dussel's Farm Market were a pretty good choice one year as they held on straight through October, and the colors were deep and rich and absolutely perfect as they days got shorter and more brisk. Try pulling out your faded and tired pastel blooms, and poke in a few pansies that will keep you smiling until the first frost. Then grab your kayak or canoe and get out on that water! Stay away from the fakery in all of it's forms!

Now that I've cleared our calendar of children, decorating and obligatory guilt, I think we need to have some decent Grown Up time. I don't know about you

but my knees are shot from being down on them playing in the little fairy garden I made for my four-year old granddaughter. I am still vacuuming up dog hair and none of it's from mine. I have seven boxes of cereal in the pantry, all opened and all almost full. Summer has been a hodge podge of people coming and going. Believe me, I love it, family and friends coming to the lake to gather is one of the greatest joys I've had in my life, and no, I'm not happy to see this part of the season end. What I do mean is that when I was preparing the recipe section of my column I gave serious thought to what we adults enjoy in food, or a meal. And I think, honest to God, it must be peace and quiet! Maybe it's just me, Yesterday afternoon I walked outside with my Poppy to sit for a second while she did her thing. I was in the middle of a writing assignment so I sat on a bench and sipped my Starbucks latte, feeling the sun on my face and the light breeze in my hair, and gradually I relaxed to the point where my paper cup began to slip out of my hand and I was jolted back to the here and now. That's it! September is the month that you need to pick up your phone and call your adult friends and invite them to your next weekend gathering (if you're up to it) and make it sans kids, just in case they are saddled with the grands or happen to think everyone loves them as much as they do. And since we are on Grown Up time, we'll serve a breakfast or brunch and I've put together a little menu here to choose from, which will be almost effortless since we Grownups respect the hostess and don't want to see her become irritable. Suggestions for side dishes are added to each recipe as well as my usual pushing and prodding to take things to another level. One thing about adulting is you don't have to eat from paper plates so I highly suggest you bring out the good things. Or at least the good paper plates and napkins.



Berry Croissant Breakfast Casserole

I'm a big berry fan and I usually have them with yogurt so this is a good spin for me. I've halved this recipe a few times. I suggest serving the casserole on a buffet along with a platter of sausage, bacon or ham and perhaps some cheese. By the way, I started to buy Staub bakeware after only ever owning Le Creuset and I wasn't impressed. Any thoughts?

INGREDIENTS:

8 large croissants (from the bakery) sliced into 1 in cubes (10 c tightly packed)
4 c berries

For custard:

*14 oz cream cheese, softened

1 1/4 c sugar
*6 eggs
*2 c half and half
1 T vanilla
1 T lemon juice
2 t lemon zest
1/4 t salt
For Cream Cheese Lemon Glaze
*2 oz cream cheese, softened
1 c powdered sugar
1 1/2 T lemon juice
1 1/2 t vanilla

DIRECTIONS:

Preheat oven to 350. Add the cubed croissants in a single layer on a large baking sheet and toast 7-10 minutes until golden and very toasted. Don't overdo it! Set aside.

For the custard, Add cream cheese and sugar to a large mixing bowl and beat with a hand mixer until smooth. Beat in the eggs until smooth followed by the half and half. Lastly, beat in the lemon juice, lemon zest, vanilla extract and salt.

To assemble, transfer half the croissants to a lightly greased 9 x 13 baking dish and then evenly layer with half the berries. Pour half of the custard evenly over the dish. Add the remaining croissants in a single layer followed by the remaining custard, pressing down with your clean hand to make sure most of the croissants are submerged. It's okay if they aren't! Scatter remaining berries over the dish. Cover with foil and refrigerate overnight.

When ready to bake, remove the casserole from the refrigerator and let it sit on the counter for fifteen minutes while you preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Bake, covered with foil for 30 minutes. Remove foil and bake another 15 minutes or until a knife inserted comes out clean. While the casserole is baking, prepare the lemon glaze: Add all ingredients to a medium size bowl and beat until smooth. Taste and add sugar for more sweetness or lemon for more tanginess. Drizzle the glaze over the casserole with a spoon when it comes out of the oven and is warm.

***Be sure these ingredients are at room temperature before adding in.**
Serves 12



Overnight Blueberry Baked Oatmeal

This dish ticks all the boxes for me not just for my grown up brunch plans but for my grown up life plan! I'm needing a whole lot of fiber and protein lately and we all know what a Superfood blueberries are. Overnight oats are simple to prepare and beat the heck out of making them the old fashion way in the morning as I do, which only takes five minutes but you make excuses not to dirty a pot, etc., and make toast instead...I make this and I'm good for the next five mornings. As with the croissant casserole, if you were serving this to guests I would suggest an assorted meat platter, as well as mini

muffins and butter.

INGREDIENTS:

*2 c old fashion rolled oats
2 c milk of your choice
1/3 c maple syrup or sweetener of your choice
2 t cinnamon
1 large egg, beaten
1 t baking powder
1 1/2 blueberries, fresh or frozen (thawed if frozen)

Streusel:

1 c old fashion oats*
1/2 c flour
1/2 brown sugar
1/4 t salt
1/2 c melted butter or coconut oil

DIRECTIONS:

Place the oats, milk, sweetener, and cinnamon in a medium to large bowl and stir. Place in an airtight container and refrigerate overnight.

In the morning preheat the oven to 375. Grease an 8 x 8 square baking dish and set aside. Stir the beaten egg and baking powder into the oatmeal mixture until well combined, then gently fold in blueberries. Pour the mixture into the prepared baking dish and spread evenly.

Prepare the Streusel: Stir the 1 c oats, flour, sugar, and pinch of salt together in a medium bowl. Stir in the melted butter until combined. Sprinkle the streusel evenly over the oatmeal. Bake for 30-40 minutes on the middle rack of the oven until most of the liquid has been absorbed. If the streusel starts to brown too quickly, cover loosely with foil. Remove from oven and cool on a wire rack for 15 minutes. Enjoy!

***I like Bob's Red Mill Steel Cut Oats**



Perfect Egg Bite Muffins

I gleaned all the things I wanted most from a baked egg muffin and the one thing I didn't want...dryness, and came up with this. If you like the egg bites at Starbucks, you'll love these. Feel free to change the ingredients up as you please such as the cheese and the veggies. The muffins also freeze well but I recommend cutting the recipe in half rather than freezing. You can make these with cupcake liners and serve them up in a basket or arranged on a cake plate. Side dishes of potatoes, fruit, and toast with an assortment of jams would be very special.

INGREDIENTS:

*10 large eggs
1/2 milk
1 c shredded sharp cheddar cheese
1/2 finely chopped vegetables (I used peppers, tomatoes and onions)
1/2 c breakfast sausage
S & P to taste
Non-stick Cooking Spray

DIRECTIONS:

Preheat oven to 350. Generously spray muffin tins with cooking spray. Prepare your veggies and if using bacon or sausage, begin cooking process in a

Lake Life with Jane

skillet, then chop and add to egg mixture. In a medium bowl, whisk together the eggs and milk until well combined and frothy. Add in the salt and pepper and continue to whisk. Place an equal amount of vegetables, protein and cheese into each muffin tin and then spoon egg mixture in filling each cup 2/3 full. Using a fork, stir to combine all the ingredients in each muffin together. Bake for 12-18 minutes or until eggs are set and the tops are golden. Let cool a bit before using a butter knife to gently loosen them from the tin. 10 servings

***Dairy products are best added just at room temp**

The Breakfast Martini

I couldn't have planned this if I had tried.

Seriously. In fact I came across this photo on Google and paused because I adore



coupe glasses. I finally scored some on Amazon that didn't break my piggy bank. You all may be a little too young to know what a whole lot of sophistication coupe glasses were/are, and for the little I know (other than I had to have four of them), they were used for Champagne cocktails back in the day. But I digress. My Signature Drink this month is appropriately named The Breakfast Martini.

There is a very interesting story behind the conception of this drink if you want to Google it, I won't take up your time here, it's rather cute. And just because I have never heard of it The Breakfast Martini before, be confident that you can go into

just about any drinking establishment here and yon, (think hotels abroad) and order one). You can find a zillion versions floating around out there, but I'm going to give you a recipe from someone I don't know and have to trust, just as I do all of the Uber drivers I use every week.

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 1/2 oz gin
- 1/2 orange liqueur
- 3/4 oz freshly squeezed lemon juice
- 1 bar-spoon orange marmalade
- Garnish: lemon wheel

DIRECTIONS:

Add the gin, orange liqueur, lemon juice, and marmalade into a shaker with ice and shake vigorously until well chilled. Double-strain into a coupe glass. Garnish with a lemon wheel.

Recipe courtesy of Liquor.com

Jane's Imaginary Bookclub

This month's read is a new novel by Catherine Newman. I promised myself No More New Books until I read the last 345 sitting on my nightstand. But as always, someone recommends something on Facebook or gives a review on a blog, or I see a little blip in People magazine, and I'm sucked in. If I just jot the name down, I forget why I wanted to read it and the moment is lost. You need that moment, that yearning to read it when you hear about it. I miss those days when I'd go to a bookstore, find a great couple of novels and look forward to getting home, getting all cozied up in a chair with a hot or cold beverage and reading well into the evening. Now it's mostly a click away and the anticipation is almost gone when that familiar blue on blue

truck comes and you open the box and think "Hm... What? Ohhhh..."

So I was still on that high when this gem came. Set on Cape Cod, a woman and her family return to a vacation rental cottage that they've been going to forever. Rocky is in her fifties, menopausal as all hell, trying to deal with two children who have just flown the nest, and her aging parents. This is where the "sandwich" part comes in. And this is where I shut up because this is what I really despise about the reviews on Amazon. Not only does some whacko feel the need to give a total 10,000,000 word recount of what the book is about, it's not just a spoiler alert, it's the spoiler with no alert. But I will say, I saw myself in Rocky, I've been in this "sandwich" and just reading it made me almost want to double over in pain at times. I also laughed hard, really hard. This book is not a downer in the least. I think that's what makes it such a great novel. Catherine Newman is amongst some of the most gifted writers of our time and I put her right up there with Anna Quindlen, Ann Patchett, and the late Nora Ephron. If you've read any of their work, you'll know what I've mean. So grab your copy. I'm serving The Breakfast Martini's along with the Perfect Egg Bite Muffins and we'll have some Grown Up time this month!



Before I wrap this up, I just wanted to pay tribute to my little furry baby which

I had to say goodbye to a couple of weeks ago. This is my Layla, all five pounds of her, just sitting here waiting to do spell-check on my work. She was small but she had presence. She dodged a lot of feet and dogs flying through our house five times the size of her. She toppled off stairs and beds, out of children's arms, but she always came out unscathed. It recently finally came down to her just wanting her food and me. Layla had just turned twenty. Love you + miss you baby girl..



Jane Boudreau is a writer, blogger, and newspaper columnist who resides on Diamond Lake as well as in Chicago and Asheville, NC. You can reach her at blndy9@yahoo.com

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<https://hallofheroesmuseum.com/>



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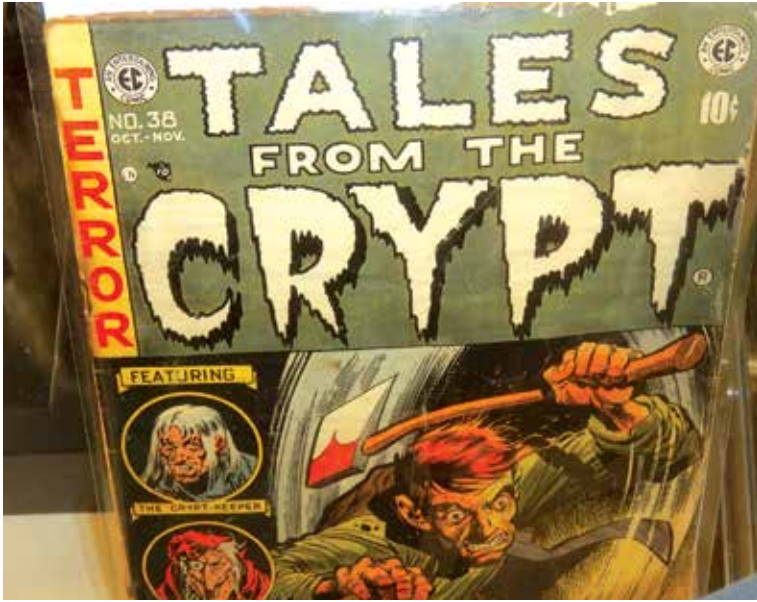
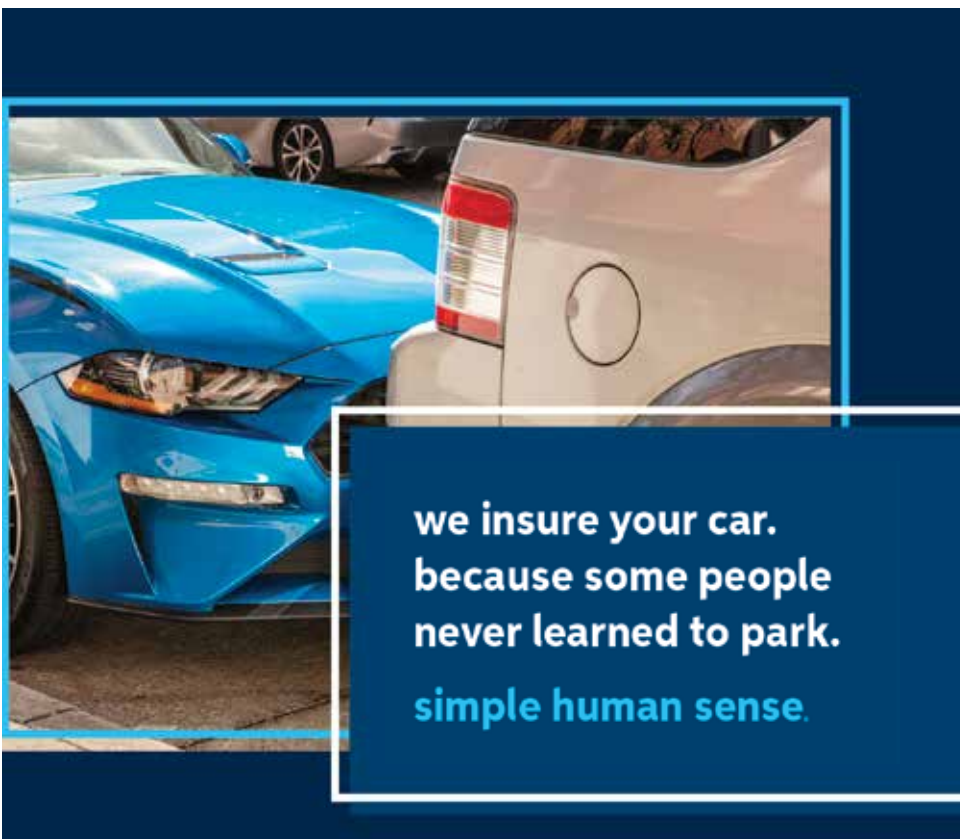
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Historic Postcards

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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 \$30, 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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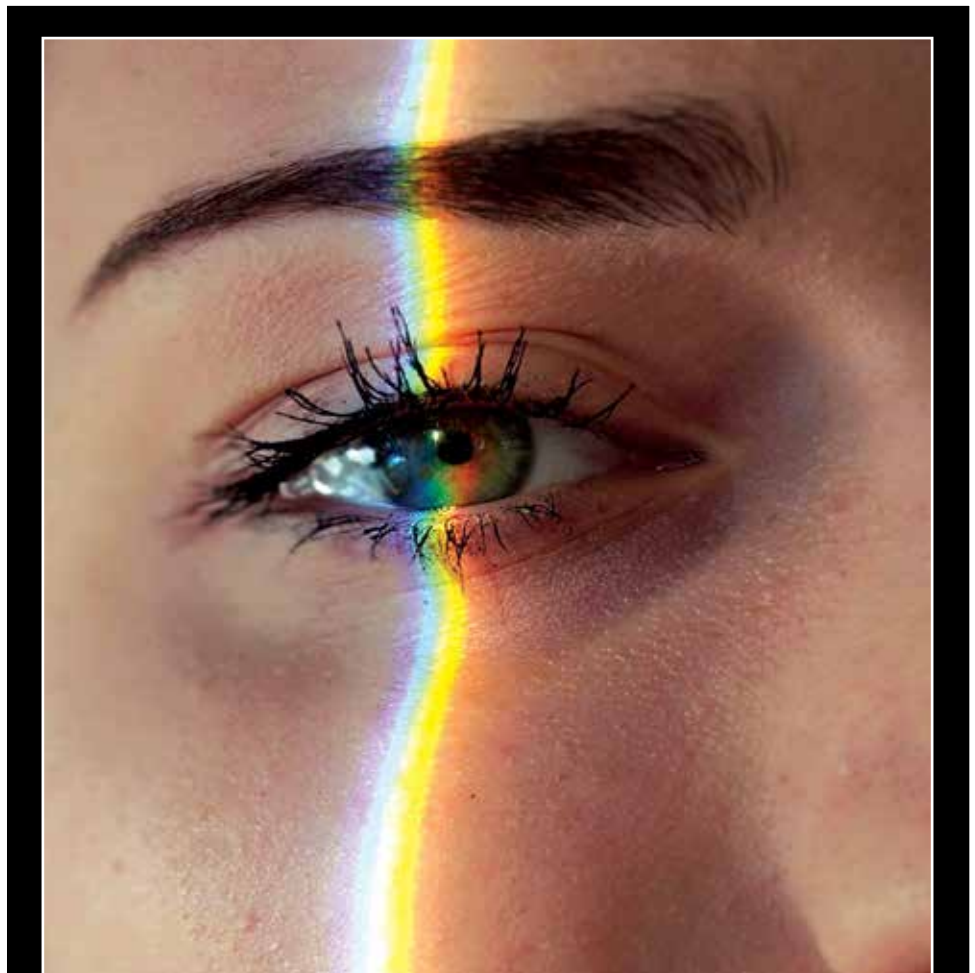
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Nature Notes

Yellow-headed blackbird seen in New Buffalo

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

On August 3, Sarett Nature Center naturalist Mike Mahler photographed a female yellow-headed blackbird, found earlier that day by other observers, at New Buffalo Public Beach. This bird was not relocated after August 3.

Yellow-headed blackbirds are common during the breeding season from Minnesota, west to Washington, Oregon and California. It ranges north to central Alberta and Manitoba south to Oklahoma. It does occur in Wisconsin and northern Illinois during the nesting season where it is considered uncommon.

The species winters in the southeastern US, south into the northern 2/3 of Mexico.

In Michigan, yellow-headed blackbirds are known to have nested in the Saginaw Bay area and (formerly) in the Muskegon area. Yellow-headed blackbirds are attracted to large stands of cattails or phragmites near open water, where they nest.

Aside from those localities, the yellow-headed blackbird is a casual migrant in Michigan. Single birds are seen in Southwest Michigan usually among large mixed flocks of blackbirds containing red-winged blackbirds, common grackles and brown-headed cowbirds. It is notable that the individual found August 3 at New Buffalo was a single bird not associated with other blackbirds. Also, August is typically not a month that the species is seen locally.

In Berrien County, yellow-headed blackbirds occur most often in April, May and June. There are a few fall and winter records for Berrien County. The first observation of a yellow-headed blackbird in Berrien County occurred in 1969.

Most, if not all, yellow-headed blackbird observations in Berrien County involve single individuals, usually once or twice per year. Most local records of the species involve sightings of the male of the species. The male appears strikingly different from the female, sporting all black wings, with white wing patches, a black body with a distinct bright, yellow head, throat and upper chest.

The song of the male yellow-headed blackbird has been described as sounding like a rusty frame gate opening. But I say it sounds like a miniature chainsaw!

Mike Mahler also submitted a photo of a ruddy turnstone taken on August 8 at Tiscornia Park in St. Joseph.

Ruddy turnstones are shorebirds



Left: Female yellow-headed blackbird at New Buffalo public beach on August 3, 2024. Photo by Mike Mahler, naturalist at Sarett Nature Center. Top right: A ruddy turnstone pauses on August 8 at Tiscornia Park, St. Joseph, en-route to its winter grounds of the Atlantic Coast of the US. Photo by Mike Mahler. Bottom right: Bald eagle in its third year of life, molting into adult plumage with white head and tail. Taken August 9 at Warren Dunes State Park by Brad Anderson.

that nest along the shores and coastal plains of the Arctic Ocean, not only in Alaska, Canada and Greenland, but also in Scandinavia and the Russian arctic coast.

Ruddy turnstones winter along the Atlantic and Pacific coasts of the US, south to Chile and northern Argentina. Eurasian populations of the ruddy turnstone overwinter along the African, Australian and south Asian coasts.

In Berrien County, they are seen regularly in spring with an average arrival date of May 16 and a departure of May 29. Fall migrants begin to arrive on average by August 4 and depart by September 19. Occasional sightings occur locally into October.

On August 9, Brad Anderson of Bridgman photographed a bald eagle in flight over Warren Dunes State Park. This bird appears to be in its third year of life, as it is molting into its adult plumage. Bald eagles take three years before they acquire their distinct white head and tail.

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Local History

Discovery and notes of a lost photo

Discovery and Notes of a Lost Photograph of the 1841 Cass County Courthouse

by Jonathan Wuepper
Manager Local History Branch
Cass District Library
145 North Broadway St.
Cassopolis, MI 49031
jwuepper@cass.lib.mi.us
269-357-7823

Within the last month, a long "lost" photograph of the 1841 Cass County, Michigan courthouse was discovered among the papers of the late Arthur Berkey, Jr. The late Arthur Berkey, Jr. is related to William Berkey who was the editor of the Cassopolis Vigilant for nearly 60 years.

The photograph that was found was unknown to myself, or to former Cass County Administrator Terry Proctor who has an interest in old courthouse photos. The photograph, likely taken during the early to mid-1890s, depicts the Cass County Courthouse, built in 1841 by Joseph Harper. The 1841, Greek-Revival style courthouse was located on the same site as the current stone Cass County Courthouse (built 1898-1900 and currently under restoration-remodeling).

In 1898, the old 1841 courthouse was moved from its original location from northeast corner of State and Broadway Streets, to the south side of State Street west of Broadway Street. Here the old courthouse sat until it was razed in May 1968. From 1898-1968 it served as an opera house and as the Colonial Movie Theater.

The photograph that accompanies this article was definitely taken before it was moved in 1898 as the brick foundation to the portico is visible, which was demolished just before its move to State Street. Another clue that tells me this was taken before the 1898 move is the old jail seen on the left side in the background of the photo. Trees are obstructing the view of the old jail, but it is certainly present in the photo.

There are two other aspects of this unique find that I want to mention. First, the photograph shows the north side of the old courthouse. I am unaware of any other surviving photos taken of this building that show the north side of the building before the 1898 move.

Second and perhaps most impor-



"Lost" photo of the 1841 Cass County Courthouse, taken circa early 1890s. Musicians in the foreground are presumably the Cassopolis Brass Band.

tantly, most of the people in the photograph are identified!

I believe the group of men in uniforms holding brass instruments is the Cassopolis Brass Band, also known as the Cassopolis Military Band. That is my best guess.

From the list of names, the men are, in the first row from left to right (spelled as they are on the paper attached to the photo): "Clite" [Clytus W] Martin; Pratt Jones; unidentified man; and John Stockdale. In the second row of uniformed men, left to right: Lafe Macintosh; Edward Miller; Elgin Stockdale; and Grenville Smith.

Also: "In front of the snare drummer: Bawse Reams."

"Standing on the Court House steps: Tall man, J.M. [James Melville] Shepard. Short Man, Lowell Glover." James Melville Shepard was owner/publisher of the Cassopolis Vigilant during the 1880s. Lowell Glover was an attorney and Justice of the Peace.

Another clue in dating this photo is by looking at Elgin Stockdale. In the photo he looks to be roughly 20 years old. He was born in 1873, which would place the date this photo was taken in

the neighborhood of the early 1890s.

Also, Pratt Jones, listed as the second man from the left in the first row of men, had moved west by the mid-1890s.

Another observation is that aside from (possibly) three young girls atop the courthouse steps, all other people shown in the photograph are males.

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Walking with an old friend ... once more



At 10:47 am on a beautiful late-summer Wednesday a couple weeks ago, when I got to a point about three houses down the street from my house, my Fitbit began to vibrate, a notification that I'd reached the number of steps I've had as my goal for the past five years.

At the time I didn't think much of it; I almost always hit my goal of 15,000 steps when I walk. Admittedly a lofty goal, the biggest reason I walk so much is that the satisfaction of that number combined with the vibrating notification give me just enough of an attaboy to propel me through the rest of the mundane sameness that plagues my ADHD-deluged psyche.

At home, as I surrendered to the usual self-imposed restraints of my daily routine, my mind wandered as it is oft wont to do at my age, but my wandering didn't follow any familiar route after my daily walk.

Maybe it was because that day I'd walked over to the park (Dr. TK Lawless County Park is just 3-1/2 miles from my front door). I'd thoroughly enjoyed the time alone, emotionally alternating between the anger roused from policing piles of roadside trash and the rapture I experience from being amidst the beauty of the farm fields, the wetlands and the forests as I walked.

When I started that day's walk, I was deep into enjoying the relief I was experiencing for finally being able to retire from my job as the volunteer editor for my lake's summer-weekly newspaper, a commitment I've shouldered for the past 25 years. Bittersweet, to be sure, but after producing 275 Birch Barkers without missing a deadline, I'm more than ready to spend a summer without an every-week cloud over my head.

But that day, about half way through my walk, just as I was passing the unmanned shed at the entrance to the park, I had a sort of epiphany (or maybe it was a 1960 induced flashback), and saw myself walking in that very place, years ago, with my dog Saba.

Saba's been gone for quite a while now, claimed by the ravages of age-driven infirmities. She'd been a good friend who had accompanied me on many a walk through that park in her youth. She'd loved the park, pulling on the leash every time a new scent would dis-

tract her (and nearly pulling me into the woods every time a deer had been foolish enough to be seen).

I used to let her pick the path when we'd get to the starting point in the parking lot. Some days she'd want to cross the ball diamond and head into the trees at the disc golf course, a path that had a lot of hills to climb. Tough path, sure, but that was when we were both still young enough to enjoy the challenge. Other days she'd opt off the left, past the inner tubing hill, over the bridges and along the lake where the built-in benches on the pier provided a perch for her to watch the herons and ducks and geese that called the lake their home.

Saba's favorite walk was the easiest trail in the park, a leisurely, no-hill-to-climb, paved loop that brings walkers back to where they started (at least I'm guessing it was her favorite since she never said it in so many words, but lacking both a command of human speech and the thumbs and fingers required to sign ASL phrases, that went without saying ... literally).

She had favorite stopping spots on that trail. Not far along the path was a nice wooden bench covered by a man-made shelter with a pitched roof. Saba would jump onto the bench and look at me as if to say, "Have a sit for a spell. Let's enjoy the day." Most days I'd accommodate her, plopping down and scratching her ears and under her chin for a few minutes while we gazed into the forest, calming ourselves and letting go of all the cares of home and work and chores and family and finances and all of the worries that had seemed so important when I woke up at 3 am that morning and couldn't get back to sleep (I suspect she was just thinking about being away from the cats, or when I was going to give her a new bone to chew on ... she never really did seem to care much about all that other stuff).

And I remember she loved the fork in the trail. She'd always stop and sniff the right side first, even though she and I both knew she was going to lead me along the left fork once she'd sniffed enough (and most likely found just the right place to leave her scent for the next dog fortunate enough to walk that path next).

At the point where the trail starts curving back around to make the loop that would eventually bring us back to the fork, there was a small, old, worn, narrow bench without a back. The bench was off the path about 15 or 20 feet into the woods, hidden just enough that if

you didn't already know it was there, you'd likely miss it. Saba knew it was there, and when we go to that point, she'd pull me into the woods, around the sticker bushes and plop down beside the bench. She loved the lofty view there, looking out over the wetlands at the geese and swans and ducks on the water below us. We'd often sit for 10 or 15 minutes, soaking in the quiet and enjoying the aerial antics of the turkey buzzards and ravens and hawks and even an occasional eagle that would soar by at eye level.

Then she'd usually be the one to break the day-dream, standing and shaking the twigs and leaves off her coat, the giving me that look that meant, time to go before she'd pull me back to the trail, down past the Shagbark Hickory and the trail fork and back to the parking lot, and ultimately back home.

But that was back when we were both young enough to enjoy that sort of a challenge.

Nowadays it seems that I mostly walk alone.

That's not entirely bad. Walking has significantly stabilized my essential high blood pressure. Walking has helped me shed (and keep off) somewhere around 80 pounds of unhealthy butt and belly baggage. Walking has provided me with a way to learn to exorcise my waking demons through peaceful meditation (when I'm not cussing the jerks who toss their fast-food wrappers and beer cans out of their car windows).

Don't know why I thought about that on that particular morning.

On that day, maybe it was the visit to the park on a beautiful day at the end of summer that had jogged those pleasant memories out of the dusty corners of my brain.

Maybe it was because I remembered that Saba had left me at the end of beautiful summer, and on the day she died, I'd been so sorry that we hadn't been able to make it to the park that whole last summer.

Maybe it's because I'm feeling the bittersweet pangs of finally being able to retire from my side gig after having it be such a significant part of my life for so long.

Most likely my mind just needed to walk a different path that day; a path through a beautiful summer day on an easy hike ... with a dear friend.

I'm glad I walked that way on that Wednesday. Hope you enjoyed walking with us.



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