

The Betsie Current

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July

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Iron Fish Distillery Set To Expand

Promising spirited fun for years to come

By Greta Bolger

Current Contributor

As an old friend was fond of saying: “Talk is cheap, but it takes money to buy whiskey.”

It also takes money—and time—to *make* whiskey. Which is one of the reasons that Iron Fish Distillery in Thompsonville is significantly expanding its storage capabilities with a new 4,500-square-foot “rickhouse,” which will enable them to produce aged spirits well into the future.

Since Iron Fish Distillery opened its doors in the fall of 2016, it has become a popular destination in the region. The venture began, at least theoretically, in the spring of 2014, when Sarah An-



After less than two years in business, Iron Fish Distillery is expanding. A new 4,500-square-foot rickhouse will contain all barrels, bottling, and dry storage, plus a new kitchen. From left: Heidi Bolger, David Wallace, distiller Dan Krolczyk, Sarah and Richard Anderson. Photo by Jacob Wheeler.

derson sent her husband, Richard, on a 60th birthday trip to Scotland with her brothers-in-law, David Wallace and Craig Maxwell. They were touring several 300-year-old, farm-based distilleries on the island of Islay—famous for its “whiskey tourism”—when the taste of smokey peat infected the men with a novel idea: why not build a spirits distillery on the 119-acre farm that Wallace and his wife, Heidi Bolger, had recently acquired on the Benzie-Manistee county line, near Thompsonville?

The idea stuck, and now, four years after the Scotland trip and nearly two years after opening their doors, Iron Fish

Please see Big Fish on page 2

Summer Soccer Camp in Benzie

Still going strong after more than 20 years

By Aubrey Ann Parker

Current Editor

Back in the late 1990s, soccer was still a fledgling sport here in Benzie County. The Benzie Area Youth Soccer program had begun in 1993, morphing into the Benzie County 4-H Soccer program (which is still going strong today) by 1995; this covered kids in grades kindergarten through 8th grades in Benzonia and Lake Ann who attended Benzie, Frankfort, Glen Lake, and Traverse City schools, even a few homeschooled kids.

At Benzie Central, the school board approved a boys varsity team (and a co-ed junior high team) for the fall of 1997, followed by a girls varsity team for the spring of 2000. (Until that point, the girls had played

on the boys team, so it was technically a co-ed team, despite that they played mostly other all-boys teams.)

Full disclosure: I was actually on that very first girls varsity team, back when I was a freshman in high school at Benzie Central, and I played on the all-girls club team the year before, as an 8th grader. Back then, there was no funding for the club



High school soccer players serve as “camp counselors,” teaching the younger generation of Benzie soccer players. Photo by Aubrey Ann Parker

team: borrowed jerseys from another club, no fields at the high school (we had to get rides down to the fields behind Watson auto dealership, sometimes en-masse in the back of a pick-up truck, but shhhh, do not tell our parents!), no buses to the games, no payment for our all-volunteer team of coaches. And it was a team—there were six local guys who were making it happen: Jack Gyr, Ingemar Johansson, Scott Kubit, Dennis Pace (whom we have written about twice before in these pages; check out those articles in our online archives), Kerry Ruble, and Hans Voss.

Voss also was instrumental in the beginnings of a soccer camp for youngsters in the area: in 1996, he asked his friend,

Please see Futbol on page 10

Something Different

Stay in a caboose by the dunes

By Linda Alice Dewey

Current Contributor

Back in the woodsy shadow of the Sleeping Bear Dunes sits a large, newly painted and refurbished caboose, replete with a bed, a flat-screen television, Wi-Fi, a microwave, and a small fridge, even air conditioning and heat. Outside awaits a gas grill, a picnic table, and a firepit.

How did a caboose wind up in the woods across the road from Little Glen Lake? It all began when owner Bill Stege finished building his house on the property and was looking for a new project—a project that took him six years.

“I wanted another project, this time for my grandchildren,” he explains. So he

looked around for ideas. “I found an ambulance that was shot, so I thought: ‘I’ll put that out in the woods, so they can climb around on it. The kids can run the siren, it has two cots, and they can sleep there.’”

That did not go over well with his wife, Cherrie.

“People died on those cots,” she pointed out. “You’re not going to have our grandchildren sleep on them.”



Rent this caboose for a two-night stay for two people in the woods near Sleeping Bear Dunes. Photo courtesy of Leelanau Vacation Rentals.

So, a couple of years later, he found a boat with a motor that was ruined.

“I thought I could just dig a hole and put the boat in it,” Stege continues. “It had bunks and a kitchen.”

But she did not like that idea, either.

Stege kept thinking.

“Somewhere, I got the idea about a caboose,” he remembers. “I think I saw it on the internet or something. I said, ‘What about a caboose?’ And she said, ‘Oh, that would be okay.’”

“It’s huge! I hate it.”

The caboose that Stege saw online was DT&I No.107, and it was located in Mus-

Please see Caboose on page 11

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Fish

Continued from page 1

is known for its distinctive spirits, yummy craft cocktails, gourmet snacks, food trucks, live music, community events, art exhibits, and relaxing countryside setting. The tranquil Betsie River meanders nearby the rural property, and many of the spirits are made from the grains that are being grown just across the dirt driveway—a real grain-to-bottle operation, quite literally from the ground up, on this Michigan Environmentally Assured Farm.

“We could have created an urban distillery or a distillery in downtown Frankfort,” Richard Anderson says. “But we thought it would be more authentic to do it from scratch. This is the way it used to be done. Distilling was a farm trade. The consequence of that decision is that we are Michigan’s first farm-based distillery.”

Need To Expand
 Some initially called them crazy,

locating a tasting room on a three-mile dirt thoroughfare: “Nobody’s going to drive all the way out there in the rainy/pothole/winter season.”

But those critics could not have been more wrong. Iron Fish has built a loyal following, and as demand has grown—

Drink in the Art at Iron Fish Gallery

“The mezzanine area above the distilling room has been a great place for us to host corporate meetings and social events, and having beautiful art on display enhances the experience for everyone,” says Sarah Anderson, partner at Iron Fish. “We are booked into 2019 with artists in all media. It’s a real privilege to show their amazing work.”

Artists who have exhibited at Iron Fish include: Linda Moore, watercolor; Noah Sorenson, photography; Lauren Everett Finn, collage, watercolor, and acrylics; Kurt Swanson, fine woodworking; Holly Sorenson, fiber arts; Beth Bynum, collage; and Steve, Julia, and Katarina Kline, a family working in a variety of media.

The next show at Iron Fish—which will run from Sunday, July 8, through Tuesday, August 28—features collaborative pieces by Barbara Webb and Jane Smeltzer, who work together to create paintings in a style which incorporates wood, metal, and paint.”

Artists exhibiting at Iron Fish through the end of 2018 include: Melonie Steffes, oils, with Cherie Correll water media, in September and October; and Jill Robinson, sculptor, with Glenn Wolff, mixed media artist, in November and December.

Dates for each exhibit can be found at IronFishDistillery.com. Exhibits can be seen on weekends. On weekdays, call 231-378-3474 in advance for appointment. Artists, contact Sarah Anderson at sarah@ironfishdistillery.com to obtain an exhibit proposal.

both on-site and through distribution—the business had to expand to keep up.

“When we built the distillery, we thought we would have enough room for production, barrel storage, bottling, and dry storage for years,” David Wallace says. “After less than two years of operation, we were completely out of space, so the new rickhouse was a priority. And once we decided on that, additional expansion became possible.”

Construction on the rickhouse began in April 2018, as soon as the ground was relatively frost-free. The exterior of the building is now complete, and soon all barrels, bottling,

and dry storage will be contained within the new structure. The new building will also include two indoor bathrooms to accommodate guests at the Barn at Iron Fish, a wedding and party venue that can host up to 150 people.

“The new rickhouse will hold four to six years of whiskey barrels in the aging process when we are in full production,” Wallace says. “At that point, we will start bottling whiskey in the oldest batches and begin the aging process with the newest spirits. We believe this additional

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storage capacity will put us in a great position for a long time to come.”

Food and Spirits

Another big plus of the new rickhouse is that it has freed up enough space within the original distillery building to allow the owners to add a full-size commercial kitchen, which is expected to be fully operational by September 2018. The kitchen will include a wood-fired pizza

previously been able to do, like having barbeque nights.”

Wallace and his partners are the first to acknowledge the huge role that the community has played in their success to date.

“We are open year-round, so the residents of Northwest Michigan have kept us busy and engaged and learning since we opened,” he says. “Between the local community and the many visitors



All barrels, bottling, and dry storage will be contained within the new rickhouse at Iron Fish Distillery. Photo courtesy of Iron Fish.

oven, a second bar, and a streamlined menu, at least initially.

“We have work to do in getting our oven ready to go, hiring the right people to fill our new positions, and developing and testing menu items,” Wallace says. “We’re planning to offer wood-fired pizzas, salad, and dessert, but we’re going to keep it very simple to start, to make sure we get it right. Our target is high quality, using local ingredients as much as possible.”

Having food available for guests has been a goal of the distillery all along.

“It just makes sense to offer food when people are drinking spirits,” Wallace says. “One compliments the other, and it makes for a more complete service. We have had food trucks from the beginning, and they have been great and very popular. But having our own kitchen will allow us to do things we haven’t

to our area, we have been really fortunate to be warmly embraced as a destination distillery. We are truly thankful that our customers have supported us in the investments we’ve made and continue to make, which will help ensure that we will be here to serve them for many, many years to come.”

Full disclosure: Greta Bolger’s sisters are Heidi Bolger and Sarah Anderson, owners (along with their husbands) of Iron Fish Distillery, located at 14234 Dzuibanek Road, just outside Thompsonville. Hours of operation vary seasonally: summer hours are Mondays-Wednesdays from 2-7 p.m.; Thursdays 2-9 p.m.; Fridays and Saturdays 12-10 p.m.; and Sundays 12-7 p.m. For more information, visit IronFishDistillery.com online or call 231-378-3474. You can also ask for drinks made from Iron Fish products at many Benzie County establishments.

The Betsie Current

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Ranger-led twilight talks every day, all summer long. Topics may vary. Meet at the DH Day Campground amphitheater and Platte River Campground amphitheater. 8-9pm.

Mondays

Circle Time for infants and toddlers at the Benzie Shores District Library at 630 Main Street in Frankfort. Infants and toddlers (+ their parents/caregivers) will have fun rhyming and moving with Miss Char, as well as a focus on repetition. Each week, children build their repertoire of rhymes, both old and new. There is an informal playgroup following Circle Time. 10-11am.

Pilates with Anna at the Oliver Art Center in downtown Frankfort. annamallien@gmail.com 10-11am.

Free yoga class for seniors with Michelle Leines at The Gathering Place Senior Center. 10579 Main Street in the Honor Plaza. 231-525-0600. 10-11am.

Cards at The Gathering Place. We have a dedicated group of card sharks who play Pinochle weekly during lunch, but we aren't limited to Pinochle: grab your friends and join us for euchre, cribbage, and rummy, too! 12-1pm.

MI FiberShed at Grow Benzie is a place for fabric, fiber craft, and clothing to be recycled, remade, or exchanged. Clear out your closet or sewing/craft room and get inspired to make new stuff. We give fiber nine lives before the landfill. Come use a sewing machine, help to sort donations, and acquire clothing for \$1 per pound! Donations give you fibercredit to use in the shop. Workshops on the 2nd Monday of the month. MI FiberShed is open every Monday 12-7pm. Call/text Emily Votruba at 231-399-0098 or email emilyvotruba@yahoo.com to join the email list.

Zumba with Suzanne at The Gathering Place. All welcome. \$3 per class. 2:30pm.

Grow Benzie Farmers' Market: Fresh vegetables and fruits, baked goods, bread, jam, honey, maple syrup, artisan crafts, and more will be for sale at each market! There will be free cooking and nutrition-education classes every week from 3:30-5pm. You can also tour our new edible trails and try out mini-golf! The Grill Benzie Food Truck will be there, so bring the family for dinner! 5885 Frankfort Highway (M-115) between Benzonia and Frankfort. 3-7pm.

Tuesdays

Sunrise Rotary Club's weekly meetings are over breakfast at the Cold Creek Inn of Beulah. Come join us! 7:30-9am.

Music by the Melody Makers at The Gathering Place. 10:30am-1:30pm.

Knitting Group at Benzonia Public Library. A "knit-along" project for those who want to work on the same project, or bring your own project if you prefer; we'd love your company! Need help? If you are having troubles with a current project, bring it along and we'll help you get it straightened out. Call Michele at 231-383-5716 with any questions. 1-3pm.

Chair Yoga class for \$5 at The Gathering Place. 3:30-4:30pm.

Zumba for \$3 at The Gathering Place. 5:15pm.

Yoga with Kari at Pleasant Valley Community Center in Arcadia. Open to all levels; \$13 per session. 231-383-1883. 5:30-7pm.

Yard Yoga with Jenn Ryan. \$10 per class, with some mats available, if you do not have one. 841 S Pioneer Road just outside Beulah/Honor. Text 231-218-0655 to register. 6-8pm.

Wednesdays

Zumba for \$3 at The Gathering Place. All welcome. \$3 per class. 8:30m.

Stay Fit with Doris at The Gathering Place. 10-11am.

Open studio at the Oliver Art Center. Participants are strongly encouraged to become members and to contribute a donation of \$2 per visit. 10am-4pm.

Bingo at The Gathering Place. Cost is \$1 per card or bring a prize. 12:30-1:30pm.

PLARN at The Gathering Place. Crochet plastic mats to donate for the homeless. For more info, call Dawn at 231-525-0601. 1:15pm.

Storm Riders Cycling Club: join the rides every Wednesday, or just those that you can make! Explore rotating sections around Frankfort and Elberta. Rides will begin and end at Stormcloud Brewing Company, and riders get a discount on their first beer after the ride. No registration; just show up! 6:30pm.

Chairlift Rides: Enjoy panoramic views of three counties and top-of-the-mountain attractions, such as live music and a cash bar. \$7 per person, but ages 8 and younger ride free with a paying adult; all house guests ride free. Crystal Mountain Resort in Thompsonville. 7pm.

Wednesdays & Thursdays

Public stargazing and constellation lessons, two nights a week all summer long at the observatory at The Leelanau School, 1.5 miles northeast of Glen Arbor on M-22, right on the Lake Michigan beach. A clear night provides the perfect setting for a star-filled sky, made even more visible by our 14" Celestron Telescope. You'll see plenty of heavenly objects in bright, brilliant detail and learn from Norm Wheeler, our local authority and guide. Adults \$4, students \$3. Weather permitting. 10-11:59pm.

Thursdays

Ranger-led beach walks in the Sleeping Bear Park at the Maritime Museum beach; help collect data for research on this 1-mile hike. 11-12pm.

Elberta Farmers' Market at the Elberta Pavilion Park. 8am-12:30pm.

Bible Study at The Gathering Place. 10-11am.

Bunco at The Gathering Place. 1-2pm.

Computers with Carol at the Darcy Library at 7238 Commercial Street in Beulah. Ask Carol computer-related questions. Read to Denny, the cute little dog! 12-5pm.

Board Game Day at the Darcy Library. 2-5pm.

Everyone is welcome to attend Open Clay Studio at the Oliver Art Center, including families! Per 4-visit block (12 hours total, used how you like), \$60 fees cover one adult or one adult/child pair. It can be as fun/focused as you prefer, and all skill levels should consider taking part. Children must be accompanied by an adult at all times in the studio. Price includes: 25 pounds of clay, glaze, and firings. 3:30-6:30pm.

Yoga with Kari at the home of Linda & Dave Schweyer in Bear Lake. Open to all levels; \$13 per session. 231-383-1883. 4-5:30pm.

Bike with a Sleeping Bear park ranger: leave from the Dune Climb parking lot/Sleeping Bear Heritage Trailhead. 4:30-6:30pm.

Guided mountain bike rides, hosted by Crystal Mountain Recreation, on mountain bike trails, the Betsie River Pathway, surrounding two-tracks, and season roads. Riders must be at least 16 years old with some mountain bike experience, but this is open to all skill levels. Helmets required. Drop-in rides are free; rental bike with helmet is \$19 per ride; helmet rental is \$10 per ride. All rides leave the Mountain Adventure Zone and end at the Beach House. 6-7:30pm.

Jake Frysinger performs harmonious cover songs and originals on acoustic guitar at The Roadhouse Mexican Bar & Grill in Benzonia. 6-9pm.

Doc Probes performs at Cold Creek Inn in Beulah. In addition to his own singer-songwriter compositions, Doc spans a wide range of musical genres, including folk, traditional, gospel, old-time, Irish and Celtic, blues, mellow rock, easy listening, jazz standards, country, and latin music. 6-9pm.

Open Mic Night at St. Ambrose Cellars. 6-9pm.

Open Mic Night at The Cabbage Shed in Elberta. 8pm.

Fridays

Bunco at The Gathering Place. 9:30-10:30am.

Fun Dance time with Ms. Vickie at the Benzie Shores District Library. 10am.

Walk in the shoes of early homesteaders. Meet at Port Oneida Farms Heritage Center. 11am-12pm.

Ranger-led "Dune Discovery" program: how were the dunes formed? Meet at the Dune Climb Pavillion. 1-1:30pm.

Tech Support to help you navigate the tech world. Please call in advance to schedule your appointment with Robert. The Gathering Place. 1-2pm.

Wii Bowling at The Gathering Place. 1-2pm.

30th summer of Beach Bards Bonfire: "by heart" poetry, storytelling, and music on the beach at The Leelanau School. \$1 per being. Children's hour begins at 8pm; adults at 9pm.

Saturdays

Frankfort Farmers' Market at Open Space Park on Main Street, between 7th & 9th streets, along the beautiful waterfront. 9am-1pm.

MI FiberShed at Grow Benzie is open 9am-4pm.

Ranger-led walk to learn what life was like along the Manitou Passage. Meet at Sleeping Bear Point Trail to hike one mile. 11am-12pm.

Farmers' Market and Flea Market at the Interlochen Eagles #3503 at 20724 Honor Highway/US-131, three miles west of Interlochen. Consisting of Michigan-grown fruits and veggies, flea marketers, cottage food vendors, artisans, arts & craft vendors, and independent reps. 12-4pm.

Ranger Rendezvous at DH Day Log Cabin in the DH Day Campground to learn what is going on at Sleeping Bear Dunes. 1-1:45pm.

Tours of Stormcloud's production brewery and tasting room, complete with an overview of the brewing process and guided tastings. All participants will take home a Stormcloud logo tasting glass or sticker. \$10 per adult or teen (ages 12-20), children under age 12 are free. Reservations required: stormcloudbrewing.com/brewery-tours/ Tours are each about 45 minutes long, and tours begin at 3pm, 4pm, 5pm, and 6pm.

Chairlift rides at Crystal Mountain. 7pm.

Dance Party at the Frankfort Beach with Vickie Slater. 231-620-1411. 7-8pm.

*Yoga classes at Discover YOU Yoga and Fitness in Frankfort every day of the week, except Saturday. For a complete schedule and more information on classes and rates, visit discoveryogami.com.

Sundays

Ranger-led four-mile paddle of the Platte River. Bring your own kayak or rent one. Reservations required. Meet at the Platte River Picnic Area in Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore. 10am-12:30pm.

ON DECK

Thursday, July 5

Free Shuttle to Beach Bums: Baseball fans can get from home to the bases quickly using Benzie Bus's free shuttle to Thursday night Beach Bums games this summer. Fans can park-n-ride at Family Fare in Frankfort (5:30pm pick-up), Shop n Save in Benzonia (5:45pm pick-up), or the Benzie Bus Station just outside Honor (6:05pm pick-up). Reserve your ride 231-325-3000 ext. 1. This night, the Beach Bums are playing the Southern Illinois Miners.

Thursday, July 5

Turbo Pup performs at Lake Ann Brewing Company. 6:30-9:30pm.

Thursday, July 5

Awesome Distraction performs at the Beulah Music in the Park summer series at the pavillion. 7-8:30pm.

Thursday, July 5

Blind Dog Hank performs at Bradley's Pub & Grille

at the Interlochen Golf Course. 7-9pm.

Thursday, July 5

Evan Taylor Trio performs at Iron Fish Distillery. 7-9:30pm.

Thursday, July 5

Ted Alan's Jazz Blowout—featuring Rob Smith playing trumpet/sax; Jonathan Lindy on drums; Andy Evans on bass—perform at St. Ambrose. 7-10pm.

Thursday, July 5

Blake Elliott performs at Stormcloud Brewing Company in Frankfort. Born in Ann Arbor, Blake took both sets of parents' last names to create her stage moniker. Raised with a piano- and guitar-playing mother and an Interlochen-trained percussionist father, Blake has been around music her whole life. Inspired by the beauty of her home state and this big adventure called "life," she writes songs that tell stories of love and heartbreak, dive bars, good whiskey, and everything that can come from them. 8-10pm.

Thursday-Monday, July 5-9

Take a leisurely bike ride to North Bar Lake and explore the wildlife, birds, and history along the trail. Bring your bike, camera, and binoculars, and hear about pirates and pioneers! Choose your night. The tour is best-suited for adults. Book your tours at SBDToursMichigan.com. 7-8:30pm.

Friday, July 6

Flags of Good Intentions: Drop in to enjoy an all-aged introspective art project, led by fiber and mixed media artist Deona Paine, followed by a contemplative hike to Sanctuary at Michigan Legacy Art Park at Crystal Mountain Resort. 9:30am-12:30pm.

Friday, July 6

5-to-ONE Playgroup: an innovative project of the Great Start Collaborative that brings together families and local partners to ensure that all children reach their highest potential. All playgroups are free and include a snack and story for children, as well as playtime with engaging material. Activities are designed for children 0-6, but older siblings are always welcome. We will be splitting time between the gym and a classroom. Each playgroup includes a parent meeting, where we share resources and talk about subjects that are important to you. They are optional but highly encouraged. Plus, take home a free book provided by Born to Read! Betsie Valley Elementary School. 10am.

Friday, July 6

Bayou in the Barn, a Grow Benzie Fundraiser: This one-day festival celebrates the cultural connections that Louisiana and Michigan share through music, food, and community leisure. This is Grow Benzie's 10th anniversary party at St. Ambrose Cellars in the historic barn and meadery. National and regional musicians perform blues, roots, and zydeco music, while Michigan ingredients are stirred into Southern and Cajun cuisine. Attendees are encouraged to bring lawn chairs, blankets, and dancing shoes. Yard games including bocce ball, bean bag toss, ladderball, and disc golf will be available. Ticket prices—\$25 general admission; \$10 ages 14-18; free for ages 13 and under—include admission to the event and live/silent auctions, while food, alcohol, beverages, and merchandise will be available for separate purchase. All funds raised will benefit Grow Benzie's community center, as well as youth and educational programs. 2018 performers include: Blake Elliott; Billy Davis Duo, featuring Wayne Craycraft; Katy Guillen & The Girls; and K Jones & the Benzie Playboys. 231-882-9510 or info@GrowBenzie.org. 5-11:30pm.

Friday, July 6

The Bergamont performs at Michigan Legacy Art Park. This couple's poignant songwriting and engaging performance is one definitely not to miss. Americana-infused indie rock promises to perfectly suit the Art Park forest setting. 7-9pm.

Friday, July 6

Elizabeth Sexton Rivers & Crew perform at Iron Fish Distillery. 7-9pm.

Friday, July 6

G-Snacks are fun and funky, performing live at Lake Ann Brewing Company. 7-10pm.

Friday, July 6

Kyle White is a third-generation musician from Toledo, Ohio. Playing with various cover bands, acoustic duos/trios, and solo, she has been a staple of the Toledo music scene for the past 20 years. As a solo performer, Kyle plays a wide range of covers from folk to pop to rock to bluegrass, along with her original songs. In the 2010 *Toledo City Paper's* "Best of Toledo" issue, she was voted "Best Singer/Songwriter". Kyle has opened for National acts Five for Fighting, Skid Row, Rusted Root, and The Doobie Brothers. Stormcloud. 8-10pm.

Friday, July 6

Detroit Symphony Orchestra performs chamber music at Interlochen Center for the Arts. 8-11pm.

Friday, July 6

Tell Yo Mama is a soulful, funky, groove machine from Lansing. They want to make you dance and not want to stop with a vast array of music that will make you leave your chair and head for the dance floor. You might want to stretch before... you're going to be sore, but it will be worth it. Cabbage Shed. 9-11:59pm.

Friday-Saturday, July 6-7

"God Bless America" Race Weekend at the Northern Michigan Dragway in Kaleva. Pit passes are only \$10 each night; children ages 8-13 are \$5. Several race teams are bringing a nice variety of fireworks. Friday night features Thirlby Automotive Street Night event #2, from 6-11pm. Saturday TNT Points event #9 time trials at 3pm, eliminations are 6-11:30pm. All racers welcome, do not need to be in points program. Trophies and prizes for winners. Event runs from 4pm on Friday to 11:45pm on Saturday.

Saturday, July 7

Frankfort Elberta Athletic Association Golf Outing: Grab your clubs and join fellow Panther fans and friends for a great day of golf and good times to benefit Lockhart Field. This is an 18-hole scramble with a shotgun start. Registration includes golf, cart, goodie bag, lunch at the turn, and a post-golf reception with prizes. Challenge your friends and test your skills on our specialty holes and receive prizes for longest drive, closest to the pin, and more. There's even a chance to WIN A CAR with a hole-in-one! Crystal Lake Golf Club. 9am-2pm.

Saturday, July 7

24th Annual Lake Ann Homecoming: arts, crafts, games, food, fun, children's events, and the tractor parade! 9am-3pm.

Saturday, July 7

Apres-Holiday Beach Clean-up with the Benzie Conservation District: Our spring beach clean-up was so successful that we had many folks asking to do it again—this time, after the big July 4th celebrations! Come out and help us beautify Elberta beach. Spread the word; many hands means fast work! 10-11:30am.

Saturday, July 7

Marbling classes at the Oliver Art Center, taught by Heidi Finley: learn to marble a silk scarf (10am-1pm) and/or a parasol (2-4pm).

Saturday, July 7

Jeff Bihlman performs at Iron Fish. 7-9:30pm.

Saturday, July 7

Barefoot performs at Platte River Inn in Honor. Jenni Rae on vocals; Nathon Lane on acoustic guitar; Phil Coryell on lead harmonicas; and Bee Jay Reffitt on stand-up bass. 7-10pm.

Saturday, July 7

Looking Forward, a CSN&Y Tribute, from John Kumjian, Chris Skellenger, and Pat Niemisto. Lake Ann Brewing Company. 7-10pm.

Saturday, July 7

Evan Burgess performs at The Cabbage Shed. Pick a song, any song, and this guy knows it or at least some form of it! Get ready for a night filled with all types of music, some humor, and probably a good amount of adult beverages. None of his shows are the same, and you're just never sure what can happen! 9pm.

Sunday, July 8

Cheryl Wolfram first picked up the guitar in the third grade, and by the eighth grade, she had chosen the 12-string guitar as her instrument of choice. During her blues rock years (2000-2010), she and her band released three CDs. Her vocal ability, phrasing, and song-writing earned the band enthusiastic reviews. She has lived in Manistee County for 31 years, the last 15 in Brethren. Cheryl fronts a female pop trio called "Peace, Love, Music," which recently appeared at the Spirit of the Woods Folk Music Festival. Cheryl also performs as a solo singer-guitarist throughout Northern Michigan. Iron Fish Distillery. 3:30-5:30pm.

Sunday-Monday, July 8-9

The Benzie County Community Chorus presents their 2018 Summer Concert series at Benzie Central High School auditorium. \$15 general admission; \$10 for students age 16 and under. 7:30pm.

Monday-Wednesday, July 9-11

Youth classes, with a different theme each day, taught by Meg Louwsma at the Oliver Art Center. \$20 each day for Benzie County residents; \$25 otherwise. 10am-12pm.

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Updates: A Lot Can

Nicole L. Bates, Speech Therapist & Novelist

In Volume V Issue 3, published June 23, 2016, we featured a Q&A with Nicole L. Bates of Encouraging Expression, her own speech therapy practice, which ranges from one-on-one, in-home appointments locally to virtual, online sessions—you can read that article here: bit.ly/NicoleBates

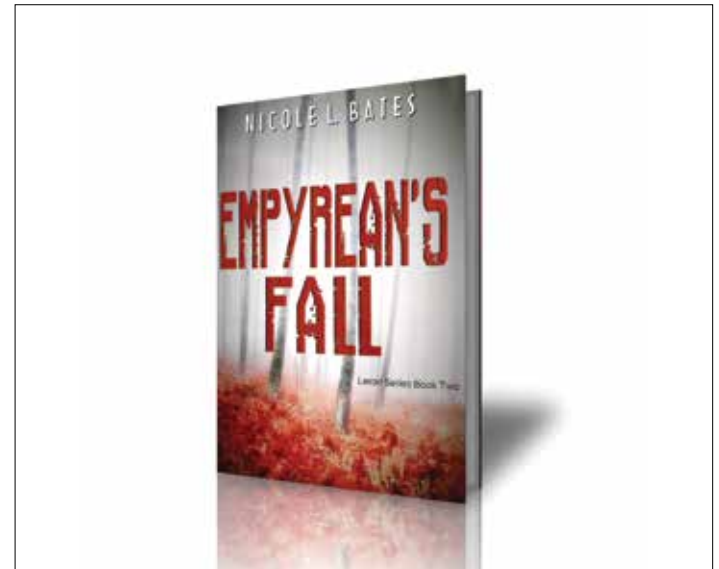
But not only is Bates a speech therapist, she is also a writer. (She even writes for us sometimes!)

Bates's first novel, *Empyrean*, was released in January 2017, a fact which we updated you on last summer in Volume VI Issue 4, published June 29, 2017.

But what you may not know is that *Empyrean's Fall*—the second book in *The Leron Series*, a science-fiction trilogy by Bates—was published in January 2018! Both books are currently available in e-book and paperback through Amazon. A copy of each book will be available soon at The Bookstore in downtown Frankfort, and they also can currently both be checked out at the Benzie Shores District Library in Frankfort.

Bates says that the response from friends and family has been overwhelming.

"I'm thrilled with the support and enthusi-



Empyrean's Fall and its predecessor, *Empyrean*, are both available on Amazon. Image courtesy of Nicole L. Bates.

asm from friends who've read the books and shared the news with others," Bates says. "It's really been more than I expected."

The third book in the series, *Empyrean's Future*, is scheduled for release in winter/spring 2019. To get the latest updates, you can follow her at Facebook.com/WriterNicoleLBates or on Twitter at [@NicoleLBates](https://twitter.com/NicoleLBates).

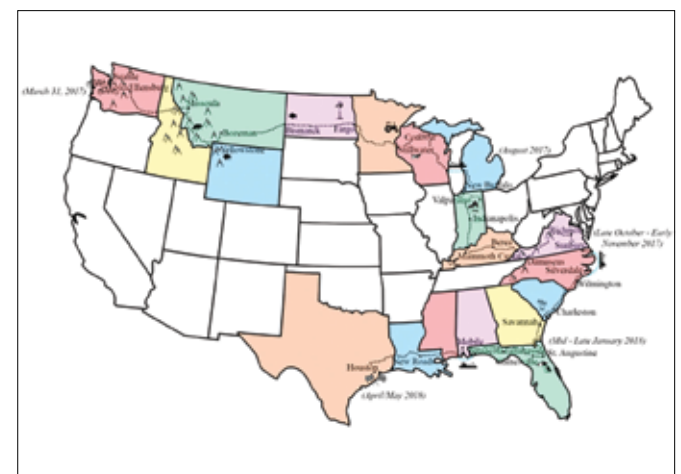
Full disclosure: Nicole L. Bates is sister-in-law to Jordan Bates, co-owner of *The Betsie Current*—just one of the many perks of owning your own newspaper means the opportunity to promote your family. #nepotism

Cycling Watsons, Completion of Cross-America Trip

In Volume VI Issue 7, published August 10, 2017, our Nancy Bordine wrote about a chance meeting with the Watson family—two adults, four kids, two bikes (each custom-made three-seaters), two trailers, eight pannier bags, two coolers, and about a bazillion water bottles—who were cycling in and out of Frankfort as part of their cross-country trek. (Read the original article in our online archives.)

"The bike tour was to serve as a break from the self-imposed, middle-class-family grind, a time for personal and spiritual growth," says Melanie Watson, mother of the family. "We crossed into worlds to which our self-selected, socio-economic bubbles rarely allow access, and we gained three-dimensional windows into topics that the media can only cover fleetingly in two dimensions... Amazingly, we experienced greater levels of community as transients than we did as residents in recent years..."

"Perhaps community is less about population density or duration of residency, and more about visibility and accessibility. I encourage everyone to reach outside of their established social circles, to not hide behind screens, but to engage people—strangers—face-to-face. If you do, you will undoubtedly, eventually, get a glimpse of God's beautiful creation, both the landscape and its inhabitants, and be blessed as we have been. We are thankful for this journey, for the people we met along the way, the things we got to do, and the places we got to see. Our family



The Watsons, a family of six, took 361 days to bike 8,188 miles through 23 states, including a stop in Frankfort last summer. Image courtesy of DandelionsAndTumbleweeds.com.

is better and stronger because of it."

Upon their arrival in Frankfort in August 2017, the Watsons had already pedaled 3,300 miles over the course of four months from Seattle, their starting point, and the plan was to cycle a total of 7,000 miles across 19 states over a total of 13 to 15 months.

When all was said and done, the Watsons took 361 days to bike 8,188 miles through 23 states. The family made it to Houston, Texas, their final destination, on March 27, 2018. Their family blog from that day reads:

"This tremendous experience tempts us to continue adventuring and delay real life for a bit longer, so we are going abroad for some volunteer and travel opportunities for the summer (without our bikes)."

Want to read more blogs from the Watson family's journey? Check them out online at DandelionsAndTumbleweeds.com.

What Happen in a Year

Still Staying Connected: A Year Into Reading From Jail

In Volume VI Issue 6, published July 27, 2017, our Beau Vallance wrote about Remain In Touch, a reading program in which incarcerated parents are recorded while reading aloud from the Benzie County jail, and these recordings are sent home to their children, along with a new copy of the book. (Read the original article in our online archives.)

The program began in May 2016 in Leelanau County and then expanded to Benzie County in April 2017. Participation has been consistent, according to program director Connie Eisenhart and Benzie coordinator Kay Leers.

In Benzie County, between early April 2017 and mid-July 2017, when our story published, 25 inmates had been recorded, and 44 children had received books and accompanying CDs with the voices of their parents. At the time of this update, a total of 49 Benzie County inmates have participated in the program, and 86 children have received 321 books and CDs.

There was a fundraising event at Stormcloud Brewing Company in Frankfort on May 19, 2018, with half the profits from sales going toward the Remain In Touch program. Additional support for the program has come from: Benzie Cares for Kids; The Bookstore in Frankfort, which donated \$100 toward the purchase of books; St. Andrews Presbyterian

Church's Missions Committee for Peace and Justice, which made a monetary donation; Quilt Connection, which gave a monetary donation; Beyond Salon, which put out a jar for donations; the Benzie County Community Chest, which awarded the program \$1,000 in February 2018; and Bookstock of Southeast Michigan.

For security reasons, all books are brand new. Monetary donations and small grants cover the cost of the books, purchased from Brilliant Books in Traverse City at a 20 percent discount and picked up by Eisenhart, who delivers to both the Leelanau and Benzie programs. For more information or to donate to the program, visit RemainInTouch.org or Brilliant-Books.net/Program/RemainInTouchProgram to see a list of books that can be bought online and held for the coordinator to pick up in Traverse City. Remain in Touch will also have booths at the Beulah Art Fair on July 7, the Suttons Bay Art Fair on August 4-5, and the Frankfort Art Fair on August 18. Additionally, RIT will be the featured non-profit at the National Writers Series program at the City Opera House in Traverse City on July 13—An Evening with Adriana Trigiani, a ticketed event. Stop by and chat with the volunteers at any of these events to learn more about RIT and to learn how you can help.

Food Rescue in Benzie, Doubled in Two Years

In Volume VI Issue 10, published October 5, 2017, our Nicole L. Bates wrote about Food Rescue of Northwest Michigan, a mobile food-rescue program of Goodwill Northern Michigan that serves six counties: Antrim, Benzie, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, Leelanau, and Wexford.

The whole idea behind Food Rescue is to keep the soon-to-expire or excess produce and bakery items—which have been donated by local grocery stores, bakeries, and farms—from ending up in dumpsters and landfills and, instead, having this food end up on the plates of people who need it. In short, the program is a win-win-win: business donors save money through reduced disposal costs and tax benefits; food pantries and other partnering organizations reduce their costs through donated items; and hungry people are getting good, local, nutritious foods that they might not otherwise have access to. (Read the original article in our online archives.)

In the nearly 10 years that the program as a whole has been operating, more than 9.5 million pounds of food have been rescued from 160 different donors since October 2008, which is up from just under 8 million pounds that we reported last fall. In the six-county area, this food is delivered to 48 food pantries and meal-site programs.

In 2018 alone, from January through May, 743,409 pounds of food have been rescued, which is a 45 percent increase over last year; clients were served 93,937 times at pantries and 13,776 meals were served.

Over the last few years, Food Rescue has been able to expand its reach, thanks to a grant which allowed for the purchase of additional trucks. One of these trucks has resided at Benzie Area Christian Neighbors (BACN): this is the third year that BACN has had its own truck and the sixth year that BACN has participated in the Food Rescue Program.

The Benzie truck makes its route two days a week through Benzie, Leelanau, and western Grand Traverse counties, picking up food from the source and then dropping it off where it is needed.

Since moving the truck out to BACN, Food Rescue has been able to nearly double the amount of food that is distributed to

Benzie County:

January - May, 2016: 37,980 pounds

January - May, 2018: 72,942 pounds

“Having Food Rescue has impacted our neighbors greatly,” says Michelle Northrup, director of operations at BACN. “Previously, we provided potatoes, carrots, and bananas, but that was about all we could get in the way of produce [because of costs]. We’ve been focused for some time on offering healthier foods in the pantry—more local fresh produce and quality protein. Now, with Food Rescue, there is a greater variety, as well as options for our diabetic and gluten-free neighbors. It helps keep everyone healthier.”

A subset of the Food Rescue program is called Healthy Harvest, and it consists of a team of volunteers, supported by Rotarians, who visit local farms and “glean” from the fields, gathering leftover fresh fruits and vegetables that would otherwise go to waste. The Food Rescue program transports the donation from the farm to wherever it needs to go.

So far this year, the program has already gleaned 650 pounds of asparagus from Norconk Farm near Empire, right on the Benzie-Leelanau county line. In addition, Food Rescue drew on its logistical and warehouse capacity to help support the Northwest Food Coalition in purchasing 810 pounds of asparagus from Norconk Farms last month.

“We want to support the pantries and meal-sites by providing nutritious food through our daily routes and in their efforts to purchase and support local farms,” says Talor Moore, manager of Food Rescue. “Healthy Harvest is another way that we can help farms put good food to good use and get healthy, local produce to pantries and meal-sites—rescuing local produce is one of the most rewarding parts of our work, because of the relationships we form and the nutritional impact this food has in our community.”

BACN is seeking a part-time driver for the truck (paid position) and volunteers to load/unload. To volunteer either to ride along in one of the trucks or to glean fields, interested individuals can e-mail volunteers@GoodwillNMI.org or call BACN at 231-882-9544. If you know a farmer who may be interested in getting involved, email foodrescue@GoodwillNMI.org or call 231-995-7723.

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Past Deeds Meet Future Needs

Poor Farm gets a second life

By Linda Alice Dewey
Current Contributor

The next time that you are driving through Maple City and you pass Myles Kimmerly Park, located on the south side of County Road 616 (Burdickville Road), east of 669 (Coleman Road), look at the field across the street. You might never have noticed the old white barn, standing off the road, looking forlorn and neglected. If you did, you may have assumed that she was a leftover from an old family farm, like so many others that are scattered about Northern Michigan.

But she is not. This lady is different.

The “Poor Farm barn” is the last remnant of what was once a haven for Leelanau County’s indigent residents who worked there raising crops, chickens, and cattle in return for a place to live.

The Poor Farm was established at the turn of the last century, when the State of Michigan mandated that each county must care for its own, before the federal government took over the burden of supporting those in need. Minutes from the county’s Board of Supervisors meeting on December 2, 1901, show that Leelanau County purchased the existing “Burke” Farm “consisting of 120 acres of good soil, one mile from Maple City, on a main traveled road in Kasson Township for \$2,400. The buildings consist of two frame residences with stone foundations and cellars, one large barn with stone foundation, and all the buildings well supplied with water; 70 acres of improved land and 22 acres of good timber, all well-fenced.”

In 1906, the two homes were replaced by a single, large, Victorian house—designed by popular Traverse City architect Jens C. Peterson, who also designed the Empire schoolhouse and later moved to California. By 1909, William Craker was hired as the farm’s supervisor. He and his family stayed for 11 years, followed by Charles Coleman, who supervised it for another 25.

“It was always a real special place for me,” Rick Watson says of visits to see his grandparents, Charlie and Mabel Coleman.

“As a kid, we’d look forward to weekends when all of us would stay there at one time,” he recalls. He had lots of cousins from downstate. “Grandma was a great cook. There [were] always baked goods—fresh doughnuts and bread.”

When the new Maple Valley Nursing Home was built next door in 1960, Watson’s grandparents retired. The house and outbuildings were demolished, leaving only the barn as a lone reminder of what had been.

Nearly six decades passed. Then, early last year, Leelanau County announced its intention to tear the barn down, causing concern among many community members; Watson’s concern went far beyond his own personal ties to the place.

“I was really upset about it, because, in my opinion, it could have been a museum or a farm museum or something they could share with the whole community,” he says. “It was a landmark, and once it’s gone, it’s gone forever.”

To The Rescue

Information on the farm and its former operations is somewhat limited.

Two single-year diaries—one by

Craker, the farm’s first supervisor, and the other by his wife—describe life at the Poor Farm in 1919 and 1920, respectively. Sadly, they only mention the “inmates” incidentally, without naming them all or describing the work that they did, although they do so for the hired help. The diaries do reveal that the farm housed six inmates at that time (in addition to the Craker family), one of whom had resided there for at least a decade. They only tell of calling the doctor for inmate illnesses, then taking their coffins to the poor folks’ cemetery in Cedar; of an “Indian girl” who gave birth and how the baby would cry at night; and of what a good cake the girl made.

According to county documents, patients numbered up to 20 at one time, but Watson says there were 35 during his grandparents’s time there, after the Crakers.

Meanwhile, Empire’s Laurel Jeris and Glen Arbor’s Barbara Siepker describe the barn in a short written historical summary: “It is a [40-by-60-foot] gambrel bank barn, with flared eaves and board-and-batten siding and Shawver-type trusses. It has a painted standing-seam metal roof and poured-concrete foundation. The top level stored hay and had an opening to the lower level to feed the cattle. The lower level has nine milking stanchions along the north wall. The original had a shingle roof, silo, and a cupola, which no longer exist.”

According to the Jeris-Siepker summary, the Peterson-designed Victorian house stood for only 50 years or so, during which time the county residential support system was replaced by federal support. The Poor Farm became the county’s “infirmary,” a project that eventually moved down the street to become the Maple Valley Nursing Home in 1960. Sometime in the mid-’60s, the county tore down the house, the outbuildings, the silo, and even the unusual cupola, leaving the barn as a lone reminder to some of what once was.

Over the past 20 years, an occasional resurgence in interest in the barn and its history brought some “preservationists” together; but every time that they tried to figure out a use for the barn, they came up empty, once they considered what it would cost to get it back in running order.

So it was not all that surprising when, early in 2017, Leelanau County commissioners voted to demolish the barn—but it was equally unsurprising that their request for bids to tear it down caught the attention of local historians and preservationists, who banded together.

Emails went out, letters were sent to editors of various local publications, and the cause swiftly gathered community support. Their outcry—coupled with a lone demolition proposal of \$66,000—caused the commissioners to listen to the preservationists and allow them six months to get their act together.

It only took five.

Together, Barbara Siepker (author of *Historic Cottages of the Glen Lakes* and former owner of the Cottage Book

Shop in Glen Arbor), her husband Frank Siepker (Chicago attorney and former Leelanau Conservancy chairman), Laurel Jeris (professor emeritus at Northern Illinois University), and Empire’s Steven Stier (licensed builder with a Master’s degree in historic preservation) became officers of the newly formed Leelanau County Historical Preservation Society (LCHPS).

According to its mission statement, the “purpose is the preservation and rehabilitation of historic structures in Leelanau County for the education and well-being of the community.” Projects will take into account “structures important to the history and culture, along with community identity and sustainability.” (The organization is not limited to this single project. “We think there are other structures in the county that need historic



Susan Zenker shows off her draft horse, Finn, at the Poor Farm’s event in May 2018. Two triple sets of draft horses plowed the area that will become gardens. Photo courtesy of the *Glen Arbor Sun*.

preservation,” Stier says.)

LCHPS received its 501(c)3 nonprofit status from the State of Michigan during the summer of 2017, enabling it to receive monetary donations. As of August 31, 2017, the nonprofit had received \$33,875 in donations and \$6,500 in pledges—one-third of the way to a goal of \$100,000.

Leelanau County commissioner Casey Noonan is among those who have supported this cause.

“I think it is important to preserve the barn,” he writes. “It is not just an old barn, it is a part of a poor farm, and I believe that the poor farms were an important part of our history, and there are very few remaining.”

But can this barn be saved? The foundation is crumbling, trusses and braces need replacing, door sills and windows are rotting... the list goes on.

“Yes, it can,” says Stier, an expert in this field, who currently serves as vice president of the Michigan Barn Preservation Network. In addition, he received a Michigan Heritage Award from Michigan State University in 2015; in 2017, he and his wife, Julie Avery, were given a Lifetime Achievement Award by the Michigan Historic Preservation Network.

Regarding the rotting foundation, Stier says: “I have looked at the barn several times. While it can appear very serious to an inexperienced eye, it is not very difficult to repair. There is no serious structural weakness if this issue is repaired. It affects about 10 percent of the entire foundation and is all caused by neglect.”

At the August 2017 executive meeting of the Leelanau County commissioners, Jeris, Stier, and Barbara Siepker presented a proposal to lease the barn property from the county and repair it—but not get it ready for any type of use, just repair

it. This is largely because Stier has observed that, in the past, questions about possible uses have stymied groups that were seeking to preserve the barn.

“We want to make sure it is structurally sound for another 50 years,” Stier told the commission.

Any type of usage can be negotiated at a future date, agreed county administrator Chet Janik, who negotiated the lease for the county. Back in August 2017, he explained the potential deal:

“In very simple terms, the Society is requesting a 25-year lease for the barn in exchange for the Society doing the fundraising and then taking the responsibility of renovating the barn at the estimated cost of \$70,000 to \$100,000. The goal is to create a ‘win-win’ situation, where the barn is preserved without any expense to the taxpayers.”

Full Circle

Things were mostly quiet while winter passed and the barn still stood, until—after six months of negotiations, and with help from commissioners Janik and Noonan—the lease between Leelanau County and LCHPS was signed in April 2018.

Then, in May, Watson—the grandson of Charlie and Mabel Coleman, the last caretakers—received a call from his cousin who said, “Hey, they’re having a plow event out there!”

Though it had taken a few months to negotiate the lease, the LCHPS board had spent that time planning for 2018 summer events, such as on Saturday, May 26, which dawned bright and warm, a beautiful day to plow a field. When Watson and his Coleman relatives arrived at the farm, they were floored to see where the draft horses were going to plow.

“My gosh! They put the garden exactly where Grandpa’s garden was!” Watson exclaimed, as Susan Zenker of Benzonia’s Fantail Farm stood nearby with her draft horse, Finn, a Brabant-American Belgian cross that is tall and black, with a bit of gray speckles on his backside.

“That’s some of the best ground we ever found,” Watson was told by Chris Skellenger, who has unofficially surveyed the property for the best arable land; Skellenger will be in charge of the new gardens on the property.

“We grew corn and hay and vegetables,” Watson recalled. They had a chicken coop with laying hens; hogs that they butchered occasionally; dairy cattle; a few beef cattle. They did all of the farming with horses. “Grandma used to hire three different women to help with cooking and cleaning.”

The home, he said, “was always a combination of infirmary and poor home. Grandpa would get a call that someone was down and out. He would go and check and find that person had [for example] mental illness and was living in squalor, and they’d make arrangements with that person or the family to bring them over to the farm. At that point, they would divide up [that individual’s] assets to pay for room and board. Any surplus went to the family or the county.”

Watson and the rest of the Coleman clan were not the only ones who had ties to the past and showed up at the plow event. Five women—dressed in big Kentucky Derby hats—from the Maple Valley Nursing Home were wheeled down the curving sidewalk that links to the farm next door.

They watched the two triple-teams of draft horses plow the field, then listened to the speakers. These women completed a circle, linking elements of the past to

the present and the future—the barn, the patients, the food that was grown by/for them, and the future food that will be produced in these gardens for low-income families.

Partnering Up To Help The Poor

The plowing event was sponsored by LCHPS, which had spent all of last winter devising plans and events for this summer, as well as cultivating potential partners.

“Early fall of last year, we were discussing what activities we could have that would highlight the original use of the farm,” says Stier, LCHPS president. In thinking about that purpose—a farm which cared for the poor—he says, “Chris Skellenger and Buckets of Rain

immediately came to mind, as their vision is feeding those in need, the same as the original mission of the Poor Farm.”

You might know Skellenger from his musical exploits—he is a regular at Lake Ann Brewing Company and Iron Fish Distillery, for instance. But you may be unfamiliar with his Buckets of Rain (BoR) program, which runs an urban farming program in Detroit’s Highland Park, as well as in Guatemala. The premise is literally a bucket that has a hole in it and is attached to a hose that runs through a garden; the tiny openings in the hose drip a drop of water at a time to individual plants in the garden. It is a drip-irrigation kit which only costs \$7 per kit and is able to irrigate a garden that receives little or no rain water, especially useful in urban environments.

The Detroit project is supported by the re-created vegetable garden at the old Allison Farm at the corner of Fowler Road and County Road 677 (Benzonia Trail) in Benzie County. In addition, students at Glen Lake High School have been starting BoR seedlings for the past five years.

Knowing all this, Stier reached out to Skellenger.

“I had no idea that this [Poor Farm] project was happening, so he had to convince me,” Skellenger says. “For a while, I didn’t know if the Poor Farm was a figure of speech. As I learned more about it, that sold me on the idea.”

Now he feels the way that the two projects line up is “as romantic it gets.”

Skellenger visited the farm to look for the best soil spot for the garden.

“I looked at the farm and saw different vegetation, where they probably pastured the cows,” he explains. This farm had been self-sustainable—it had fed its own 20- to 35-or-so patients—so it had to have a large vegetable garden. When he found extremely rich soil, he knew that he had struck gold.

Food produced at the new garden will feed the needy—half will go downstate, and the other half will be distributed to local food pantries. There may even be

a vegetable stand on Cold Spring Road, just off the main highway, says Skellenger, “if it looks like we’ve got the ability to man it.”

But that is the thing. Finding good volunteers and help will be key for this project to proceed—BoR and LCHPS do not have nearly enough help, although there have already been many wonderful givers.

“Alton Smith, who bought Peter Phinney’s farm [corner of Cold Spring Road and County Road 616], has offered his equipment and his manure pile,” Skellenger laughs. “It doesn’t get any better than that.”

Maybe it does—county commissioner Casey Noonan hauled his manure over himself, so Skellenger does not have to arrange for it to be transferred.

Additionally, the Envirothon team of five students from Glen Lake School who grew seedlings for this and the other BoR gardens were at the plow event, along with teacher Karen Richard, to erect raised garden beds. They felt that this work was important for the community.

Even so, it is going to take more. “This is a community garden,” Skellenger declares. “We need the community’s participation in it.”

That is why Skellenger hired Glen Lake graduate John Viswat as volunteer coordinator. He and Leelanau County’s Tom Patton, a Master Gardener, will be rounding up people to man the stand and work this garden.

A Good Start
Both Skellenger and Stier are happy with their partnership.

“The very successful event was a great beginning, and we expect our partnership will continue to flourish,” Stier says. “The Poor Farm will serve its original purpose again.”

Watson is happy, too. “I’m really glad that the effort was put forth to restore it or save it,” he says. “It’s something that should [benefit the whole community.]”

Anyone wishing to donate funds or volunteer at the Poor Farm gardens can call 231-334-4395 or email siepker@aol.com. You can also like the “Save the Poor Farm Barn” Facebook page to donate and/or receive notification of current events. To donate to Buckets of Rain, visit BucketsOfRain.org or ask about buying shirts that benefit the program at BayWear in Frankfort. A version of this article originally published in the *Glen Arbor Sun*, a semi-sister Leelanau County publication to *The Betsie Current*.

Discover The Project

There is a lot still to come with the Poor Farm Barn project.

The first of a series of “Discovery Days” will take place Saturday, July 14, at 10 a.m. at the Kasson Township Hall. The public will be invited to share any stories, documents, and pictures that they have about the Poor Farm, about which we really know very little. (In fact, it was not until the Coleman family shared it on Plow Day that local historian and LCHPS vice-president Barbara Siepker learned that the farmhouse had a beauty parlor and barber shop in the basement.) The Empire Historical Museum, Leelanau County Historical Society, and LCHPS will collaborate in the effort.

A second Discovery Day on Saturday, July 28, beginning at 10 a.m., will feature stories, pictures, and documents shared by the Coleman family that may be unknown to the rest of us. For instance, according to county documents, patients numbered up to 20, but Watson says there were 35—we have a lot to learn from each other.

Barn repairs are slated to begin later this summer, in spite of the fact that fundraising, which went very well in the beginning, lagged over the winter. As of June 1, 2018, only \$45,000 of the estimated \$70,000 to \$100,000 that is needed to repair the barn has been raised. (There have been 100 donors so far.)

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Futbol

Continued from page 1

Michael Rahn, to help with a day camp during the summer. (Rahn was an assistant coach at Michigan State University from 1992-1996, and then he was an assistant coach at the University of Wisconsin-Madison from 1997-1998, before becoming the head coach for the men's team at a small NAIA college.)

"[Rahn] brought a couple other strong young coaches with him, and the camp was really good," Voss says. "And the logo that Carl Freeman did of the Osprey grabbing the soccer ball was top notch."

Remember that there was no soccer field at Benzie Central High School back then? Rather, all soccer was played at Almira Township Park for Lake Ann kids or at Benzonia Memorial Park for everyone else. From the 1990s through the early 2000s, there was a pair of ospreys that had built nests in the tall stadium lights above the fields, and a whole generation of Benzie County soccer players grew up dribbling a ball down the field as the osprey parents flew overhead and fed their young—thus the camp was aptly named "Soaring Osprey Soccer Camp," and Freeman, a local nature artist and Benzie Audubon Society member, penned the design for the T-shirts that were given to each kid who attended the camp.

The Soaring Osprey Soccer Camp ran from 1996 until 1998. With Voss transitioning to life in Traverse City and Rahn transitioning to life as a head coach, there was a void in summer soccer programs for several years, until Scott Kubit—coach of the Benzie Central Girls Varsity Soccer team from 2000-2016, as well as Boys Varsity coach for a few years and co-ed Middle School coach for one year (notably when I was a 7th grader on that team)—decided to revive the idea in 2006.

Kubit's model was a little different, though: instead of bringing in outside coaches from big universities downstate, he used his players as the "camp counselors," teaching the younger generation of Benzie soccer players.

All in all, the camp continues to be a win-win-win situation: the younger kids get to learn soccer and have fun, the older kids get some mentoring experience, and the soccer program makes some money in the process.

For the past 12 years, this camp has been helping to bridge the gap of generations of soccer

players in Benzie County.

I, myself, am now a coach; I stepped into the shoes of Kubit a little over a year ago as head coach of the Girls Varsity Soccer team, and I have served four seasons as the coach

of the co-ed Middle School team. And as someone who has gone from playing for Benzie Central to now coaching in Benzie County, I am thrilled at the idea of having my players participate in this way. The best

way to learn something is to teach it, so the saying goes, and I see that in the players that I coach; I watch them become better players after serving as a counselor for four days in the summer, or as a ref in the fall. And, rather than the old standby of having soccer players selling various sundry—candy, cookies—or asking extended family to make a "pledge" for every goal they make in a mock shoot-out, this alternative fundraising model allows these young people to see first-hand how they can make a difference in the lives of others in their immediate community.

"The kids make camp so great, because of the energy that they bring," says Keegan Plamondon, 2018 BCHS graduate and former captain of the Boys Varsity Soccer team. For the past three years, Plamondon has worked with the youngest campers. "Nothing even comes close to comparing to it."

Novia Dalzell, an incoming junior on the Girls Varsity Soccer team, had this to say:

"When I can get young kids to love soccer as much as I do and to help them progress into great players, that's a really cool thing."

For the past several years, there have been more than 75 kids in grades kindergarten through 8th grades who have come out for camp. Additionally, there are about 10-15 student-athletes from the Girls Varsity Soccer team and 10-15 student-athletes from the Boys Varsity Soccer team who have helped out, not to mention Boys Varsity coach Scott Barker, emeritus coach Scott Kubit, Girls Varsity assistant coach Adam Worden (a 2008 BCHS graduate), and myself, along with Jeff Louwsma, who has run the Benzie 4-H Soccer program for the past two years, as well as a few involved parents and Benzie soccer alumni.

Consistently there are 20-25 business sponsors, each paying \$100 to have their logo on the back of the T-shirts that are handed out to all campers and "camp counselors." Over the past few years, the camp has raised close to \$3,000 each year that has been split between the boys and girls teams. This money has gone toward various things, such as enabling the teams to buy a new PA system for the field, so that the National Anthem could be played before games; new jerseys, warm-ups, and other equipment; team-bonding experiences; as well as to cover the costs of assistant coaches.

The 2018 Benzie Central Soccer Camp will take place Monday, July 23, through Thursday, July 26, from 6-7:30 p.m. each evening at the Benzonia Memorial Park fields, behind Watson auto dealership and McDonald's. Camp costs \$30 and includes a ball and a T-shirt; to guarantee your shirt size is ordered, please mail your registration before July 15. Find registration form online at bit.ly/BNZsoccer. To become a sponsor, email aubreyannparker@gmail.com.



Novia Dalzell cuddles with a new friend (top); Coach Adam Worden leads the group in a team high-five at the end of the day (middle); Keegan Plamondon is mauled by litt'uns (bottom). All photos by Aubrey Ann Parker.

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Caboose

Continued from page 1

kegon. Research turned up a few interesting facts.

“This was built in ’48 and decommissioned in ’84,” he says. “DT&I is Detroit, Toledo, and Ironton. It was a railroad that went just from Detroit down to Ironton—which is a little town on the Ohio River in Ohio—back and forth.”

Henry Ford used the DT&I to transport supplies and Ford products, Stege says, but over time, “he didn’t like the way they operated [the railroad], so he just bought it.”

More investigating revealed that No.106 was located near Manistee—and since No.106 was made just before No.107, it ought to be just like it, he figured, so he dragged Cherrie down to see it.

“We went down there and parked and got out of the car, and she said, ‘Oh, my God! It’s so big! It’s huge! I hate it.’”

But, he sagely pointed out, she had promised.

Soon, three flatbed trucks, loaded with No.107 and other key associated parts, arrived at their property after the journey from Muskegon. On one flatbed sat the body of the caboose; the second carried a section of track for it to sit on and four sets of railroad trucks (each consisting of four wheels, attached to an axle bed); on the third rested a crane.

Then the lifting began. Once everything was in place, Stege welded the train to the tracks, and No.107 had a new home.

Dear Santa...

Railroad aficionados, Stege notes, often become highly specialized, so he thought that he could probably find a researcher who knew about DT&I, and thus he could find information about his specific caboose. And, as luck would have it, as he browsed books about the DT&I, Stege found gold.

“This guy writes a book about DT&I railroad cabooses—a whole book just on cabooses! I sent away for it, hoping to find information about my caboose,” he says.

Lo and behold, he found nine pictures, along with the story of DT&I No.107.

As it turns out, this was a special caboose. Several photos show No.107 in its original paint. Then, it was repainted and all dolled up in 1961; for what? Few knew. Even the workmen and crew “didn’t know why it was fixed up,” Stege says. A few pages later, there is a photo of No.107 topped with a Christmas tree and ‘Merry Christmas’ messages all around.

“This one was the first Santa caboose,” Stege proudly declares. “This one.”

And so, Henry Ford’s first ever Santa caboose, dressed in its original colors, sits in the woods by the Sleeping Bear Dunes. But fair warning: because it is not open to the public, the only way to see it is to book it for a special stay.

Rustic Living

As you walk in, the original hardwood floors and a stainless steel kitchenette shine. The walls throughout the interior are a pleasing cream, a trick to help lighten up the space and make it feel larger. A small, round, stainless steel table and two chairs greet you opposite the kitchen. There is no dishwasher; dishes must be hand-washed. Remember—this is rustic living!

You walk through a narrow corridor to the center of the caboose, where there is the original “observation area,” in which you can climb vertical metal rungs to sit in four facing, black-vinyl-upholstered seats—two on each side—surrounded by windows. (Up here, the conductor observed the rest of the train to watch for wheel fires, caused by friction sparking the oil that pooled in the bushings. When he saw one, he pulled the nearby handle on the wall, which would exhaust the air from all of the brakes and stop the train.)

Past the observation area, on one side,



Rent this caboose for a two-night stay for two people in the woods near Sleeping Bear Dunes. Photo courtesy of Leelanau Vacation Rentals.

is a very small bathroom, about the size that you would find in a sailboat cabin. Across from that stands a newly installed shower, with period-appropriate subway tile.

At the rear of the caboose is a pull-down, dropleaf table and a full-sized Murphy bed—you know, the kind that pull-down from the wall in the old movies. Everywhere are metal handles to hold onto, as the train would have bumped its way through Ohio and Michigan.

Refurbishing No.107 has been a labor of love for Stege. Bought around 2010, he painted it in 2012 but first took pictures of all the old stencil-lettered signs and symbols, so that he could recreate them. An experienced blacksmith, he was well-equipped to repair the broken conduits and handles.

Did the grandkids like it? Sure, they came out, clambered around on it and climbed up on the roof; but they never slept in it. Originally, there was no bed, Stege explains, adding that the conductor never would have slept overnight in here—he would have gotten off in Ironton.

“Someone else got on and came back... I never figured out the sleeping arrangement until recently,” he admits.

Stege put the final touches on the caboose just this past fall. By then, his grandkids were too old to use it as a plaything.

So now, it is ready to rent, for those who are looking for something different.

“For a railroad person,” Stege says, “it’s ideal.”

And the location! There is the Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail and public access to Glen Lake nearby; the dune climb is right behind; and do not forget the wineries!

*The caboose sleeps two and can be rented through Leelanau Vacation Rentals (LVR) by calling 231-334-6100 or online at bit.ly/LGLcaboose. Please do not visit on your own without a reservation. The minimum stay is two nights. A version of this article originally published in the **Glen Arbor Sun**, a semi-sister Leelanau County publication to **The Betsie Current**.*



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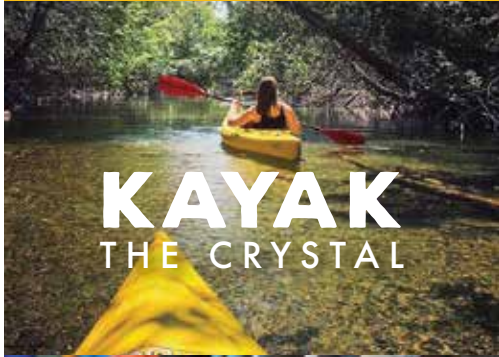
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