

# FRESHWATER REPORTER

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

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## MORE TREES, PLEASE

By KEVIN HOWELL.  
Photos courtesy of Jenni Shockling, Releaf.

Nearly four decades and more than 33,500 new tree plantings later, Releaf Michigan, a nonprofit organization founded by Michigan arborists, is still spreading the green throughout Michigan.

The organization was founded in response to a life-threatening situation.

“In 1988, Michigan (along with other parts of the Midwest) was experiencing a severe heat wave and drought, and people were dying,” explained Releaf Lead Project Forester Jenni Shockling. “A group of Michigan’s leading arborists and foresters came together to address the deadly impacts of severe weather that Michigan communities were experiencing.”

Releaf Michigan jumped in, planting trees and educating others about the benefit of trees to help combat the effects of extreme weather. The new nonprofit organization began working with communities to “properly select, plant, and maintain trees, so that they deliver these benefits across Michigan.”

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Buzz Lightyear escaped from Santa’s gift bag and landed on his lap in this photo by Lori Wilson Photography taken at Patina in Onkama. Please leave the wayward toys at home and bring your pet to Patina, 4850 Main St., on Dec. 6-7, from noon to 2 p.m., for a professional photo with Santa Claus in exchange for a donation to Manistee’s Homeward Bound Animal Shelter. In Ludington, pre-register your family to have a professional photo taken with Santa, also on Dec. 6, 2-6 p.m., at West Shore Family Support, 603 E. Tinkham Ave., in exchange for your donation of diapers or baby wipes for families in need. Go to: <https://tinyurl.com/3euz5jj4>

### ARCADIA NEWS

## M-22 Cuisine Crawl builds relationships

By KRISTINA STIERHOLZ

It can be hard to find friends when you move to a new community. A natural space exists between residents who have lived in the town for their entire lives and the new residents. That space can be even harder to navigate when new residents arrive in their retirement years. Sometimes it leads to separate communities — the “originals” and the “newbies.” This can be especially true in the small communities of our area.

In Arcadia, there are also differences based on where someone lives — outside of town, in town, or in the Arcadia Cottage Colony. There’s a group of women in Arcadia who are starting to bridge that gap through food and fun at a weekly lunchtime gathering. All it took was an invitation on Facebook.

After vacationing for many years in and around Arcadia, Debbie Besanson and her



The Cusine Crawl had its biggest turnout this summer at Ketch 22 in Arcadia. Photo courtesy of Deborah Besanson.

husband moved to Arcadia. One of her first and best friends in town was her neighbor, Roxanne Matteson.

In the spring of 2025, Besanson realized she was starving for female friends; there were local clubs, primarily populated by men, but no women’s club. She shared her need with Matteson, and Matteson — who had by then lived in town for seven years

— had the same need. They decided to host a women’s coffee club and meet every week. No agenda or rules. Attend as you are able and willing. They thought there might be other women who’ve been in Arcadia for years and don’t know many people.

Besanson and Matteson posted an invitation on Facebook to join their women’s group, sharing the time and location — Monday mid-morning coffee at the local diner, the MT Plate Diner. Besanson and Matteson arrived early to the restaurant ... and waited. Then, at the appointed time, a stream of women came in, pushed tables together, and a weekly tradition began.

“I really had no idea how it was going to turn out,” Besanson said. “I just knew I wanted to meet and know more women in

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## Events Calendar on pages 2 and 4.

## Season’s Greetings

In this edition, you’ll find fun facts about trees and tree organizations. Stories about Releaf Michigan and its “Big Tree Hunt” partner, Archangel Ancient Tree Archive of Copemish, were scheduled. Then I received a MI Backyard essay listing the benefits of trees. Synchronicity! I decided to ask writers to share their favorite tree or tree species, and we added information about other tree programs, too.

The spirit of the season can be found in stories about a new Arcadia women’s group offering companionship over coffee and the Kaleva community’s holiday activities and timely reminder about volunteering. This season will bring challenges to many. There are numerous opportunities to donate to local organizations offering food, clothing, shelter, holiday toys and other relief. We’ve included a list of nonprofits featured or mentioned in our stories this year.

Inspiration struck and we received four poems and one poem suggestion, included inside and below. Our Northwoods Sauce Boss returns with a tale of overseas travel.

Keep your eyes open as December brings the magical Geminid Meteor Shower (peaking Dec. 12-13) and Audubon’s annual Christmas Bird Count (Dec. 14-Jan. 5). Check with your local birding group for outings. ~ Pat



Andreas Rasmussen, Unsplash.

## Lantern-Flakes

By Botony Newton-Knudson

Snow wanders down like it has  
nowhere else to be,  
unhurried, unbothered,  
soft as a sigh released by the world  
itself.

Outside the window,  
roofs and branches  
gather white like the season is tucking  
them in.

Streetlamps turn every flake  
into a tiny star  
that forgot its place in the sky and  
drifted here instead.

It’s quiet but not lonely,  
like the whole night is holding its breath  
in gentle awe.

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# Area Events Calendar

## TELL THEM YOU SAW IT IN THE FRESHWATER REPORTER!

To be included in our January 1 edition, submit your announcements by December 8. Be sure to include the address where the event takes place, for visiting readers. Email your events/press releases to: [editor@freshwater-reporter.com](mailto:editor@freshwater-reporter.com). Email any time for our online calendar. Always check with the venue before attending as some event dates may change or be canceled. Despite our best efforts, errors may occur.

### ONGOING EVENTS

**Thru Nov 22**  
**Last Exit for Antelope Wells, Ludington**  
Free. Solo exhibit of paintings by Dave Preston. Ludington Area Center for the Arts, 107 S. Harrison St.

**Thru Nov 24**  
**2025 Coat & Blanket Drive, Ludington**  
Ludington Bay Brewing, 515 S James St. is collecting coats & blankets for the Ludington Area Schools Resource Center which assists not only kids and teens in Ludington, but all of Mason County. Anyone donating a coat/blanket will receive a \$6 coupon for Ludington Bay Brewing Co. Drop gently used coats and blankets off at the brewery. Coats/blankets will be dry-cleaned by our community partners before being donated to the center.

**Thru Nov 25**  
**Thanksgiving Food Drive, Benzie, Ludington, Manistee**  
9am-6pm Monday-Friday, 9am-2pm Saturday. All 3 Watson Motors locations are collecting nonperishable food items to help local families enjoy a holiday meal. Donations can be dropped off during business hours.

**Thru Dec 14**  
**Snow Snake Art Exhibition, Manistee**  
Free. Artworks by 16 Onekama-area artists. Ramsdell Regional Center for the Arts, 101 Maple St.

**Thru Dec 24**  
**Winter Market Holiday Artisan Boutique, Frankfort**  
Free. Unique handmade gifts, cards, ornaments & more from regional artists. Oliver Art Center, 132 Coast Guard Rd.

**Thru Jan 2**  
**Autumn Art Exhibition, Arcadia**  
Free. Arcadia Community Center, 3586 Glovers Lake Rd.

**Nov 27-Dec 31**  
**Sparkle in the Park, Bear Lake**  
5-10pm. Free/donations gladly accepted. Drive through 50 or so Christmas displays with over 80,000 lights. Hopkins Park Campground, 7727 Hopkins Dr. (just off US-31).

**Nov 28-Dec 18**  
**Art of Giving Holiday Market, Ludington**  
Free. Sale of gifts made by local artists. Ludington Area Center for the Arts, 107 S Harrison St.

**Dec 5-Jan 3**  
**Annual Winter Member Art Exhibition, Frankfort**  
Free. Oliver Art Center, 132 Coast Guard Rd.

**Nov-Dec**  
**Ludington Area Festival of Lights, Ludington**  
\$10/car. Drive-through light display. Proceeds go to local nonprofits. Mason County Fairgrounds, 5302 US-10. For dates & times: [checkoutthelights.com](http://checkoutthelights.com)

**Dec 14-Jan 5**  
**126th Annual Christmas Bird Count; Cadillac, Lake County. Ludington, Manistee**  
Help the Audubon Society collect data about local bird populations. Locate the circle on the map where you want to participate. Contact the compiler for your local area by email to sign up & find out the specific day your group is counting. Info: <https://tinyurl.com/y9z6nmpy>  
Map: <https://tinyurl.com/nan6f8z5>

**Thru Jan 31**  
**Small is Beautiful Miniature Art Exhibition, Ludington**  
Free. Ludington Area Center for the Arts, 107 S Harrison St.

### DAILY EVENTS

**November 20**  
**Diapers & Desserts, Ludington**  
3:30-5:30. Free. Families with children ages 3 & under are invited to attend & receive free diapers (up to size 6) & treats. Parent or legal guardian must be present to receive diapers for the child(ren). Car seat safety checks available upon request. West Shore Family Support, 603 E Tinkham Ave.

**Pubs 4 Paws, Bear Lake**  
7-9pm. Live music with Lynn Callihan. Enjoy the tunes, purchase a paw & support the animals. Proceeds benefit Homeward Bound Animal Shelter. Grill 44, 12951 Pleasanton Hwy.

**November 20**  
**The Venue presents: Dogma Dogmatic Confessions Tour, Cadillac**  
7-11pm. The Venue Event Center, 902 W 13th St. Tickets: [thevenueeccadillac.com](http://thevenueeccadillac.com)

**November 20-22**  
**Alice in Wonderland, Manistee**  
7pm Thursday & Friday, 1 & 7pm Saturday. \$17. Performance by the Manistee Conservatory of Dance. Ramsdell Regional Center for the Arts, 101 Maple St. Tickets: [www.conservatoryofdance.net](http://www.conservatoryofdance.net) or at the door.

**November 21**  
**Friendsgiving Youth Dinner Party, Manistee**  
4:30pm. Free. Kids in grades 6-12 are invited for a dinner of turkey, mashed potatoes & gravy, stuffing, mac & cheese, green beans, rolls & pie. Armory Youth Project, 555 1st St. Sign up online or in person: <https://tinyurl.com/2m39wyky>

**Light Our Valley Event (LOVE), Arcadia**  
5:30-7:30pm. Free. Dinner with sloppy joes, tater tots & dump cake with mac & cheese for the kids. Limited supply of a vegetarian option available on request. Games & activities. Santa & Mrs. Claus visit from 6-6:30pm and afterward a reading of "T'was the Night Before Christmas". There will be a silent auction of gifts for holiday giving to benefit the Arcadia Community Center, 3586 Glovers Lake Rd.

**The Venue presents: Shaggy2Dope of Insane Clown Posse & DJ Clay, Cadillac**  
8pm-12am. The Venue Event Center, 902 W 13th St. Tickets: [thevenueeccadillac.com](http://thevenueeccadillac.com)

**November 22**  
**Christmas Shoppe Arts & Crafts Show, Scottville**  
9am-3pm. Mason County Reformed Church, 45 S Amber Rd.

**Christmas Artisan Market, Onekama**  
10am-3pm. Onekama Schools, 5016 Main St.

**The Hidden World of Aquatic Plants, Frankfort**  
10:30-11:30am. Free. Benzie Conservation District's Aquatic Invasive Species Coordinator, Kyla Robinson, presents an exploration of the intersection of creativity and ecology, featuring paper sculptures of native & invasive aquatic plants. Benzie Shores District Library, 630 Main St.

**2nd Annual Wreath Workshop, Arcadia**  
3:30pm. \$55 includes all materials, greenery, dried flowers, eucalyptus, bows, wire, snips & light refreshments. Bring work gloves if you prefer to wear them. Hosted by Z & N Farm and Arcadia Community Center, 3586 Glovers Lake Rd. Space is limited. Tickets: <https://tinyurl.com/ytv5f8hv>

**Celebration of Lights, Onekama**  
6pm. Donations. Farr Center, 5283 Main St.

**Gopherwood Concerts present Luke Winslow-King wsg Graham Parsons, Cadillac**  
7pm. \$12.24-22.94. Cadillac Elks Lodge, 122 S Mitchell St. Tickets: <https://gopherwoodconcerts.org>

**The Filharmonic, Scottville**  
7:30pm. \$15-25. Los Angeles-based A Capella group of Filipino American artists have appeared on TV, in movies & on over 500 stages around the US. Center Stage Theater at West Shore Community College, 3000 N Stiles Rd. Tickets: [www.westshore.edu/performing-arts/](http://www.westshore.edu/performing-arts/)

**The Venue presents: Michigan Country Music Night, Cadillac**  
8pm-12am. The Venue Event Center, 902 W 13th St. Tickets: [thevenueeccadillac.com](http://thevenueeccadillac.com)

**November 25**  
**Sunfish (& Other Stories on Green Lake), Manistee**  
7pm. \$6-8. Debut movie filmed entirely on location in Interlochen by director (and Interlochen's own) Sierra Falconer. Vogue Theatre, 383 River St. Tickets: [voguetheatremanistee.org](http://voguetheatremanistee.org)

**November 26**  
**Anniversary Jam Celebrating 25 Years of Music by K. Jones & the Benzie Playboys, Frankfort**  
7-10pm. \$20. Concert to benefit Grow Benzie. The Garden Theater, 301 Main St. Tickets available online only: <https://qrco.de/bgKpvs>

**The Venue presents: Night Before Thanksgiving Celebration, Cadillac**  
7-10pm. The Venue Event Center, 902 W 13th St. Tickets: [thevenueeccadillac.com](http://thevenueeccadillac.com)



**CLASSES, EVENTS & EXHIBITS @ OLIVER ART CENTER:**  
 **WINTER ARTISAN MARKET**  
GREAT GIFTS FROM MICHIGAN ARTISANS!  
OPEN THROUGH DEC 24  
 **FREE HOLIDAY CRAFTING DAY**  
HOLIDAY CRAFT PROJECTS FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY!  
DECEMBER 13, 11:00 AM - 2:00 PM  
 **2025 WINTER MEMBER EXHIBITION**  
OPENING RECEPTION DECEMBER 5<sup>TH</sup> @ 5PM  
DEC 5 - JAN 2  
**WINTER CLASSES:**  
**CERAMICS, PAINTING, DRAWING, PRINTMAKING AND MORE!**

**MUSIC, ART, AND FUN ON THE SHORES OF BETSIE BAY**  
**132 COAST GUARD RD, FRANKFORT - OLIVERART.ORG**

**November 27**  
**Thanksgiving Dinner, Manistee**  
2-6pm. Free. Open to anyone needing a meal. Family, friends or folks who just don't feel like cooking. Special accommodations needed? Call 231.723.4868. Also accepting donations for the local food pantry & Toys for Tots. Jailhouse Bar & Grill, 2707 Nelson St.

**November 28**  
**Christmas Vendor Expo, Ludington**  
11am-6pm. Vendor Row, 5762 W US-10.

**Habitat for Humanity Festival of Trees, Benzonია**  
4-6pm. Free. Silent auction of trees, wreaths & table decorations to raise funds for affordable housing in Benzie County. Benzie Area Historical Society & Museum, 6941 Traverse Ave. Bidding is online & continues on Saturday 12-6pm & Sunday 12-3pm. To bid: [benziehabitat.org](http://benziehabitat.org)

**Christmas in the Park, Cadillac**  
5-7pm. Free. Tree lighting celebration & Caddy Bear Activity Book giveaway. Cadillac Commons Market, 117 W Cass St.

**November 29**  
**Small Business Saturday, Statewide**

**Holly Berry Arts & Crafts Fair, Frankfort**  
9am-3pm. Free. 70 artists & crafters. Frankfort-Elberta High School, 534 11th St.

**Christmas Craft Show, Manistee**  
9am-3pm. Free. VFW Post 4499, 1211 28th St.

**Make a Commemorative 2025 Ornament, Benzonია**  
10am-12pm. Free. All supplies & some snacks will be provided by the Friends of Benzonია Public Library, 891 Michigan Ave.

**The Star of Wonder Craft Market, Scottville**  
10am-2pm. Free. Our Savior Lutheran Church, 765 US-10.

**An Afternoon with Santa, Ludington**  
The Mitten Bar, 109 W Ludington Ave.

**Stage Left Theatre Company presents Ken Ludwig's "Twas the Night Before Christmas", Ludington**  
2pm. \$5/person or \$15/immediate family. Ludington Area Center for the Arts, 107 S Harrison St. Tickets at the door or at: <https://tinyurl.com/2vwadev>

**Santa Comes to Ludington**  
3-5pm. Visit with Santa and Mrs. Clause & get a complimentary photo by Lynsey Baldon. Red Rooster Coffee & Community, 205 S James St.

**Aglow on the Avenue Holiday Parade, Ludington**  
6-8pm. Free. Parade on Ludington Ave. starting at Gaylord thru downtown. Followed by caroling, a tree lighting, and a Santa visit in Legacy Plaza, 112 N James St.

**November 29, 30**  
**"The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe", Benzonია**  
6pm Saturday, 2pm Sunday. Suggested donation \$15. Performance by the Benzie County Players. At 8pm after the play on Saturday the Christmas Tree will be lit in Academy Park. Live music, treats & hot cocoa will be provided. The Mills Community House, 891 Michigan Ave.

**December 3**  
**Small Empires Entrepreneurship Workshops, Manistee**  
6:30-7:30pm. \$30. "Smart Investments." Classroom A, Ramsdell Regional Center for the Arts, 101 Maple St. Info/Register: [ramsdelltheatre.org](http://ramsdelltheatre.org)

**December 3**  
**26th Annual Live Auction Gala, Ludington**  
6:30-8:30pm. \$50. Appetizers, dinner, dessert, cash bar, auction. Lincoln Hills Golf Club, 1527 N Lakeshore Dr. Proceeds benefit the Rotary Club's STRIVE Program and college scholarships. Tickets: <https://tinyurl.com/53kmszdy>

**December 4**  
**Coffee with the Councilors, Ludington**  
5pm. Free. Learn about city updates, share ideas & connect with city council members. Book Mark, 201 S Rath Ave.

**Healing Through Story and The Science of Sharing, Ludington**  
7pm. Free. Join Dr. John Moore for an inspiring session that explores how writing & speaking about difficult experiences can promote healing and personal growth. Part of WSCC's Humankind Series. Ludington Public Library, 217 E Ludington Ave.

**The Venue presents: Jimmie Allen, Cadillac**  
7-11pm. The Venue Event Center, 902 W 13th St. Tickets: [thevenueeccadillac.com](http://thevenueeccadillac.com)

**December 4-7**  
**Victorian Sleighbell Parade & Old Christmas Weekend, Manistee**  
Numerous family-friendly holiday activities in various locations. Info: [manisteesleighbellparade.com](http://manisteesleighbellparade.com)

**December 5**  
**Near & Farr Friends, Onekama**  
11am-1pm. Free. Vera Petrusha of UCARE program to support Ukrainian children impacted by war. Onekama Township Hall, 5435 Main St.

**1885 Murder Mystery, Manistee**  
7:30pm. \$70/person, \$135/couple. Heavy hors d'oeuvres, cash bar, thrilling performances while solving a murder in the ballroom. Period dress encouraged. Ramsdell Regional Center for the Arts, 101 Maple St. Tickets: [LakesideClubManistee.org](http://LakesideClubManistee.org)

**December 5,6**  
**Inaugural Holiday Craft & Vendor Market, Cadillac**  
4-7pm Friday, 10am-4pm Saturday. Proceeds benefit Foster Closet of Michigan Wexford/ Missaukee. Revival Center Church, 5676 E M-55.

**December 5-7**  
**The Nutcracker Ballet, Manistee**  
7:30pm Friday & Saturday, 2pm Sunday. \$10-30. Ramsdell Regional Center for the Arts, 101 Maple St. Tickets: [ramsdelltheatre.org](http://ramsdelltheatre.org)

**December 6**  
**Manistee Sleighbell Craft Bazaar , Manistee**  
9am-3pm. Wagoner Community Center, 260 St. Mary S Pkwy.

**10th Annual Holiday Arts & Craft Show, Ludington**  
10am-2pm. Free. Lunch is available for \$7. Ludington Senior Center, 308 S Rowe St.

**Holiday Craft Fair, Scottville**  
10am-3pm. Scottville Senior Center, 140 S Main St.

**Santa's Workshop, Manistee**  
12-4pm. Manistee Municipal Marina, 480 River St.

**Snapshots with Santa, Ludington**  
2-6pm. In exchange for a photo, please bring a donation of diapers or wipes for families in need. Photos by JanelleMarie Photography at West Shore Family Support, 603 E Tinkham Ave. Space is limited and registration is required: <https://tinyurl.com/3euz5jj4>

# Acorns stuck in your rake?

ByPAT STINSON



Photo: Rick Wunderle, Pixabay.

This is what’s known as a mast year, which means oak trees produced enormous quantities of squirrel and deer food, otherwise known as acorns. The trees made so many that wildlife can’t keep up, and that’s the idea. More oak trees, baby.

Mast events happen every 2-5 years or so and guarantee that there will be a surplus of acorns beyond what the turkeys forage, woodpeckers drill and bluejays hide.

Other nut trees experience the same mast frenzy, but in our forests and backyards this is the year of the acorn.

Scientists theorize that oak trees somehow “communicate” to each other to make more nuts. (Acorns are considered nuts — seeds surrounded by a hard shell.) They hypothesize that there’s some sort of chemical signaling happening amongst them, or perhaps the weather plays a part in these hyper-reproductive episodes.

Of course, critters are partial to white-oak species of acorns, which are less bitter but less common in this area. Most of us with red-oak tree species growing in our yards are crunching and slipping on acorns the deer, squirrels and bears missed, and inadvertently raking them as we clear a path to the shed. (Raking, how quaint, readers may be thinking.)

You can fume about the inconvenience

or make acorn flour with the abundance, as Indigenous peoples have done. The tannins in the seeds that make acorns less palatable to wildlife and unpalatable to humans can be drawn out (“leached”) during the flour-making process. Learn more about turning acorns into a nutrition-packed flour at: <https://www.thespruceeats.com/cold-leaching-and-preserving-acorn-flour-4007438>.

There’s a potential life-saving use for the acorn caps, too. Co-editor Mark knows that blowing through your joined thumbs into the top of an empty acorn cap creates a near eardrum-shattering whistle that can be heard ’round the forest. When hiking, keep one in your pocket — in case you need to scare predators or attract a rescue party.



Cute use for acorn caps. Photo: P. Stinson

Thanks to MSU Extension, Science through Nature, Northern Woodlands magazine (“The Humble Acorn: A Feast for Wildlife, Feb. 2024) and The Spruce Eats for the above information.



Mourning doves. Photo: M. Videan

## First-timers welcome during Christmas Bird Count

From staff reports

This year marks the 126th annual Christmas Bird Count, a bird census conducted by citizens of the U.S., Canada and Central and South America. The event is coordinated by The National Audubon Society and takes place Dec. 14-Jan. 5.

Citizens’ observations will be placed into a database researchers use to “spot trends” in bird populations, according to the society.

Those interested in participating may watch birds in their yards, if they live within one of the designated survey areas, or they may choose to join a local group of birdwatchers who head into the field. The survey areas are circular, and each bird-watching group picks one day during the census period to look for birds within its circle.

Bird-watching experience is not required to participate in the count. Michigan Audubon indicated that some newcomers act as spotters for experienced birders, leading them to where they heard or saw birds. Others volunteer to drive, so the birders can keep watch as they travel within the survey area. Still others might tally the group’s observations.

The Manistee Christmas Bird Count will take place all day on Friday, Dec. 19, in Manistee County, according to coordinator Dr. Brian Allen. He said the circular counting area radiates 7.5 miles from a center point at Fisk Road and U.S. Highway 31 and includes: Manistee, Stronach, Onekama, Norwalk, Chief Lake and slightly south of Bear Lake to west of Brethren. An informational meeting will take place at 7 p.m., Wednesday, Nov. 19, at the Oak Grove Hospitality Center, 309 W. Parkdale Ave., Manistee. Those interested in helping by watching feeders or birding in the field can contact Dr. Allen at 231-510-9380.

The Ludington Christmas Bird Count will be held on Saturday, Dec. 20. Anyone interested in helping as field observers or feeder watchers (and who live within Ludington’s bird-counting circle), should e-mail David Dister at [david.dister@gmail.com](mailto:david.dister@gmail.com) or call him at 231-845-7574.

Other counting areas can be found in Benzie, Lake and Wexford counties. To view a map and find a group, go to: <https://audubon.org>.

## Virtual 5K to support state park forests

ByPAT STINSON

Registration is now open for the 2026 Happy Little 5K for the trees. We first reported on this event in our May 2020 essay, “Trees and Other Comforts,” published during the pandemic. This is a virtual event that allows you to pick your time, outdoor place and pace to complete a 5K walk, run, jog or roll between April 18 and 26 next year.

The entry fee is \$36 per person and includes a T-shirt, commemorative bib, medal and sticker. Proceeds will be used to plant trees and keep our forests healthy in state parks.

Last year more than 10,000 in 13 states, including Michigan, participated. They raised \$200,000 for tree planting and forest

health, according to a Michigan Department of Natural Resources’ statement on its Happy Little Trees web page. Individual states received funds in proportion to the number of participating residents.

The event is a partnership between MDNR, Bob Ross Inc. and a dozen other states. Ross was a landscape painter who taught others the techniques he used to create his paintings during a half-hour PBS television show called, “The Joy of Painting.” Segments air periodically on local public television stations.

To register for the event, visit: <https://tinyurl.com/df6h5cza>

## Help reduce pollution: Adopt A Forest

ByPAT STINSON

Imagine you are Jeepin’ down a two-track in the Manistee National Forest. You see a big, black shape ahead, between the trees. Bear! Your eyes widen and your pulse quickens while your companion hurriedly reaches for a camera. As you approach, you begin to make out individual shapes. Not a bruin. A pile of old tires. Your grip on the wheel loosens and you let out a groan, maybe a gasp of disappointment.

If you sign up as a volunteer with the Michigan DNR’s Adopt-A-Forest program, you can take action. Your camera becomes a witness to the illegal dumping. By visiting the MDNR’s Adopt-A-Forest web page, you can report what you find.

Volunteers not only discover new dumpsites, they help watch over old dumping

grounds and can report any new infractions on a dumpsite database. They can even decide to become part of the cleanup crew, with a little advance planning.

A statement on the Adopt-A-Forest web page reads: “The program shares the importance of clean and healthy forests, improves recycling and responsible trash disposal and works to stop illegal dumping,”

This volunteer forest-protection program was founded in 1991. To date, 2-million-plus acres of forest have been cleaned up, 100,000 tires hauled away, and “tens of thousands of cubic yards of trash properly disposed of.”

Those interested in reporting dumpsites, volunteering to clean up the forest or donating to the cause can visit: <https://www.michigan.gov/dnr/about/get-involved/aaf>.

### KALEVA NEWS

## The Heart of a Community

ByCYNTHIA ASIALA

Volunteers are the heart of most communities. In Kaleva this is especially true. In addition to two churches, a Lions Club, a Snowmobile Club and a volunteer fire department, there are many other groups of volunteers that make the heart of the community.

As is true of most small-town museums, a volunteer board of directors owns and operates the Kaleva Bottle House Museum. This group sets up displays, maintains historical records, acts as docents during open hours and plans special events such as the Taste of Finland, which will be held on December 20, 12-4 p.m. A larger group of volunteers places luminaries in the cemetery on the Winter Solstice, December 21, starting at 4 p.m.

Recently, two new volunteer groups have formed to help at the Maple Grove Township Community Center. One is a board of directors, which oversees the activities at the Center. Many of these folks take care of maintenance such as cleaning the floors and windows. There is a landscaping group and a group that serves the Senior Meals on Thursdays.

There is also an Events Committee active at the community center. The goal of this group is to host community events open to all. At Halloween there is trick or treating at each decorated classroom doorway, costume parades with prizes awarded, and a hot-dog luncheon by donation. Most recently, the group helped with a November 15 Hunter’s Dinner to benefit the roof fund.

The final activity at the community center is the Christmas Marketplace. This takes place on December 13 from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Merchants with tables will display gift ideas, and the public is invited to shop. Santa will be present, and visitors will have an opportunity to get a passport stamped at the Kaleva Art Gallery, Bottle House Museum and community center to enter a drawing for prizes from local businesses.

There are many opportunities to volunteer in any community. To be part of the “heart” of a community is very rewarding and certainly makes a great difference in the lives of residents and visitors. Try it, if you haven’t already!





# Area Events Calendar

TELL THEM YOU SAW IT IN FRESHWATER REPORTER!

continued from Page 2

**December 6**  
**Winter Celebration, Frankfort**  
3:30-5:30pm. Free. Family-friendly event featuring live music, caroling, sweet treats, prizes & a 10% discount on all purchases through the gallery, gift shop & winter market. Oliver Art Center, 132 Coast Guard Rd.

**Winter Sounds, Thompsonville**  
5-7pm. \$10/adult. Kids free. Family-friendly celebration of the season with hot cider, bonfire, hike through the woods, outdoor performance of Traverse City West Middle School Madrigal Singers. Michigan Legacy Art Park, Crystal Mountain Resort, 7300 Mountainside Dr. Dress warmly, bring a travel mug or Thermos for cider & camp chair or blanket.

**Michigan Mandolin Orchestra Christmas Concert, Ludington**  
7pm doors, 7:30pm concert. \$20 Adv, \$25 Door. Ludington Area Center for the Arts, 107 S Harrison St. Tickets: [ludingtonartscenter.org](http://ludingtonartscenter.org)

**Kenny G in concert, Manistee**  
8-9:30pm. \$50-80. Little River Casino Resort, 2700 Orchard Hwy. Tickets: [lrcr.com](http://lrcr.com)

**December 6,7**  
**Pet Photographs with Santa, Onekama**  
12-2pm. No appointments. Sign in & wait in your car. Fundraiser for Homeward Bound Animal Shelter. Patina Designs, 4850 Main St.

**A Very Merry Card-Making Workshop, Manistee**  
1-3pm. \$1/person. Create your own beautiful, handmade holiday cards. Artists will guide participants of all ages & skill levels. All materials will be supplied. Classroom A at the Ramsdell Regional Center for the Arts, 101 Maple St.

**WSCC's Holiday Rock Spectacular IV, Scottville**  
2 & 8pm Saturday, 2 & 6pm Sunday. \$30-35. Center Stage Theater at West Shore Community College, 3000 N Stiles Rd. Tickets: [www.westshore.edu/performing-arts/](http://www.westshore.edu/performing-arts/)

**December 7**  
**Whoop-De-Do, Frankfort**  
5:30-8pm. Free with donations encouraged. Live music by The Handstanders, a silent auction, food & drink & door prizes throughout the evening. All proceeds benefit the Elberta Labor

Heritage Center & WUWU Community Radio who are raising funds to buy the Elberta Mercantile Building. Their goal is to create a home for local history, radio production & cultural events. Oliver Art Center, 132 Coast Guard Rd.

**December 8**  
**WSCC Wind Symphony & Drumline, Manistee**  
7:30pm. Free. Manistee High School auditorium, 525 12th St.

**December 10**  
**Ladies Night, Manistee**  
4-8pm. Downtown merchants feature specials, drawings, and spirits for the ladies. Downtown Manistee.

**Small Empires Entrepreneurship Workshops, Manistee**  
6:30-730pm. \$30. "Cognitive Distortions." Classroom A, Ramsdell Regional Center for the Arts, 101 Maple St. Info/Register: [ramsdeltheatre.org](http://ramsdeltheatre.org)

**December 12-14**  
**The Nutcracker Ballet, Manistee**  
7:30pm Friday & Saturday, 2pm Sunday. \$10-30. Ramsdell Regional Center for the Arts, 101 Maple St. Tickets: [ramsdeltheatre.org](http://ramsdeltheatre.org)

**December 13**  
**MCC Band Boosters Christmas Expo, Scottville**  
9am-3pm. Free. Mason County Central Schools, 210 W Broadway

**Family Holiday Crafts with Mrs. Claus, Frankfort**  
11am-2pm. Free. Family-friendly crafting including printmaking, beeswax candles, ornaments, greeting cards & more. Oliver Art Center, 132 Coast Guard Rd.

**Kaleva Christmas Marketplace, Kaleva**  
11am-4pm, Maple Grove Twp. Community Center, 9208 Kauko. Local folks, businesses and products. Get a "passport" stamped at the center, Bottle House Museum & Kaleva Art Gallery to be entered in a drawing.

**Cookie Walk, Ludington**  
1-5pm. \$20/person. Only 100 tickets available. Stroll downtown Ludington, sampling delicious cookies. Ticket price includes over 2 dozen cookies and a cookie bag. Info/tickets: [downtownludington.org](http://downtownludington.org)

**December 13**  
**That's a Wrap Party, Onekama**  
2-4pm. End of season. Final Day Open in 2025. Patina Designs, 4850 Main St.

**Lantern-Lit Hike, Ludington**  
6-8pm. Free. Begins at the Warming Shelter. Approx. 1 mile of lighted trails for walking, cross-country skiing or snowshoeing. Bonfires are at the Warming Shelter & the Amphitheater, free warm beverages at the Amphitheater. Ludington State Park, 8800 M-116. MI Recreation Passport required for vehicle entry.

**COVE's Annual Holiday Party Fundraiser - "Framed in Strength", Ludington**  
6-9pm. \$50. Benefit for Communities Overcoming Violent Encounters. Stories of survival become portraits of strength. Timeless Picture Framing, 103 E Ludington Ave. Tickets: [Eventbrite.com](http://Eventbrite.com)

**The Venue presents: Esham wsg Lil Lon, Takeheart & Young C, Cadillac**  
7-11pm. The Venue Event Center, 902 W 13th St. Tickets: [thevenueeccadillac.com](http://thevenueeccadillac.com)

**December 14**  
**Benzonia Area Community Emergency Fund Concert, Benzonia**  
4-6pm. Free with donations encouraged. Uncle Ted's Crawlers & Carter Creek String Band in concert to benefit the emergency fund & the Mills Community House, 891 Michigan Ave.

**Deer Hunter's Dinner, Branch Township**  
5:30-7pm. Dine-in or carry out. Sponsored by the Evergreen Women's Group. Proceeds benefit local charities. Evergreen Covenant Church, 7396 S Evergreen Rd.

**December 16**  
**WSCC Concert Choir, Scottville**  
7:30pm. Free. Center Stage Theater, West Shore Community College, 3000 N Stiles Rd.

**December 17**  
**Men's Night, Manistee**  
5-8pm. Downtown merchants feature specials, drawings, and spirits for the gents. Downtown Manistee.

**Small Empires Entrepreneurship Workshops, Manistee**  
6:30-730pm. \$30. "Building Your Circle." Classroom A, Ramsdell Regional Center for the Arts, 101 Maple St. Info/Register: [ramsdeltheatre.org](http://ramsdeltheatre.org)

**December 18**  
**WSCC Jazz Ensemble I & II, Scottville**  
7:30pm. Free. Center Stage Theater, West Shore Community College, 3000 N Stiles Rd.

**December 19**  
**United Way's Feeding America Food Truck, Brethren**  
11am. Free. Prepackaged bags of healthy food for anyone who needs help with groceries. Lakeview Church of the Brethren, 14094 Coates Hwy.

**Christmas Vendor Expo, Ludington**  
11am-6pm. Vendor Row, 5762 W US-10.

**The Venue presents: A Man Named Cash (Johnny Cash Tribute), Cadillac**  
7-11pm. The Venue Event Center, 902 W 13th St. Tickets: [thevenueeccadillac.com](http://thevenueeccadillac.com)

**December 20**  
**Taste of Finland, Kaleva**  
12-4pm. The Bottle House Museum, 14551 Wuoksi Ave.

**December 21**  
**Metropolitan Opera Live/Encore in HD presents Arabella (Strauss), Manistee**  
1pm, \$15-25. Ramsdell Regional Center for the Arts, 101 Maple St. Tickets: [ramsdeltheatre.org](http://ramsdeltheatre.org)

**Christmas Concert, Ludington**  
3-5pm. Free with donations gladly accepted. Daniel Ball & the Friends at United Methodist Church of Ludington, 5858 Bryant Rd.

**Winter Solstice Luminaries in the Cemetery, Kaleva**  
4pm. Free. Kaleva St. across from Maple Grove Cemetery. Info: [www.kalevamichigan.com/upcoming-events](http://www.kalevamichigan.com/upcoming-events)

**December 31**  
**New Year's Eve Balloon Drop, Ludington**  
5-8pm. \$15/person or \$60/immediate family. Fun activities & refreshments for the whole family with a balloon drop to celebrate New Year's Eve. Sandcastles Children's Museum, 129 E Ludington Ave. Tickets: (231) 233-9326.

**Family New Year's Eve Party, Ludington**  
8:30-11pm. Free party includes games, crafts, and snacks. Ludington Library, 217 E Ludington Ave.

**New Year's Eve Ball Drop, Ludington**  
9pm-1am. Street party with live music, beer tent, ball drop & fireworks at midnight. Downtown Ludington, 100 Ludington Ave.

## Cuisine Crawl

continued from Page 1

our community. Plus, wanting to support our wonderful establishments was a plan that also has been a big hit. Who knew? I'm super happy about all the women it has and continues to bring together. There are a lot of amazing women in Arcadia, and it's been a pleasure getting to know all of them."

As it turns out, many women in the group had felt the same need to build friendships. Matteson said that a common refrain from attendees was, "I just wanted to meet some new people."

The women range in age from 50 to 90-plus, and the group includes both "originals" and "newbies." The Cuisine Crawl also offers a way for those associated with the Camp Arcadia Cottage Colony to get to know others in town. At times, the group



*The Cuisine Crawl's first official photo, taken in June at MT Plate Diner. Photo courtesy of Debbie Besanson.*

includes women from outside the Arcadia Township borders.

The group size is 8-15 on any given week, with Besanson and Matteson the bedrock of the group. To support the three food establishments in town, the group rotates

between each one – MT Plate Diner, Bowen's Creek and Ketch 22. At the end of each get-together, Besanson takes a picture and posts it on Facebook, along with the place and time for the next week's gathering.

Others on the Arcadia Facebook page are cheering this new event.

"With your Cuisine Crawl, you have created a valuable addition to the Arcadia social scene," began one post. "The weekly culinary conclaves have brought together a most valuable asset to Arcadia. Thank you for bringing this together."

"One of our goals in opening MT Plate was for it to be a gathering place for food, friendship, and conversation," said co-owner Matt Catlin. "It's been fun watching and listening to this group laugh and tell stories."

Now that Bowen's Creek and Ketch 22 are closed for the season, the group is focusing on MT Plate and will be expanding a bit to

try establishments just outside of Arcadia, weather permitting.

One of the unexpected pleasures of this group has been the additional connections that sustain relationships outside of the cafes. Matteson talked about how she now sees group members at her other hobby events and loves having those connections in the rest of her life. Besanson frequently runs into women she met through the Cuisine Crawl. The risk these two women took to start this group — and all the women who joined a group of strangers for lunch — is a testament to the need for relationship and community, and the wide-ranging benefit of sitting down for lunch with strangers. It can be done, and the reward is great.

*Kristina Stierholz, recently retired, lives in Arcadia. She is happy to share all of her favorite natural features of the area with anyone who asks.*

## In Memorium

**Christine Blackledge**, formerly of Traverse City and Lansing, brought her real-life experiences as a Michigan dairy farmer, extensive educational background in public health, and working knowledge of NGOs to her Freshwater Reporter articles, including "Lifelong lessons from a teacher," "Making soap with ashes," and "Why a U.S. Secretary of Food cabinet position makes \$ense." She was a talented gardener and welder and a fearless home remodeler, and she never hesitated to share her skills and harvest with others, including us.

**Diana Six** contributed more than exceptional nature photographs to this publication. She worked at the Manistee News Advocate for 44 years, greeting customers and designing ads for them. For many years, she also composed ads and designed the annual program for the Manistee Saints baseball team. She brought a wealth of knowledge about the area and drew on her former work experiences to suggest advertising opportunities and local story ideas to us. More than these, Diana was a dear friend who taught us just about everything we know about

Manistee County, personally taking us or pointing us to the best backroads (especially for fall color) and to taverns offering the best meal deals. Diana was a sympathetic listener and offered moral support whenever our courage wavered.

**We miss these talented, generous friends and wanted to share how each contributed to the success of the Freshwater Reporter.**







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Photo: Smileus, Adobestock.

## What Trees Dream

By Louisa Loveridge Gallas

If a majestic tree  
is felled in the forest  
what sound does a logger hear?  
Does the plunder  
of ancient ancestral timber  
tumbling down  
in a firmament of loss  
reach the cold star of his eye,  
his soul, as he witnesses  
the final roll  
of the tree’s huge body  
after the thunderous kill?  
What is the sound  
that will tell him  
the sap draining from  
the raw stump  
of this life  
he has subdued  
is his own blood?

~ ~ ~  
Imagine,  
this millennium,  
the trees take back their land,  
stand tall sheltering us,  
simply being alive, safe,  
all back together again.  
They make a joyful sound  
full of gratitude,  
the trees in their power,  
the trees in their mercy  
rise, return to heal  
the mountains,  
the forests.

Perhaps this is what  
the last tree on the block  
or hillside  
imagines.

Perhaps this is  
what trees dream.

## Tree of my dreams

By ROSALIND JAFFE

Those who plant new trees must be the greatest optimists among all gardeners. We invest money, muscles and time creating a new home for the skinny twigs we adopt and lovingly place in the soil, hoping they become mighty giants. Optimists, nay, fools; though dreamers might be more accurate. The tree of my dreams took a long time to come to fruition.

At our Onekama home, tiny red pines and spruce dot the landscape. They are only a few inches taller than their planting day thirty years ago because my husband planted them in the shade. I consider these our bonsai collection. Near the garage is “The Ornamental”, a well-beloved Douglas fir nibbled into dwarf surrealism by deer, protected with netting far too late to ever look normal. The tulip trees I purchased from the Manistee Conservation District Tree Sale fit perfectly into our miniature, deformed tree forest.

The tulip trees remained skinny sticks for about 4 years, not providing enough fodder to tempt the ravenous deer. Yet only a couple of years later, dormancy is over and the tulip trees have sprung up straight and tall, reaching a height of almost 20 feet. Finally,

trees growing like a tree! I needed to learn more about these fabulous creatures.

Tulip trees, scientific name *Liriodendron tulipifera*, are also known as tulip poplar, tulip magnolia, whitewood, saddle-leaf tree, fiddle-tree or yellow poplar and are a member of the magnolia family. The tallest North American hardwood, they grow to 100-150 feet (and more!) and live 250 years. Their large yellow & green teacup-shaped flowers aren’t produced until the fifteenth year of life, a far-off moment I greatly anticipate. Flowers resemble tulips (thence the name), have a faint cucumber smell and are beloved by hummingbirds and other pollinators.

The Cherokee People used tulip trees to treat stomach issues, pain, fever, dermatological conditions, and snake bites while the Rappahannock Tribe is reported to have used them for pain and as a stimulant. Because of the long straight tree trunk, they were used to make dugout canoes and are also referred to as the “canoe tree”. Daniel Boone reportedly used a tulip tree canoe to traverse waterways. The tree’s main use was for fence posts and railroad ties but nowadays the wood is used in cabinetry. I’m



Tulip tree. Photo: R. Jaffe.

happy my favorite tree is a Michigan native. It’s the state tree of Kentucky, Tennessee and Indiana and is native to the Eastern U.S.

I was unable to find negative references about my beloved tulip trees except for Britain’s Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew, which consider its relative, the Chinese tulip tree “a far superior species”. Easy for those extraordinary gardeners at Kew to sniff at this miracle tree, the American tulip tree. I have finally found my tree, the validation of my dreaminess and optimism.

## Yellow birch: the lesser-known birch?

By JOSH SHIELDS, Ph.D., Forester, Wildlife Biologist, and Arborist. Michigan Forestry Assistance Program (FAP), Manistee/Mason-Lake Conservation Districts

What comes to mind when you hear the word *birch*? I bet many of you think of the charismatic paper birch (*Betula papyrifera*), known for its beautiful white bark. But did you know there is another very common native birch in Michigan called yellow birch (*Betula alleghaniensis*)?

Like paper birch, yellow birch has bark that is paper like, but the paper-like pieces are much smaller and golden colored instead of white. Yellow birch can be found in a variety of forested habitats, ranging from upland northern hardwoods where sugar maple (*Acer saccharum*) dominates, to lowland mixed deciduous and coniferous forests dominated by species such as hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*), red maple (*Acer rubrum*) and white cedar (*Thuja occidentalis*). It is somewhat of a Goldilocks in terms of sunlight, whereby it does best in medium-sized canopy holes (not too small and not too big, but “just right”). Germination is most successful when the seed falls on bare soil or very decayed wood (nurse logs or nurse stumps).

While yellow birch is not typically the dominant tree in forests in terms of abundance, it is known to have a disproportionately high ecological value relative to its abundance. For example, it serves as a preferred foraging substrate for



Yellow birch. Photo: J. Shields.

certain forest arthropods, such as moth and butterfly larvae that dwell on the leaves in “free-living” form (i.e., not within leaf tissue or rolled up within leaves). Likewise, some forest songbirds will preferentially use yellow birch to attack insect prey. Birds like the black-capped chickadee (*Parus atricapillus*) and scarlet tanager (*Piranga*

olivacea) seek yellow birch twigs and leaf petioles as launch sites to attack insects.

People love to utilize yellow birch as well. It can be harvested as a wood product, especially if it is veneer quality. Also, teas, tinctures and infused oils can be made from the twigs, inner bark and young leaves. Next time you see a yellow birch twig, scratch and sniff it; that minty smell comes from the same compound (methyl salicylate, to be specific) that makes yellow birch such a great source for tea. And yellow birch is an excellent place to look for the medicinal fungus chaga (*Inonotus obliquus*), which only grows on birch.

I am often asked what my favorite tree is. While this answer can change depending on the day, yellow birch is probably the most common response you will hear from me. As a child I was fascinated by its interesting bark and minty odor, even though I did not know much about it at the time. I gained a deeper appreciation for this tree during my time at Michigan Technological University, where I specifically focused on yellow birch and the forests where it thrives as part of my master’s degree research. With my current position at the conservation district, I consistently encourage landowners to promote this charismatic species when they make habitat management decisions. I hope you can appreciate yellow birch as much as I do!

For more information about yellow birch, contact me at 231-889-9666 (Office Phone), 989-220-9236 (Mobile Phone), or joshua.shields@macd.org.



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## A life-giving tree

By STEWART A. MCFERRAN

Northern white cedar is my favorite tree. *Arborvitae* is the obvious choice for me. *Thuja occidentalis*, a member of the cypress family, is also known as the “tree of life” due to a tea made from its twigs that keeps scurvy at bay. It was said to have cured Jacques Cartier and his party during the Winter of 1535 with its vitamin C. “Nookomis Giizhik” is a gift to humanity and one of the four plants on the Ojibwe medicine wheel.

The wood is light, strong, splits well and smells good. I love the cracking and popping sounds that come from the woodstove when cedar kindling catches fire. Only a few sticks are needed.

I have carved canoe paddles from wood split from cedar trees. They are light and durable. The largest one (seven feet) was displayed at the Oliver Art Center along with the gate I fashioned from cedar logs to resemble a Japanese torii. Cedar is a joy to carve.

I assisted Andy Rockwood as he built

Canoe paddles Stewart carved from northern white cedar, in front of his sauna. Photo: S.A. McFerran

canoes from cedarwood. The cedar ribs of the boats were steamed and bent over a form and then covered with thin cedar planking secured with brass tacks. Andy also built canoes covered with birchbark at the historic Fort Michilimackinac in Mackinaw City. Long pieces of cedar were split for gunwales, and thwarts were fashioned. These canoes were lashed together with spruce roots. This traditional building method is rarely used today, and few have the knowledge to build a boat from cedar and bark.

Northern white cedar trees can reach large sizes, such as the cedars in the “Valley of the Giants” on South Manitou Island, but

they never reach the height or diameter of white pine, Michigan’s state tree.

As I sit on the cedar bench in my sauna, with the snow swirling about just outside, and enjoy the aromatic blast of hot air, I can agree that cedar is a gift to humanity.

## When I grow up, I want to be a tree

By RON SCHMIDT

It is an ideal autumn day as I walk to greet my large maple tree, one mile away. While most people are driving around looking for and taking photos of colored leaves throughout northern Michigan, I savor the hickory-nut-like fragrance of the fallen leaves as they flutter around my feet and race each other down the road. These days rekindle my childhood memories of our farm woodlot. My brother and I would gather hickory nuts from the ground each late October. We took them upstairs in the house and scattered them across our floor, waiting for them to dry and crack in winter, so we could eat the sweet meats. We also picked apples from our old tree and Bartlett pears for eating and for my mom to can.

I think as kids we are wired to love climbing trees. Most that have a chance to do so are quite good at it. It is a thrill to climb to the top of the tree on a windy day and sway back and forth with the limbs. As a kid I looked forward to windy days just for that reason. My happiest, most thrilling nights were spent in a treehouse that my brother and I built in the woods. The treehouse was where we could be away from our parents, eat snacks and fall asleep to the sounds of crickets and katydids. I feel sorry for children growing up in cities that never have the chance to experience all the joy trees provide.

To me, some of the greatest tributes to trees are written by singer-songwriters — John Gorka’s “Branching Out,” Molly

Bristlecone pine, Colo. Photo: M. Videan

Tuttle’s “I’d Rather Be a Crooked Tree” and Hugh Prestwood’s “Bristlecone Pine.” Prestwood wrote his song years ago, and many have sung it since. Some of the bristlecones are over 4,500 years old and among the oldest living trees on the planet. I embrace the words of his song, some of which go like this:

So when I’m laid to rest  
It would suit me just fine  
To sleep at the feet of the  
Bristlecone Pine.

## Trees and I

By RAMONA DEGEORGIO-VENEGAS

Not yet in school, I collected leaves from the sidewalks and asked Mommy to press them in books to dry. Some were red, others yellow or orange. We ironed them between two pieces of wax paper and taped them to a window. They were nature’s stained glass. I didn’t know their names, only that they were pretty and made me smile.

Soon I was climbing trees with lower branches, daring myself to go higher. I scratched my belly coming down but never fell.

An 8-year-old friend had a tree house in a huge oak. Gosh, how I wanted one too!

We didn’t have big trees in our yard, only skinny ones and lilacs. I watched squirrels and birds with envy. My grandmother had

Oak tree. Photo: R. DeGeorgio-Venegas

an apple tree and let me shake the branches. That applesauce was so delicious, made with love and sticky fingers.

In grade school we made leaf collections and learned a few names; oaks, maples, aspen, cottonwoods and pines. Not much later I was in a college dendrology class

Willow tree. Photo: R. DeGeorgio-Venegas

and learning more about trees than pretty leaves: their Latin names, branch and stem formations, bark textures, habitat and leaf-shape types.

I have been fortunate to live near trees most of my life. Here in Manistee we have

a wide variety, both deciduous and non-deciduous. But where I grew up in the West, the mountains were filled with pines, larch, firs and spruces. Cottonwoods, box elders, aspen and a few others could be found along the rivers or near lakes.

Five of my favorites — and that changes as I meet other trees — are ponderosa, red oak, larch, maple and beech. I can’t forget cedar, locust, redwoods, hemlock, birch, palms, jacaranda and ash. I remember how the puzzle-pieces bark of ponderosa pine smells like vanilla. The trunk of beech looks like elephant legs. The larch (aka tamarack) turns all golden needles and then the needles fall off — a deciduous pine! I can’t forget maple syrup or seasoned oak firewood in my tree gratefulness.

The more you learn about a tree, the more you admire and appreciate it. Yes, I hug them!





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### Trees of Joy

By EILEEN STAPLETON

Trees invite us to be creative, to be strong, brave and aware of what surrounds us. I'm sure you have some favorite tree stories, and I'll share a few of mine with you.

At sunset, cocktails in hand, we sat on the deck overlooking a valley with the huge, solo basswood tree growing in the middle of my daughter's sheep pasture. "It's King Kong climbing to the top, grasping the girl," my sister-in-law remarked, as she looked at the tree's shape. We saw it, too. (Remember the cocktails.) Nature may not have agreed. A strong thunderstorm with lightning split the tree in half. Bye-bye, King Kong.

No cocktails for tree number two. I was 8 years old with a neighborhood friend who loved to gather at the house of another friend whose father was a conservation officer. He



Giant basswood, 2017. Photo: C. Stapleton

had huge tanks of water filled with tadpoles or a young fawn he was feeding and a large barn with a challenging-looking tree beside it. We were prepared for the challenge, but only those who were tall enough to reach a branch and strong enough to pull ourselves onto that branch. I was both. The unspoken

challenge was to go the highest. I held my breath more than once as I climbed back down, adrenaline pumping. Was it a pine? Was it a maple? I don't recall, but the unidentified tree gave us joy.

My last tree grows in a small churchyard in the village. The area resembles a park, with lots of trees and children's playground equipment, and one majestic, gigantic pine of an undisclosed type. This tree grows near the highway that it grew under as it grew taller. It truly must be the biggest of its kind in Michigan. I can see its future in Rockefeller Center or decorated at the White House. I want to hug it, but my arms aren't long enough. I imagine crowds gathering to admire its stature, but it is too big to be seen full length. In my mind's eye, I hug this gigantic, beautiful tree and thank it for its gifts.

Touching our minds, hearts and spirits, the trees speak to us and wait for us to respond.

### Sunshine on a cloudy day

By CHRISTINE STAPLETON



Paper Birch. Photo: C. Stapleton

A December snow blanketed the woods as I meandered the paths winding through the pines. With good dogs as my company, I was getting the exercise we all needed. The sky had been grey and cloudy for several days. It was a taste of what was to come

in January and February, when we have weeks of no sun along the Lake Michigan shoreline, sending my neighbors south to sunny states or into states of sadness. I caught a glimpse of bright yellow through the tall, red trunks of the pines. The brilliance drew me in, and I made a beeline toward whatever it was. Standing on the base of a hill among the pines was a white-barked tree full of bright, golden leaves — long after the brilliant colors of the maples had fallen and were now buried in snow. I took a picture of the leaves and bark and discovered it was a paper birch tree.

A native tree to this area, the *Betula papyrifera* is also nicknamed the canoe birch. It is a fast-growing, short-lived tree. Native American tribes used its bark to create sturdy watercraft, wigwams and containers. The romantic lore is that long ago people would peel layers of the thin, paper-like bark and use it to send love messages. The paper birch can grow as high as 50-70 feet and is the state tree of New Hampshire.

Since finding that first one on my land, I have found several more young ones and enjoy the happiness and sunshine they provide on the many cloudy and snowy days of winter here in northern Michigan.

### The quiet giants

By JENNY DELEEUEW

An isolated childhood with vacuous days. Not much TV. Laissez-faire parents. Ours was the third house on our street. It would be a few years before the other kids would show up that my mom wouldn't let me play with because she was at odds with their parents. They were Christian Reformed or Democrats.

Life would begin to improve at 5 years old, when I learned how to tie my shoes and ride a bike without training wheels up and down our beech-tree-lined driveway. The silver, smooth-barked sentinels towered 100 feet or more over a little girl who couldn't do much yet in life, didn't know much. I did somehow learn that the triangular, prismatic nuts that fell in the driveway, whose skins peeled off like fingernails, were tender and sweet. Early spring beech leaves are sweet-n-tangy, like arugula. Wandering the woods, I'd see where people had used the flat surface of the bark to carve messages of first love that would expand and warp as the tree grew, eventually disappearing as first loves will.

Today these quiet giants are either succumbing or adapting to a couple of diseases. I don't think I've seen beech leaf disease, but I have seen the fairy-like scale insect that causes beech bark disease.



Beech, Lake Bluff Farms, Manistee. Photo: P. Stinson

They're hypnotizing. Minuscule, fuzzy white balls that cluster together and vibrate in unison when disturbed. Again, this tree has found a way to cause me to sit beneath it, watching the choreography of death and praying it doesn't happen.

When my days are done, I'd like my remains encapsulated in a beech tree root ball, to be surrounded again by majesty as my spirit grows with it on to the next thing.



# Pepperidge is more than a cookie

ByPAT STINSON

I admire many trees in our yard in Manistee Township. The previous owners left identification tags in a drawer for the trees and shrubs they planted. One tree didn’t seem to match any of the tags. This one had a squat appearance, like a trimmed apple tree, but there was never any fruit. Nine years later leaders finally emerged, and the tree took on a conical shape. I noticed greenish flowers on its branches this spring, and I asked our gardener friend to use her smartphone’s tree app to identify this stranger. The app called this little beauty a black tupelo or black gum tree, also known as sour gum or pepperidge. Thoughts of sought-after Tupelo honey came to mind, but I discovered that the honey is mostly made from the flowers of the swamp tupelo or a combination of swamp and black varieties.

Tupelo comes from the Creek words toi (tree) and opilwa (swamp), according to the Institute for American Indian Studies. Native Americans reportedly used it to flavor drinks and stews and used the wood to make shuttles for weaving, ax handles and war clubs. They also created medicines to treat tuberculosis, parasitic worms and gunshot wounds. The tree’s scientific name is Nyssa sylvatica, appropriate since Nyssa is the name of a water nymph and the tree likes to be watered.

Black tupelos are either male or female. Our tree is female because it has flowers, and I discovered deep blue fruit within its branches this fall. The birds and squirrels quickly devoured them. Under ideal conditions (sun, no crowding or disease) black tupelo can grow up to 80 feet tall



Black tupelo. Photo: P. Stinson

with a 3-foot diameter. Our tree’s leaves glowed yellow, orange, red and purple this fall! Some say the bark on mature trees looks like alligator skin. We’ll have to wait and see.

Old or stressed trees might develop a fungi that hollows out the branches and trunks, making excellent dens for animals. The wood dries fast and burns like a softwood, if you can split it. The tough wood is useful for making railroad ties and pallets. The wood’s fine grain makes it an excellent candidate for furniture and cabinetry, and woodcarvers think it’s the best.

# The magic of hemlocks

ByJULIA CHAMBERS, President of AFFEW

I grew up in a suburb north of Detroit and lived for being outside! I loved nature and everything in it. My dream was to live in the woods and country. I am very happy to say I have done so since the ’70s.

College at Western Michigan University brought me to the western part of the state. We moved to the Ludington area later, in 1979, after visiting friends there. Here I discovered swamps and forests, mainly with hemlocks and cedars.

My senses became alive in this habitat. The beauty of these swamps, especially the hemlocks with their delicate needles and swooping branches, reminded me of fairytale settings, like the enchanted forests in Snow White and Little Red Riding Hood. The piney scents penetrated my nostrils. The soft needles of the hemlock tickled my fingers as I pulled gently on them. I was in my element. From an early age, hugging tree-beings made me feel connected to them and also calmed my spirit. Yes, I still hug trees!

Every time I went into a swampy area I searched for the hemlocks, which became my favorite tree. Being the “naturalist” at the Ludington State Park in the early 1990s gave me the opportunity to learn and study all aspects of nature, so I could share the information on hikes and during presentations.

The more I learned about his spectacular tree, the more I loved it. Hemlocks stabilize soil moisture and temperatures. They help control erosion and reduce sediment in rivers. Hemlocks provide shade to fish like trout, with their outstretched limbs reaching over the rivers. These amazing trees also



Hemlock. Photo by P. Stinson

draw carbon dioxide from the air. Wonderment enters my mind, thinking of all the life a hemlock tree takes care of — insects, birds and mammals above the ground and then all the life below, such as salamanders, insects, moss, lichen, etc.

Historically, the hemlock tree bark and needles were used for inflammation and as an antioxidant. It was also used to treat diarrhea and scurvy, though there is no good evidence to support these two medicinal uses. (Hemlock is not to be confused with the water hemlock plant, which is deadly.)

Presently, the Hemlock wooly adelgid is attacking hemlocks. If found early, it is treatable with pesticides. The insect, which looks like little snowflakes, feeds on the sap, eventually killing the tree. Since this has been a concern, I examine hemlocks whenever I see them.

I love hemlocks, and their magic definitely has me under their spell. How about you?

# New guide helps you pick, plant trees for your space

Edited MDNR press release



Thinking of planting a tree in your yard? Put down that shovel and check out the new Michigan Communities Tree Species Selection Guide by using the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/43zusp4>.

“Think of this guide as a menu of tree species with information to help you make an informed decision when you want to plant,” said Lawrence Law, forester with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources’ Urban and Community Forestry Program.

Law and other DNR collaborators created the guide to give homeowners the information they need to choose trees that are right for their space and safe for the landscape and to help Michigan communities make decisions about planting public trees.

The guide highlights tree species that work well in managed landscapes such as residential streets and neighborhoods, city and village downtowns, parks and urban green spaces, private yards plus hospital, school and business campuses.

“In these types of spaces, trees can provide shade, make the street more beautiful, help manage stormwater and reduce noise,” Law said.



## What’s in the guide?

The guide offers tips on what to look for when purchasing trees. It offers help in evaluating different species and cultivars, and decided which trees work best in an urban environment.

“Choosing the right tree for the right place is one of the most important steps in any tree-planting project,” Law said. “Careful planning and informed

species selection are essential.”

In addition, the guide explains tree-naming conventions and rates trees on a scale of 1 to 10, based on their suitability and adaptability for urban environments.

The goal for many urban landscapes is to include a variety of trees so that a devastating insect or disease affecting a single species won’t leave streets bare.

“The good news for Michigan residents is that there are many really, really nice trees to choose from that should satisfy both environmental needs and desired landscape aesthetics,” Law said.

## So many trees

Looking for a pretty, native tree with an upright, oval shape? You might choose a Kentucky coffee tree. It’s adaptable, hardy, not prone to disease and can reach up to 60 feet in height.

Need something compact for a tight spot? You might consider a white fringe-tree — a native species with a round shape and fragrant, white spring flowers — that grows to a mature height of no more than 20 feet.

Want a tree that turns a gorgeous red in fall but don’t want to plant another maple? Take a look at black gum, also known as black tupelo, that has a unique whorled-leaf arrangement and leaves that go from a glossy dark green to deep crimson red in late fall.

“Communities should put time and thought into tree selection, just as they do with other city infrastructure. We hope this makes that process easier when most Michigan communities don’t have a designated city forester,” Law said.

## Watch for utilities; water new trees

Many urban and residential areas have utility cables buried underground. Call 811 or go to the MISS DIG web site (<https://www.missdig811.org/>) to have utilities marked. After your tree is in the ground, make sure to water it often and mulch properly. (Think doughnuts, not volcano shapes.)

## Map your trees

For more tips, to pin your new trees on our tree-planting map, and help the DNR plant 50 million trees by 2030, visit DNR’s MITrees page by using the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/2s43du6p>.

## Trees

By Joyce Kilmer

I think that I shall never see

A poem lovely as a tree.

A tree whose hungry mouth is prest

Against the earth’s sweet flowing breast;

A tree that looks at God all day,

And lifts her leafy arms to pray;

A tree that may in summer wear

A nest of robins in her hair;

Upon whose bosom snow has lain;

Who intimately lives with rain.

Poems are made by fools like me,

But only God can make a tree.

(This poem, suggested by Eileen Stapleton, is in the public domain.)







Named a Manistee County Big Tree is this black cherry growing in Kaleva, with a 133-inch circumference measured at a standard height of 4.5 feet. Nominated by Amy and Jack McKinley.

## Trees

continued from Page 1

Trees benefit communities economically and environmentally and contribute to public health. Their benefits are entwined and often overlooked. For example, trees planted along roadways can offer shade and cooling to counter climate change-induced heat. According to the U.S. Department of Energy and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the shade of mature trees along an asphalt road not only cools the surface but reduces UV light deterioration, thus prolonging the road's life by 10 years or more, saving money for the community.

Shockling cited the World Health Organization when explaining that asthma in young students is a major cause of absences from school. Planting trees helps clean the air for young lungs. This results in healthier students and better learning. The community benefits because better-educated students will be more equipped to provide for their families in the future.

Trees also slow rain and stormwater runoff, which in turn reduces the work of sewage facilities and decreases pollutants in our waterways.

Of course, trees provide staple foods for birds and critters, which improves their habitat, and habitat improvement contributes to environmental biodiversity.

And on and on it goes.

Thomas Crowther is a professor of ecology at ETH Zurich. He co-founded and sits on the advisory board for the U.N. Decade on Ecosystem Restoration. Crowther had this to say recently to The Guardian about the importance of regenerating our woodlands: "Forest restoration isn't just one of our climate change solutions, it is overwhelmingly more powerful than all of the other climate change solutions proposed." (Quote found on releafmichigan.org.)

Since its beginning, Releaf has hosted two plantings a year, spring and fall, and recently finished its 2025 season with a final planting on Nov. 1 in Highland Park, just north of Detroit. This fall, according to Shockling, Releaf planted 280 trees. She said the number of trees planted ranges from 250 to 300, depending on funding.

"For example, in spring 2025 we distributed over 400 5-gallon-sized trees in Portage in response to tornado damage they experienced in 2024," she said.

The trees they planted this fall measured 1.5-2 inches in diameter, and all were planted in public spaces. Additionally, smaller trees in containers were distributed to residential property owners. Educational



ReLeaf Michigan Lead Project Foresters Marvin Pettway (Right, in safety vest) and Jenni Shockling (Left, in safety vest) demonstrate how to properly plant a tree.

materials are included with the tree distributions, and community leaders and members are encouraged to help plant the trees as part of the effort.

Trees come from several reputable nurseries through a bidding system that includes at least three nurseries. High-quality, healthy trees are then hand selected by Releaf's project foresters.

Funding for the projects comes from grants obtained through the Michigan DNR Urban and Community Forestry program, Releaf's sponsors and members, and fundraisers and donors.

Interested communities can apply for tree plantings on Releaf's website, <https://releafmichigan.org>. If chosen, community members and leaders agree to a 50-50 cost share. Community volunteers help with the plantings, no contractors are involved, and learn how, where, when and what species to plant. Community members also agree to keep the trees healthy until they are well-established.

"As part of our model, the community provides in-kind services, including calling Miss Dig (Michigan Utility Notification Center), digging tree holes and placing trees near them in advance, providing water for the trees at the planting, and providing ongoing services in alignment with a three-year maintenance agreement," Shockling explained.

Education is at the core of Releaf's mission. The organization works with local schools, libraries, garden clubs and others.

"This can look like a larger planting event on school grounds or a workshop for



## Releaf teams with Archangel in Big Tree Hunt

By KEVIN HOWELL

One of Releaf Michigan's projects is the statewide hunt for the biggest trees in Michigan. The Big Tree Hunt is a three-year contest to search out those long-living giants of the forest.

In that endeavor, Releaf is joined by Archangel Ancient Tree Archive, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit based in Copemish. Archangel was founded in 1996 by David Milarch and his son Jared for the purpose of preserving, propagating and planting old-growth forest genetics.

Jenni Shockling is Releaf's lead project forester.

"Archangel Ancient Tree Archive is a valued sponsor of our Big Tree Hunt program," Shockling said, "and we support one another in ongoing collaboration and information-sharing around Michigan's Big Trees, tree species and diversity, and other forestry-related topics."

Michigan's Big Tree Hunt for the 2023-25 cycle ended on Oct. 18. The three winners for largest trees in the state are an Eastern white pine in Antrim County, with a circumference of 192 inches; a weeping willow in Shiawassee County, measuring 327 inches; and a sugar maple in Lapeer County with a girth of 240 inches. There are also Big Trees named in each county, like a black cherry in Manistee County with a 133-inch circumference. (See the accompanying photo.)

"They're (Archangel) interested in having the data from our program because we are statewide," explained Shockling. "They're interested in seeing where those big trees are because they might have an interest in preserving the genetics."

Archangel searches the entire state for old-growth trees, but Jared Milarch said their work ranges far wider than Michigan; the team has traveled to six other countries.

"We actually collect and clone the world's largest trees," he said. (To learn more about Archangel, read: "Manistee's giant sequoia to be climbed, cloned," Freshwater Reporter, Sept. 2022, and "Archangel cofounder weighs in on fires, climate and big trees," Freshwater Reporter, Oct. 2020.)



A member of Archangel Ancient Tree Archive climbs the giant sequoia at Lake Bluff Farms in Manistee, Sept. 2022. Photo: P. Stinson.

Jared echoed Shockling's statement about why they have partnered with Releaf.

"So, we're from Michigan, and to know where those (big) trees are in the state is valuable information for us," he said. "And the opportunity to collect and clone from those and to have those planted in our landscapes would be great."

"... we do propagation mainly," Jared continued. "We do that through tissue culture, root cuttings and grafting; all those are ways to capture genetics from our old growth giants," he said.

So far, according to Jared, Archangel has propagated more than 95 species and planted more than 200,000 back into areas that needed it.

At times Jared and his brother Jake, also of Archangel, find it necessary to climb to the tops of the trees to gather what they need.

"Sometimes it means getting up there 200 feet," he said. "It's beautiful way up there!"

According to its website, Archangel Ancient Tree Archive also made scientific inroads in propagation:

"Archangel's early experimentation with propagation led to scientific success in cloning the oldest and largest trees in existence. Prior to AATA's work, the scientific community believed that several thousand year old trees could not be cloned through propagation and were no longer viable. AATA proved it was possible and these 'best of the best' trees remain critical to the protection of our planet."

For more information about Releaf Michigan, Big Tree Hunt or Archangel Ancient Tree Archive, go to: <https://releafmichigan.org>, [www.bigtreehunt.com](http://www.bigtreehunt.com) and [www.ancienttreearchive.org](http://www.ancienttreearchive.org).

*"Forest restoration isn't just one of our climate change solutions, it is overwhelmingly more powerful than all of the other climate change solutions proposed." - Professor Tom Crowther, interviewed in The Guardian*

smaller groups, featuring education and a hands-on planting of 1-3 trees," Shockling said.

Educational presentations as well as tree plantings can be requested through the website application.

Plantings are organized all over the state, from the Upper Peninsula to the Indiana state line. Tree species range from non-native (if not on the DNR invasive species list) to Michigan natives. At the Highland Park event, Releaf and volunteers planted peach, pear, plum, cherry and apricot, along with serviceberry and redbud trees.

Shockling encouraged Freshwater Reporter readers to consider a tree-planting

project in their neighborhoods. Interested community members may submit an application this winter for a proposed planting event in 2026. Partially completed applications will be considered.

"We understand that all requested information may not be available at this time, but providing any information that is available and entering TBD (To Be Determined) for the rest helps get the conversation started," Shockling said.

Kevin Howell is a freelance writer living in Mason County. He loves the Michigan woods, lakes and craft beers—not necessarily in that order.



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# All the way to the end

Story and photos by JOSHUA ELIE

“Up the ramp and all the way to the end,” the nice lady said, as she took my checked luggage.

I love the simplicity of Traverse City’s Cherry Capital Airport, though if you don’t have a direct flight and have a friend in the Detroit area, you could probably save a bit of time and money by parking your car at your friend’s and flying directly out of Detroit’s Metro Airport. As I boarded the aircraft, the chipper flight attendant looked at my boarding pass, pointed toward the back of the plane and said, “All the way to the end.” Little did I know how common this phrase was going to be during my European adventure.

We touched down 15 minutes early at Chicago’s O’Hare International Airport, so the mood of the passengers was rather cheerful. These bright, sunny dispositions began to dim as we sat waiting for a gate to become available. Forty-five minutes later we were finally allowed to disembark, though considering I had a 5-hour layover I wasn’t in any hurry. I don’t know why people rush to get on or off these flights because it isn’t going to get you to your destination any faster. The flight isn’t going to take off or land any sooner just because “you” are on board.

O’Hare was the same enormous, crowded zoo I remembered, so I wasn’t about to try to find my gate on my own. Not like last time. I asked this kind gentleman behind his little bar for directions. He pointed, saying, “Go that way, all the way to the end, turn right, take another right just past the McDonald’s, down the escalator, through security (again), up the second elevator, and when the door opens, walk across the skyway, all the way to the end.” I was wondering how I was going to remember all that amidst the chaos, then later I realized it wouldn’t have mattered much, anyway. Not seeing any escalators, I asked for directions again and found I was supposed to turn right *before* the McDonald’s. There was no escalator, just steps. At the bottom of the steps, I actually looked for security, to get further directions or at least see if I was on the right track. There was none to be found. After trying a few elevators and flights of

stairs, I found the skyway, and at the end was a train station? (Sheesh.) There was a guy there, and I think it was his job to orient all the people with confused looks on their faces. He told me to “get on the next train and stay on it for three stops, all the way to the end.” The train was pretty cool, though, kind of like a wood-framed roller coaster with dips and bank turns.

The train dropped me around Gate 17, and I began looking for Gate 46. By now, you probably know where that Gate 46 is located — all the way to the end. After about Gate 20-something, everything was quiet. Very few people or businesses around. I got all the way to 46 and all I saw was a small gathering of Muslims praying. I looked at my boarding pass; it said Gate 36, not 46. O.K., that one is on me. I walked back and there was this tiny, crowded bar, standing room only, and all I wanted was a place to sit down and make sure I had the right gate. Of course, they changed the gate, but I didn’t know that because they don’t post these things until 45 minutes to an hour before boarding. At least I was in the right area. Soon, the whole place flooded with people speaking languages I didn’t understand. After figuring out the lines for where to show my passport and where to show my boarding pass, I boarded this humongous Boeing 777. I thought with these larger aircraft they had more than one place to board, like one access at the front and one in the middle, but not this one. The flight attendant, while looking at my boarding pass, said to me in her lovely Swiss accent, “You want this aisle here and all the way to the end.”

I don’t understand why they don’t board the tail section first. People that pay extra money for first class end up sitting on the plane much longer as they wait, enduring all the rest of the passengers with carry-ons trying not to bump into them and their seats as they make their way past them.

These were not the only places that I got to see all the way to the end. In Germany I got to go all the way to the end of the majestic Black Forest, due to the misspelling of the town Triberg as “Triburg” on the GPS, and all the way to the end of the Swiss Alps into Italy.

Swiss Alps, seen from Italy.



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Triberg, a small town in Germany’s Black Forest.

As exciting as it is to see such fantastic places overseas, traveling there always makes me ever so grateful to live in the USA, the greatest country in the world. And, especially thankful for my homestead, where you turn right on the old dirt road across from the gas station, and take it all the way to the end.

Joshua Elie is studying for his second builder’s license. He is the Irons’ handyman and is also a musician and a homesteader.

Sweet Red Pepper Wursts

- 5 1" x6" pork sausage links, cut in thirds
- 2 large red bell peppers
- 2 large onions
- 2 Tbsp salted butter

It isn’t a necessity, but I like using a wok for this because the curved walls help keep the sausages from rolling away from where you want them.

Melt the butter in the wok, then add the sausages and turn the heat to medium-high. Sear the bottoms, then turn one-quarter until seared, then turn, sear, turn, sear until seared all the way around.

While you are doing this, you will have plenty of time to core and *batonnet* (slice about ¼-inch thick) your pepper and slice your onion. Cut the onions in half, peel, then slice about ¼ inch. You don’t have to bother breaking them apart because they will fall apart in the wok later.



Lake Superior. Photo: P. Stinson

## Stone Linguistics

By Ramona DeGeorgio-Venegas

I don’t speak “Superior”.  
She repeats over and over  
a phrase to the shore.  
Spoken by water over rocks,  
liquid as Portuguese.  
I walk along the cobbles,  
trying to understand.

Now, I can understand  
a few snippets of “Michigan”.  
Her soothing lullaby words  
washing onto sandy beaches.  
She shares fossil rocks with me.

But I apologize, Superior.  
I still can’t quite make it out,  
your guttural, epiglottal responses  
to the question I asked of your stones.  
Where are the agates?

Superior waves won’t say.  
Yet they offer a soliloquy of surf.  
A teasing, rhythmic tumble,  
washing other pretty rocks at my feet.

Sweet red pepper wursts.

After your sausages are seared all the way around, add your peppers and onions, and mix. It will take a while because the liquid from the peppers and onion will slow things way down. You will want to mix a few more times to get a nice little bit of char on the veggies.

Makes enough for two, sided with whatever you are in the mood for. Simplicity is bliss, and this recipe doesn’t require much attention.





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## Giving Tuesday is Dec. 2

Compiled by the editors

We gathered a list of nonprofits (and related others) that our writers either featured or referred to as sources in their stories in 2025. We usually post this list on Facebook but decided to publish them here to reach more of you. Consider helping your favorite nonprofits, especially charities, during Giving Tuesday on Dec. 2.

To find a charity's rating, **visit [charitynavigator.org](https://www.charitynavigator.org)**. More about Giving Tuesday can be found by visiting: **[www.givingtuesday.org](https://www.givingtuesday.org)**

- AFFEW, A Few Friends for the Environment, [affew.org](https://affew.org)
- Alliance for the Great Lakes, [greatlakes.org](https://greatlakes.org)
- American Tortoise Rescue, [worldturtleday.org/american-tortoise-rescue](https://worldturtleday.org/american-tortoise-rescue)
- Arts & Culture Alliance of Manistee County, [allartsmanistee.com](https://allartsmanistee.com)
- Benzie Area Christian Neighbors, [benziebacn.org](https://benziebacn.org)
- Benzie Area Historical Society and Museum, [benziemuseum.org](https://benziemuseum.org)
- Benzie Conservation District, [benziecd.org](https://benziecd.org)
- Benzie Manistee Snowbirds Snowmobile Club, [benziemanisteesnowbirds.com](https://benziemanisteesnowbirds.com)
- Community Cats of Benzie County, [benziecats.org](https://benziecats.org)
- DarkSky Michigan, [darksnymichigan.org](https://darksnymichigan.org)
- Elberta Labor Heritage Center, [elbertalaborheritagecenter.org](https://elbertalaborheritagecenter.org)
- Elizabeth Lane Oliver Center for the Arts, [oliverart.org](https://oliverart.org)
- Friends of Ludington State Park, [friendsofludingtonstatepark.org](https://friendsofludingtonstatepark.org)
- Friends of Orchard Beach State Park, [sites.google.com/orchardbeachfriends.org/orchardbeachfriends/home](https://sites.google.com/orchardbeachfriends.org/orchardbeachfriends/home)
- Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy, [gtrlc.org](https://gtrlc.org)
- Great Lakes Environmental Festival, [glef.org](https://glef.org)
- Grier Music Fest (and scholarship), [grierworldcc.com/donate-and-partner/](https://grierworldcc.com/donate-and-partner/)
- Grow Benzie, [growbenzie.org](https://growbenzie.org)
- Homeward Bound Animal Shelter, [homewardboundmanistee.org](https://homewardboundmanistee.org)
- Indivisible, [indivisible.org](https://indivisible.org)
- KCS Angels, [kcsangels.com](https://kcsangels.com)
- Kaleva Historical Society, [kalevamichigan.com](https://kalevamichigan.com)
- Kaleva Lions Club, [www.e-clubhouse.org/sites/kalevami/](https://www.e-clubhouse.org/sites/kalevami/)
- Lake County Animal Control/Shelter, [lakecountyanimalcontrol.wordpress.com](https://lakecountyanimalcontrol.wordpress.com)
- Lake County Historical Museum, Facebook @lakecountyhistoricalsociety
- Leader Dogs for the Blind, [leaderdog.org](https://leaderdog.org)
- Leelanau Energy, [www.leelanauenergy.org](https://www.leelanauenergy.org)
- Ludington Area Center for the Arts, [ludingtonartscenter.org](https://ludingtonartscenter.org)
- Manistee Area Racial Justice and Diversity Initiative, [marjdi.org](https://marjdi.org)
- Manistee Conservation District, [manisteedc2.org](https://manisteedc2.org)
- Manistee County Community Foundation, [manisteefoundation.org](https://manisteefoundation.org)
- Manistee SNAG (Spay/Neuter Action Group), 231-889-0182
- Marilla Historical Society and Museum, [marillahistory.org](https://marillahistory.org)
- Mason-Lake Conservation District, [www.mason-lakeconservation.org](https://www.mason-lakeconservation.org)
- Mason County Animal Control/Shelter, [masoncounty.net/departments/animal-control](https://masoncounty.net/departments/animal-control)
- McClure Rabb Idlewild Foundation, [mcclurerabbidlewildfoundation.org](https://mcclurerabbidlewildfoundation.org)
- Michigan Environmental Council, [environmentalcouncil.org](https://environmentalcouncil.org)
- Michigan History Center, [michigan.gov/mhc/about/membership](https://michigan.gov/mhc/about/membership)
- Mobile Clothes Closet, [mobileclothescloset.wixsite.com](https://mobileclothescloset.wixsite.com)



## HOLIDAY schedule

**CHRISTMAS ARTISAN MARKET – ONEKAMA SCHOOL**  
**22 NOVEMBER 10–3**  
**PATINA AFTER PARTY 10–4**

**FABRIC STAMPING HOLIDAY DISHTOWEL**  
**14 NOVEMBER 12–3**

**BLACK FRIDAY/SMALL BUSINESS SATURDAY SALES**  
**28–29 NOVEMBER 11–3**

**PET PHOTOS WITH SANTA**  
**6–7 DECEMBER 12–2**

**THAT'S A WRAP PARTY!!!**  
**13 DECEMBER 2–4**



# FRESHWATER REPORTER



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

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- National Museum of African American History and Culture, [nmaahc.si.edu/connect/ways-give](https://nmaahc.si.edu/connect/ways-give)
- Nature Discovery, [www.naturediscovery.net/aboutus.htm](https://www.naturediscovery.net/aboutus.htm)
- North American Butterfly Association, [naba.org](https://naba.org)
- Onekama Guild Thrift Shop, Facebook @Onekama.Guild.Thriftshop
- PFLAG Manistee, [pflagmanistee.org](https://pflagmanistee.org)
- Portage Lake Association, [www.onekama.info](https://www.onekama.info)
- Pride in the 'Stee, [facebook.com/people/Pride-in-the-Stee/100082884475238/](https://facebook.com/people/Pride-in-the-Stee/100082884475238/)
- Ramsdell Regional Center for the Arts, [ramsdelltheatre.org](https://ramsdelltheatre.org)
- Save A Buddy Fund (dogs), [saveabuddyfund.org](https://saveabuddyfund.org)
- SEEDS, [ecoseeds.org](https://ecoseeds.org)
- Sightline Institute, [sightline.org](https://sightline.org)
- Solar Faithful, [solarfaithful.org](https://solarfaithful.org)
- Sun Day, [www.sunday.earth](https://www.sunday.earth)
- Trigenta Club, Facebook @Bear-Lake-Trigenta-Club
- Wexford County Animal Control/Shelter, [www.wexfordsheriff.org/animalcontrol](https://www.wexfordsheriff.org/animalcontrol)
- World Renew (Byron Center, Mich.), [worldrenew.net](https://worldrenew.net)
- World Turtle Day, [worldturtleday.org](https://worldturtleday.org)
- Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation, [xerces.org](https://xerces.org)

