Glen Arbor Sun

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Meet Me at the Loaf

Leelanau Historical Society celebrates Sugar Loaf stories

From staff reports

The Leelanau Historical Society (LHS), in partnership with Here:Say Storytelling, will present *Meet Me at the Loaf: A Celebration of Sugar Loaf in Stories*. The Jan. 29 event at Solon Township Hall near Cedar will feature memories and voices connected to one of Leelanau County's most beloved landmarks: Sugar Loaf Mountain.

Doors open at 5:30 pm, offering guests the chance to reconnect with old friends, neighbors, and fellow "Sugar Loafers." The storytelling program begins at 6:30.

Tickets are $20 per person and are available online at LeelanauHistory.org, or in the Historical Society museum gift shop. Guests will enjoy snacks, drinks, historical displays curated by LHS, and exciting door prizes generously provided by Boyne Mountain, Crystal Mountain, and additional community partners.

Meet Me at the Loaf's scheduled storytellers will include Tom Nelson—executive director of the Leelanau Conservancy, which acquired Sugar Loaf last year and will preserve it in the future—and *Glen Arbor Sun*

See **SUGAR LOAF** *on page 7*

Before closing in 2000, Sugar Loaf was the wintertime pulse of Leelanau County.

The Homestead near Glen Arbor stockpiled manmade snow early this winter and opened its runs the second weekend in January, despite rain and warm temperatures.

Chasing Snow: Northern Michigan ski resorts adapt to a warmer world

By Jacob Wheeler
Sun editor

A version of this article first appeared in Traverse Northern Michigan.

It's been a soggy couple of years for skiers and snowboarders. So, what keeps us coming back? From crockpot warming stations to cutting-edge snowmaking technology, Northern Michigan ski resorts pull out all the stops to keep winter lovers happy—and stay one step ahead of Mother Nature.

Lonely patches of snow melting on the hill. Idle chairlifts. An empty parking lot below. That's how the 2023-24 winter looked at Mt. Holiday, the ski hill east of Traverse City, which opened for just two weeks that season.

A freakishly warm January and February 2024 wiped out snowpack from earlier in the season, and a 73-degree day in late February left snow-sports enthusiasts frustrated. In fact, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration called the 2023-24 season "the warmest winter on record for the contiguous United States."

A more robust winter last year allowed Mr. Holiday to stay open for 12 weeks. It's early in the winter of 2026, but Mother Nature seems to be delivering for snow enthusiasts. After temperatures hit an unseasonal 50 degrees on Jan. 9, and rain turned the slopes and trails into hard crust, powder has returned to Northern Michigan.

But the near constant risk of snow turning to slush has forced resorts and ski hills to adjust. On the other side of Traverse City, Hickory Hills has made and bankrolled snow when temperatures dip to 28 degrees, stockpiling it on slopes the city-owned destination could maintain and squirreling it away in the forested paths where cross-country skate skiers sprinted loops. Even as rain and snow dance together in the skies, Hickory massages the base long enough to give those soggy but happy rippers a ski season.

We all know that recent winters have been warm, and we are on a decades-long warming trend. As soon as a base of snow formed this past November, erratic temperature swings threatened to destroy the runs and spoil the fun. But ski destinations understand that making snow is how to survive and win this game.

Ski pass and lift ticket sales have lagged—both out West and in the Midwest—for the first time since the rebound from the pandemic. But here in Michigan, the industry predicts growth as ski resorts invest aggressively in snowmaking infrastructure and supplement adventures on the hill with other on-site amenities and four-season programming, from weddings and retreats to disc golf and pampering at the spa. Their innovative solutions range from mounting high-tech snow guns on towers to providing crockpot plugins for families who want to bring dinner to the hill and avoid breaking their budgets—and they just might

See **CHASING SNOW** *on page 6*

The Folded Leaf: A Dream Embraced by Community Connection

By Rachel Zemanek
Sun contributor

Zemanek owns The Folded Leaf, which opened its doors last Spring in Cedar. Together, with Liz Neddo, owner of Bee Well, and niche jeweler Dana C. Fear, a creative community built on connection was formed. Now The Folded Leaf is pursuing a different home in Traverse City, following building inspections and a notice that gatherings are not allowed unless the entire building officially changes use.

When the snow falls on a crisp winter day, the silence and peace are something of a fairytale. The noise of the world is absorbed by the gentle flakes floating around my chilled cheeks as they land softly on the ground I call home. Taking a deep breath fills my lungs with air so clean that I forget the suffocating pressure of society.

It's the same when I step through the door of The Folded Leaf. The books absorb the noise and instead reflect millions of stories of fantastical worlds or treasured pasts. The air smells of well-loved pages and hope for the future through literacy and community.

The Folded Leaf was built as a haven to learn, grow, rest, and be exactly who you are. You can sit and read Wuther-

See **FOLDED LEAF** *on page 7*

Benzie prepares to open Wellness and Aquatic Center

By Ross Boissoneau
Sun contributor

People running around the track. Pickleball and basketball. Swimming lessons and water aerobics. These are some of the activities that will take place at the Benzie Wellness and Aquatic Center, located at the former site of Crystal Lake Elementary in Benzonia.

That's the hope and the plan, but the reality is still years away.

"We anticipate the capital campaign ... for two or three years, with construction in 2029 and opening in 2030," says Diane Tracy, vice president and development chair of the non-profit BWAC board.

Nonetheless, members of the board overseeing the project express optimism and enthusiasm. "We have great momentum," says Bill Kennis, president of the board.

When it finally opens its doors, the BWAC will be the culmination of work that began nine years ago. The organization grew from a modest beginning: a desire to teach youngsters how to swim. Initially the group's home was at the Crystal Lake beach in Beulah. A desire to have a more controlled environment led to a search for a year-round indoor home.

Along the way, the idea grew into a larger scale operation that will enable people of all ages throughout the county and beyond to participate in other health and exercise-related activities. Kennis says it became obvious that to make it economically viable, the facility had to offer more than just aquatics, hence the decision to include additional sports and recreational possibilities.

When completed, the facility will include two pools, a fitness center, a gym for basketball and pickleball, two studios, a meeting room, and locker rooms.

The selection of the site was based on its central location at the intersection of two of the main roads in the county, M-115 and US-31. It is within walking distance of both Benzonia and Beulah, and only seven miles from Frankfort. The hope was to renovate and retrofit the aging school, but the engineers and designers determined that wasn't possible, so the building will be razed before a new one is built.

Nonetheless, Kennis and Tracy both say its location will enable it to draw attendees from across the area. "It will draw from northern Manistee (County), western Wexford and southern Leelanau, places within a 20-minute drive," says Tracy.

It won't be cheap. The cost to purchase the defunct school and property from the Benzie Central School District was $425,000, with another $500,000 for schematics and design. That will be dwarfed by the estimated $25 million for the rest of the project. BWAC is estimating $20 million for demolition and construction of the new building, with a $5 million endowment for operating and maintenance costs.

Among the challenges is the fact Benzonia doesn't have a sewer system. That means a large portion of the site needs to be dedicated to a septic system to handle the wastewater for a facility that includes not only bathrooms and locker rooms but also two pools.

The organization is taking some lessons from the Kaliseum, the recreation complex in Kalkaska. When it was proposed, a millage to construct the building passed, but millages to pay for its ongoing operational costs have not always been successful, leading to an air of uncertainty over that building's ongoing use. That is why the BWAC board is looking to the $5 million endowment, the idea being that the facility will be solvent while usage fees enable it to remain viable.

Tracy and Kennis say the board did

not want to put the cost on the back of local taxpayers. "We're not going for a millage," says Tracy. Instead, the group is looking for private funding, foundations and government grants.

The group wants to then rely on user fees. "We want to break even after a couple years," adds Kennis.

Kennis believes the facility will prove beneficial to local people, particularly in the winter, who otherwise have to drive to Traverse City to use the YMCA or other facilities, such as simply walking at Grand Traverse Mall. He says it goes beyond getting exercise to fostering a sense of community. "Winter can be tough. Isolation can be hard on folks," Kennis says.

Despite the cost, they remain confident they can raise the money. "When the community sees something, they get it done," says Kennis, pointing to the Elberta waterfront land project as an example.

NeighborFood Market hosts farm-to-table dinner series

From staff reports

The Lively NeighborFood Market continues its focus on supporting small local farms by inviting area chefs and neighbors to come together around a Farm-to-Table Dinner Series that celebrates the bounty of our region—even in the winter months. Across four Mondays in January and February the NeighborFood Market will host multi-course meals for 26 guests with reservations seated at a beautiful candlelit community table.

The guest chefs come from a wide range of backgrounds, but all have strong connections to western Leelanau County.

On Jan. 19, the market hosts "Authentic Mexican Taco Dinner" with the Martinez Family. Adrianna, Jesus and Delaney Martinez launched a successful takeout taco business at Grocers Daughter Chocolate in Empire and will prepare a several course authentic flavorful Mexican meal.

On Feb. 2 Mel & Fell host "A Fortnight Dinner—Griffith Family Tradditions" Tim and Melanie Griffith, who work together as Mel and Fell, have been based in the NeighborFood Kitchen since 2024 and are well known for their delicious meal delivery and catered meals around Empire. In this special plated dinner event, they bring elevated cuisine to the table with a humble and comfortable approach.

Feb. 16 features "Winter Wonders" with Loghan Call of Planted Cuisine. Chef Loghan has been a culinary standout in the region for nearly a decade, and focuses almost exclusively on plant-based meals.

Reservations are required, and can be made at the Lively NeighborFood Market website with prices ranging from $55-80 per seat. Menus use only local ingredients, as available in the NeighborFood Market, and have at least three courses. These dinners feature comfortable community seating at a long table beautifully decorated with natural seasonal touches. Chefs will share their inspiration and the hosts will celebrate the farms that grew the food for the dinner.

Bay Theatre hosts high school jazz celebration

From staff reports

Join the Bay Theatre in Suttons Bay on Saturday, Jan. 17, and Sunday, Jan. 18, and welcome to the stage the jazz bands of Traverse City Central, Traverse City West, Kingsley and Elk Rapids High Schools.

YES! (Youth Entertainment Showcase) is an annual celebration featuring the talents of young artists and all those who are supporting their efforts along the way—parents, caregivers, mentors, and teachers. This year's event pulls together four high schools under one roof for a phenomenal celebration.

Saturday, at 4 and 7 pm TC Central and West ensembles will be playing compositions by Duke Ellington, Thelonius Monk, Larry Barton, Gordon Goodwin and others, under the direction of department heads Thomas Vieira and Chad Mielens, respectively.

Sunday at 3 pm the Bay Theatre welcomes Kingsley and Elk Rapids Schools playing famous compositions such as "All of Me," Cantaloupe Island," "How High the Moon," "Tequila," "Color My World" and many more to bring the concert weekend to its close. Department heads Nick Anderson and Lance Dubay will direct Elk Rapids' and Kingsley's ensembles.

Tickets are $15 for each performance. Please visit TheBayTheatre.org to buy tickets in advance or make your purchase at the door. Doors open one hour prior to each concert.

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Youth for Christ, Twin Flames raid, Trump's cuts, Art's Tavern sells

Glen Arbor Sun's most read stories of 2025

From staff reports

A controversial youth missionary group recruits inside Leland school and rattles the community; Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel orders a raid of the Twin Flames Universe cult's home near Suttons Bay; Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore leadership and staff face cuts and uncertainty under Trump and DOGE's wrecking ball; Barb and Paul Olson acquire Glen Arbor's iconic Art's Tavern, and tribal fisherwoman Cindi John survives a mass stabbing at Walmart in Traverse City. Those were the most-read online stories of 2025 in the *Glen Arbor Sun*.

Here's a list of our top 10, by online views. Thanks for your readership!

1. **Leland navigates a lighthouse and a rocky shoal**, Nov. 21

2. **Police raid Twin Flames Universe home: Michigan AG announces investigation**, July 1

3. **Your Sleeping Bear Dunes experience this year may feel very different**, March 12

4. **Iconic Art's Tavern sells to Barb and Paul Olson**, June 1

5. **Tribal fisherwoman Cindi John recovering after stabbings at Traverse City Walmart**, July 28

6. **Scratching the right itch**, July 9

7. **Disgusted at Trump, Canadians boycott Michigan travel**, May 13

8. **Boughs that won't break: Sleeping Bear Dunes employees should stand strong against Trump's attempt to humiliate federal workforce**, Feb. 4

9. **Protecting paradise since 2013: Leelanau County's Sheriff Mike Borkovich**, June 28

10. **Stuck in Glen Arbor, Jamaican workers worry about families after Hurricane Melissa ravages island**, Oct. 30

Leland citizens debate Youth for Christ ministry downtown

From staff reports

The missionary group Youth for Christ's bid for a brick-and-mortar ministry in the heart of Leland's business district, and until this past September, their presence inside Leland School, has roiled the closeknit small town in recent months. The controversy has also awakened a debate over the role of religion in public schools and in the public square.

The Leland Planning Commission heard nearly three hours of impassioned public comment on Wednesday night, Jan. 7. Their monthly meeting was moved to the Northport Public School auditorium to accommodate a crowd that numbered in the hundreds. The commission's December meeting at the Leland Library was postponed due to an overflow crowd that exceeded the room's capacity.

Approximately 60% of the 40 people who spoke during three different public comment periods opposed Apollos Properties' bid for a special use permit to hold a Youth for Christ ministry as a "club" on Jim VanSteenhouse's property, which sits in the business district overlooking Leland's Fishtown.

Concerned parents, grandparents and community members opposed the bid because they said only tax-paying retail businesses should be allowed within Leland's C-1 commercially zoned district. They found Youth for Christ's mission and previous pursuit and alleged recruitment of students (and minors) within the public school to be divisive. The community recoiled at Youth for Christ missionary Micah Cramer referring to them as "the enemy" during a church service in Northport in November, as well as VanSteenhouse's suggestion that Leland was an unsafe community. They encouraged Apollos to find another location for their ministry outside of downtown Leland, where the group also owns property.

The 40 percent who support Youth for Christ's bid for a ministry said they want more religious opportunities for youth in the community. They alleged that opposition to the ministry and to the Cramers suggested a "discomfort with Christianity." They touted the First Amendment, and praised the Cramers for their "dedication" and "tough skin." A couple citizens alleged that people "care more about retail businesses than about our kids." Another grew emotional as she spoke about struggles in her childhood and the positive role of faith in her life.

The Leland Planning Commission will use their next scheduled meeting, on Wednesday, Feb. 4, to review findings of fact for the application and consult with their attorneys. Another large venue might be needed for next month's meeting, to accommodate impassioned debate.

Township supervisor Clint Mitchell predicted that the Planning Commission might hold a vote during their March meeting "at the earliest." The result of the commission's decision could be appealed to the Zoning Board of Appeals.

A lawyer representing Youth for Christ, who owns property in Leland, has already alluded to the threat of lawsuits.

To add another wrinkle to an already complex story, Planning Commission chair Ross Satterwhite announced Wednesday night that he would step down, effective this week. As township supervisor, Mitchell may nominate a new chairperson in the coming weeks. That candidate would need to be officially appointed by the board.

If the new planning commissioner is not in place by March, a vote on the Youth for Christ ministry application could be decided by four commissioners. In the event of a tie, the special use permit bid would fail.

Follow the Glen Arbor Sun for updates to this story.

Art that turns INward

By Katie Dunn
Sun contributor

Winter in Leelanau County draws life inward. In a place so deeply defined by outwardness—by land, water, and expanse—the shift, nevertheless, feels instinctive, even necessary. The season arrives not only as weather, but as a kind of inversion, reshaping both landscape and psychology.

Which makes the Glen Arbor Art Center's (GAAC) first exhibition of 2026, *INteriors*, so timely and so entirely relevant.

The concept for *INteriors* was developed by Sarah Bearup-Neal, gallery manager of GAAC, whose curatorial instincts invariably have a way of calibrating exhibitions with the emotional temperature of the season. Ever the wizard behind GAAC's most resonant ideas, Bearup-Neal had been pondering winter itself: what happens when cold and darkness bends attention toward introspection, and how that shift might be reflected, challenged, and expanded through the arts.

"Because winter was on the horizon, which is a signal to hunker down in one's cave, I wondered how many different ways one could pull on the concept of 'interior.' And, as it turns out, there are many interiors to explore. There's the go-to interior created by a building…Then there's the interior space between a person's two ears," Bearup-Neal explains.

In framing the call for work, Bearup-Neal intentionally left the idea of *INteriors* open and elastic, welcoming the familiar language of rooms and walls, while also inviting artists to venture further inward. The result is an exhibition that moves fluidly between physical space and states of mind, where conceptual approaches feel especially generative without eclipsing the power of the rendered room.

The opening reception on Jan. 9 unfolded as a warm counterpart to the cold outside. On one of winter's shortest days, GAAC was a haven for conversation and curiosity—filled with the low, steady hum of engagement. Attendees lingered in the gallery, circling back to works, exchanging impressions, settling into a slower, more deliberate rhythm of observation.

Upon entering the gallery that evening, the energy was immediate. And the very first piece to draw me in was Beulah-based artist Jessica Kovan's *Screaming Inside*. I thought at once: is Willem de Kooning (1904-1997), one of the defining figures of Abstract Expressionism, somehow here? Because this particular work by Kovan, deliberately or not, unmistakably harkens to his genius.

Familiar and reliable supporters of the arts were in attendance, including Georgia Gietzen; Rita and Bill Witler; Sandy and Don Miller; Peg McCarty; Mary MacDonald; Beth Bricker; Page Stoutland; Carol Hohle; Angela Saxon and Royce Deans; Tom Krause; and Christine Deucher, among others. The evening stood as a celebration of a creative ecosystem shaped by regional artists and the community that sustains them.

Laura Cavender, Glen Arborite and avowed aesthete, was also in attendance. In her immediate impressions, she spoke less about any single piece than about the collective impact of the work and the vitality of the local creative community.

"I remember reading Sarah Bearup-Neil's artist call for this particular show. Immediately it woke my mind with all sorts of ideas…so it's especially impactful to walk through and see how this has been answered by the artists. We get to live in this community of people who create art—pieces from Maple City, Cedar, Traverse City, and here in Glen Arbor. Creating art takes imagination, but also action and follow-through. I'm really proud to live in a community of people who have all three," Cavender shares.

Interiors features work by 27 exhibitors, encompassing 34 objects in both two- and three-dimensional formats. The exhibition spans a wide range of media—including collage, digital photography, drawing, found materials, ink, mixed media, painting, paper cutting, and sculpture—all reflecting the richness of the concept itself.

Awards

Best of Show was awarded to Gail Hunter of Beulah for *Time to Go*, a piece that exemplifies the exhibition's cerebral ambitions. Her acrylic-on-canvas work distills the moment of departure into simple yet evocative imagery: a suitcase and two boxes sit in an open doorway, with a key left hanging on a hook—its meaning deliberately ambiguous. The composition is spare and meticulously rendered, each element carefully chosen to invite reflection.

As Hunter reflects, "Time to go. When your space no longer has a purpose, when your space no longer supports you mentally, physically, or emotionally…time to make a big change. When you know something or someone is just not working…hopefully we'll consider any situation that may not be working for him or her, and realize it's time to move on."

The Marjory Sonner Hughes Award for Creative Excellence (made possible by Margo Burian) was awarded to Lake Ann-based artist Cherie Correll for her mixed media piece *Underground Upside Down*.

One of two merit awards (made possible by the Barbara and Victor Klein Fund) went to Corrina Ulrich of Cedar for her ink wash collage *Before Us*.

Lake Ann-based artist Cherie Correll stands with her mixed media piece "Underground Upside Down."

The other merit award was presented to Traverse City-based artist Jan Johnson Doerfer for her acrylic, ink and paint work *Outside In*.

The Couldn't Be Ignored Award, a special recognition created by GAAC for work that defies conventional categories, went to Kovan for her mixed media piece *Screaming Inside*.

Kovan drew inspiration for *Screaming Inside* from a deeply resonant moment when her teenage daughter donated 12 inches of her hair to Locks of Love. Emerging from the salon with a stoic demeanor, her daughter simply said: "I'm crying inside." That sentiment—a raw, universal expression of hidden emotion—stayed with Kovan and became the seed for her work.

Kovan shares: "Daily I work to hold grace and beauty together in the midst of this complicated world. Yet, if asked, I would respond: 'I'm screaming inside.'"

She channels this notion of inner turmoil—frustration and quiet anguish—into her practice as an artist and advocate for the environment, engaging with vulnerability on both a personal and communal level. In *Screaming Inside*, a shadowed figure embodies these hidden emotions. The work became a collaborative experience during a climate-change art journaling workshop led by Kovan, where participants were invited to contribute words directly onto the rendered figure. Inscribed sentiments on *Screaming Inside* range from *overwhelmed* and *fear* to *love, help*, and *horrified*. Through this layering of voices, Kovan transforms personal struggle into a shared dialogue, bridging the private and the universal, and demonstrating how beauty, grace, and internal conflict can coexist.

Other Notable Submissions

One of the most unexpected voices in the exhibition was that of Michele Aucello, an acclaimed nighttime sky photographer whose work chasing the northern lights has captivated audiences far beyond northern Michigan. Her contribution to INteriors proves that even an artist known for vast landscapes and celestial panoramas can create intimate, arresting reflections on personal space.

Aucello's piece, *Tiny World*, began as part of a larger night-photography process. Using a 360º camera, she selected a single frame and "curled it in and around itself in Photoshop to create what is known as a tiny planet." As a landscape photographer, she approached *INteriors* by asking how exterior spaces might become interior ones, capturing "something vast in a small, contained space." Taken in a field by D.H. Day Barn on a cold winter night, the image was transformed into a cozy, self-contained interior.

As Aucello explains, "Because I am a landscape photographer, I had to apply that notion to the great outdoors… Can the outside become the inside? I'd say so."

One of Leelanau's most venerated artists, Mark Mehaffey of Empire, approaches the idea of interior not as a

See **INTERIORS** *on page 5*

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space one enters, but as a condition one carries. His work, *Windows*, is grounded in attention—to emotional weather, and to what is quietly revealed.

Windows consists of a centered pair of eyes, isolated against a neutral field. One eye bears a single falling tear, emphasizing restraint and vulnerability over overt drama. Rendered as a transparent watercolor on Yupo, the eyes act as portals to the interior self. Inspired by someone deeply cherished by the artist, the gaze holds sadness and lived experience without spectacle.

"I thought the eyes represented our interiors … often hidden, sometimes masked, occasionally readable," Mehaffey explains. "The eyes are both a reflection of what is seen and a window into the interior of ourselves. They allow others to peer into our hearts and reveal what is not said."

Bill Allen, based in Maple City and widely known for his welded steel animal sculptures, engages the exhibition's theme from a markedly different—and deliberately playful—direction. In contrast to the precision and structure of his metal work, Allen explored a more instinctive mixed-media practice, favoring spontaneity, color, and process over premeditation.

"By *Playing Inside*, I'm referring to playing with various materials and letting the process show the way," Allen shared, describing the title of his work, which exemplifies his improvisational approach. Composed of watercolor, paper, ink, marker, charcoal, spray paint, acrylic print, and sand on a wood panel, *Playing Inside* functions less as a fixed destination than as a visible record of creative motion.

These artists represent just a portion of the work on view in *INteriors*, an exhibition highlighting the remarkable range and vitality of interior space as an artistic subject. It makes clear the interior is not a minor motif, but a powerful genre—one that has occupied artists for centuries.

Art History: Interiors Across the Centuries

In the 17th century, Johannes Vermeer (1632–1675), one of the most distinguished painters of the Dutch Golden Age, elevated the domestic interior into a site of meticulous observation and quiet contemplation.

With *The Art of Painting* (1668), Vermeer depicts a sunlit workspace rendered in extraordinary detail. A solitary artist turns away from the viewer—absorbed in his creative labor—while maps, fabrics, and furnishings are arranged with measured precision. A second figure stands near the window, a woman traditionally interpreted as Clio, the Muse of History, identified by her laurel wreath, trumpet, and book—reminding us that even the quietest domestic interiors can carry profound symbolic and cultural meaning.

More than two centuries later, Salvador Dalí (1904–1989), one of the most inventive Surrealists of the 20th century, carried the interior fully into the realm of the mind. While best known for *The Persistence of Memory* (1931), his oil painting *The Ghost of Vermeer of Delft Which Can Be Used as a Table* (1934) offers a direct, reverent homage to Vermeer's *The Art of Painting*.

Where Vermeer's interior is grounded in careful observation, Dalí's is filtered through Surrealist logic: furniture becomes anatomy, forms melt and fuse in biomorphic ways, and space behaves unpredictably. Familiar shapes are warped, stretched, and reimagined, producing a disorienting yet fascinating interplay of reality and imagination. Still, the connection between the two artists is decidedly unmistakable.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Pierre Bonnard (1867-1947) expanded the interior into a space of sensory exploration. His densely patterned rooms blur boundaries between figure and environment, creating interiors saturated with memory and intimacy. Works such as *Interior with Flowers* (1919) and *Interior at the Balcony* (1919) exemplify his fascination with how light, color, and objects can transform a room into an interior reimagined through paint, where the arrangement of objects and the shimmer of color take center stage.

Any conversation about interiors in modern art inevitably turns to Henri Matisse (1869-1954). *The Red Studio* (1911), housed at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, and its companion piece, *The Pink Studio* (1911), held in Russia at the Pushkin Museum, remain among the most influential meditations on interior space ever painted. Though separated by geography, the two works operate in tandem, each exploring the interplay of color, space, and personal environment in complementary ways.

A pivotal figure of American Realism, Edward Hopper (1882-1967) likewise is closely associated with interior scenes shaped by solitude, introspection, and emotional restraint. In works such as *Nighthawks* (1942), Hopper depicts spaces that feel spare and deliberate. These interiors are not decorative backdrops but psychologically charged environments, often marked by silence, stillness, and a subtle tension between figure and space.

Conversely, David Hockney's (b. 1937) interiors radiate a very different energy from Hopper's. A British painter who spent formative years in Los Angeles, Hockney absorbed the effects of sunlight, color, and the clarity of California light, and these qualities transformed his approach to interior space. In his painting, *Looking at Pictures on a Screen* (1977), a figure studies reproductions of artworks in a bright, colorful studio, showing how interiors can become active sites of engagement and reflection.

From Vermeer's quietly observed rooms to Hockney's sunlit, playful spaces, the arts remind us that interiors are more than physical settings. They are mirrors of perception, emotion, and imagination. GAAC's *INteriors* carries this legacy forward, inviting viewers to step beyond their own rooms and experience the many ways interior life can be expressed, imagined, and shared.

On view through March 12, *INteriors* arrives at the very moment we are most inclined to turn inward. But rather than huddling in our personal interiors, GAAC offers a reprieve—a chance to escape the familiar and step into the interiors of others.

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CHASING SNOW

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make for an even better skiing experience in the years to come.

Whether or not we ever get another winter of 6-foot snowdrifts and Great Lakes that freeze over—stories we tell our children that seem increasingly like legends—snowmaking is the key for local resorts.

Resorts need about 72 hours of temperatures that stay below 28 degrees to lay a base and open terrain for skiing. "The ski industry in Michigan happens because of snowmaking. There's no other way to say it," said Ben Doornbos, general manager at Nub's Nob near Harbor Springs. "Our product is the snow."

Nub's recently added five more snow guns to bring its arsenal to 320, which creates a powder base for 53 runs that skiers and boarders access using eight chairlifts. The resort also replaced 100 of its slope lights with LED bulbs to create brighter and more energy-efficient lighting for night skiing, when temps drop and the base solidifies.

Everyone, including smaller destinations like Mt. Holiday, is getting on board. The Traverse City hill used disaster relief loans from the Small Business Administration to increase its fleet of snow guns from eight to 22 since 2024 and installed 8,000 feet of piping in the ski area, as well as 34 snowmaking hydrants and a whole new electrical system.

Resorts are optimistic about skiing in the North, both because the sport is enjoying a resurgence and because forecasts suggest the weather will cooperate this year. Two years ago, the ski industry battled a strong "El Niño" weather pattern, which meant warm water surfacing in the Pacific Ocean drove a heat wave over the Midwest. By contrast, a "La Niña" pattern last year and this year could mean a more typical Northern Michigan winter.

Even with a good dump of natural snow forecasted, snowmaking is still a serious part of a successful strategy. Karyn Thorr, CEO at Crystal Mountain near Thompsonville, offers this fun fact: One inch of high-density man-made snow is more durable and lasts longer than 10 inches of natural snowfall. A foot of powder that falls from the sky ultimately packs down to one inch of base. So, in a way, making snow is more efficient than waiting for Mother Nature.

Crystal Mountain, which has been making snow for nearly 60 years, uses 179 snowmaking guns. This year, Crystal focused on improving the base terrain around its Buck complex, which offers the steepest hills at the resort.

Ski pass and lift ticket sales at Crystal have increased each of the last two years. That's in part because the Benzie County destination has improved its messaging that the resort's snowmaking capacity can carry it through the winter—despite erratic weather.

"We had great conditions last year with 118 ski days," Thorr said. "Opening day was Dec. 6, and we closed on April 6."

But when natural snow failed to accumulate on people's yards and driveways two years ago, it fed a negative feedback loop that resorts couldn't accommodate skiers.

"We're trying to get that message to folks, pointing them to our webcams and telling them that we have snow," she said.

Resorts like Crystal are responding to skiers' hesitancy to commit by getting creative with ticket options like flex passes, which are suited for people with flexible schedules who are waiting for ideal ski conditions. To remain nimble and to keep guests occupied, they also promote other activities early in the season, including disc golf and the spa.

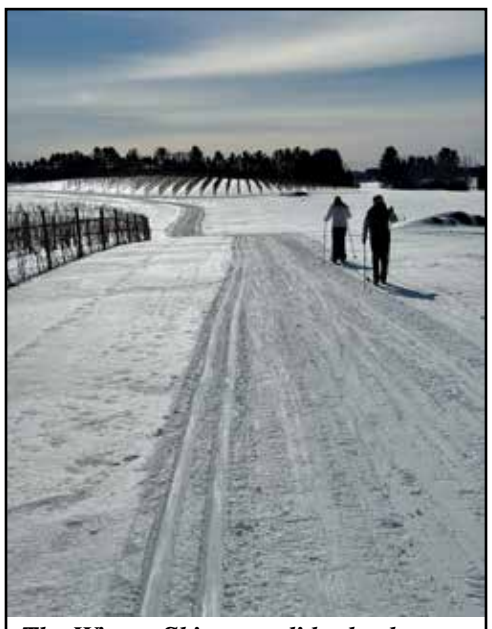
The density of manmade snow and the temperature needed to make it are important—so is the location where it's placed.

Treetops Resort near Gaylord has mounted 10 of its 30 snow guns on towers and installed them in spots that require a stronger base or terrain that presents challenges with shifting winds.

"We've also done more extensive training with our snow-making staff," said ski operations director Brad Jacobsen. "We're coaching them on different weather patterns, what to look for in the 10-day forecast and how to make adjustments with the snow guns."

Treetops is optimistic about seeing more skiers this year, so much so that it added two new Black Diamond (most difficult) runs to its lineup of 27 trails. To attract and entertain entire families, the destination also offers tubing, sleigh rides, ice skating and cross-country skiing.

"Expectations are higher … because of the winter we had [in 2024]," Jacobsen said. "People are excited. They want to get back out on the slopes."



The Wiener Ski event glides back to Shady Lane Cellars near Suttons Bay on Feb. 7. Visit ShadyLaneCellars.com for more information.

Resorts will innovate in ways big or small to get them there.

Ski resorts know that attracting families with young children, as well as priming kids for the slopes, represents not just sustainability but future growth for the industry. Effective marketing and social media campaigns that speak to tomorrow's rippers will keep skiers returning to Northern Michigan hills year after year, despite the inconsistent weather conditions.

Young adults and children 17 and under account for a lower percentage of visits to U.S. ski areas than they did a decade ago. That means resorts must heed the call and promote their experience on YouTube, TikTok and Instagram with the hopes of capturing the youth audience—and ensuring they become lifelong customers.

Some in the game see post-COVID opportunity. "Since 2020, when most of the state was shut down for the pandemic, skiing experienced a strong rise in popularity, and that has continued," said Ben Doornbos at Nub's Nob. "People have returned to the sport or discovered it for the first time."

The big dogs like Boyne Mountain and The Highlands at Harbor Springs—the largest ski area in Michigan's lower peninsula—are diversifying their appeal, too. Boyne is home to the popular SkyBridge, with panoramic views in all four seasons (and a dazzling Lights in the Sky stroll this winter), as well as an indoor water park, ziplines, tubing and winter biking. The Highlands offers winter horseback riding and an enchanted trail experience for those who need a break from skiing.

A smaller slope, Hickory Hills has offered an ideal training ground for young skiers since tow ropes began pulling patrons up the hill in 1952. Hickory still uses tow ropes, save for one conveyor lift which it added to the "bunny hill" in 2019, along with a new maintenance building and lodge. The lodge is a cozy gathering and dining space for young families on ski days and hosts events throughout the year, including weddings.

Located at the end of Randolph Street, Hickory's most unique quality is its proximity to downtown Traverse City. "A lot of people don't even know we're here," said general manager Cindy Anderson.

"[Even as] a small, community-based hill, we're still getting people from downstate and Ohio, because we offer a cost-effective way of getting out on the hill."

To shore up their skier experience, The Homestead in Glen Arbor offers a creative array of family-friendly activities, too. The resort only opened slopes for two weeks in 2023-24, as snow conditions are a bit more delicate because of The Homestead's proximity to the warmth of Lake Michigan. This year, The Homestead stockpiled manmade snow and opened the second weekend in January, despite warm temperatures.

The location, views and overall skier experience are a part of the draw. Homestead President Bob Kuras and his staff have found other innovative ways to attract visitors.

To help celebrate the season, The Homestead is bringing back its popular Ullr Festival, named for the ancient Norse god of winter and skiing. The expanded slate of activities may include a children's lantern parade, a caricature artist, cookie decorating, and photo fun with Ullr—live and in person. Nonna's restaurant will run a new la carte menu through the season and Whiskers will host a daily happy hour, followed by live music.

To improve its visitor experience, Caberfae Peaks in Cadillac renovated one of its older lodges and dedicated the space to day trippers bringing brown-bag lunches or hot meals in crockpots.

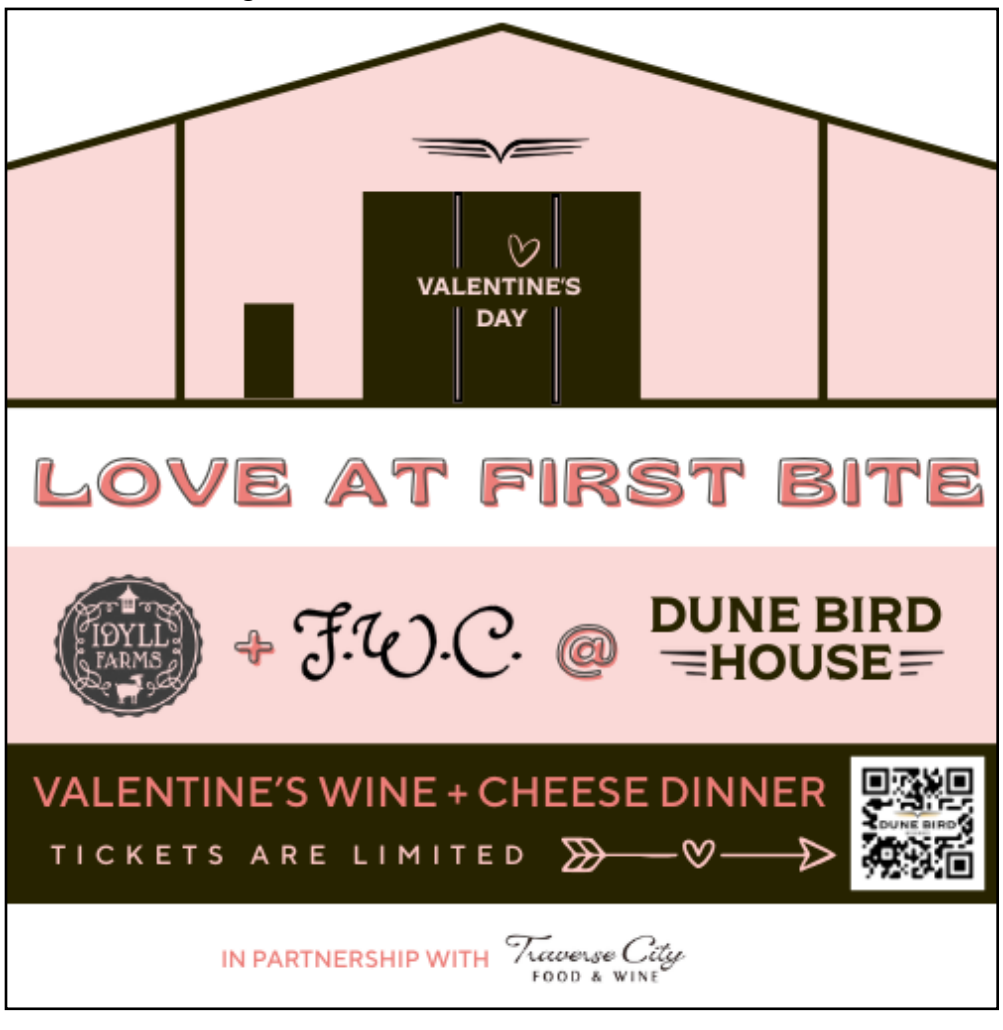
"What makes Caberfae special is we're extremely downhome and family-friendly," said general manager Pete Meyer. "We hear that from our customers."

Crockpots are nice, but they're no substitute for skiable runs. Caberfae also muscled up on snowmaking over the past couple seasons, installing another pump and 12 more guns to its fleet, which now totals 160. The resort also has new lines from Consumers Energy to power the operation and ensure fewer outages.

Meyer emphasized that resorts all offer live webcams and social media updates to keep skiers informed. "It's become extremely transparent," he said.

Despite a difficult season two years ago, Caberfae operated for 98 days, opening on Dec. 2 and staying open until March 17. The Cadillac destination was the southernmost ski resort to welcome skiers for a three-week span over the holidays in 2023-24.

Not all resorts have turned to snow guns to stabilize their season—but there are still tactics that allow them to make the most of every inch Mother Nature gives them.



SUGAR LOAF

continues from page 1

editor Jacob Wheeler, who will share stories about reporting on Sugar Loaf's colorful cast of previous owners. All stories are connected to Sugar Loaf and explore themes of keeping secrets, finding community, growing up on the hill, and navigating the twists and turns of the hill's history. Collectively, these stories capture the wild, warm, and unforgettable spirit of a place that shaped lives on and off the slopes.

"Sugar Loaf has been many things to many people over the decades—adventure, livelihood, memory, or simply home," said LHS director Kim Kelderhouse. "This event brings all of this together, letting the community celebrate its shared history."

Whether you're a former employee, longtime local, weekend skier, or someone newly curious about the mountain's legacy and future, this event invites everyone to relive cherished memories, discover new perspectives, and celebrate a place woven deeply into the identity of Leelanau County.

This designed image features families enjoying Sugar Loaf under the care of the Leelanau Conservancy. The property may open to the public later this year.

"It's Up to Us"

Leelanau Indivisible holds Jan. 17 demonstration in Suttons Bay

From staff reports

Join Leelanau Indivisible on Saturday, Jan. 17 (MLK Weekend), from 11 am until noon in downtown Suttons Bay. Join demonstrators after the march for an Afterglow Gathering at Hop Lot Brewing Company.

GAAC considers living well

From staff reports

How can we live better, and dwell more thoroughly in our homes? Two Northern Michigan interior designers explore that question on Jan. 18 at 1 pm at the Glen Arbor Arts Center, as part of the GAAC's INteriors exhibition. The free event is facilitated by gallery manager Sarah Bearup-Neal, who will interview Gretchen Knoblock, design director of the Traverse City firm New Leaf Interiors, and Karen Van Nort, a local home stager and designer.

FOLDED LEAF

continues from page 1

ing Heights or Calvin and Hobbes. You can flip through a magazine, discover new artists, or sit in the Snuggery and stare at the fireplace. It's a space to exist without having to explain yourself.

This is the kind of freedom that can only be found in a special place, a third space, if you will.

Growing up in Leelanau County, I felt a void in community. I didn't really know that any space to fill that gap existed in the world. But I knew I needed something else, a place to be myself without the midwestern guilt that had been repeatedly placed on my young shoulders. I also knew that I wasn't alone in that feeling. Without realizing it, this became my mission in life.

Over my 34 years, I've attempted to build that space around me as a journalist, massage therapist, firefighter, Paramedic, and just about every job in between. Nothing ever felt quite right. The closest I came was working as a Paramedic. Although I wasn't providing a physical space to feel loved, I tried to be that space to every patient I interacted with. It wasn't until that career came to a screeching and painful halt that I knew something had to shift. I had to stop trying to find that space in a job. I had to create it for myself.

The space I needed when I was a kid came into existence in a whirlwind of happenstance. Whether it was fate, God, or the Universe weaving all the pieces together, The Folded Leaf materialized in my hometown through sheer dedication to the mission I had committed to. What I didn't expect in all of this was that, although my name is listed as the Owner, the space's ownership would belong to the community.

There have been many tears shed, celebrations held, and dreams shared in that 1,100-square-foot space since April 26, 2025. To have it ripped away is a pain I hadn't realized existed. While the future of TFL's location in Traverse City is being secured and will be revealed very soon, there is one thing I know to be true. The spirit and necessity of The Folded Leaf in Leelanau County will not die. It will live on as we grow in community and love. I have realized that it's not the four walls that make a community; it's the energy, grace, joy, peace, and the realization that, together, we are each other's third space.

As plans develop and dream spaces shift, it is my solemn oath to continue to support you all as you have supported me. It is clear that what The Folded Leaf represents is exactly what the heart of Leelanau was looking for: a vibrant and diverse community space that is welcoming to all. My dedication to building that space remains true, and we will actualize it as we come together to operate with a community mindset, bringing love, acceptance, and life literacy to Northern Michigan.

Whatever the future holds, it is bright. The mystical and fantastical power of a bookshop can be found every time you open a story. Breathe it in and believe that a better world is possible. Trust in the story and know that our ending is a happy one because we have come together and created a community that cares in a way none of us knew was possible.

The Folded Leaf is yours, my dear community. Wherever it goes, so do you.

Support community journalism, local storytelling and in-depth investigative reporting about topics that matter to Leelanau and the Sleeping Bear Dunes
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— Gretchen Knoblock, New Leaf Interiors

"We would not have known about the (Bicentennial Barn on M-22) if it wasn't for the article you published in August 2024. I was at The Homestead while on vacation and came across the article while waiting on a pizza. That started our interest in purchasing the property."
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UPCOMING EVENT

Duke Lott, January 17

Duke Lott, host of "The Duke Lott Show," is a Certified Crisis Prevention Instructor, Motivational Speaker and Diversity Lifestyle Coach based in Michigan. He is also the author of *London Visits London*, a Children's Literature book, *Never What We Wanna Say: Poetry, Essays and Stories* and *100 Lessons For A Successful Interracial Relationship*. His most recent novel, *The Boardman Watches*, follows Nathaniel Williams, whose life changes when a mysterious family pocket watch begins to tick, bending reality and opening portals through time and taking place in Suttons Bay, Traverse City and our own VI Grille,. Duke will visit Bay Books for a special book signing as part of his Michigan tour! We're so excited to have him visit. Please join us January 17 from 1-3 pm.

Open Monday-Friday, 10 am-6 pm. Saturday, 10-5, Sunday, 12-5

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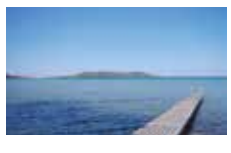

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