

FRESHWATER REPORTER

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October means bugling elk at Amber Elk Ranch

By Pat Stinson

LUDINGTON – “The wagon is full,” the gal behind the counter told the two stragglers who rolled into Amber Elk Ranch at 11:20 a.m., Saturday, Sept. 14 – just 10 minutes before the wagon’s scheduled departure time.

Visitors had arrived early to the ranch, to snag the day’s first wagon ride. The morning was deceptively sunny, with a chill in the air as crispy as a honeycrisp.

The stragglers decided to browse the ranch’s store, the aptly named Antler Shed, both to keep warm and to check out the mind-boggling array of antlers, gifts made of antlers, stuffed toy animals and an upright freezer full of elk meat.

Just as one of the two began reaching for the freezer handle, the voice spoke again.

“There’s room on the wagon.”

The pair paid for their \$10 senior passes (\$12, adults; \$8, ages 2-12) and hurried outside to take their seats in the last of the two wagons in a “train,” pulled by a tractor. The seats in the rear wagon are good, as it is covered to protect passengers from sunlight and stray raindrops. The front wagon is open.

“You picked a good time to be here,” said Pat, the tractor driver, wagon master and tour guide. “The rut began Wednesday in a waxing moon. From now until Thanksgiving, the elk will behave



Photos by Mark Videan

unpredictably.”

All that stood between the passengers and the horny elk were rails of steel on the sides of the wagon, several feet off the ground.

Pat said the owner, Bob Northrup, was taking care of the calves – recently separated from their mothers – so we would not meet him. Then Pat introduced his helper, a “runner” named Emily. Visitors would shortly discover why this job title is appropriate.

Pat reeled off his checklist of rules. If there’s a bull (male elk) in the pen, don’t stick your head, or any body part, past the rails. The cows (female elk) are antsy; they were just separated from their calves. If you were so foolish as to step off the wagon and find yourself on the ground, the cows will

hurt you. The elk are wild animals. When you feed them, (from the wagon) place your hands down low, palms flat, and push the grain toward their mouths. Elk have no upper teeth in front, so they won’t nip you. They do have a full set of molars, so don’t stick your hand up to your elbow in their mouths. Above all, STAY ON THE WAGON.

The tractor’s engine started up and the wagon wheels began rolling. Emily hopped off the back of the rear wagon and ran ahead of the tractor to open the gate to the first pen. It was empty, save for some invasive moonflowers (jimsonweed, poisonous to elk). She said the elk are smart enough not to eat it.

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Fate of Arcadia bells up in the air

By Stewart A. McFerran

The Trinity Lutheran Church was built by Henry Starke in 1888. The church bells have been heard in the Village of Arcadia ever since. Current Pastor Ryan Tinetti described to me last month the carillon that traditionally sounded from the steeple. Hymns and secular tunes still are heard throughout the Pleasant Valley, but someone has lodged an objection.

A Benzie resident bought a house just behind the church. The tall steeple towers over his back yard. He and his wife spent the summer fixing up their second home. He objects to the volume of bells that sound every hour during daylight. At noon and 6 p.m., hymns play. When asked if he has a theological objection to the hymns he said, “Not really.”

Melanie Cederholm lives just down the street from Trinity Lutheran Church. She was born and raised in Arcadia and loves the bells. It wasn’t the steeple clock, designed and installed by Nels Johnson in 1900, that helped her tell the time. Carillon hymns sounded throughout her childhood at 6 p.m. and told her dinner was ready. Likewise, her children were instructed to return home for dinner at the sound of hymns.

But it is not just hymns that can be heard from the steeple. Secular themes

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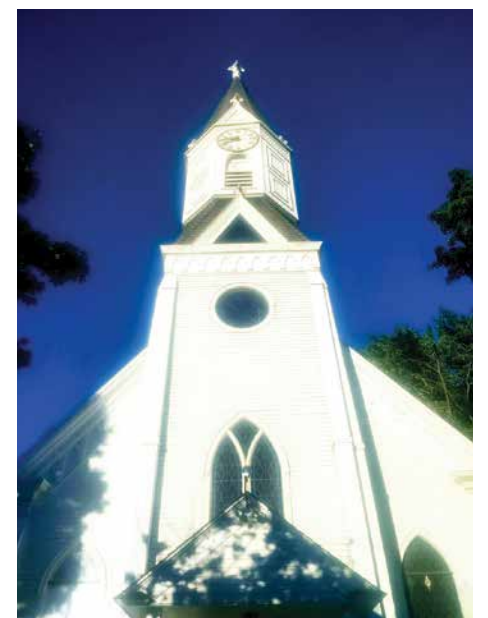


Photo by Stewart A. McFerran.

All hail the days of October

By Ron Schmidt

I love October. It is by far the best month of autumn, to me. I do miss my summer songbirds that migrate south, and I am sorry when the furnace starts up again to evict the night cold from my house.

But what can top walking through the woods on a cool October day while listening to a flock of geese flying overhead and smelling that heavenly, nutty fragrance of falling leaves?

Yes, they land on my head and drift to the ground as I work in the yard or take a walk. To me, leaves in fall smell like hickory-nut shells and acorn caps – that pleasing aroma that makes me take a long, deep breath and feel glad to be alive.

Yet, the day is not over. There is more to look forward to as the sun goes down.

There are evening campfires to enjoy with good friends. The heat and smell of the burning wood is hard to beat, especially with a handful of homemade hickory-nut cookies and a glass of cider or St. Ambrose mead.

Every fall day without rain is a treasure, so please get out and search for the little gems that make yours memorable.

Ron Schmidt is a children’s author. He lives on 5 acres in the north woods with his Leader Dog, Lila.



Photos by Pat Stinson

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Fall is the season to prepare for wildfire threats

By Misty Sheehan

REGION – Fire Prevention Week is Oct. 6-12, and this year's theme is, "Not Every Hero Wears a Cape. Plan and Practice your Escape."



Courtesy photo by Jen Theodore.

Making a home escape plan is not just for fires that occur inside the home.

We've all read about the tragedies that have occurred in the West from wildfires. In 2018, across the U.S., more than 50,000 fires burned almost 9 million acres and destroyed 18,000 residences.

We who live in the northern Michigan forest need to be concerned as well. Many new homes are built by owners who want to live "in nature" by enjoying the green of the forest and the forest animals that come to our homes – birds to bird feeders, and chipmunks and squirrels that eat from our hands. We enjoy watching deer walking through our yards as well as foxes, raccoons, bobcats, skunks and even bears. Walks through the forest are said to improve our health.

We are so glad to get away from cities like Chicago and Detroit, with traffic jams, pollution from cars and trucks, and just too many people. A student living in the city said to me, "It seems like I just leave my apartment, go to the college, get out of the

car, go to class, and then return the same way." Yes, those of us who live up here call that an artificial life. So, we build up here amongst the rustle of the trees.

But fires have occurred in Michigan and could again.

On October 8, 1871, the same day as the Great Chicago Fire, (which burned Oct. 8-10), massive fires swept Michigan, fed by piles of branches lumbermen left after cutting logs and possibly fueled by the same winds that touched off the Chicago conflagration. Twelve-hundred people in Manistee alone were made homeless by that fire. (National Fire Prevention Week always includes October 9, in remembrance of the Great Chicago Fire.)

John Yohe, Forestry Technician with the U.S. Forest Service, explained that most fires are caused by humans.

"There are still wildfires in Michigan," he said. "They're small, so (they) may not be in the news, but they happen. The Duck Lake fire north of Newberry, in the U.P., burned (21,114) acres on the Two-Hearted River in 2012."

Fire safety organizations are concerned about homes sprawling from urban areas into the forest. Before, their main concern was stopping forest fires from burning more land, but now they must also consider areas where homes were built. Decisions must be made about protecting the forest versus protecting homes.

Now in its 45th year, the U.S. Fire Administration is educating members of the public about what to do to protect their homes from fires and how to escape them if it becomes necessary.

Your home can catch fire from an approaching wildfire, either from the flames themselves, from sticks or tree limbs carried long distances by the wind, and even from heat radiation.

On its website, the Michigan State University Extension Office states:

"Although spring is usually thought of as 'wildfire season' throughout Michigan, it is in the fall when homeowners can be most effective in protecting their structures from potential wildfire losses."

MSU Extension Bulletin E2948, "Wildfire-Resistant Landscape Plants for Michigan," includes a thorough list of plants you can grow in your yard. Any plant will burn, but those listed are less likely to burn quickly.

National Firewise guidelines call for keeping at least a 30-foot perimeter around your home clear of debris that can ignite.

MSU Extension Bulletin E2831, "Protect Your Michigan Home From Wildfire," lists steps homeowners can take to reduce their wildfire risk.

It suggests keeping your lawn mowed and unwanted grass cut.

Trim branches overhanging your home and trim shrubs closer than 5 feet. Clear gutters, rooftops and fence lines of dead leaves and pine needles. Remove anything next to the house that can burn. Irrigate this area well. Keep wood away from the house or shed.

Look at the construction of your home. Begin with the roof, because if flying branches or other materials fall on it and it begins to burn, it will compromise your house. Two fire-resistance tests, ASTM E 1084 and UL 790, can assess the safety of your roof. Exterior walls can catch fire, so examine openings in them, like eaves, soffits, vents, and windows. Enclose soffits and use screens to cover openings, such as chimneys.

You and your family can take precautions when fire is close. Listen to warnings on the radio or online. When you leave your home, turn off all the utilities you can. Ensure windows, doors and pet doors are closed. Gather food, water and cherished items. Follow the directions of fire safety personnel who come by.

We all hope we will never receive a fire warning, but by taking these preventive measures ahead of time, you can be in a better position to protect your home should a wildfire occur.

Visit npfa.org to find out how to plan your escape and to learn fire prevention techniques.

Creating a Safe Yard

Compiled by Misty Sheehan

Take these preventive measures to reduce your fire risk:

- Install a fire-resistant sign at the road.
- Mow the lawn regularly.
- Store deck cushions in the house.
- Don't store flammable liquids under decks or porches.
- Keep your woodpile away from your home.
- Prune shrubs around the house that are closer than 5 feet.
- Prune trees that have branches hanging over the roof of house and deck.
- Remove dead vegetation from around the house.
- Driveways should be at least 12-feet wide so responders' equipment can get by.
- Trees should clear the driveway by 15 feet.
- Determine which openings on your home, such as chimneys, you need to screen to protect from a wildfire's flying embers.
- Burn trash in a proper container.
- Check with authorities before doing any burning.
- Do not burn aerosol cans. They will explode.
- Chain saws, portable generators, and other equipment are required to have spark arrestors.
- Never leave a fire unattended.
- Remember: 9 out of 10 forest fires are caused by people.

Misty Sheehan is a retired professor of humanities. She built her dream home in the country, here in the northwest Lower Peninsula. Her son fights wildfires.

Rare black hole event surprises scientists

By Brooke Edwards

In April of 2018, NASA launched the first satellite of its kind to search for worlds beyond our solar system. TESS, short for Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite, does this by monitoring changes in the brightness of stars for a period of 27 days. These changes can occur as a result of a planet transiting (crossing in front of) its host star.

This is exciting because TESS may find numerous exoplanets (planets outside our solar system) with the right conditions to host life, even if it is microbial life.

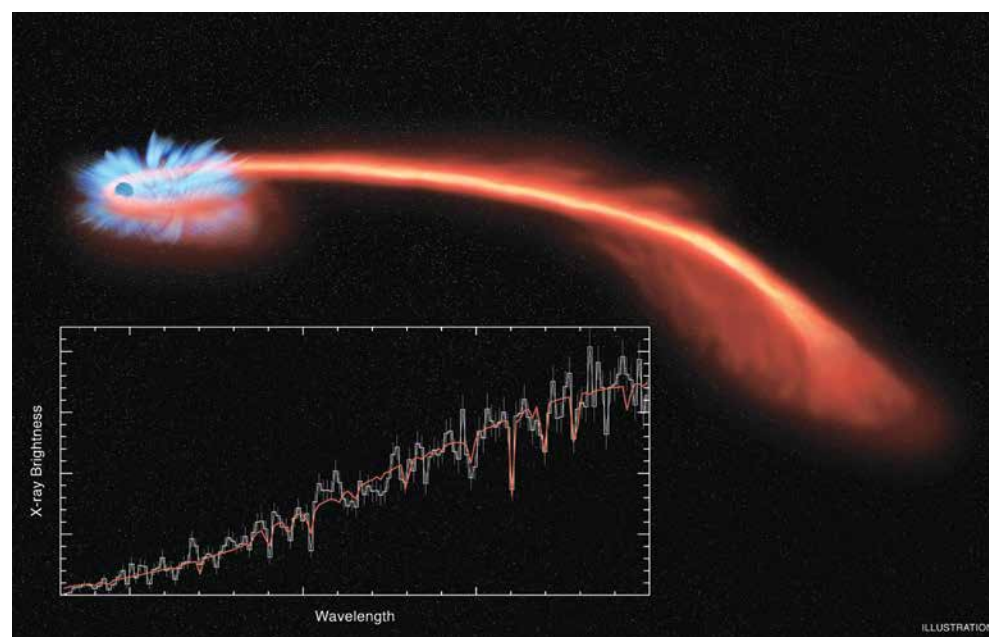
If this sounds familiar, it is because the Kepler Space Telescope, (shut down after reaching the end of its lifespan), was the first to discover exoplanets using this principle of dimmed sunlight to establish the existence of an exoplanet. The difference between Kepler and TESS is that Kepler looked at distant stars with much dimmer light and TESS is looking at brighter stars closer to Earth.

As we awaited exciting new data from TESS, the satellite recorded something else amazing earlier this year, something more fascinating than the discovery of a new exoplanet.

On January 21, TESS was surveying a section of sky near the constellation Volans when a rare event reached us from 375 million light-years away. Though TESS was

watching, more evidence was obtained when some 20 robotic telescopes across the globe were trained on the same section of sky. To further confirm the discovery, the European Space Agency focused its Swift telescopes on a star in the constellation showing changes in brightness. Observations began in earnest and the event was named ASASSN-19bt. Changes in starlight were observed for 42 days, initially, then another 37 days. All the data showed the light from a star in the constellation to brighten and fade. After all evidence was gathered, researchers concluded that this was a star being pulled in by a black hole, a rarely observed event known as tidal disruption.

Black holes are terrifying, yet fascinating, objects. These monsters form from the violent supernova explosion that results from the death of a star. A black hole's gravitational pull is so strong that it is impossible for anything to escape from its path. When light encounters a black hole,



This illustration shows a disk of stellar debris around a black hole (upper left) and a long tail of debris that has been flung away from it. NASA/CXC/U. Michigan/J. Miller et al.; Illustration: NASA/CXC/M. Weiss

it is relentlessly pulled in, never to be seen again. Even though these space monsters do exist, theorized to be in the center of most galaxies – including our own, there is no evidence to suggest you should fear one coming near you in your lifetime. Knowing this, you can relax and enjoy these dramatic cosmic events as they are discovered.

Let's all root for TESS as "she" explores

the cosmos for distant planets, bringing us one step closer to finding life in other solar systems.

Brooke Edwards is a NASA/JPL Solar System Ambassador. She lives in Manistee County. Night-sky gazing has concluded for 2019, but she is currently working on future programs.

An Accidental Obsession

By Judy Cools

Fall is trying to sneak into west Michigan. Colder nights and shorter days are here. Falling leaves grace the warm and sunny afternoons we still enjoy. As we reflect on these seasonal cycles we've lived all our lives, we also reflect on our first season raising monarch butterflies.

Just about everyone has raised a monarch butterfly at some time. Known for their easy care and stunning metamorphosis from striped caterpillar to brilliant orange butterfly in only a month's time, they're easy to get hooked on. Perhaps the bigger miracle is that these tiny creatures actually fly from the upper Midwest area to a mountain outside Mexico City for their "overwintering" period – a distance of nearly 3,000 miles. There, they cluster in a semi-hibernative state until spring and then start their journey back north. It's that unique migration, for a creature that seems so fragile, which inspires human awe and devotion.

Monarch season in Michigan is coming to an end now, and it's like empty nest syndrome all over again. We got in deep quite by accident. One afternoon, I was feeling particularly down about all the ugly things in our world today that I feel powerless to change. (I'll spare you the list; I'm sure you have a list, too.) I decided that helping some beautiful little bugs that were approaching the endangered list might be someplace I could make a difference. My husband Gary was "all in" and we began this journey together.

HOW WE BEGAN

We went into this figuring we'd get a mesh habitat to protect the caterpillars from predators, feed them some milkweed and release some glorious butterflies. Pretty basic, right? After all, children have been doing this forever – how hard could it be?

We were further inspired by our niece and her daughter, who have been raising monarchs and sharing on social media for several years. We joined a group on Facebook and learned much faster than we could on our own. Our new Facebook connections were greatly supportive in our times of loss or confusion. We had many of those.

We got a habitat for \$11 and went to the milkweed patch looking for the familiar black, white and yellow-striped caterpillars. We came inside with four of different sizes and a handful of milkweed stems. We collected more caterpillars as we found them in the milkweed. Our chosen distraction was working its magic.

Shortly into this adventure, we heard stories from people who had released tagged butterflies in Pennsylvania and Wisconsin and later got letters from research agencies who found their tags near Mexico City. They learned how far their butterflies had traveled and approximately how long they lived. We ordered tags the same day.

REAL-LIFE LESSONS

As the caterpillars grew, we continued to read. We learned about the many things that can harm or kill the "cats" before they get to be butterflies. Anything from frogs and lizards to birds and mice will eat the caterpillars as well as the chrysalises. If that weren't enough, those very cool-looking caterpillars are target zones for parasitic tachinid flies. The t-flies, as they're known, lay eggs on the caterpillars. Sparing you the grizzly details, the fly eggs thrive but the caterpillars don't. Between environmental issues and natural predators and parasites, only an estimated 2%-5% of monarchs in the wild survive to adulthood.

As our critters crunched their milkweed, (yes, you can hear them munching!), we kept reading. One day we were surprised to find a chrysalis on a little tree branch in the enclosure. Later we watched another caterpillar weave its silk button and hang upside down in a "J" shape, the precursor to making the chrysalis. Our first chrysalis died, thanks to the dreaded t-fly. Then one of the smaller cats was breakfast for his older sibling. The more things happened the more we read, determined to have as many successes as we could.

We learned that rinsing the milkweed isn't enough. Bleaching it helps protect the caterpillars from disease. We learned how to raise caterpillars from eggs, completely avoiding the possibility of them getting t-fly. Happily, 100% of the caterpillars we raised from eggs grew up into beautiful adult butterflies.

OUR BROOD

Overall, counting wild caterpillars, the egg-raised ones, and one lucky little butterfly that we found injured and were able to rehab, there were 43 monarchs that came under our care this season. The 100% success we had with our seven egg-raised butterflies helped push our overall success rate past 46%, far better than 2%-5% in the wild. Granted, our 20 little butterflies may not change the world. But if everybody raised 20 it surely could. It's easy, thrilling, a little heart-breaking ... and is rewarding beyond what you can imagine.

Butterflies are magic. Be obsessed.

Judy Cools has a varied background as a columnist (Manistee Observer, Mason County Press), web designer, feature writer, editor and business writer – spanning nearly 30 years. She and her husband Gary make their home in the woods outside Ludington. Visit: judycoolsmoondance.blog



This tiny caterpillar has just hatched. The black part is his head, and he will begin to eat his eggshell (to the right) which is a high-protein first meal. Monarch caterpillars don't have stripes until after their first molt. Photo: Judy Cools



Early days with collected caterpillars. Photo: Judy Cools



Mature caterpillars weave a silk "button" and hang upside down in a "J" shape for about 18 hours before making a chrysalis. Photo: Judy Cools



When monarchs first come out of the chrysalis, they are small and wrinkly. They pump fluid from their abdomen into their wings to expand and straighten them. Photo: Judy Cools



Recently emerged butterfly on the left; mature chrysalis center; and newer green chrysalis. The butterfly in the mature chrysalis emerged about 10 minutes after this photo was taken. Photo: Judy Cools



Female monarch with empty chrysalis. Photo: Judy Cools



Author with Peter, their last butterfly of the 2019 season. Photo: Gary Cools



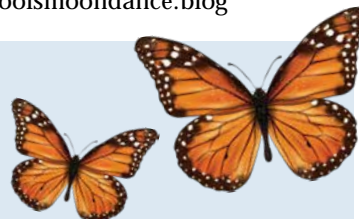
Butterflies love fruit. Sometimes they must be fed if their release is delayed by bad weather. The small tag identifies the butterfly for tracking purposes. Photo: Judy Cools

Tips for saving monarchs

By Judy Cool

If hands-on raising butterflies isn't your thing, there's still a wide range of things you can do to help monarchs:

- Preserve your milkweed, don't chop it down or pull it out.
- Consider planting some decorative milkweed; it comes in about 30 varieties and many different colors hardy for Michigan's Zone 5 winters.
- Plant nectar flowers to feed adult butterflies and other pollinators. Plant a wildflower patch. Purple coneflowers, black-eyed susans, and bee balm are favorite perennials. Many annuals provide nectar sources as well.
- Add your voice to local efforts to restrict or eliminate pesticide spraying in your community.
- Consider donating to monarch research and preservation organizations, such as Monarch Watch, Xerces Society, Monarch Joint Venture, Journey North and others.



Amber Elk Ranch

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The wagon slowed as it reached the already open gate to the second pen, (thanks to Emily). One gal had her arm beyond the wagon rails and Pat, who watched both ahead and behind him as he moved past the gate, shouted to her to move it inside. It was a good call, as the wagon cleared the fence posts with about a foot to spare.

Emily closed the gate behind the wagon and hopped aboard again. Someone remarked that she certainly reaches her 10,000 steps a day. With 130 acres, the ranch covers a lot of ground – and so do its 3 runners, 4 drivers and other worker bees.

The wagon slowed again then stopped, so passengers could admire the big bull with an enormous rack of antlers. He's a beauty. His rack is symmetrical, making him good breeding stock. Cows in the next pen gathered near him, huddled like his harem under shady conifers. He ignored the humans, their phones and camera shutters clicking away.

The wagon moved on, then stopped beside two males – enormous beasts of 650 to 750 pounds. Their racks are asymmetrical so they didn't "make the cut" for breeding, according to Pat. (They will be sold.)

Passengers admired them as Pat pointed to and named the various parts of the rack: eye guards in front, whale fins in back.

The herd at Amber Ranch Farm are Rocky Mountain elk. Of the elk species, they have the largest racks, weighing 25 pounds per side. The antlers help disperse the animal's body heat, Pat said.

As he spoke, two other males butted racks: one in this pen, one in the next.

"These guys are like sophomores in a locker room with wet towels," Pat said, adding, "Who can I pick on?"

There is blood flow in the antlers but no feeling, so a bloody rack does not signal pain.

Occasionally, staff uses wire clippers to untangle an antler from the fence. Sometimes the rack must be cut, or racks cut apart, with a Sawzall.

First rut always falls on a full moon: September, October or November.

Pat said the bulls are not to be trusted. The passengers trust him when he says this. Though they are 30 feet apart, two bulls



Photos by Mark Videan

lay claim to the same cows, just out of reach.

The bugling heard from the bulls is a territorial challenge. Pat said if you stop on the road outside the ranch early in the morning, you can hear a symphony of bugling. Currently, there are 70 bulls of bugling age.

The cows without babies are territorial too and fight every day. Their high-pitched calls resemble that of seagulls.

The wagon continued rolling to the pen with the cows. The babies were still with them, so they were more docile. Cows will not let babies near the wagon, Pat said, so passengers would feed the adults. Everyone was anxious to try. A bucket of grain was passed around the wagon and most passengers remembered to feed them from a low position between the rails, palms up. The cows' eyes looked gentle and their mouths were soft, but Pat's warning about their unpredictability kept the humans in their wagons.

The bucket was passed around a final time. Emily instructed everyone to rub the grain between their hands, as if washing with water. She said the grain soaks up the elks' saliva.



After a long visit with the cows and babies, the wagon headed back to the parking area. As soon as the vehicle stopped, Emily jumped out, said goodbye to the passengers, and raced to feed and water the goats in the petting zoo. The sun was now high in the sky, signaling lunchtime – but not for Emily. She had already stashed her empty buckets and hopped aboard the wagon to greet the next visitors.

Amber Elk Ranch is located at 2688 West Conrad Road, west of Stiles Road, and is open 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays this fall, through Oct. 13. Visit amberelkranch.com for spring and summer hours and information. Call 231-843-5355.

MARIE MARFIA FINE ART
AND THE
BōNafide GALLERY

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To celebrate spooky skeleton time I'm offering my skeleton art for

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Use the coupon code 25thru31 to get your 25% discount at checkout. Or come down to the gallery (307 S. James St., Ludington, Michigan) Monday-Friday, 10-5. I'll mostly be there.

This sale includes everything in my store: originals, prints, cards and canvas wraps! Please note: this does not include anything in the Fine Art America shop, which is also on my website.

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Bells of Arcadia

continued from page 1



Photos by Stewart A. McFerran.

play on Independence Day.

From the new marsh walkway and the ice cream shop to Camp Arcadia, the steeple of Trinity Lutheran Church can be seen and its bells heard. From miles to the west, on Lake Michigan, boaters can see the steeple and hear the bells. Motorists approaching from the lookout on M-22 to the north can glimpse the steeple and are called by the bells. As they trundle in from the south the roadsters see the spire Starke built. As one passes the Pioneer Cemetery in the east, the shiny white tower draws the eye.

As the council of elders met at the church on a September Thursday to consider the request of the newcomer, he got ready to

drive to his home on the shore of Crystal Lake. In his wake, he left a large wave of support for the bells of Arcadia.

Yard signs with the message "Save the Arcadia Bells" have been printed and widely displayed in the village. On Facebook, "Devin" posted: "Love hearing the bells when I'm fishing! Don't have to look at my phone when I'm in God's country."

The complaint has many in the small community concerned. But they need not be. The legacy of Henry Starke endures not only in the tall tower of Trinity Lutheran Church but in the harbor and channel to Lake Michigan he built and the very streets of Arcadia he laid out. Mr. Starke made a mark on the landscape as well as a ringing in the hearts of the residents of Arcadia.

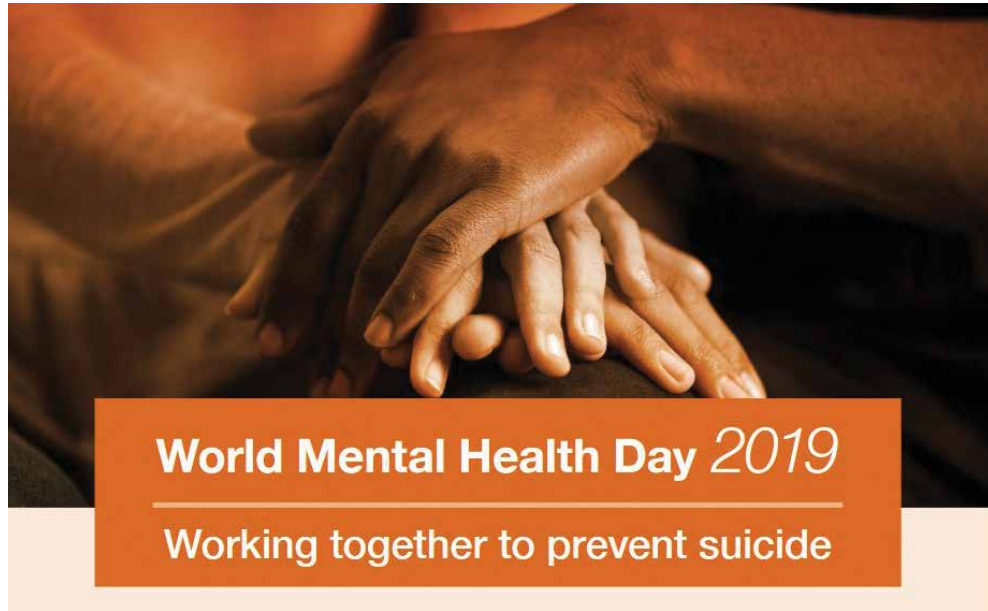
A community forum regarding the bells will be held at 7 p.m., Oct. 15, at Trinity Lutheran Church.

Stewart A. McFerran was Assistant Harbor Master of Veterans Memorial Marina, of Arcadia, this summer. He holds a degree in Environmental Studies from Antioch College and is a member of the Great Lakes Fisheries Heritage Trail and a recent graduate of the MSU Lakes and Streams Leadership Institute. He resides on his sailboat in Arcadia in summer and lives on the Platte River in winter.



Facing the suicide crisis as a community

By Christina Ryan-Stoltz



Recently I attended a meeting of the Benzie Human Services Collaborative which meets monthly to discuss various concerns regarding services in our region aimed at helping everyone in our community have the opportunity to thrive.

REGION – I was invited by my husband who is a member of the collaborative and is the executive director of Grow Benzie. He invited me because of my growing interest in suicide awareness and prevention, the topic of the month for September’s meeting.

Perhaps “interest” suggests I’m having a grand time learning about this growing epidemic facing our country, but the truth is quite a distance from that. My son Isaac died by suicide 5 years ago in October, and I’ve been thrust into learning more than I ever wanted about suicide ever since.

At the meeting, the guest speaker showed statistics for suicide in Benzie County for the last 5 years of reporting (2012-2017) and there, under 2014, it showed 4 deaths by suicide.

Isaac was one of those. I had gone into the meeting as an advocate, the face I put on in this work so that I can bear it. The moment I read those statistics I became a mama again, as it both hit me like a ton of bricks and left me feeling hollow inside — at the same time.

The QPR Institute, an evidence-based advocacy center committed to reducing stigma and empowering people to question, persuade and refer people in crisis with

appropriate help/responsiveness, says that a suicide occurs every 11 minutes in the U.S. For every suicide, an average of 115 people will be impacted. Of those, 53 will have a short-term life disruption, 25 will have a major life disruption and 11 will be devastated, long term.

This means that 1.4 million people per year, on average, are devastated by the suicide of a loved one.

I am one of those 11.



Isaac Julian Ryan-McKinnon

My life has been irrevocably altered by the suicide of my only child. What is also true is that I have felt a compulsion to help someone else’s Isaac, so that there are fewer me’s walking around, wounded.

So, I attend meetings, conferences, workshops and trainings to learn, and I talk about suicide wherever anyone will allow me to. When I read statistics, I’m not sure what my efforts truly contribute, as the numbers continue to rise. The World Health Organization says there are 800,000 annual suicides, globally. Depression is now the leading cause of disability internationally, with 15 million affected in this country alone.

More people die in the U.S. by suicide than by breast cancer or homicide. For several pockets of the populous, the numbers are startling. Data show that 13 of every 100,000 deaths are by suicide, but for farmers that number skyrockets to 90 per 100,000. Equally disturbing: the number one cause of death for children ages 10 to 14 is suicide.

While these and all the other statistics are alarming, one thing that seems to be changing – and whose time has come – is that people are talking about it. Gone are the days when the very word suicide was taboo, and when those who were loss survivors suffered in silence. Many communities are recognizing the need to envelop loss survivors with support and resources following a suicide. Public institutions are bringing it out of the dark, implementing strategies for prevention and increasing awareness. Fostering hope, coping skills and resilience are at the forefront – for those suffering as well as for those who have lost someone.

There is still a lot more work yet to be done. Suicide can happen anywhere at any time to anyone; it crosses every demographic. We are all vulnerable. We must remember this and treat one another humanely, with dignity and compassion. We must learn how to look for signs of distress in our loved ones. We must talk about suicide and mental health as we would any other health epidemic. We must place a value on the need for systems that support people in crisis. And as citizens, we should all consider learning how to connect those in crisis to those who can help.

Armed with the right information, suicide is the most preventable form of death.

Take action on World Mental Health Day, Oct. 10

From staff reports

REGION – Suicide prevention is the focus of this year’s World Mental Health Day on Oct. 10. Organized by the World Federation for Mental Health, the annual observance seeks to improve the mental health of people around the world by raising awareness of mental health issues through education and by advocacy against social stigma.

Worldwide, someone dies by suicide every 40 seconds. The objective of this year’s “40 seconds of action” is to raise awareness of the scale of suicide around the world and the role that each person can play to help prevent it.

“Simply put, this is an opportunity to show you care,” states the federation’s “40 seconds” flyer, which also lists steps people can take to turn the statistic around.

Either publicly or privately, individuals are asked to spend 40 seconds on Oct. 10 doing one of the following: improve awareness of the significance of suicide as a global public health problem, improve knowledge of what can be done to prevent suicide, reduce the stigma associated with suicide, and let people who are struggling know that they are not alone.

The flyer is available at who.it or wfmh.global.

If you or someone you know is contemplating suicide now, or in crisis, call 911 or the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255.

Christina Ryan-Stoltz lives a creative life focused on healing for herself and others in northern Michigan. As an advocate for suicide awareness and prevention, she writes, speaks and is a QPR instructor. She can be reached at: isaacslegacy@gmail.com

Pumpkins ripen in a field near Custer and Anthony roads, south of Custer. Photo by Pat Stinson.



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Jamlady spreads the love of fruit from her Jam Farm

Story and photos by Pat Stinson

LUDINGTON – Set among orchards and farmers' fields on Meisenheimer Road, the Jam Farm is an actual farm, as well as a local brand of jam and other products.



Above left. Jam Farm owner Lois Gielegem stands in front of one of many racks of jam in her farm store. Above right. Savannah helps keep the shelves stocked at the Jam Farm.

The 40-acre working farm is owned by James and Lois Gielegem. Lois says the farm – which they have owned for 30 years – includes 2,000 cherry trees, 2,700 apple trees, 200 rhubarb plants and 150 feet of grapes.

You could make a lot of fruit products from that harvest, and she does.

Lois and her team of helpers, (including Lolly, Savannah, Debra and two youth from area farms: Rae Lynn and Sarah),

make and sell 34 varieties of jams, jellies, marmalades, preserves and butters.

All are made from fresh-picked fruit grown on the Jam Farm and other family farms.

Lois recalls a couple who once approached her to buy cherries, but she had none left to offer.

"I called Sue (Kistler, of Kistlercrest Farms) and sent them over there," she explains. "That's what we do. Farmers need



each other."

The farm's fruit products, and other items, are sold in their sweet, compact farm store. In August, they stocked a limited batch of cherry blossom honey made in their orchard by bees owned by a hired beekeeper. Their maple syrup comes from Fred Bates, who Lois says was born in a maple syrup ("sugar") shack.

The Jam Farm's relationship with other farmers is symbiotic, and that's how the store flourishes, too.

Savannah, one of the farm's young assistants, greets visitors on this day. She is stocking shelves with homemade bread mixes in an open cupboard beside an antique gas cookstove. Beyond her is Lois, the jamlady, as she calls herself. She is busily preparing Jam Farm gift boxes for shipment.

On the counter, in front of her, are free little gifts for customers: packaged fruit snacks for kids, M&Ms for grownups and, lest they be forgotten, dog treats for parents to take home.

"Just like Old Mother Hubbard," Gielegem quips.

Lolly, her long-time kitchen helper, is in the back, filling cellophane cones with homemade

veggie dip mix, one of five they offer.

Though no jam is simmering on the stove, Lois motions toward the back, an invitation to follow her to the storeroom. There, she proudly points to her many bulk bags of Michigan sugar and boxes of pint jars.

She says she made jam at her husband's urging one year, when they were unable to harvest all their cherries.

"He brought me a bucketful of cherries," she says, "and I asked him, 'What do I do with those?' He asked me to bake a couple pies, but I didn't use all the cherries – so he suggested I make jam."

She says the jam tasted like cherry pie. To this day, you can buy Cherry Pie Jam from the store.

Some of the other 33 jars of fruit products are made from heirloom recipes and include: Concord Grape (a time-consuming labor of love), Blueberry Jam, Partying Peach Amaretto, Rhubarb Jam made with crystalized ginger, Plum Preserves, Caramel Apple Jam, Orange Chili Marmalade, Carmelized Onion Marmalade and Wild Blackberry Jam. Many of her fruit goods – spreads, jams, jellies and marmalades – are paired with recipe suggestions.

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The day science became magical and rocked the Ramsdell

Story and photos by Pat Stinson

The area's elementary students were buzzing as soon as they stepped off their school buses parked near the Ramsdell Regional Arts Center on the morning of October 3. Their excitement at being out of school and seeing Bill Blagg's Science of Magic show was contagious.



Using a flipchart, Bill Blagg draws a bowling ball ... just before one magically drops to his feet.

MANISTEE – Once all 500 or so students filed into the theater and took their seats, they shouted and waved to classmates seated on the main floor and in the balconies. The decibel level was off the charts.

A couple minutes before showtime, music blared from the sound system, inviting everyone to "make your hands clap." Students put their hands together and sang along, some bobbing up and down in their seats.

When the music ended, the Ramsdell's

charismatic executive director, Xavier Verna, greeted everyone and introduced Blagg. The students went wild with delight. Their screams hit a fever pitch as the house lights dimmed and the magician walked into a single spotlight on stage, already set with props for the illusions ahead.

To say Blagg is a showman who understands his audience is an oversimplification of the man's talent. His warmth and wit shone as he hopped back and forth across the stage. He dressed simply, no top hat and tails or spangles, and wore cushy-looking, gym-type shoes that would make high-powered executives cringe – or drool with envy.

His delivery was friendly, fast and questioning. Students hung on his every word and followed along, shouting out answers to rapid-fire questions as if they had heard them before.

When the "lessons" began, the soundtrack faded and the room grew quiet.

"Magic is nothing more than something in the English language we use to describe science," he began. "Magic happens when you break the rules of science."

Or appear to.

To know how to do magic, you have to understand science first, he explained, as he launched into his first optical illusion.

Using a spinning disk with a hypnotic black-and-white spiral design, he asked the



Robbie, 11, a Bear Lake elementary school student, waits to help with a rope trick while magician Bill Blagg pumps up his audience.

students to stare into the center of the disk for 10 seconds, then look up at his face. Students burst out laughing as Blagg's head appeared to grow larger for a few seconds. When he spun the disk the opposite direction and asked them to do the same, more laughter ensued – as Blagg's head appeared to shrink.

Though the phenomena appear to be real, they are optical illusions. He explained that it is "physically and scientifically impossible" for the head to grow and shrink in seconds.

He next launched into the scientific explanation for the illusion – involving eye muscles, equilibrium and brain signals. It was an "ah-ha" moment for many.

Blagg said magicians use a secret, five-step process – which is the scientific method – to create their illusions. He named the

steps: ask a question, research, hypothesis, experiment and conclusion.

"Hy-po-the-sis," he said again, asking his audience to say the word aloud. "It's a real fancy word for 'what do you think is going to happen?'"

For step one, the question, he asked his audience members if they would rather see him make a teacher disappear or make a teacher float in mid-air. The din was loudest for the latter, but he made them wait. Instead, he invited "Robbie," 11, of Bear Lake, to join him onstage for a rope trick Blagg saw his teacher perform in fifth grade.

Blagg explained the three states of matter (solid, liquid, gas) and asked Robbie to choose one to describe the rope (a solid) before helping him also describe the rope's

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Nature's bounty inspires local antler artist



Phil Brunais, of Bear Lake, attended the Manistee County Fair with his baskets, gourds, musical instruments and toys.

Story and photos by Pat Stinson

Antler artist. Basketmaker. Musical instrument maker. Toymaker. Phil Brunais likes to create things you can hold in your hands.

BEAR LAKE – Using antlers obtained in trade or purchased at yard sales, Brunais fashions buttons, creates rattles and instruments, and weaves one-of-a-kind baskets. Most of his antlers come from whitetail deer, but he also uses moose, elk and caribou – whatever fate brings his way.

He is a self-taught basketmaker who remembers trying unsuccessfully to make baskets as a youth, before there were “good” books and videos to demonstrate how to weave them.

“I’ve always been fascinated by baskets,” he says, adding that he studied old, black ash baskets made by American Indians.

He has made baskets for 30 years.

“I prepare most of my materials from the wild,” he says.

Brunais prefers to make black ash baskets using the wood of felled logs from living trees. Live ash trees are scarce these days, he says, thanks to the devastating effect of the emerald ash borer.

“Black ash is their favorite,” he adds.

Today he sources his black ash from a private landowner in Arcadia, but most of the trees are already dead. If they have not dried out or started to rot, he can use them.

He soaks them until he can work with them, pounding the black ash log with a hammer to separate the growth rings.

“I might take a 6-inch log down to 1 1/2 inches,” he explains. “When I’m pounding it, sometimes I’ll (decide to) use the thicker

pieces for hoops and handles.”

The width of a curved handle, whether antler or ash, determines the width of his basket. What the basket’s use will be determines its size, and the size is dependent

“ Phil Brunais
I like to call it thinking outside the basket. I like to make unique shapes you won’t find anywhere else. Every basket is one of a kind.

on the wood’s length.

For the weavers, (thin strips woven between the hoops or skeleton of the basket, also called “upstakes”), he prefers black ash but also uses the inner bark of the slippery elm or cedar and, sometimes, even reed.

When adding color to his materials, he likes to use black walnut hulls (boiled) for “a nice brown color” or a commercial dye.

He sometimes uses wooden blocks as molds to weave his baskets. The bottom of

the basket is woven on top of the mold, then he weaves his way down the sides of the mold, working upside down, to create the basket’s shape. This method is especially useful when making a custom size.

“One reason for making forms to weave a basket ... I like to use this example: farmers had to make sure a bushel basket was the right size,” he explains. “It had to be a bushel.”

He recalls, with a chuckle, his father’s self-made, self-named “bushel measure,” a galvanized wash tub without a bottom. A burlap sack would be placed over the sides of the tub, filled up and pulled out. That was his bushel.

Using molds, Brunais weaves round baskets he says are “primarily gathering baskets for mushroom picking.”

But he weaves free form, too.

“People call it thinking outside the box,” he explains. “I like to call it thinking outside the basket. It’s easy to get into a rut and make the same kind of basket. I like to make unique shapes you won’t find anywhere else. Every basket is one of a kind.”

He says an antler’s shape determines



what it will become. Antler might be used in a basket, made into one of the “probably 10,000” buttons he has sold over the years, or become part of a sistrum – his version of an Egyptian rattle, also using wire and bottle caps.

“I look at each individual antler and let it tell me what it needs to be.”

He weaves cornucopia antler baskets he says are “pretty much sculptural” but are useful, too. When he suggests their usefulness to customers, however, they disagree and tell him the baskets are



sculptures to look at.

For some, the thought of weaving a basket, with or without a mold, might seem daunting or time-consuming.

“I think it’s relaxing,” he says. “On Saturday night, I’ll listen to the folk program on Blue Lake Public Radio and listen to folk music while I weave. When things get frustrating, I can go out and beat on a log.”

He will trade artwork for antlers, cigar boxes or old metal rakes.

He uses the tines of old rakes as keys in kalimbas, the finger pianos he makes using cigar boxes or gourds as the sound boards. He explains that kalimbas (traditionally called mbiras) are African in origin.

He sells decorative gourds as well and uses a woodburning tool to create his designs. The gourds are grown by his cousin.

He makes toys, such as trucks, from repurposed wood and woven sections – no parts from China, he explains with a smile. He once used a discarded wooden bowl to create a drum and has made paddle drums using old tennis rackets and deer hide.

His work can be found at Niizh Makwa Traders, on US-31 in Bear Lake, and he also sells them at a handful of area music festivals: Spirit of the Woods in Brethren, Dunegrass in Lake Ann and Farmfest in Johannesburg. (We spoke to him at the Manistee County Fair.) You might find him at holiday craft shows, too.

For more information, contact Brunais at 231-887-1055.

Magical Science

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physical properties (touch-soft, smell-rubber, sound and taste-none). Then Blagg demonstrated the trick, finishing with smoke and music, (Chariots of Fire), followed by peals of delight from his audience.

He did not reveal the trick’s secret, instead telling students, “You have to understand the rules of science in order to break them.”

He then asked students to use step two of the scientific process: research the trick online later, via YouTube.

He took a moment to share the first time he performed a magic trick in school, his sixth-grade teacher’s homework assignment. Then he posed a question, “Would you like to see your homework disappear?” The response was thunderous.

Using step three of the scientific method, he hypothesized how that might happen, telling the students they had simply to do their homework and turn it in. Not many were impressed.

Then he moved to step four of the scientific process: he made schoolbooks, homework and quizzes “disappear” by using the “magic box” he created with his dad for his first magic trick, years ago.

In step five, the conclusion, he revealed

his secret. He used the science of mirrors, light and reflection.

The time for the show’s grand finale illusion finally arrived. First, he delayed the students’ gratification with an explanation of the center of gravity, using a plastic prop he bought through a magazine ad. Next, he invited a teacher, Mrs. Fisk, of Trinity Lutheran School, to join him onstage. She gamely agreed and laid down on a table. The illusionist had promised to make her float in mid-air, which she appeared to do, to extended cheering.

In his last moments on the stage, Blagg described his fascination at age 5 of seeing snow and wondering for the first time where it came from. He followed his story with a brief explanation of the water cycle – of evaporation, condensation and precipitation.

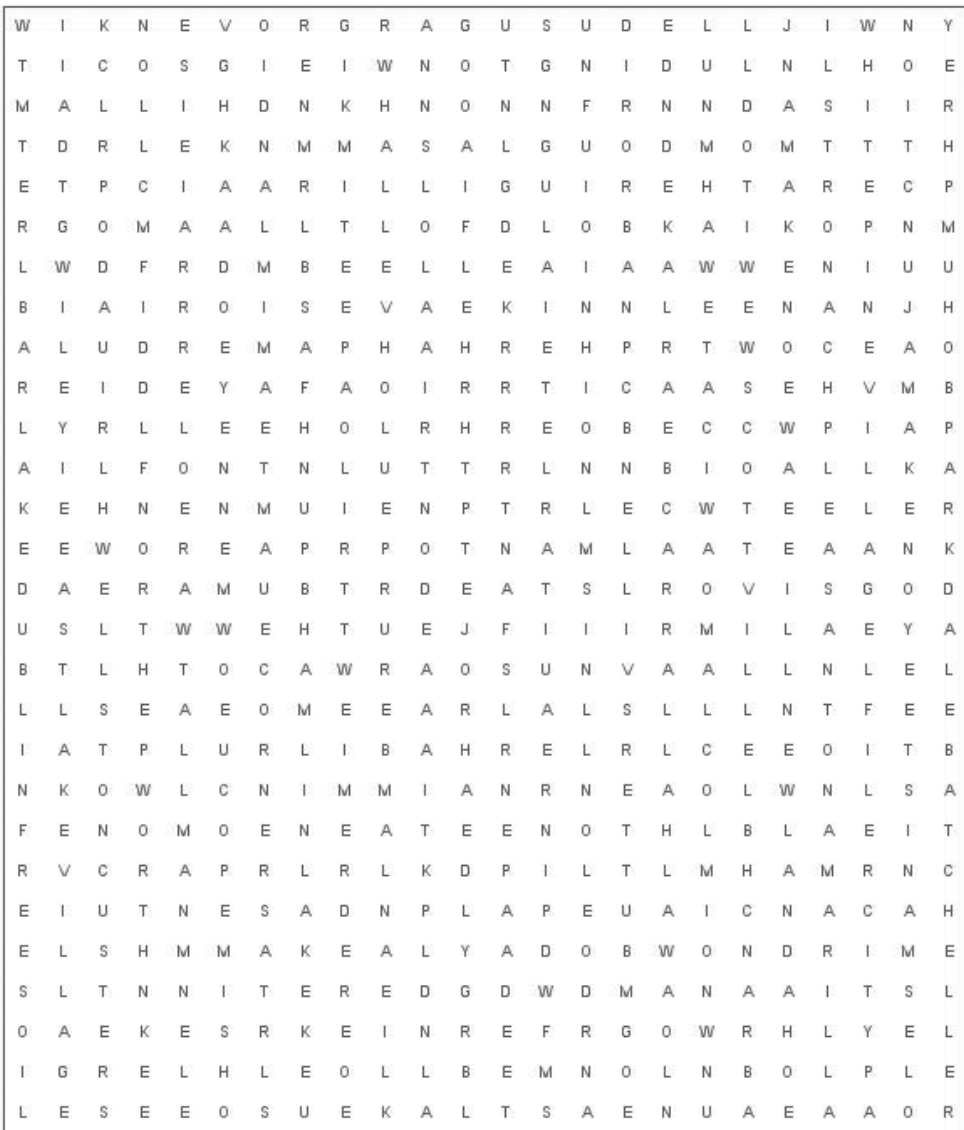
Then he made it snow.

For more about Bill Blagg’s Science of Magic student show, go to www.billblaggscience.com. For more about his evening show, The Magic of Bill Blagg LIVE!, visit billblagg.com and follow him on Facebook.



Bill Blagg offers his final magic trick: a heartwarming but cold change in the weather.

Around Here Word Puzzle, by Mark Videan



Jamlady spreads love

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Jars line two walls in the store and are neatly stacked in shelving units at least six feet tall. Lois is there to point you to your favorite flavors, or you are free to browse the shelves yourself. You can also find honey-related items. Look for handmade wooden pieces by Jim, the "jamdude," such as decorative, wood-burned crates; cutting boards; oriole feeders; wooden bowls specially made to keep yarn from rolling on the floor; and other household goodies. He also grows the garden produce for sale in the produce cart or on the store's front porch.

Her jars are also available for sale at Chef John's European Café, in Ludington, or by mail order.

"One time last year we (shipped) 73 boxes in one day," she says, matter-of-factly.

The store's Facebook page announced last week that pumpkins are available for sale for \$2 each. Choose your own from the farm's 7-acre patch and pay in the store. The farm is a stop on the Mason County Barn Quilt Trail, too.

The Jam Farm is located at 5075 West Meisenheimer Road, west of South Pere Marquette Highway. Call 231-845-9909 or email ludingtonjamlady@gmail.com. Look for the Jam Farm on Facebook at Lois Jamlady. Fall hours are Friday, Saturday and Sunday, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.



Jam Farm helper Lolly fills tubes with homemade seasonings.

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AROUND THE COUNTIES

Each issue, we will feature a photo of something fun or unusual in Manistee or Mason county. Can you guess where it is?

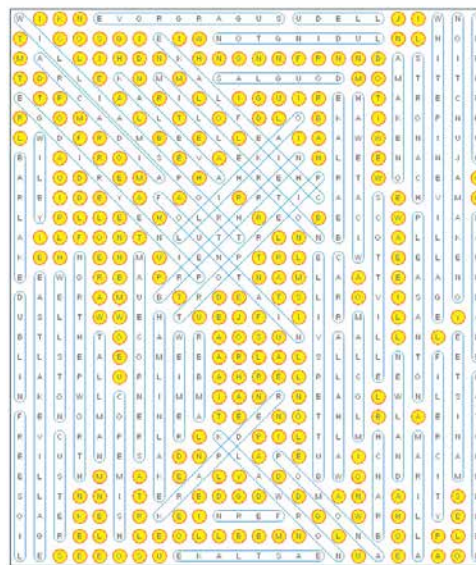
First person to email the correct answer to editor@freshwater-reporter.com will receive a \$10 gift certificate to the location, or to the business closest to it. GOOD LUCK!



Congratulations to Barbara Scherer, of Ludington, who received a \$10 gift certificate to Sanders Meats in Custer, summer home of the giant hot dog pictured in our last issue.



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