Glen Arbor Sun

Here to Enlighten You

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Leelanau's beloved T. Rex migrates to Traverse City

By Ross Boissoneau
Sun contributor

Gilbert is on the move. But don't worry—the massive tyrannosaurus rex is not terrorizing the neighborhood or lumbering through the woods in search of his next meal. Instead, he is being taken apart and transported from his setting on M-72 east of Empire to his new home on Cass Road in Traverse City in front of the upcoming TentCraft headquarters.

The brainchild of metalworker and artist Curtis Warnes and brought to life, or at least creation, by sculptor Enoch Flaugher, Gilbert will soon grace the front entrance at what will be the new location of TentCraft.

"It's quite an endeavor, both to build and take apart. It's going smoothly," says Warnes.

TentCraft owner Matt Bulloch, who purchased the T. Rex, says the dinosaur will fit right in with his company's ethos. TentCraft's values are right there on its website: "We are rooted in humility, hard work, fun, and a little weirdness." In that respect, having a life-size T. Rex welcome both employees and visitors makes perfect sense.

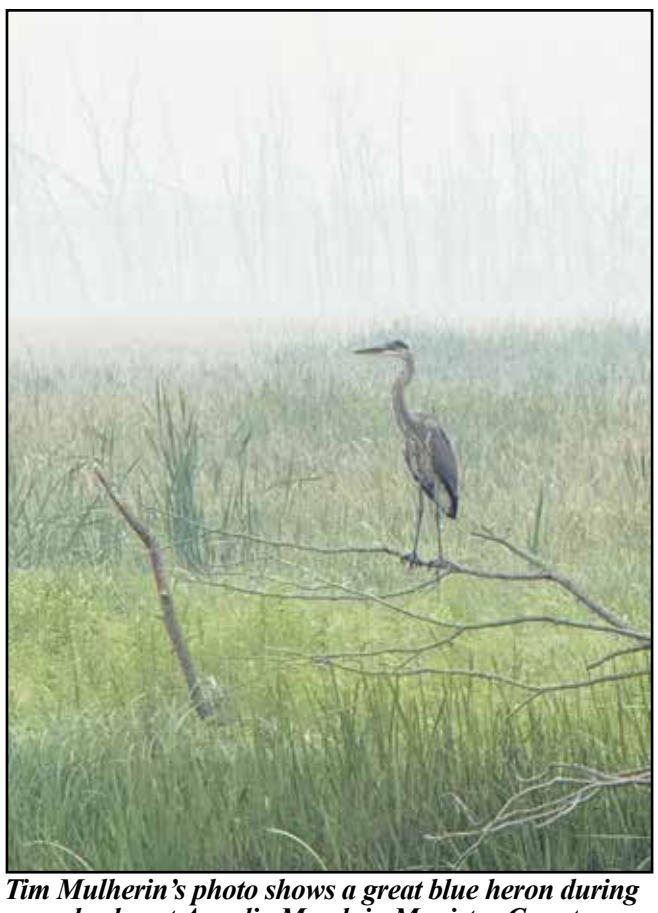
Gilbert, named for Warnes's father, grandfather and great-grandfather, has stood sentinel along M-72 since 2023. When Warnes decided to close his business and sell the property, he had a dilemma: What to do with the big T. Rex? He posted a "For Sale" sign

See **T. REX** *on page 10*

TentCraft owner Matt Bulloch's sons strike a pose with the T. Rex before it leaves its previous home along M-72 near Empire.

Smoke Signals

Summer wildfires hurt Michigan tourism as political leaders resorted to border accusations, but stay silent on climate change



Tim Mulherin's photo shows a great blue heron during a smoky day at Arcadia Marsh in Manistee County.

By Jacob Wheeler
Sun editor

The numbers tell a clear story.

Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore attracted its lowest number of visitors for the month of July since 2010—the year before the Good Morning America TV show crowned our National Park as the "most beautiful place in America" and putting it squarely on the tourism map.

Typically the most popular month of the summer, July 2026 saw 382,396 visitors—the first time in 16 years that visitation numbers dipped below 400,000.

High gas prices caused by Trump's bungling war in Iran didn't appear to be what kept tourists away. That's because Sleeping Bear posted its second-best August in history, with 454,366 people visiting the Dune Climb, Empire Bluff, Pyramid Point and other destinations within the National Lakeshore. Only during the COVID summer of 2020 did more guests visit Sleeping Bear in August.

September was also a healthy month for Sleeping Bear visitors, as 169,777 tourists arrived, making it the busiest since 2023 and the fourth busiest September in the Park's history.

The culprit in July was undoubtedly the smoke from massive wildfires in Canada and northern Minnesota, which blanketed our region for nearly a week and subjected Michigan to the worst air quality in decades. Our air quality index was among the worst in the world during the third week in July.

Tourists stayed inside their hotels and rental homes; some left the region early; some didn't travel here at all. Fewer visitors meant depressed profits for businesses in the gateway communities surrounding the National Lakeshore. At Grocers Daughter Chocolate in Empire, orders were down 26 percent, and revenues were down 18 percent between July 15-20.

The wildfire smoke also had a significant, albeit temporary, impact on visitors and sales at River Club Glen Arbor as guests stayed inside during that week. The smoke affected the venue's outdoor entertainment schedule, as artists canceled performances. Crowds returned once the smoke cleared.

Businesses throughout northwest-lower Michigan rely on tourism to drive their economy. Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, its pristine beaches and awe-inspiring views of Lake Michigan, is a catalyst for that sector. A National Park Service Visitor Spending Effects report estimated that approximately 1.7 million guests who visited the Lakeshore in 2024 spent nearly $220 million in gateway communities. Their tourism generated more than 2,100 local jobs and spurred $272 million in economic output.

By contrast, the July 2026 wildfires caused more than $6.7 billion in direct economic damages across the state of Michigan, according to an analysis by

See **SMOKE** *on page 11*

Re-threading a community narrative through neighbor conversations

From staff reports

With a divisive national election just weeks away, the group of Leelanau County neighbors behind *Community Conversations: Exploring What Matters to our Neighbors* believes in the power of storytelling to unite us.

You may have seen photography portraits and stories that highlight everyday northern Michiganders on display at libraries and locations around Leelanau County and the Grand Traverse Region.

We featured the PerSisters project in our Labor Day edition of the *Sun*. In the runup to election day, Nov. 3, we'll highlight the 10 Leelanau County residents who are among the 17 neighbors profiled in this project by Leelanau Indivisible. Visit our website, GlenArbor.com, as we unveil these stories through the month of October.

"People love stories. Humans are biologically wired for stories because narratives are how our brains make sense of the world. Every day, stories are how we share our lives, make complex ideas easier, connect with others, and remind ourselves we are not alone," write the PerSisters.

"Yet, currently in our country, our stories and beliefs about one another often separate rather than unite us. In *Community Conversations*, we found that people are tired of the vitriol and divisive rhetoric. We heard stories of different experiences, yet often of shared values."

See **CONVERSATIONS** *on page 9*

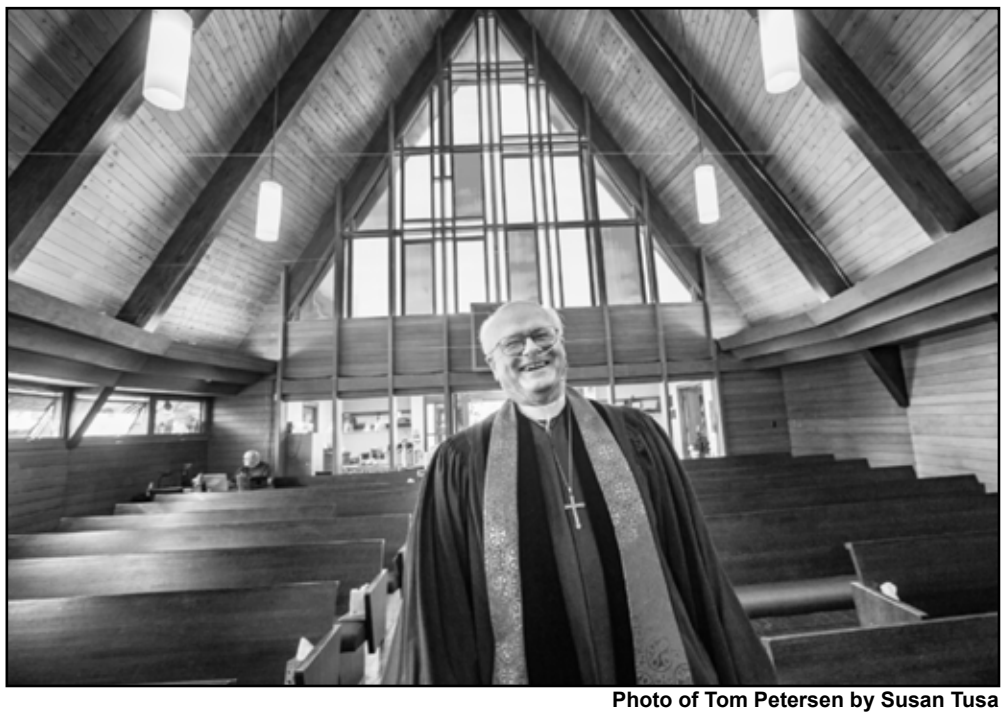


Photo of Tom Petersen by Susan Tusa

The ink on this newsprint was forged in the fight against lies and authoritarianism.

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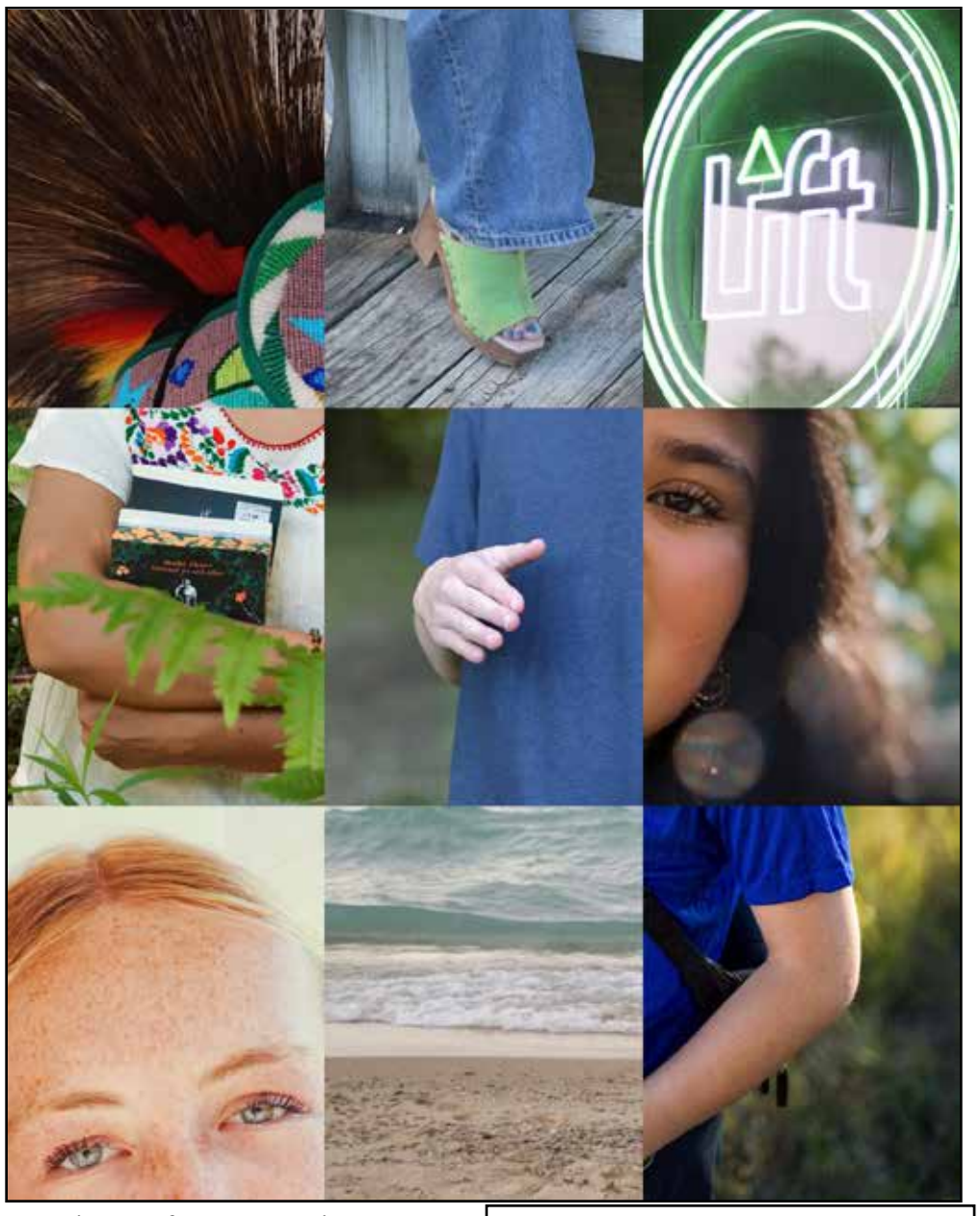
Growing Up Leelanau: LIFT features narrative portrait exhibit of Leelanau County teens

From staff reports



LIFT Teen Center (LIFT) is excited to announce an upcoming, one-night-only narrative portrait exhibit of local teens, titled "Growing up Leelanau."

Through nine life-size portraits and first-person narratives, local teens will share the people, places, and experiences that have shaped who they are and what it means to grow up here. On Thursday, Oct. 8, community members are invited to the Old Art Building in Leland for a fundraiser and an elevated art-show experience featuring the portraits and stories, along with drinks, appetizers, and an opportunity to connect with their community from 6-8 pm.

Visit the online version of this story at GlenArbor.com for tickets, which are still available as of press time.

"LIFT has always served as a bridge between generations, creating opportunities for young people to connect with and learn from the community around them," said LIFT founder and executive director Rebekah TenBrink. "'Growing Up Leelanau' is an exciting opportunity to take that a step further by amplifying the voices and experiences of the teenagers who are growing up here. We're excited to invite our community to see Leelanau County through their eyes and to create space for meaningful conversations across generations. I think this exhibit will be both eye-opening and inspiring for people throughout our community.

"It is an idea I had when thinking about all the amazing teens we have here in Leelanau County. We live in a beautiful place, but we also know that growing up in today's society can be challenging. How do you reconcile both realities for a teenager? I wanted to find a way to give our teens a voice so they can share, from their own perspective, what that experience is like. The results have been funny, heartwarming, and enlightening, and we're excited to share them with the community."

The nine students are all high schoolers and represent nearly every town and community in Leelanau County. They are diverse in culture, gender, home life, interests and hobbies. Both their portraits and narratives reflect those unique experiences.

Tickets are $50 per person and include drinks, appetizers, and a commemorative booklet featuring the portraits and narratives from the exhibit to take home. However, any Leelanau County student is welcome to attend the event at no cost.

"Growing Up Leelanau" is a project of LIFT Teen Center, Leelanau County's only free out-of-school-time program for 6th–12th graders. Ticket proceeds support LIFT's work creating safe, supportive spaces where local teens can build confidence, discover their strengths, and grow into kind leaders.

LIFT also wants to thank their partners who made the project possible: the Old Art Building, National Writers Series of Traverse City, HP Foundation, and Friends of Fine Arts at Suttons Bay Schools.

Click here for more information and to purchase tickets, or call 231-866-1355. To learn more about the LIFT program, visit LiftTeenCenter.com.

Trick or Treat in Glen Arbor, Sunday, Oct. 25

The Sunday before Halloween, come out and enjoy family-friendly, daytime trick-or-treating in Glen Arbor on Sunday, Oct. 25, from 12–3 PM (or until the treats run out).

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Longtime Glen Arbor gallery owner Ruth Conklin retires

By Ross Boissoneau
Sun contributor

When Ruth Conklin first opened her gallery in 1980, she featured her own artwork and that of a couple artist friends. When she closes the gallery for good this year, she will have represented hundreds, if not thousands of artists.

"It's grown as the business went on. It was just my two or three friends originally," she says from the gallery in Glen Arbor.

"The number right now—probably 120. There are so many (artists) with little pieces," she says, gesturing past the small items directly in front of her toward the jewelry and display case.

Conklin's gallery debuted in 1980 in the old soda shop, before moving to the front porch of what is now the Totem Shop. In 1991, she built the gallery at its current site at 6632 W. Western Avenue.

While the gallery may have a humble beginning, over its nearly half a century it grew rapidly. With homes in both Michigan and Florida and a steady stream of appearances at art fairs in both states and beyond, Conlkin became well acquainted with numerous artists and with the art world.

Today, her gallery reflects her many friends and acquaintances and their work: a stunning variety of paintings, sculptures, jewelry, furnishings and décor, all tastefully displayed in the surprisingly expansive gallery. Conklin says all the art is by American artists, and estimates about a third are from Michigan.

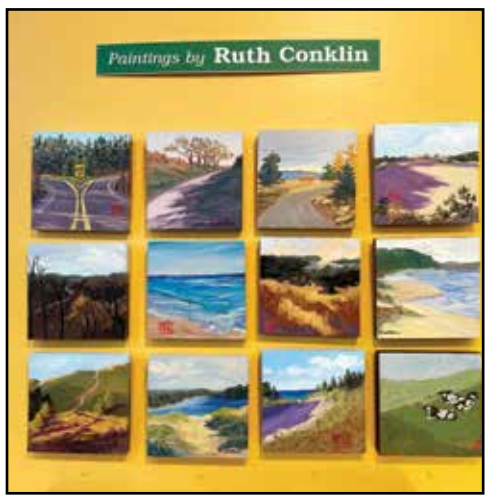
The 88-year-old hasn't lost any of her enthusiasm for art. Walk with her around the gallery and she'll regale with stories about the pieces and the artists who created them. "This is Sticks," she says, pointing to a selection of colorful furnishings and décor. "They're from Des Moines."

She moves on to a series of etched metal landscapes by Scott and Victoria LaCosse. "LaCosse Studio do contemporary work on metal," Conklin says. Then it's on to Meg Staley of Leelanau County and her soft goods, Elizabeth Paxson's vibrant colors, Shelly Drews's laughing wooden fish, even Conklin's own painting and woodblocks.

And that's just the tip of the iceberg. There's Suttons Bay driftwood artist Rick Reyhl, Michelle Aucello's work—"She's an incredible photographer," Conklin says—and the list goes on and on.

Conklin says the decision to close her business came down to her age. As she uses a cane, she says she can no longer work by herself because she can't get up on a ladder. But Ruth Conklin Gallery will continue for the next year at least. She has leased the building to Katie Brandt, co-owner of Synchronicity Gallery across the street. The name will remain the same at least through 2027.

She's pleased it will remain a gallery, and is happy to have Brandt put her own spin on it. That's in keeping with the nature of the gallery, where pieces are purchased on a daily basis and others come in to take their place. "It's always changing," Conklin says.



But she admits that handing off the gallery will be bittersweet, and the feelings can be overwhelming. "When Wildflowers closed, I felt that way," she says of the longtime Glen Arbor shop which sold antiques, flowers, home décor and more.

"I'll miss my friends," she says. When asked to clarify whether she means people who come to the gallery or the thousands of works which dot the walls and cases, she immediately says the people. But as her eyes roam the store, it's clear she treasures the artworks as well.

After all, they've greeted her every day as she enters the gallery. From twisted wood and stone-framed mirrors to brightly colored grinning fish, exquisite jewelry to etched metal, benches, watercolors, mirrors framed with driftwood and so much more, the art speaks to her and to her customers.

"The most gratifying thing? Coming in every day and greeting customers."

With a heritage of 46 years in business, she has seen customers come and go, then return with a new generation of art enthusiasts. "Now I'm meeting their grandkids," Conklin says with a laugh.

And while she will be done with her art gallery, she's definitely not done with art or with visiting with her artist pals. "I'll have lunch with my friends, go to other galleries," she says.

She doesn't have a firm closing date, saying it depends on when her stock of paintings, jewelry, blocks, wildlife carvings, glassware, clothing and all the rest is depleted. The gallery is open Tuesday through Saturday, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Empire Museum celebrates Heritage Day, October 10

From staff reports

The Empire Area Museum celebrates Heritage Day this year on Saturday, Oct. 10 from 1-4 pm with old-time music, old-fashioned arts, crafts and treats. Treats include Moomers ice cream, free popcorn and samples of homemade maple sugar candy, sauerkraut cake, apple cider and butter made on site. Exhibits include demonstrations of barn quilting, rug hooking, tatting, knitting, fiber arts, corn shelling, washboard laundering, sauerkraut making, log cutting and Antiques bicycles

The entire Empire Area Museum complex will be open, including the main museum and store, the one-room schoolhouse, the fire-hose house, and the Billy Beeman Barn. Must-see exhibits include the turn-of-the-century Empire saloon and kitchen, the blacksmith and woodworking shops, the railroad and lumbering exhibits, and several old-time vehicles, including horse-drawn wagons and sleighs, early motor cars, and an authentic 1956 Sleeping Bear Dunesmobile. The museum's newest acquisition, the original scale from Salisbury Hardware—formally home to the Empire Lumber Company Store—is on display in the lower level of main museum building.

During your visit to the museum take advantage of a complimentary tour of the beautiful quaint village led by a docent. Tours begin at 1 and 2:30 pm.

Admission to the Empire Area Museum Heritage Day celebration is free. Local history books, children's stories and other merchandise may be purchased to help support the museum, and donations are appreciated. Note that the Fire Department next door will also be open for tours.

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Imagining the unimaginable: Could tourism someday go bust in northern Michigan?

By Tim Mulherin
Sun op-ed contributor

In the Aug. 20 edition of the *Traverse Ticker*, the Traverse City manager, Benjamin Marentette, was interviewed about his concept of a passthrough lodging tax. The levy would be paid directly by visitors staying at hotels and short-term rentals. This new stream of tourist revenue would help fund public safety and infrastructure projects.

But it leads me to wonder: could the cost of visiting the Grand Traverse region someday become prohibitive for a significant number of visitors?

Although it may seem inconceivable, given the ever-climbing tourist count – Marentette says that Traverse City alone receives an astonishing "6 million visitors a year" – that time may be rapidly approaching.

My daughter, an Indianapolis attorney whose family loves vacationing Up North, recently told me about several of her Indy-area friends who decided to do some comparison-shopping last spring while planning their upcoming summer vacations. As usual, northern Michigan was their preferred destination. That is, until they made a remarkable discovery.

Their families could vacation at *international* locations – the French Mediterranean and Ireland, to name a few – for far less money, including airfare, than they would spend driving to and staying in Leelanau County this summer season. So, across the pond they went.

As we entertain the unimaginable death of tourism here, let's not forget to factor in the rising cost of living that's profoundly affecting the Everyman and -woman living in the region as part of the picture.

The mounting economic pressures on the working class in coastal Michigan communities have become as undeniably clear as Lake Michigan's invasive mussel-enhanced translucence. The multifaceted affordability crisis – most demonstrably involving food, housing, transportation, and healthcare – is crippling many families. This untenable situation feeds the bitterness expressed by a growing number of vocal locals whenever the subject of tourism comes up. Struggling mightily day in and day out opens the door for misplaced resentment.

To be sure, it's not the tourists' fault for showing up, however the economy is behaving. Rather, it's the lack of a bold, cohesive vision for what sustainable tourism could be here and how it can enhance and not trouble the way of life of the host communities.

This calls to mind Michigan's boom-and-bust cycles that started in the 1800s. First came the copper mining run, later followed by the ravenous clear-cutting of the lumber industry. Both turned out to be environmental catastrophes resulting from a reckless extraction mindset. Decades later, Yoopers are still contending with legacy pollution from copper mining.

And now there's the wildfire smoke.

Pure Michigan and Traverse City Tourism (TCT) have always promoted that great outdoors experience, a northern Michigan hallmark. Yet this summer's Canadian wildfire season was a dramatic eye-opener (and eye-irritator). The sky-dimming, daytime headlight-activating wildfire smoke that inundated the Upper Peninsula and northern Michigan last July was a major vacation buzzkill. Sadly, the smoky track record of the past four years portends enduring summertime wildfire smoke drifting into Michigan airspace for years to come. That alone could be a game changer for tourism.

TCT's most recent economic impact report on tourism in Grand Traverse, Benzie, and Leelanau counties states that in 2022, the three-county area benefited from "$1.4 billion in total business sales" generated by visitors. That year, 7.3 million visitors traveled to the greater Grand Traverse region. (Consider this: Michigan's population is just over 10 million per the U.S Census Bureau's 2025 estimate.) Here's another positive result of the annual influx of visitors: $134 million in tourism-related state and local taxes were collected in 2022 alone.

Metaphorically speaking, tourism is a gold rush. Many businesses benefit both directly and indirectly from serving visitors. Yet the affordability crisis, aggravated by high prices that are especially endemic to tourist destinations, is hollowing out the region's communities.

Granted, good help has often been hard to find. Now, help for so many service industries and in the construction trades and agricultural sector has reached a crisis-level shortage when it comes to staffing. The fact is, many people filling these jobs can no longer afford to live in the areas where they work. Consequently, this negatively affects the tourist experience.

The long-standing and long-identified need for non-tourist-focused industry diversification in the region has become an urgency in strategizing for the future. Thankfully, there is some welcome traction in bringing high-tech and renewable-energy enterprises, for example, to northern Michigan. But is the vision grand enough, and does the overarching will exist to overcome the complex problem of an overreliance on tourism that's been building here for years?

Traverse City Tourism's 2026 Community Report states that the region is "A Place for Everyone." In this case, "everyone" exclusively pertains to visitors. Which suggests some hard questions:

• How much tourism is too much tourism?

• Conversely, what is the price point, in aggregate, of short-term rentals, restaurant-served meals and adult beverages, commercial flights, and tourist-related entertainment expenses (boat rentals, charter fishing, concerts, etc.) that could eventually cause many potentially new and repeat visitors to vacation elsewhere?

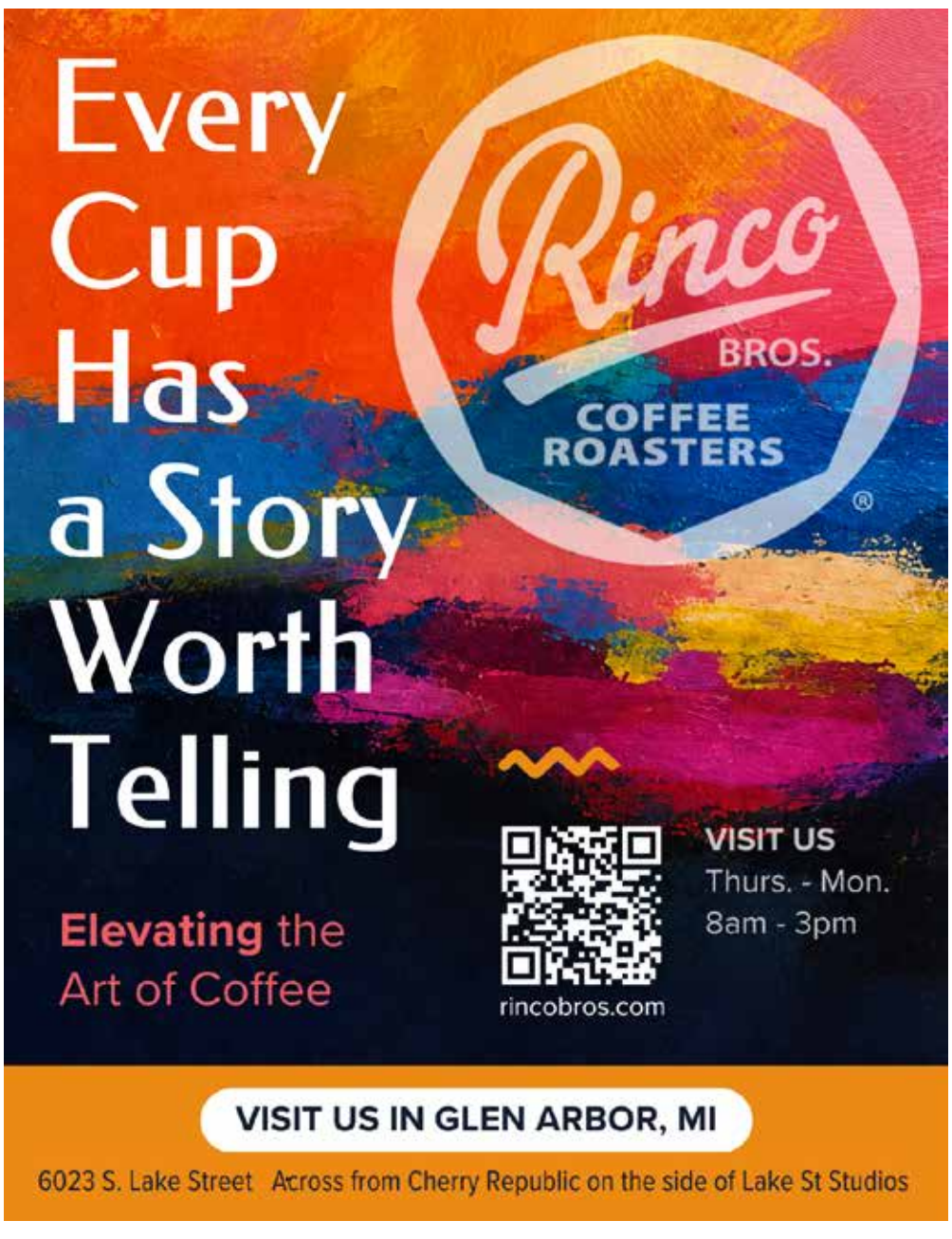
• What effect will the new reality of summer wildfires have on tourism next year and in years to come? (Regardless of what one believes, human-driven climate change, at least for the foreseeable future, is here to stay.)

• What is the human carrying capacity of the environment regarding adverse impacts on ecosystems in the Grand Traverse region?

• Is there a will to reimagine tourism as being inseparable from the best interests of the hosting communities in the most responsible, respectful way possible? (Google "Beaver Island's Good Guest Guide" as a worthy model to customize and expand upon.) Furthermore, could an increased emphasis on ecotourism, agritourism, and voluntourism prove to be attractive to tourists while improving the experience of the host communities?

Obviously, tourism matters greatly here. It's a supercharged economic engine. It's responsible for at least a quarter of the region's economy and employs

See **TOURISM** *on page 5*



TOURISM

continues from page 4

thousands of people. But how it's shaped and developed is key. The last thing anyone should want is a poorly conceived future that places a greater value on promoting a community-rending revenue stream over northern Michiganders' collective well-being. Right?

Pricing tourists out of the market while hitting the pocketbooks of the people who call the region home is not the best way forward. It's a recipe for a boom-to-bust disaster.

Fudge is fun. Foodie culture is cool. The National Cherry Festival is epic. Yet now is the time to envision a coherent environmentally and economically sound approach to tourism. One that really gives tourists something to talk about: an innovative, educational, nature-appreciating, community-respecting, low-impact, us *and* them experience that can become a nationwide model for sustainable tourism. Which gives visitors an even better reason to return. And for many of us thinking otherwise, to stay.

Photo by Christopher O'Non / *White Pine Press*

U.S. Senate candidate, Democrat Abdul El-Sayed spoke at a debate held by the Northern Michigan Chamber Alliance at the Traverse City Opera House on Sept. 21. His Republican opponent Mike Rogers did not attend. El-Sayed, a progressive populist, is the former health director for Wayne County (Detroit). He advocates for a single-payer, Medicare for All healthcare system and wants to get corporate money out of politics. His candidacy is seen as a bellwether for the progressive left. The U.S. Senate race between El-Sayed and Rogers is expected to be close.

Little Traverse Lake residents battle beavers and National Park over floods

By Justin A. Hinkley
Bridge Michigan

This story was originally published by Bridge Michigan, a nonprofit and nonpartisan news organization. Visit Bridge online at BridgeMI.com.

Residents around Leelanau County's Little Traverse Lake know who to blame for the frequent flooding on their properties: beavers.

The flat-tailed rodents dam a creek that drains their lake through Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore into Lake Michigan, causing water to back up in the little lake during major rains and into their yards and crawlspaces. About 20 of 174 properties on the lake regularly flood, said Jeff Shutz, vice president of the Little Traverse Lake Association. In April, he had 5 inches of water in his crawlspace.

About three dams on the creek below Little Traverse Lake cause the problems, and residents say a solution worked for years—removing dams as soon as they pop up, so beavers build them elsewhere.

But for the last decade or so, the National Park Service has not allowed proactive removal and has instead only allowed residents to remove dams when water peaks.

"By then, it's too late, after people have property damage," said lakeside resident Doug Verellen, who has gathered dozens of property owners' signatures on a petition encouraging the Park Service to again allow proactive dam removal.

Photo of Little Traverse Lake by David Skjaerlund

Officials from the Park Service and Sleeping Bear Dunes did not return messages seeking comment for this story.

However, Sleeping Bear Dunes Superintendent Scott Tucker told the Little Traverse Lake Association, in a statement posted to the lake association's website in May, that the Park Service recognizes that "specific and limited circumstances" exist when beaver dams cause flooding and that a Park Service hydrologist is "developing clear, objective trigger points that identify when targeted intervention with beaver dams may be necessary.

"It is important to emphasize that the (Park Service) has not issued—and will not issue—blanket approval for beaver dam manipulation," the May statement read. "Any intervention must be supported by data and justified by the specific circumstances at hand."

Beavers build dams to protect themselves from predators, living in shallow lodges accessible by tunnels. Turning creeks and rivers into slow-moving ponds is a boon to the environment, as well, supporting fish and wildlife. One study claimed that dammed ponds can create 80% more species than undammed ones.

See* BEAVERS *on page 7

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Renaissance Woman: Emily Nash Smith

By Rebecca G Carlson
Sun contributor

How many Leelanau County artists can claim the honor of being invited to their own Parisian Art Exhibit? Renaissance woman Emily Nash Smith can.

Preparing for my interview with Emily's grandson Tom Van Pelt of Overlook Farms, the more I pursued various research paths on Emily Nash Smith, the more amazed I became of this one woman. And full disclosure, prior to this preliminary research and the family interview, I knew zip.

It became exhausting thinking about all the work she did in one day from teaching school in a one-room schoolhouse at Bass Lake, raising her daughter, working the 160-acre farm alongside her husband Thearl, baking treats for the summertime visitors on Northport Pointe to make some extra monies, tending her gardens, running her antiques business, and eventually honing her artistic skills. I won't even pretend to be objective in this article. The admiration will ooze from these pages.

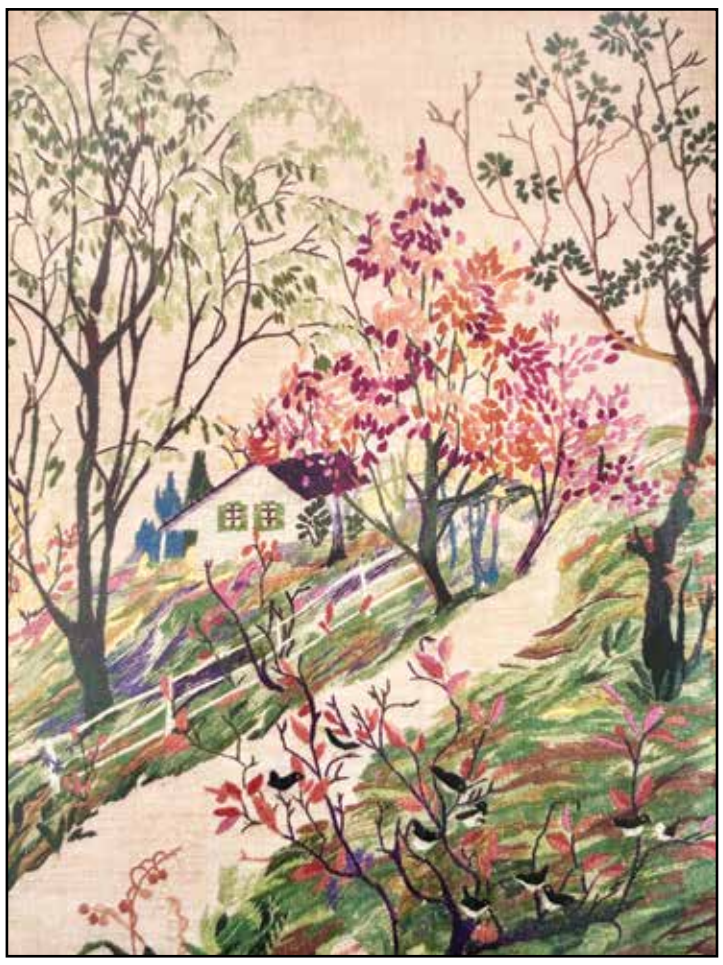
Emily Nash and her future husband, Thearl Smith, were born and raised in Tipton, Indiana. Emily was training to be a teacher when she met Thearl. They married and moved from Indiana to Overlook Farms in Leelanau Township in 1922 and began an incredibly fruitful (pun intended) life in Leelanau County. They had one daughter named Joan Frances Smith who becomes a glassworks artist with Emily's encouragement. While Thearl focused on cultivating the cherry farm into a successful business enterprise, Emily carefully tended to her own skills as a mother, educator, business woman, baker, as well as forging her early artistic talents in hand hooked rugs and other textiles.

While delivering her baked goodies to the summer visitors at Northport Pointe, a few happy patrons requested that Emily cater a dinner at Overlook Farms for about 20 Northport Pointe guests. Another guest requested special flower decorations for the tables. Emily's artistic nature blossomed as she went to the local pond, harvested water lilies, and decorated the tables on the veranda of the farmhouse for the dinner guests.

This was the inaugural farmhouse dinner that created her special events summer chicken dinners that carried on for several years. Keep in mind, this is not 2026, with 24 hours of HGTV to supply ideas, but the late 1920s and '30s. Emily was a visionary ahead of her time.

When it was possible, Emily, Thearl, and Joan would spend winter vacations on Long Boat Key, Florida. It is here that Emily developed her master talent of painting in her 50s. She enrolled at a college in Sarasota, studying painting under such artists as: Syd Solomon, Philip Guston, and Larry Rivers. In addition, Emily also studied under Emile Gruppe, Robert McFarland, Marilyn Bendell, Hilton Leach, and Eldon Rowland.

It is Marilyn Bendell who painted one of the most stunning portraits of Emily, whom she credits with her growing skills as a painter. "It's all a question of light and shadow and halftone" according to Emily. Furthermore, it is "a question of interpreting light and shadow. I owe that to Marilyn Bendell, a teacher with whom I studied for about five years" (*Traverse City Record-Eagle* Bill McCulloch 1978 retirement interview).



To gaze upon the few of Emily's works I saw is a privilege and creates an appreciation for her use of color. As I sat at the kitchen table with Tom and his wife Deb, they shared a treasure trove of exhibit brochures, family pictures, some notecards that Emily painted, as well as two paintings that hang in the home.

There was a beach scene painting over the fireplace that changed with the light of the room depending on where you stood. As Tom turned his phone flash light on, the beach sands turned gold and glowed. I couldn't stop staring. As he moved his phone light over different parts of the painting, the colors kept changing. Emily did not shy away from experimenting with different types of metals and mediums in her paintings.

She painted using all forms of mediums: watercolors, oils, acrylics, and later mixed media and textiles incorporated into some of her works.

Another work that caught my eye in a Northport Arts History Brochure was the "Garden Road," which wasn't even a painting but an exceptional needlework piece. The family would love to know who bought it. Most pieces that were sold are traceable, yet this piece has been lost. Emily only completed a few pieces of the needlework, increasing its value to the Van Pelt Family.

The mysteries continue as there are two more of Emily's works missing in action, and the family would love to be able to locate them. One was painted in 1958, which is about the time Emily's skills were flourishing. The title of the work is "Omena," and she painted it for her daughter Joan. The piece was removed from Joan and Bud VanPelt's home while they were away and is believed to have been sold to a Ford Motor Executive in 1960. There was a follow up "Omena II," similar to the first one, but it is also lost and untraceable.

The Van Pelt Family would appreciate any information on these missing works.

The zenith of Emily's artistic career was the invitation to exhibit her work in Paris, France in 1975.

See **EMILY NASH** *on page 7*

EMILY NASH

continues from page 6

As her beloved husband Thearl had passed at this point, Emily embarked on a solitary trip by ship over to France with her paintings and other artworks. The exhibit was successful and Emily sold many paintings to a European clientele, expanding her artist talents and reach. Emily was also pleased in that she wore a patchwork skirt she designed and made herself to the exhibition. This caught the attention of the women attending the art exhibit. According to fellow Traverse City artist Pat Ford, "It was a beautiful skirt [and] ladies at the opening…asked Emily for the name of her couturier…" (*Record-Eagle* McCulloch interview 1978).

In doing a quick Google search on Emily Nash Smith, almost zero results returned. According to the Google search, and let's be honest, it was most likely an AI response, "There is no record of an artist named Emily Nash Smith." Instead, it wanted to wax poetically on Emily Mae Smith. Who?

Leelanau County's Emily Nash Smith died at age 86 in 1983, 43 years ago. It would be criminal for any of us to forget this amazing woman of education, art, proud homemaker, culinarian, special events hostess, business woman, mentor and motivator to many. Her works are still exhibited 40+ years after her death at the Spanish Embassy in D.C., the Ford Motor Company headquarters, as well as in many personal art collections throughout the U.S. and Europe.

Benzie Art Teacher Dave Rosendale stated, "Her creativity…has exerted this kind of force all her life." Bill McCulloch added as well as "through the lives of hundreds of her students." Emily didn't selfishly guard all her talents and wisdom, she shared it with everyone. She should be recognized as a cherished member of the artistic tapestry that is Leelanau County!

All the pictures are mine of the Van Pelt Family collection except for the black and white "Omena"

BEAVERS

continues from page 5

Dams can create tensions with homeowners, though, and beavers are not protected animals. Michigan allows seasonal trapping and if they're a nuisance to property.

Verellen and other lakeside residents said dam removal was routine—and park rangers even helped—until about 2012, when the Park Service suddenly and without explanation stopped allowing it.

Residents say flooding has become routine since.

"It just feels like they're reluctant to let us do this when for decades prior it wasn't an issue," Verellen said. "I don't get it."

The nearly 72,000-acre Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore has been a national park since 1970. In 2014, Congress set aside nearly 33,000 acres of the park—including areas downstream of Little Traverse Lake—as wilderness. It isn't clear if the wilderness designation has anything to do with the park's decision to stop allowing proactive beaver dam removal.

Meanwhile, Cleveland Township and the Leelanau County Road Commission have spent money engineering a new, $1.1 million culvert project near where Little Traverse Lake meets the creek to help bring down water levels, but the township board has decided it won't expend another dime until the downstream beaver problem is solved.

"Einstein's definition of stupidity is 'doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results,'" Township Supervisor Tim Stein wrote in an op-ed in the Leelanau Enterprise. "Well, I can assure you that myself and Cleveland Township are done being stupid!"

Stein declined to comment to Bridge for this story, and Road Commission officials did not return a message seeking comment.

Little Traverse Lake drains into Lake Michigan's Good Harbor Bay via a narrow waterway called Shalda Creek. The elevation between the little lake and the big lake is mostly flat, meaning it takes a long time for water to move through the watershed and out to Lake Michigan.

Beavers are damming Shalda Creek between Little Traverse Lake and Good Harbor Bay, causing water to back up in the watershed, according to the lake association.

In a 2015 study posted on the lake association's website, removing just one beaver dam caused Little Traverse Lake levels to drop more than half an inch over 12 days. Other studies have shown even starker impacts: A 2020 study found removing a dam dropped the lake 9 inches over 30 days, while the removal of two dams earlier this year dropped Shalda Creek beneath a bridge near the lake 5 inches over the course of 24 hours.

Photo of beaver dam at Shalda Creek by David Skjaerlund

When the dams aren't removed before winter, water backs up throughout the snowy season and then spring rains—like the record-breaking rains that flooded half the state in April—cause the water table and the lake levels to rise, flooding yards and homes.

That's why residents want to clear out dams now before heavy autumn rains lead into another snowy winter that backs up the watershed.

Shutz, of the lake association, said he's optimistic about the possibility of a compromise.

"I love the park," he said. "It's wonderful to have it out our back door. And I understand very well their desire to make it a wilderness area where animals have free rein. I have no animosity toward them. I hope we can work together and come up with some sort of beaver dam maintenance policy. They're good guys at the park and they listen."

New electric research boat creates a (quiet) splash in Grand Traverse Bay

By Vivian La
Interlochen Public Radio

This story is made possible through a partnership between Interlochen Public Radio and Grist, a nonprofit environmental media organization.

West Grand Traverse Bay has a new research boat—and it's all-electric.

The Freshwater Research Innovation Center in Traverse City bought the boat last month using a state grant that aims to transition the maritime industry to clean energy.

The center's purchase joins efforts around Grand Traverse Bay to expand the footprint of electric boats and chargers.

The 24-foot rigid inflatable boat, built by the company Vita Power, is docked at Discovery Pier, where it will be used by students and scientists starting next spring to collect samples, map the lakebed or do other research on the Great Lakes.

Matt McDonough, CEO of Discovery Pier, hopes the vessel can be a model for the region.

"If you're connected to a resource, even through recreation, you're going to start to care about that a little more," he said. "So if we can promote electric boating as a viable alternative to petroleum-based motors on boats, then that's a good thing."

Without a gas-powered motor, there are no exhaust fumes or chance of fuel spill into the lakes, according to McDonough. Another plus—there's almost no noise from the vessel.

"It's really cool," he said. "You're hearing the water under the hull, but you're not hearing the motor."

Electric boats also don't emit any planet-warming pollution.

Expanding access to electric boats and charging stations is part of Michigan's broader climate strategy to transition the state's maritime sector to cleaner sources of energy.

Backed by state grants, there's already charging stations around Grand Traverse Bay, including at Discovery Pier and marinas in Northport and Elk Rapids.

At the Elk Rapids Marina, where a charger has been installed since 2023, co-owner Lewis Cooper III said he's seen a few boats use the station, but as of now, most people are plugging in their electric jet skis.

"We actually see people buy the jet ski and then come over and take advantage of the supercharger, like you would a supercharger at the Meijer parking lot with your car," Cooper said.

He wants to plan open house events next year to increase awareness around electric boating, plus promote the marina's showroom that stocks some electric vessels.

Industry experts said electric boats are still a new, growing market.

Scott Canning, vice president of business development for ATV Power which developed the new research boat, said challenges remain for the industry like high costs and boaters' "range anxiety" about the availability of chargers.

But as interest and awareness grows, Canning said there's ways to bring prices down through government incentives and increasing the volume of production.

"Michigan has so many kinds of boating," he said. Michigan consistently ranks in the top five of U.S. states with the most boat registrations, mostly because of its more-than-3,000-miles of Great Lakes shoreline, plus the large number of rivers and inland lakes.

From research vessels to speedboats to jet skis, Canning said "there's an electric solution for most of those."

National Park Service proposes expansion of e-bikes

From staff reports

The National Park Service in late August announced a proposed rule to expand bicycle and e-bike access and make it easier for visitors to enjoy America's national parks. The proposal would remove unnecessary reviews and requirements for bicycle use across the National Park System, allowing NPS to manage its resources more efficiently and streamline the approval of new opportunities for visitors to use and enjoy their parks.

"America's national parks should be easy to access and enjoy," said Jessica Bowron, current acting director of the National Park Service. "This proposal would create a simpler, more consistent approach to bicycle and e-bike access across the national park system, making it easier for visitors to access the incredible landscapes, history, and recreation opportunities our parks have to offer while also allowing parks to manage their resources more efficiently."

The proposed rule will be available for a 60-day public review and comment period at Federalregister.gov to help inform the agency's consideration of the proposal. The NPS will review public comments before making any final decisions.

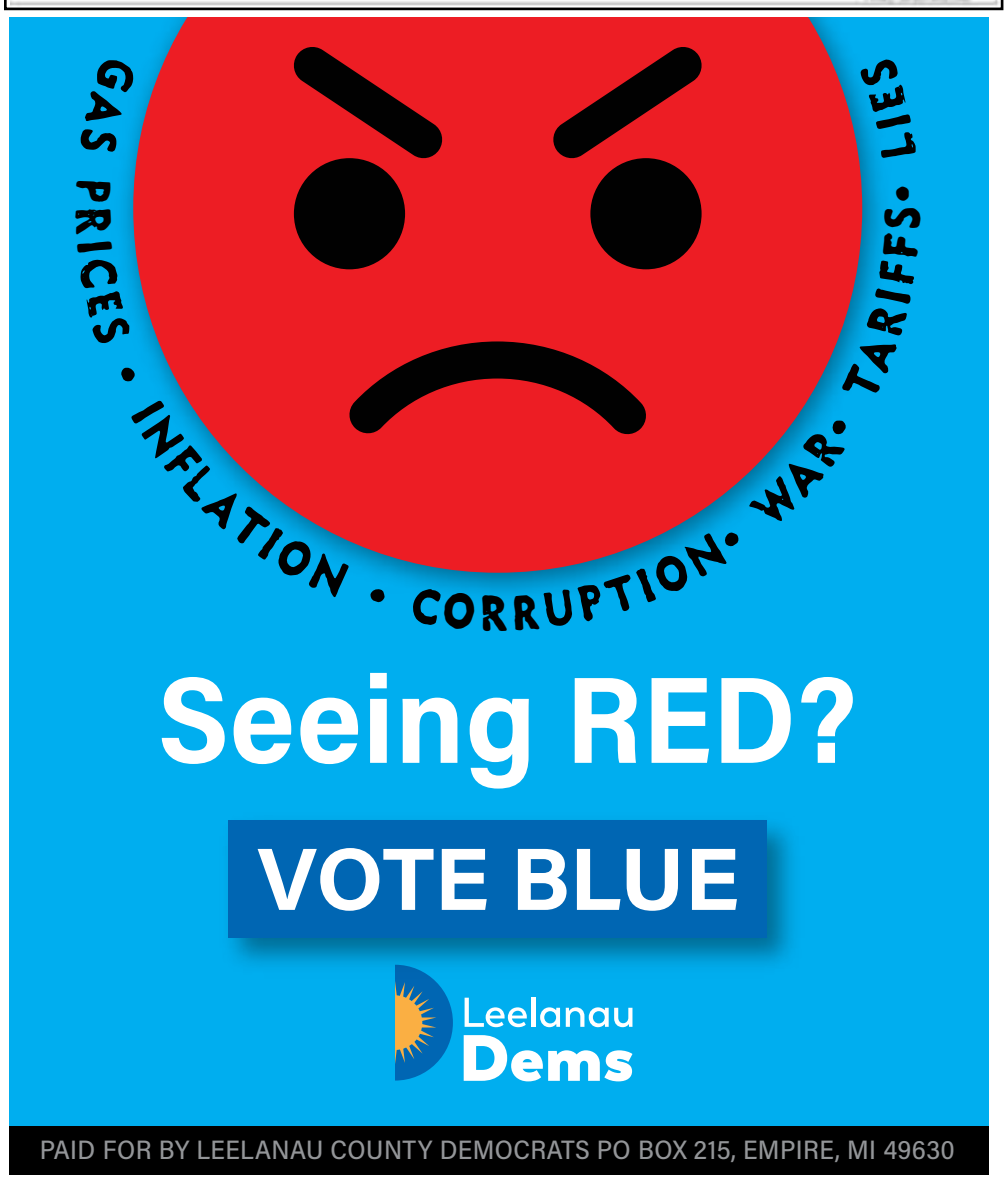
According to Merrith Baughman, director of interpretation and visitor services at Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, e-bikes are allowed in Sleeping Bear Dunes where traditional bicycles are allowed. E-bikes are prohibited where traditional bicycles are prohibited. Except where use of motor vehicles by the public is allowed, using the electric motor to move an e-bike without pedaling is prohibited.

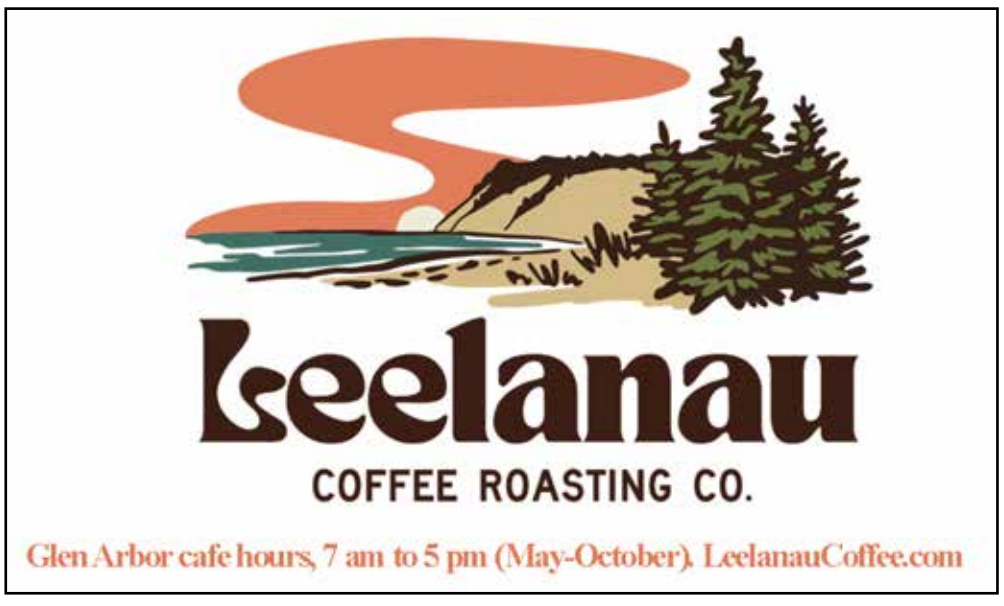
NPS regulations define e-bikes at 36 CFR 1.4 as a two- or three-wheeled cycle with fully operable pedals and an electric motor of not more than 750 watts that meets the requirements of one of the following three classes:

Class 1 electric bicycle shall mean an electric bicycle equipped with a motor that provides assistance only when the rider is pedaling, and that ceases to provide assistance when the bicycle reaches the speed of 20 miles per hour.

Class 2 electric bicycle shall mean an electric bicycle equipped with a motor that may be used exclusively to propel the bicycle, and that is not capable of providing assistance when the bicycle reaches the speed of 20 miles per hour.

Class 3 electric bicycle shall mean an electric bicycle equipped with a motor that provides assistance only when the rider is pedaling, and that ceases to provide assistance when the bicycle reaches the speed of 28 miles per hour.





CONVERSATIONS

continues from page 1

Featuring:

Tom Petersen: Navy veteran, retired pastor

Age 78, Burdickville

"Whenever I was in a dangerous situation, I could stop for a moment, shift gears, and visualize sitting on the dock at Glen Lake and things would come back into focus for me."

Tom Petersen, a disabled veteran who served 26 years in the Navy, attributes much of his resilience to the strong women in his life. His mother, who faced cancer, held a relentless focus on finding the good in difficult situations. His grandmother, a "powerhouse" who raised 22 children, shaped his moral foundation and faith. His wife, whose family home on Glen Lake became his "safe place," stayed with him through "thick and thin."

Petersen also shares a deep connection to his Oglala Sioux heritage, having spent much of his youth on a reservation in South Dakota to understand that part of his identity.

His military service was a defining era, beginning with a desire for adventure and electronics that eventually led to the stark reality of patrolling rivers in Vietnam. It was during this time that a chaplain helped him return to his faith after a traumatic experience, eventually leading Petersen to become a pastor; sometimes still a guest pastor.

Today, Petersen lives on Glen Lake, the place that served as his mental sanctuary during combat. While his immediate family is well-established, he remains concerned for his community, serving on boards like ShareCare and assisting food pantries. Petersen is grounded in the resilience he inherited from his elders and that saved him in the past, including the ability to "shift gears" and find focus in beauty. Having survived the river, he now protects the lake: Petersen envisions a world that prioritizes stewardship of the Earth as a life source, not just a resource; and a political system focused on service.

"We need to fix a political situation so that people in power realize that their job is to take care of the people. Not to get rich, not to have wars... but to take care of the people."

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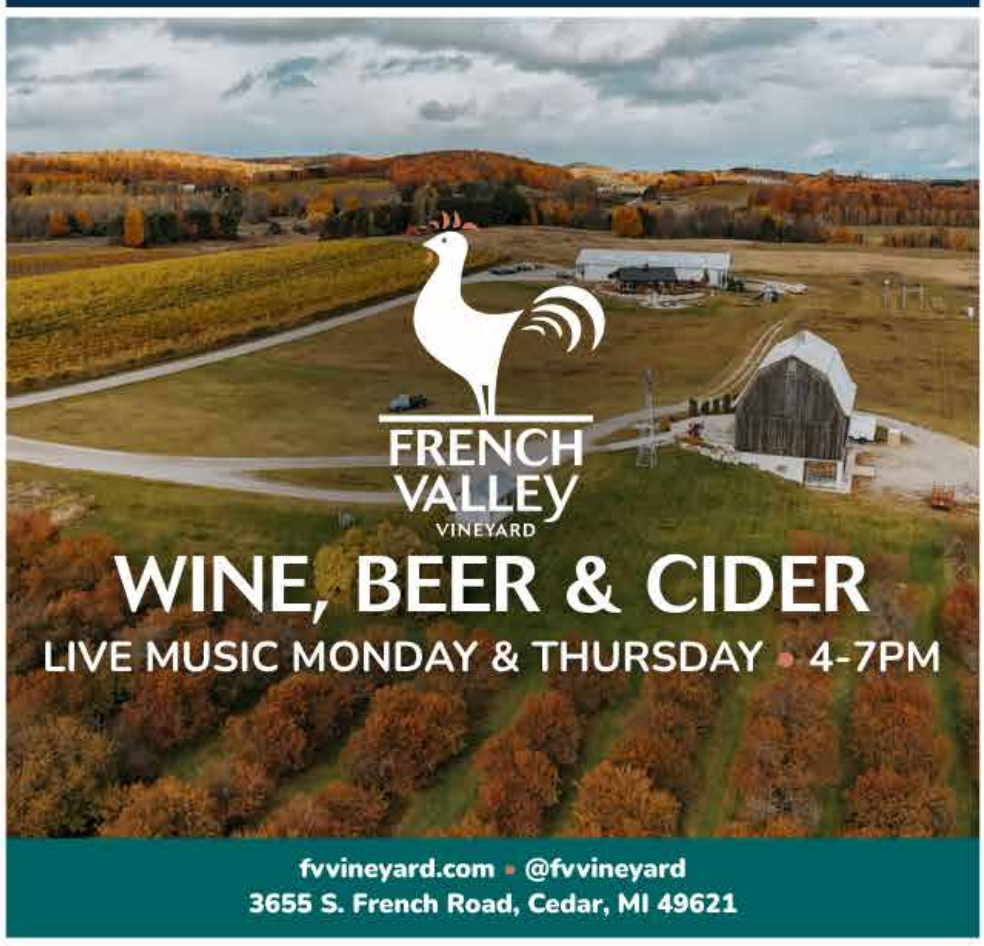

HARMONY
ESTATE WINERIES OF LEELANAU

T. REX

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alongside the dino, and it got noticed by workers at TentCraft.

"It was an employee idea," says Bulloch. The initial suggestion to purchase the dino by one of the workers was embraced by others who others chimed in to support it. "It wasn't on my radar," admits Bulloch, but he was soon all in.

"I like art, public art," he says, including the giant mural which adorns the current TentCraft building. He and Warnes came to an agreement on an undisclosed purchase price.

"We plan to move buildings to the Skilled Manufacturing Inc. location at 3680 Cass," says Bulloch. "We've needed more space for a while." At the same time, he was reluctant to move too far from the current location, as he has employees who drive from both the east and west. He believes moving to a location on the same road but closer to trails and downtown will be a boon for employees who will be able to more easily travel by foot, car or bike to nearby shops and businesses.

While the move won't happen until the middle to end of next year, Gilbert will be reconstructed as soon as Warnes can do so. Bulloch also believes having the dinosaur at the entrance will bring more visibility to TentCraft.

Bulloch wasn't the only interested party, and Warnes had the chance to sell Gilbert to buyers elsewhere, but the opportunity to keep him local meant more than getting more money for the sculpture. "I had the opportunity to move it to Detroit or out of state. This way I keep it close to home and work," Warnes says.

Warnes now works for Britten, just down the street, and coincidentally the company which owns the building where TentCraft is now housed. Bulloch says moving to a bigger building just down the street from its current location makes sense for his growing business, but he will leave behind that mural. So, Gilbert will continue to demonstrate his commitment to art.

Warnes admits the change is bittersweet, but it has made life easier for the Traverse City resident who doesn't have to drive to and from Empire every day. "I closed the business I'd grown for 23 years," he says.

At the same time, he says he loves his new job at Britten, where he is a project manager. "I really enjoy the job. I apply everything I've learned running a business. It's been a good transition."

And Gilbert will live just down the street from where he now works.

Leland Cultural District hosts Indigenous Peoples' Day events

From staff reports

Monday, Oct. 12, marks Indigenous Peoples' Day—a national holiday recognizing the histories, cultures, contributions, and resilience of Indigenous peoples.

In Leland, community partners invite the public to gather for a free, family-friendly day celebrating and learning about Anishinaabek history and culture.

The day will culminate at 6 pm at the Old Art Building with featured speaker James Vukelich Kaagegaabaw, a descendant of Turtle Mountain, international speaker, author, educator, and creator of *Ojibwe Word of the Day*. Vukelich is the author of *The Seven Generations and the Seven Grandfather Teachings* and is known for sharing connections between Anishinaabemowin (the Ojibwe language), culture, and traditional teachings.

Books will be available for purchase and signing following the program.

A Day of Culture, Community & Learning

Programs throughout the Leland Cultural District will begin at 12:45 pm with drumming by the Dusty Bears Singers, accompanied by Tribal community dancers. The afternoon continues with Indigenous Knowledges films, food, artists and educational opportunities, along with free museum admission and exhibits.

Full schedule:

• 12:45–1:45 pm: Drumming & Dancing Dusty Bear Singers and Tribal Community Dancers

• 3 pm | Indigenous Knowledges Film Hour. Featuring short films from the Leelanau Conservancy, the Kchi Wiikwedong History Marker Project, and This Basket Is My Ancestor by the Leelanau Historical Society

• 4-6 pm | Food, Art & Educational Opportunities. Indigenous food with Tanya Raphael, and other Educational learning opportunities

11 am-6 pm | Leelanau Historical Society Museum

Free museum admission, including the Traditional Anishinaabek Arts Room.

6 pm | Featured Speaker: James Vukelich Kaagegaabaw

Old Art Building | Book sales and signing

For more details about the day's activities please visit, Leelanauhistory.org/Events. Indigenous Peoples' Day is free and open to all ages.

Recognizing a longer history

As Leelanau County commemorates America 250, Indigenous Peoples' Day offers an opportunity to recognize a history that reaches much further back. Anishinaabe people have lived in relationship with the lands and waters of Kchi Wiikwedong, "Place of the Big Bay," for generations.

The past 250 years have brought cultural exchange and community building as well as conflict, displacement, and profound change. Through it all, Anishinaabe people, language, traditions, and ways of life have endured and remain an important part of Leelanau today.

The event is hosted by the Old Art Building, Leelanau Historical Society, Leland Library, Fishtown Preservation Society, Friends of the Leland Township Library, Leelanau Conservancy and Leelanau Investing For Teens.

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SMOKE

continues from page 1

the Anderson Economic Group, which found total economic losses of nearly $40 billion in the 10 Midwestern and East Coast states most impacted by the wildfire smoke. Those damages related to lost earnings from missed work and associated reductions in economic activity.

"Wildfire smoke can have a substantial cost. People can become ill or stay home to reduce their exposure, while some businesses need to close temporarily. We also saw some outdoor events can get cancelled," said Richard Melstrom, an environmental economist at Anderson Economic Group. "These all affect earnings and job outcomes."

"Smoke does not carry a passport"

Man-made climate change created the tinderbox conditions for the Canadian and Minnesota wildfires, according to a study from World Weather Attribution, a group of international scientists who examine extreme weather conditions to see if there are climate change fingerprints. While no single weather event can definitively be linked to climate change, Northern Michigan has experienced its share of freak storms in recent years, from the rains and flooding this past spring, to the ice storm two winters ago, to the wildfire smoke blanket this summer.

"In a pre-industrial climate this would have been much less likely to occur, maybe once in a lifespan. So climate change has made those events more likely," study co-author Jonathan Boucher, a fire scientist at Canada's Forest Service, told the Associated Press.

While scientists pointed to carbon emissions as the source behind the dangerous conditions, politicians in the Republican Party this summer ignored climate change and instead blamed Canada for what they alleged was forest mismanagement.

"A lot of damage has been done. They're not managing their forests properly," President Donald Trump said on July 21. "And the wind has a tendency to blow right over New York City, right over, you saw Detroit, they had to close the whole place. Michigan was really affected."

Since Trump returned to power in early 2025, his administration has aggressively cut and canceled billions of dollars in federal climate change research, clean energy grants and environmental programs—in particular by targeting clean energy grants in Democratic-led states that voted for Kamala Harris in the 2024 election.

Conservation and science groups warn that degrading the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration by defunding its climate labs and research threatens disaster forecasting and storm warnings.

Republican members of Michigan's congressional delegation parroted Trump's criticism of Canada in July. They included Jack Bergman, who has represented Michigan's first district since 2017 (and faces Democratic challenger Callie Barr in the Nov. 3 midterm election) and John James, who is running for governor against Democrat Jocelyn Benson, Michigan's current Secretary of State.

"We write today as members of Michigan's congressional delegation to raise our voices on an issue that has already drawn letters from our colleagues in past years: wildfire smoke drifting across the border from Canada into our communities," Bergman, James, Lisa McClain and John Moolenaar wrote in a joint letter to Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney.

"Sovereignty comes with responsibility, and the responsibility to prevent a foreseeable disaster from crossing into another country's airspace has not been met."

Trump has threatened Canada's sovereignty and called it the "51st state" since returning to the White House. The president's incendiary rhetoric has damaged relations between the two nations and prompted many Canadians to boycott the United States.

Neither the Trump administration nor Michigan's Republican Congressional leaders articulated how Canada could prevent wildfire smoke from crossing over international land borders.

"Smoke does not carry a passport, but carbon pollution does have a history. That history shows that the United States contributed more than any other country," said University of Victoria climate scientist Andrew Weaver. "President Trump is pointing at the smoke while ignoring America's fingerprints on the climate conditions behind it."

The League of Conservation Voters' (LCV) annual national environmental scorecard tracks the voting records of members of Congress on environmental, climate change, and democracy legislation. LCV gave Congressman Bergman a 2025 score of 0 percent and a lifetime score of 7 percent.

"It is a little bit ironic to focus on Canada's forest management techniques when our current federal government is dismantling programs that present long-term solutions to the underlying drivers of wildfires," Teresa Homsi, deputy director of Michigan Clinicians for Climate Action, told the *Michigan Advance* after Bergman sent a similar critical letter following wildfires in summer 2025.

Photo of Oct. 5 Cherry Pie Debates by David Dodman

The Glen Arbor Town Hall hosted the 2026 Cherry Pie Debates on Oct. 5, featuring four candidates vying for seats in the Michigan legislature: incumbent state Rep. Betsy Coffia (D), challenger Edwin Dean (R); incumbent state Sen. John Damoose (R) and challenger Kate Gallup (D). The debates were moderated by Interlochen Public Radio, the Leelanau Enterprise, the Glen Arbor Sun, and the League of Women Voters of Leelanau County. Topics discussed included: affordability and housing, balancing state and local power, climate change adaptation, Line 5, data centers and AI, the statute of limitations, immigration enforcement, and rural health care. Visit GlenArbor.com for a link to listen to the full debate on IPR's website.

Read about the phone booth outside Grocers Daughter Chocolate in our mid-November edition of the *Sun*.

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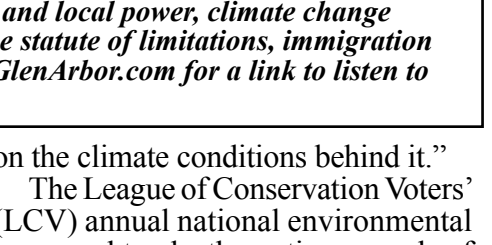

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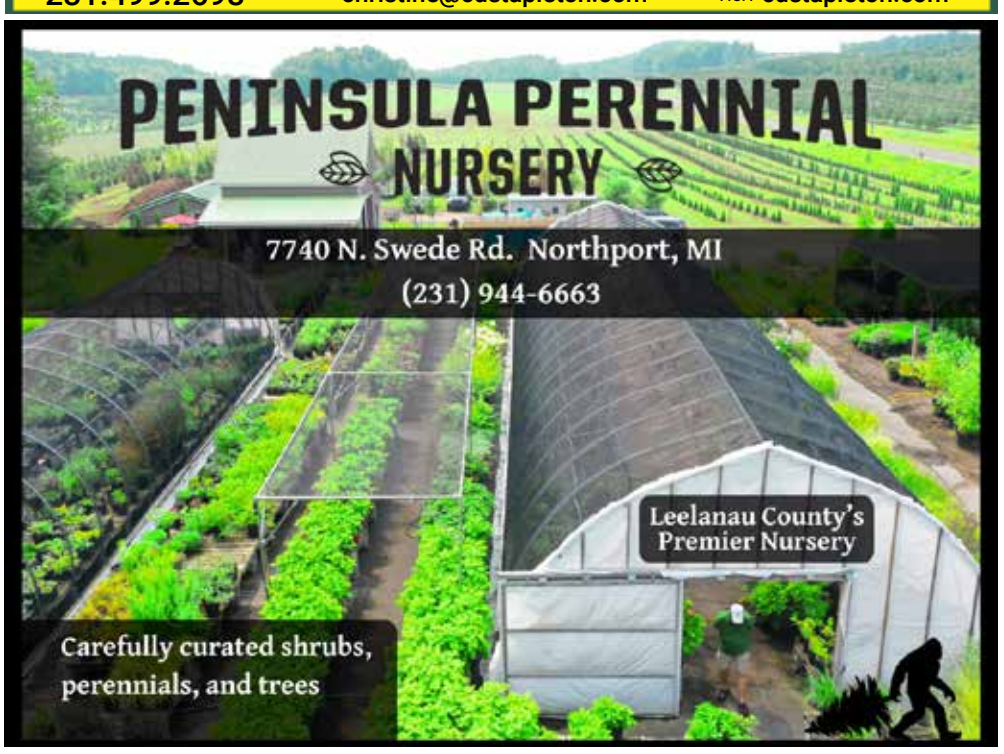

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