



Parenting during the pandemic

A first-time mother considers how COVID has affected parenting in rural northern Michigan

By Mae Stier
Sun contributor

It is hard for me to imagine what parenting might look like in a typical year; how our daily routines would change if there were no pandemic. My son, Daniel, wasn't yet five months old when the Coronavirus made it to Michigan, and my partner, Tim, and I were still sifting through several transitions that had come with becoming first-time parents. After realizing that it wasn't the best fit for our growing family, I had just closed my shop, The Blue Heron Mercantile, in Empire. We had bought a house south of Lake Ann, moving out of the village I had called home for three years, where Tim had called home his entire life. Perhaps by March, we were beginning to find ourselves in a sort of routine again, between unpacking boxes and getting to know our new neighborhood,

when "normal life" halted for what we expected would be a few weeks, a month at most. But what we hoped in March would only be a short interruption of our daily lives has undoubtedly changed our entire experience of this first year of parenting.

Last October, as we prepared to welcome Daniel into our lives, we did not consider childcare options. As a self-employed person, I had always hoped that when I became a mother, I would be able to reformat my days to care for my children. Of course, I had no idea the sheer difficulty that would ensue from attempting to care for my child while also trying to work from home, but in my state of hopeful ignorance, I imagined it would be manageable. Fourteen months into motherhood—and nine months into this pandemic—I assure you that "manageable" is not a word I would choose for the balance of caring for children while working full or even part-time



Photo by Tim Egeler

Mae Stier and Tim Egeler's son Daniel was less than five months old when the Coronavirus officially arrived, upending their parenting-worklife balance.

from home. "Survivable," yes; "comical," on the best days; "overwhelming and isolating" on the worst. Whatever word I use to describe the dance of child-caring and working from home, I imagine there are far more parents in this role today than there were a year ago.

Even in a typical year, Northern Michigan has its challenges for young families. The affordable housing crisis continues, and because people seem more inclined to move to rural areas in the face of the pandemic, the **See COVID PARENTING on page 6**

Love and Loneliness Through a Window

By Amy Johnson-Velis
Sun contributor

This is a photograph of my mother, Toni Johnson. Her given name is Olive, a name she despises, yet her family finds precious. "Can you imagine being called Olive Oil every day as a child?" she'll say to explain her disdain for the name her parents gave her 94 years ago. As a result of this teasing, precocious little Olive returned home from elementary school one afternoon and announced that her name was "Toni." The name stuck.

Back to the photograph. Notice the date? March 17, 2020. This has been the way Mom has visited with her family for nine months. Consider this, Mom hasn't been hugged or kissed by her family for three quarters of a year, roughly 270 days, give or take. Three days after Michigan's schools closed on March 13, assisted living facilities also closed their doors to visitors. As a result, Mom hasn't been in a car to go anywhere, with the exception



Amy Johnson-Velis hasn't hugged her mom Toni since March.

of quarterly visits to Munson's Pain Clinic. She has missed her grandson's birthday, Easter, Memorial Day, Mother's Day, the Fourth of July, her granddaughter's birthday, her daughter's birthday, Labor Day, Halloween, Veterans' Day, and Thanksgiving. She hasn't been out to eat, gone shopping, gone on a fall color tour, seen her precious Lake Michigan, nor a single friend outside of Boardman Lake Glens in nine months. She's watched through the window as her granddaughter Emma left Michigan for a teaching position in Brooklyn, New York, a position which prevents Emma from returning to Michigan for Christmas this year. (Covid 19 precautionary measures by the State of New York would require Emma to quarantine upon returning from Michigan, a quarantine that would infringe upon her teaching duties and school year.) Mom said goodbye, again through the window, as her grandson Charlie returned to Glasgow, Scotland to finish his Master's Degree. Soon, she'll be unable to celebrate her 94th birthday, on December 19, with those she loves. Oh, yes, then there's Christmas, a holiday Mom cherishes. Traditionally, Christmas Eve is spent in Mom's sweet

little apartment in the Highlander building of Boardman Lake Glens. Her family gathers around hors d'oeuvres which must include creamed herring, my late dad's favorite. Christmas is spent across the hallway at Joan and Charlie Velis's welcoming apartment where Joan, who demonstrates her love of family through cooking, prepares a beautiful and generous Christmas meal. Joan and Charlie are my husband John's parents. This Christmas, none of these traditions will occur. John and I consider ourselves lucky that our parents live across the hallway from one another. During good times, we laugh that we have a "corner of the market" on the Highlander building. John and I remind ourselves that we're fortunate — Mom, Joan, and Charlie live in this lovely one story building on Boardman Lake. John and I, as well as my brother-in-law, Jeff, recognize our ease at visiting our parents through their windows, six feet away **See LOVE AND LONELINESS on page 5**

"If she hadn't been in the car, she'd be alive today"

COVID-19 claims 30-year-old Native American

By Jacob Wheeler
Sun editor

In the final days before she died of the Coronavirus on November 23,

Maryan Rochel Petoskey's family received fewer and fewer updates from the COVID-19 ward at Munson Medical Center in Traverse City.

They understood that meant the



Photo by Simone Petoskey

COVID victim Maryan Petoskey (middle) in a lighter moment.

hospital was becoming overwhelmed with patients. Calls from Munson grew less frequent as Maryan's time on a ventilator stretched from days to a week (she

arrived at the hospital on the evening of Thursday, November 12, three days before she was put on a ventilator).

Her aunt, Eva, became the liaison with Munson, and she would text updates to the larger family. Some messages were misinterpreted as hopeful news. Maryan was taken off the vent on Saturday morning, November 21. She wasn't able to talk, but messaged friends and family on Facebook.

Her half sister Simone received a call that Sunday evening that she had flatlined and was being put back on the vent. Maryan lost her heartbeat and died at 4:58 on the Monday morning before Thanksgiving.

According to her obituary, Maryan

was dubbed "Sissy But" by those who cherished her as a free-spirited "ball of energy". She loved dirt bikes, ATVs, anything fast and full of adrenaline — all the while listening to her heavy metal music. She loved to travel and was never scared to make new friends.

A member of the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians who lived on the Peshawbestown reservation, Maryan Rochel Petoskey was 30 years young. She was the third victim of COVID-19 in Leelanau County, and the first person under age 60 to die of the pandemic. According to the Benzie-Leelanau Health Department,

See MARYAN PETOSKEY on page 4

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Malt and Barley: “the terroir of Empire”

By F. Josephine Arrowood
 Sun contributor

It’s a glorious autumn day at the Empire Malting Company farm. The century-old red barn, clad in modern aluminum, features hand-hewn posts and beams that shelter ancient agricultural practices adapted to the 21st century. The spring barley harvested months ago is undergoing malting—a process of soaking seeds into germination, then drying, and kilning—before being packed and sent to discerning breweries and distilleries in northern Michigan and beyond.

Zack Stanz, 31, is a third generation Burdickville native. His mother’s family includes the Breys and the Johnsons, whose Case tractor dealership in Empire was a longtime staple of county farming into the 1970s. Zack focuses on the family excavation and landscape business, and he co-owns the Empire Orchards Hops Farm on M-72.

Alison Babb, 32, grew up in Gainesville and earned a degree in agricultural



management from the University of Florida. She credits her high school and college career as a runner as preparation for a farming career, developing physical stamina as well as realizing that she is better suited to an active outdoor life, rather than sitting at a desk. In 2013, she and Zack established the Empire Malting Company, and she oversees every aspect of its operation.

The first three years, they grew 60-120 acres of “amazing” barley before expanding operations to include malting. The work is labor intensive, often solitary, and vulnerable to trends of culture, as well as climate.

“In the immediate 15-mile area around here, we’ll have 200-300 acres going, and half will be barley. We do grow it every year, and rotate with crops like sorghum. We have great neighbors and friends that we work with, other farms we share equipment with.

“It’s always a challenge to make sure you have enough barley coming in[to the malting process], but this year has been one of the most challenging. We buy barley from other growers—I want to be accurate about that—and we also grew our own. It’s beautiful barley, but we just didn’t have the yields this year that we’ve seen in the past. That’s weather and the nature of farming.”

Like most who work the land, she takes the long view. “So we’re getting better and stronger, and it’s good to build relationships with other farms, support the community.” This cooperative spirit is an integral part of Alison and Zack’s vision for their businesses’ sustainability.

“We’re growing winter and spring varieties. Winter barley is planted in the fall, similar to rye, and ripens a little earlier. There’s a trial plot that the university [MSU Extension] is doing to test different varieties; which varieties can live through the winter here and our cold temperatures. We’ve had a lot of success with spring barleys; that’s our mainstay. Unfortunately, there’s no such thing as ‘heritage’ barley any more. They’ve been bred so many times over the years with different varieties. There’s land-race studies to try to determine which species have roots in certain locales, where the dominant, most healthy seeds outcompete the others,” she explains.

In the United States, just seven percent of farmers are women, operating 14 percent of land; of these, only 10 percent farm grains and oil seed crops, according to the 2012 USDA Census of Agriculture. Like most farmers, Alison must wear many hats; farmer, researcher, and marketer are just a few. An accomplished artist, she designed the logo and other graphics for the company. She also picked up welding as a skill when she needed custom hoppers, trays, and drying kilns for the grain.

A self-taught maltster, she says, “I traveled around Canada, worked with

experts, picked up every book I could find—technical, historical, new. A lot of trial and error, for years, went into figuring out how we would actually make the malt. But you still have to adapt to local grains and climate. There’s always tweaks we do to make sure everything’s coming out right.

“There’s a lot of debate about where the flavor comes from when you’re making a

malt. Does it come from the barley or the malt house? There’s no actual right answer, but there are certainly some very opinionated positions. I think there’s a little bit of both. We’re small-batch, so we’re very heavy on the art side of malting. It’s a combination of art and science, so we like to embrace the artfulness of it, with flexibility and careful intention,” she says.

“All steps in the process are a series of judgment calls by the maltster. Malting is elemental: we’re using air, water, temperature, and time to develop natural flavors and color compounds in the grains. So you’re using these elements, figuring out what combinations bring out different colors and flavors.”

“The real story, I think, is how we are small batch. Terroir is a very important concept. It describes soils, sun, land, water characteristics—literally, the home field advantage of a particular malting house. The air here is phenomenal, probably the most driving factor for why I wanted to do this here, in Empire. This air and water, this climate is so delicious, so this would be a great place to work with barley.

“With the malting, we do make Empire Malt really about the terroir of Empire. We start by cleaning the grain, with this vintage machine of hardwood and iron. I like the concept of a mechanical malt house, instead of completely automated.”

A look into one room in the red barn shows a giant steel soaking vat that Alison created with advice from neighboring cherry farmers. “The grain is soaked for 48 hours. Essentially I look at checkpoints: bubbling the water to keep it oxygenated, enough water to germinate in the next stage. You also want to make sure your water is so delicious; the barley’s taking on almost 50 percent water, so that has a big effect on its flavor.”

In the sprouting room, augurs rotate the grains on large, flat trays called Saladins. The idea of small-batch malting is a relative term. “We do six-ton batches. We start with about seven-and-a-half-ton batches, but it loses quite a bit of weight, so we’ll end up with six tons of finished malt.” This is in contrast to industrial-scale malting that processes 30 tons or more at a time, mostly by automation.

She holds up a kernel. “These are the little rootlets emerging. You’re converting carbohydrates and starch, increasing the sugar. There’s a lot of biology behind it. We take all kinds of measurements; we’re not entirely sensory. It’s a responsibility to make sure your product performs. If you take people’s money, you have to make sure you have some quality guarantees. We get great customer feedback, and we’re very attentive. That’s really what small batch should be.”

See **EMPIRE MALTING** on page 7

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Northern Latitudes keeps hands clean, spirits high

From staff reports

Businesses throughout Leelanau County had to adapt on the fly when the Coronavirus arrived, and commerce shut down, in March. Northern Latitudes Distillery in Lake Leelanau not only retooled their business and retail space, owners Mandy and Mark Moseler prioritized making hand sanitizer—a byproduct of the distillery’s spirits—and supplied it free of charge to essential workers and those on the frontlines in the battle against COVID-19, including first responders, schools, home health care nurses, homeless shelters, medical care facilities, churches and food pantries. We talked to the Moselers about this crazy year, and how they got through it.

Glen Arbor Sun: How did you react when the pandemic officially arrived in March? Was the decision to make hand sanitizer an instantaneous one? When did you decide to sell it?

Northern Latitudes: When the pandemic arrived Mark and I knew we had to focus on safety first, then making money. We spent a few thousand dollars on acrylic panels, 2x4s and a couple of intercom systems (because we all know how hard it is to communicate through those panels). In the beginning it seemed every two weeks we and our steadfast employees were modifying how we did business: No inside cocktails, then we were permitted to sell cocktails to-go, so we set up a bar, separate from our permanent bar, to more easily reach customers outside.

We soon realized that our cocktails to-go customers wanted a place to stay onsite and enjoy their cocktails, and the Michigan Liquor Control Commission allowed us to create a temporary outside area. We thought we’d open our tasting room using acrylic panels to separate employees and customers but didn’t have the employees to cover the entire room so we moved everything into our chamber gift shop; This meant we were unable to use our dishwasher and our glass tasting glasses so we spent hundreds of dollars on plant-based compostable tasting glasses. We limited our customer numbers to six inside at a time so we had to add an employee outside to greet and explain our new setup and monitor our front door that also meant a wait to get in during the busier times of late July, August, September and October. For eight years we have given four free tastings but lessened it to two free tastings to shorten their time inside. On Oct. 13, when our area’s COVID-19 numbers went up, we stopped tastings entirely because until then we would allow customers to take off their masks for the few moments it took them to drink their tasting. Since the very beginning we have required EVERY customer to be masked.

When you own a business, you learn to “roll with the punches” and reinvent yourself as necessary to keep your company alive. We knew we had the knowledge and equipment to make hand sanitizer, just not the federal and state permission. We had to wait for those government entities to allow us. We, like so many companies, were affected by the initial shutdown to slow the spread of COVID-19 but because of our ability to make and provide hand sanitizer when the larger companies couldn’t make enough to fill the demand in our country, it allowed us to pivot and help out our community.



Sun: What other ways has Northern Latitudes reached out to help the community during COVID? I know you have supplied sanitizer to first responders and schools? Any other businesses or institutions?

Northern Latitudes: Large quantities of free Northern Latitudes Distillery hand sanitizer went to the Grand Traverse Band Fire and Rescue, Leelanau and Grand Traverse first responders; local schools; not-for-profit home health care nurses; two local homeless shelters; not-for-profit medical care facilities; a resource center for women; local churches; a local volunteer pantry and anyone who came to our business and could not afford to pay for the hand sanitizer.

Sun: Tell us more about the effort with schools this fall? How did that start, and who initiated it?

Northern Latitudes: As former public school teachers, Mark and I wanted to try to lessen the risk of COVID-19 infection to staff and students. Schools do outstanding work with the insufficient budgets they are given. We thought if we could provide our World Health Organization-formula hand sanitizer to them, then that was one thing they didn’t have to find money for in their budget. I simply called the schools and talked with whom-ever would talk with me. I connected with secretaries, principals, business managers, and a superintendent. If I couldn’t reach a school via phone, I emailed them. Most schools wanted the gallon containers with pumps on them but some schools also asked for our 4-ounce spray bottles so each child could have their own, or so each classroom could have multiple spray bottles.

Sun: If you’re willing to share this — how have profits or sales in 2020 compared with previous years?

Northern Latitudes: Spring was tough for the bottom line. It’s a tough time of year for most businesses in our area and we had to switch over to making hand sanitizer. This involved completely reinventing our business with the purchase of new ingredients and packaging, many of which skyrocketed in price because most small distilleries in the U.S. began making hand sanitizer and were trying to purchase the same products. It was amazing, though, the customers who would come in and purchase hand sanitizer and say, “keep the change” or leave a few dollars or \$10 or \$20 to help the next person who was struggling to pay for hand sanitizer. From the beginning, we told people if they were having trouble paying for hand sanitizer, they could have it for free. About halfway through July hand sanitizer sales declined and sales of spirits increased. With recent COVID-19 numbers increasing, in our area since mid-October, so have our hand sanitizer sales.

Sun: Will the pandemic change your business model in any permanent ways? That is, once we have a vaccine and it’s safe to congregate inside again, might you keep your walkup window open?

Northern Latitudes: Northern Latitudes, like many service industry companies, is employee/payroll heavy. Since March we have had our tasting

See DISTILLERY on page 6

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Friendly buys Deering's, envisions open-air mercato

From staff reports

Frank Lerchen has big ideas for the vacant space he now owns next to Joe's Friendly Tavern, his popular restaurant in downtown Empire. Lerchen purchased the building that used to house Deering's Market late in October from Sue and Phil Deering. The grocery store closed in April 2018.

Lerchen is installing a septic system and drain field and hopes to build a covered, but open-air mercato featuring food, cocktails, and a permanent farmers market. He hopes to open next May.

Lerchen announced the news on the Friendly's Facebook page, and put out a call for interested vendors, including farmers, bakers, and artists.

"I believe it would be an asset to the downtown area and give vendors a permanent covered area to set up shop," wrote Lerchen, who encouraged interested parties to call the Friendly Tavern at 231-326-5506.

Lerchen confirmed that he has already received phone calls of interest from potential vendors.

"I'm limited on seating (inside the restaurant)," he said. "I thought the mercato would fill the need."

Much of the former Deering's Market space has been demolished, said Lerchen, but the "really cool old" girders and trusses in the ceiling of the building will remain.

Lerchen came up with the idea for an open-air mercato after seeing similar venues in Florida, which included a restaurant and bar area, and live music. He confirmed that his business would include a roof and open walls. Garage



dors and farmers express interest. He hopes to create a synergy with the weekly summer pop-up farmers market, which currently happens across the street next to the post office.

"The only thing I don't want is to become a flea

doors would enclose the space every evening.

"We'll have really nice air flow through there and give people a different place to go to the Friendly for their burger and beer."

Lerchen is eager to see which ven-

market," said Lerchen. "I'd like vendors to make (the mercato) their permanent space and to make it presented well. I don't want card tables where things are just laid out."

"This could be a real benefit for Empire."

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MARYAN PETOSKEY

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she had "no significant comorbidities". No cancer, no diabetes, nothing to reinforce the dangerously false notion that the Coronavirus claims only the old and the sick.

[Another tribal member, 76-year-old Phyllis Wanageshik died of COVID-19 on December 5. To some, she was considered "the Queen of Peshawbestown." Zhaabadiis Biidaasige wrote on Facebook, "They say that when an elder passes it is as if a library of wisdom has collapsed." The following day, church bells in the community rang 76 times in her honor.]

"COVID does not follow party lines, it does not care about race, sex, age or who you are," Simone told me on a phone call six days after Maryan died. "It will attack whoever it can."

"I feel people aren't being safe enough. People are so worried about their freedoms. I don't think that wearing a mask infringes upon your freedom. If anything, it preserves your freedom because you can live through this pandemic."

"Maryan was young and healthy," added Simone, though she conceded that her half-sister had a tough life, and drank too much alcohol as a result. Their father, Robert Petoskey, died when she was 14. When Maryan was 20, she had a daughter named Louisiana Mae King, who died after 13 days. "She was a beautiful Anishinaabek baby with round cheeks, a head full of thick, black hair, and sparkling black eyes," read the girl's obituary. Louisiana would have been 10 years old today.

"It was heartbreaking for her—something that lived with her forever," said Simone. "She was learning to live with that loss, but it was hard on her."

Maryan's family believes she was exposed to COVID-19 on October 27, when an individual stopped by her house in Peshawbestown and took her for a drive to visit the site where they had lost a family member earlier this year to an accident. He tested positive after they were in the car together, and Maryan received a call from the Health Department on October 30, the day before Halloween, informing her of the exposure. She received a rapid, same-day COVID test at the Grand Traverse Band's Medicine Lodge.

Simone remembers that Maryan "was a little upset" when she learned that she had tested positive. "But she wasn't super sick." Maryan was more worried about protecting her nieces who lived in the same household. They sectioned off the house so she wouldn't come into contact with them.

"She told me she was stupid for hanging out with him," said Simone. "She regretted not being safer."

Six days after receiving her positive test, Maryan suffered from more and more symptoms. She was throwing up, felt achy, had a bad headache, and was retaining so much fluid in her stomach that her sister Donna said she looked like she was 9 months pregnant. Still, Maryan had no trouble breathing. On that Thursday night, they made and ate their dinner, then called 911 because no one at the home had a car and they didn't want to ask someone in Peshawbestown to drive a COVID-positive person to the hospital. When the ambulance arrived, Maryan walked to it herself.

"I talked to her the day after she arrived in the hospital," said Simone. "She didn't have labored breathing at that time. We honestly thought she would get the fluid drained, and be on her way. But she got worse and worse.

By Saturday, Maryan had trouble breathing. On Sunday, Munson staff told her she would be put on a ventilator.

Simone and three of her children called Maryan to tell her "we loved her, we'd see her soon, and to be strong and get over this."

Maryan was particularly close with her 18-year-old nephew Frankie, who was born when she was 12. "They did their growing up together," said Simone.

Maryan told Frankie, "I'll see ya later. Don't forget me!"

"She was scared she wasn't going to come out of this," said Simone. "She was scared to talk to them. But if she wasn't going to make it, she wanted to say goodbye to them."

Maryan was buried and received a graveside Catholic service attended by immediate family only on November 25—the day before Thanksgiving—in the St. Kateri Tekakwitha Cemetery. She rests next to her father Robert.

The family hopes to have a traditional Native American service next August 11, which would be Maryan's 31st birthday, with a bonfire, tribal members paying their respects, saying prayers and offering tobacco to the fire—if a vaccine is ready by then.

"When a native person dies, our community rallies together," said Simone. "There's a whole process you go through. Everyone is usually together. In our dad's case, he had 19 brothers and sisters, and I can't tell you how many cousins."

"Hopefully it's safe to gather then and hold a celebration of life. Maryan touched so many people, everybody really wanted to be part of it. ... We want to remember our sister in a positive light."

LOVE AND LONELINESS

continues from page 1

from those windows, masked up. We think of those who have loved ones in multiple storied facilities and wonder how they see their family members. We realize how fortunate we are as well that our parents are given the attentive, thorough, and safe care by the extraordinary staff of Boardman Lake Glens. In addition to their roles as dedicated caregivers, this staff has now taken on the role of family, too. One of these loving souls has a mom in a different facility. So while she so lovingly takes care of my mom, someone else is taking care of hers. Like the staff in all facilities providing care to others, the staff of the Highlander building is tired. That fatigue is hidden behind eyes that still twinkle, a work ethic dedicated to service, and with an obvious, yet mask-covered smile.

Despite our good fortune, Mom now cries every day, every time we talk. She is lonely. She misses her family. She eats breakfast, lunch, and dinner all alone, day in, and day out. She feels like a burden, relying on others for everything. She is losing her vision, which prevents her from her passion of reading. Loneliness has sped up a cognitive decline and a loss of the ability to press the buttons on her State of Michigan Library for the Blind reader. She has forgotten that all she needs to do is say, "Okay Google, play Frank Sinatra," to hear the sound of big bands that she historically sang along and aloud with. She suffers a confusion that the experts in geriatric care say is rooted in isolation and loneliness.

Mom's generation sacrificed for this country during World War II. Sacrifice for others, especially country, is what our parents were taught. And so, for those of you who are voicing concerns that your rights and freedoms are being violated because we're being asked to wear a mask, I invite you to stop and think about what others have given up during this pandemic. Our parents belong to a generation who fought to protect our rights and freedoms. While we so fervently honor our veterans one day each November, when asked to do something to protect their well being, we protest, citing our "rights." What an odd and interesting juxtaposition!

Thankfully, many people have demonstrated loving care for others during this time that we must unite as a nation to take care of our neighbors. I am humbled and amazed to be part of the Glen Lake Schools community that has been extraordinary in its ability to "think outside the box" in order to take care of students and their families. Paraprofessionals joined bus drivers and kitchen staff to deliver food, via Glen Lake buses, for Laker bellies, toilet paper for Laker homes, and necessary learning supplies to eager students. Even donated diapers were delivered to future Lakers on those bright yellow buses. Safe, pop-up learning labs have provided continuity in education for a variety of Lakers. Maintenance staff implemented new and different ways to clean not just rooms and buses, but the actual air our students breathe. Office staff have been extra diligent in connecting with our families. Glen Lake's nurses have been dedicated to the health of all in our community. Our athletic department has stayed abreast of ever-changing Michigan High School Athletic Association decisions regarding our athletes. Counselors have applied extra measures to assess and support the mental health of

students and employees. Our student support and family liaison team are in constant communication with parents. Today our staff delivered Glen Lake's traditional holiday meal to the homes of all our high school students who are currently learning remotely.

This is all due to this community that believes it is our mission to support a school and the people in it. When the pandemic arrived this spring, Graeme Leask and the staff of the Little Traverse Inn provided free weekly meals to anyone in need. Mary MacDonald of Peg Town provided meals as well, including Easter dinners, along with a spot for a pop-up food bank. Frank and Mary Lerchen got creative and now offer a small grocery store at the Empire Village Inn so the residents of Empire needn't drive to obtain groceries.

The community continues to contact Glen Lake Schools' Counseling Department and Glen Lake's Student/Family Support Team to ask, "What is needed? How can we help?" Leelanau Christian Neighbors delivers food each week for Blessings in a Backpack (BiaB). One of our families again bought livestock from local 4-H members during the virtual Northwest Michigan Fair, paid to have the meat processed in a USDA approved facility, and then donated the meat in an effort to provide additional protein to hungry Laker families. Thanksgiving meals for 16 families were provided by a group of Glen Lake School's moms. Area service organizations like the former Empire Eagles and the Empire/ Glen Arbor Lions Club, as well as the Cedar/ Maple City Lions Club, have always been incredibly supportive during the holidays. Bethlehem Lutheran Church walks the walk of "What Would Jesus Do?" by annually giving a portion of their third quarter tithing to, and out of love for, Glen Lake children. The Hayloft's cuss jar money is shared with those in need. (Writing a thank you to all of their customers who swear brings a smile to whichever counselor has that duty!) This year, Cooley Contracting wanted "in" on helping. Laker families write checks or shop for Little Lakers. As a result, Operation Christmas is in full swing, making sure the children of our area are taken care of this holiday. This season, because of the generosity of this community, well over 100 Lakers will have a merrier Christmas. Thank you for the sacrifice of wearing a mask to take care of others for what we as Americans hold so dear — the common good. May we continue to be guided by this value and may we always remember those who made it possible.

Sleeping Bear sets visitation record in 2020

From staff reports

Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore has set a new yearly visitation record. Through the month of November, the National Park has recorded 1,697,940 visitors, besting the previous record of 1,683,553 in 2016. And that doesn't even include the current month of December.

Deputy Superintendent Tom Ulrich didn't know exactly which visitor broke the record, in which location and on which day. But just for fun, Ulrich did his best impersonation of Ernie Harwell, the late Detroit Tigers radio announcer who would famously name

See SLEEPING BEAR on page 7

Christmas in Cedar, not long ago



Painting by Linda Alice Dewey

Solstice

By Anne-Marie Oomen

Was it wrong to cancel the moon so near the Solstice when light slinks off by mid-afternoon?

It comes on now, that other light, light without source, faded except for the butcher's legacy sign

coupled with the spicy scent of sausage over snow. The market, still open, lures you in: local cheese,

range of fine wines, too fine—merchant succumbs to dabbling with you, and talks of the good old moon. Such things,

once common, are now short-lived: families arrive and leave, vendors once thriving, disappear, and at that

window of the Emporium, a necklace glimmers over a plastic Santa Claus, leftover from a farmer's auction.

To cancel the moon means to pocket the lined box, means getting lost on the way home, means veering,

finding your way by the bark of a neighbor's dog. It is not the path you thought to trod. But you do.

Sun or moon, it does not matter; what matters is getting home in winter, turning onto that street of old names,

believing for that moment in the light that has no moon, we may enter a room, offer the small gift strung like stars.

Linda Dewey's painting "Christmas in Cedar, not long ago" is a collaboration with Anne-Marie Oomen's poem, "Solstice"

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COVID PARENTING

continues from page 1

market here is as competitive as ever. Tim and I had a meager budget (under \$175,000) when looking for our home a year ago, which required us to open the radius outside of the Empire area. Thankfully, we found a decent option, only 20 minutes from the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore and 15 minutes from both of our parents. Proximity to family was vital for us and has proven especially important during this time, offering us a support system we wouldn't have if our families were farther away.

Beyond the difficulty of housing, parents face limited options for childcare in the region. Our move to Lake Ann put us much closer to in-home daycare and childcare facilities than what was available in Empire, but the options are still few outside Traverse City. If I needed to work outside of the home, we wouldn't have many nearby choices and would likely need to commute for childcare, which is a reality for many families.

When we moved out of Empire, I knew that we would make our way back to the village often, and especially planned to make Thursdays our "Empire day." For years, the Glen Lake Library has hosted a story hour with Joanne "Yogi" Beare, a gift to Glen Lake area parents. Yogi was a childcare provider for years, and Tim, my partner, used to attend her daycare in Empire when he was a child. He fondly remembers the goodbye song she would sing to them each day, a song she still sings at the end of story hour at the library.

Unfortunately, only a handful of story hours have occurred this year, as we all do our best to keep our community safe. Before the latest surge of COVID-19 in our region, the library and Yogi worked together to create a safe environment for story hour to happen. With limits to the number of people allowed, and with masks in place and everyone at a distance, I took Daniel to story hour one week, and he was able to see other children his age, really for the first time. It was refreshing to see other parents, for us to all shuffle through the doors laden with diaper bags and car seats, our eyes tired but smiling above our masks. I realized that day that story hour and other children's groups are as much for the parents as the children, offering us the opportunity to connect with people who understand the whirlwind of our days. Daniel crawled around on the floor after Yogi read us all a book, followed by a couple of other young

boys, and he laughed at the game of chase with other children, a game he had previously only played with his dad or his dog.

As a mother, I have realized more fully the importance of community support, and that support is more critical now than ever. So many of us are feeling weighed down by the heaviness of this year. The reality that many of our children haven't seen their grandparents or had the opportunity to make friends. That children haven't been in school or maybe the fact that they have been in school, and we worry about everyone's safety. New parenthood can be isolating in an average year, but this year gives a whole new meaning to that sense of isolation. The help that was so vital to me in the earliest days of being a mom—a neighbor dropping off a meal or my mom doing our laundry—may not be as accessible to new parents because of the pandemic. The help I need now—someone to watch Daniel for a few hours so I can work, a necessity to pay our bills—is continuously weighed against the risk of seeing anyone outside of our household. Daniel hasn't had a babysitter besides my parents since the summer, and before that, his Aunt Stevie was the only other caretaker he has had. Would it have been different in a year without the pandemic?

It isn't easy to know the answer to that question, as this year's reality is all we have known as parents. Would there be more playdates? Date nights? A regular sitter? Would my work be consistent enough to require more difficult decisions to be made around childcare? Certainly, we would have needed more assistance without the pandemic during the summer, a season where I typically am photographing weddings and families frequently. This year with a number of those events postponed, my workload lightened just enough to allow me to care for Daniel without necessitating outside help, though I certainly could have still used it.

The reprieves parents usually find from hectic days with young children—a nice meal out with their partner, a weekend where the kids go to Grandma's, a play date for your child while you connect with another parent—have been limited this year. Many of our support systems as parents have been removed, forcing us to balance more than any one set of parents should have to manage alone. Parents this year have become teachers while also caring for toddlers while also continuing to work. Perhaps in an average year—one with the promise of a night out or a visiting Grandparent to break



Employees from Texas-based Honu Labs conduct COVID tests on November 18 at the Sleeping Bear Dune Climb. Nearly 10 percent of results were positive.

up the responsibility—these many roles would be less exhausting. But when there is no end in sight, it is simply overwhelming. It turns out parents need support systems, whether those systems exist in public schools, at a library story hour, or with friends and family. Of course, we understand the importance of limiting our interactions with others during this current season. We know how easily and quickly this virus has spread throughout our country, something that could have been prevented with more stringent restrictions early on. Even still, we mourn what we have missed this year and look forward to a future where we can be supported by and support our neighbors through physical presence.

Despite the difficult days, I am so grateful for the opportunity to work at home while raising my son, even if I envision that we will begin to add in one or two days of childcare a week once it feels safe to do so. For now, I look forward to the time when we can have our Empire Thursdays—story hour, maybe hot cocoa at Grocer's Daughter Chocolate, and a hike with a friend, the promise of which offers a bit of hope during this quiet holiday season. Meanwhile, we continue to struggle to do the only dance we know, a clumsy balance of work and childcare during a worldwide pandemic, with limited systems of support. Despite our two-left feet in this unexpected era, we have learned the dance is a little easier (and a little more fun) when set to a Whitney Houston soundtrack, and we have added joy to many of our days by ending them dancing together in the living room.

Parenting Resources

For parents who are looking for access to childcare options in our region, the Benzie-Leelanau District Health Department (BLDHD) can be a great resource for connecting you to available providers. The BLDHD provides the Parenting Communities program to our region, facilitating many playgroups when it is safe to do so. Great Start to Quality, a resource within the Michigan Department of Education, also helps families find the best learning centers for young children.

Our local libraries are also an excellent resource for parents with young children, as they host story hours and

other events for families. A number of those programs are currently on hold due to the pandemic, but some have programming available via Zoom or Facebook. Interlochen, Suttons Bay, and Traverse Area District Libraries are all offering online story hours for children.

Mae Stier is a writer and photographer living in Inland Township. She lives with her partner, Tim Egeler, and their one-year-old son, Daniel. You can find more of Mae's work, including her collection of poetry, "Lake Letters," via her website maestier.com.

DISTILLERY

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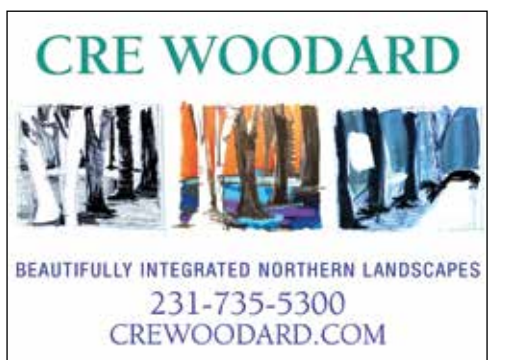
room and cocktail bar area closed (our choice mostly) and have worked solely out of what we call our chamber gift shop. We had continued doing our free tastings up until Oct 13 when our area's COVID-19 numbers tripled. We have done a lot in about 1,000 square feet and with a skeleton crew! So yes, Mark and I are rethinking how our business was set up previously and how what we have learned during this global pandemic can help streamline Northern Latitudes post COVID-19. Customers and our team all like the area we lovingly call "the fishbowl" but our business is dictated by the Liquor Control Commission. We'll see what they allow in the future.

Sun: Personally, how have you managed through this difficult year? What has been the biggest challenge? And what has kept your "spirits" up (no pun intended)?

Northern Latitudes: We love our business and what we do every day. Not only is Northern Latitude our livelihood but it supports our employees too. We are grateful to still have a company that we can work hard to continue! However, we know we would not be here without the hard work of our employees and the support of our customers. Without them Northern Latitude would no longer exist. How have we kept our spirits up? How has anyone during these tumultuous times with the global pandemic, civil unrest and the chaos of our federal government? We take care of ourselves, our business and help as many people around us as possible.



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EMPIRE MALTING

continues from page 2

The room has a heady aroma of CO₂, brought about by the respiration of the grain. Until last April, Alison was hand shoveling and stirring for about four hours a day. “I had a hard time keeping help, getting enough air, or even taking on enough calories. It was very tiring! It was critical to overcome this part.”

The grain is dried and finished next, and here is where her maltster’s skills really come into play. “The driving message with malt is that color and flavor correlate; everything is connected in the grains. A skilled or very competent brewer—and we have so many in Michigan—can crunch it and tell if the finished malt is of high quality.”

Even with some automation in place, she has plenty of heavy lifting to do. Her wiry frame and rock hard muscles reflect the labor intensity associated with malting. “The packaging is also very laborious, filling 50-pound bags continuously. It’s certainly not a business for the weak of heart. But it’s fulfilling in a strange way. You have to be a unique person to enjoy it truly, but I really do.”

Hops, with their dramatic vining habit—up to 30 feet on poles and wires—have received a lot of attention in the past dozen years in Leelanau County. But their contribution to beer making is surprisingly small and relatively recent (think seasoning; think 16th century Europe), compared to beer’s foundational ingredient, malted barley.

“Malting is so historical, an industry over 10,000 years old, while brewing has been going on for 30,000 years,” Alison says. Without the process of malting, barley cannot create the fermentation so necessary to the brewer’s art.

“You build your beer recipe around your malt, in fact; it’s considered the heart, or the meat on the plate, while hops are like the seasoning or spice. Your taste and your malt are the drivers of what your beer outcome is. There was a time when beer was brewed with gruits, or herbs, to add the bittering agent, while hops is more recent. The more I work with malts, the more I see what we can do, and the more interest I have in making new flavors, taking new directions.

“It’s an exciting time for malt as people have started to take notice. Once you start to pay attention to the malt, it helps you understand beer styles more. It adds deeper layers to local beverages and the farming that’s happening, and small businesses working together.

“It’s very clear that craft beer is a conversational thing; it’s a way that people can have time talking together in communities. It’s really cool to see malt finally being a part of it.”

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SLEEPING BEAR

continues from page 5

the hometown (always in Michigan) of each fan who caught a foul ball in Tiger Stadium or Comerica Park.

“On the balmy afternoon of November 20, 2020, the 1,683,554th visitor of the year leapt out of their car and raced up the Dune Climb, setting a new visitation record for Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore,” said Ulrich with a chuckle.

“That visitor from Mio, Michigan, likely didn’t know they were setting a record, just enjoying their National Park on an unseasonably warm Friday in November.”

What’s not a joke is how important national parks, and outdoor spaces, in general, have been to Americans during this excruciatingly painful year of the pandemic.

National parks may be more important this year than ever before, said Rob Wallace, assistant secretary for Fish, Wildlife and Parks at the Department of the Interior, during a visit to Sleeping Bear on Sept. 15. Wallace was in town to learn how the Great American Outdoors Act, signed into law on August 4, could expand recreational opportunities and address long overdue infrastructure and modernization challenges for this and other parks.

Thankfully for Sleeping Bear visitors looking to recreate outdoors and socially distance, 2020 has offered fantastic weather—including a warm November, the month the visitor from Mio broke the record.



Traverse City native Chasten Buttigieg (left) and his husband “Mayor Pete”—who ran for president last year—hiked Empire Bluff on a warm November 28.



Read about the late Rich Quick, Glen Arbor’s modern-day cowboy and staunch National Park opponent, on our website, GlenArbor.com.

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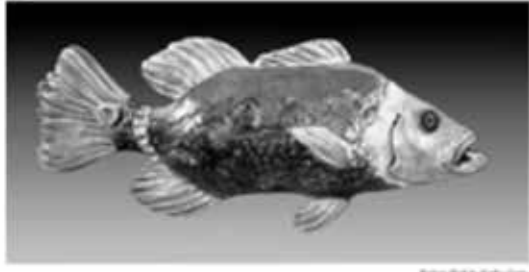
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