



Innovative early childcare model expands in Leelanau

By Jacob Wheeler
Sun editor

One year ago the Leelanau Early Childhood Development Commission (LECDC) launched a campaign to recruit more people to open home-based childcare facilities in Leelanau County—where a dire lack of affordable childcare options has imperiled the ability of young parents to return to work.

Rhonda Mack's home near Lake Leelanau, which hosts six children each weekday—two younger than 18 months and the others between 2 and 3 years old—was the model for the LECDC, which received a grant of \$318,000 from the private nonprofit Early Childhood Investment Corporation to grow the program and recruit as many as five more Leelanau citizens

to help alleviate the childcare crisis.

The commission is well on its way to reach that goal. But it has also been forced to pivot and work with the state's licensing agency to include centers outside the home, as well.

"You can't drive down the street without seeing help-wanted signs," said Patricia Soutas-Little, a former County Commissioner who chairs the LECDC and Leelanau Peninsula Economic Foundation. "This initiative targets the economic side and also provides important services for our families."

Later this month Kriya and Matt Miller will open a childcare facility at their home near M-72 in Solon Township. The Millers, who have a 20-month-old son as well as a teenager, co-founded Human Nature School in Traverse City in 2010. They'll employ a similar nature-based environment on their seven-acre property. Kriya learned of the opportunity on social media, and it gave her the nudge she needed.

The LECDC, working in tandem with the Leelanau Children's Center and the Leelanau Peninsula Economic Foundation, helps with startup costs, including a personal and business coach, and guides participants through the complex world of childcare licensing and regulations. The grant helped the Millers update their electrical systems and install yard fencing.

"Those were both pricey. I'm not sure we would have been able to do that without their help," said Kriya.

See CHILDHOOD on page 6



Kriya Miller, pictured here with her 20-month-old son Robert, will open a nature-based early childcare facility at their home in Solon Township.



Student Nik Carman and LIFT associate director Audrey Sharp turn their backs on the wind howling off Lake Michigan and toward The Homestead ski hill on Feb. 10.

LIFTing teens on the slopes

From staff reports

This winter The Homestead resort is donating free lift tickets and rentals to area teenagers through LIFT, an out-of-schooltime teen center based in Suttons Bay, which is dedicated to empowering local youth to discover their strengths by investing in their evolution, autonomy, and character.

A lack of snow in January delayed the collaboration, but those teens finally hit the slopes on Friday, Feb. 10.

"LIFT is grateful to The Homestead for their kindness in donating free skiing and rentals to our teens!" said LIFT Teen Center founder and director Rebekah TenBrink. "Our time on the slopes has been such a blast, and the conversations on the way home are full of adventurous stories and laughs. Participating in this kind of activity is a great bonding experience for the LIFT teens, and provides them with an oppor-

tunity they may not have had the resources otherwise to do."

The teenagers who skied and snowboarded on Feb. 10 concurred.

"It was my first time snowboarding and it was very fun!" said Alondra Calderon, who is 17 and lives near Traverse City. "The staff was kind and very patient with us. I was asking a lot of questions and a staff member was always willing to answer and give tips. I've always wanted to try snowboarding and was excited when the opportunity to go for free opened up!"

"This skiing experience was definitely one to remember. Great memories were made with great people," said Nina Guillen, an 18-year-old Suttons Bay resident.

"It's refreshing to see people that really care about improving our community. I'm so grateful LIFT is doing what they're doing," said Nik Carman, 17, from Suttons Bay.

Haylee Fisher barrels along at Cold Spring Farm

By Norm Wheeler
Sun editor

Certain moments determine the rest of your life. When she was 18, Haylee Fisher remembers that she "lived in Traverse City in a super-crappy apartment with a dog while looking for a place to board my horse that I could afford."

A lady told her there was a job in Maple City at a horse farm, so she called farm manager Tom Pierson. He said, "You're too young to watch over all of the brood mares and horses," Haylee remembers. It was 2001, and the Cold Spring Farm needed help throughout the year, including every winter when the owners went to Patagonia, Arizona. The next day she got a call from owner Peter Phinny's secretary, Carol Hilton, that she should stop by to meet. Peter was impressed.

"You're awfully young," he said, "but we'll give you a shot." The rest, as they say, is her-story. "Peter was so important to me — he gave me this

chance — and it shaped the rest of my life. Ever since that day, I'm like the barn cat."

Later, Molly Phinny's son Chris Fisher was home on vacation from his bike racing pursuits in Colorado. "Why don't you go down to the barn and meet Haylee," Peter said. His words worked their magic again. "I was a weekend chore-girl then," Haylee remembers. "There were 40 horses, all reining horses, so I did chores and saddled colts for Tom Pierson. It was a private facility then. For a while I was at NMC (Northwestern Michigan College) in the mornings, and out here in the afternoons." Haylee and Chris got married in Onkama, Haylee's home town, on July 5, 2003. "We lived in Colorado for a while when he was racing bikes, but then he got a job teaching English at The Salisbury School, an all-boys boarding school in Connecticut. Chris won the senior class medal of honor two years in a row." During

See HAYLEE FISHER on page 7



National Writers Series guest Egan casts a world out of balance

From staff reports

New York Times best-selling author Dan Egan writes about the source of great bounty—and now great peril—all over the world in his new book *The Devil's Element: Phosphorus and a World Out of Balance*. He'll visit the Traverse City Opera House on Friday, March 10, at 7 pm, for an event co-hosted by the National Writers Series and the International Affairs Forum.

Phosphorus has played a critical role in some of the most lethal substances on earth: firebombs, rat poison, nerve gas. But it's also the key component of one of the most vital: fertilizer, which has sustained life for billions of people. In this major work of environmental journalism, Pulitzer Prize finalist Egan investigates the past, present, and future of what has been called "the oil of our time." He explores the alarming reality that diminishing access to phosphorus poses a threat to the food system worldwide—which risks

rising conflict and even war.

Egan's book also highlights the dangers phosphorus poses for the Great Lakes. He and his family have vacationed in Leelanau County and are especially fond of the Sleeping Bear Dunes, where he enjoys hiking and the sweeping vistas "like nothing else I've seen in the world."

Lake Erie has been famously ravaged by toxic algae for decades, Egan told the *Glen Arbor Sun*. But the problem also plagues inland lakes and ponds nationwide.

"The phosphorus issue is off our radar screen now, but I don't know how long that will be the case. People are connecting the dots between land use and water quality. Farming and fertilizer are having dramatic and unfortunate effects on fresh water. It is something that people need to be aware of. It's not just fertilizer on your lawn or golf courses. The big driver of algae blooms is agriculture. Every body of fresh water is jeopardized as the result of decades of overfertilization of croplands.

"When you tell someone you wrote a book about phosphorus, they look at you blankly or ask 'why?'. I hope this book answers the question. It's not a dry subject. It's fascinating stuff. It's in every living cell."

How does Egan translate complex, hard science into vivid narrative storytelling?

"Years and years of practice," he said. "I worked at the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* for 20 years. When you translate science into storytelling, you have to inform but also engage the reader. I keep the reader in my mind with every word I write.

"It doesn't hurt to not have a technical background. You just take the time to work with subject experts."



"You won't take me until spring!" the snowman bravely told Lake Michigan on Jan. 21.

Winterfest returns to Boonedocks

From staff reports

Glen Arbor's Winterfest, the anticipated mid-winter event, takes place annually the Saturday of President's Day weekend. The event includes a perch fishing contest followed by chili cook off on the deck of Boonedocks restaurant in Glen Arbor on Saturday, Feb. 18, from noon-3 pm.

Winners will be crowned as the event wraps up around 3 pm. Proceeds from this event are given out on senior scholarship night at Glen Lake School to deserving students to help defray college tuition. This is a family friendly event, just be sure to dress for the weather.

Admission to the chili cook-off is \$10 per person, which includes unlimited chili samples. \$5 for kids ages 6-12 and seniors 70 or older, kids under 6 enter for free.

The Sportsman Shop hosts the annual Perch Fishing Contest as either a spectator or participant. Sign up will take place at the Sportsman Shop in Glen Arbor from 6-7:30 am. Ice fishing takes place on the Glen Lakes all morning. Bring your catches back to weigh at the Sportsman Shop promptly by 1 pm. Entry fee for the Perch tournament is \$20. (\$10 goes to the chili cook-off and \$10 to the tournament. 100% pay out.) Call Bob at 231-883-5638 for more information.

To enter your chili in the contest, please send email Boonedocks-ga@gmail.com or call Stephanie at Boonedocks (231) 218-0009 if you would like to participate by serving Chili in the Cook-Off. Eight gallons of chili are required by each business, organization or family in order to serve at the event.

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Suttons Bay celebrates Yeti Fest

From staff reports

The Suttons Bay Chamber of Commerce proudly presents the 2023 Yeti Fest dubbed "The Best Yeti Fest This Side of the Himalayas." The event takes place on Saturday, Feb. 18, from 10:30 am to 5:30 pm featuring a chili cook-off and fun for the whole family.

Yeti Central is the headquarters and will be located at the VI Grill event space adjacent to the bar. It's there that you can obtain event maps, commemorative Yeti merchandise and day-of tickets. A variety of activities will take place throughout the Village all within walking distance.

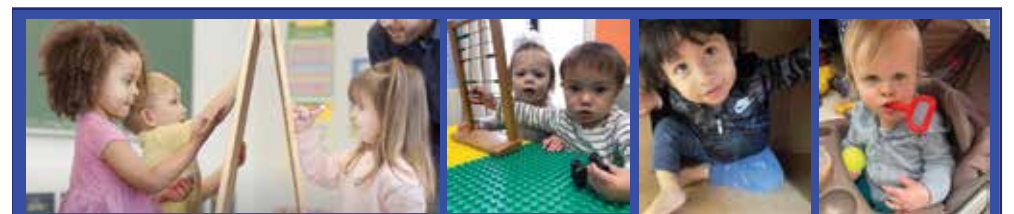
Events include Yeti Exploration and activities for children at the Suttons Bay Library, face painting and hot chocolate at LIFT Teen Center, live music, and

hockey tournament at Ice Rink Park. The Bay Theatre will host a FREE movie during the day. And an interactive scavenger hunt will engage participants and their teams to complete missions with prizes awarded. The chili cook-off takes place from 2-4:30 pm throughout the Village including a variety of chilis prepared by area restaurants. The day will wind down at Yeti Central at 5 pm with prizes awarded for the scavenger hunt, chili cook-off and hockey tournament.

Tickets for chili cook-off are \$10/person. Advance tickets for the chili cook-off can be purchased at MyNorth Tickets.

Scavenger Hunt is \$20 per team with 1 person required to download the FREE app. Teams can enter the Scavenger Hunt at Yeti Central the day of.

For additional information, visit SuttonsBayArea.com.



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Park, Preserve Historic Sleeping Bear debut maple sugaring days

From staff reports

Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore will host Maple Sugaring Days at the Dechow and Olsen Farms in the Port Oneida Rural Historic District on Saturday, March 4, and Sunday, March 5 from 10 am-3 pm each day. Join park rangers, volunteers, and special presenters at this new event to learn the history of maple sugaring and the process of making maple syrup from start to finish. There will be a guided hike, a visit to an historic sugar shack, sap boiling demonstrations, kid's activities, maple syrup sampling, and goodies to take home.

For additional information, please visit [NPS.gov/PlanYourVisit/Maple-](https://www.nps.gov/PlanYourVisit/Maple-)

Sugaring-Days. Maple Sugaring Days is presented in partnership with Preserve Historic Sleeping Bear. If you're interested in volunteering with Preserve, please visit [PHSB.org](https://www.phsb.org).

The Homestead resort will also host a community pancake breakfast on Saturday, March 4, from 9 am-1 pm in partnership with Preserve. Admission is \$10 per person at the door for pancakes, sausage or bacon, fruit and beverages.

There is no cost for the event; however, you must have a park entrance pass, or an annual pass displayed in your vehicle. Park passes can be purchased at the Philip A. Hart Visitor Center in Empire, which is open daily from 9 am-4 pm. For questions, call 231-326-4700, extension 5010.

Ford wins 2023 Manitou Music poster image

From staff reports

Grand Rapids artist Randi Ford's acrylic-on-canvas painting "Path Through Time" is the Glen Arbor Arts Center's 2023 Manitou Music poster image.

Ford's painting was selected by the GAAC's Manitou Music Poster Committee from a field of 40 entries. The 2023 poster can be viewed and purchased online at GlenArborArt.org and the GAAC office.

Ford is a landscape painter who is inspired by the beauty, life and spirit that exists within nature. It is her goal to capture the energy and life within the landscape through her flow paintings.

"'Path Through Time' was inspired by my time spent exploring the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Shoreline," she said. "As I walked along the path through time, I was in awe at the beautiful colors within the landscape. The greens and oranges against the teals within the water were so magnificent. This piece really captures the divine beauty I felt among these dunes."

The GAAC's Manitou Music Poster Competition is an annual event that had been open only to GAAC members until last year. The 2024 poster competition will be open to anyone. Applications for the 2024 poster competition can be found online at GlenArborArt.org/ARTISTS in May 2023. Deadline for submissions is mid-September.

The GAAC is located at 6031 S. Lake St., Glen Arbor.



MANITOU MUSIC 2023 GLEN ARBOR ARTS CENTER

Creativity Q+A LIVE with Mark Mehaffey

How do artists think, work, and practice? Those questions are explored during *Creativity Q+A LIVE*, a series of conversations with Northern Michigan artists at the Glen Arbor Arts Center. The first 2023 conversation is Feb. 25, at 11 am with Leelanau County resident Mark Mehaffey. The program is free. No reservations are required. Doors open at 10:30 am.

Mehaffey is an artist whose creative work refuses to be shoehorned into tidy boxes. He moves fluidly between representing the visible world, and working with not-so-representational subjects: marks, lines, scratches, color stories. His practice is less focused on "subjects" than it is on ideas, and "what-if?". Working primarily in water-based media, Mehaffey paints, draws, collages, and taught art in the public school for 30 years.

Creativity Q+A LIVE is an offshoot of the GAAC's online feature, *Creativity Q+A*. Since 2020, the GAAC has published monthly, long-form interviews that dig into artists' creative practices. Mehaffey's conversation was published in December 2022. To read it, and all the *Creativity Q+A* interviews, visit GlenArborArt.org/ARTISTS.



Explore Sleeping Bear by candlelight

From staff reports

Explore Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore at night on a candlelit winter hike on Saturday, Feb. 18, from 6-8 p.m. at the Dune Climb. Join park rangers and volunteers to explore the park after dark. Arrive anytime between 6-7:30 p.m. to enjoy the full experience. Hike one mile on flat terrain along a candlelit trail. The self-guided hike should take roughly 30 minutes to 1 hour. Bring your sense of adventure, enjoy a trail lit by luminaries, and engage with our knowledgeable rangers and volunteers. The event is free with a park pass.

This hike will take place regardless of snow conditions. Park rangers will share information along the route. If there is adequate snow, this will be a snowshoe hike. Attendees are encouraged to bring their own snowshoes for the event. Snowshoes will also be loaned on a first-come, first-served basis.

There is no advanced registration needed. Luminaries will light the trail; however, visitors are encouraged to bring a flashlight or headlamp and wear layers.

There is no cost for the event; however, you must have a park entrance pass, or an annual pass displayed in your vehicle. Park passes can be purchased at the Philip A. Hart Visitor Center in Empire, which is open daily from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. For questions, please call 231-326-4700, extension 5010.

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Glen Arbor Arts Center's "Feral Housewife" takes on gender norms

By Katie Dunn
Sun contributor

"The Feral Housewife" is the *nom de guerre* of Mary Beth Acosta, a longtime Leelanau County resident, whose collage work is on display at the Glen Arbor Arts Center (GAAC) until April 23. The word "feral," generally, is defined in one of two ways: "of, relating to, or suggestive of a wild beast," or "having escaped from domestication and become wild." The latter definition of "feral" is that which resonates with Acosta. Indeed, she playfully sees herself as "feral."

Acosta's exhibit at the GAAC includes a retrospective of nine collage works that reference American culture from the 1940s through the 1960s, with an emphasis on female domesticity and Detroit automotive design. Her body of work is, essentially, a reflection on the ethos of those decades, and, also a parodic critique thereof.

That the name of Acosta's exhibit is "A Feral Housewife" is no accident. Acosta firmly identifies as a liberated woman, and a feminist undercurrent to her work is palpable. Her work contemplates notions of idealized femininity, domesticity, patriarchy, and female subjugation. It, essentially, is a very subtle—yet powerful—critique of the traditional role of gender in modern, industrial America.

This unlikely feminist—who Acosta most certainly is—was born in Detroit and attended public schools there. She then studied at Thomas Jefferson College (once a part of Grand Valley State University), graduating with a degree in environmental science and a minor in ceramics and jewelry making. From college, Acosta embarked on life with her husband, Mike. They raised their two boys on a farm nestled in the Manistee National Forest near Mesick. In 1993, they settled in Leelanau County, having built their own cottage in Northport. Acosta and her husband now split their time between their home in Northport and a condo in Traverse City—the best of both worlds!

Acosta attributes her feminism to her upbringing. Growing up, her parents did not confine her to the traditional female sphere.

"I worked for my father in his cabinet shop when I was in high school," Acosta said. "I learned how to use tools and that was the beginning of finding satisfaction through working with my hands. I had a high school AP English teacher who wore an identical black woolen shift, and every day an

outrageous hat. It was her answer to men having a uniform to wear. She drove a 1950s pink Cadillac. She kept a bulletin board full of articles about feminists of the day. That was the [feminist] spark."

As an adult, Acosta never felt fully at ease with conventional notions of femininity and female subordination. She continued to defy sexist norms, describing herself as "a stay-at-home mom with a feminist trapped inside." She channeled this feminist spirit into carpentry—something that typically is male-dominated. This stay-at-home mom wasn't merely raising her two children, she also was installing the floors of their home, doing all the cabinetry work, and even building the roof.

Ultimately, Acosta began cultivating her creative energy and artistic instincts. The arts—collage, in particular—provided an outlet for her inner feminism. The inception of her collage artistry was through simple journaling. Acosta would embellish her personal journals with magazine clippings, newsprint, photographs, and the like. The embellishments were a form of language for her, replete with symbolism. Her journaling eventually evolved into collage work itself. Fittingly, her first authentic collage work was one of a self-constructed passport—perfectly metaphoric as to how collage would ultimately transport Acosta to a new creative dimension.

Acosta is very much a self-taught artist, and a prolific one. She uses a variety of media, all vintage and recycled—from magazines to newspapers to advertisements. All of the clippings are from the 1940s through the 1960s. The tools that Acosta employs are simple and rudimentary: embroidery scissors, glue stick, wax paper, wooden spoon, magnifying light, and satin polymer varnish with UVLS (to protect the vintage papers from sunlight exposure). Her collages are fastidiously constructed and extremely intricate. Remarkably, each of Acosta's collages may be rendered out of as many as 70 trimmings. She sources the vintage pieces from garage sales, the internet, or simply from personal references. Her collected media are cataloged and meticulously preserved at Acosta's art studio in her Traverse City home.

Regarding the craft itself, collage encompasses both the technique and resulting work of art in which pieces of magazine, newsprint, photographs, and fabric are arranged and affixed to a supporting medium, such as tagboard.



From many elements, one cohesive work of collage is created. The media utilized by Acosta is generally deemed "ephemera." Acosta defines "ephemera" as "something never meant to last." Fleeting. But, by repurposing ephemera, she has given it a sort of immortality. "Vampires" as Acosta says the ephemera have become by her hand. (Ironically, like vampires, her clippings are vulnerable to sunlight—hence, the necessity of polymer varnish.)

The history of collage is long and distinguished. First coined by Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque, the term "collage" refers to a medium that is simultaneously serious and comedic. Also, collage historically has been a medium that is very much politically charged. It is readily apparent from "A Feral Housewife" that Acosta is continuing in that same vein.

A beautifully prominent and pervasive undercurrent to the body of work is the feminist spirit. Acosta views the

female characters depicted in the ads as an idealization of women, even an objectification. And, she sees it as her duty to release them—literally and metaphorically. Acosta views the physical act of cutting of female images from the media as a sort of liberation—a symbolic freeing of women from the confining and antiquated realm of domesticity. Essentially, by repurposing the iconography, and giving it a whole new meaning, Acosta subverts the paternalism inherent in advertisements from the mid-20th century.

While Acosta's current exhibit predominantly has an emphasis on domesticity and feminism, also represented is Detroit's legacy of automotive design. Acosta has long been fascinated with mid-20th century automobile industry—not surprising considering that she grew up in the long shadow of Detroit's glory days. The impact of Detroit's storied auto industry for her

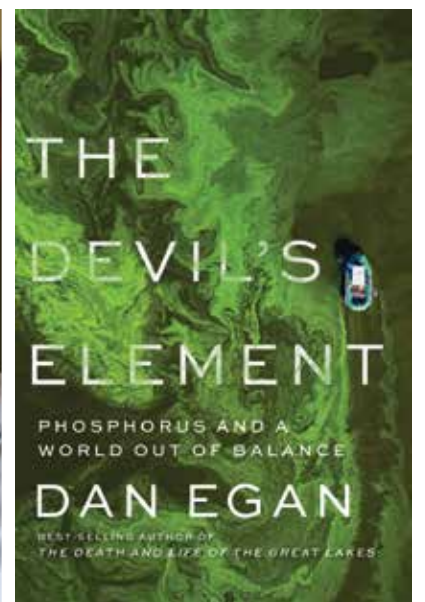
ACOSTA concludes on page 5



NATIONAL WRITERS SERIES

In partnership with the International Affairs Forum

The National Writers Series welcomes award-winning author **Dan Egan** to discuss his new book, *The Devil's Element*. A major work of environmental journalism, Egan explains how our overreliance on phosphorus is causing toxic "dead zones" in our country's waterways. Egan offers strategies to counteract the depletion and overuse of this vital element. Guest host is **Patrick Shea**, environmental reporter at Interlochen Public Radio.



Friday, March 10, 7PM - City Opera House • For tickets visit NationalWritersSeries.org

Mielczareks take over Leland Harbor House

From staff reports

Greg Mielczarek and his wife, Maggie, a Leland native, acquired the Harbor House Trading Co. from Richard Roberts on Feb. 1. The Mielczareks will officially re-open the iconic spot in the heart of the village on Feb. 24-26 for the Harbor House's annual storewide sale, during which apparel, paddleboards and other products will be sold at discounts of 50-70%. Roberts will remain the owner of the building.

Roberts bought the Harbor House building in 2003 from the Haverberg family and has owned it and the business for 20 years. According to Roberts, the building was moved to its current location at the corner of

Main St (M-22) and River St in the early 1900s and was a popular dance hall, community gathering space and general store.

"We were honored when Richard reached out to us in November," said Greg. "He has leased the upstairs to Maggie for the interior design and custom fabric portion of her business (Leland Gal). At that point, he was able to see firsthand that we were good stewards for the historic building and Richard knew we were looking for a way to be more involved in our business community. When the opportunity presented itself, we jumped on it."

Very little inside the Harbor House will change under the Mielczareks' ownership. The popular store will keep the same layout, brand-name apparel, camping gear, toys and beach essentials. The nautical artwork on the walls will remain, as will the Moomer's ice cream. (Harbor House serves more flavors of Moomer's than the company's flagship store near Traverse City does.)

"People associate the Harbor House with ice cream and the

core memory of summer family vacations," said Greg. "Richard has built something special here and we plan to keep the store as it has been, while making a few changes. It's about continuing the legacy and providing a positive experience for everyone that will help the greater good of the community."

The Mielczareks moved to Leland full time from Grand Rapids five years ago, after Maggie opened her textile design business. Leland Gal's location on the other side of Main St will remain the same, with no plans to combine with the Harbor House.

Greg will share Harbor House general manager duties with employee Ana Holley, an outdoor aficionado who grew up camping in Leelanau County during the summers and moved here last May. Holley, who studied Environment and Natural Resources and Sustainability at the University of Wyoming, knows the store's outdoor apparel brands and has worked in the retail sector since high school.



L-r: Maggie, Tommy, Eddie and Greg Mielczarek.

ACOSTA

continues from page 4

was indelible: "Neighbors worked for the car industry; kids knew cars by fit size; no public transportation meant you got a new car when you got your license. My first car was a tan 1964 Ford Galaxy 500."

One such piece, entitled "Auto Show Housewives," is exemplary of precisely that which Acosta strives to achieve with her collages. The collage depicts smiling women blissfully—almost robotically—showcasing the latest offerings from Detroit: oversized, glossy sedans in a variety of cheerful colors. It masterfully serves as a critical meditation on the symbiotic relationship between stereotypical female iconography and the automobile industry.

"A Feral Housewife" is not Acosta's first exhibit. In 2006, the Inside Out Gallery in Traverse City hosted Acos-

ta's very first show. Her work piqued the interest of The Dennon Museum Center's former executive director, Eugene Jenneman, who approached Acosta about displaying her work there. In 2007, the museum included 25 of Acosta's collages in a multi-artist show entitled "Romancing the Automobile," a nostalgic reflection on America's fascination with automobile design. In the years since, her work has been on display several times at Inside Out Gallery. Other galleries where she has shown her collages include Michigan Artists Gallery in Traverse City, Crooked Tree Arts Center in Petoskey, Kubiak Gallery in Douglas, and even galleries in Palm Springs, California. Again, Acosta is very prolific.

Consider experiencing "A Feral Housewife" while it is on display at the GAAC through late April. It is visually stimulating as well as intellectually provocative.

Exploring early Native school in Leelanau

From staff reports

On Feb. 23, at 1:30 p.m. the Omena Historical Society and Leelanau Historical Society Museum will host Mark Smith for a discussion of the Grove Hill School—one of the first residential schools for Native Americans in the country. The event takes place at the Leelanau Historical Society's Munnecke Room at 203 E. Cedar St. in Leland.

Smith will explore the efforts of Reverend Peter Dougherty in his establishment of the school in 1853 in Omena. Find out how this residential school was more enlightened and attuned to the advancement of the local Anishinaabe people than the oppressive government-run schools which would follow. Admission is free. A recording of the program will be made available after the event.



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CHILDHOOD

continues from page 1

“I’m excited to be outside a lot, tucked away in our little forest play area. This spring we’ll tap maple trees, play in the garden, and build birdhouses. Even the two-year-olds are excited to be outside. My kid cries when it’s time to go inside.”

Outside the home

While Mack and the Millers operate out of their home, the commission is helping others open centers elsewhere.

“When we received the grant, we thought we’d have five home-based providers, each of which would serve six or 12 children, depending on their staff,” said Soutas-Little. “But many people don’t want to offer childcare in their home. Either other family members work from home, or their homeowners’ association didn’t allow it, or the home is too small.”

Working in conjunction with Emily Laidlaw, director of Michigan’s Childcare Licensing Bureau, LECDL began to consider childcare options in microcenters—essentially a hybrid between home-based and center-based childcare, including necessary variances.

Easing childcare regulations has bipartisan support in Lansing. Former state representative Jack O’Malley (Republican, Lake Ann) sponsored a bill to allow home-based childcare providers with a proven record of success to serve more children. Governor Gretchen Whitmer signed the bipartisan childcare package into law last June.

In her State of the State address last month, Whitmer, a Democrat, pushed for funding to support preschool. “Data shows that children who go to preschool are: more likely to graduate, earn a certificate or degree, and get a good-paying job. Preschool helps employers too, which is why so many business groups support it,” the governor said.

In Northport, Amalie Kristiansen hopes to open a childcare facility this summer in a village-owned facility

that once housed the Discovery Center, with support from LECDL and the Leelanau Township Foundation, whose grant upgraded the space, installed a new dishwasher, and repaired an outside fence. This facility will supplement the Leelanau Children’s Center, which offers care for preschoolers but not babies and toddlers. Northport Public School will officially lease the space and sublet to Amalie—a prime example of a successful collaboration between a private business and a public entity. In turn, Amalie’s parents repainted the building’s interior.

“After having our son Theo, who is now 14 months, we couldn’t find a reason for me to return to work and find day care. There wasn’t any day care available. Even if there was, it would have eaten up my paycheck,” said Amalie, who was born and raised in Northport and has more than a decade of experience as a babysitter and preschool aid. Amalie and her husband Jacob, who works in construction, returned 3.5 years ago to Leelanau County. Before she had Theo, Amalie managed the tasting room and wine club at Good Harbor Winery.

She credits the LECDL for helping her with startup costs, forming a business plan, walking her through the licensing and inspection process, and connecting her with other community institutions that now have her back. The commission initially asked Amalie if they would open the childcare center in their home, but the family of three lives with Jacob’s parents, so they needed to find an independent space.

“The space is so open and bright and welcoming,” said Amalie. “I have designed it to make it feel more like a home so the kids are comfortable. Especially being a parent, the first time I had somebody babysit my son I was so nervous. It’s important for parents



Amalie Kristiansen and her son Theo.

to feel comfortable and safe, having their children with me.”

In Suttons Bay, Megan Henderson and her mom Cynthia (who owns Lylah’s sandwich shop in the old Subway location) will pay \$1 a year to rent a childcare space at Suttons Bay Public School after working out an arrangement with superintendent Casey Petz. The Hendersons just began their licensing process and hope to open this summer.

“What led us to this was pure necessity,” said Megan. “My fiancé Scott and I have two small children, and we have not been able to find home-based childcare. Our daughter Lylah (for whom the restaurant is named), is 5 and in kindergarten; our son Oliver is nearly 2.

“This is a great opportunity to work with the school in a space that was set up for toddlers. We just need to make it more infant friendly. This program in general will help so many people who can’t find childcare.”

Seeking a space

While Kristiansen and the Hendersons have located spaces for their child-care centers and hope to open later this year, Sherry Davenport’s professional childcare journey is just beginning.

Davenport, 59, moved from Jackson, Michigan, three years ago with her husband, expecting they would retire in Leelanau County. They bought a home near Glen Lake School in order to be close to their daughter, Charynn, who owns Refuge Salon in Suttons Bay, and their grandkids. But when

one of Charynn’s employees became pregnant and began looking for local childcare, she quickly found herself at the bottom of waiting lists.

“My daughter called me to vent,” said Davenport. “I had no idea it was such an issue here. I thought, ‘I’m not doing anything. I might as well help her out.’”

Davenport babysat Charynn’s employee’s infant. She soon learned of LECDL’s childcare program and reached out to Soutas-Little in hopes of getting on a fast track to be licensed as a provider. But first she needs to find an approved space to watch children. Davenport contacted Glen Lake School and found a receptive audience, but the school doesn’t currently have room for an early childhood center; an extra 100 students applied to grades K-12 this year.

“I can’t finish the licensing process until I have an actual facility,” said Davenport. “We need businesses, churches and schools to step up to the plate and open their doors. Anyone who has extra rooms in their building.”

Davenport outlined the dilemma faced by her daughter and other local business owners who struggle to find or keep employees.

“How are we going to get the employees back post-COVID if there’s not affordable childcare?”

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HAYLEE FISHER

continues from page 1

that time the Phinnys divorced and “pieced up the farm.” The horse farm sold to Alton and Kathy Smith.

“When we moved back about 10 years ago, they were leasing out stalls a la carte,” Haylee continues. “I leased stalls and we lived on Shimek Road. I met my farm partner Rachel Rice in 2014. We later leased the barn from Alton and Kathy with about 30 horses. That’s when we really started to teach a lot and to put kids’ programs in place. Now we’re up to 34 horses. We are a

three-women crew: me, Rachel, and Arielle Pasquier who is Swiss.” Haylee and Chris took over ownership of the farm on October 31, 2019.

As you may imagine, it takes a ton of work to care for 34 horses. “You have to be a little bit stupid to do this, there is so much work!” Haylee laughs. “And I struggle with how expensive everything’s gotten. When we started, our full-service board per horse was \$600/month. Now we’re up to \$750, and honestly it should be more, but we love the people and don’t want to cut anybody out.”

Though it started out as a ranch for

reining horses, Cold Spring Farm now focuses on barrel racing. “Chris and I love to compete,” Haylee declares. “We’ve got a house full of competitive people here.” (Their sons are Bryhn, 18, a freshman at Ferris State, and Boden, 15, a 10th grader at Glen Lake.)

Haylee is the district director of the National Barrel Horse Association (NBHA-MI02 district). An online silent auction to benefit the association and youth barrel racing begins on Feb. 23. (Visit our website, GlenArbor.com, for a link to the silent auction.) It’s a grassroots campaign targeting youth and beginning riders. Whether you are a top open rider or new to the sport you can be competitive in NBHA. In divisional barrel racing you can run two seconds off the fastest time and still be a divisional winner qualifying for NBHA World Finals in Perry, Georgia.

Cold Spring Farm is also a school with year-round teaching. “Rachel and I teach 40 lessons per week, and 25 of them are kids,” Haylee continues. They host 12 summer kids’ day programs to accommodate the overflow of people who want to learn to ride, with 20-25 kids/session. “Some come to all of them, and some are only here for one week every summer, but they come back every single year!” Haylee smiles. “Chris and I are so happy that we get to share this place.”

From our website, GlenArbor.com



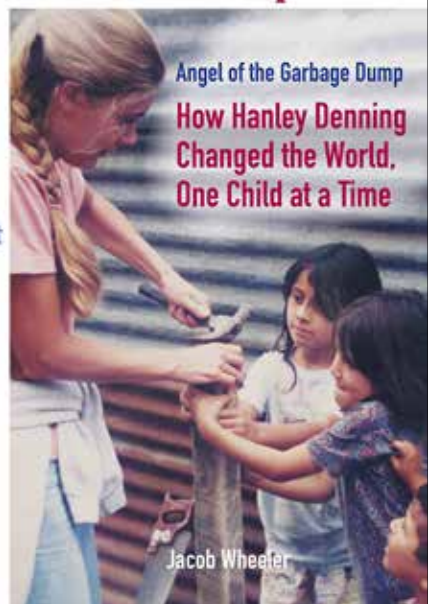
RIP, Mary Sutherland, a longtime Glen Arbor resident, teacher, feminist and champion for gender equality, who was perhaps best known as the matriarch of a large entrepreneurial, athletic, and public-spirited clan that has had an outsized impact on Leelanau County and the Grand Traverse region. Visit GlenArbor.com to read the story we published just over a decade ago on the occasion of Mary reissuing her self-help book “Claim Your Self,” which was originally published in 1983. Mary passed away on Saturday, Jan. 28, at age 92.

From Leelanau author Jacob Wheeler comes a story about hope and optimism, bravery and idealism, and finding light in the darkest of places.

“Hanley Denning’s story is filled with practical magic, brought to warm, vivid life by Jacob Wheeler’s reporting and storytelling. It’s a handbook, too, filled with dramatic triumphs and hurdles, on how to be a neighbor; a maker; a parent, an engaged citizen, no matter your home. In this book are simple but critical lessons about living; there is much we can learn from Wheeler’s telling of the story. This book needs to be on every library shelf and in every city hall in America.”

—Doug Stanton, *New York Times* bestselling author

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Glen Lake Library hosts Inland Seas

From staff reports

Visit the Glen Lake Community Library in Empire on Feb. 23 at 7 pm to learn about the environmental health of our Great Lakes in a presentation by the Inland Seas Education Association. ISEA staff will describe the various monitoring activities they perform during their excursions on Grand Traverse Bay, and demonstrate some of the specialized equipment they use in this work. You can also learn about the various volunteer opportunities available with this dynamic local organization.

Iconic Leelanau businesses are changing hands in 2023. Check out our spring editions of the *Glen Arbor Sun* for coverage.

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