Glen Arbor Sun

Here to Enlighten You

JUNE 4, 2026 FREE!

Volume XXXI, Issue VII Covering Events, Characters, Businesses and the Arts in Leelanau County and Sleeping Bear Dunes www.GlenArbor.com

Asparagus is ripe in the land of the Sleeping Bear

From staff reports

Empire's quirky, fun, day-long Asparagus Festival returns to Leelanau County on Saturday, June 6. The day of peace, music and food offers something for everyone in the family.

Events include the Kick-Yer Assparagus 5K Fun Run/Walk at Empire's public beach at 10 am; a pop-up book sale at the Glen Lake Community Library from 11 am-3 pm; a recipe contest in the Township Hall at noon; open hours at the Empire Area Museum from 1-4 pm; the Ode to Asparagus Poetry Contest at the Library at 2 pm; an appearance by the Asparagus Queen on Stilts from 2-4 pm, and the Magic Lady Family Magic Show from 3-4 pm.

The main party under the big tent on closed-off Front St runs from 12-6 pm. Asparagus delicacies made by local food vendors and drinks from local breweries will be available, complimented by live music performances by Zinnia Dungjen, Andre Villoch and 5th Gear Band.

Food vendors this year include Art's Tavern, Plevas Meats, Shipwreck Café, Birria Taco Truck, Red Top Gourmet Hot Dogs, Squeeze 'Em Lemon Shack, Norconk's Asparagus, and Lively NeighborFood Market. Right Brain Brewery, Lake Ann Brewery and St Ambrose Cellars will supply the drinks.

Admission to the street festival costs $10 per adult; children under 16 are free.

Visit our website, GlenArbor.com for links to sign up for the Kick-Yer Assparagus Run/Walk on Saturday morning.

On our website you'll also find a link to the asparagus recipe contest entry form, which should be completed and emailed to jody@grocersdaughter.com. Those participating are encouraged to bring their asparagus dish and completed form to the Empire Town Hall between 11-11:45 am on June 6. Please bring enough to accommodate 100 bite-size servings. Typically a medium to large casserole is sufficient.

To submit poems for the Ode to Asparagus Poetry Contest, email dfd@glenlakelibrary.net at the Glen Lake Library, or just show up.

Pictured to the right: Empire's Asparagus Queen on Stilts.

Photo by Ross Boissoneau

Paul Skinner helps drive Empire

By Ross Boissoneau
Sun contributor

"Come on in," says Paul Skinner as he opens the door at the Miser's Hoard. "Don't mind them. Hush," he says to Brandi and Gizmo, the Shih Tzu security team.

The tall, ungainly building on Front Street in Empire is home to the two tiny guard dogs, Paul and Shelly Skinner, and the Miser's Hoard, their catch-all store which sells an eclectic mix of gifts, jewelry, furnishings, accessories and antiques. And more than that, if you want to know the truth. It's also the headquarters for the Empire Asparagus Festival and the Empire Hill Climb, both of which Paul oversees.

That's quite a bit for one place in the diminutive village in the southwestern corner of Leelanau County. But the Skinners make it work.

Take the Asparagus Festival as a start. When he was approached to help kick off the then-new event in 2003, Paul volunteered to find sponsorships. When the original organizer got married and moved to Traverse City, he found himself in charge. Since then, it's become a tradition. "It's grown. The first year we had 25 T-shirts, ten gallons of asparagus soup. We had a car show—with three cars, and one didn't run. And it rained."

From that auspicious beginning, the event has become a staple for the community. This year's festival is expected to bring between 2,000 and 2,500 people to downtown Empire.

See* SKINNER *on page 14

Community supports Sebastian Smith, an athlete with true grit

By Sandra Serra Bradshaw
Sun contributor

Sebastian Smith, the 37-year-old general manager of The Riverside Inn in Leland, suffered a life-changing accident in February while teaching his younger cousin how to snowboard at Boyne Mountain. A lifelong athlete, he has taught others in his chosen sport, kiteboarding, in locations throughout the world including Aruba, Costa Rica, Puerto Rico and the North Carolina Outer Banks.

In a moment that changed everything, Smith fell and fractured his neck. Though the shock and uncertainty following the accident has overwhelmed him and his family, through hard work, determination and inner strength Smith has shown his tenacity and strong spirit.

He was released this spring from Craig Hospital in Englewood (near Denver), Colorado, which is among the finest hospital of its kind for people with spinal cords and other severe injuries, according to *U.S. News & World Report*.

"It is where Sebastian spent so many hours learning to adjust to his new way of life,"' said his father Jerome. "He worked with a dedicated team of professionals, helping him in so many ways." Smith had a full schedule at Englewood, where he learned how to operate his new electric wheelchair, attended rehab classes, and took physical therapy.

"Craig Hospital is where many pro athletes with severe injuries go," said Jerome. "The staff there were amazing. They are occupational and physical therapists who have been there 23 years. I cannot say enough good about them."

An amazing human and friend to many, Smith's recovery road is long.

"My son is very independent," said Jerome. "He wants to be in charge of his own care. He wants to know everything that is happening. If his physical therapists tell him to do his certain exercises five days a week, Sebastian will be doing them seven days. At Craig he was among patients of many who were just like him."

Hospital staff taught him many new tasks including effectively using his

See* SEBASTIAN *on page 14

Tenants lose everything after Glen Arbor apartment house catches fire

By Cameryn Cass
Sun contributor

Early in the morning on Monday, June 1, an apartment house caught fire in downtown Glen Arbor.

The Glen Lake Fire Department was dispatched to 6002 S. Oak Street at 2:05 a.m., said Nate Perdue, lieutenant at the department and incident commander at the scene.

"We had the fire out around 8 a.m. and kept a truck at the scene to monitor conditions until noon," he said. "It was a total loss."

No tenants or firefighters were injured during the blaze, and no other property was impacted.

Perdue said the team pulled water from the Crystal River to subdue the flames, which is standard procedure in a town with "no actual fire hydrants."

At first, there was a problem pulling water from the river—something Perdue attributed to "equipment malfunction"—but it was fixed and otherwise worked well.

The cause of the fire is still unknown and under investigation, which could take upwards of a month to complete since insurance and private investigators will get involved.

Mara Miller and the Semple family, the two tenants impacted by the fire, are staying with family and friends in the area for the meantime.

"I've lived there since 2015," said Miller. "I just have what's in my car, my purse. I didn't even grab my phone."

She said that people keep asking if she's okay and what they can do to help, but she's not quite sure what she needs yet.

"Right now, I'm just trying to figure out a long-term solution," said Miller. "The worst part is, where do you go? It's not like we can just go out and buy a home; the median house price in Leelanau County right now is $700,000."

Mara Miller, who manages the Leelanau Coffee Roasting Company's cafe in Glen Arbor, lost everything in a June 1 apartment fire.

Both Miller and the Semple family have active GoFundMe campaigns online to help rebuild after the loss.

Miller has been an active member in the community for many decades, from singing in the Leelanau Community Choir to working at and managing the Leelanau Coffee Roasting Company. The Semples are a young family with children, and Robb Semple has done quality contracting work in the area for some time now.

As far as fire safety goes, Perdue underscored how the area is in a "significant" burn ban.

"I know it looks green, but all the foliage on the ground and the loose leaves under the trees are all very dry," he said.

If you'd like to help Miller and the Semple family, visit our website, GlenArbor.com, for links to their respective GoFundMe campaigns.

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secure.actblue.com/donate/wheelerforbetsy
For questions regarding directions to the Wheeler Home, please call Mimi at (231) 631-0153

Leelanau June Upcoming Events Calendar

Thursday, June 4: Dune Bird launches Woolsey Red to support airport restoration, 4-8 pm

Friday, June 5: Glen Arbor Arts Center opens American Tree exhibit, 5-7 pm

Saturday, June 6: Empire Asparagus Festival, 10 am-6 pm. Visit Empire-Chamber.com for lineup.

• Grand Traverse Lighthouse Museum and Friends of Leelanau State Park hold Rock the Light races

June 8-20: Cerus Quartet plays Sound Garden performances throughout Glen Arbor-Empire area.

June 8-12: Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore holds barn restoration workshop, Lyle and Sarah Schmidt farm

Wednesday, June 10: Benefit fundraiser for Sebastian Smith at Hop Lot Brewery, Suttons Bay, 5-8 pm

Thursday, June 11: Glen Arbor Arts Center hosts painter Heidi Weiss, 10 am

Saturday, June 13: M-22 Challenge, departs from Sleeping Bear Dune Climb and circumnavigates Glen Lakes

• Grand Traverse Lighthouse hosts Community Day, 10 am-5 pm

• Glen Lake Library hosts TED Democracy Live—Founding Futures, 11 am-5 pm

• Leland Food & Wine Festival, noon-6 pm

• Glen Arbor Arts Center hosts Leelanau Conservancy's Becky Hill, 1 pm

Wednesday, June 17: The Homestead hosts Music on the Mountain concert featuring Alan Hewitt, 7 pm

• Glen Lake Library hosts Susan Hollister Wasserman, author of Stepping off the boat, 7 pm

Wednesday, June 24: TART Trails hosts ice cream social, 2-4 pm at West Skyline Drive. RSVP at emily@traversetrails.org

June 24-August 20: Lanphier Observatory Public Stargazing, 10-midnight, clear skies permitting, at the Leelanau School beach. Adults $5, students $4.

Ongoing

• Live Music at Dune Bird Winery, **Sundays**, 3-6 pm

• Live Music at Bel Lago, **Sundays**, 3:30-5:30 pm

• Live Music at French Valley Vineyard, **Mondays**, 4-7 pm

• Cherry Public House beer garden hosts live music, **Tuesdays**, 5-8 pm

• Live Music at Bel Lago, **Tuesdays**, 5:30-7:30 pm

• Bay Books in Suttons Bay hosts Books and Wine Book Club, first **Tuesday** of the month, 6 pm

• Live Music at French Valley Vineyard, **Thursdays**, 3-6 pm

• Live Music at Dune Bird Winery, **Thursdays**, 3-6 pm

• Cherry Public House beer garden hosts live music, **Thursdays**, 5-8 pm

• Glen Arbor Wines hosts live music, **Thursdays**, 7:30-9:30 pm

• Northern Latitude Distillery in Lake Leelanau hosts Books and Bourbon Book Club with Bay Books, last **Thursday** of the month at 5 pm

• Stories & More for Preschoolers, Glen Lake Library, **Fridays** at 11 am

• Live music at River Club Glen Arbor, **Fridays**, 5-8 pm

• Live Music at Bel Lago, **Fridays**, 5:30-7:30 pm

• Lake Street Studios Center Gallery art openings, **Fridays** 6-8 pm, beginning June 26

• Glen Arbor Wines hosts live music, **Fridays**, 7:30-9:30 pm

• Live music at River Club Glen Arbor, **Saturdays**, 5-8 pm

• Live Music at Bel Lago, **Saturdays**, 3:30-5:30 pm

• Glen Arbor Wines hosts live music, **Saturdays**, 7:30-9:30 pm

Recycling located at 9 locations throughout Leelanau County, including at the ball fields in Empire, at the Leelanau School and at Glen Lake School.

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Cerus Quartet plays Sound Garden in Glen Arbor

From staff reports

The Glen Arbor Arts Center (GAAC) is thrilled to host the Cerus Quartet as Musicians in Residence from June 8–20, as part of their Manitou Music Series, in partnership with Interlochen Public Radio's (IPR) Sound Garden Project.

Emerging as one of the most compelling chamber ensembles of their generation, the Cerus Quartet brings the dynamic sound of the saxophone quartet to the Glen Arbor area. Their repertoire spans contemporary works and transcriptions of classical masterworks, combining innovation, versatility, and engaging visual elements to create a distinctive performance experience.

The Cerus Quartet has earned multiple prestigious honors, including first prize at the 2024 MTNA National Chamber Music Competition, the 2025 Concert Artists Guild Louis and Susan Meisel Competition, and a Gold Medal at the 2025 Fischoff Chamber Music Competition. They have premiered works by Jennifer Higdon, Karalyn Schubring, and Joey Karz, with a new commission by Ryan Lindveit underway.

The quartet includes Roberto Campa on Soprano Saxophone, Laura Ramsay on Alto Saxophone, Kyle Kato on Tenor Saxophone, and Samuel Dishon on Baritone Saxophone.

During their two week residency, the Cerus Quartet will offer immersive musical experiences around the Glen Arbor and Empire area, from public performances to school and library visits, open rehearsals, and "Sound Samples" (spontaneous musical interactions in community spaces). This residency is part of the Sound Garden Project, which is dedicated to "planting classical music in unexpected places," from beaches and parks to porches and public spaces.

Audience members are also invited to attend two open rehearsals, offering a unique behind-the-scenes look at how musicians prepare for performance. These interactive sessions provide an opportunity to observe the creative process, hear works in progress, ask questions, and chat with the musicians. Open rehearsals are especially popular with musicians, music students, and anyone curious about the artistry and collaboration that bring a performance to life. The open rehearsals will take place on **Wednesday, June 10, from 6–7:30 pm** at the Old Settlers Park Gazebo in Maple City, and **Wednesday, June 17, from 6–7:30 pm** at the River Club Outdoor Stage in Glen Arbor. Both events are weather dependent and will be canceled in the event of rain.

The residency includes two concerts. The first will take place on the Glen Arbor Arts Center front porch (or in the gallery in case of rain) on **Saturday, June 13, at 2 pm**. No tickets are required, and attendees are encouraged to bring a chair. The second culminating concert will take place at the Glen Arbor Township Hall on **Friday, June 19, at 7 pm**. Tickets are required for this free event, with a suggested $25 donation to support Manitou Music. Both concerts will feature special guests and Beach Bards hosts Norm Wheeler and Anne-Marie Oomen, sharing stories and reflections on Glen Arbor's history and cultural life.

Throughout their residency, the Cerus Quartet will create joyful, spontaneous encounters with music through a variety of free public events. These performances are designed to surprise, delight, and deepen community connection.

Residency Schedule Highlights

(All events free and open to the public unless noted)

• Sunrise Sounds: Wake up to morning music at favorite Glen Arbor locations

• Open Rehearsals: Get a behind-the-scenes look at the creative process from the Old Settlers Park Gazebo in Maple City and the stage at River Club in Glen Arbor

• Sound Samples: Interactive musical experiences in parks, shops, and other unexpected places

• Front Porch Music: GAAC Front Porch Gallery, if it rains, with special guests Beach Bards hosts Norm Wheeler and Anne-Marie Oomen, sharing stories and reflections on Glen Arbor's history and cultural life. | Saturday, June 13, 2-3 pm. Free - bring a chair

• Sunset Sounds: A dreamy evening performance at Empire Beach

• Musical Story Time: Family-friendly music at the Glen Lake Community Library

• Glen Lake Community School Visit: An afternoon of music for Glen Lake students, including performances on the playground and during school pickup

• Culminating Concert: A free final performance at the Glen Arbor Township Hall, Glen Arbor with special guests Beach Bards hosts Norm Wheeler and Anne-Marie Oomen, sharing stories and reflections on Glen Arbor's history and cultural life. Friday, June 19, 7–8:30 pm. **Tickets required. Free with suggested $25 donation**

This residency invites community members of all ages to encounter chamber music in inspiring, unexpected ways, fostering connection, creativity, and joy throughout the Glen Arbor area. For the most up-to-date schedule and final concert free ticket information, visit GlenArborArt.org/product/musicians-in-residence-cerus-quartet. Or follow the GAAC on social media.

Arts Center hosts painter Weiss

From staff reports

Kalamazoo artist Heidi Weiss's paintings spring from images taken from paused film stills—a number of which will be the basis for a series of new oil paintings that "preserve and disrupt story logic." Weiss will focus on these "transitional frames" during her Glen Arbor Arts Center (GAAC) residency. Weiss talks about her residency during a public presentation on Thursday, June 11, at 10 am at the GAAC.

"These transitional frames—often overlooked—offer a chance to slow down visual information before it resolves into narrative," she said. "This residency gives me the time to test how visual interruption, abstraction, and fragmentation can shift the emotional and interpretive weight of familiar scenes, and how the series should develop moving forward."

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No blues for Alan Hewitt

By Ross Boissoneau
Sun contributor

The Moody Blues are no more, but keyboardist Alan Hewitt isn't slowing down. The band's longtime keyboardist and musical director has turned back to his own band, One Nation. He brings the progressive rock/jazz fusion outfit to the Homestead June 17, opening the second season of the revived Music On The Mountain.

"I'm excited to be on the road with my band, and to be playing in such a beautiful place," says Hewitt.

As a youngster growing up in Petoskey, he absorbed a lot of influences. He and his pals would make the drive to Detroit to see iconic '70s bands at Cobo Hall or Olympia, with artists like King Crimson, Yes, Gentle Giant, Edgar Winter's White Trash and Emerson, Lake and Palmer. He graduated from Petoskey before heading off to Berklee College of Music, where he originally enrolled as a drummer. "I intended to keep on (drumming) at Berklee. Vibes too – Gary Burton was my teacher." While at Berklee, he served as drummer for T-Bone Walker.

He was a huge fan of the fusion outfit Return to Forever and wanted to emulate drummer Lenny White. But instead, he found himself turning to piano as he began working on his degree in composition and arranging. Good bye Lenny, hello Chick Corea.

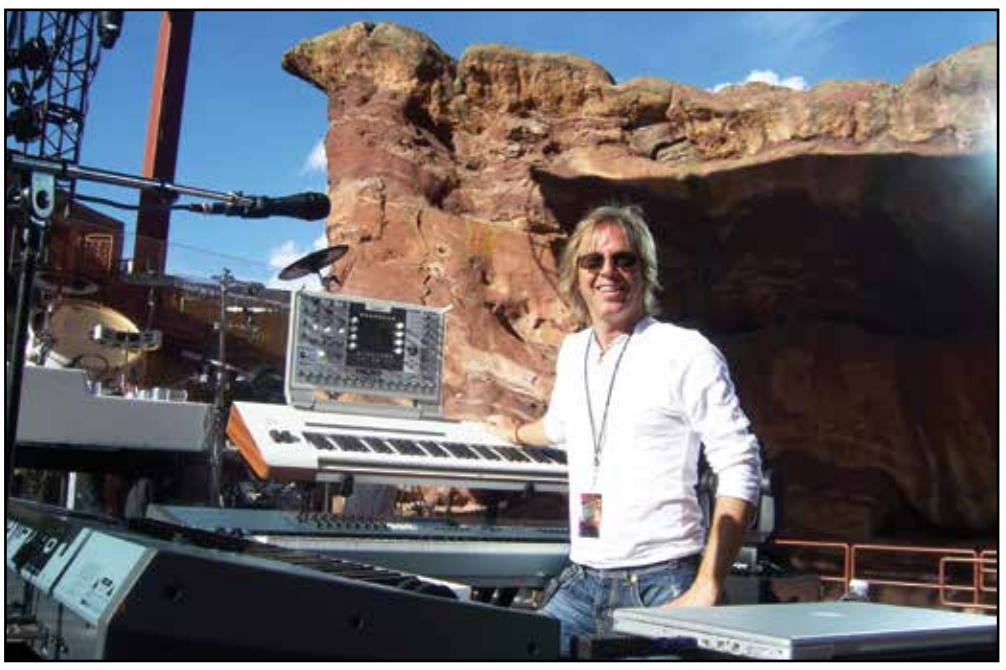
Coming out of Berklee, Hewitt signed with Warner Brothers, and was pegged as a smooth jazz keyboardist, even appearing on smooth jazz cruises and in a 2007 concert at Dennos Museum Center as such. He still maintained interest in other musical styles, and it was during that period he worked with Donny Osmond, Fee Waybill (the Tubes) and Jane Wiedlin (the Go-Gos), among others.

He played keyboards and did production work with his friend Maurice White on Earth, Wind & Fire albums ("Maurice was a good friend and a mentor," he says), played and produced with Flint's Dick Wagner (Alice Cooper), even recorded with metal's Warrant, writing the band's hit "Cherry Pie" and playing keyboards on the multi-million selling album of the same name.

His music and piano can be heard in films including *Ocean's 13, Happy Gilmore,* and *Bridget Jones' Diary*, and he has arranged and composed the theme songs or backing music for more than 50 television programs, including *Oprah, The Osbournes, Inside the NFL*, and fellow Michiganian Tim Allen's *Home Improvement.*

It was his work on keys that led to his working with Rock and Roll Hall of Fame inductees the Moody Blues in 2011. "I got a call from the Moody Blues. We had the same management," he says. That led to a nearly decade-long run with the pop/prog pioneers, from 2010 until the band called it quits in 2018.

Following the band's dissolution after drummer Graeme Edge's retirement, Hewitt went on the road with Justin Hayward, the Moody Blues guitarist and vocalist, then for a number of years with Moody bassist John Lodge's 10,000 Light Years band. It was with Lodge that he finally got to work with original Moody Blues members Mike



Pinder and Ray Thomas on Lodge's album *10,000 Light Years Ago*.

"Ray was a swashbuckler. He said he wished I'd been in the band when he was," recalls Hewitt.

When Lodge passed away last year, Hewitt was saddened to lose his friend and bandleader, but took the opportunity to work on his own music. Not that he had ever stopped, mind you. As noted, his diverse background includes forays into funk, smooth jazz, hair metal and pretty much anything and anyone who wanted to benefit from his keyboard prowess and production work.

So, he could and has done anything and everything. It's clear he could rest on his laurels, and it's just as clear he has no interest in doing so. Not when there are songs to be written and music to be played.

Alan Hewitt and One Nation perform at the top of Bay Mountain on June 17 at 7 p.m. His band includes fellow northern Michigan natives Duffy King from Indian River on guitar and vocals and Petoskey's Jake Allen on guitar and vocals. Drummer Billy Ashbaugh is, like Hewitt, a former member of the Moody Blues band, and he and King both toured and recorded with Lodge. Bassist David Johnson (the Neville Brothers) rounds out the group.

All Music On The Mountain shows are on Wednesday night. The rest of the season is as follows:

- Kevin DiSimone/Hilary James, July 1
- Blue Water Ramblers, July 8
- Randy Marsh/Cat Daddy, July 22
- Jabo Bihlman band, Aug. 5
- Seth Bernard w/band, Aug. 12
- Joe Taylor, Aug. 19
- East Bay Drive, Sept. 9

All shows are at 7 p.m. except East Bay Drive, which begins at 6:30. Tickets are $22 and are available at tinyurl.com/Tickets-MOTM.

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Suttons Bay grads, "Take the trail that challenges you to grow"

By Bekah TenBrink
Sun contributor

Bekah TenBrink, founder and director of LIFT Teen Center—a free, out-of-schooltime program to support 6th through 12th graders in Leelanau County schools—gave the commencement address at Suttons Bay High School's graduation ceremony on May 29. Below is the text of her address.

Good evening, graduates, families, teachers, and everyone who believes in these incredible students. Thank you for being here tonight.

I am deeply humbled to speak on behalf of the Class of 2026.

I have known many of you since you were in sixth grade, and I've had the privilege of walking alongside you through some pretty awkward years and trust me, I have stories. But more importantly, I have had the honor of watching you grow into not only remarkable students, but truly incredible human beings. I can confidently say that every one of you has impacted my life and helped put the "why" behind LIFT's mission.

Over the years, we have shared so many adventures together. From theme parks and hiking trails to snow-covered mountains, lunch gatherings (where you somehow cleared out every snack in one fell swoop) , paintball battles, beach bonfires, and water balloon fights on the last day of school… the list could go on.

Through all of it, we learned together. You shared your journeys, your hardships, your victories, and the moments in between. And getting to witness who you are becoming has been an incredible gift.

Class of 2026, tonight I want to take you on one last metaphorical adventure.

When you arrive at a trailhead, and you are preparing for your hike there is usually a map. It outlines the distance of the hike, maybe some terrain notes, and possible routes ahead. But most importantly, somewhere on that map is an arrow circled with the words:

"YOU ARE HERE."

What I love most about that marker is that it does not tell you everything that will happen next. It does not list every challenge you will face, every turn you will take, or every obstacle waiting ahead.

It simply reminds you where you

TenBrink (l) gave Suttons Bay's commencement address on May 29.

are right now.

And from here, anything is possible.

Tonight, you stand at an entirely new trailhead. Some of you already know which direction you want to take. Others are still figuring it out. And I want you to know that both are beautiful places to be.

Because in life, sometimes the hardest thing to do is simply begin.

I am learning that in order to move forward with purpose, you first have to recognize how far you have already come. Tonight marks the end of your time at Suttons Bay Schools. Both of your feet are planted firmly in this moment in the now.

So take time to celebrate it.

Celebrate the people who supported you, encouraged you, challenged you, and loved you enough to help get you HERE.

There is something else I have learned about trails over the years.

Sometimes the path is clear and well marked. Other times, you lose sight of it completely. Sometimes you reach the top faster than expected, and sometimes the climb feels impossibly steep.

There will be seasons in your life when you feel confident and certain, and seasons when you feel completely lost. And wandering

But feeling lost does not mean you have failed.

It simply means you are still moving.

Still learning.

Still becoming.

The truth is, no trail map could ever fully prepare you for the life ahead of you. It cannot show heartbreak, unexpected opportunities, friendships that will change you, or moments that completely redefine who you are.

What matters is not whether you always know exactly where you are going. With or without the map

What matters is how you choose to walk the path in front of you.

Be kind.

Be curious, not judgmental

Be brave enough to try.

Be willing to take the long road and dirt paths if it leads to something meaningful.

And when you stumble because everyone does, keep going.

Class of 2026, you do not need to have your entire future figured out tonight. You only need to take the next step.

Because "You Are Here" is not just a marker on a map.

It is a reminder that this moment matters.

Your community matters.

Your story matters.

And from this exact place with everything you have learned and everyone who has loved you along the way, because you are capable of more than you know.

So celebrate tonight.

Hold onto the people beside you.

Thank the ones who helped guide you here.

And then, when the time comes, step forward with courage.

Take the trail that scares you a little.

Take the trail that challenges you to grow.

Take the trail that helps someone else feel less alone.

Because the world needs successful people AND

It needs compassionate people.

Brave people.

People who choose kindness when it is hard.

People who make others feel seen.

People who leave things better than they found them.

And I believe with my whole heart that you are those people.

Class of 2026, your story is just beginning

Enjoy the journey.

Can agritourism help Michigan farms survive?

By Rebecca Gearing Carlson
Sun contributor

Small American farmers are facing an existential crisis driven by record debt, corporate consolidation, and policy shifts that have negatively impacted farmers for well over 25 years, according to Time magazine. "If we're going to save the family farm, we need policies that support the success of small and midsized farmers and the communities they call home— not the profits of multinational companies" (Harvie FarmAid.org).

So how can Michigan save family farms and protect the rich agricultural heritage? Agritourism is one solution.

Michigan farmers, and farming families who have been considering growing their agricultural businesses, listened to the opportunities offered during The Agritourism Summit held May 13-14. Starting with a pre-summit farm tour through Antrim County and an evening soiree, the Agritourism Summit was held at the Grand Traverse Resort with a focus on Planting Seeds for a Resilient, Sustainable Agritourism Industry.

What is agritourism? While there is no legal definition, it is a form of commercial enterprise that links agricultural production and processing with tourism to attract visitors to a farm, ranch, or other agricultural business for the purposes of entertaining, educating, or providing recreational experiences while generating income for the operator (USDA).

Opening the summit was Dianna Stampfler who stated the "Intention [is] to share perspectives across local governments, state policy makers, growers, and agritourism entrepreneurs…advancing collaboration in the region." Agritourism in Michigan can translate to farm stays, farm tours, creating products for retail, becoming a special events destination, and ultimately creating a cohesive connection between consumers and food producers.

Ben LaCross, president of Michigan Farm Bureau and a Leelanau County cherry farmer, offered the welcome address emphasizing the theme: "Cultivating Opportunities through Collaboration, Innovation, and Policy." Agritourism becomes key as it is how visitors can connect to agriculture—shaking hands with the food producer at a farmer's market, learning about the methods for extracting sap for maple syrup, or picking fruit at a self-serve farm stand.

With around 50,000 farms raising an estimated $100 billion in revenue, Michigan is the 2nd most diverse agricultural state as it is home to over 300 different types of crops. LaCrosse explained, "Agritourism tells the story of Michigan agriculture as no other sector can." Through corn mazes, pumpkin patches, farm markets, maple syrup operations, and more, agritourism creates a direct connection between the land and the farmers. Furthermore, LaCrosse stressed, agritourism is an opportunity to "Chang[e] how people think about food."

The summit continued with panelists from four Northern Michigan farm owners and operators who explained their path to grow their agritourism businesses: Jimmy Spencer, Pond Hills; John Dindia, Lakeview Hill Farm; Amber Parsons, Harwood Gold; and Greg Shooks, Cellar 1914. Each presenter offered personal background, strategies, and growth models of the family agricultural businesses. During the following question and answer period, none shied away from difficult questions regarding insurance liability, ownership options, succession plans, as well as addressing over-commercialization and zoning queries.

Jimmy Spencer, who owns Pond Hills with his wife, began selling eggs at the end of their driveway 30 years ago, later creating a year-around agritourism business model for their restaurant, winery, brewery, and farm market. Spencer stated, "Creating value-added things" brought cars down the driveway. In the slower seasons of winter and spring, Pond Hills adapts by offering cross country skiing and other winter activities to keep the visitors coming. Lastly, Spencer explained, "perpetuation planning," carefully defining the business' future and succession, will help protect farms and their heritage.

John Dindia, who owns Lakeview Hill Farm and Market with his wife, Bailey Samp, began their farming journey in 2017. Offering both wholesale and direct-to-consumer products, this

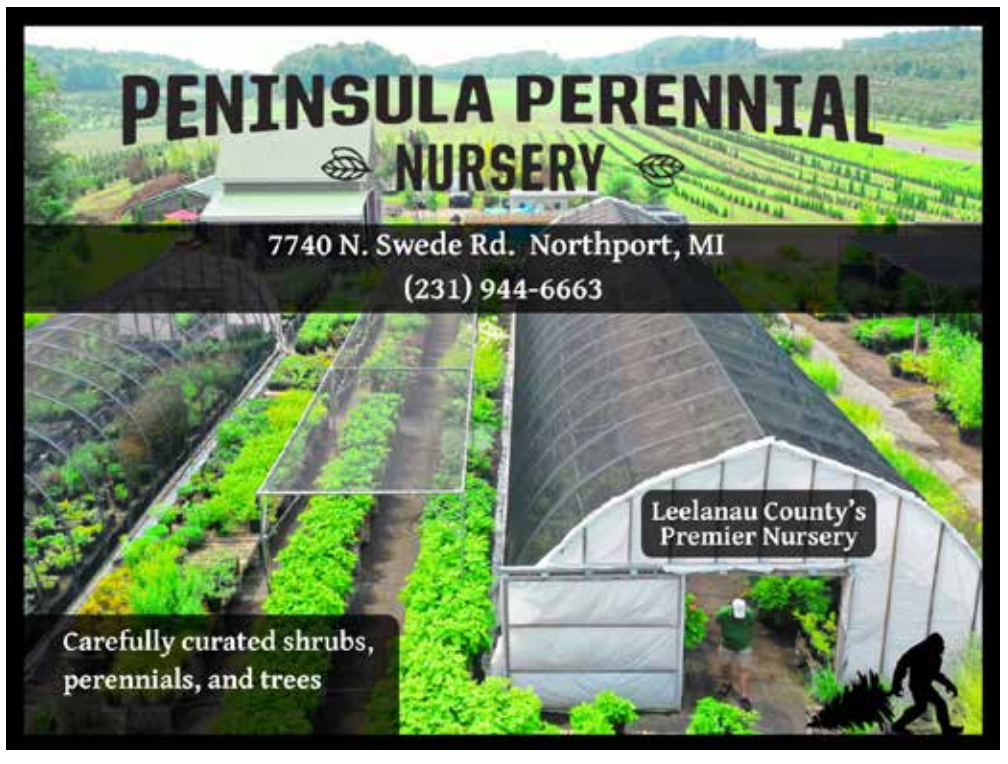
Above: Ben LaCross, president of Michigan Farm Bureau and a Leelanau County cherry farmer. Below: Bailey Samp and John Dindia, who own Lakeview Hill Farm. Photos by Madeleine Hill Vedel.

successful husband and wife team offer certified organic produce, cut flowers, and groceries year around. In the seasonal world of Northern Michigan, this is not an easy feat. But they successfully manage both a greenhouse, hoop house, and a retail outlet offering year around employment. Lakeview Hill also participates in the MI Farm Coop, as well as offering around 25 farm tours a year to local schools.

Third panelist, fifth generation farmer Amber Parsons of Harwood Gold along with her family, has grown the late 19th century family farm into a successful agritourism business. Starting as a maple syrup producer, Parsons and her family's maple syrup business evolved into a retail brand, café, food company, and agritourism destination. Embracing the hospitality of agritourism business, Parsons stressed the importance of "branding and storytelling" for visitors who wish to "bu[y] the story, nostalgia, and [make a] connection" to the farm. However, she offered a caveat: "Growth can be dangerous if it pulls you away from your identity." It is the authenticity and imperfections that will connect visitors to the farm.

Fourth generation farmer and the final panelist, Greg Shooks of Cellar 1914, explained the roots of the Shook's Farm began traditionally in 1914, farming crops and fruit trees as well as livestock. As with many multi-generational farming families, as the elder generation stepped back, the younger generation makes the decision to continue the farm or sell the land. Greg Shooks and his brother stepped in and decided to put in a vineyard. Twelve years later, these siblings have created a thriving agritourism

See **AGRITOURISM** *on page 9*



New Farm (Club) market eases operations

By Ross Boissoneau
Sun contributor

Loma Farm and Farm Club now have a third farm operation in the family: the on site farm market and processing facility opened earlier this year. For owners Gary and Allison Jonas, and Sara and Nic Theisen, it's been a long time coming.

"When we did the first drawings, we had the market on it," says Nic Theisen. Until it opened, they compressed the bakery, brewing operation and market into the existing Farm Club restaurant. Which worked, sort of – space was at a premium, especially in the kitchen.

That was then, and this, finally, is now. The nearly 2,000-square-foot market boasts two levels. The upstairs is home to the market and bakery; the lower level is mostly for storage. "We use the new building for canned and bottled beer and cider conditioning and cold storage," says Theisen.

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic stifled their plans in both the short and long term. "We were delayed by COVID. We were slated to open in April 2020, and the building was so close to completion. We ended up opening in July. It went well given the circumstances.

"The market timeline – we didn't know. It was all a stab in the dark. We believed in the products and processes, preservation of farmland, but you never know how it's going to be received," he adds.

Spoiler alert: It's been very well received, thank you, starting with that very first summer – including the restaurant's farm market. There, you could purchase fresh produce, baked goods and more, but it was shoehorned into a relatively small area.

The kitchen too was pressed for space. So having a separate building for processing, baking, a preservative kitchen for pickles, kimchi and the like, along with storage and displaying the business's many wares, was always in the cards.

Though there are more products displayed and given room to breathe, it's not just new items. It's about bigger, better and broader, as in a broader selection. "Everything we are doing there we have been doing. It's just amped up."

Such as its grain processing. Farm Club processed corn for masa and polenta, making its own tortillas, all using an eight-inch stone mill. "We couldn't keep up," says Theisen. The solution came when they purchased a 48-inch mill. "It's a bigger scale."

The farm market serves both the on site farm and nearby Loma Farm. As one grows, so too does the other. "The produce footprint is significantly larger," says Theisen. Then add the coolers, preserves including hot sauces, freezers to sell meat, beer and wine, merchandise – they all call for a larger footprint.

Best of all, the front of the restaurant still welcomes shoppers, with the promise of more, bigger and better a stone's throw away, enticing patrons twice.

"Part of the goal of Farm Club was to support other farmers. It's a place that supports local agriculture."

To that end, not only do the restaurant and market sell products grown on site, but those made on site from area farmers. "We partner with Michigan-based farms for our bread: wheat, rye, corn, buckwheat," Theisen notes.

The lone exception is for the pasta: while it's made on site, the durum flour is from out of state. "The high-protein wheat doesn't grow well in our climate," he says. They import it from North Dakota and Montana. "They have stronger sun, a larger fluctuation in temperatures, and are less humid. We could take the same sed and the protein content pf the grain would be drastically different." Theisen compares it to growing wine grapes, saying, "There's a terroir for grain. Michigan grows wheat that is soft, low protein," which is good for things like pastries and cookies.

What else? Glad you asked. "We grow two heirloom corns. One is for our pislolé and tortillas, the other for grits and polenta," says Theisen. "All our beer and cider are made here. We partner with Leelanau and Grand Traverse wineries."

The new market is stocked with produce, groceries and everyday essentials, and the bakery offers a full menu of breakfast items, pastries, sandwiches, cookies, grab and go meals. It is complemented its diminutive sister operation inside the restaurant, which boasts a selection of ceramics, cookbooks, textiles and kids' items, as well as a small assortment of items you'll find at the separate market, such as pastries and produce.

So, what's next? Another building? More farms? Another restaurant? "I hope not," says Theisen with a laugh. More likely is simply refining the processes as they grow used to new space and their customers grow used to another, larger farm market.

The bakery and market hours are Tuesday through Sunday from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. The restaurant is open Tuesday from 3 p.m. to 9 p.m., and Wednesday through Sunday noon to 9 p.m. Both are closed on Monday.

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Iconic Bluebird continues family tradition on the riverfront

By Sandra Serra Bradshaw
Sun contributor

The highly esteemed Bluebird in Leland reopened quietly this past fall by owners Skip and Lynn Telgard along with their family and loyal staff. The original Bluebird was the family home as well as the local café. The restaurant is a family tradition, with four generations of Telgards who have brought the business from a two-room little shack to a thriving corner business known far and wide.

An iconic and nostalgic place since it was established in 1927, the Bluebird, affectionately nicknamed the "Bird," takes full advantage of its location on the historic Leland River. Indoors, it gives diners delightful up-close and year-round views of the river through its new wide glass windows.

The Telgards cleverly had a pass-through window built at the bar and, with good weather, is highly appreciated by both staff and diners. Patrons can dine on the new deck and conveniently get their food and beverages passed through it from the bar.

"Over the last two years, we've undergone a comprehensive transformation, reconstructing our establishment to feature a beautiful, outdoor-oriented design that brings you closer to the picturesque Leland River," said Skip. "The river is a significant part of our heritage."

The restaurant's loyal patrons waited patiently for two years while this iconic landmark was rebuilt.

The river itself is a short one, barely 4,000 feet in length, and connecting Lake Michigan and Lake Leelanau. River otters often can be seen playing in its waters, and in the autumn, many come to watch the salmon as they try to leap the waterfall. The fish are thwarted from swimming upstream to spawn by the waterfall over the historic dam. Early settlers knew the river by the name "Carp River." Generations of fishermen called it "fish creek."

The plentiful fish was the reason early bands of the Ottawa established a town at its mouth as there was once was a natural fish ladder on these traditional Native American fishing grounds. Fishtown is one of only a few commercial fishing villages still operating today in Michigan. The Native Americans called this spot Mishi-me-go-bing, or alternatively Che-ma-go-bing or Chimak-a-ping, meaning "the place where canoes run up into the river to land, because they have no harbor."

The water power led to Leland's founding by French Canadian millwright Antoine Manseau, in 1853. The river sheltered fish boats, pleasure craft, and the Manitou mail boat and ferry, many decades before Leland became a Harbor of Refuge. Today the Bluebird revels in its new location, just a stone's throw away from its original one. The large deck welcomes up to 100 guests. Diners can delight in fresh breezes while watching life and boats along the river.

"While the place was under construction, inquisitive deer often came to check the site out," said Skip. "We often see other wildlife and enjoy watching jumping fish too. We also enjoy the many boats that come by. Some of them are wooden antique boats, there seems to be quite a few of them."

Skip's grandfather, Martin Telgard, a boat builder, and his grandmother (Martin's wife) Leone, opened the original Bluebird as a small sandwich and soda shop. With Martin's talents as a craftsman and Leone's dedication to creating excellence in her kitchen, the business

slowly grew to become a full-fledged restaurant and Leland's gathering place.

"My Grandparents first lived out on North Manitou Island," Skip said. "In 1906 they walked all the way across the ice to the mainland."

In addition to offering cooked meals, they sold candy, cigars, cigarettes, and "Indian baskets" made by local Native Americans. The business, even while surviving lean moments at times, grew to be a full-fledged restaurant.

"Sadly, Grandpa Martin passed away in 1961. My Grandma Leone continued cooking every meal until her retirement in the mid-'70s," Skip said.

This past winter, the Telgards made the decision to close the restaurant for the months of February through April to hone the operation of the new restaurant. The Bluebird reopened in early May. They have labored hard and carefully with every decision made regarding the look and feel of the new 'Bird'.

"It's going to remain being a great place to sit and discuss world politics and religion," said Skip.

Skip's son-in-law, Michael Leaveck, an architect, designed the new restaurant. The Telgards' daughter Caroline, along with her husband Michael, both help run the business. Their son, Derek, who ran a successful restaurant in Knoxville, Tennessee, has also returned to Leland to help as a cook.

The family holds many memories of the original Bluebird structure. It was not easy for them to watch the building that their grandparents founded in 1927 demolished before their eyes. But this business has endured hardships unimaginable to most people.

"When WWII came Grandpa Martin built landing crafts for the war, and he and my Grandma Leone lived in a small 14-foot trailer and they had to sell the land, parcel by parcel, to survive the war," said Skip. "Then he would come back to the Bluebird to build the business. "Grandma Leone did it all. From cooking all the meals for their customers to doing dishes and everything in between."

All the while, Leland slowly evolved from a sleepy fishing village into the summer booming tourist town of today.

Today, under the care of a third generation of Telgards, the Bluebird proudly still serves its award-winning whitefish the same way Leone and Martin first did in the early days.

In keeping with their grandparents' original fish menu, they offer appetizers that include the popular Carlson's Smoked Whitefish Dip, which is freshly made in nearby Fishtown.

The Carlsons are synonymous with Fishtown and trace their local roots to the early 1900s, when Swedish immigrant Nels Carlson (1854-1935) moved his family from North Manitou Island to become the first Carlson to fish out of Leland. Today, more than a century later, a fifth generation of Carlsons continue with the family tradition in Fishtown's commercial fishing pursuits.

"The only Great Lakes whitefish we serve is directly fresh from the water … from Carlsons," Skip said. No frozen fillets here. Besides whitefish, you may savor the kitchen's crispy fish and chips, and other items that include Lake Trout, European Perch, fried Smelt, and Canadian Walleye. "We have built up reliable sources for our fish through the years," said Skip.

Besides fish, the Bird offers freshly made pizza such as their Bird Pie, which consists of pepperoni, spin-

See **Bluebird** *on page 15*

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Mary Patterson's 37 years of service behind the badge

By Isabelle Plamondon
Sun contributor

Republished from the White Pine Press, the student-run newspaper at Northwestern Michigan College.

Late into her 37th year in law enforcement, Mary Patterson still measures her career the same way she did when she started: by the people she's helped.

"I just like interacting with people. I like helping people… just having an impact and knowing my community—that's pretty rewarding," Patterson said.

A road patrol deputy with the Leelanau County Sheriff's Office, Patterson has spent nearly four decades responding to everything from routine calls to life-threatening emergencies. But for her, the job has never been about recognition or pay. "You have to love what you do and know that you're helping people," she said. "You're not going to get rich doing this job."

In a small Northern Michigan community, that kind of work becomes personal. Unlike larger cities, where officers may never encounter the same person twice, Patterson has built lasting relationships with the people she serves.

"When you're in a small community, it's nice to know your community. I know a lot of people, and people know me," she said.

Those relationships don't end when her shift does. "You can take the uniform off, but you don't ever really take the uniform off. People still know who you are," Patterson said. Whether she's on duty or not, the role follows her—something she's grown used to over time. "You still have to conduct yourself professionally… people recognize you," she added.

Mary Patterson (l) with Isabelle Plamondon (r), circa 2010.

That visibility also reflects the trust she's built. "People will ask, 'Is Mary working? We'd like to see Mary.' You really build bonds with your community."

Over the years, Patterson has seen the full spectrum of human experience. Some calls are routine, others unforgettable. "Fatal accidents, child deaths—any deaths. Those are very difficult," she said. "You're trying to help, and sometimes you're not successful."

But not all moments are defined by tragedy. One call that has stayed with her involved a young boy walking alone early in the morning. After making sure he was safe and reunited with his family, the situation ended on an unexpectedly light note. "He gave me a tour of his house," Patterson recalled.

Experiences like that—quiet, human, and often unseen—are what have sustained her throughout her career.

Behind the scenes, Patterson describes law enforcement as more than a job. "You become one big family because you work together so much—you spend more time with them than your own family sometimes," she said. That sense of connection becomes especially important as departments face ongoing staffing shortages. "If someone's down, you pick up the slack. That's what being a team is."

She has also watched with interest as the profession has changed over time. "When I started, you'd have two or three positions and 25 people applying. That's changed," Patterson said. Fewer people are entering the field, she explained, in part because of the realities of the job. "You're going to have to make sacrifices— you're going to miss holidays, family events, and weekends," she said. "You have to know what you're getting into."

After nearly four decades on the job, Patterson doesn't point to a single moment as her defining achievement. "Probably what I'm most proud of is being in the career and being able to handle it for so long."

For her, the meaning of the work comes back to something simple: connection.

"Law enforcement is a very rewarding career," Patterson said. "You don't get rich doing it, but it's so rewarding."

AGRITOURISM

continues from page 6

business with a winery and tasting room, farm tours, farm stays, wedding and special event spaces, corn maze, and more. Lastly, Shooks offered words of wisdom that echoed Parsons: "sell the authentic self on the farm." Tell the honest stories of both successes and failures, so that visitors understand and appreciate the real world of the working farm.

Following the morning panelists were three breakout seminars ranging from marketing and promotions, understanding local ordinances for agritourism businesses, and lastly, the one I attended, "Right to Farm Act Basics," focusing on the fundamentals of the Michigan Right to Farm Act as it relates to General Accepted Agricultural Management Practices (G.A.A.M.Ps).

This breakout seminar was packed with standing room only. Deftly moderated by Ryan Coffey Hogue, this seminar explained the Right to Farm Act (1981) and how the voluntary guidelines of GAAMPs can assist with farm management and legal rights of farm owners. During his presentation, Hogue encouraged everyone to consider the GAAMPs program as a "shield to protect farms." Currently, updates to guidelines on greenhouse and hoop house farming are being considered. Towards the end of the session, Hogue, and several audience members, advocated for summit attendees to get involved on their planning and zoning commissions with the intent of shaping and protecting our future Northern Michigan agricultural communities.

Sustainability, food security, community responsibility, environmental stewardship, personal connection to food sources, resourcefulness, and diversity are just a few of the intrinsic values of small family farms. "By preserving biodiversity, open space and trees, and by reducing land degradation, small farms provide valuable ecosystem services to the larger society" (USDA).

Our agricultural heritage is worth protecting, and this agritourism summit is an integral step in providing the tools and information to those potential agricultural entrepreneurs who plan on successfully leading their family farms into the future, and, as Amber Parsons shared, "Creat[ing] something that lasts."

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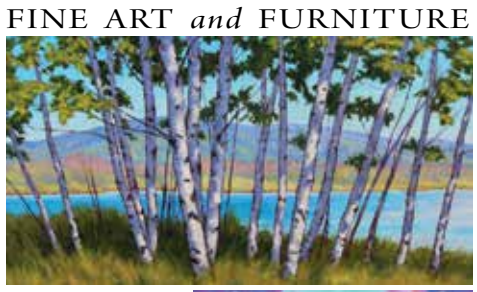
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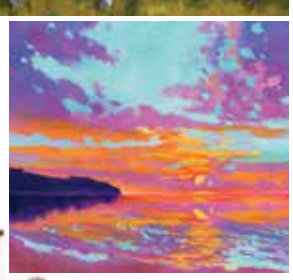

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Starting from and Staying with the Nature of Place

By Stephanie Mills
Sun contributor

Mills gave this address as the keynote speaker on Oct. 30, 2025, at the Freshwater Summit in Traverse City.

A disclaimer: I speak only for myself. I represent no organization, party, or institution. I was invited to talk about bioregionalism, and will offer the personal reflections, opinions, and hopes of a freelance writer who's a longtime bioregionalist. Though I am boundlessly grateful to the countless activists, authors, thinkers and doers who've taught me over the last fifty years, I'm solely responsible for my remarks.

Now. It is right and necessary always to acknowledge that this land, these watersheds, are located on the ancestral, traditional, and contemporary lands of the Anishinnabeg, who today are represented by the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians and the Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians. Since time immemorial, these nations have lived, honored, worked in, and respected this place. Migwech.

Land acknowledgement and water protection count as core bioregional practices. They direct us to respect and honor the living earth and to learn from the people who have dwelled in these forests and along these shores for time out of mind, and who live here now.

In *The Accidental Reef*, what Lynn Healey wrote of the Bkejwanong and Aamjiwnaang First Nations down on the St. Clair River might be said of the Anishinaabeg up north as well: "perhaps their most powerful storying, their most radical act of resistance and renewal was this," she "wrote. They stayed."

Starting from and staying with the nature of place.

My late friend Richard Nelson's Koyukon hunting mentor in interior Alaska told him "everything out there knows way more than you do," because most living creatures have been at their infinitely varied and intertwined ways of being a lot longer than our young species. Respect and humility in the presence of Others are always appropriate.

Likewise, every one of you, full of experience and expertise knows something more than I do. Whatever you're doing, some heartfelt concern for water--essential, real, and sacred-- most likely animates and sustains your commitment. What an awesome responsibility to study and care for the health of these inland seas and for the many beings that swim, nest near, and ply their predator-prey business in this place!

I honor you for your work and devotion. I hope some of these thoughts on bioregionalism will inspire your imagination and creativity, offer some encouragement and possibilities. This morning I can't begin to hint at the scope of the bioregional kinds work going on around Turtle Island and Planet Earth.

It's quite a moment. Earth systems and human societies are stressed beyond tipping points. There's talk of collapse. The velocity of change tests our mettle to the utmost. In this perilous time, the imperatives are so many: The shift to renewable energy, wildlands preservation, population decline, watershed restoration, justice for all, the reclamation of democracy and the relocalization of governance and economies. My sense is that bioregions can offer tangible, coherent scales and frames of reference for these by keeping nature (the *bio*) *and* terrain (the *region*) as the primary, but not exclusive, arena of concern.

Bioregionalists speak of *reinhabitation*: This means restoring or regenerating ecosystems and finding or rediscovering the ways and means of living well, as integral parts of naturally defined terrains, like watersheds. We call them *life places*. We look to our surroundings. We try to learn the patterns and flows, the lay of the land and the land use history. We ask what forms of subsistence were and are practiced here? How might these inspire, or be adapted going forward? Starting from and staying with what we can learn from nature in our watersheds, our life places, the idea is to live in ways that are materially simple and inwardly rich.

A few hundred years ago, people here lived pretty sustainably. Indeed, all over the planet indigenous people had myriad place-specific cultures. They may have appeared primitive but were highly sophisticated lifeways. While there's no going back, the capacity to live in reciprocity with nature, to learn from it, work with it, suffer the hard lessons, and experience communion with all beings is part of our evolutionary endowment. Knowing that can help one face today's daunting realities and envision good ways of life amid the ruins of the old. We are made for this.

It's about staying with the questions "Who are we? Where are we? What are we going to do about it?"

On June 3, Habitat for Humanity welcomed two more families into the New Waves Community on M-72, west of Traverse City. When Jaclyn (pictured above) volunteered with Habitat in Illinois, she didn't know that some day her family would need Habitat's hand-up. Her whole life has been about helping others. After years working in mental health fields, she was the one in need of a little support. Shortly after moving to Traverse City, Jaclyn found herself a divorced mother of two girls. After three years of unsuccessful house hunting and moving from rental to rental, Jaclyn was working multiple jobs just to keep her family financially above water. When the landlord of her rental put the house on the market, she turned to Habitat for a permanent, stable place to live.

Water is life. We should know that in our very bones. That image [attached] was taken by the late Dave Egan, an ecological restorationist and great friend, on a walk at Good Harbor Bay. When it's warm enough, I swim in those waters. Living here, in the midst of much of the fresh water on the planet, it's hard to imagine water scarcity or absolute contamination. Yet in cities and counties not so far south of here, water is toxic or privatized. Encouraging city and country people to perceive the connections, from the intake pipe or well, to the tap or the toilet, to the septic tank or the sewer has been basic to bioregionalism from the beginning. Fresh, clean water should be a natural right. It's a matter of justice and survival.

In the 50 years since bioregional ideas began to percolate out on the Pacific Coast, from Shasta to Cascadia, and in the Ozarks, in the Kaw and Hudson River watersheds, up in the Gulf of Maine, here in the Great Lakes, and the Po valley in Italy, countless variations have sprung up around the world. Planet Drum Foundation's website (https://planetdrum.org/) publishes a directory of bioregional and watershed groups and projects. You're invited to list yours.

It's not easy to define Bioregionalism. It's a countercultural movement, a value system, an orientation, a paradigm and a philosophy. Bioregionalism and "bioregioning" are the antithesis of generic, off-the-shelf programs. It's not technique or, dogma, but place-based and adaptive. There are practices ranging from mapping to Green City directories to seed saving to youth programs running native plant nurseries. Bioregionalists join campaigns and coalitions to support and defend their life places. There are seasonal gatherings, online linkages, and even a Cascadian soccer team. It's empowering, participatory, and prefigurative, meaning that bioregionalist try to walk their talk. Individuals and neighborhoods, families, and organizations are engaged in doing pieces of the work to reinhabit their life places. Roses by many other names also smell as sweet.

In the 1970s, when I was a working ecology activist out in San Francisco, I became a bioregionalist. Then as now, and of necessity, grassroots alternatives flourished under the radar and all across the land: actions like recycling and composting, and demonstration projects like Berkeley's Integral Urban House. There were backyard organic food gardens and rabbit hutches. There were co-ops and communes, and moves back to the land. There was spit-and-baling wire improvisation of alternative and intermediate technologies. There were household energy conservation tricks, and pious anti-consumerist frugality. There were periodicals, ephemeral publications, and inspiration from bards and native peoples: Such were and are some of the elements of a simpler, if not easier, but more sustainable way of life.

It's no coincidence that the Club of Rome's Limits to Growth study, the United Nations' first conference on the Human Environment, and bioregionalism's beginnings shared an

See **NATURE OF PLACE** *on page 11*

Writer, farmer, wood craftsman, cheesemonger, and documentarian of passenger pigeons, Jess Piskor invited friends for a poetry reading and storytelling around the campfire at his farm near Lake Leelanau on Memorial Day Monday, May 25.

NATURE OF PLACE

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historic moment: those early 70s. That was when Planet Drum founder Peter Berg and the conservation biologist Raymond Dasmann began to articulate the tenets of *reinhabitation*. Bioregionalism differed from conventional environmentalism. The assumption was that globalized industrial civilization would prove to be unreformable.

For hundreds of thousands of years the the matrix of our evolution was the ethos of human species groups living lightly and cooperatively, in loose terrains, by deep understanding of the natural communities to which they belonged. That ethos of subsistence through intimacy with place was forcibly and persuasively overpowered by modernity. Overpowered, but not negated. The exploitation of fossil fuels accelerated what was advertised as progress and the twentieth century's two World Wars revolutionized technology and trade, seeming to overturn what Stewart Brand dismissed as "the tyranny of geography". Our beginning to live what Ancient Futures author Helena Norberg-Hodge calls Local Futures seems more likely to me. Sustaining the cultural and ecological diversity that persists, and working to regenerate our much-changed, multicultural life places, cities included, is the human species endeavor we're called to now.

Maps can be political. And maps can be revelatory. Mapping can be liberatory. It has been a basic bioregional activity to peel the lines off the maps. Unlike river basins or biomes, geopolitical borders are abstract, negotiated, sometimes arbitrary. Their geometries can slice through natural systems. But like rivers, deltas and coasts, they, too, are subject to change. We need to be able to understand place, not only as defined by surveyors and governments and property lines but as sketched by watersheds and landforms and ecosystems. Even in the flux of global warming and the extinction crisis, bioregions can be knowable terrains with resonant identities.

While nation states have their own rules and realities, bioregionalism peaceably addresses these life places, looking to revive their ecosystems and encourage mutual aid. Peter Berg's precepts were "Restore natural systems, meet basic needs, and support individuals". Thus we seek opportunities to restore essential local economic activity, especially food growing. The search image is: Largely self-reliant bioregional economies predicated on genuinely renewable flows of energy and materials.

Seeing globalization falter, bioregionalists, among many others, anticipate the decentralizing, devolving, and relocalizing of our societies, hoping to steer the process towards Life—the *bio*—and Beloved Community. If our societies, permeably bounded by natural features, are scaled to our surroundings, some local approaches can fail without taking the whole ecoregion or biosphere down.

Bioregions are appropriate realms for adapting to inevitable resource constraints. Tom Bender, a long-ago champion of appropriate technology and energy frugality spoke of Sharing Smaller Pies. In our post-fossil fuel future, many right livelihoods will be found in reclaiming, repurposing, restoring, and *raising* the materials necessary to meet basic needs for healthy food, clean water, and comely shelter. The need for skillful, earth-savvy, muscular work is apt to be great.

Besides the grass-roots, life place politics, I was drawn to bioregionalism by the intense amateur interest in natural history, meaning what's naked-eye observable. Activities like belly botany, birding, and fungus foraging, beach combing, and bug watching were all promoted and could lead to nature-knowledge pride. One heuristic is the famous "Where You At?" Quiz, first published in 1981 in the CoEvolution Quarterly. It betrays its origins in the Shasta bioregion with the killer question about grasses. Here it might be about sedges. Learning the plants, and how to recognize tracks and scat, birdsongs and frog calls is all part of reclaiming the authority of our senses and the pleasure and wonder they can bring.

Bioregionalism has long been about healing the dominant culture's ruinous alienation from nature. Bioregionalists honor wild, or self-willed nature as a wellspring of beauty, challenge, resilience, and spontaneity. Wild and free places are the beating hearts of bioregions for their astonishing manifestations of life's diversity and its sublime, dynamic equilibrium.

"Old growth landscapes represent nature's living memory," said Mattole watershed restorationist Freeman House. "Once they're gone, we will not be able to re-imagine their elegant complexities," In an age of extinctions, saving native and endemic species in their habitats, and linking those places is urgent work. If we ally ourselves with our bioregions' living creatures and with the waters of our shores, creeksheds, and lake basins, they may teach us how to follow their logic and necessity upstream and inland to save the whole by saving the parts.

Bioregions are life support systems. In a time of technological encasement we need to be reminded that our lives are utterly dependent on other beings and natural processes. Without the microbiomes of soils, without the vultures, fungus, and beetles that tidy up and turn death into life, without the bats that devour disease-carrying mosquitoes, without the riparian vegetation that cleanses the runoff, without the inland forests exhaling oxygen, we two-leggeds are toast.

A joyful, compelling way to invite interest in, and solidarity with a bioregion's more-than-human community is the All Species Parade. The first was organized in San Francisco in 1978. New Mexican bioregionalist Chris Wells ran with, and promoted the idea. Ever since, here and there, bioregionalists have mounted them. For a decade in the nineties they were part of Earth Day in Traverse City.

The community—especially kids—comes together to learn something about the shapes and forms, habits, and associations of the other living creatures in the vicinity. With paint, papier-mache, cardboard, thrift-store fabrics, and with help from artists and teachers, participants make costumes to impersonate and celebrate those beings. Then there's a parade down Main, or Front Street. It's fun, it's home-grown, it taps our talents and it affirms all manner of diversity—of ages, abilities, and understanding. Low

PLACE ***concludes on page 12***

PLACE

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carbon footprint, high spirits!

Lyla June Johnson, a brilliant young Dineh scholar of the many subtle and sustainable ways that indigenous peoples have cultivated and tended their lands, leads off "Thriving Where We Live", a recent video panel offered by Resilience . She says "Don't be afraid. Life knows how to do life." Given half a chance, refuges of natural diversity--like many of our parks, conservancies, and public lands--can stabilize and become seed banks. Life knows how to do Life. By and by, acre by acre, creekshed by creekshed, woodland by woodland, marsh by marsh, those communities may revive to afford some natural provision for our species--and countless others.

In preparing for this talk, I lost count of all the organizations hereabouts that are doing what could be seen as bioregional activity. There's a lot of good work towards being part of of nature as learners and helpers. It all matters. There's the adaptive realism and citizen science of Assisted Tree Range Expansion, which acknowledges that climate change and biotic invasions are remaking our forests, while striving to keep this a woodland biome. There's the willingness of householders to plant native wildflowers in pollinator gardens.

There are efforts like the plover protection and monitoring going on at the National Lakeshore, which may yet bring that brave and endearing migratory bird back from extinction's brink. There's the work by tribes and others to reinstate the mighty sturgeon to the Great Lakes aquatic ecosystem. These wild and sacred beings, and the grayling, whitefish, and lake trout; the sandhill cranes and the wood frogs, the bobcats and coyotes, the monarch butterflies, flying squirrels, and the troops of warblers nesting and moving through, truly merit our care and devotion. (While some or our other relations, like white-tailed deer, garlic mustard, and golden oyster mushrooms, invite an honorable harvest and chowing down on them as local provision for local needs.)

I see Great Lakes and Michigan peninsula maps on many rear windshields around here. Maybe we can build on the attachment to place they bespeak. Bioregional community organizing entails good faith dialogue with our neighbors, even if we disapprove of what they're doing in their yards. Can we enhance and inform that sense of place, encourage a shared sense of loyalty to place without xenophobia and with a welcome to new arrivals willing to join in restoring natural systems, meeting basic human needs, and supporting individuals?

In light of the multitude of crises breaking in our time, almost everything about our ways of life needs revision. How can we illuminate and rectify the downstream consequences of our actions? There's remains no way to do it but one day at a time, from the ground up, and imperfectly. It may seem like it's never enough. We cycle through grief, practice gratitude, and muster up some grit again and again. It matters immensely to make common cause with a native species like the sturgeon or to tend a wild preserve or to organize a city neighborhood for composting, car pooling, tool sharing, conflict resolution, or child care. The magnitude of the changes we're called on to make is very great. How else can we make them but daily and in physical communities?

Facing disastrous times calls for wisdom and courage. I got some from a young friend, effectively a bioregionalist. She's a working mother who organizes seasonal commemorations, back yard theatricals, and folkloric choirs. She publishes zines, fostering physical, hyper-local social media, cheap and fun, still readable during power outages.

She wrote "Don't flinch away from the terrible beauty of it all, or from the human actions causing the destruction. Don't live as if the world wasn't burning, but as if a burning world was still worth living in (it is)."

While the sand looks similar from hill to hill, Leo Wheeler (age 6) points out that Pyramid Point is actually quite a long way from the Sleeping Bear Dune Climb.

Glen Lake Summer Singers sought

From staff reports

You're invited to join The Glen Lake Summer Singers. All voices, high school age and up, are welcome. Rehearsals are held at Glen Lake Community Church, located at 4902 McFarlane Rd., Glen Arbor, every Tuesday evening from 7-9 pm beginning June 16, with the annual concert performed on August 11.

Spread the word to your singing friends to gather and share in the joy of music making. For more information, contact Patty at greenepatr@gmail.com or call 517-231-0250.

Library features poetry, democracy symposium, North Manitou stories

From staff reports

The Glen Lake Community Library in downtown Empire will hold several community events in the weeks to come.

On Saturday, June 6, at 2 pm the Library will host **"Ode to Asparagus,"** the annual gathering of asparagus-themed poetry, as part of the 2026 Empire Asparagus Festival. Submit your poems via email (info@glenlakelibrary.net), snail mail (Glen Lake Library, PO Box 325, Empire, MI 49630), or simply drop it off at the library. Then, come recite your work at the Ode on June 6. An Audience Choice award will be given to the most inspired reading.

TED Democracy Live—Founding Futures

On Saturday, June 13, the Library will participate in the live TED Democracy symposium, featuring brand-new TED Talks focused on the evolution and future of democracy. Streaming live from Philadelphia leading up to the nation's 250th birthday celebration, this national event brings together bold thinkers and change-makers to share ideas designed to inform and inspire. The library will host three live sessions, beginning at 11 am, 2 pm and 4 pm, with breaks in between. For more information about this special opportunity, check out VisitPhilly.com/TEDLive.

Stepping Off the Boat

On Wednesday, June 17, at 7 pm the Library will host Susan Hollister Wasserman, author of *Stepping off the boat: stories from North Manitou Island*. Published by Leelanau Press of Glen Arbor, the book is an historical account of the growth and development of this Lake Michigan island community from the 1800s to the early 1940s. It features hundreds of photographs, vividly documenting this chapter of our region's history. The book was also selected as a 2026 Michigan Notable Book by the Library of Michigan, which is sponsoring a state-wide tour of Notable authors. Copies of the book will be available to purchase courtesy of the Cottage Book Shop.

Dune Bird launches Woolsey Red to support airport restoration

From staff reports

On Thursday June 4, from 4-8 pm Dune Bird Winery celebrates the launch of a new varietal red wine, Woolsey Red, a partnership with the Save Woolsey Airport Terminal project, a group of dedicated community volunteers and partners working with Leelanau Township to Save Woolsey Airport Terminal, an 1870s-era, hand-laid stone building that once served as a farm creamery.

Dubbed SWAT! (Save Woolsey Airport Terminal) the project's goal is to safeguard and restore the historic Woolsey Airport Terminal building at Woolsey Airfield Park in Leelanau Township, just outside of Northport. The intention is to keep this rare stone building—and its popular rooftop stargazing site, open, safe, and meaningful for this and future generations of residents, tourists, pilots, cyclists, and travelers. The project will also highlight the unique story of Clinton F. Woolsey, a local aviation pioneer and war hero.

Originally a creamery on the farm of Byron Woolsey, whose Jersey cows provided milk and cream for summer residents for more than two decades, the Terminal is one of the few surviving examples of 19th century rural craftsmanship and agricultural life in Leelanau County. In 1933, farmer Woolsey donated 80 acres of his dairy farm—including the stone masonry barn structure that he had constructed after the death of his father in the Civil War—in memory of his son, Captain Clinton F. Woolsey, a U.S. Army engineer and pilot, who served in World War I and died in a crash while flying in the U.S. Pan-American Goodwill Expedition in 1927. The Township added another 120 acres, which comprised an area sufficient to construct two perpendicular grass strip runways.

Today, the airport, Terminal and the surrounding park area are welcoming beacons for visitors and is home to several community events. The Terminal's rooftop is a favorite Dark Sky viewing area and the grass airstrip offers a rare chance to see planes come and go.

Dune Bird Winery, founded in honor of the love for both land and sky, is itself named after an aviator, the original owner who had a passion for flying small planes and the fascinating connection to this region's aviation history. The idea to re-launch Woolsey Red, to support the restoration and preservation of the Woolsey Airport Terminal building, was directed by winery owners John and Lynn Heekin.

"Our family and Dune Bird team are so proud to be part of the preservation effort surrounding the iconic Woolsey Airport. We are so excited to partner in this piece of history thru a commemorative red wine grown right here in Leelanau County," said John Heekin.

Dune Bird and the SWAT team are co-piloting a celebratory launch of Woolsey Red on Thursday, June 4, at Dune Bird Winery. In addition to local music, delicious bites, refreshing spritzes, craft espresso, non-alcoholic options, and plentiful samples of the new wine, the Save Woolsey Airport Team will be on hand to share the stories and histories of pilot Captain Woolsey, the Woolsey family, and the latest on this preservation project. Woolsey Red is a Leelanau Peninsula appellation, dry and medium bodied that pairs well with chicken, duck, barbeque sausage, and charcuterie. It is comprised of merlot, cab frank, petite pearl, and Marquette grapes.

Two dollars from every bottle of Woolsey Red sold will go toward the SWAT project. Bottles can be purchased at Dune Bird Winery anytime or online. Visit our website, GlenArbor.com, for a link to donate.

SEBASTIAN

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wrists. Imagine having to relearn these new functions such as drinking with a cup and straw or eating with a fork, tasks most of us take for granted. At Craig, he used a manual wheelchair for about 30 minutes a day to help build up his muscles. The electric wheelchair is currently his main chair. Also, a slide board can be used instead of a harness to move him from his bed to his wheelchair or between chairs. The goal is for him to build enough upper body strength to eventually assist with these movements, but he is not there yet.

"One of my physical goals is to transition to a manual wheelchair that I push myself," Sebastian told the *Sun*. "One of my other big goals is to give back to the community that has been so supportive of me. People in Leland and Leelanau County have amazed me with the level of support that they have given to me."

Sebastian has sensations of his whole body but not enough to move on his own.

"I only have movement from the chest up," Sebastian explained.

Right now, he can move his arms, but he does not have use of his triceps. He can use his wrists, but not his fingers. He qualified for a research study with electric stimulation for his hands to learn to move them again. An eventual surgery might help him regain use of his triceps which would boost his independence.

His family and friends appreciate all the love from the community and how locals have supported Sebastian through a GoFundMe crowdfunding campaign that launched soon after the accident. A May event at the Old Art Building in Leland also raised $60,000.

Sebastian's next local benefit will be held on Wednesday, June 10, from 5-8 p.m. at the Hop Lot Brewing Company in Suttons Bay. Tickets are $40 and include dinner. The evening will feature a silent auction and performance by The Broom Closet Boys.

While much can change in the coming months, the reality is the family has a long and hard road ahead with growing expenses. The Smiths are renovating their rental house in Suttons Bay so Sebastian can recover there. But the place requires extensive work: removing doors, upgrading the bathroom and kitchen, adding ramp access to two doors. Sebastian is currently staying at a local hotel in Traverse City.

He will also require equipment, including a specialized bed, hoists, bathroom equipment, a vehicle that can handle his wheelchair, and help from people. He needs someone to help turn him every two hours each night. The community around him are busy planning for his return. Sebastian will need more than $120,000 to help pay for all this.

"I was able to purchase a van this past week, and I found an amazing deal," said Sebastian.

The Smiths are partnering with Help Hope Live (HHL), a 501C3 fundraising site meant for such situations. Most important is any money raised is kept in an account under his name with their organization, so it won't affect Sebastian's Medicaid or disability claims. In addition, since HHL is a 501C3, all direct cash donations or items for the upcoming auction are considered charitable if they are made through the website, and these can be written off on one's personal taxes or by the company donating.

Sebastian's spirits lifted after his dad, Matt Larson, and Emily joined him in Colorado to learn how to support him, attending his therapy sessions and spend quality time together. The experience brought a sense of normalcy, laughter, and connection.

"I am trying to get back to living my life and be part of my community and be as active as I can," he said.

"Sebastian, while in a very dark place that first month, now realizes his disability does not define who he is," Jerome said.

He is even doing his own research.

"I have been looking into every possible type of therapy or treatment available, including stem cells," said Sebastian. "I may have to go to another country for treatment. Stem cell therapy can be successful, but it is not available here in the United States and is very expensive."

The Leelanau community is encouraged to help the Smith family care for Sebastian and support his rehab and home renovations.

"Thank you so much for your support. It means so much to me that the community is sharing my story and supporting me through this difficult journey," said Sebastian.

As Sebastian begins the long journey ahead, he and his family face countless challenges. The funds raised will go directly toward covering medical bills, everyday living expenses, and the intensive rehabilitation he needs. Every dollar will help support his efforts to regain as much independence as possible and make his life better as he hurdles over these obstacles ahead.

"There have been so many people who have donated to me, many of whom I have never even met," said Sebastian. "Their support means so much to me, it really does move my heart to receive all this support."

Please make checks payable to: Help Hope Live. Note in memo: In honor of Sebastian Alexander Smith: Mail to: Help Hope Live, 2 Radnor Corporate Center, Suite 100,100 Matsonford Road Radnor, PA 19087. Donor preference is important to them; please specify in writing if you wish for your name or donation amount to be kept private.

SKINNER

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Not bad for someone who has been in the U.S. for less than three decades. "I'm originally British," he says, though Shelly's voice in the background leads him to immediately correct himself. "I guess I still am," Skinner adds with a chuckle.

How did this voluble Brit find himself in Empire? Turns out it's all about love.

"I moved to America in 1997. I came here to marry Heidi," Skinner says, referring to his late wife. She's the one who started the Miser's Hoard in Interlochen in the late '80s.

The couple moved the operation to Empire in 2001, eventually building on the previously empty site next door. Skinner says moving the business made sense, noting there is more of a community feel in Empire. The store's former location was on busy US 31, which bisects Interlochen. That precluded any walk-in traffic and in general worked against developing close community relations with neighbors or neighboring businesses.

While the move to Empire was successful, as the years went on, Heidi developed dementia. Paul was thrust into the role of caretaker, until Heidi passed away in 2022. Neighbor and friend Shelly soon became more than that, and she and Paul were married in the following year.

Skinner says being able to contribute to the community feel is enjoyable, in endeavors such as the Asparagus Festival and the Hill Climb. A veteran of similar races in his native Britain, he said time had passed him by in terms of participating. When he was approached about restarting the village's venerable Hill Climb, which had run from 1964 until 1980, he was interested.

"In 1976 in the UK I competed in my first car rally. I did that until 1997 when I came over here," he says.

Given the interest of others and his own experience, he decided to try it out—even though he'd never been an organizer. "The Hill Climb was always in the back of my mind. I knew my days of competing were over," Skinner says, so he decided to take it on.

While there was some initial skepticism, he says time has proven it has staying power. He's quick to credit the efforts of others, from racers to organizers to artists, with helping make the yearly fall event a success. It features around 40 to 50 race cars competing across different classes, including vintage racers, rally cars, and drift cars, and brings a crowd of 1,200 to 1,500 to town, and interest far beyond that. "When I posted the schedule, it had over 25,000 views, and over 2,000 interactions."

It started off small, with just a few cars racing up the hill in time trials. You'd see a homemade race car competing against a $1 million vehicle, which no doubt helped build the event's popularity. It's now run under the aegis of Sports Car Club of America. "There's a branch in Detroit," says Skinner.

Between the community events and running the store, Paul and Shelly's lives are no doubt full. Still, one wonders if there's room for more, either in the crowded interior of the store or the seemingly limitless interior of their lives. "We did dabble in the Hops Festival for a while, but in October there's weather," says Paul. Then the pandemic struck, which effectively scuttled that event.

So, probably not, but as the saying goes, he didn't say no. Maybe there's a chance. You just have to get past Brandi and Gizmo first.

BLUEBIRD

continues from page 8

ach, bacon, garlic and tomato; or the Caprese which includes fresh basil, spinach, tomato, fresh mozzarella and garlic. "We had two pizza ovens at the old restaurant, now we have three ovens," said Forrest Bradshaw, longtime bartender at the Bluebird.

The Bird features many other delicious items on the menu, too, including items such as fresh fried chicken (quarters), hamburgers, a delicious cherry chicken salad, smoked in-house beef brisket, tater tots, onion petals, chicken fingers, coleslaw, and freshly made soup of the day…as well as a wide variety of other sandwiches, salads, sides and beverages for you to savor.

To satisfy a thirst for a beverage, there is a wide variety of beers, wines, spirits and seltzers.

"Back in the old days, I recall our grandparents putting my brother Cris and I to work downstairs with the beer cartons," Skip said. "Those were the days when beer was packed in hard cartons with lift up tops - Schlitz, Stroh's, Pabst, Miller…"

Many in Leland fondly remember, and miss, Nancy Telgard, Skip's mother. She had the warmest and most welcoming smile as she greeted each customer near the front door.

"One of the favorite things that my mother Nancy would do (she was both host and owner of the Bluebird) was to reminisce about famous people who visited the restaurant. We found a "Who's who at the Bluebird" list a while back," said Skip.

In the sports world, her list included Walter Hagen, Jim Northrup, Norm Cash, Wes Unseld, Johnny Bench, Dan Majerle, Bobby Hull, Jackie Smith (Hall of Fame Tight End), Jan Stephenson (golfer), and Bill Laskey.

Of celebrities, Nancy's list included General Mark Clark, General William Westmoreland, Ann Landers, Michigan Governors include George Romney,

James Blanchard, William Milliken, John Engler and Soapy Williams, Kansas Governors Kathleen Sebelius, Barry Goldwater and Dick Enberg.

Other celebrities who dined (and drank) at the Bluebird include Vicki Lawrence, Jimmy Buffet, Forest Tucker, Don Knotts, Shelly Fabre, our own Jim Harrison, Russell Chatham, Al Melvin (Sam the butcher), Susan Lucci, Rita Moreno, Pat Paulson, Tim Allen, Mario Batali, John C. Reilly, Kurt Luedke, Vivian Vance, Richard Brautigan, Phil Caputo, Steve Goodman, Amy Smart, Arthur Godfrey, John "Shorty" Powers (voice of NASA), Governor John Gilligan, Johnny Apple, Candy Crowly, Jack Kevorkian and Jack Nicholas… "And of course the legion of fine folks among you that grace our doors every day!" she wrote.

"It's a great place to enjoy a drink and a meal as you watch the wooden boats drift by. There is nothing quite like the throaty rumble of a vintage Chris-Craft, and the Leland River is home to many!" said Skip.

Follow the Bluebird on Facebook and Instagram. Visit BlueBirdLeland.com/blue-bird-merch to order from their extensive line of merchandise including t-shirts, hats, boating flags and stickers. Hours are Wednesday-Saturday, 11:30 am-11 pm and Sunday, 11:30 am-10 pm. Call 231-256-9081 for information. No reservations are accepted.

Lakeshore announces barn workshop

From staff reports

Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore will conduct its annual barn restoration workshop from June 8-12, commencing daily at 9 a.m. The workshop will be held at the Lyle and Sarah Schmidt farm, located three miles south of Empire, off M-22 on Norconk Road, with signage provided along M-22 for guidance.

The primary focus of the workshop will be the repair of the horse barn at the Schmidt farm. This event offers opportunities for both families and individuals ranging from novice to experienced carpenters, with activities designed to engage all skill levels. There is no participation fee.

Participants are not required to possess specialized skills in the building trades; however, prior experience is welcomed and valued. The workshop aims to provide instruction in restoration techniques for timber and frame structures.

For registration or further information, contact the Park Historical Architect, Kimberly Mann, at 231-326-4771 or via email at kimberly_mann@nps.gov.

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