

FRESHWATER REPORTER

Serving Manistee and Mason County Communities

Vol. II No. 3

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Mar. 11 - Apr. 7, 2020 **FREE**

Ready ... Set ... Grow!

By Kevin Howell

April showers bring May flowers and, months before spring, greenhouse workers are busy planting seeds to make that happen.

In early to mid-February thousands of seeds and flower cuttings are put into flats and pots to mature in time for planting in customers' gardens.

Two area greenhouses, Gustafson's in Mason County and Pleasanton Valley in Manistee County, will have plants ready by early March into April. They range from fuchsias to geraniums, petunias to pansies. They will be joined by vegetable plants as the season progresses.

GUSTAFSON'S GREENHOUSE

In Mason County, south of Ludington on Kistler Road, Joey Gustafson and company were busy in early February readying plants for their April opening.

"We're really getting started now," Gustafson said. "We've got a lot of cuttings and just started planting seeds last week."

Gustafson orders cuttings from several different companies in the U.S. and other countries. Cuttings come in boxes with as many as 2,700 or more per box. Planted in flats to root, the cuttings will be transplanted into separate pots as they grow.



Randy Cox (L) and Al McCrath clean and sort fuchsia cuttings to be planted in flats at Gustafson's Greenhouse, south of Ludington. Photo by Kevin Howell.

Seeds can be as small as a little, round, nonpareil candy (used in pastry decorating), and 1,000 fit in a container the size of a prescription pill bottle. Some will have a coating on them, so they can more easily be seen when planting.

"There's one of these (tubes of seeds) in each one of these flats," Gustafson explained.

A standard nursery flat is about 21 inches long by 9 1/2 inches wide by 2 1/4 inches deep.

He said he really has no total count on how many plants he has growing due to the sheer number of flats laid out on tables in 1 of 15, 200-foot greenhouses.

Gustafson's Greenhouse was founded in 1970 by Joey's grandfather and father. Joey took over seven years ago. His mother Virginia still works in the office and brother Jeff helps with maintenance of the buildings. The business began with

five glass greenhouses and has grown to 15 buildings, a majority of them converted to hoop houses that can be connected as needed.

Many of Gustafson's plants are sold wholesale to businesses like Orchard Market in Ludington, as well as shops in Traverse City, Interlochen and Evart. There is an onsite retail center for sales to individual customers.

Besides family members, the business employs anywhere from two to eight helpers as needed throughout the year. In early February, Randy Cox and Al McCrath were cleaning thousands of fuchsia cuttings in preparation for transplanting. Cox said that no two days seem to be the same, and he enjoys the peaceful work environment.

"The air when I come here in the morning, all the extra oxygen, I just like it," he added.

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Memories of Dublin General Store

Story by Susan Hintz.
Photos by Mark Videan.

The Dublin General Store in Wellston hit our family's radar in 1988. We were constructing a "shed" on a parcel of hunting property that my dad had purchased a year earlier when we discovered we needed a few items. My dad contacted a buddy with a camp nearby to see if, by chance, he had what we needed.



Feeding the bear was always a thrill at Dublin General Store.

He did not, however, he told us about the Dublin General Store. It wasn't too far, and he assured us they would have what we needed.

We piled in the car and ventured toward "Dublin." Arriving in the middle of nowhere, we found the store's only neighbor was a gas station across the street. No parking was available in front of the store, but there were two large parking lots on either side. The exterior

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Venus At Twilight

By Brooke Edwards

If you have looked toward the west around sunset on a cloud-free night, you probably have noticed a bright object in the sky. That bright object is the planet Venus, which reappears in the night sky this time of year. When lake-effect clouds break and I see Venus in the evening sky, I am reminded that Spring is near. It will not be long before we are enjoying warm evenings with star-filled skies.

The first planet I ever noticed in the night sky, Venus makes me reminisce about past spring evenings. One time, when I was in middle school, I was in the kitchen getting a snack. The blinds on the window facing west were slightly open, revealing a bright object in the sky that caught my attention. Having little knowledge of astronomy at this time, I had no idea what this was, but it sure was a beautiful sight. At first I thought it was a plane, so I paid little attention. After a few minutes I noticed it was still there and not really moving. The bright light was not even twinkling like a star. My curiosity spiked, causing me to go to my computer and get on the DSL-connected internet. I was fortunate to find a clearly labeled sky map, and what I saw blew me away. It was a planet! Venus! I felt like the luckiest girl in the world.

A bright, dazzling diamond just sitting up in the sky - this is how I think of the view of Venus, which is the Earth's next-orbital

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Venus above Luna. Photo by William Markey.

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Your Community Calendar for Manistee and Mason Counties

Please check with the venue before heading out as dates and times may have changed. Some venues may charge admission not indicated here. **Please send event notices for our April 8 issue by March 23.**



March

- Mar 5-28** **Helen Kleczynski Art Exhibit**
Reception March 6, 5-8 pm, Ludington Area Center for the Arts, 107 S. Harrison St., Ludington
- Mar 12** **Business & Career Expo Manistee Area Chamber of Commerce**
All day. Little River Casino Resort, 2700 Orchard Hwy., Manistee. Exhibitors for students, Lunch & Learn session and Business After Hours. Contact the Chamber, 231-723-2575. Register: ManisteeChamber.com
- Mar 12** **Marshmallow STEAM Challenge**
Arcadia branch, Manistee County Library. 4-6 pm, Arcadia branch, Manistee County Library, 3586 Glovers Lake Rd., Arcadia. 231-889-4230. Be an engineer!
- Mar 13** **Crafternoon**
BRAND NEW open knit/crochet group 2-5 pm, Manistee County Library, 95 Maple St., Manistee. 231-723-2519
- Mar 13** **Irish Night with Crossbow a Michigan Celtic band**
7:30 pm, \$20, Ramsdell Regional Center for the Arts, 101 Maple St., Manistee. Small bites, cash bar, in the ballroom
- Mar 13** **Jack Fivecoate (solo)**
7:30-9 pm, Live at Iron Fish Distillery, 14234 Dzuibanek Rd., Thompsonville
- Mar 14** **LEGO S.T.E.A.M. Challenge**
10 am-2:45 pm, Free, Manistee County Library, 95 Maple St., Manistee. 231-723-2519
- Mar 14** **Spring Carnival**
9 am-11 pm, Crystal Mountain Resort, 12500 Crystal Mountain Dr., Thompsonville. Numerous activities, races, BBQ, music
- Mar 14** **Big M Firetower Fat Bike Race**
10 am-1 pm, Big M Ski Area, Wellston. Beginner to Elite. Register online by 5 pm, 3/12. www.bigmfatbike.com Proceeds to Big M improvements grooming. Presented by Shoreline Cycling Club. Contact dave@spindriftrcyclesports.com or 231-425-4999
- Mar 14** **Manistee Polar Plunge**
11 am-3 pm, Little River Casino, 2700 Orchard Hwy., Manistee. Benefit for Special Olympics. Registration begins at 11, plunge at 1. After Splash Bash.
- Mar 14** **Annual Cabin Fever Reliever**
7pm Chili Cookoff, 8-11:30pm Onager Live. B.Y.O.B. \$10/person or \$5 + 3 nonperishable items. Skinner Park, Irons
- Mar 14** **Finny Slam Fishing Tournament**
Register now before 7 am on the 14th, \$10/person includes all categories. Pere Marquette Expeditions, 1649 S. Pere Marquette Hwy., Ludington. Prizes for the longest Perch, Pike & Steelhead
- Mar 14** **29th Annual Family Affair**
10 am-3 pm, Free, Mason County Central High School, 300 W. Broadway St., Scottville. Interactive booths with games & activities for families. Food available for purchase
- Mar 14** **St. Patrick's Day Activities**
12-9 pm, Downtown Ludington, Parade starts at noon, Pub Crawl starts at 1 pm., Irish jog, food, shopping, more
- Mar 14** **St. Patrick's Day Scavenger Hunts**
1-4 pm, Downtown Pentwater, one hunt for adults 21 and over, one for those under 21
- Mar 14** **"Der Fliegende Hollander" (Wagner) Met Opera Live in HD**
1-5 pm, \$20, \$5 for students, Ramsdell Regional Center for the Arts, 101 Maple St., Manistee

- Mar 14** **Sufferin' Suckatash**
8 pm, VFW Walsh Post 4499, 1211 28th St., Manistee
- Mar 14** **Liz Landry**
7-10 pm, Live at Iron Fish Distillery, 14234 Dzuibanek Rd., Thompsonville
- Mar 16** **Travel to Ireland**
6-7 pm, Free, Manistee County Library, 95 Maple St., Manistee. 231-723-2519 Kids learn about Irish life, culture, history and make fun crafts
- Mar 17** **Shaving Cream Shamrocks**
3-6 pm, Kaleva branch of Manistee County Library, 14618 Walta St., Kaleva. 231-362-3178
- Mar 17** **St. Patrick's Day Party**
11 am-2 pm, Free, Arcadia branch Manistee County Library, 3586 Glovers Lake Rd., Arcadia. Festive crafts & treats. 231-889-4230
- Mar 17** **Career Building**
1-4 pm, Kaleva branch, Manistee County Library, 14618 Walta St., Kaleva. 231-362-3178. Face-to-face guidance: resume development, application searching/assistance. By MI Works!
- Mar 17** **St. Patrick's Day Party**
4-5:30 pm, Free, Mason County District libraries at 217 E. Ludington Ave., Ludington & 204 E. State St., Scottville.
- Mar 17** **Book Bingo for Kids**
3:30-4:30 pm, Free, Manistee County Library, 95 Maple St., Manistee. 231-723-2519
- Mar 19 & 21** **An Intimate Evening with Bob Milne, pianist**
7-9 pm, \$5, Ludington Area Center for the Arts, 107 S. Harrison St., Ludington Considered the best ragtime/boogie-woogie pianist in the world and a National Treasure
- Mar 19-22** **Ludington High School Spring Musical**
Thurs., Fri., Sat. at 7:30 pm, Sun. at 2 pm Peterson Auditorium, Ludington High School, 508 N. Washington Ave., Ludington
- Mar 19** **Game Night**
5-7 pm, Bear Lake branch, Manistee County Library, 12325 Virginia St, Bear Lake. 231-864-2700
- Mar 20** **Explore Watercolor**
All day, Free, Arcadia branch, Manistee County Library, 3586 Glovers Lake Rd., Arcadia. 231-889-4230. All ages welcome. Materials are provided, just bring your creativity
- Mar 20** **Pentwater PTCO Carnival**
6-8 pm, Pentwater School, 600 E. Park St., Pentwater
- Mar 20** **Tim Krause**
7-9:30 pm, Live at Iron Fish Distillery, 14234 Dzuibanek Rd., Thompsonville
- Mar 21** **Celts & Kayaks**
9 am-10 pm, Crystal Mountain Resort, 12500 Crystal Mountain Dr., Thompsonville Numerous activities, races, BBQ, music
- Mar 21** **The Bach and Beethoven Experience: Folk But Baroque**
7:30, \$15-30, Ramsdell Regional Center for the Arts, 101 Maple St., Manistee
- Mar 21** **Beginner's Archery Clinic**
(Free, No reservations, rescheduled in case of snow/rain). Choose one of two 2-hour sessions: 10 am and 2 pm. Ludington State Park, Ludington. Ages 10-99. Ages 10-15 with parent only. No exceptions. Archery range is near amphitheater.
- Mar 21** **Lantern-lit Snowshoe Hike**
7-9 pm, Free, Orchard Beach State Park, 2064 Lakeshore Rd., Manistee. Meet at the warming tent

- Mar 21** **Saldage**
7-9:30 pm, Live at Iron Fish Distillery, 14234 Dzuibanek Rd., Thompsonville
- Mar 21** **Chubby Checker**
8-11 pm, \$30-\$45, Live at Little River Casino, 2700 Orchard Hwy., Manistee
- Mar 23** **High School Jazz Concert**
7-8 pm, Peterson Auditorium, Ludington High School, 508 N. Washington Ave., Ludington. Featuring musicians from Hart, Ludington, Manistee, Scottville and Shelby High Schools
- Mar 24** **A Parade of Elephants Storytime**
12-1 pm, Free, Arcadia branch, Manistee County Library, 3586 Glovers Lake Rd., Arcadia. A preschooler event featuring a fun, interactive story with beautiful illustrations. 231-889-4230
- Mar 24** **Career Building**
1-4 pm Bear Lake branch, Manistee County Library, 12325 Virginia St, Bear Lake. 231-864-2700. Face-to-face resume development, application searching & assistance. By MI Works!
- Mar 24** **Frida - Viva La Vida**
12:30-2 pm, \$15, Ramsdell Regional Center for the Arts, 101 Maple St., Manistee. Cinematic documentary of the life and works of Frida Kahlo
- Mar 24** **Sportsman's Dinner**
6 pm, Advance tickets are \$25/adults, \$20/kids 12 and under. Prices go up \$5 after March 15. Lighthouse Baptist Church, 1950 N. Jebavy Dr., Ludington
- Mar 24** **Paint Party**
presented by Manistee Moose Lodge 1128 6 pm. Subject is "Dockside Pets." Stencils avail. with your choice of pets. Choice of sky colors. \$40/painter. Contact the lodge at 231-723-2432
- Mar 25** **OJ Bands Pops Concert**
Peterson Auditorium, Ludington High School, 508 N. Washington Ave., Ludington
- Mar 26** **Collage Club**
All day. Arcadia branch, Manistee County Library 3586 Glovers Lake Rd., Arcadia. 231-889-4230
- Mar 26** **Lego Club**
3-7 pm. Bear Lake branch, Manistee County Library, 12325 Virginia St, Bear Lake. 231-864-2700
- Mar 27** **Spring Lion or Lamb Craft**
3-5 pm, Free, Kaleva branch, Manistee County Library, 14618 Walta St., Kaleva. 231-362-3178. Kids celebrate spring by making a lion or a lamb.
- Mar 27** **Blair Miller**
7-9:30 pm, Live at Iron Fish Distillery, 14234 Dzuibanek Rd., Thompsonville
- Mar 28** **Frankenstuffs**
11 am-1 pm, Manistee County Library, 95 Maple St., Manistee. 231-723-2519 Tweens and teens, tear apart a stuffed animal, sew it back together to make something weird, wild, and totally your own. Registration required.
- Mar 28** **Retro Weekend**
9 am-8 pm, Crystal Mountain Resort, 12500 Crystal Mountain Dr., Thompsonville. Numerous activities, races, BBQ, music
- Mar 28** **Redux**
6:30-9:30 pm, Live at Taco 'Bout It Mexican Fusion, 344 River St., Manistee Celebrating the restaurant's 1 year anniversary
- Mar 28** **Barefoot**
7-9 pm, Live at Iron Fish Distillery, 14234 Dzuibanek Rd., Thompsonville

- Mar 30** **Pop Sculpt! Chewbacca**
5-7 pm, Free, Manistee Public Library, 95 Maple St., Manistee. 231-723-2519 Create your own Chewbacca sculpture using polymer clay
 - Mar 31** **Spring Break Crafts**
All day, Bear Lake branch, Manistee County Library, 12325 Virginia St, Bear Lake. 231-864-2700
 - Mar 31** **More! Hunting Seminar**
6-7:30 pm. Manistee County Library, 95 Maple St., Manistee. 231-723-2519 Learn tips & tricks from five-time National More! Hunting Champion Anthony Williams
- ## April
- Apr 1-May 1** **Ken Cooper Art Exhibit**
Reception April 3, 5-8 pm, Free Ludington Area Center for the Arts 107 S. Harrison St., Ludington
 - Apr 2** **2020 Skywarn Storm Spotter Training, Manistee County**
6pm Manistee County Sheriff's Office, 1525 E. Parkdale Ave., Manistee. Training is free and usually lasts 1.5 hours.
 - Apr 3-30** **Girls Rock Art Exhibit**
Reception 4/10 5-8pm, Ludington Area Area Center for the Arts, 107 S. Harrison St., Ludington
 - Apr 3-May 15** **Mary Wahr (retrospective) Local Artist Exhibit**
Free, Ramsdell Regional Center for the Arts, 101 Maple St., Manistee
 - Apr 4 & 5** **Big Bear Sportsman's Club Spring Yard Sale (4/4) & Gun Show (4/5)**
Kaleva VFW, Nine Mile Rd. \$10 tables avail. for yard sale; \$20 tables avail. for gun show. Yard sale admittance is free; Gun Show is \$3 per person. Contact Dave Somsel: 231-499-3471.
 - Apr 4** **REO Speedwagon**
8-11 pm, \$70-85, Live at Little River Casino, 2700 Orchard Hwy., Manistee
 - Apr 7** **Leonardo 500**
12:30-2 pm, \$15, Ramsdell Regional Center for the Arts, 101 Maple St., Manistee. Documentary film giving modern insights on Da Vinci's lasting legacy
 - Apr 9** **An Intimate Evening with Dan Seabolt**
7-9 pm, \$5, Ludington Area Center for the Arts, 107 S. Harrison St., Ludington
 - Apr 9** **WSCC Jazz Ensemble**
7:30 pm, Center Stage Theater at West Shore Community College, 3000 N. Stiles Rd., Scottville
 - Apr 11** **"Tosca" (Pucini) MET Opera Live in HD**
1-4:30 pm, \$20, \$5 for students, Ramsdell Regional Center for the Arts, 101 Maple St., Manistee
 - Apr 13** **Garden Club**
1-2 pm, Free, Manistee County Library, 95 Maple St., Manistee. Pleasanton Nursery/Plant Swap
 - Apr 13** **WSCC Wind Symphony & Percussion Ensemble**
7:30 pm, Manistee High School Auditorium, 525 12th St., Manistee



Ready ... Set ... Grow

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Owner Joey Gustafson inspects thousands of seedling flower plants in one of his greenhouse buildings. His retail greenhouse will open by late April. Photo by Kevin Howell



Manager Christa Lutz (Terri's daughter) adds time-release fertilizer to a Super Mom basket of petunias, a Mother's Day offering at Pleasanton Valley Greenhouses. Photo by Mark Videan.



Pleasanton Valley Greenhouses' co-owner Terri Schmidt transplants pansies grown from seed in Bear Lake. Photo by Mark Videan.

Around July, the season slows enough for a break. In fall, the crew shifts to building maintenance and repair, and then it's back to early flower planting by October or November.

"Roughly half our 10-inch baskets are fuchsias, and this would be the first plant we would get in the end of October," Gustafson said. "Then geraniums are probably our biggest potted crop; we get roughly 10,000 of those in December."

And it's back to more planting in February.

PLEASANTON VALLEY GREENHOUSES
At Pleasanton Valley Greenhouses, in Bear Lake, planting time has been in progress

Cristina Lakso, a family friend of the Schmidts, of Pleasanton Valley, loads empty pots into trays in assembly-line fashion. Photo by Pat Stinson.



since early February and similarly entails planting thousands of seeds and transplants. When grown to a certain stage, the plants will be available for sale to the public. The retail store will reopen beginning in late February or early March.

Terri and Robert "Bob" Schmidt established the business in 1985. Each had owned flower shops in the county previously.

Pleasanton Valley employs anywhere from 2-15 workers, depending on the season. One of these is the Schmidts' daughter Christa Lutz, their manager, and Lutz's Aunt Mary (Zalud), who Lutz said "has been with my parents forever, over 30 years."

Working in the greenhouses on this day are Bob, who built the greenhouses and store, does the maintenance and keeps the plants moist; Terri, now busy transplanting pansies; Lutz, planting petunias in Mother's Day baskets; Patty Descavish, potting gerber (or gerbera) daisies; and Diane Keillor and Cristina Lakso, preparing trays of pots for planting.

Like Gustafson's, Pleasanton's seeds and plants start out in flats until they're mature enough to transfer.

"We do a seed flat, sow plants in a seed flat, and once they get to a seedling stage we transplant to a bigger flat," Lutz explained. "Then we grow them in and sell them in a flat price, or we take them out of that flat and pot them up into baskets or pots."

She added that 17,000 pansies had been planted by the first week or so of February.

"And that's just one plant - it's a pretty big production," she said. "We have 13 greenhouses that we use - we have 11 on US-31 where the store is, then Terri and Bob do a seed bed at their house - they have

two greenhouses at their house - that's where the seedlings all start, and then we bring them up here to Bear Lake."

Lutz listed a sampling of the varieties of plants for sale each season.

"We do a huge selection of vegetables, a huge selection of annual flowers, and then we do a huge selection of herbs, as well as perennials," she explained.

Among the vegetables they grow from seed are tomatoes, "slicers, heirlooms, cherries and grapes," and hot and sweet peppers. Some annuals grown from seed include snapdragons, pansies, begonia and petunias. Herbs include parsleys, chives, peppermint, spearmint and basil. Perennials range from daisies and hollyhocks to lupine



Diane Keillor, a friend of Terri's, fills trays of empty pots with newly thawed soil in one of Pleasanton's heated greenhouses. Photo by Mark Videan.

and sedum.

Lutz said the business is Proven Winners Certified, the name of a training program provided by the Proven Winners' company to garden center employees.

Pleasanton Valley also hosts customer workshops. Among several others planned for this year are a Plant N Grow patio pot planting workshop, a Kids Getting Dirty workshop, an Unleash Your Imagination workshop, and a Make and Take wreath workshop. (Editor's note: Check our event calendar in upcoming issues for more workshops.)

A May 16 grand re-opening event is planned to celebrate the completion of Pleasanton Valley's addition to the retail store. A new storefront will allow customers with carts to flow more easily through checkout and into the parking area.

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

Gustafson's Greenhouse

231-845-6130
5053 W Kistler Rd
Ludington, Michigan 49431
gustafsonsgnrhse@gmail.com
Find them on Facebook

Annuals, herbs and vegetables. Flats of bedding plants, pots & baskets, and containers of many sizes/shapes.

Hours:
Retail flower shop opens end of April
Mon.-Sat.: 9 a.m. - 6 p.m.
Sunday: 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Pleasanton Valley Greenhouses

14758 Pleasanton Hwy. (US-31)
Bear Lake, Michigan
www.pleasantongreenhouses.com
pleasantongreenhouses@hotmail.com
Find them on Facebook

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Sing along with the String-A-Longs

By Kevin Howell

There's something about stepping into a room of enthusiastic musicians playing and singing together that brings a smile to your face and gets your toes tapping.

That's what it's like to meet the String-A-Longs, who shared their passion during a recent practice session at the Mason County District Library in Ludington.

The String-A-Longs is a group of ukulele players. They practice together once a week to hone their skills for gigs they play around the area.

Linda Lewis, a Mason County resident and leader and organizer of the group, said they first got together in Pentwater. When the center where they played underwent a revamping, the group relocated to the Zonta Room at the library.

"So now we're feeling like it's home," Lewis said. "It's really nice, and there's a copy machine right outside to copy our music."

The group is open to new members, according to Lewis, and there are no prerequisites for joining.

"We do have a beginners' group that meets here on Tuesday," Lewis noted. "So we kind of get them doing our songs right away, and as they acclimate they just start right in, start doing gigs with us, or at least start practicing with us."

More advanced players practice on Wednesdays from 10 a.m. until noon.

Group members' level of experience ranges from novice to more skilled, from those with a few days of practice to others

who have played for years.

"You just need to know a couple chords," explained Jim Kastelin, a "uke" player for about two years. "Then you just add more every time you show up – then you just have to practice, practice, practice."

"We're always happy if we all end up on the same chord," he said, as this session's group of nine finished one tune and prepared for another.

"What's our next one?" Kastelin asked.

Lewis suggested "Tennessee Waltz."

The group launched into the popular country music song then jumped into "Has Anybody Seen My Gal," followed by a lively rendition of "King of the Road," an old Roger Miller song involving plenty of finger snapping in time. Kazoos chimed in, a spritely addition to a longtime favorite.

"A lot of these are just classic old tunes a lot of us grew up with," Kastelin explained, adding, "The Beatles is about the most recent stuff we do."

He also remarked, and other members agreed, the ukulele is not a difficult instrument to play.

"There's not a whole lot to it," he said. "I actually used to think they were really just a toy until I heard somebody play a chord and I went, 'Wow, I think that's kind of pretty.'"

Ever since Israel "Iz" Kamakawiwo'ole's heart-rending ukulele medley of "Somewhere Over the Rainbow" and



String-A-Longs' members Karine Graham (L) and Jim Kastelin enjoy playing the ukulele and performing locally. Photo by Kevin Howell.

"What A Wonderful World," the instrument has grown in popularity.

"Just about every community has a ukulele group: Traverse City has one, Lansing has a huge group, Ann Arbor has them, Grand Rapids – it's not a fading thing, it's a very popular instrument," Kastelin said.

That's evident in the String-A-Longs. The turnout on this winter Wednesday was about half the size of a jam or practice session in warmer months. Even in winter, the number of players has grown.

"We just picked up three, and two more new ones are in the wing," Lewis said.

The ukulele is one of the more affordable instruments, with prices in the \$50-\$60 range, although the cost increases for higher-quality instruments. But for the average player, the price is reasonable.

Besides playing for the enjoyment and camaraderie, the musicians encourage, and are delighted by, audience participation.

"We have song books when we go to the places we play, so some of them (audience) can sing along," explains String-A-Longs' member Jane Croff. "It's just nicer and most of them know the tunes."

Most of the group's gigs are at assisted living/senior living facilities, such as Ludington Woods in Ludington, but the String-A-Longs also play at Ludington's farmers' market, and similar venues, during the summer months.

Members bring their percussion instruments and encourage kids at the farmers' market to join in and play along.

"We even met a couple ukulele people and they joined up," Lewis said.

A regular gig is the Jam and Sing Along at Oceana County Council on Aging. That one takes place on the fourth Wednesday



The ukulele, with just four strings, is easier to learn to play than other stringed instruments. Photo by Susan Hintz.

of the month and replaces the Wednesday practice session. Anyone with an instrument is welcome during those events.

As it wound down, this Wednesday's lively practice session seemed to have met its goal and was summed up simply by Lewis:

"We just have a good time."

For more information, contact Linda Lewis, (231) 869-3255. Beginners practice 10 a.m., Tuesdays, at Mason County District Library's Zonta Room, 217 E. Ludington Ave., Ludington. Regular group practice is 10 a.m., Wednesdays. Uke Jam and Sing-A-Long is every fourth Wednesday, 1:30 p.m., at Oceana County Council on Aging, 4250 W. Tyler Road, Hart.

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! Contact him at kevin@ytc.com.



(L to R) Jane Croff, Jan Forrest, group leader Linda Lewis, Thomas Trahey and Heidi Moloney play "Tennessee Waltz" during a ukulele practice session at Mason County District Library, Ludington. Photo by Kevin Howell.

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AND THE
BONAFIDE GALLERY

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MarieMarfia.com • 904-566-4473

Venus

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neighbor toward the sun. After the moon, it is the brightest object in the night sky. It surely gets your attention, but the average person may brush it off as a star. The one thing to look for is if it is twinkling. If it is not, you're likely seeing a planet!

Venus is more than a pretty celestial object. It's exciting to realize you're looking at a whole other world, one very different from our own. Venus orbits 67.2 million miles from the Sun, while Earth orbits 92.9 million miles out. Even with many successful probe and orbiter visits, it is unlikely that humans will ever visit the planet's surface in person. Venus does have an atmosphere, but it's mostly carbon dioxide, with a little nitrogen, carbon monoxide, argon, sulfur dioxide and water vapor. This combination

causes a massive greenhouse effect, heating Venus hotter than the surface of Mercury, which orbits much closer to the sun. If you could withstand the heat on the surface of Venus (about 872 degrees Fahrenheit), you would also have to endure air pressure 90 times heavier than Earth's, the equivalent of diving 3,000 feet beneath the ocean. Were you to rise 30 to 40 miles above the surface of Venus, the air pressure would be similar to Earth's, with oxygen and hydrogen floating above the heavier gas layers covering the surface. Venus is a beautiful, but brutal, world!

It was recently announced that two missions to study Venus are being proposed. It would be fascinating to learn more about Earth's neighbor. Our nearby planets have many undiscovered secrets. Only time

will tell if we will see NASA launch more investigations of Venus.

Observed even by the ancients, the planet named after the goddess of love and beauty is not going anywhere anytime soon. The planet Venus is out there and putting on a great show in the evening sky this spring. When you are out on a warm night, take a look in the western sky to catch a view! You don't need to buy a ticket to enjoy the universe.

Sources:
<https://solarsystem.nasa.gov/planets/venus/overview/>
<https://www.space.com/18526-venus-temperature.html>

Brooke Edwards is a NASA/JPL Solar System Ambassador. She lives in Manistee.

Local dairy brings back the milkman

Story by Greg Gielczyk.
Photos by Pat Stinson

Some of us remember our milkman delivering glass bottles of whole milk from door to door. The bottles were placed in chutes in walls or inside metal boxes left on door stoops or porches.

REGION – Back in the day, round cardboard covered the mouths of the bottles. It was always satisfying to be the first one to open a fresh bottle of milk or cream and make the first pour.

That all ended when dairies began bottling milk in plastic jugs and selling wholesale to grocery stores.

Over the last 14 years, however, glass milk bottles have been making a comeback in Manistee and Mason counties, and communities beyond. From its farm east of Norwalk, in Manistee County, Cream Cup Dairy delivers milk in bottles to about 25 stores and 110 homes over a wide geographic area.

In Manistee, Cream Cup's milk and dairy products are sold in places such as Family Fare and Port City Organics. We watched one morning last fall as the owner and a young helper delivered milk to The Outpost, in downtown Manistee, for use in the store's mochas, lattes and specialty brews. Bottled milk is also sold in Onekama and Bear Lake.

In Mason County, Cream Cup products are available at West Shore Market in Scottville, the Biercamp and other stores in Ludington, as well as places in Hart, Montague, Benzonia, Frankfort and Traverse City.



Above. Barista and sales associate Laina Laarman uses Cream Cup milk to make espresso drinks at the coffee-and-tea bar inside The Outpost in Manistee. Right. Berry-flavored, drinkable yogurt and chocolate milk are among Cream Cup's offerings.



processing our own milk," Cheryl said.

David sold all but one or two of his cows and ceased operations in 2004. For the next two years he built a bottling plant. In 2006, he began rebuilding his herd of dairy cattle, bottling milk and making door-to-door deliveries.

"We started bottling our own milk partly because here in Manistee County there were very few farms, and the milk truck had to come from an hour and a half to two hours away," Cheryl explained.

They currently milk about 20 cows and process about 630 gallons of milk a week.

The Millers own 40 or so acres that they farm and lease another 50-55 acres.

"When we started, more of our children were at home," Cheryl said. "They helped us a lot. But now our children are getting older and going on to doing other things."

The Millers have one other worker, outside the family, who helps with the business.

"We have a full-sized van that has a reefer (refrigerated unit) on it that my

husband uses for the door-to-door routes, which are two days a week, Wednesdays and Thursdays," Cheryl explained. "Then we have a refrigerated trailer, like a cargo trailer, that we use for delivering to the stores. That's two days a week, too, Tuesdays and Wednesdays. We process usually on Mondays and Fridays."

A typical delivery day begins around 8 a.m., when the trucks are loaded, and ends about 5 p.m. After the trucks come back to the dairy, any empty bottles that are returned are unloaded. Some days may be a little longer.

Sales often peak in July during tourist season.

"Once schools start again, it seems sales drop a little," Cheryl said. "It seems the home deliveries do (well) throughout the winter."

Whole milk, two percent, skim, chocolate, half-and-half and heavy cream are available, as well as drinkable yogurt and a couple flavors of ice cream. When they have extra

milk, they make a fresh cheese curd that is available in summer.

On the door-to-door residential routes, they also deliver eggs and processed chickens. One of their sons handles that end of the business.

"Our milk is not homogenized; it's more back to the natural," Cheryl said, adding that they pasteurize as required by the state but use the minimum temperature possible.

"It's not organic, but we say it's the most natural that we can do," she said. "We do farm with non-GMO feed. We try for quality."

Quality means farm-to-table fresh, s-moo-th milk products.

For more information, or to inquire about deliveries, call Cream Cup Dairy at 231-889-4158. Milk products, chickens and eggs are available at the farm, 7377 Feldhak Road, Kaleva.



Cream Cup also sells ice cream, eggs and chickens to residential customers.

FROM THEIR DOOR TO YOURS

The dairy is owned and operated by Cheryl and David Miller. Cheryl explained that David used to do electrical work and started the farm in 1995 to give his four sons something to occupy their time at home. Initially, the Millers sold their milk to a Michigan company, but Cheryl said David sensed that their small farm would be cut out.

"So, he decided to change and start



Greg Gielczyk was sports editor at the Manistee News Advocate for over 30 years. He writes a monthly column for TV 9&10's website MISportsNow.

Happy cows eating hay at Cream Cup Dairy's farm.

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Left top. Jessica Hopkins began working at The Restaurant at The South Course in August. She is the new librarian at the Arcadia branch-Manistee County Library. Photo by Pat Stinson. Left bottom. The clubhouse at Arcadia Bluffs' new South Course. Courtesy photo. Below. The dining area in the enclosed porch offers splendid views of the course. Courtesy photo. Bottom right. A smoked brisket omelet from the Sunday brunch menu, which includes breakfast and lunch fare. Photo by Mark Videan.



Arcadia Bluffs South: Dining rooms with a view

By Greg Gielczyk

Visions of a new, year-round restaurant grew in the minds of management as plans were drawn up to construct The South Course and clubhouse, a second golf course facility owned by Arcadia Bluffs. The new destination is located one mile south of the original course on Northwood Highway (M-22) and four miles south of Arcadia.

Cameron Cosby, Director of Food and Beverage for Arcadia Bluffs, explained:

"Since we built such a great following and had such success at the Bluffs' course for the past 20 years, we thought it would be the perfect opportunity to provide that to the local community and be an outlet for dining for many years to come."

In December, Golf Digest named the new course one of the 2019 best new public golf courses.

SCENERY AND SEATING CHOICES

The new restaurant, which opened its doors in August, serves two purposes: to give area residents another dining destination and to employ "locals" all year, instead of just during the golf season.

"We always pride ourselves on the level of service that we provide our guests," Cosby said. "It's a little more of a casual concept than the Bluffs' course; the scale of the building is a little different."

The restaurant is inside a three-story clubhouse building that sits prominently at the end of a long, scenic driveway flanked by the golf course. A seasonal snack bar is on the first floor, and the restaurant and pro shop are accessed by an interior stairway and elevator leading to the second floor. Clubhouse architecture and décor are similar to the Bluffs, with mission-style windows and beamed ceilings.

On a recent visit to the restaurant, a customer seated at a table in the enclosed porch was overheard saying, "I like coming here because the waitstaff is always happy."

Indeed, customers entering the dining area on this Sunday were greeted cheerily by the host, the bartender and each of three servers.

Except for the usual, "No shirts, no

shoes, no service," there is no dress code for diners. And, while Arcadia Bluffs seats up to 500, dining at The South Course is more intimate.

In the 100-seat restaurant patrons sit in two, well-lit rooms. The front dining area, in addition to table seating, offers nine seats at the full bar. The focal point is a gas fireplace ... and a 70-inch flatscreen TV with the volume set so low as to be imperceptible. The enclosed-porch dining area, with windows on three sides, directly overlooks the course, just off the 18th green. Distant views of a picturesque red barn, orchard and occasional visits from ducks, swans and other birds add to the ambiance.

Tables on the porch are slightly oversized, with ample room for multiple dishes and diners. A server kindly moved the salt-and-pepper shakers from the edge of the table to the middle, saving diners from rising from their seats to retrieve them.

"In the beginning phases of the plan, (the porch) was just going to be a patio, which would have left the indoor seating to about 70 seats," Cosby explained. "At kind of the last minute during the construction process, knowing that we were going to keep this open year-round, we decided to close that in and added windows."

"We're excited for this summer, having guests being able to watch their friends finish up (their golf game) while dining in our location."

WEEKEND DINNERS SNOWBALLED

Since it remains open in winter, the restaurant is prepared for whatever the season brings: snow, ice, wind and power outages.

A special anti-freeze unit runs the length of the front entrance to prevent snow and ice buildup and a wind screen protects the

entrance. A backup generator keeps diners' meals from being interrupted, and area residents without power can warm up while eating a meal or ordering a drink here.

"We've been really lucky with the weather that we haven't been getting dumped on with snow, and it hasn't been too cold and windy," Cosby said.

Whether due to an appealing menu, good food, reasonable prices, or all three, winter dining at The South Course has caught on.

"We're really pleased with how everything turned out," Cosby said. "We've had really great weekend nights."

"Brunches have had a really strong following," he added. "I don't anticipate anything changing in the very near future, or in the far future, with how we operate the business."

EVERYTHING IS MADE FROM SCRATCH

Jacob "Jake" Slonecki, a Manistee High School graduate, is the executive chef. Though he went to college to be a pharmacist, Cosby said Slonecki started losing that passion and helped open a couple restaurants, including the Fillmore in Manistee, working as their executive chef. He has worked at the Bluffs for six years, starting as a sous chef.

"We knew he was the right fit for what we were looking to do here, offering what we call upscale casual or casual comfort cuisine that would appeal to everyone," Cosby said. "It would just have that feeling of what you remember your grandmother cooking, or something that would just resonate with everybody as far as comfort food goes."

Greg Gielczyk was sports editor at the Manistee News Advocate for over 30 years. He writes a monthly column for TV 9&10's website MISportsNow.

FUN FACTS:

Arcadia Bluffs: The Restaurant at The South Course

13637 Northwoods Highway (M-22), Bear Lake
(231) 889-3009, (800) 494-8666
www.arcadiabluffs.com/dining
On Facebook.

MENU: Upscale casual, comfort cuisine. Start with Irish eggrolls.

Try a meatloaf sandwich or fish tacos for lunch, beef stroganoff or chicken Cordon bleu for dinner.

Friday Fish Fry: Whitefish, walleye and salmon.

Sunday Brunch: Off the menu, served tableside. Try smoked brisket omelet or Kodiak pancakes. The omelets are light as a crêpe.

Drinks: Coffee is strong and good. Sunday drink specials: Mimosa or Bloody Mary. Also offering martinis, specialty smoked cocktails, beer (10 brews on tap), wine, spirits – including some locally made.

LENTEN SPECIALS: Day after Ash Wednesday through Good Friday. Many fish/seafood selections.

WINTER HOURS:

Wed.-Sat., 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. for lunch, 4-9 p.m. for dinner. Sunday brunch is 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

HIGH SEASON HOURS:

(Begin in April, weather dependent, when course opens). Open 7 days, 7 a.m. to 10 p.m., breakfast, lunch & dinner

RESERVATIONS FOR SPECIAL EVENTS:

The restaurant has hosted birthday parties, company Christmas parties, anniversaries, etc. Call them for info.

Millionaires of Manistee: The illustrious Abram Oren Wheeler

This is the third in a series of five stories about Manistee's most influential millionaires.

By P. Misty Sheehan. Photos courtesy of Manistee County Historical Museum



A.O. Wheeler residence in Manistee.

Abram Oren "A.O." Wheeler was born in New Marlborough, Massachusetts in 1846, the last of seven children. He moved with his family at age 13 to Joliet, Illinois. Joliet, 30 miles west of Chicago, was an exciting city, with goods moving in and out on both sides of the Des Plaines and DuPage rivers, and the Illinois-Michigan Canal that ran from the center of Chicago to the Mississippi River. It was a great place for a teenager.

A.O. started out in Chicago as a newsboy, riding the train back to Joliet and selling newspapers to the commuters. By age 17, he had been promoted to baggage master and at 19 he was a conductor on the Rock Island line. An ambitious young man.

He set out for Manistee with his brother Edward to work with their brother-in-law

John Canfield, already doing quite well with his sawmill. Canfield made him president of the East Shore Wrecking and Tug Line. Tugs were very important for sawmill owners because they moved around heavy equipment and pushed logs coming from upstream into the sawmill. He started with two tugboats purchased in Buffalo and by 1880 he owned eight tugs. In 1883 he purchased Mr. Canfield's interest in the tugs and in 1887, at 41, he became sole proprietor and manager.

With his wealth and connections, he branched out into different businesses. A. O. became president of the Manistee Manufacturing Company in 1888, president of the Manistee Building and Loan Association, and director of the Manistee National Bank. He became the

first superintendent of harbor improvements for Manistee's river and harbor. He was the organizer of the Manistee Water Company.

He married Ella M. Barnes in 1872 and had four children: Abram Oren, Jr., Morton Barnes, Burr, and Irma Lorinda. Mrs. Wheeler was a leader in society. She is said to have presented the library with a fine print in 1907.

A.O.'s honors were extensive. He was president of the Manistee Business Men's Association and a member of the Congregational Church of Manistee. As a Republican, he was elected to the state senate and served as a member of the senate committee on railroads. He was appointed U.S. Marshall of Western Michigan.

Railroads were becoming increasingly important. The first railroad in Manistee was a logging railroad, the M&NE, which carried lumber from the pine lands where the logs were harvested to sawmills in Manistee. In 1889 a standard gauge railroad was built to carry passengers as well as freight. In 1892 the train was scheduled to move from Manistee to Traverse City, stopping along the way at Onkama, Bear Creek, Kaleva, Copemish, Interlochen, Lake Ann and Greilickville. It brought more people into western Michigan to try their hand at needed occupations.

Manistee had gone from a lumbering town when A.O. arrived to a major port to the inland of Michigan, with much of the vision his.

A.O. Wheeler's residence, built in 1882, was designed by William LeBaron Jenny, a Chicago architect. The elegant building, often compared to a castle in Europe, was on the summit of a hill overlooking Manistee Lake and Lake Michigan. It is said one could see all the way to the Frankfort Iron Works in Elberta. The home's large



A.O. Wheeler

garden blossomed in all seasons with multicolored blooms around a fountain and was surrounded by a black iron fence. Its red brick contrasted with black cement and was trimmed with limestone. It had steam heat, hot-and-cold running water, a cellar for vegetables, and a laundry room and large refrigerator in the basement.

The home included a spacious vestibule between the dining room and parlor. Behind the parlor was a sitting room that led to the piazza. A small hallway ran between the dining room, kitchen, pantries and back stairway. The second floor was mainly bedrooms. The third floor had a grand ballroom, a clock and retiring room for guests, and the children's playroom.

A.O. died in 1912. The house, at 514 Third St., was sold in 1920.

P. Misty Sheehan is a retired professor of humanities and the former executive director of Benzie Area Historical Society and Museum.

Snowbird meltdown

Story and photos by Judy Cools

I didn't think I could feel worse than I did last night. Achy, exhausted, unable to think – a sniveling pile of bones and flesh on the bed. I was the very definition of "spent."

Most everything was packed to go back home to Michigan. Bags were ready, sorted for TSA, and today's clothes were laid out for travel. Just a few miles away from my folks' house in Arizona, it hit me: Yes, I feel a whole lot worse than I did last night.

During the night, if the hospital had called, we could have hurried back to her bedside. With each mile we drove toward the airport, last night's goodbyes became more final. I broke down in the car. I will never see my mom again.

My folks "winter" in Arizona while we still stay in Michigan. Mom had a rough autumn season with so many health issues that her time is at an end now. She's a bright, enchanting 96 years old.

It's torturous to be away from loved ones at such times. Just Sunday I'd arrived home to Michigan, at nearly 3 a.m., after what was supposed to have been a visit with my mom and Doug in Arizona. That trip turned into a medical advocacy marathon. Mom acquired complications after a bad fall that had broken five of her ribs and her tailbone. I translated medical jargon for Doug, and together we were making the decisions for my mother's well-being. There wasn't much visiting.

I'd only been home in Michigan for a few

days when her nursing home called. The new day found Mom barely responsive. Another mad scramble to ER, where a doctor said she was bleeding internally. He guessed she'd live maybe a week. Unofficially, he said he'd be surprised if she lasted 48 hours. That was January 29.

With my airplane convenience bag still packed, my toiletries still in a quart-sized zipper bag, we were faced with a decision to fly back to Arizona. This time my husband and I were able to go together.

I found a flight out the next day. The airline's insane last-minute fare was cut in half by a booking service. I rented a car, so Doug wouldn't have to leave Mom for hours at a time to pick us up and later drive us back to the airport.

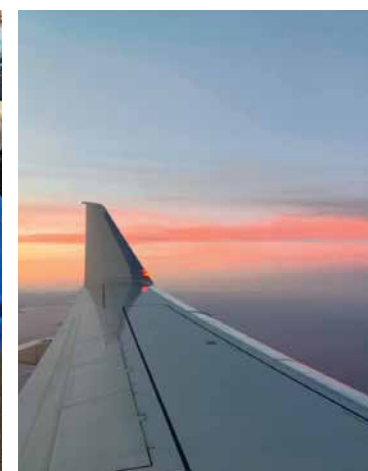
We average a 14-hour travel day on these Arizona trips, with weather delays and layovers. It's a tough schedule now that we are older. My husband cancelled his patients; I cancelled work at two locations and a "mental health" weekend I'd planned after that grueling first trip.

We visited Mom off and on for two days, usually leaving for a break so she could rest. She was actually more "present" than she had been the week before, which surprised me.

This concludes a two-part series about "snowbirds": those living part of the year in warmer climes.



Left. Mom (far right) and the rest of us had a great meal at La Riviera Restaurant in Manistee last summer. Right. A beautiful sunset. We were heading home, and I guess Mom was, too.



On the breaks, we inspected care facilities, talked to doctors, nurses, hospice providers ... and funeral homes. Some of the providers resonated with us. We felt safe and well-guided. Others did not and left us feeling at odds and lost. We all agreed to honor her wishes, even when we didn't personally agree. By the time we left for home, we had a plan.

Mom's new home is in a beautiful facility. Corridors and common areas are bright and airy. Attendants are plentiful, smiling, with heads up and making eye contact. The residents were clean and seemed happy. Even those who needed lots of assistance, as Mom would, were smiling or happily dozing in the conversation areas. They belong. They are included. Views out the plentiful windows are stunning vistas of the

mountains – not parking lots or the back side of another building, as it was with some other places.

All diet restrictions got lifted. They don't intend to fix anything now, they just want to keep her comfortable and happy. She drank a lot of water and a whole glass of iced tea as soon as she could. She ate some of the foods they brought, sometimes feeding herself, sometimes getting help.

And that is where we left her last night. We'd frantically arranged as much comfort as we could for her, then offered our last hugs and last words, just to go home and wait.

We left Doug by himself. His kids, also from Michigan, will come and go but it's likely he will face Mom's death alone.

Nothing we could do in this situation

continued on page 8



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Dublin Store

continued from page 1



The new store is under construction.

of the store was modern and inviting yet reminiscent of years past, with timbers supporting the front porch.

Stepping inside was like visiting the Wall Drug of Michigan! They had absolutely everything. One side of the building housed hardware, power equipment, hunting equipment, wood stoves and more, while the other side held groceries, apparel and the largest case and wall of jerky I have ever seen.

Coolers stocked typical beef and venison jerky but also contained some unusual offerings, such as exotic gator and ostrich, which tasted surprisingly good to this rather traditional palate! The honey hunter sticks, cherry beef and pheasant jerky are my personal favorites. Don't even get me started on their cheese and sausage selection.

Dublin did not disappoint, and the store had exactly what we needed and more. Staff was knowledgeable and friendly, and the prices were good. Although our trips to Dublin for spare parts became less frequent in recent years, it was always comforting to know they were there in a pinch. We found it a great way to spend an hour or two on a rainy day, when "shed" life got a little mundane.

Our family was saddened by the fire in 2019 that closed the business, so the owners' decision to rebuild was met with delight.

We await the opening of the new store and look forward to even more jerky goodness in 2020!

Editor's note: Follow the store's construction progress on its Facebook page: Dublin-Store Jerky-Place.

A homegrown Traverse City gal, Susan Hintz is a creative entrepreneur and an avid beachcomber and photographer.




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Snowbird

continued from page 7

seems like enough. The burden of distance weighs so heavily on families who are separated this way. There are not enough right answers, not enough closure, no way to address all the needs of so many different people. And now, having done our best, there is no comfort. We've said our goodbyes, but Mom is still alive ... for now. She's too weak ever to come back home to Michigan. Even too weak to use a phone, so we have no real contact. What closure we had when we

left on February 2 is dissolving day by day in third-person accounts of her condition and our endless longing for her to enjoy her last days.

I'd like to know she got some joy from our best choices.

Editor's note: Judy's mother passed away on February 17 at a care facility in Arizona.

Judy Cools has been a columnist for area newspapers, a 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: judycoolsmoonance.blog

Crypto Quotes

A cryptoquote is a quotation by a well-known person that has been encrypted by substituting one letter for another. See if you can solve the puzzle to reveal the quote and its author.

QX HOY VIF VD XAVYF MOGUA LOEY HAFI XAF YTI YAQIFY
 AVX OIL XAF HQIL SZVHY UVZL: HAFI QX QY YTMFG QI XAF
 ZQCAX OIL HQIXFG QI XAF YAOLF. -UAOGZFY LQUPFIY

SCX IFHKS OI GEHFJ FK SCX TGU VX HXQXQAXH VCGS VX GHX
 SCX OSCXH SCHXX CBRTHXT KFPSU-IOBH TGUK OI SCX UXGH.
 -QGHY SVGFR

Cryptoquote Solutions

1. "It was one of those March days when the sun shines hot and the wind blows cold: when it is summer in the light and winter in the shade."
Charles Dickens

2. "The first of April is the day we remember what we are the other three hundred sixty-four days of the year."
Mark Twain

AROUND THE COUNTIES

CONTEST

Each issue, we will feature a photo of something fun or unusual in Manistee or Mason county.

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P.O. Box 188, Manistee, MI 49660 231-835-0867 editor@freshwater-reporter.com

Publisher/Editor: Pat Stinson Co-conspirator: Mark Videan

Graphic design/layout: Amy Hansen Delivery: Pam Dohner Adams

Contributors: Judy Cools, Brooke Edwards, Greg Gielczyk, Susan Hintz, Kevin Howell, William Markey, P. Misty Sheehan

Freshwater Reporter is published 16 times per year by Freshwater Planet LLC of Manistee. Free copies are distributed throughout Manistee and Mason counties. Advertising inquiries are welcome, as are suggestions, articles, poems and photos. ©2020, Freshwater Reporter, all rights reserved. Look for our website soon at www.freshwater-reporter.com. Like us on Facebook.

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