FRESHWATER REPORTER

A fresh approach to storytelling in Manistee and Mason counties...and a bit beyond.

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FREE

What's Brewing?

Photo by Gábor Adonyl, Pixabay

By KEVIN HOWELL

The change from warm summer to autumn's chill brings the arrival of seasonal flavors found not only in coffee drinks but also in brews, wines, spirits and ciders. We asked local craft-beverage makers what special elixirs are in the works to warm you after a day of raking, snow blowing or skiing.

Love Wines
facebook.com/ludingtonwine

In Mason County, Love Wines is keeping busy this fall, harvesting grapes and bottling.

Owner and Winemaker Jana Rose said the winery/tasting room, on Washington Avenue in Ludington, has plenty of new flavors ready to burst on the scene.

"We've got a lot of stuff coming out right now," she said. "We have three different cherry wines along with our Deep Space Wine – a black currant and blackberry wine."

One selection, Queen Anne's Revenge, is a tart cherry wine that can also be served warm. Orange Blush, a sweet peach and cherry wine, is set to arrive for the holiday season. Coming in December is Caramel Coffee Dessert Wine.

"My wines are very fruit forward," she explained. "We use local fruit and grapes and a lot of blends. The caramel coffee line is a really rich grape wine made with cold brew coffee."

Editor's picks: Deep Space Wine, Michigan Marquette and Toes in the Sand.

Ludington Bay Brewing
facebook.com/lbbrewingco

Ludington Bay Brewing, on James Street in Ludington, just launched "12 weeks of D'Booty" on October 14, according to Sales

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Falling Water, Shining Sun

By STEWART A. MCFERRAN

Both falling water and shining sun produce power. To compare these two ways of generating electricity, consider Hodenpyl Dam in Mesick and CBS Solar, a business in nearby Copemish.

CBS Solar crew installs solar panels on a pergola. Courtesy photo

Hodenpyl Dam was built on the Manistee River in 1925. The power it produces fluctuates with the seasons and the level of the water. As stated on the Consumer's Energy website, Hodenpyl Hydro Power Plant can produce "up to 17 megawatts" of electrical power when the Manistee River is flowing fast, and the generators turning within the dam can power "5,000 homes." Consumers hangs thick cables from tall towers to move the power to where it is needed. While the current of the Manistee River changes with rainy and dry weather, consumers of power cannot expect the power output of Hodenpyl to increase beyond its current capacity.

Allan O'Shea, president of and sales director for Contractors Building Supply, Inc., said the family-owned company has been "in the renewable energy business for almost 40 years." During this time, he estimates CBS Solar has installed five megawatts of generating power. Last year, CBS installed systems in 150 homes. The company also installed large arrays at commercial sites. The solar power from the rooftop and ground arrays is available to the homeowner. With a system tied to the grid, the inverter in a home will pass extra power to neighbors.

We can all expect the generating capacity of solar companies like CBS to significantly increase. There is no limit to the power of the sun.

It is safe to say that this Copemish solar energy company has designed, built and installed one-quarter of a Hodenpyl of electrical generating capacity. O'Shea said the demand for solar power is growing and CBS is busier than ever. He expects it will not

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SEE THE EVENTS CALENDAR INSIDE

Sculpture Trail Views, Backroads

Story by KEVIN HOWELL

Winds were whipping and Lake Michigan waters were predicted to produce sizable waves on a recent fall Friday. My navigator Jean and I decided it was a great time to take a ride to Ludington and drive north along Lakeshore Drive to catch the action.

"Flights of Learning," a sculpture in front of the Mason County Library, represents the sense of wonder books can offer. Photo by Kevin Howell.

"Let's go check out the lake; waves are supposed to be seven feet," Jean suggested that morning.

I also wanted to catch one more sculpture to present in the fifth of our six Mason County Culture Trail travels.

This sculpture stands alone in front of the Mason County Library, on Ludington Avenue in downtown Ludington, enroute to the lakeshore. It depicts a young girl holding an open book, birds flying up from the pages like the imagination of a child flying free. I've been an avid reader since I can remember, and that's a long time, so the image the sculpture – Flights of Learning – presents seems apropos to me.

Created by artist Bryce Pettit, of Brigham Young University, the sculpture's owls, hummingbirds, meadowlarks, and terns are metaphors for "the sense of excitement and wonder a book gives us," according to the trail guide.

The sculpture set my mood for the lakeshore visit. We took Lakeshore Drive to the south end of Ludington State Park and one of our favorite pullouts.

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Fun & Fabulous Community Events - Manistee & Mason Counties

Due to weather, schedules and COVID-19, some events may change or be canceled. **Always call ahead.**
Email your December calendar events or press releases by Nov. 17 to editor@freshwater-reporter.com
or mail to Freshwater Reporter, P.O. Box 188, Manistee, MI 49660.

November

1-23 Mary Wahr Retrospective art exhibit
Free, Hardy Hall at Ramsdell Regional Center for the Arts, 101 Maple St., Manistee Featuring works made throughout the artist's life including drawings, paintings, prints, paper castings, scratchboards and collage

1-Dec 4 Artist Appreciation Invitational Exhibition
Elizabeth Lane Oliver Center for the Arts, 132 Coastguard Rd., Frankfort. Featuring artists who have given their time and art to support O.A.C. fundraisers

3-26 Second Annual L.A.C.A. Regional High School Art Competition
Ludington Area Center for the Arts, 107 S. Harrison St., Ludington. Students from Lake, Manistee, Mason and Oceana counties will participate. Artists' Reception Nov. 6, 5-8pm.

6 West Shore Community College Livingroom Livestream Performances with Jim Alfredson and Organissimo
(organ jazz), 7:30pm, links available 2 weeks prior to performance

7 Sight-in Days
10am-12pm, $3/gun, $5/gun for bore sighting, Big Bear Sportsman's Club, 8927 Puustinen Rd., Kaleva. Open to the public, with members on hand to assist

8 Sight-in Days
10am-12pm, $3/gun, $5/gun for bore sighting, Big Bear Sportsman's Club, 8927 Puustinen Rd., Kaleva. Open to the public, with members on hand to assist

9 Carl Sagan Day
Celebrating the life, teachings and legacy of the legendary planetary scientist and co-creator and host of the original Cosmos TV series. For info go to carlsaganday.com

10 L.A.C.A. Indoor Courtyard Concert with John Merchant
7 and 8pm, $5, Ludington Area Center for the Arts performance hall, 107 S. Harrison St., Ludington. Two individually ticketed (in advance), 40-minute concerts limited to 20 guests each. Tickets available at L.A.C.A. gift shop, or call 231-845-2787, or go to https://ludingtonartscenter.square.site/courtyard-concerts

11 80th Anniversary of Armistice Day Storm in Ludington
1-7PM, half off admission, Port of Ludington Maritime Museum, 217 S. Lakeshore Dr. New exhibit allows visitors to experience the storm, temperature changes and all. 231-843-4808

12 The Metropolitan Opera Live in HD: The Magic Flute (Mozart)
1-3:00pm, $20 adult/senior, $10 under 18, Ramsdell Regional Center for the Arts, 101 Maple St., Manistee

13 Children's Book Reading with author/artist Mary Wahr
12pm, Ramsdell Regional Center for the Arts, 101 Maple St., Manistee. Mary will read from her book, Just Beachy. Reserve a spot online at ramsdelltheatre.org

13 West Shore Community College Livingroom Livestream Performances with Sierra Hull
(singer/songwriter/multi-instrumentalist), 7:30pm, links available 2 weeks prior to performance

14 Dress the Porch – Winter Patio Pot Workshop
Two sessions 10am-12pm, 12-2pm, $30 (free if you bring all your own materials) Pleasanton Valley Greenhouses, 14758 Pleasanton Hwy., Bear Lake. 10 people per session, call 231-864-3517 for reservations

14 Sight-in Days
10am-12pm, $3/gun, $5/gun for bore sighting, Big Bear Sportsman's Club, 8927 Puustinen Rd., Kaleva. Open to the public, with members on hand to assist

14-15 Deer Widows Weekend Fun, Onekama
Hosted by Patina, 4850 N. Main St. (M-22), and Anchored Designs Boutique, 4857 Main St. Jewelry Trunk Show, Holiday Bulb Planting, Card Making Workshop, Personalize Ornaments. For details, visit the stores, their Facebook pages and Instagram.

21 Gnome Workshop with instructor Anne
10am-12pm, Pleasanton Valley Greenhouses, 14758 Pleasanton Hwy., Bear Lake. Create a unique gnome for your garden. $30 per person. 10 people max. Call 231-864-3517 for reservations.

22 Celebration of Lights, Portage Lake Association, Onekama
6pm, 5283 Main St. (M-22), Farr Center.
Purchase a light in tribute to one you love. Lights will be placed on the spruce tree near the center and names will be read. Lights will be lit every evening for six weeks.

26-29 Thanksgiving Reconnect Weekend at Crystal Mountain Resort
12500 Crystal Mountain Dr., Thompsonville Featuring a Virtual Turkey Vulture Trot 5k, Thanksgiving Day Dinner To-Go, Holiday Trail Celebration and First Light Tree Lighting Celebration. For details, go to crystalmountain.com

28 6th Patina Pop-Up Market & Small Business Saturday, Onekama
Pop-Up Market: 10am-2 pm, Farr Center, 5283 Main St. (M-22). Sales at various village merchants throughout the day. For details, visit the store or its Facebook and Instagram pages.

28-Dec 31 16th Annual Sparkle in the Park
Hopkins Park, 7727 Hopkins Dr., Bear Lake 5-10pm, Free, with donations accepted. Drive or walk through 1000s of lights in holiday displays

Two Decades of Life on the ISS

By BROOKE EDWARDS

On October 14, astronaut Kate Rubins launched to the International Space Station with cosmonauts Sergey Ryzhikov and Sergey Kud-Sverchkov aboard a Soyuz spacecraft. This mission is Rubin's second space flight. Her first was in 2016, when she became the first person to successfully sequence DNA in microgravity.

The launch was momentous for multiple reasons. In addition to falling on Rubin's birthday, the flight to the ISS was a super-fast one, taking only three hours and two orbits. In the past, some flights took up to two days to complete. Most importantly, it is likely one of the last flights of NASA astronauts on a Russian Soyuz. Following the successful SpaceX Demo -2 flight this the summer, Nasa plans to continue launching astronauts to the ISS from American soil.

While NASA makes progress on its SLS and Orion Crew Capsule that will fly astronauts to the moon in 2024, the agency has been successfully partnering with commercial space companies to ferry astronauts to the ISS from America. In November, we will see another crewed SpaceX launch from America. The Crew 1 mission will fly not two, but four people this time around. Victor Glover, Michael Hopkins, Shannon Walker, and JAXA's (Japan's space agency) Soichi Noguchi will fly to the ISS onboard the Crew Dragon Capsule they named "Resilience."

They will join Kate Rubins, Sergey Ryzhikov, and Sergey Kud-Sverchkov on the ISS. The Crew 1 launch, originally scheduled for Halloween, was delayed due to the need for additional testing.

This final flight of 2020 falls near the 20th anniversary of humans continuously living in space. The first crew to the International Space Station was launched on October 31, 2000. Had the SpaceX Crew 1 launch taken place on the planned date, it would have been on this remarkable anniversary.

As research on the ISS continues to help life on Earth, it also prepares for future human missions to the moon and beyond. Who knows what incredible achievements in space we will be commemorating in another 20 years? Celebrate the International Space Station's 20th anniversary using #SpaceStation20th on social media. You can also follow Rubin's stay on the ISS via Facebook @ISS_Research and on Twitter @Space_Station.

If you are interested in learning even more, please join me for a Zoom event at 6 p.m., Nov. 17, for a fun discussion about the history and science of the ISS. RSVP via Facebook at: https://fb.me/e/ib71HOBF4 or contact me at https://solarsystem.nasa.gov/ambassadors/1870/.

The International Space Station was launched in November 1998. Crews have been living there continuously since 2000. Photo courtesy of NASA.

Brooke Edwards is a NASA/JPL Solar System Ambassador. She lives in Manistee. Follow her on Facebook @ ManisteeStarParty.

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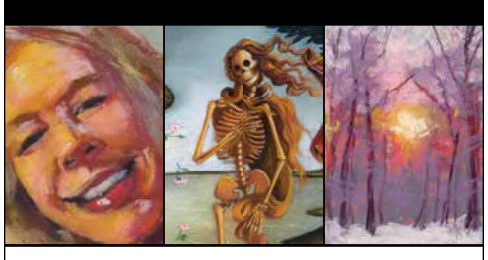

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Marilla: Remembering a close-knit community

Story and photos by STEWART A. MCFERRAN

Little did Jan Thomas know that the piece of metal that formed the edge of her flower garden was the wheel of a giant logging rig that once operated in Marilla Township. That is just one of the stories Thomas has about the Marilla community and its history.

Marilla Museum Director Jan Thomas stands beside one of the Pioneer Place buildings on the museum grounds.

Recently, when I was in the vicinity of Marilla, I mentioned Thomas to some of the residents. Faces lit up and I was informed that she had been their kids' teacher. Fond memories of all the things the now-retired teacher accomplished have not been forgotten.

One of the Marilla Historical Society board members told Thomas that the metal in her garden was a logging wheel. They dug it up and moved it to the Marilla Museum and Pioneer Place, 9911 Marilla Road, where it is now on display. Art Wilbur suggested hanging the wheel from the loft of the museum barn. Visitors can walk through the 18-foot wheel and imagine how it once moved massive logs of old-growth trees.

Thomas, director of the Marilla Historical Society, her husband Bob and many others were instrumental in the preservation of historic buildings and artifacts within the Marilla Historical Museum. She relays fascinating stories about the lives of Marilla pioneers and cooperation within the community vital to their survival and prosperity.

"I've always had a great interest in history," Thomas began. "Even as a child, I wanted to know about the olden days. When I retired from teaching, we became even more deeply involved in the historical society here – along with other people, many of whom have already passed away ... Restoring these buildings was a huge effort and took a lot of perseverance and strength, but we did it and this is the result."

Thomas's book, "Marilla: The Woods, The Farms, The People" was published in 2019. She labored on the book project for six years, researching and finding resources within the museum, and meeting three or four times a year with Tom Vranich, an Elk Rapids' consultant who works with historical societies.

The museum printed 250 copies, and Thomas said buyers hail from all over the state. The Michigan Historical Society featured the book in Chronicle, its venerable membership magazine.

Her large-format book is bound with a soft cover and includes lots of first-person accounts, pictures, newspaper articles and maps. It is a good complement to a visit to the Marilla Historical Museum. There is a picture of a "Big Wheel" on the cover. They were made by Silas Overpack's Manistee company and used to pull logs out of the woods. The giant-wheeled logging rigs were shipped all over the country.

Thomas said that Marilla – as a small, rural township with no commercial development – is not unlike so many others across the state.

"Our story could be the story of how any community begins," she said, adding that the book opens with the Native Americans who lived along the river.

She also writes about another beloved Marilla teacher by the name of Eveline Ritchie. "Miss Ritchie" taught in Kaleva in the 1920s. She was an avid botanist who focused her artistic talents on the roots, stems and flowers of local plants. Miss Ritchie roamed the Marilla environs with her sketch pad, summer and winter. She produced a book with 97 pages of fine watercolors that is also available for sale from the Marilla Historical Society.

The "Wild Flowers of Orchard Hill Farm, Marilla, Michigan" was not the only project Ritchie completed. She painted a large curtain that was used during performances in the Marilla school. (Curtains of this type were often used in opera houses and theaters of the day.) Ritchie also wrote a book, "Taking Out My Bucketful," published in 1978. Her canvas curtain, complete with ads for local products and services, still hangs in Marilla.

Thomas, her husband Bob, and the community of history enthusiasts have come together to create something special at the Marilla Township Hall and Community Center. She spoke about the importance of community in Marilla and said it is as important now as it was in the "olden days."

While standing amongst the historic tableaux, she observed:

"I think, today, people can feel that they have had a loss. They don't know what it is, maybe because they have never experienced it. These small communities (were), this one, (was) very isolated for a long period of time. Their survival in the early years depended on ... cooperating together, working together, helping each other, and there was that closeness of community that we are lacking. It would be wonderful if we could bring some of that back."

"Marilla: The Woods, The Farms, The People" is $35 (plus shipping, when needed) and is available for sale by calling Jan Thomas: 231-362-3430. Proceeds go toward helping support the work of the Marilla Historical Society: www.marillahistory.org. A donated copy is available at the Betsie Valley Library in Thompsonville.

Stewart A. McFerran illuminates current environmental issues in an historic context. He hopes readers will gain understanding and insight into ways people interact with their environment.

Oh, Henry: Where have you gone?

By MILTON F. WHITMORE

The area in northeast Manistee County, a few miles west of the village of Copemish, sits almost empty and alone in an opening in the forest. The woodland is divided, north to south, by a narrow slit in the long, extended treeline, as if cleaved by some giant slicing operation. Standing at the spot, one would little suspect that, in the first third of the 20th century, it marked the junction of three railroads pivotal to the development of the area and points both north and south.

The Pere Marquette, Manistee and Northeastern, as well as the short Arcadia Betsie River railroads, all meet in the small village of Henry. All three lines each have their own history and the ABR railroad is interesting, due to its well recorded past in word, photos and maps.

The Arcadia Betsie River Railroad was built in the mid-1890s by the Henry Starke Land and Lumber Company, centered in Arcadia, about 17.5 miles west of Henry. The company timbered the local area, milled finely crafted veneers and other wood products, built quality furniture in its Arcadia factory and shipped these products to eastern markets via the newly constructed rail line. Previously, these items – along with fruits and vegetables – were shipped out of Arcadia's harbor, but these were mainly to Chicago and near-western areas. Ice from Bear Lake was also moved by the railroad.

Henry Depot as it once was. Courtesy photo.

The country was booming, and the markets to the east were where the real money was. Passenger service was added a bit later and things looked good for the short, but profitable, railroad. The end of WWI began the downturn of Arcadia and other villages. Roadways were being vastly improved, so more and more products were transported by ever-increasing truck traffic. Railway traffic slowly ebbed until the line was no longer profitable and operations were ceased in 1936. The rail line was removed in 1937.

Today's Glovers Lake Road roughly parallels the rail line and, if one knows where to look, signs of the railroad, in the form of a raised rail bed, can be seen. This is especially true in the area east of Glovers Lake, on the north side of the road. You can also see the remains of the rail bed along the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy's Arcadia Marsh Boardwalk, which begins on the south side of the marsh, off highway M-22, as one enters the village.

This sign, decorated with railroad items, was erected by a homeowner at the former site of the village of Henry. Photo by M.F. Whitmore.

While Henry was never a bustling beehive of activity, it did serve a purpose and deserves a visit by those who enjoy exploring little known, out-of-the-way locales. Henry may be gone, but the spirit of those who knew it remains.

Milton Whitmore and his family moved to the Onekama/Arcadia area, where he taught middle school science and math until he retired in 1997. He is active with the Arcadia Area Historical Society and Arcadia Lions Club.

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DAILY SPECIALS
Fish Fry Friday

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Water, Sun

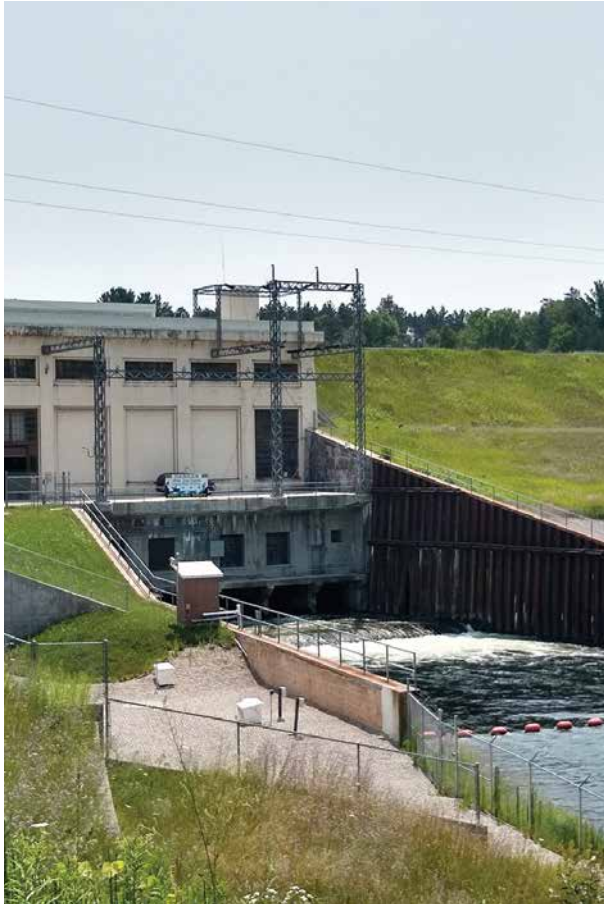
continued from page 1

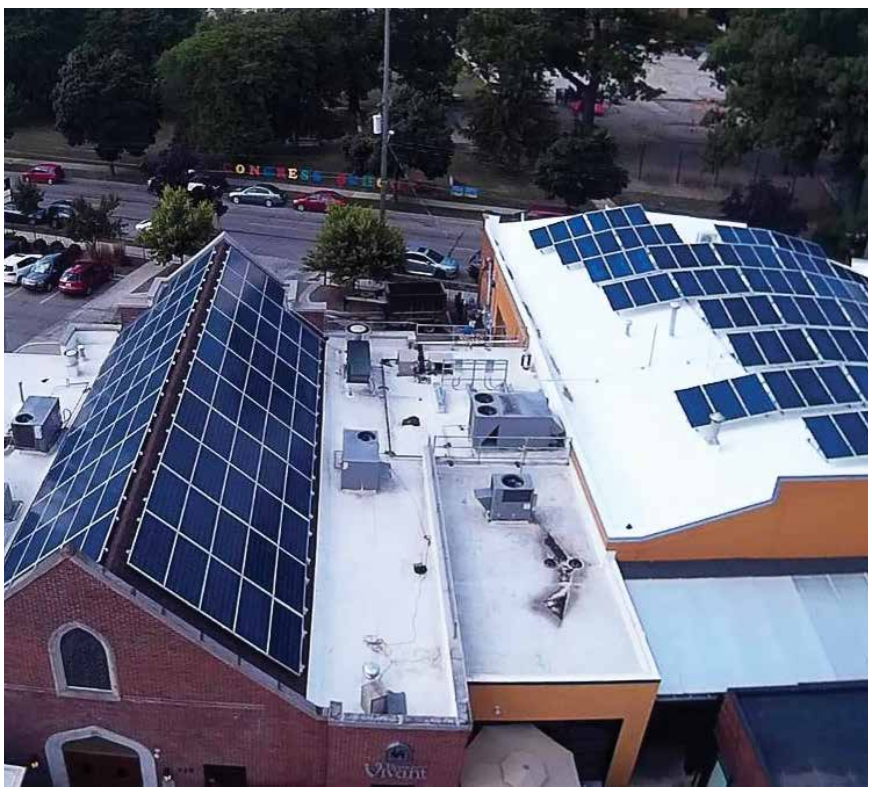
take another 40 years for the company to reach half a Hodenpyl.

For its part, Hodenpyl is almost 100 years old and they are not making any new rivers. Still, hydro power and solar power work well together. Solar inverters in homes are the first link in a smart grid. Tesla's "Power Wall," and the energy storage systems like it that CBS Solar provides, is another link in the chain of the "smart grid" of electrical power.

The generators in the Hodenpyl Dam powerhouse turn all night long. When the sun comes up, solar cells go to work to provide power at peak times. A truly smart grid would balance power from the various sources and energy storage facilities in the future.

Stewart A. McFerran has a degree in Environmental Studies from Antioch College. He completed North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners certification at Northwestern Michigan College. He has installed numerous solar arrays in homes.





Left. Hodenpyl Dam in Mesick. Photo by Stewart McFerran. Above. Rooftop solar panels at Brewery Vivant in Grand Rapids were installed by CBS Solar. Courtesy photo

A Tale of Two Energies

By STEWART A. MCFERRAN

It is the best of times for solar owners. Advances in technology have resulted in products that make more power and last longer. There are companies installing solar arrays for a fair price. One of those companies is in Copemish. CBS Solar employs 25 people, some of whom climb roofs across the state to install the long-lasting solar panels that make electricity right at home.

CBS Solar team members stand in front of the company's own solar array in Copemish. Courtesy photo.

After solar panels are installed, homeowners are no longer just customers who buy power as needed. They are power producers. Much of that power is used in the home, but some is not. The unused power is "sold" to their utility. When homeowners using solar energy need power at night, they can "buy" it from Consumers Energy.

The rates at which solar owners "sell" power to the utility were set in 2008 and fall under a (1%) cap on renewable energy. According to law, when a utility reaches its cap it is no longer obligated to buy power from solar owners. Consumers Energy is likely to reach its cap late this year.

Another change looming over the solar industry is the rate solar owners are paid for energy they supply to the electrical grid. This rate may be set lower by the Michigan Public Service Commission. They are now cogitating over the Consumers Energy "rate case." It may be that instead of getting paid 16 cents per kilowatt hour for solar power, solar owners might only get 7 cents or less per kilowatt hour, according to John Freeman of Great Lakes Renewable Energy Association.

It is a clash of business models. Consumers Energy is a legacy company with hydro power plants that will never produce more power. While CBS Solar can add generating capacity anywhere, any time. The term "distributed generation" has been coined to describe the power generated by solar arrays distributed far and wide on rooftops. This is a value that the Copemish solar company provides. Allan O'Shea would like the big utilities and lawmakers in Lansing to acknowledge the benefit that distributed generation adds to the electrical grid.

The question of cables

Consumers Energy needed to move power from the Hodenpyl Dam to where people wanted to use it, so they built a network of cables. CBS Solar came along and is adding the power from solar arrays to the mix. Consumers Energy wants to make sure CBS Solar customers pay to use its cables. But as it happens, the sunny, hot days in summer are when solar panels produce the most power. They are also when everyone turns on their air conditioners and rivers are running low. Consumers Energy needs extra power at these times. O'Shea points out that this makes solar power more valuable.

According to Freeman, the extra energy solar power provides can keep the big energy companies from having to use additional power plants in summer, when air-conditioning use is high and energy use is at its peak.

"So, by having all this extra solar electricity put on the grid, this saves them money," Freeman said. "So we think that 7.4 cents is undervaluing the benefit to Consumers and DTE."

While O'Shea recognizes certain technical challenges in the solar business, such as energy storage, the most limiting factor has been state regulations. Michigan laws are a result of teams of utility lobbyists roaming the capital in Lansing.

Consumers Energy has 14 active registered lobbyists, including one of Michigan's largest multi-client firms. DTE has 28 active registered lobbyists, including three firms. The Great Lakes Renewable Energy Association has no lobbyists and relies on solar installers like O'Shea to testify.

The Senate Energy and Technology Committee is hearing testimony of solar installers regarding the "solar cap." Senate Bill 597 would remove the cap. Consumers Energy is opposing that bill. CBS Solar supports lifting the cap on solar projects and the current rate of 16 cents its customers on the Consumers grid are paid for their solar power.

Lightfoot: Understanding the "Wherefore and Why"

By MCSTELLAR

Editor's note: It has been 45 years since the Nov. 10 sinking of the Edmund Fitzgerald, a tragedy commemorated in Gordon Lightfoot's song, recorded in December 1975.

As kids, my brothers and I were taught by our grandmother that proper road trip preparation includes Twizzlers and plenty of music to set the mood. Gordon Lightfoot had become so expected and ingrained in our family's road trip repertoire that any one of us kids can now recite many of his songs without difficulty. You might even consider us Lightfooters. What is a Lightfooter? A Lightfooter knows what it feels like to be a robin, to sit on the banks of the Long River, to watch your backstairs for sundown and to slip away on the carefree highway.

Gordon Lightfoot in concert at Interlochen in 2009. Aimelee CC BY-SA 3.0

SS Edmund Fitzgerald. Photo courtesy of U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Speaking of carefree highways, I am embarrassed to admit that I have only been to the Upper Peninsula a handful of times in my life, though I hail from Northern Lower Michigan. I am also embarrassed to admit that it has been awhile since I last listened to Gordon Lightfoot, likely because his music strikes a nerve deep within me.

With Twizzlers, camping gear, and Lightfoot's discography on-hand, I recently hit the road in the quintessential early morning rain. As I drove north, I couldn't help but notice the October colors – the ruby, maize and orange leaves, a reminder of the scorching flames of a world on fire. For most of us, 2020 has been a challenging year. Lately, it has felt like a "Ribbon of Darkness" over me, tugging at my desire to understand the "Wherefore and Why" of these days.

The wise say that listening to understand is vastly different than listening to respond. I apply this concept to music unfailingly but acknowledge my intermittent practice while communicating with my own species. Some hours later I found myself setting up my tent, tears welling in my eyes after going down this old, familiar road with Lightfoot. Avoidance of understanding and of feeling emotions is easy, but it is hard to let them out. Perhaps the absence of Lightfoot's music in my life isn't a coincidence.

For those of you who have never delved into Lightfoot, you ought to know he possesses a rare ability to weave love, loss, nature, and idealized notions of taking public transportation into harmonious, thought-provoking folk gifts. He builds an atmosphere within the song unlike any other artist. For example, "Steel Rail Blues," from his first album Lightfoot! in 1966, marries the human condition with the romanticism of hopping a train. It isn't until the song ends that you realize you aren't, in fact, the one sitting on the big steel rail being carried home to the one you love, and you are left feeling blue as hell. Lightfoot's music exists to share the human experience and help us understand the wherefore and the why.

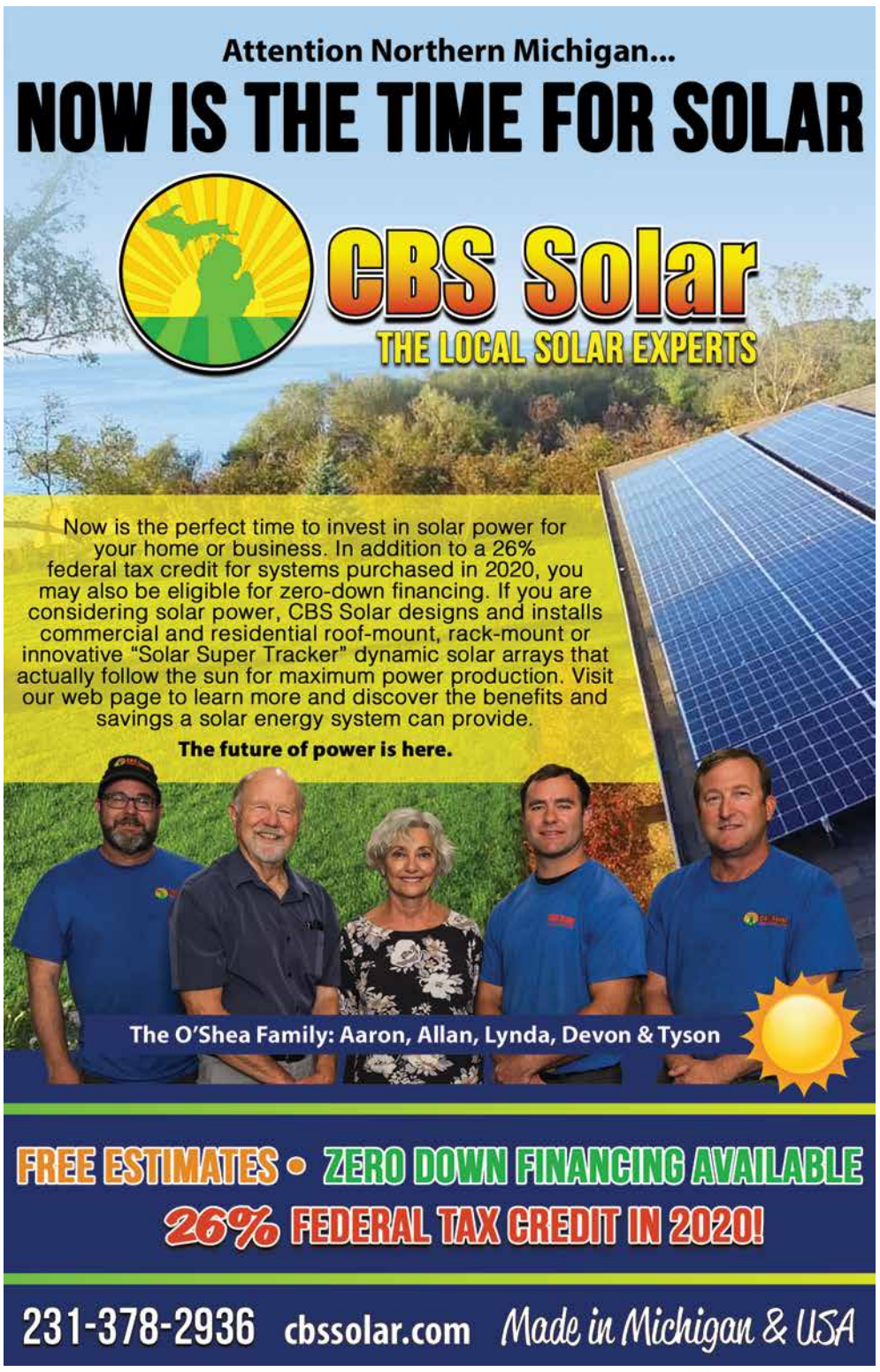
His ability to render empathy through words led him to become one of the boldest poetic storytellers of his time. Like Bob Dylan, a contemporary and friend of Lightfoot's, he ushered in an era of songwriting that laid bare the human condition and society of the 20th century. Some of those lessons we have yet to learn.

Beyond his tender ballads of love and loss, his storytelling skills were of such magnitude that the Canadian Broadcast Corporation commissioned Lightfoot to write and perform "Canadian Railroad Trilogy" for the centennial celebration of the Canadian Pacific Railway in 1967. Shortly afterward, the Canadian folk artist drew attention from the U.S. with his song "Black Day in July" following the violent 12th Street Riots in Detroit – a message that holds the same significance today as it did more than 50 years ago. And one cannot think of Lightfoot without "The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald" coming to mind, a song about the tragedy that took the lives of the ill-fated freighter's crew in a stormy Lake Superior and endeared him to the crews' family members.

As I waited for my brother to arrive, I sat outside my tent and let the emotions Lightfoot's music provoked just "be." It occurred to me that perhaps the reason I prefer 20th century music is because it had influential storytellers like Lightfoot. So, that begs two questions. What would you teach us today, Mr. Lightfoot? And who do we Lightfooters turn to when we look to understand the "Wherefore and Why" of the 21st century?

Please share your thoughts of who our 21st century storytellers are and your favorite Lightfoot song/story with me at themcstellar@gmail.com.

McStellar is a music and space enthusiast who digs blending and balancing the creative side of work and life. Parent to a wild-child toddler, McStellar is a two-time MSU graduate and northern Michigan native.



Looking Up to History: Udell Hills Fire Tower

By MILTON F. WHITMORE

Fire has long been a scourge or a blessing (depending on the circumstances) in the huge tracts of forested land spanning the breadth and width of our country. Northern Lower Michigan and the Upper Peninsula, with their vast expanses of timbered land, have potential for large, devastating forest fires.

During the first third of the 20th century, the United States Forest Service and Michigan Conservation Department (later, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources), in an effort to quickly identify and locate small fires before they could explode into a nightmare conflagration, erected tall, steel fire towers topped with an observation platform called "the cab."

Manistee County had three such structures that were manned by trained fire observers: in the Udell Hills, east of the city; in Glovers Lake, southwest of what is now Crystal Mountain ski resort; and off Coates Highway near Red Bridge, over the Big Manistee River.

Another could be found in Lake County, in the Ward Hills north of Baldwin.

While three of the towers were dismantled in about 1966, the Udell Hills Fire Tower remains. Located west of the village of Wellston and south of highway M-55 on Forest Rd. 5207, the tower is 100 feet tall and constructed of a prefabricated, galvanized steel frame with a staircase that winds to the top. It was crowned with a steel-sheeted "cab," where the observer would remain on the lookout for fire threats. The tower was erected in 1936 and manned until the mid-1960s, when airplanes took over.

Photo by John Hull of Arcadia, MI

It is accessed by vehicle at the end of Forest Rd. 5207 south of M-55 or via the Big M hiking/biking/ski trail system from the east on Udell Hills Road. Be aware that you cannot climb the tower. The structure is fenced, and the lower stairs have been removed.

The Udell Hills Fire Tower was named in the National Register of Historic Places in 1996. It is worth the trip. Go to the base of the structure and, looking up, imagine the view and the long hours spent keeping the forests free of fiery destruction.

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A Jolly Time at Jolly Plate

By KEVIN HOWELL

Kim Babcock started working in her grandparents' truck-stop diner in Hastings, Michigan, when she was 13 years old.

After moving to the Ludington area and gaining hospitality experience at a local hospital, she has finally made a wish come true.

Babcock is the owner of her own restaurant, The Jolly Plate, on U.S. Highway 31, a few miles north of Scottville.

"My first experience with restaurant work was with my grandparents; they owned a restaurant and, when I was 13, I used to wait tables," Babcock said.

"I did that for two or three summers."

Owner Kim Babcock purchased the former Steak and Egger Restaurant building two years ago and has transformed it into the Jolly Plate. Photo by Kevin Howell

From there she worked as a dietary department supervisor in a hospital kitchen, which gave Babcock food service experience.

"I've always just wanted to start my own restaurant," she explained.

The opportunity came up two years ago when she bought the former Steak and Egger restaurant on U.S.-31, refurbished the building inside and outside, and renamed it The Jolly Plate.

"The people that owned this place before me, Larry and Bunny Williams, had it for 11 years," Babcock said. Before that, it was called Ginger's, a bar/restaurant."

The building had been for sale for quite a while and needed work. Babcock said she liked the large parking area and that she could live on site.

"It's still a work in progress, and we want to put pizza in here, a patio outside," she said.

The name Jolly Plate came from family members and was suggested by son-in-law Eric Jensen, of Hart.

"My mother's last name was Jolly and my grandmother who owned the restaurant (I worked at) was a Jolly, so I just thought that should be the name of the restaurant," Babcock said, adding, "My family got a kick out of it."

Angela Padula, Marie Kapeller, owner Kim Babcock, and Christina Singer pause before closing up for the day at the Jolly Plate restaurant, north of Scottville. Photo by Kevin Howell

The name is apropos. Billing itself as "Great Food and Jolly Folks," the restaurant's employees offer a friendly greeting and always seem to be in a cheerful mood as they serve their customers.

The interior is quaint, with a hand-painted mural on one wall and curious curios around the large, well-spaced seating area. Outside, several picnic tables offer seating in front of the building.

The food is tasty, too, with an assortment of omelets and sandwiches, and several dishes named after relatives.

"My daughter is the one who developed the menu, and we just decided to have a little fun with it," Babcock said. "We have the Jolly Plate (two eggs, choice of meat, hash brown or American fries), the Jollier Plate (three eggs, two meats), and the Clydeburger. I had an Uncle Clyde and he was quite a character, so we better have a Clydeburger on there," Babcock said.

Homemade "hits" include the Belgian waffle, corned beef hash and pot roast hash.

Babcock hopes to obtain a beer and wine license to complement the pizza she plans on serving at a future date.

The Jolly Plate is open 7 a.m.-2 p.m. for breakfast and lunch and is located at 2516 North US-31.

Kevin Howell is a transplanted freelance writer from Indiana currently residing in Mason County. He loves the Michigan woods, lakes, people and, especially, Michigan craft beers – not necessarily in that order. Reach him at kevin@ytci.com.

Brewing

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Manager Jamie Adam.

D'Booty is an ale created by aging Ludington Bay's Dark Necessity Stout in Old George Rye barrels and Grand Traverse Bourbon Whiskey barrels for several months.

"For the next 12 weeks we will offer 12 flavors of our barrel-aged D'Booty," Adam said.

The first week's flavor was Salted Caramel D'Booty, followed by Chocolate Fudge Brownie D'Booty.

Editor's picks: Any of their barrel-aged stouts, James Street Brown, and 90 WT., a double IPA.

Jamesport Brewing
facebook.com/jamesportbrewingco

Also on James Street in Ludington, Jamesport Brewing is rolling out some new flavors this fall, according to head brewer Patrick Saxton.

"Right now, we have a Pumpkin Wheat and we'll be bringing out our Mocha Java Porter for when we get into the holidays; and we'll also have the Smoky Porter.

"The Smoky Porter is made with a smoked malt and you get the smoked flavor, but it's not overpowering," he said. "It's a good, festive beer."

He described the Pumpkin Wheat as a beer having "a nice, mild pumpkin spice meld to it." Think subtle, not overpowering.

Jamesport's Bourbon Barrel Aged Scottish Strong Ale will also make a comeback, and a Belgian Trippel was brought out this year for Jamesport's 20th anniversary and will be on tap through 2020.

Editor's picks: Maple Stout and Bourbon Barrel Aged Scottish Strong Ale.

Starving Artist
facebook.com/starvingartistbeer

East of Ludington, on Stiles Road south of US-10, Starving Artist Brewing's Andy Thomas said he isn't brewing anything in particular for fall, due to a vacation break in November.

He will, however, be bringing out specials for the Christmas season.

Iron Fish Distillery is highlighting a special cocktail for the cold weather that includes barrel aged maple syrup and Maple Bourbon. Courtesy photo.

"But I'm not sure what quite yet," he said. "Right now, I'm just focused on my regular beers until we return (in) mid-November."

Regular beers include Blood Forge, a double IPA with hints of blood orange citrus, and Pop Art, a grapefruit session IPA, plus a host of others.

Editor's picks: Blood Forge, Hop Marley IPA and Double CCR.

North Channel Brewing
facebook.com/northchannelbrewing

Moving north, Manistee County's sole brewery, on Washington Street in downtown Manistee, is planning some winter warmers.

"This fall and winter, North Channel Brewing Company is focusing on some richer, dark beers and our barrel-aged series," brewery spokesperson Jake Knight said.

"Coming in November and December, we are featuring a bourbon barrel-aged stout and wine cask-aged beer," he continued, adding, "These will be produced in special in-house canning runs with limited availability."

North Channel also has a Wheat Wine ale that is 13.69% ABV and has notes of citrus.

"With the colder weather, people are looking for something a little heavier to warm them up."

Editor's picks: Firestorm Smoked Porter, Kilt It! and Oktoberfest.

Northern Natural Cider House and Winery
facebook.com/northernnaturalwinery

In addition to rotating hard ciders on tap, Kaleva's Northern Natural, on Chief Road,

Love Wines crafted a trio of cherry wines for release this fall. One is Orchard Blush. Courtesy photo.

has fresh organic apple cider to offer this fall, both at the cider house and at local grocers.

"We only buy certified organic apples so there's no aftertaste, like with preservatives in other ciders," said owner Dennis Mackey. "You just have to keep it cold. "(Fresh) organic ciders always taste sweeter."

He added that all their ciders have the USDA organic seal on them.

Hard ciders on tap include Lavender, Northern Star, Gin Barrel Aged and more.

Editor's picks: Fresh cider, Lavender hard cider, Iced Apple Cider and Rockin' Robin Cherry Wine.

Backwoods Homemade Wine
facebook.com/Backwoods-Homemade-Wine

Backwoods Owner Russ Nicewander announced upcoming offerings from his Irons' winery.

"We have three holiday specials: Cranberry, Cranapple, and Caramel Apple wines," he said. "It's all actually pretty good and available now."

Nicewander explained that his wines are real fruit wines. No grapes are used – only fruit, such as the cranberries and honeycrisp apples found in the Cranapple Wine.

"They're sweeter wines, but not super sweet – somewhere in the middle," he said. "They're not dry wines and not bitter, by any means."

Backwoods offers 26 flavors seasonally, including Black Cherry, Raspberry Rush and Dry Gooseberry, as well as the Honey Crisp wines.

For information or to arrange to pick up

In October, Ludington Bay Brewing released a barrel-aged stout series it calls "12 weeks of D'Booty." Courtesy photo.

wine, call 231-301-2111 or email deerveiw@att.net. The wines are also available at Shop-N-Save, in Ludington, and Dublin General Store, in Wellston.

Editor's picks: We only just discovered Backwoods … we are on our way to the store and will report on them soon.

Iron Fish Distillery
facebook.com/ironfishdistillery

According to spokesperson Jesse Den Herder, Iron Fish Distillery, south of Thompsonville in Manistee County, is excited about its special coffee creation.

"Here is a hot cocktail we would love to promote for the fall/winter," he said. "Our barrel-aged maple syrup and Maple Bourbon, together with a dark roast, topped with cinnamon-maple whipped cream makes for a slightly sweet and rich coffee – perfect for colder days."

Iron Fish also has a regular line of whiskeys that include Bourbon Whiskey finished in Imperial Stout casks, White Whiskey, Rye Whiskey as well as an assortment of vodkas, rum, gin and more.

Editor's picks: Wile E. Coyote (a mixed drink), Gin, and Maple Barrel Aged Whiskey.

Now you know … there is no reason to be thirsty this fall and winter. When the thermometer heads south, chill out on a northern Michigan fermentable.

Kevin Howell is a transplanted freelance writer from Indiana residing in Mason County. He loves the Michigan woods, lakes and, especially, Michigan craft beers – not necessarily in that order. Reach him at kevin@ytci.com.

Loon Rangers: To Observe and Protect

By PAT STINSON

Editor's note: Part one of our Loon Ranger story, which ran in July, is reprinted here to refresh your memory before we print part two in December.

From his living room window, Dale Doepker uses his telescope to spot loons in their nest on an island 100 yards from his dock. Doepker said the loons nested on the island's opposite shore this year, so he could not see them or their eggs, as he had in years past. He had to jump in his pontoon boat and motor slowly around the island to keep tabs on the loon pair and their speckled, tan eggs before they hatched.

A loon chick gets a lift from its parent on a Northern Michigan lake. Photo by Susan Hintz.

Joanne Williams, Michigan LoonWatch state coordinator, oversees the Loon Ranger program.

Retired USEPA biologist Ross Powers, recently retired from the Loon Ranger "corps," will help build an artificial loon nest this summer. Courtesy photo.

Loon Ranger Dale Doepker is also the Loon Watch Coordinator for 24 Loon Rangers in Mecosta County. He is also president of his local fishing club. Courtesy photo.

Doepker is a Loon Ranger, one of 300 volunteers across the state who share a love of loons and agree to observe and protect them. They educate lakefront owners about the importance of loons, a threatened species in Michigan. They talk to lake owners and visitors, to let them know of any resident (nesting) loons on the lake. They also post Loon Alert signs at boat launches to advise boat owners to keep at least 100 feet from loons. In some cases, the rangers write about the loons in lake association newsletters and other publications. Loon Rangers also count and report the number of loons, eggs and chicks they see.

The Loon Ranger program is administered by the LoonWatch committee of the Michigan Loon Preservation Association, originally founded in 1986 as the Loon Registry by the Michigan DNR Nongame Wildlife Fund and the Nature Conservancy.

At that time, according to Michigan LoonWatch State Coordinator Joanne Williams, Michigan's loon population was declining rapidly. She said the state wanted to know why and what to do about it.

The name of the program changed, but the mission did not. Protection is the number one goal of the rangers, Williams said, and they operate using guidelines of the Michigan Loon Recovery Plan published in 1994-96, under the direction of the MDNR.

A Loon Ranger does not have to live on a lake but must be able to observe loons on the same lake over time. Williams said many rangers are summer residents or weekend visitors.

Loon Rangers count loon pairs on their lakes – as well as eggs, hatched chicks and fledglings – and report losses as they observe them. They also pinpoint the locations of loon nests on lake maps provided by the MDNR and share information on loon habitat. Sometimes, they even build artificial nests for the loons. Williams retrieves this information from the rangers each fall and compiles the data for MDNR. She said the agency uses the data from the Loon Ranger program – specifically, the nesting information – in its permitting process. The presence of loons is considered when lake levels are managed, lakeshore projects are reviewed, and decisions are made about herbicide treatments.

"Our main goal is not to count loons," Williams said. "The main thing is to find and protect them; the statistics are an aside."

She said the organization is always looking for more volunteers.

Williams explained that loons are an ancient species, 65 million years old, and remarkably intelligent. She said their presence on a lake is an indication of "good, clean water" as they are "sight" hunters, meaning they use their eyesight underwater to catch small fish.

Ross Powers, a recently retired Loon Ranger and retired U.S. EPA biologist, echoed her statement.

"Loons are an environmental indicator of a good, clean, healthy lake," he said. "If the water is cloudy, turgid or full of weeds, they can't follow the fish. It takes a good, healthy fish population (such as bluegills) to attract them."

He remarked that some anglers view loons as competition for big fish.

"It's a matter of education," he said. "(Loons) don't take the big fish; they'll do a good culling of some of the overpopulated species."

Williams said it is the larger fish that sometimes go after loon chicks, and adult loons feed their chicks aquatic insects more often than minnows.

Powers noted that the presence of loons on a lake has an added benefit to those living there.

"Real estate agents will tell you it increases the property value," he said.

To learn more about the Loon Ranger program, or to support the loon preservation effort, visit www.michiganloons.org and follow them on Facebook @ MichiganLoonPreservationAssociation

The Covid Circus

By JUDY COOLS

A year ago, you never would have believed it if someone told you what today would look like. And here we are. I won't rehash it; you know all too well how Covid-19, the coronavirus, has changed the world.

We began with over-the-top hypervigilance, wiping every door handle and light switch we touched, washing our groceries: canned, packaged, and fresh. We know now that it was too reactive, but the caution didn't hurt anyone, aside from a little lost time. And yet, it changed our awareness forever more.

Masks came along. We know some Asian countries have used them for years, due to pollution and as a health measure. But many Americans have gone kicking and screaming into this health safety measure.

"Violation of human rights!"

"No one is going to tell ME what to do!"

Hold up a minute, there, folks. It's just a health precaution. Those of a certain age (yes, me) will remember similar outrage about wearing seatbelts. People tucked them down in the seat, refused to wear them and squealed loudly in protest. Tempers boiled over when seatbelt use became mandatory.

"It's my right to choose to get killed in an accident."

"They're dangerous – they'll trap you in a burning car!"

About 50 years down the road, you rarely hear a complaint about using a seatbelt in Michigan. You get in your vehicle, you buckle your seatbelt and you travel. It's no big deal.

The same observations can be made for the ban on smoking in public places. Again, almost no one even bothers to talk about it anymore. It just is.

And what has happened here? What is the magic ingredient that has made seatbelts and no-smoking zones an everyday thing, while masks are the hot topic on the street and in the news?

Simple: it's time. The passage of time has taken the fire out of resisting a seatbelt. As our kids grow up, we teach them the rules, (whether we like those rules or not). They grow up using seat belts and knowing that smokers can't smoke inside buildings, and these small changes in society are the biggest non-issues ever.

It looks like masks will be the norm into the indefinite future. Not for any political statement, as some claim, but because they protect against this persistent, sneaky, deadly virus. In another generation, it will be an accepted daily healthcare practice, like cleansing a wound or brushing your teeth.

Other things in our daily lives are changing as well. Social gatherings are stopped or greatly curtailed. Graduations have become drive-bys, weddings are a minimal, outdoor family affair. Most gatherings have been outdoors – an option that may be fading for the less hearty as the colder weather moves in.

Hardest of all, perhaps, are funerals. At a time when a person's spirit struggles to endure the loss, there are no hugs, no community meals, no gatherings to tell stories that will commemorate the lost one's life and sustain the mourners.

In daily life, we've lost the handshake when we meet someone and the hug when we see a friend. The elbow-bump is a feeble substitute, but at least it makes a connection, a human contact.

Humans are social creatures, and we need to take proactive steps before we develop a personal crisis from so much social distancing and isolation. Yes, do the elbow bumps. Do the Zoom meetings. Write letters that you actually send through the mail – something the other person can hold onto. So much the better if it's hand-written. Personal contact!

Remember that isolation and distancing do not mean you're stuck at home and on the couch. Go take a walk. Visit a park or the beach. You can socially distance and still enjoy a great view and a little exercise. Remember to fill up those reservoirs of sunshine and fresh air, beautiful vistas, changing seasons – especially if you spend winters in the north. And if the weather is not to your liking, then explore from inside the car.

The point is to keep living and enjoying life, but to do it safely. Keep happy and hopeful energy within yourself, in your home, and in your family. We'll get over the hump of this ugly virus as best we can, together – while apart.

Judy Cools has been a columnist, web designer, feature and business writer, and an editor for nearly 30 years. She and her husband make their home in the woods near Ludington. Read more at: judycoolsmoondance.blog

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Sculpture

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"Out of the Forest," a sculptural piece in the town of Fountain, represents the growth of railroads, lumber and logging. Photo by Jean Howell.

Climbing to the top of the small dune, we found the view of the lake was incredible, the waves roaring, the wind bending the beach grasses – a good place to let your imagination fly. In the distance and sitting offshore, the freighter Calumet (we think) waited for winds to subside before entering Ludington Harbor.

Numerous sculptures along the trail are located near the harbor at Waterfront Park and at the entrance to the harbor near the boat launch.

One favorite of mine, "Follow the Leader," is a series of sculptures of children playing the childhood game. According to the tour guide, they are part of a sculpture gallery at Waterfront Park and the second installation in what has grown to 16 pieces of art along the Mason County Sculpture Trail. Created by Stanley Proctor, an empty rock in this sculpture encourages children to stand in a pose with the other figures.

Additional park favorites include "Carferries," "Sportfishing" and "Spirit of Ludington," all part of the Maritime Culture Trail.

During our previous trail adventures – Maritime, Barn Quilt, Agriculture and Lumber – we've encountered pieces of the Sculpture Trail, such as "Daedyl," which my navigator directed me to as we returned home along the Quilt Trail.

"There's a sculpture over by the college; let's go find it before we head home, then you'll have it for the Sculpture Trail," my navigator offered, as we traveled the back roads home from Ludington.

West Shore Community College is at the intersection of Stiles and Sugargrove roads, east of Ludington, in a pleasant country setting. College roads curve around the main buildings. We had been to a couple hockey games there last winter and thought we knew our way around – sort of.

"It should be over by the arts building," Jean said.

We circled around a couple times and finally parked at one end of a building for a walk around. At the opposite end of the building we found it and snapped a photo.

"Daedyl" is an abstract piece of sculpture, and I know little about abstract art. The tour guide enlightened us: "A resident of Mason County for 55 years, Manierre Dawson is remembered by local residents as a fruit farmer but is America's first abstract artist. He was one of the first to develop a cubist style." There's more to the story of the sculpture and its artist, but I'll leave it to the reader to discover.

One more sculpture, also on the Lumber Trail but left out of that narrative, is also on a back road. Found in the village of Fountain, this sculpture speaks to me as I was a horseman in my younger days. "Out of the Forest" depicts two finely-detailed draft horses pulling a huge log and represents the growth of area railroads, logging and lumber. Each Memorial Day weekend, Fountain features a horse-pulling contest that has continued for 50-plus years.

From here, Jean and I let the winds blow us back home to contemplate our final cultural trail story – the Music Trail – just in time to finish the year and appear in next month's issue.

Follow the trails yourselves at masoncountyculture.com/trails.

Kevin Howell is a transplanted freelance writer from Indiana living in Mason County. He loves the Michigan woods, lakes and, especially, Michigan craft beers – not necessarily in that order. Contact him at kevin@ytci.com.

"Follow the Leader," a series of sculptures at Waterfront Park in Ludington, is a delight for children who strike poses with the sculptures on an empty rock. Photo by Kevin Howell.

FALL HARVEST

By MARK VIDEAN

APPLES
ARUGULA
BARLEY
BEANS
BEETS
BROCCOLI
BRUSSELS SPROUTS
CABBAGE
CARROTS
CAULIFLOWER
CELERY
CHARD
CHILES
CORN
CRANBERRIES
EGGPLANT
FENNEL
GARLIC
GOURDS
GRAPES
GRAPES
KALE
MUSHROOMS
OATS
ONIONS
PARSNIPS
PEARS
PEPPERS
POTATOES
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