



All the kids going surfing ... surfing on Lake Michigan.

Sleeping Bear Surf updates look, stays dedicated to water

By Ross Boissoneau
Sun contributor

When Sleeping Bear Surf opened its doors in Empire in 2004 (then called Sleeping Bear Surf & Kayak), it was billed as the state's first surf shop. Today it still stakes its claim as the state's only full-service surf shop, serving as a hub for Great Lakes surfing and general water merriment, with sales, rentals and classes.

And with a 20-plus year history, manager Ella Skrocki decided it was time for a reset. "As I choose the state of evolution, it felt like I needed some new energy," she says.

The family's story and that of the surf shop started decades ago. Skrocki's grandparents, Jack and Muzzy Lewis, had a cottage on the shore of Lake Michigan at the base of the dune. It was grandfathered in when the National Park was created. "It's an incredible gift," Skrocki says.

They spent summers there but lived downstate. Skrocki, the oldest of three, and her parents spent her first few years in Chelsea. Her mom and dad, Beryl and Frank, looked into ways to relocate to the area. "They tried to figure out how the heck to get back up to their parents."

It was the birth of her sister Annabel that catalyzed their dream. "When my sister was born, our house was too small. We had to move," she explains. So, with the decision made to move, her mom Beryl decided they should share their love of Lake Michigan—by

opening a freshwater surf shop.

A crazy idea? No crazier than also deciding to build a new home at the same time. They ended up finishing construc-



tion on their Empire home and opening Sleeping Bear Surf the same day.

Back then, the idea of a business catering to water-lovers was not far-fetched. But a surf shop? Turns out they knew what they were doing. They were amazed, not at the fact the business was successful, but that nobody else had thought of it.

"My parents were flabbergasted (when) they were the only ones out

See SURF on page 15

Sleeping Bear Equestrian Club: no horse required

By Berry Kendall
Sun contributor

A horse is a horse, of course, of course but what image does "equestrian club member" conjure up? Affluence, designer gear and prestige speak to the stereotype that one local club is turning on its head.

Founded just over a year and a half ago, the Sleeping Bear Equestrian Club achieves a unique goal for Northern Michigan: creating one organization where every kind of horse enthusiast — regardless of discipline, experience level or even horse ownership — is welcome. The club serves the regions of Leelanau, Benzie, Antrim and Grand Traverse. Debunking the myth that equestrians require deep pockets, its membership rates start at \$10.

Horse organizations traditionally revolve around breeds or disciplines. Dressage riders join dressage clubs while draft horse owners have their own associations. Arabians, Tennessee Walkers, jumpers, and barrel racers all tend to gather within their own circles.

Gretchen Knoblock is the founder of Sleeping Bear Equestrian Club.

"There are plenty of clubs for this breed or that discipline," she said. "We wanted to be one that was for everybody, and to be very inclusive instead of exclusive."

The board of the Sleeping Bear Equestrian Club intentionally includes people from different corners of the equestrian world so decisions aren't viewed through the lens of a single discipline. Trail riders, carriage enthusiasts, draft horse advocates and others all have a voice, helping ensure that the club reflects the broader horse community rather than one niche within it.

That spirit of inclusion extends beyond horse owners. Some members don't currently own horses. Others haven't ridden in years. Some simply enjoy attending events, volunteering or supporting local businesses connected to the equestrian world. Businesses — from trailer repair shops to real estate agents, trainers and boarding facilities — have joined as affiliate members because they recognize the value of strengthening the region's horse community.

Interestingly, the club itself began with children who weren't riding horses at all. Several years ago, Knoblock



Gretchen Knoblock

and a neighbor launched a program called Pony Pals, introducing children to miniature horses through grooming, handling and horsemanship rather than riding lessons. The goal wasn't competition but connection. Children learned confidence, responsibility and empathy while forming relationships with the tiny horses.

When circumstances forced the program to close, Knoblock realized the nonprofit she'd envisioned for Pony Pals could evolve into something much broader. Instead of serving just one youth program, it could become an organization dedicated to strengthening equestrian culture throughout Northern Michigan, while allowing future educational initiatives to exist beneath that umbrella. That realization became the Sleeping Bear Equestrian Club.

One of the club's most ambitious ideas is also one of the simplest: creating more places where horses can safely go.

A pivotal moment came hundreds of miles from Michigan. Knoblock had traveled with her horse to the Biltmore Estate in Asheville, NC which boasts a full equestrian center with boarding on site. They spent two days exploring nearly 90 miles of dedicated equestrian trails before Hurricane Helene forced an emergency evacuation. But while the trip was cut short, its impact wasn't. In those two days, she'd experienced something Northern Michigan largely lacks: extensive horseback riding trails free from motorized traffic.

See HORSES on page 14

Of Stars and Flowers: Alyssa Smith's Meditations on the Earthly and Infinite

By Katie Dunn
Sun contributor

There is something entirely intimate about stepping into an artist's studio. It is a rare, almost disarming experience—less like encountering finished work and more like entering a living process. Paintings are not yet resolved, forms still in conversation with their maker; everything feels suspended in a state of becoming. To be present in that space is an act of trust, a quiet invitation to witness what is usually unseen. It's the moment where the work is still alive

with possibility, where the magic is not yet complete, but actively unfolding.

When I stepped into Alyssa Smith's Traverse City studio for a preview of her upcoming exhibition, *Of Stars and Flowers*, at V Gallery in Omena, I entered a space that felt both serene and animated. Perched high above the world outside, the studio carried the steady cadence of creation: paintings leaning against walls, ceramic pieces resting nearby, and carefully arranged collections of plants, dried flowers, and gathered objects. The windows were flung open, allowing birdsong to drift through

the room—something Smith spoke of with affection, describing the sounds of nature as a constant presence and source of inspiration from her elevated vantage point.

Among the many works I experienced in Smith's studio, each imbued with its own sense of wonder, one piece drew me deeper into the

See SMITH on page 8



Alyssa Smith



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Outpace the Running Bear

From staff reports

Please join the Glen Arbor Women’s Club at the Running Bear 5K Run/Walk & ½ Mile Kids’ Run on Tuesday, July 28. Come out and take the challenge as the run takes off for its 19th year.

What makes a beautiful summer day even better? Spending it with family and friends who take the challenge. You can run or walk the 5K. As a chip timed event, the Women’s Club has 16 categories from 10 & under to 80+ as well as an Overall Best Award for our top male and female runner. Winners will receive medals and prizes from Cherry Republic and Crystal River Outfitters and The Cyclery.

In addition, the race offers the ½ Mile Kids’ Run for younger runners. They get to run with the Bear and take home a ribbon and a coupon for a free ice cream cone from Cherry Republic. Bring the whole family and enjoy a great day.

The event is staged at Cherry Re-

public in Glen Arbor. Registration will be from 7:30 a.m. to 8:45 a.m. and the race will leave from the corner of Lake and State Streets at 9 a.m. The Kids’ Run follows at 9:05 a.m. The race will start with the National Anthem and our Mascot “Running Bear” will cheer on all our runners and charm all the children. She is on hand for your special photo ops. Great food is offered to all runners too so enjoy.

Ninety percent of all proceeds go for college scholarships for Glen Lake students with the balance going for community projects. This year, the Glen Arbor Women’s Club gave out 7 scholarships totaling \$22,500. The club also contributed to the Glen Arbor Art Association and Share Care of Leelanau.

Please join the “Running Bear Run” on Tuesday, July 28. The cost is \$30 for the 5K Run/Walk (\$35, the day of the Run) and \$5 for the Kids’ Run. You are encouraged to register early by going online at RunningBearRun.com. An



early registration will also take place at the Glen Arbor Town Hall from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Monday, July 27. You can register there and already registered runners can pick up their bibs as well. A limited number of T-shirts will be available for purchase and ordered shirts can be picked up. For more info, visit RunningBearRun.com.

Come out and take the challenge. Can you run faster than the Bear?

Upcoming Summer Events in Leelanau County

- Thursday, July 16:** Sleeping Bear Folk & Field School offers Intro to Leather Working, 10 am-2:30 pm
- Leelanau Historical Society hosts Frontier to Freedom documentary screening, 6 pm at Leelanau School auditorium
- Friday, July 17:** Sleeping Bear Folk & Field School offers Intro to Paper Making, 2-5 pm
- Beach Bards Bonfire at Leelanau School Beach, 8 pm. \$1 per being.
- Saturday, July 18:** Fishtown 5K, 9 am-3 pm
- July 18-August 21:** Oliver Art Center in Frankfort hosts Nancy I. Foster retrospective exhibit
- Tuesday, July 21:** Aurora Cellars hosts Leelanau Grown fundraiser for Leelanau Children’s Center, 6-9 pm
- Wednesday, July 22:** CSA Art Fair, Crystal Lake near Frankfort, 9:30 am-3 pm
- Harvard historian Philip Deloria presents “American 250” lecture, Leland Performing Arts Center, 6 pm
- Saturday, July 25:** Leland Old Art Building hosts Art Leelanau, 10 am-4 pm
- Glen Arbor Arts Center hosts conversation with American Tree exhibitors, 11 am
- Tuesday, July 28:** Glen Arbor Women’s Club hosts Running Bear Run, 9 am

- Wednesday, July 29:** Leelanau County Historic Preservation Society hosts picnic concert at Poor Farm Barn featuring Andre Villoch, 6-8 pm
- Friday, July 31:** French Valley Vineyard hosts launch party for Sugar Loaf Red and Sugar Loaf White to support Leelanau Conservancy, Sugar Loaf’s new owner, 7-9 pm
- Saturday, August 1:** Port Oneida Run
- August 7-8:** Final Port Oneida Fair held in Port Oneida Rural Historic District in Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore
- Wednesday, August 12:** Leelanau County Historic Preservation Society hosts picnic concert at Poor Farm Barn featuring The Fabulous Horndogs, 6-8 pm
- Live Music and Performance**
Check venues for days and times.
- In Glen Arbor**
- Boonedocks
 - Cherry Public House
 - Glen Arbor Wines
 - M22 store
 - River Club Glen Arbor
- Elsewhere in Leelanau County**
- Bel Lago
 - Dune Bird Winery, near Leland
 - French Valley Vineyard
 - Northern Latitudes Distillery

- Bay Books in Suttons Bay hosts Books and Wine Book Club, first **Tuesday** of the month, 6 pm
 - Stories & More for Preschoolers, Glen Lake Library, **Fridays** at 11 am
 - Lake Street Studios Center Gallery art openings, **Fridays** 6-8 pm
 - Beach Bards Bonfire, **Fridays**, July 10, July 17, August 21, at Leelanau School Beach, 8 pm. \$1 per being.
- Summer Farmers Markets**
Visit GlenArborSun.com/calendar for a list of vendors at each market.
- Glen Arbor’s** market, located behind the Township Hall, runs Tuesdays until Sept. 15.
- Leland’s** market, located in the Blue Bird parking lot, runs Thursdays until Sept. 3.
- Northport’s** market, located across from the marina, runs Fridays until Sept. 18.
- Suttons Bay’s** market, located on St. Joseph St., at the north end of the village, runs Saturdays until Oct. 17.
- Empire’s** market, located next to the post office, runs Saturdays until Aug. 29.
- 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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Leelanau residents, workers encouraged to take housing survey

From staff reports

The Leelanau County Housing Collaborative, an effort of the Leelanau Peninsula Economic Foundation, and its partner organizations are inviting residents, workers, employers, and community members to participate in the Leelanau County Attainable Housing Survey. The survey is designed to gather public input on housing needs and community priorities to help inform future housing solutions across the county.

The survey builds on a 2024 business survey that gathered input from local employers about the ways housing availability and affordability affect their workforce, operations, and ability to retain employees. This broader community survey will help add resident and worker perspectives to that earlier feedback as local partners consider future housing strategies.

Housing affordability continues to be one of the most significant challenges facing Leelanau County. The Michigan’s Senate Fiscal Agency has shown Leelanau County to be the most unaffordable county in the state for housing since at least 2010.

For the purposes of the survey, attainable housing means housing, whether for sale or for rent, that is priced so people earning typical local wages can afford to

live in the community where they work.

“Community input is critical as we work to address housing challenges in Leelanau County,” said Jim Bardenhagen, president of Leelanau Peninsula Economic Foundation. “This survey will help local leaders better understand what residents support when it comes to creating housing opportunities that allow people who live and work here to remain part of our communities.”

The short survey is open to anyone with a connection to Leelanau County. Responses will help guide local discussions and future efforts to expand attainable housing options throughout the county.

Community members can participate in several ways:

- Complete the survey online at: LeelanauHousingCollaborative.org
- Scan this QR code using a smartphone or tablet
- Pick up a paper copy at local library branches in Northport, Suttons Bay, Leland, and Empire.
- Paper copies will also be available at Leelanau County Senior Services office at the Government Center, at Senior luncheons hosted at the Lions



Club, Maple City on Thursdays at noon and the Friendship Center, Suttons Bay on Fridays at noon.

Hard copies can be returned to a “ballot box” at each pick-up location or mailed to the Leelanau Peninsula Economic Foundation PO Box 1063, Leland MI 49654.

The survey will remain open until September 15.

For more information about the survey or the Leelanau County Housing Collaborative, contact Jamie Jewell, Administrative Support for the Leelanau Peninsula Economic Foundation at 231-835-0104 or jamie@jamiejewell.com.

The Leelanau County Housing Collaborative is a coalition of local organizations, community leaders, and stakeholders working together to advance housing solutions that support a thriving, inclusive, and sustainable Leelanau County. Through education, collaboration, and community engagement, the Collaborative seeks to increase housing opportunities for people who live or work in the region.

Organizations involved in the Collaborative include:

- Aspire North Realtors
- Habitat for Humanity
- HomeStretch
- Home Sweet Home
- Housing North
- League of Women Voters Leelanau County
- Leelanau Christian Neighbors
- Leelanau Peninsula Chamber of Commerce
- Leelanau Peninsula Economic Foundation
- New Community Vision
- Peninsula Housing
- Sleeping Bear Gateway Council



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Poor Farm Barn hosts fundraising concerts

From staff reports

Leelanau County’s historic Poor Farm Barn will host some of the area’s finest musicians at a string of three fund-raising concerts beginning on Wednesday, July 15. These Picnic Concerts are being organized by the Leelanau County Historic Preservation Society (lchp.org) to help fund the last big item needed to open the barn to wider community use—a set of bathrooms!

After almost 10 years of effort by over 100 contributors, volunteers, and contractors, the Poor Farm Barn may soon be a three-season community venue hosting educational programs, art exhibits, theater, music and other cultural events. The barn has already received extensive rehabilitation from the foundation on up, including a new electrical system, re-surfaced wood floors, and a fresh coat of paint completed just this spring.

“One of our goals as a nonprofit organization is to return this county-owned barn back to community use as a gathering place for cultural events, educational offerings, and entertainment,” Board of Directors president Joe VanderMeulen said. “We really have only one more big huddle to go. To meet



Leelanau County building standards, we need a set of bathrooms!”

The Picnic Concerts are scheduled for 6 to 8 p.m., on July 15, July 29 and August 12 at the Poor Farm Barn (Burdickville Road near Maple City). There are no tickets needed. Rather, organizers are asking all participants to make a donation at whatever level they can to help build the bathrooms.

Concert goers are invited to bring their picnics, chairs or blankets, and get comfortable on the lawn under the shade canopies or in the sun. There’s plenty of room for dancing.

Organizers have promised really great music from *Go North!* (Wed. Jul 15), *Andre Villoch and friends* (Wed., July 29), and *The Fabulous Horndogs* (Wed., Aug. 12) along with free tours of the barn, visits to the Row-by-Row

Garden, familiar yard games, and wonderful food offered by TC Tacos.

Everyone’s invited to Picnic at the barn! Join us on the grass and enjoy some great music by professional musicians. Bring your lawn chairs, blankets, and a picnic if you wish. Sit under the canopies, or in the sun, and dance when the music moves you! Sing Along! Enjoy!

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Leelanau Historical Society hosts *Frontier to Freedom* documentary

From staff reports

Frontier to Freedom, a PBS documentary tracing Michigan's transformation from Indigenous homeland to statehood, will be screened on Thursday, July 16, as part of the Leelanau Historical Society's America 250 programming. Commemorating the semiquincentennial anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, America 250 invites communities to explore the people, places, and events that shaped our nation while discovering the local stories that give our shared history meaning.

The screening will take place Thursday, July 16, at 6 pm in the Leelanau School Auditorium, at 1 Old Homestead Road, north of Glen Arbor.

Produced by Manitou Films and directed by Keith Patterson, *Frontier to Freedom* traces Michigan's evolution from a vast landscape inhabited by

Indigenous peoples in the early 1600s to its admission as the nation's 26th state in 1837. Through expert interviews, archival imagery, animated maps, and striking cinematography, the documentary examines the wars, diplomacy, settlement, and political decisions that shaped Michigan and the Great Lakes region.

Following the screening, Patterson will lead a question-and-answer session, giving attendees an opportunity to learn more about the research, filmmaking process, and the stories behind the documentary.

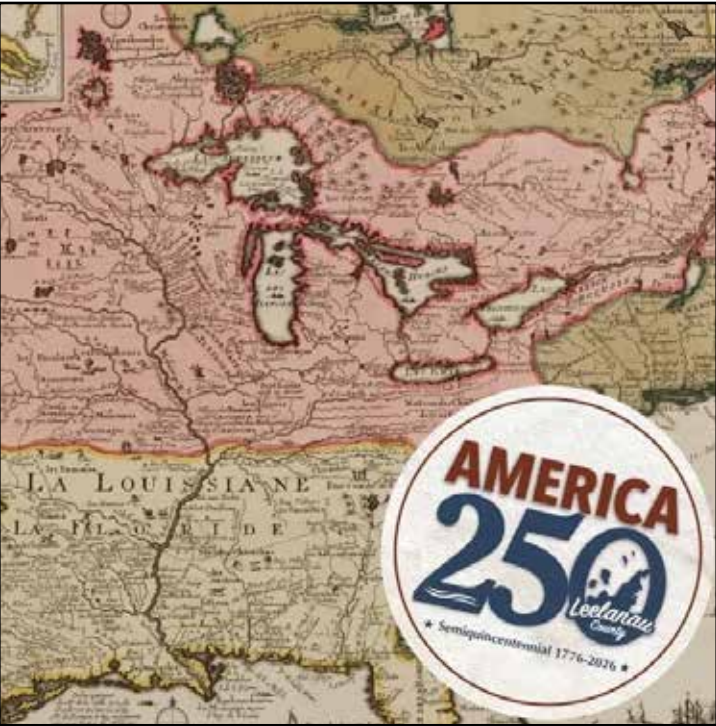
"Understanding Michigan's early history helps us better understand our own communities," said Kim Kelderhouse, executive director of the Leelanau Historical Society. "The story of our state is one of diverse cultures, changing landscapes, and complex relationships. *Frontier to Freedom* offers an engaging and thoughtful look at the events that shaped Michigan and provides important

context as our nation commemorates its 250th anniversary."

The two-hour documentary is recommended for history enthusiasts, educators, lifelong learners, and anyone interested in gaining a deeper understanding of Michigan's past. The screening complements the Leelanau Historical Society's ongoing America 250 programming, which explores how the history of Leelanau County connects to the broader American story.

Tickets are \$15 per person and may be purchased in advance at LeelanauHistory.org. For more

information about this program and other America 250 events, visit LeelanauHistory.org.



Port Oneida Run returns Aug. 1

From staff reports

Lace up your running shoes for one of Michigan's most scenic race courses. The 16th Annual Port Oneida Run will take place on Saturday, August 1, a fundraising event hosted by the nonprofit park partner Sleeping Bear Forever (formerly Preserve Historic Sleeping Bear).

Three races are offered including the Homesteaders Hilly Half Marathon and the Tiller's 10k which go up past Pyramid Point trailhead, and the Farmers Flat and Fast 5K ventures out and back on the Heritage Trail and Basch Road in Port Oneida. The Kid's Schoolhouse Dash is also being brought back this year with participant treats from Cherry Republic.

The only race of its kind, the courses wind through the beautiful scenery of Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore's Port Oneida Rural Historic District. The run starts and ends at the big red barn at the Olsen Farm/Port Oneida Farms Heritage Center, 3164 W. Harbor

Hwy, (M-22) Maple City, MI, just 4 miles north of Glen Arbor. Strollers and leashed dogs are welcome on the 5K.

To register, visit Phsb.org/port-oneida-run-2/. All races have a wave start with professional chip timing. Post-race celebrations include race awards and food. Afterwards, participants can take a swim on the beautiful Lake Michigan beaches down the road in Port Oneida.

"This race supports preservation of the park's historic structures and landscapes that are so integral to our National Lakeshore. We encourage the community's participation to help preserve these treasured resources," says Sleeping Bear Forever's executive director, Susan Pocklington. "Last year marked our largest number of participants, and we would love to continue to grow this year."

Spectators are invited to gather at the finish line and support our racers with applause and cheers. Bring a blanket and enjoy the festivities in the park. Bring your park pass.

Harvard Historian presents America 250 Lecture in Leland

From staff reports

Nationally acclaimed historian and Harvard University professor Philip J. Deloria will present "Building a Nation in the Aftermath of Revolution: The Northwest Ordinance and the Creation of New American States" on Wednesday, July 22, at 6 pm at the Leland Public School Performing Arts Center. Hosted by the Leelanau Historical Society, the lecture is part of the Society's America 250 programming commemorating the semiquincentennial anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

As the United States celebrates this anniversary, communities across the country are reflecting on the people, places, and ideas that shaped the nation. Deloria's presentation will examine how the United States established policies for westward expansion following the American Revolution, focusing on legislation including the Land Ordinance of 1785, the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, and the Trade and Intercourse Act of 1790. By placing these laws within their historical and geographic context, Deloria will explore the ambitions and contradictions that defined the early American republic and continue to influence the nation today.

"America 250 is an opportunity to look beyond familiar stories of the Revolution and explore how the nation took shape in the years that followed," said Kim Kelder-

house, Executive Director of the Leelanau Historical Society. "Professor Deloria's scholarship offers a deeper understanding of the policies that transformed the Great Lakes region and the lasting impact those decisions had on Indigenous communities, settlement, and the development of states like Michigan."

Deloria is the Leverett Saltonstall Professor of History at Harvard University and one of the nation's foremost scholars of American Indian history and culture. His research explores the social, cultural, and political relationships between Indigenous peoples and the United States, as well as Indigenous histories in a global context. He is the author of several acclaimed books, including *Playing Indian*, *Indians in Unexpected Places*, and *Becoming Mary Sully: Toward an American Indian Abstract*. Deloria has also served as president of several national historical organizations and as a trustee of the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of the American Indian.

The lecture is part of the Leelanau Historical Society's yearlong America 250 programming, which connects the history of Leelanau County to the broader American story through exhibits, lectures, films, and educational programs.

The program is free and open to the public.

For additional information visit LeelanauHistory.org.



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Organic blues and jazz on tap at The Homestead

By Ross Boissoneau
Sun contributor

These cats can play. That will be obvious when Randy Marsh, Clif Metcalf and Lee Heerspink perform at Music On The Mountain July 22. The next show in The Homestead’s music series at the top of Bay Mountain features the threesome, a.k.a. Cat Daddy, performing music that recalls everything from the soul-jazz of the ’60s and ’70s to modern sounds.

Music is life for Marsh. If he’s not drumming up a storm somewhere, maybe it’s because he’s put down the sticks to showcase his harmonica playing. Or he’s working on his next gig, whether with Cat Daddy, Big Fun, the Jeff Haas Trio, or one of the many other musical entities he performs with.

But that all came to a crashing halt when the pandemic took hold of the world. “In early 2021 I’m not playing anywhere, fighting depression and boredom, wondering what’s next,” Marsh says. “I got a call from Lee Heerspink. I didn’t know him, but he said he was a big fan of Organissimo.” That organ trio, which recently celebrated a quarter century with concerts in Traverse City, Ann Arbor and Milwaukee, features Jim Alfredson on keys, Marsh on drums and a rotating cast of guitarists.

“He said he was doing a recording session and wanted me on drums. Maybe he’d get an organ player,” Marsh suggested he call Alfredson, who agreed, and with keyboardist Dutcher Snedeker and saxophonist Caleb Elzinga on board, Monsters Impromptu was born.

“It was music magic,” says Marsh. But when it came time to perform, getting all the players together became a

challenge. “Jim is busy with so many things.” Marsh suggested paring the personnel down to a trio, and he and Heerspink enlisted Metcalf.

Thus was born the band. But a new band needs a new name. The three still hadn’t agreed on a name when they played their first gig, at a now-defunct wine and jazz bar in Grand Rapids. A woman who was there when they were setting up said, “I don’t know you” to the band, then looked at Marsh and said, “but you’re Cat Daddy.”

“I said to the band, there we go, we’re Cat Daddy,” Marsh says. And it stuck.

“It’s a different sound from Organissimo,” Marsh notes. The band does originals that reflect the individual approaches of the players. “Lee is a big fan of Joe Gloss (the original guitarist for Organissimo), but he’s kind of like John Scofield or Bill Frisell.” Metcalf brings together sounds reminiscent of Joey DeFrancesco one minute, Alfredson another, or the gospel-style music that originally spurred his interest in the organ.

Marsh’s approach is similar to what he does with Organissimo. “That was my style, what I brought to the band,” he says. “It’s a little experimental. I’ve got my freedom to create.” The band plays a number of originals as well as the occasional cover, arranged to fit their approach.

Marsh says the group hopes to go into the studio at some point, but coordinating their busy schedules has made doing so a challenge. So, too, is the cost of such a project. “Lee’s busy, I’ve got other things. We haven’t figured out the financing to record.”

Cat Daddy is a multi-generational



band. Marsh is still a force to be reckoned with in his 70s, while youngsters Metcalf and Heerspink groove just as ferociously.

“I like playing with cats who are good. It’s a joy to play with younger guys. That’s what Art Blakey did,” Marsh says.

Regardless of age, he says the key for him is working with people who listen to each other. “My biggest gripe is playing with people who don’t listen. They’ve got their arsenal of chops,

but they aren’t feeling anybody. Music is a collective consciousness. You play and listen and shape things together.”

So says the original Cat Daddy.

The Music On The Mountain performances begin at 7 p.m. and include a ride to the top of the hill on the ski lift. Tickets for all the shows are \$22 and are available at tinyurl.com/Tickets-MOTM. The concerts go on rain or shine and are non-refundable. In the case of inclement weather, they take place at Mountain Flowers Lodge.

Park conducts traffic enforcement

From staff reports

The National Park Service will conduct a series of high-visibility traffic enforcement operations throughout the summer at Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore to promote safe driving behaviors and reduce serious traffic crashes. These operations will be conducted in coordination with local and state law enforcement partners.

Visitors can expect an increased law enforcement presence on park roads and at key traffic corridors during designated enforcement periods. Rangers and partner agencies will focus on traffic safety violations, including seatbelt use, speeding, and impaired driving. The goal of these highly visible patrols is to encourage voluntary compliance with traffic laws and improve safety for all who visit the park.

Motor vehicle crashes caused by speeding, impaired as well as distracted driving, remain among the leading

safety concerns in national parks. With increased visitation during the summer season, park roads experience higher traffic volumes involving passenger vehicles, motorcycles, bicycles, and pedestrians.

The NPS encourages all visitors to help make park roads safer by following these simple safety tips:

- Wear your seatbelt at all times.
- Obey posted speed limits.
- Never drive while impaired by alcohol or drugs.
- Stay alert for pedestrians, bicyclists, and wildlife.
- Allow extra travel time during periods of heavy visitation.
- Use caution and be patient in construction or maintenance zones.

These high-visibility enforcement operations are supported through funding provided by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration in partnership with the National Park Service Traffic Safety Coalition.

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Foothills Café and Motel seek the ‘right buyer’ to carry on legacy

By Cameryn Cass
Sun contributor

You know the overused adage, “All good things must come to an end”?

Though admittedly cliché, it’s with that very sentiment Shari Bernstein, the owner of The Foothills Café and Motel in Maple City, concludes her 16-year journey at the property she calls “magic.”

“There’s an old oak tree, an old maple tree,” Bernstein smiled. “It feels... It’s got a vibe.”

But, alas, “We are all ready for our next chapters, filled with new opportunities, growth and experiences, where we can slow the pace and be present,” Bernstein wrote last fall in a Facebook

post. “That’s why we are selling.”

She and her family listed the “double whammy” that is the motel and cafe in December. And because winter is famously quiet in these parts, Bernstein “didn’t expect interest until people started coming up for the season.”

So far this summer, there’s been “a lot of interest.”

“Neat folks have come to look at it with energy to do something different,” she said.

However, since it’s a “mainstay in the community,” she isn’t in a rush to sell. Instead, she’s focused on finding “the right buyers.”

“You’re kind of buying into a lifestyle,” she explained. “I created a platform, a foundation. I don’t want



Shari Bernstein and her father, Richard.

to see a developer come in and put up condos; I want it to be somebody’s passion project.”

Because for a time, The Foothills was something of a passion project in her own family.

They renovated “everything” inside the rooms. When they got there nearly two decades ago, Bernstein remembered how “even the mattresses were from 1960.”

They’ve since refreshed the bedding, and upgraded other things without sacrificing its character, like by salvaging the original bathroom tiles.

Renovations came to a halt when her mom died and Bernstein took over operations about two and half years ago.

“My energy is limited,” she said. “If I’m not here, I’m in Toledo counseling, teaching a driver intervention course or seeing my dad.”

Shari’s father Richard is 92 years old now, and she intends “to spend as much time with him as I can while he’s on this planet.”

What’s more, Bernstein’s career has long focused on counseling, namely for those struggling with substance abuse.

“I firmly believe addicts are the empaths of the planet,” she said. “I’ve

never met an addict I don’t like.”

“Sober,” she added.

It’s no wonder, then, that Bernstein spearheaded the NARCAN “Harm Reduction MI” newspaper box outside the café four years ago. NARCAN, or Naloxone, is an opioid antagonist which is used to reverse or reduce the effects of opioids. The medication can stop overdoses and save lives.

“People say it doesn’t happen in Leelanau County, but it does,” she said. “People come; it empties.”

She also helped start an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting at The Foothills on Mondays at 5:30 p.m., and “a Pay It Forward kind of thing.”

“You could buy someone else’s meal, or donate money to fund the food bank,” she said.

There was music out back, which Bernstein dubbed the “Foothills Deck Sessions.”

“We spent many summers supporting local music,” she said. “I hope that kind of stuff continues.”

Though the cafe is closed now and has been since January, the motel is open and booked up for the season.

“We hope that they [the new owners] will fuel this beautiful property and all of its living creatures, with the love, energy, and spirit that [the previous owners] set out to manifest and maintain here,” she wrote. “We truly thank you.”

Bernstein said that once The Foothills sells, she will “plug into the community wherever I end up,” whether that be Toledo or northern Michigan. She’ll also continue her work with addicts, grow the course she now teaches and spend time with her father.

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What’s in a Leelanau name?

By Ross Boissoneau
Sun contributor

A rose by any other name would smell as sweet. So said Juliet in the Bard’s most famous work. But would Leelanau really be such a land of delight if that’s not what its name really meant?

Spoiler alert: The name Leelanau doesn’t come from any Native American source. That’s despite the stories that have sprung up around it, some of which were spread by the person who came up with the name. More on that shortly.

Many of the county’s locations have stories surrounding their names. Start with Sleeping Bear Dunes, the story of which is well-known. Mama bear and her cubs swam across Lake Michigan to escape a forest fire. When Mama reached shore, she looked back, waiting for her cubs. She eventually became the sand dunes, while the cubs became the Manitou Islands.

Move to the north end of the county, where you find likely the easiest one of all. It’s not hard to derive the source of Northport’s name. After all, it is indeed the northernmost point of the county, and was a port for ships of all sorts.

But go back 175 years and you would find yourself in Waukazooville, named after the Odawa Chief Peter Waukazoo. In 1854, a newcomer named Deacon Joseph Dame arrived. He platted the village and renamed it Northport, simply because the settlement was located at the northern tip of the Leelanau Peninsula and mirrored the name of a town in Maine where he had lived. The name stuck, though the original moniker lives on in the form of Waukazoo Street, one of the town’s main roadways.

At the south end of the county, Empire took its name from a ship. Make that two ships. The *Empire State* was a 19th-century side-wheeler steamer that grounded and was stuck off the Leelanau shoreline in 1849. Just 16 years later, the schooner *Empire* was trapped in offshore ice during a severe winter storm. The area subsequently became known as Empire, and the name was officially adopted when the village was incorporated in 1895.

Glen Lake, Glen Arbor and Glen Haven all reference the surrounding glens, the rolling, wooded hills and valleys characteristic of the area. The lake was known as Bear Lake by the Native Americans. Harriet Fisher, the wife of early settler John E. Fisher, renamed the waters for its nearby topography, then combined the name of the lake with arbor, to describe the leafy, shady grapevines she admired

growing on the area’s trees.

Glen Haven’s name references the sheltered, deep-water port it provided for Great Lakes steamships needing wood and supplies. Founded in 1857, the town was originally called Sleeping Bearville, though the name was changed shortly after its founding.

Some towns are named for a person who founded or otherwise impacted it. Residents of Suttons Bay may know the town was named for landowner Harry Sutton. They may not know it was originally named Suttonburg. It is such a charming town the name was changed to Pleasant City when it was replatted in 1860. Alas, that settlement failed, and it reverted to Suttons Bay a year later.

Suttons Bay is typically spelled without an apostrophe. While it was named for a single Sutton—hence Suttonburg—the U.S. Board on Geographic Names, the official arbiter of American place names, discourages the use of possessive form in place names.

It’s not just towns that are named for people. Kasson Township was named for Kasson Freeman, the first county surveyor of Leelanau County. He was further celebrated, but not by name, for another familiar county place. John Fisher and Freeman were honored for their early efforts in the area with a picnic on Aug. 3, 1893. That date was Freeman’s birthday and the day Fisher arrived in Glen Arbor from Wisconsin. In 1904, the picnic moved from Maple City Road a quarter mile from Glen Lake to its present location on Dunn’s Farm Road in what is now officially named Old Settler’s Park.

Lake Leelanau is pretty easy. It’s named for the lake of the same name, which makes sense as the waterway borders much of the town. But of course, that is not its original name. The town was first known as “Le Naro,” due to its location at the narrows between the north and south arms of the lake. As the settlement grew and was improved, the name was changed to Provemont, a play on “Improvement.” When the area’s first post office was established in 1871, it was officially named Provemont, and as such was home to the Provemont General Store, designated a Michigan Historical Site in 1991.

On March 31, 1924, the village adopted its current name for its post office and the settlement, to match the surrounding body of water. Good thing it waited, as Lake Leelanau was known as Carp Lake until 1901, when it was renamed Lake Leelanau by Leelanau County supervisors.

For a hint as to Maple City’s name,

simply look at the nearby trees. But again, as with Lake Leelanau, that isn’t the full story. The restaurant in the middle of town offers a clue: Pegtown Station references the town’s original name. It was named for a local factory that used the surrounding maple trees to manufacture wooden pins—pegs—for footwear.

Nearby Cedar is another easy one. Founded in 1885 by lumberman Benjamin Boughey, it was originally named Cedar City. It is located in the midst of cedar forests and swamps. The historic name was retained for many years after the post office was officially shortened to Cedar in 1893 by the local Manistee and North-Eastern Railroad depot.

When Reverend Peter Dougherty and his band of Native American Indians left Old Mission, they settled across the bay at a site variously called A Point Beyond or New Mission. According to the Omena Point Preservation Society, the new name came about through Dougherty responding to interesting information with the phrase “O-ma-nah” which means “Is that so?” in Ojibwe. In time the Mission and the town became known as “O-ma-nah” or Omena.

Leland is surprisingly not related to Leelanau. Its exposure to the north winds meant it was in the lee, so it became Lee Land.

So back to Leelanau itself, which may boast the most interesting story. It is among the ten counties in Michigan whose names were created by Henry Schoolcraft, a geographer, geologist and ethnologist, who served for a time as a United States Indian Agent in the state. His made-up words often combined Native American words with roots in Greek, Latin and Arabic.

Some sources still ascribe the county’s name to a Native American word or combination of Native American and French, meaning “delight of life.” But the Library of Michigan calls it a name totally fabricated by Schoolcraft and his wife, Jane Johnston Schoolcraft, an Ojibwe writer. She used “Leelinau” as a pen name for stories published in their 1820s family magazine, *The Literary Voyager*. He later used “Leelinau” as the name of a Native American heroine in his 1839 book *Algic Researches*.

So, “Land of Delight” may indeed refer to the county, with its hills, lakes, beaches and ample attractions. But a native word? Sorry, no.

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SMITH
continues from page 1

world she is creating. *Everything is the Beloved* seemed to hold the spiritual and visual language of the exhibition. It is at once expansive and intimate, grounded and otherworldly, inviting contemplation

rather than simple observation. An immense diptych, *Everything is the Beloved*, has the presence of a mural—an immersive field of color and light that seems to open beyond the boundaries of the canvas itself. Rendered in layers of leafy greens, muted blues, and soft ochre tones, the

work evokes a realm where the earthly and celestial converge. Forms suggest flowers, foliage, and a luminous, constellated sky, yet they move beyond representation; they become symbols of transformation and renewal.

While *Everything is the Beloved* serves as a central point of entry into Smith’s artistic vision, the exhibition expands outward through a cohesive body of paintings and sculptural works exploring themes of nature, growth, and intuition. The paintings are executed in safflower oil on linen, canvas, and wood panels, while a series of sculptural ceramic works extends Smith’s meditation into three-dimensional expression. Among these are handcrafted ceramic flowers, including a grouping of 14 smaller blossoms and two larger, more commanding pieces.

At first glance, the title *Of Stars and Flowers* might suggest something decorative, ornamental, or sentimental—a celebration of visual pleasure alone. Yet this exhibition offers a glimpse into the larger oeuvre of Smith’s artistic practice, where beauty consistently serves as a gateway to deeper conceptual inquiry. The flowers and stars are not simply subjects; they become vehicles for exploring interconnectedness and awareness. The work’s power comes from the intelligence and intention beneath that beauty.

Smith describes the flowers in the work as a metaphor for an awakening—a process of becoming more fully present to oneself. “I would say the show revolves around the idea of flowers as a metaphor for the ‘flowering’ or consciousness, or a way of coming alive to oneself,” she explains.

As Smith painted, the imagery moved beyond the earthbound forms of flowers and into a celestial realm. “As I started to paint the flowers, these star-like shapes started to emerge in the sky, and I felt an expansion of the idea from the earth to the sky.”

That connection between the grounded and the infinite became central to the exhibition. “I like this connection between the earthen flowers and the celestial stars because we are so connected and bound to the earth and so connected and bound to the stars... flowers and



Alyssa Smith’s work displayed at Farm Club in 2023.

plants can help us process emotions and navigate difficult stages life. I think stars hold that ability as well,” Smith shares.

Of Stars and Flowers also represents a significant evolution in Smith’s practice. After years of creating smaller paintings, she found herself searching for a new sense of freedom and possibility.

“I’ve done hundreds of small paintings and was getting burned out,” she recalls. “It just wasn’t feeling as fun as it had in the past. I really was craving making larger work.”

Moving to a larger scale was deeply liberating for Smith. She describes the shift: “I feel like once I started painting big, it was like I could breathe again. Images got fleshed out more. There is literally and metaphorically more room to move. I think the larger work feels like walking into a portal.”

Smith’s work is informed by a range of art historical voices that span centuries and styles. She points to Odilon Redon (1840–1916) for his fantastical, deeply internal imagery. Claude Monet (1840–1926) serves as a touchstone for his close observation of flowers and the natural world, while Pierre Bonnard (1867–1947) comes through more in execution than subject, particularly in his use of color. Sandro Botticelli (1445–1510), with *Primavera* and *Map of Hell*—his intricate interpretations of mythology and Dante’s *Inferno*—offers a vocabulary of symbolism, allegory, and carefully constructed worlds that shapes Smith’s own approach to meaning and composition. Josef Albers (1888–1976), known for *Homage to the Square* series, provides Smith a way of understanding color as an emotional and perceptual experience; as Smith puts it, “his squares are spiritual to me.”

For longtime supporter and fellow artist Melanie Parke, Smith’s work occupies a space between the transcendent

SMITH concludes on page 9

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French Valley partners with Conservancy to support Sugar Loaf

From staff reports

Valley Vineyard, part of the Harmony Estate Wineries of Leelanau portfolio, announced the release of two new wines: Sugar Loaf Red and Sugar Loaf White. Created in partnership with the Leelanau Conservancy, the wines support the long-term stewardship of Sugar Loaf, the iconic Leelanau County landmark recently protected from development for generations to come.

The wines are available at the French Valley tasting room. A portion from every bottle sold will be donated to the Leelanau Conservancy’s Sugar Loaf fund. The donations will help sustain trail maintenance, habitat restoration, and long-term stewardship of the 285-acre property.

“Sugar Loaf has always been part of the landscape we work in and the community we’re rooted in. When the Conservancy completed the acquisition, it felt like the whole county exhaled,” said Peggy Gauthier, wine club manager at French Valley. “We

wanted to do something that made that support real and lasting—not just a moment, but a contribution that grows with every bottle we pour.”

The Sugar Loaf ski resort property, that has been dormant for over 25 years, officially transferred to the Leelanau Conservancy on March 11, following a community fundraising effort that raised over \$8 million from more than 1,100 donors. The property was gifted by the Edmund F. and Virginia B. Ball Foundation. The Conservancy’s long-term vision includes a multi-use trail network for hiking, biking, snowshoeing, and cross-country skiing, as well as



Photo by Sarah Peschel

universal access features, scenic viewpoints, a community sledding hill, and ecological restoration of native habitat throughout the 285-acre site.

The Sugar Loaf property is not yet open to the public while safety assessment and trail infrastructure work is underway. The Conservancy expects an initial public opening in mid-to-late 2026.

“Partnerships like this one are how conservation becomes community. French Valley’s commitment ensures that the work of caring for Sugar Loaf doesn’t stop when the press releases do—it continues every time someone opens a bottle,” said Tom Nelson, director of the Leelanau Conservancy.

French Valley Vineyard invites the community to celebrate the launch with a release party on Friday, July 31 from 7-9 p.m. at the French Valley. Guests can taste Sugar Loaf Red and Sugar Loaf White, hear more about the Conservancy’s plans for the property, and toast to a landmark now protected for generations to come. Admission to the event is free, details and RSVP on our website, GlenArbor.com.

SMITH

continues from page 8

and the tangible. She describes it as “otherworldly and grounded at the same time,” noting that the immediate experience is one of being “washed in light and swept up in a very specific atmosphere.” Parke recalls the particular qualities of Smith’s palette, “a dusky, hazy if-you-blink-it-will-be-gone tone of yellow, an August green when the sun dips behind a hill,” as sensations that extend beyond the visual and into something emotional.

Living with one of Smith’s paintings, Parke says, has revealed that the work continues to unfold over time. She is especially drawn to Smith’s ability to make light feel almost material: “Here the eye can rest and move at the same time. Here the light is on the inside, not the outside.”

In Smith’s paintings, Parke sees an artist studying not only the appearance of the natural world, but its deeper structures—the ways plants, landscapes, and living things seem to be connected through light. That sense of discovery reflects what Parke finds most compelling about Smith’s practice. It is a curiosity that is “infectious, seductive, generous.”

Smith’s own story is as layered as the work she creates. Born in 1984 in Lille, France, near the Belgian border, she spent her early years moving between Europe and the United States. Her parents, Lonnie and Debbie Smith—Americans who had relocated from Omaha, Nebraska, to France in 1983—raised Smith and her five siblings across both continents. This transatlantic upbringing exposed her to a wide range of cultural landscapes and visual influences.

Smith went on to study art education

at Taylor University in Indiana, earning her undergraduate degree in 2007. She later returned to Black Forest Academy, the boarding school in Kandern, Germany, where she had once been a student, to teach art. She continued her studies at the New York Academy of Art, earning a Master of Fine Arts in painting in 2015.

While pursuing her master’s degree, Smith encountered an unexpected medical barrier that would temporarily redirect the course of her artistic practice. She developed a debilitating, undiagnosed condition that made working with traditional oil paints impossible. Rather than stepping away from creativity altogether, Smith turned to farming, a new chapter that became both a creative and grounding practice.

Beginning in 2016 at her uncle’s goat farm in South Carolina, Smith immersed herself in the rhythms of cultivation. She later continued farming at Furman University Farm, Keith’s Farm in upstate New York, and Providence Farm in Eastport, Michigan. The experience deepened her connection to the earth, to cycles of growth and renewal, and to the colors, textures, and living forms that would continue to inform her work.

In 2018, Smith returned to France, where a chance encounter introduced her to oil pastels made with mineral wax rather than linseed oil—the traditional medium that had triggered her health issues. The discovery opened a path back to painting. Over time, she also learned of oil paints made with alternative oils, including safflower oil, allowing her to safely return to oil painting.

Smith’s journey eventually brought her to the Traverse City and Leelanau County area, where she settled in 2021 and established her studio practice.

Drawn by the region’s landscape, its connection to water and land, and its community of makers and growers, Smith found a place that aligned with the values that had shaped her artistic path. It is here, in the environment that now surrounds her, that the vision behind *Of Stars and Flowers* ultimately emerged.

The setting for *Of Stars and Flowers* feels inseparable from Smith’s sensibility. Within V Gallery, her paintings and ceramic sculptures find a place that mirrors their own quiet intensity: a space where beauty, imagination, and deeper meaning can reveal themselves. Nestled along the shores of Lake Michigan in Omena, one of Leelanau County’s most distinctive corners, the gallery is situated within a small, tranquil village with a timeless quality all its own. Away from the pace of the region’s busier destinations, Omena carries a sense of stillness and reflection that feels naturally suited to Smith’s work.

When Smith first reached out to me in February about *Of Stars and Flowers*, the exhibition was still in its nascency. From those first conversations in the depths of winter to seeing the completed work arrive at the height of summer, I have witnessed the trajectory of an idea as it came to fruition. What began as an intuitive impulse developed into a deeply intentional exhibition—ethereal, yet meticulously considered. *Of Stars and Flowers* will be on view July 18 through July 28, with an opening reception on July 18.

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*By Tim Mulherin
Sun contributor*

In June, my wife and I stopped by a long-established eatery in a Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore gateway town for a late lunch. We ordered

Across the country, the cost of living continues to skyrocket. Inflation stubbornly keeps rising, tariffs are escalating the cost of many goods, and the war in Iran is jacking up fuel prices. The price of housing in the region—and Leelanau

Clearly, the burgers we savored during our summertime lunch at a local eatery are not prepared with the average American family in mind. They are made for tourists with plenty of disposable income who can whip out their credit cards without hesitation or worry. The same for upper-middle and upper-class locals and seasonal homeowners. It's just the price of making oneself happy. No systems thinking or

An opening reception will be held on Saturday, July 18 from 5-7 pm.



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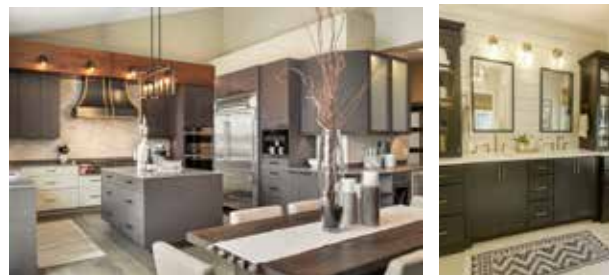
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A quest to visit 250 historic sites

By Linda Engelhard
Sun contributor

Celebrating a national anniversary is kind of similar to looking ahead at a milestone birthday, with good, bad, and sometimes ugly aspects. Yes, I'm still breathing but not everything in my past is cause for a party.

My husband John and I had escaped snowmageddon and were heading toward the coast of Georgia, surrounded by Civil War history on the way. Without snow to shovel, we began to contemplate what a genuine celebration of the Declaration of Independence might look like for us.

We love this country. That said, we also love justice, honesty, kindness, generosity—the values we grew up with that seem to be less embraced by our country in 2026. We settled on a quest to celebrate by learning more history and visiting 250 historic sites by the end of the year.

The very first site we visited was at South Carolina State University. A security guard met us at the gate and helped us find the Orangeburg Massacre Memorial on the campus map. We made our way to Legacy Plaza and found a substantial brick and steel structure surrounding the busts of three handsome young men: Samuel Hammond, Delano Middleton, and Henry Smith. In 1968, they were killed and 28 others were injured by police while protesting on campus about segregation at the local bowling alley.

John and I were college students in the late 1960s and early '70s, so watching news stories and reading about the horrible killing of four white students at Kent State in 1970 are clear memories. Neither of us remembers hearing news reports about the killings at South Carolina State just two years earlier.

Making our way south, we spent a day in Charleston, first visiting Mother Emmanuel A.M.E. Church where the pastor and eight church members were murdered 11 years ago. In 1822, white citizens destroyed the building where the African Methodist Episcopal Church was meeting and hanged several church leaders involved with a slave uprising. Mother Emmanuel's statement "grace means courage" has been tested by racism, an earthquake and a hurricane, but they continue to thrive.

Closer to the harbor, we stopped at the Old Slave Mart Museum located in part of a building that housed "Ryan's Mart," the last major slave market in Charleston. When the Union Army reclaimed Charleston in 1865, all slave trading was outlawed. On the day we visited, visitors of all colors filled the nearby sidewalks, a sign of hope going forward.

We journeyed on toward our destination, St. Simons Island, Georgia, a place we love to visit, but this time we looked around us with a mission. Driving through Brunswick on our way to the F.J. Torras Causeway, we stopped at the Ahmaud Arbery Memorial Park, a modest space honoring the memory of the young man gunned down for jogging

in the Satilla Shores neighborhood. Even the beauty of the Low Country marshes could not erase the sadness of his death.

After getting settled and breathing in the salty St. Simons breezes, we decided to explore a building we had passed many times: the World War II Home Front Museum. Outside of the museum stands a metal marker titled "S.S. Oklahoma and Esso Baton Rouge attacked by U-123."

Two of our grandsons accompanied us to learn more about World War II along the Georgia coast and were soon mesmerized by the interactive exhibits about radar and plane identification. All of us were amazed to learn that more Americans died along our Atlantic Coast during World War II than at the World Trade Tower bombings in 2001. Georgia has developed a World War II Heritage Trail, so we have more to learn next year.

In the northern half of St. Simons Island, we visited Fort Frederica, the preserved ruins of a town developed by James Oglethorpe and a fort where the British defended the island from attacks by Spain. And on the southern end, near the river, we walked around Gascoigne Bluff where trees were felled and shipped north to build "Old Ironsides," the USS Constitution.

Adjoining the bluff, the Hamilton Plantation is a disquieting reminder of life prior to the Civil War. Long-staple cotton was grown and harvested by slaves and shipped from the plantation's wharf. We questioned why neighborhoods throughout the South still choose to include "plantation" in their names.

As we drove north toward our native state, we realized that we need to work harder to learn more Michigan history and wondered how many historical sites we could find on our return route. We visited the Underground Railroad Sculpture last year, but Battle Creek wasn't on our route this time. In Ann Arbor, we found a plaque honoring the Michigan Antislavery Society founded in 1836 at the First Presbyterian Church, moving to the First Congregational Church in 1847.

On the west side of the state, we visited the Captain Walker's Branded Hand monument at the Evergreen Cemetery in Muskegon. Captain Walker was a staunch abolitionist sea captain who helped slaves escape from Florida to the Bahamas. When he was caught, his captors branded his hand with "SS" to signify slave stealer, and he spent a year in solitary confinement. Supporters from the North helped him pay a fine for his release, and until the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, he traveled the country showing his hand and exposing the cruelties of slavery. He had earned his retirement on a fruit farm near Muskegon.

Our list has grown to 114 sites, nearly halfway to our goal, but it's already July and the pressure is building. Fortunately, our granddaughter will start college in New York, so we hope a fall road trip will provide opportunities to learn even more.



Flow launches Great Lakes Passport

From staff reports

Flow Water Advocates, based in Traverse City, is proud to announce the release of the Great Lakes Passport, a free educational guide that invites Michiganders and visitors alike to explore the Great Lakes while learning about the rights, history, and legal protections that safeguard these shared waters. Designed for families, educators, outdoor enthusiasts, and all friends of the Great Lakes, the Great Lakes Passport combines travel inspiration with practical knowledge about public access to one of the region's most important natural resources.

Part travel companion and part educational resource, the Great Lakes Passport introduces readers to Michigan's lighthouses, shipwrecks, wetlands, and Indigenous history while explaining the Public Trust Doctrine—the centuries-old legal principle that protects the Great Lakes and guarantees the public's right to access, enjoy, and be sustained by them. The guide also helps readers understand the Ordinary High Water Mark, which generally defines where the public may walk along Michigan's Great Lakes shorelines.

"The Great Lakes are more than beautiful places to visit—they're a shared public trust that belongs to all of us," said Dave Dempsey, senior policy advisor for Flow Water Advocates. "We created the Great Lakes Passport to help people connect with these incredible waters while understanding both their rights and their responsibility to protect them. We hope it inspires thousands of people to explore the shoreline, ask questions, and become lifelong stewards of the Great Lakes."

The Great Lakes Passport is available free of charge while supplies last at locations including Cherry Republic, M22, Backcountry North, select Michigan Welcome Centers, and others.

Watch videos at GlenArbor.com of the Declaration of Independence reading on July 4 at Leelanau post offices.



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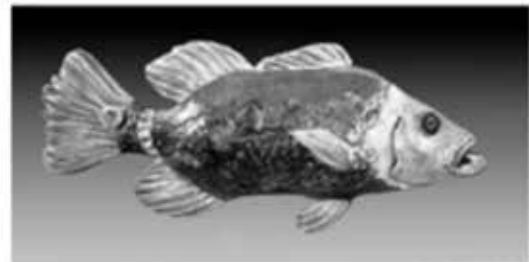
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Affordable bunkhouses debut at Indigo Bluffs



By Cameryn Cass
Sun contributor

As the month of June came to a close, four new family bunkhouses were added to Indigo Bluffs RV Park & Resort in Empire.

With a queen bed and four bunks, the new 320 square foot accommodations sleep six, a number that campground owner Gary Becker described as “magic” in hospitality.

“The three generation vacation,” he said. “Grandparents, parents, children. Figure two plus two plus two.”

Beyond providing an enjoyable place to stay, the campground is concerned with “preserving and defending the opportunity for families to come here,” said Becker.

Which is precisely why, at the height of the tourist season in July, the bunkhouses are under \$130 a night.

“The bunkhouses are affordable options for families,” he said. “I don’t want this to become an area of the rich and famous. Too many things are becoming too expensive and it’s unfortunate. Everyone should be able to come here and stay.”

As we talked under the canopy of hardwoods, a light breeze made the maple leaves overhead dance. Birds sang, and kids played at the playground on the other side of the trees.

Becker spoke of plans to plant pines around the bunkhouses for greater privacy, of clearing out more brush and cleaning the space up. After all, he just received the certificate of occupancy

for the bunkhouses the day prior.

Even though they have yet to trim the windows and baseboards, and to paint the bunkhouses Indigo Bluffs blue, all four are already rented out.

“There’s even a waitlist going,” said Becker.

We watched a father wheel a wagon full of camp gear up the ramp to his bunkhouse. Already, visitors stretched out on the Adirondack chairs out front, making themselves at home.

There’s water onsite, but no running water inside the bunkhouses. Still, they’re equipped with a kitchenette. Outside, there’s picnic tables, fire pits and the aforementioned Adirondack chairs.

“We might add more cottages and things of that nature in the future. We’re looking at rearranging some things,” said Becker of the greater campground layout.

“People seem to be more comfortable camping this way,” he said, nodding toward the bunkhouses.

“When you say the word ‘camping,’ people think dirty, bugs, I’m sleeping on the ground, I’m wet,” he laughed. “Everything you can think of.”

This fall, Quality Structures LLC, an Amish building company out of Clare, will construct two more bunkhouses at the Bluffs so there will be six available to rent for the 2027 season.

“A family of four can stay elsewhere for hundreds of dollars a night,” said Becker. “The affordability (of the bunkhouses) is great.”

“People so love the fact that they can come and be a part of the area.”



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Port Oneida Fair sees visitor decline prior to final fair in August

From staff reports

For more than two decades, the Port Oneida Fair during the first weekend in August has stood out as a memorable part of the Leelanau summer experience. The two-day event staged among the barns, meadows, and one-room schoolhouse of the Port Oneida Rural Historic District within the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore celebrates the rich cultural heritage and traditions of settler families during the late 1800s and early 1900s.

However, the *Sun* reported in late June that this year's event, Aug. 7-8, will be the final Port Oneida Fair. Sleeping Bear Dunes superintendent Scott Tucker said that his staff is reexamining the impact of the event and whether they have the resources to continue holding the fair. Dozens of National Lakeshore staff work during each Port Oneida Fair.

Tucker added that visitor numbers have dwindled in recent years, and actors and demonstrators are aging out. Finding interpretive funding to stage the event has also proven difficult, he said.

The *Sun* followed up with Merrith Baughman, director of interpretation and visitor services at Sleeping Bear Dunes, to learn how many Park staff and volunteers work during each fair, and how much visitation has declined.

According to Baughman, the number of Park interpretive and visitor services team members that have worked during the Port Oneida Fair has varied from 19 in 2024 to 10 in 2022. In 2023 and 2025 the number was 12, and the Park plans to employ that number next month. These numbers do not include maintenance staff preparing parking areas, mowing sites, and collecting trash—or Park law enforcement officers that stop at the Fair

to check on visitor safety.

There are also four-five Park employees on the Port Oneida Fair Committee that meets each year from October-August. The tally also does not include the number of volunteers that work the Fair. According to Baughman, it takes 75-100 volunteers over the two days to cover 20-30 different positions or activities.

Public attendance at the Port Oneida Fair peaked at 4,392 visitors in 2012, according to the National Lakeshore's count. Only once since then has the number topped 4,000 (4,140 showed in 2017). In fact, the tally dipped below 3,000 after 2019 and never rebounded. According to Park metrics, only 2,000 attended last year's fair—less than half of the 2012 peak. (The Port Oneida Fair was canceled in 2015 following a windstorm that ravaged the Sleeping Bear Dunes region the weekend before the event. It was also canceled in 2020 and 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.)

Baughman also contrasted the number of exhibits that took part in 2012 (93, not including food) with the tally from 2025 (62, not including food).

Below is a list of the Park's visitation numbers from 2012 to 2025:

2025	2,000
2024	2,679
2023	2,580
2022	1,926
2021	canceled
2020	canceled
2019	3,200
2018	3,197
2017	4,140
2016	3,100
2015	canceled
2014	3,397
2013	3,918
2012	4,392



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Look for Primary Election coverage in our forthcoming July 30 edition of the *Glen Arbor Sun*, as well as reflections on the final Port Oneida Fair, and a roundup of thriving new businesses in the now bustling town of Lake Leelanau.

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When: 1PM to 7PM Saturday
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HORSES

continues from page 1

“Our two days of riding there were incredible. I’d never experienced anything like that and started thinking, ‘What do we have that’s like this in our area?’” said Knoblock.

Returning home, she couldn’t stop asking herself that question. Northern Michigan certainly has horses, forests and public land. But finding safe places to ride remains surprisingly difficult.

“There isn’t really any place except Alligator Hill and most equestrians don’t even know you’re allowed to ride a horse up there because they don’t promote it. And there isn’t anything else in Leelanau County,” she explained.

Virtually all other existing trail systems are shared with motorcycles, ORVs, bicycles and other users. “We may have an issue with whomever is driving those vehicles,” said Knoblock. “Some of them are lovely, wonderful people who stop and ask what would we like them to do? Horses [and riders] always have the right of way on any trail, no matter what,” she explained.

While some interactions are courteous, it only takes one careless encounter with a frightened 1,200-pound animal to create a dangerous situation. “You’re always on high alert,” said Knoblock. “You’re listening for the rumble of an engine because you know something’s coming, and it’s probably coming fast. It’s not safe.”

Recent incidents have reinforced those concerns. One woman was hospitalized after dirt bikers deliberately accelerated near horses, startling one animal badly enough to throw its rider. Those moments convinced club leaders that advocacy needed to become

central to the organization’s mission. Not advocacy against other trail users, but advocacy for education, cooperation and stewardship. Stewardship isn’t simply about maintaining trails; it’s about helping everyone – horseback riders, hikers, cyclists and off-road enthusiasts – understand how to safely share them.

In the months since its founding, the organization begun translating its philosophy into tangible projects – efforts designed not only to improve access for riders, but to strengthen relationships across the broader outdoor community.

“We want to be uplifting,” said Knoblock. “We’re trying to lift the rising tide that lifts all the boats.”

That approach has shaped hopeful conversations with agencies and organizations across the region. Rather than positioning horses in opposition to other trail users, the club emphasizes shared stewardship; recognizing that hikers, cyclists, ORV riders and equestrians all have a stake in preserving access to Northern Michigan’s natural spaces. It’s a slower path than confrontation, but it’s one the club believes will lead to lasting results.

“We’re not trying to take anything away from anyone,” Knoblock said. “We’re trying to make it better for everyone.”

For generations, horseback travel was a common way of experiencing Northern Michigan’s forests and dunes. Today, it’s less visible but no less meaningful to those who continue the tradition. By placing riders back into those spaces in a visible, positive way, the club hopes to remind both visitors and decision-makers that equestrian access remains an important part of the region’s outdoor identity.

“A horse can take you to areas that



might be a little more treacherous to attempt on foot,” she said. “And it’s friendly to the environment. Footpaths and bicycles do far more damage to a trail or an ecosystem than a horse does.”

Another dimension to the club’s work is one that extends beyond trails and into the local economy. Equestrian tourism is a niche market, but a powerful and untapped one in the region and the Sleeping Bear Equestrian Club hopes to promote it.

“There’s the argument: ‘We don’t need any more tourists!’” said Knoblock, “But I would argue it depends on who that tourist is.”

She explained that horseback rid-

ing is not harmful to the environment. Riders who travel with horses are, as a whole, quite respectful and tend to stay longer. They need specialized accommodations: boarding facilities, trailer parking, access to feed and veterinary services. They frequent local restaurants, shops and attractions. In regions where equestrian infrastructure is well developed, that translates into a steady stream of visitors who contribute meaningfully to the local economy.

Northern Michigan has the landscape to support that kind of tourism but what it lacks, in many cases, is the coordinated infrastructure. The Sleeping Bear Equestrian Club sees an opportunity. By advocating for more horse-friendly trails, promoting local equestrian businesses and organizing events that draw riders to the area, the club hopes to help build a network that benefits both the horse community and the broader region.

Not all of the club’s efforts happen on trails. Some unfold in vineyards, others in open fields, barns or community spaces where horses and people come together in ways that feel less like formal events and more like shared experiences.

Upcoming events include the Wine & Whinny Glamping Weekend July 17-19 at Blu Dot Winery in Charlevoix where members can enjoy leisurely trail rides, wine and cheese tastings, dinner and socializing under the stars. The Sleeping Bear Equestrian Club will also host a Club Day at the Traverse City Horse Show in Williamsburg on July 23. Members and non-members alike can enjoy

HORSES concludes on page 15

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HORSES

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watching the Nations Cup together.

August offers a camping trip at Garey Lake Campground in Empire, September serves up both an Upper Peninsula Lake Michigan Ride Weekend and a camping weekend at Lake Dubonnet, and in October there will be the Fall Color Ride to Norwood Beach in Charlevoix/Norwood.

In winter months, the Sleeping Bear Equestrian Club hosts monthly member coffees at rotating locations. For long-time riders, the gatherings are a chance to connect with others who share their passion and for newcomers it offers a first glimpse into a community that might otherwise feel out of reach.

“You don’t need to own a horse to attend, you don’t even need to know how to ride; you just need to be curious,” said Knoblock. That openness is intentional. “We want people to feel like they can come and be part of it,” she said. “There’s a misconception that horsemanship is difficult to get into. We’d like to open people’s minds to see what we’re about and become involved. It’s accessible to anyone.”

For all the club’s initiatives — its advocacy, its partnerships, its events — the heart of the organization is found in the relationship between a person and a horse. Knoblock explains that a horse mirrors human emotion, responding not to words but to presence. Patience is required to build trust and humility comes from working with an animal that cannot be forced, only guided.

“Horses are pretty magical,” Knoblock says. “They have such a way of reaching people and healing them. They don’t judge you. They just respond to what you bring to them. You learn a lot about yourself. They teach you to be present, to be patient and to be aware.”

Even as the Sleeping Bear Equestrian Club organization grows, its leaders remain focused on that philosophical objective: not just creating more places to ride, but creating more opportunities for people to experience what horses can offer. Perhaps the old adage apocryphally attributed to Lord Palmerston said it best: “There’s nothing so good for the inside of a man as the outside of a horse.”

For membership and event info please visit SleepingBearEquestrianClub.org

SURF

continues from page 1
enjoying the lake,” says Skrocki. “We needed to share.” That philosophy encapsulates the goal of the business. “The mission of the shop is to connect all people with the lake.”

Skrocki’s mother Beryl passed away in October 2022. She was known as the heart of the surf shop. When asked how the family is continuing Beryl’s legacy, Ella says her mother is completely irreplaceable. “When she passed our foundation was rocked. She was the foundation, the heart and soul. My sister and I worked with her, kept the business alive.”

When Annabel left for the West Coast, it was up to Ella to keep the shop running. And after 22 years of operation, she felt it was time for a reset. “I lost my dog in March—additional loss on top of pre-existing grief,” she says.

To embrace the changes, she opted for a new color scheme and focused on their own curated goods, as well as rentals, lessons, classes and camps. New this, new that, but still with the same goal: to help people get in and enjoy the water. “It felt symbolic like cutting one’s hair,” she says of the renovation. “It’s a fresh start.”

She brightened the interior with a coat of white paint, added new product lines and discontinued some old ones. Spaces were opened up, but it’s still a collection of smaller spaces, all the better to explore in.

“I’m putting my twist on the business,” she says. “We’ve had so many renditions of the shop. We’re moving into lifestyle clothing, bringing in more apparel.” That includes their own branded products. “People want to represent what we stand for. We’ve

had a ton of fun curating our goods.” Limited edition shirts, hoodies and pants, hats and blankets, tumblers, playing cards and skateboards are among the many items on display. Oh, don’t forget the stand-up paddleboards, foils, surfboards, sarongs, prints—it’s a lengthy list. And the new displays, art and airiness of the store make it more inviting than ever.

Though Ella is now the only Skrocki on site, Sleeping Bear Surf is still a family business. Since her father Frank’s retirement from the world of environmental treatment, he has helped with accounting and bookkeeping. “He’s still the primary owner. I’m the owner in training,” Skrocki says with a laugh.

While the shop’s new look is indeed brighter and lighter, its core business remains service, both from a retail aspect and offering lessons and classes. “We wanted to make the retail space a launching place for our offerings,” Skrocki says. That includes surf classes and the Junior Waterman Camp.

The store is open 11-7 Monday through Saturday and 12 to 3 Sundays. “We’re bringing back Sundays for the first time in six years,” she says. The in-store crew is lean—just Skrocki and two employees, Kelly Andrus and Nick Schneider. Others assist with the classes.

Though she’s been gone four years, Beryl’s influence remains. Among the many photos displayed in the shop are several of her smiling while cavorting in or near the water. Her elder daughter is determined to carry on and share the family’s love of life and the lakes with others, one board and one swimsuit at a time.

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