

Good, Clean Living

Lost Lake Farm of Honor

By Jenn Ryan

Current Contributor

As a little girl, I lived in the last house on the west side of Fewins, a dusty gravel road—not too much more than a two-track back in the day—about two miles from downtown Honor. It was then, as it is now, a rural road, riddled with potholes, old farms (many abandoned or non-working), open pastures, beautiful wildflowers, and aged trees.

My parents still live on dusty ole’ Fewins, but theirs is not the last house on the road anymore—several families have built beyond our land, while some have moved on and others have passed on. One of the new families in “the neighborhood” includes Carissa Savage and Nathan Cornell, co-owners of Lost Lake Farm, LLC, located atop a picturesque hill on Fewins Road. With a small homestead, large

open fields of tidy green rows, hoop houses, and half a dozen heritage breed pigs, the farm is a vestige of the slower pace of life that I remember from my childhood here.

They began their farming adventure in 2013 on Cornell’s family property in Kalkaska County, which included a small pond, named “Lost Lake,” which explains the farm’s original namesake. But, even when they moved the farm to Honor, they kept the name, especially, as Savage admits, since they actually did “lose the



Lost Lake Farm has a small homestead, large open fields of tiny green rows, hoop houses, and half a dozen heritage breed pastured pigs. Photo by Jenn Ryan.

lake” completely in the move. In 2016, this sweet young couple came to Benzie County looking to dig deep and lead by example—quiet, intelligent, introspective, creative, and gracious, they are an inspiration. Like many Northern Michiganders, they each have deep and diverse backgrounds containing fascinating stories of travel, meaningful work, and intentional living. Luckily for us, they decided to plant roots in Benzie County after returning to Michigan to be closer to family. Their calloused hands provide a remarkable array of offerings to those who are looking for good, clean, local foods.

Please see Lost on page 7

The Last Straw

Students embark on mission to rid Frankfort of plastic straws

By Ella Larsen and Kirsten Miller

Current Contributors

I am blissfully floating in the endless ocean of Lake Michigan; time, space, and all of my worries wash away with the gentle waves. Ah, summer in Northern Michigan. But, wait, what is that thing on my foot? Is it a minnow? A hungry sturgeon? I grab at my feet—*go away, lake creature!* Snatching at the monster attached to me, I realize it is of the polyethylene variety. I subdue the beast and take it ashore; it will harm Lake Michigan no more.

While most humans can defend themselves against this plastic monster and its relatives, there is an abundance of fragile marine life in the Great Lakes ecosystem

that cannot. This is happening right here, right now.

“While considering summer projects to undertake, we started talking about facts like how 500 million plastic straws are used in the United States every day,” says Frankfort High School junior Janey Turner, a member of the school’s Interact Club.

Classmate Nora Pasche chimes in: “By 2050, there will be more pounds of plastic than fish in the oceans.”

Plastic straws are particularly harmful, as they are a single-use plastic and not recyclable—although mostly a convenience item for humans, they are most



Tiny plastic pieces of garbage being picked up at Elberta beach earlier this spring. Photo courtesy of Aimé Merizon.

definitely not convenient for our lakes. So the FHS Interact Club has developed an initiative to end the use of plastic straws in Frankfort. This group of six students has spent the past month working on a plan, and now they are in the implementation process. “The group felt like they needed a project that was achievable and could have a positive impact on the environment,” says Kristin Pensyl, the club’s faculty advisor.

The Plastics Problem

Although very handy in a multitude of ways, plastics are also very detrimental to the environment, from creation to disposal. The majority of the familiar plastics that make up our cars, phones, and computers are

Please see Straws on page 8

Wave of Change

Connecting kids to healthy foods

By Kelly Ottinger

Current Contributor

One in three children in the United States are on track to develop diabetes during their lifetime, and poverty is a contributing factor. Moreover, one in five children in Benzie County struggle with access to enough food, and more than 50 percent of students qualify for free or reduced school lunches. Additionally, basic cooking skills were taught at both Benzie Central and Frankfort high schools a little over a decade ago, but no longer; further, funding for the after-school SEEDS program, which taught cooking, has also dried up.

But studies have shown that having an awareness of where foods come from and some basic cooking skills can have profound

impacts on food-related preferences, attitudes, and behaviors of school-aged children—habits that will stick with them through adulthood.

Fortunately, several key partnerships surrounding this topic are popping up in Benzie County.

“Obviously these issues surrounding access to healthy foods aren’t going to be solved overnight,” says Gerri VanAntwerp, executive director of Benzie Area Christian Neighbors (BACN). “Everybody



Sarah Perez-Sanz (right) assists a Benzie County youngster to try new foods and expand her pallet. Photo by Kelly Ottinger.

is having to define their roles; for example, the MSU Extension as educator, BACN as connector, Benzie Senior Resources as deliverer, and so on. We all have to be willing to examine what we can offer and what our role is going to be.”

Partnerships Pay Off

FoodCorps member Sarah Perez-Sanz has dedicated a year of her life to changing the harrowing statistics around youth diets, perhaps one sweet potato fry at a time. Prior to summer break, Perez-Sanz was finishing a stint at Traverse Heights Elementary School, where she oversaw an extensive overhaul of the school’s greenhouse, helped students compost, and supervised the tending of plant

Please see Food on page 6



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Ahead of the Curve

Investing in community, funding an indoor climbing center

By Stephanie Purifoy
Current Contributor

Nancy and Larry Bordine are used to doing things ahead of the curve. The owners of Beachnut Surf Shop in Frankfort started buying and using stand-up paddleboards and riding electric skateboards before many in Northern Michigan knew what they were. In those early days, the couple was once stopped while paddling in Grand Traverse Bay, only to be asked about their rides. Larry was even arrested for riding an electric skateboard in Frankfort, the officer informing him that he had broken state laws.

The Bordines—along with their employee, Alex Thayer, a recent Frankfort High School graduate and the 2018 class valedictorian—are now working with state lawmakers to promote the use of alternative transportation, such as electric skateboards. In the meantime, Larry has brought his electric board up to “code” with a tiny piece of glass for the windshield and a small mirror, secured by tape to the deck.

With this forward-thinking nature, it is not surprising that the couple’s next venture would be bigger than anything previous. The Bordines’s new goal is to see their rock-climbing facility, MI Summit, erected in Long Lake Township, just west of Traverse City and just south of M-72. Once built, it will be the closest indoor climbing center for 27 counties—the next closest ones are in Mount Pleasant, Grand Rapids, Kalamazoo, and Ann Arbor.

“I am over-the-moon excited about this new rock-climbing facility that the Bordines are building,” says Meryl [Estes] Brydges, who grew up in Traverse City and now lives just outside Beulah with her husband and their two kids at Narrow Gauge Farm & Forge. “I spent a good portion of my early teens climbing at the New Campus climbing wall in the State Hospital grounds [at what is now the Grand Traverse Commons]. That was the only indoor climbing wall in the area back then. The other alternative was Climb Kalamazoo, and that was three hours away.”

Fidelity or New Facility?

Nancy grew up in eastern Michigan doing all sorts of outdoor activities, from waterskiing to climbing trees. After completing her nursing degree at Michigan State University, she moved “up north” to Petoskey and took

up downhill skiing. It was during a day on the slopes that her friends set her up with Larry; he had grown up on the California coast, also doing every outdoor sport that he could, like rock climbing and surfing.

The couple moved to Traverse City and made a living in Northern Michigan through several companies, such as Larry’s business for designing and selling backpacks that are specifically made for rock climbing and their Frankfort surf shop, which opened in 2010.

But as their retirement approached, they had a decision to make.

“You can go with Morgan Stanley or Fidelity or any other institution, but after you work your whole life for this little nest of money, you have to give it all to them, and then they pay you back so you can live on that,” Larry says. “We wanted a way to *do* something with the money and get some back. It’s pretty much the same thing, except not only do we get to use it, everyone else also gets to benefit from it, too.”

With their lifetime savings, they decided to fill a hole that had existed in the Northern Michigan region for almost 10 years—they began plans to build a state-of-the-art rock-climbing facility. The Bordines purchased a plot of land on M-72 with these savings and began planning their building.

Up until this point, there was relatively little risk involved. If they wanted to abandon the project, the land and the building could be sold, and most of their money would be returned. But, if they made the investment to spend thousands of dollars to build and equip the climbing wall, all of that money would be lost. So the Bordines decided to invest in a crowdfunding campaign, which will launch later this summer.

The goal of the crowdfunding campaign is to find several hundred people who would be willing to buy season passes in advance. If they do not reach the required mark by the deadline, every participant gets their money back. But if enough money is raised, the initial investors will receive lifetime discounts for all future MI Summit programs.

Aside from the money, the Bordines think this is a good way to gauge interest in the area.

“It’s kind of a market study before you do anything,” Larry says. “I’d rather lose \$20,000 right now than spend \$300,000 to find out it’s not going to work.”

Why Climbing?

Larry grew up rock climbing. When he



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moved to Michigan, he would frequently make climbing trips to Canada with Nancy and friends. Meanwhile, Nancy was drawn into the sport by Larry, and she fell in love with the strong bonds that exist within the rock-climbing community.

“You can walk into the room by yourself, but by the time you’re on a route, you’ve got coaches on the ground encouraging you and helping you,” Larry says. “And you’re also establishing this bond with your belayer. It’s really easy to meet people like that.”

Nancy sees this project not as just an opportunity to build a sport, but also as a way to help the community.

“All the skills you learn on the wall are applicable in real life,” she says. “Setting a goal and reaching it, helping others achieve

Community response has been good. “I’m excited that my children will be able to enjoy a local indoor climbing facility, where they can safely explore and learn the art of rock climbing,” says Brydges, who, along with he husband, Alex, has climbed outdoors in many states throughout the nation—Arkansas, Colorado, Kentucky, Michigan, New Mexico, Oregon, Washington, and West Virginia.

Community Building Builds Community

The builder, Nathan Greenwood, and the architect, Jess Glowacki, presented the Bordines with detailed designs and a rendering of a three-dimensional fly-through of what the space would look like.

“It felt like I had been in this 18-month pregnancy and now someone was showing me what my child was going to look like,” Nancy laughs.

Groundwork for the wall has already started, and their goal is to have a soft opening for Thanksgiving weekend, with a complete opening of the facility at the New Year.

The Bordines hope to eventually take a step back from the venture. They are currently laying the groundwork but hope to leave the company in younger hands. After that, Nancy hopes that the company will eventually buy the building from them and expand to an even larger facility.

Both Nancy and Larry say they want people to know them as the couple who stayed ahead of the curve and established a gathering point for the community.

“Why leave our retirement money sitting in a bank account where no one except for us gets to have fun with it?” Nancy says. “With this, we get a cool place to climb, we get to help develop a sport, and I have the chance to do some community outreach with it.”

Stay tuned: the Bordines are planning a “reveal party” for their crowdfunding video very soon, most likely at The Workshop Brewing Company in Traverse City. Their crowdfunding goal is \$250,000, pending the acquisition of 1,500 sign-ups online.

A version of this article originally published in the Glen Arbor Sun, a semi-sister publication to The Betsie Current.



Nancy and Larry Bordine are surfers, skateboarders, and rock-climbers with plans to build a rock-climbing facility soon. Photo courtesy of the Bordines.

their goals, trusting others and having someone trust you. These lessons could really strengthen the community. I want to reduce the feeling of isolation for some of the fringe members of our society.”

With the space they will have, Nancy wants to have fitness classes, birthday parties, and other community events.

The biggest challenge for any new business owner is figuring out all of the logistics, and this has been no different with the Bordines. When they first came up with the idea, they assembled their group of friends with whom they climb frequently. This group became the steering committee, and together they designed the company and the “feel” of the brand. Then they found an architect and builder who would design the kind of building that they wanted.

“We always remember that we’re doing this as a group, and we’re doing this for our community,” Nancy says. “That’s always the bottom line that brings us back into focus throughout any challenge.”

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The Betsie Current

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Everyday

Heros of the Storm: a ranger-led shipwreck rescue re-enactment program every day, all summer long, at the Maritime Museum in Glen Haven. 3-3:30pm. Lyle Gun Firing from 3:30-4pm.

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.

MIFiberShed at Grow Benzie is a place for fabric, fiber craft, and clothing to be recycled, remade, or exchanged. Clear our 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. MIFiberShed 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.

Gentle yoga for women in the barn at the First Congregational Church of Benzonia. All levels welcome. Teacher is Jeanne Peters. 10am.

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" Celstron 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 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 Schwyer 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.

Knitting for NICUs: Ashley Taillard leads a knitting guild, which is fulfilling the clothing needs of the neonatal intensive care units (NICUs) of Northern Michigan hospitals. Children's activities are available during this time, so that parents do not need to find childcare. Bring your own knitting supplies or purchase a starter kit on site. Free lessons will be offered for those who do not know how to knit. The guild meets at the Crystal Cafe at 1681 Benzie Highway/US-31, in the Shop'n'Save plaza. 5:30pm.

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 Moutain 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.

Magical History Tour: A collaboration between the Benzie Area Historical Society and Benzie Bus, the Betsie Bay Tour departs from the Benzie Area Historical Museum in Benzonia at 2pm. \$15. Call 231-882-5539 to reserve your spot in history!

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.

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

Magical History Tour: A collaboration between the Benzie Area Historical Society and Benzie Bus, the Heart of Benzie tour departs from the Almira Township Historical Museum at 1pm. \$15. Call 231-882-5539 to reserve your spot in history!

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 19

Very Cherry Smorgasbord dinner at Frankfort United Methodist Church. 5-7pm.

Thursday, July 19

Keith Scott is one of Chicago’s most vibrant musicians. For the past 26 years, he has built his reputation as a sizzly blues guitarist, dynamic performer, and noteworthy songwriter and bandleader. He has toured Europe and the United States with his band and with blues great Jimmy Dawkins; now he hits the stage at Iron Fish Distillery. 7-9pm.

Thursday, July 19

Based in New York City, Mulebone is a musical partnership comprised of multi-instrumentalist John Ragusa and roots music specialist Hugh Pool. The grist for their mill is traditional blues. Stormcloud. 8pm.

Friday, July 20

The Pocket at Iron Fish Distillery. 6:30-9:30pm.

Friday, July 20

Four-time Emmy Award winning composer/songwriter and lead guitarist/vocalist for the rock band The Bihlman Bros, Jeff Bihlman’s music has appeared on television shows for Fox, CBS, ABC, CMT, and most recently on “Sons of Anarchy” on TNT. Catch this world-class musician who has appeared with BB King, ZZ Top, Ray Charles, Buddy Guy, and many more. Stormcloud. 8-10pm.

Saturday, July 21

Up North Stand-up Paddleboard Classic. 8am-7pm.

Saturday, July 21

Monthly meeting of the Benzie Democrats: coffee, treats, and conversation begin at 9:30am. At 10am, we will hear from special guests: Jeanne Butterfield, immigration expert; and Michigan Supreme Court candidate Sam Bagenstos. Meeting at Dems headquarters at 9930 Honor Highway/US-31 in the small plaza beside the Cherry Bowl Drive-In.

Saturday, July 21

Feast Before The Fight: Hang out at St. Ambrose Cellars and learn more about Mike Taillard, our Benzie County guy that is running for state office! The primaries are just around the corner, and we’ll soon know who we’ll be up against in the against in the general election! Before we spend the next few months battling to victory, we’ll eat and drink to our content, celebrating the glory of the oncoming fight! There are plenty of activities, games, bands, food, drink, and so forth. Kids ARE welcome. Free sober drivers available for locals to get home. 3-10pm.

Saturday, July 21

Jack Pine Savage performs at St. Ambrose Cellars. 6-8pm.

Saturday, July 21

Catch “head nod jazz” aficionados After Ours, from South Bend, Indiana, grooving at Iron Fish Distillery. The duo has quickly made a name for themselves around the Midwest with their unique approach to improvisation and their arrangement of contemporary tunes. 7-9:30pm.

Sunday, July 22

The Clean Water Campaign for Michigan is ramping up the effort to uplift water issues in this most important election year! Join us for an afternoon of music and food, with special speakers and plenty of inspiration, information, and celebration. Activist heroes Hans Voss and Jim Lively of the Groundwork Center (formerly the Beulah-based Michigan Land Use Institute, MLUI) will speak about the efforts of Oil & Water Don’t Mix and the impact of the Clean Water Campaign. Michigan’s beloved poet Jaime Delp will read from her works about the preciousness of water. Clean Water Campaign founder and renowned Michigan bard Seth Bernard will perform a set and do an interview with Grow Benzie’s own Josh Stoltz. Kalamazoo’s Jordan Hamilton is a cellist, singer, rapper, and beatmaker and a rising star in the midwest music scene. Jordan will perform his own set and will also accompany Seth. Grow Benzie. Suggested donation for entry is \$15, but no one will

be turned away for lack of funds; larger donations will be graciously accepted. 1-4pm.

Sunday, July 22

Democrat Candidate Fundraiser: Support Matt Morgan, Mike Taillard, Kathy Wiejaczka, and Ed Hoogterp by donating to any or all of the candidates. Amble around the gorgeous flowers and remarkable artwork while enjoying a chilled drink, a snack, and friends who share your values and your intention to help Dems win big in November. All four candidates will be available to talk about what is on your mind and theirs. Suggested \$20 donation, includes a bit of refreshment and live music. Betsie River Centennial Lily Farm at 17745 Moore Road, Thompsonville. 2:30-4:30pm.

Sunday, July 22

Enjoy a kaleidoscope of music by The Mosaics at Iron Fish Distillery. 3:30-5:30pm.

Sunday, July 22

The Lofteez are an upbeat and entertaining acoustic duo from Northern Michigan, originally formed and recorded in lofts in the artists’ community of Downtown Pontiac. The Lofteez feature multi-instrumentalist and vocalist Karin E of The Remedy Band on fiddle and vocals, with her partner Riffin Tiff on guitar and bass. Playing an eclectic mix of covers and originals with influences from all genres, The Lofteez are storytellers, sharing their experiences and love of extensive traveling, yoga, food, and humor. St.

Ambrose Cellars. 6-9pm.

Monday-Thursday, July 23-26

Benzie Central Soccer Camp for grades K-6: camp costs \$30 and includes a ball and a T-shirt. Show up to camp a half hour early on Monday to register. Camp runs from 6-7:30pm each evening at the Benzonia Memorial Park fields, behind Watson auto dealership and McDonald’s.

Tuesday-Saturday, July 24-28

Lakeside Shakespeare Theatre’s performances of *Henry VIII*. All shows begin at 7pm on Tank Hill at 188 Park Avenue in Frankfort, just down the hill from Paul Oliver Memorial Hospital.

Friday-Sunday, July 27-29

Dunesville Music Festival in Lake Ann at The Harm Farm, 4846 Hulbert Road. \$85 tickets at the gate; \$35 for teens; free for children 12 and under. Rust camping is an additional \$10. Visit DunesvilleMusicFestival.com for the line-up of this year’s musicians.

Saturday, July 28

Little Platte Lake Water Tour with the Benzie Conservation District. Call 231-882-4391. 9am-12pm.

Saturday, July 28

Basics of Ayurveda for Health & Longevity: learn the general principles of ayurveda, it will change your approach to health! \$40 workshop. Contact Marti Jeffs at 231-838-5171 for more information. Yoga at Ladaka of Frankfort. 10am-12:30pm.

Monday-Friday, July 30-August 3

Family Week with Lakeside Shakespeare Theatre, featuring 50-minute *Hamlet* and education workshop performances, all shows begin at 7pm on Tank Hill in Frankfort.

Wednesday, August 1

Sleep Soundly: informational workshop for developing regular, deep, restorative sleep through ayurveda, yoga, and breath techniques. \$40 workshop. Contact Marti Jeffs at 231-838-5171 for more information. Yoga at Ladaka of Frankfort. 6-9pm.

Saturday, August 4

Walk-a-thon: walk, run, or bike from Frankfort’s Bellows Park on Crystal Lake, at the corner of Bellows Avenue and South Shore Drive. All proceeds to benefit Benzie Senior Resources, a non-profit organization serving the seniors of Benzie County. Please contact 231-325-0600 or info@benzieseniorresources.org for an information packet. Registration from 7:30-9:30am.

Saturday, August 4

57th annual Frankfort Rotary Chicken BBQ in Mineral Springs Park in downtown Frankfort. Tickets are a \$10 donation. 11:30am-6pm.

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July 24 - July 28

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Continued from page 1

Sometimes, it is difficult to understand how kids develop their taste preferences and attitudes about fresh foods. Letting them actually put hands in the dirt and have a stake in a plant's growth—and then following with washing and preparing the food—can

Approximately 50 people visit the BACN food pantry each week, and during the summer months, the numbers climb to include children who come along on the

For several years, Grow Benzie has served as a culinary hub for our area—hosting workshops, events, cooking classes, and more. Additionally, many high school sports teams have used the Grow Benzie facilities to cook their own team dinners; for instance, the Benzie Central High School football teams even grew their own tomatoes in the community gardens and then harvested them for a spaghetti dinner for their end-of-the-season banquet.

Eichberger adds: “As [Perez-Sanz’s] direct supervisor, I am confident she will be able to draw from the rich experiences she has had throughout this past year and apply them in her studies. I also know she played a critical role in developing relationships and systems in her schools that will continue long after her departure.”

Kelly Ottinger is fundraising coordinator for Benzie Area Christian Neighbors (BACN). Visit bit.ly/foodcorpsMI for information on FoodCorps Michigan; bit.ly/MunsonFoodRx for more information on Munson's fruit and vegetable prescription program.

Lost

Continued from page 1

“Taking the time to play with food feeds our souls,” Savage says.

The Road To Benzie
Growing up in Kalkaska County in the 1990s, Cornell noticed many local farms were moving to more mechanized, chemicalized, and commoditized ways. With a rich culinary background, this is not his idea of how food should be cultivated.
“Excellent, high-quality ingredients—clean, well-raised, nutrient-dense—allow you to create delicious food,” says Cornell, who attended the Culinary Institute of New York and spent a decade traveling the country as a cook at a wide variety of restaurants.

This makes sense, given Cornell’s cooking style—he is inspired by what is fresh and available at a particular place or season. His experience includes working for Robert Redford at the Sundance Resort in Utah; making authentic Mexican food alongside Oaxacan women in Oregon; and cooking wild-caught salmon and halibut at a wilderness lodge in Alaska.

This last one is where he met Savage, originally from Tucson, Arizona. After studying sociology and Spanish in Chicago during college, she had a varied career in teaching, gardening, and community organizing in many parts of the country, before settling down as a full-time farmer with Cornell. Despite arriving at this juncture in her early 30s, Savage has always had a green thumb, working with plants and experimenting in gardening in a wide range of climates—from growing lettuce in Arizona’s mild winters to her 4-H watermelon garden in Arkansas to planting potatoes under Alaska’s midnight sun.

“I got really serious about growing food while working at Village Gardens, a nonprofit in Portland, Oregon,” Savage says. There, she facilitated community gardens in public housing neighborhoods and worked with gardeners of diverse ages, ethnicities, and physical abilities; she led children’s garden clubs and cooking classes and helped to start a community-run laying hen cooperative to provide organic eggs for the neighborhood.

Cornell and Savage’s mutual interests in healthy food, community, environmental issues, and a love of working outdoors fostered the couple’s relationship to one another, as well as to farming.

“As I increasingly became interested in the quality of ingredients that I was cooking with, and where those ingredients came from, I decided to switch gears to farming,” says Cornell, who no longer cooks professionally (though he still loves to prepare meals for family and friends). While Savage was working at Village Gardens, Cornell apprenticed at organic vegetable farms in Oregon for two years.

Social activists who have put their money where their mouths are, the couple decided to put down roots—literally and figuratively—in Northern Michigan.

“While we loved Portland, we wanted to be nearer to family and to know that our work would directly impact our community,” Cornell says.

On The Farm
The average workday is 15 hours, from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m., with a break for lunch. They follow organic growing practices, improving their soil with compost and minerals and never using synthetic chemicals in their farming.
For Cornell, sometimes it is straight to business in the morning, meaning that boots go on over pajamas, and it is time to irrigate. But other times, he first enjoys yoga with the farm cats (aptly named after varieties of aru-

gula: Astro, Surrey, and Etta, short for Sylvetta) and an energizing high-fat breakfast of bacon, eggs, and coffee before heading outside.

Meanwhile, Savage generally starts her day with computer work before heading outside to enjoy the quiet beauty of the sunrise. (Though she admits that her favorite chores are at twilight.) Hers is the friendly face that you will see at one of Benzie County’s seasonal farmers’



Carissa Savage and Nathan Cornell, co-owners of Lost Lake Farm in Honor, along with one of three farm cats, aptly named after varieties of arugula: Astro, Surrey, and Etta, short for Sylvetta. Photo by Jenn Ryan.

markets, depending on the day.

At The Market
Lost Lake Farm’s market booth is welcoming and robust, filled with the colors of the season and always brimming with what I think of as their signature offering—delicious micro-greens! In all, depending on the season,

farm, they hope to sustain a diverse assortment of good, clean food for years to come—for instance, just this past week, they added a high tunnel to extend their growing season.

In addition to the veggies, Lost Lake Farm offers non-GMO, heritage-breed, pastured pork via pigs that are raised on grass and are humanely treated, free of antibiotics and hormones: ground pork, sausage, bratwurst, bacon, bone-in and boneless chops, tenderloin, spare ribs, baby back ribs, hocks, and many different roasts. Notably, all of the smoked meats are naturally cured with celery juice, without chemically derived nitrates/nitrites. (The pork cuts are available for delivery in Kalkaska or Traverse City, along with pick-up at the Lost Lake Farm in Honor or at the 24-hour farm stand at The May Farm on Adams Road, just outside Frankfort; you can also get their pork at Oryana Natural Foods Market in Traverse City.) They welcome additional pastured pork customers—the farm has capacity to continue growing as they add pasture.

“Our animals play an integral part in our farm plan,” Savage say. “Helping us to fertilize our fields for future vegetable production and eating the excess or imperfect produce that we don’t sell.”

Do What You Love, Love What You Do
It is obvious that they both love what they do—Cornell shares one of his favorite chores: “I feed the pigs at dusk. It’s sort of like a rugby match, wondering if they’ll knock off a bucket before getting to eat out of it—a very fun and challenging chore. I love to watch their social dynamic at the feeder.”

Savage says that her favorite crop to grow changes throughout the year, but right now, it is sugar snap peas; Cornell agrees that his “favorite” crops change all the time, but right now, it is arugula, due to the challenges of germination and planting—the true trouble-shooting of farming.

Long hours of physical labor can take a toll and deplete, but Savage says ice cream helps. She also enjoys farm walks and arranging stunning wild flower bouquets, when time permits. Cornell says yoga and going to the chiropractor every two weeks help him to maintain his sense of balance from the toilsome work of farming. Their joint self-care rituals include choosing to cook dinner together each evening, letting their inspiration lead as they take time to use the tantalizing ingredients they have cultivated to concoct flavorful meals, enjoyed *al fresco*, while watching the sunset.

When they are not occupied with farm-life, the couple enjoys hiking, biking, swimming, paddleboarding, and skiing through the beautiful Northern Michigan countryside.

Lost Lake Farm is located at 11664 Fewins Road, just outside Honor. Their goods make appearances at the Elberta Farmers’ Market on Thursdays from 8 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.; at the Frankfort Farmers’ Market on Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. and sometimes at Grow Benzie’s Farmers’ Market on Mondays from 2-6 p.m. The farm also offers order-based Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA) shares, with pick-ups happening at the farm on Tuesday afternoons; if interested, call 231-709-7203. Learn more at LostLakeFarm.net.

Favorite Recipe Bacon, Beet, & Mozzarella Pizza

- Garlic Oil
¼ cup olive oil
2 cloves garlic
1/8 teaspoon smoked paprika
Blend all ingredients together until smooth.
- Pizza
Olive oil, salt, and pepper
2 handfuls arugula or spinach
2 large onions
2 Chioggia (candy stripe) beets
4 ounces fresh mozzarella, sliced 1/8-inch thick
4 slices bacon, pre-cooked
Pizza dough of your choice

Pre-heat oven to 500 degrees. Thinly slice the onions and cook slowly with olive oil, salt, and pepper over low heat until caramelized. Roll out dough to the size of a baking sheet, and transfer to the sheet (dusted with cornmeal, if you have it, to keep it from sticking, or just a little extra flour). Brush dough liberally with Garlic Oil. Top with a couple handfuls of arugula, then the caramelized onions. Slice the beets as thinly as you can, using a mandolin if you have one, then toss with a bit of olive oil, salt, and pepper. Evenly distribute the beets and mozzarella. Crumble the bacon on top. Bake at 500 degrees for 8-10 minutes, or until cheese is melting and crust is browned.

they have 90 different varieties of naturally grown vegetables, including heirlooms: basil, beets, broccoli, carrots, cilantro, cucumbers, eggplant, fava beans, fennel, garlic, garlic scapes, green beans, kale, leeks, onions, parsley, potatoes, radishes, rutabagas, scallions, snap and snow peas, sweet and hot peppers, squash, strawberries, tomatoes, turnips, zuchinis, and more.

Monitoring what their clients purchase, they are mindful of what and how much to grow. Deeply conscientious, they believe whole-heartedly in slowing things down with real food, taking care of the earth, and making a difference in their community.

They reinvest what they earn into the farm, to be able to offer even more to their community. By adding to the infrastructure of their

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Straws

Continued from page 1

man-made from non-renewable resources: primarily fossil fuels.

When plastics are created, their by-products pollute our atmosphere in the form of climate-changing gases. Then, whether those plastics are disposed of in a garbage can (to fill our overflowing landfills) or on the side of the road (#litterbugs), the chemicals are released back into nature to wreak havoc on Earth's ecosystems—chlorinated plastics release harmful chemicals into the soil, which can seep into groundwater and surface water, according to Plastic Pollution Coalition, a global alliance of more than 700 organizations and businesses in 60 countries that is working toward a world

that is free of plastic pollution. Exposure to plastics has been linked to cancer, birth defects, impaired immunity, endocrine disruption, and other health problems.

Moreover, plastics are made to last forever, but 33 percent of all plastics are used only once—water bottles, bags, straws—and then are thrown away. Plastics do not biodegrade; they break down into smaller and smaller pieces. Some plastics are known to cling to one another, forming masses in the oceans (and lakes) that are like floating islands. Additionally, wildlife can become entangled in plastics, or they can mistake plastics for food and eat them—whales have been known to die of starvation, because their bellies are full of plastics that they cannot get rid of.

What Can Be Done?

Looking at the entire plastics problem, from when plastics are created to how they are disposed of, it seems pretty overwhelming for a small group of high school students to take on.

"If we could do just one small thing in our small town, it could actually make a big difference and be a stepping stone toward larger projects," Turner says.

The reduction of plastic straws seemed like a doable project: "The Last Plastic Straw of Frankfort" initiative.

Straws are non-recyclable and single use, and they commonly end up on beaches, plus they can harm marine life. They are also used and thrown away for convenience, without considering how much plastic they waste—think about it: how many times have you actually really *needed* to use a straw?

The use of plastic straws is a problem that many campaigns have been devised to rival, and nearby Traverse City even has a "The Last Plastic Straw" committee, as of early 2017. But so far, such efforts have not spread to Frankfort, though there is a Benzie Plastics Awareness Collective, aimed at educating the county as a whole on the plastics problem—big "wins" for this group have included The Cabbage Shed of Elberta, Stormcloud Brewing Company of Frankfort, and The Roadhouse Mexican Bar & Grille in Benzonia all committing to halting the use of plastic straws. Additionally, Ursa Major Bistro in Beulah is currently experimenting with paper straws, as is Iron Fish Distillery out in Thompsonville. Also, the Cold Creek Inn of

Beulah only provides straws if they are asked.

"We are very pleased with the response and effort of our local restaurants," says Aimé Merizon, Outreach Coordinator at the Benzie Conservation District and co-founder of the Benzie Plastic Awareness Collective.

Last Straw of Frankfort

With all of its beautiful beaches and trails, the Interact Club thought that Frankfort could also benefit greatly from taking this step toward environmental protection, considering that the city's economy is largely based on the area being as natural as it can be for when the tourists begin to arrive during the summer.

So the Interact Club has taken action by creating flyers that list facts about their mission and why they want Frankfort to become a straw-free environment. They have also visited several Frankfort businesses to discuss

When Straws Make Sense

After a 2015 Youtube video of a sea turtle with a plastic straw stuck up its nostril went viral, social media campaigns like #StopSucking and city-wide bans on plastic straws have been gaining support. Even international companies like Starbucks now have plans to phase out plastic straws by 2020.

However, for many people with certain disabilities, going straw-free is simply not an option.

Yes, there are many alternatives to plastic straws—paper, biodegradable plastics, and reusable straws made from metal or silicone.

However, paper and/or biodegradable straws often fall apart too quickly and can be problematic for people with limited jaw control, allowing them to bite right through, according to a recent article by *National Public Radio*. Meanwhile, people with disabilities may struggle with washing reusable straws. Silicone straws are usually not flexible enough for people with mobility challenges, while metal straws can pose a safety risk, as they conduct heat and/or cold from the drink, not to mention being hard and inflexible.

reducing—if not entirely removing—plastic straws.

A few business owners have already come to the same conclusion on their own, like Natalie Niederhofer and Nick Crawford, owners of the new Birch & Maple restaurant in Frankfort. (As *The Betsie Current* reported earlier this summer, they are trying to be conscious of waste: the restaurant uses cloth napkins and non-plastic/biodegradable straws, plus their non-pork waste is all going to a pig farm on M-115.)

"The paper straws are working out great, and customers are having a positive reaction," says Jacob Grix, a server at Birch & Maple. "Customers say they're happy that we are helping the environment with paper straws."

Petals and Perks is also working toward using less straws, according to the barista behind the counter:

"Selling bamboo straws in the establishment worked very well, and we have sold out of the bamboo straws. In addition, we don't put straws in the drinks when we serve them; we have straws at the counter so people can come grab a straw if they want one, but they can choose to go straw-free, too."

Rocks Landing, the new restaurant at Chimney Corners Resort, just outside of Frankfort's city limits, is using biodegradable straws, as well.

"The next time you are in a restaurant with friends or family, please choose to refuse a straw," Turner says. "We encourage restaurant owners to only serve straws upon request or consider using paper straws instead. As residents or as visitors of this beautiful third coast, we can be leaders in protecting our beaches, so join us in making Frankfort straw-free."

Ella Larsen and Kirsten Miller are going into 10th and 12th grades at Frankfort High School. They are secretary and president of the FHS Interact Club, respectively.

Trash Clean-Up

Locals un-trash the Elberta beach

By Aubrey Ann Parker
Current Editor

It was a sunny spring morning in May. The waves on Lake Michigan were minimal, considering the season, and the wind was not-so-blustery. One by one, cars pulled up to the Elberta beach boardwalk, and groups piled out to volunteer their help with collecting trash from the beach. After a quick briefing on how to record items of collected trash, the team leader, Aimé Merizon from the Benzie Conservation District, divided the volunteers into teams, armed with sanitary gloves.

There were about 80 volunteers that day, and they were mostly local families with young kids, as well as “more experienced” volunteers, plus about 15 Frankfort National Honor Society students and all six of the FHS Interact Club members. After more than an hour of meandering about, the volunteers began to trickle back and turn in their tallies—more than 300 pounds of garbage had been collected, with items ranging from car tires to rusty bedsprings to piles of bits of plastic. (The Village of Elberta was key in helping the volunteers to dispose of the trash, and the village was thankful for the help.)

Later that day, *Smog of the Sea*, a documentary about the plastics problem in the world’s oceans, was shown at The Garden Theater in downtown Frankfort. Volunteers talked about the film and their awe at the amount of plastics that they had cleaned up over lunch at Stormcloud Brewing Company in Frankfort and at The Cabbage Shed in Elberta (both restaurants offered \$2 tokens for lunch to every beach-clean-up volunteer).

The idea of an annual beach clean-up is the brainchild of the Alliance for the Great Lakes, a non-profit that works to protect the Great

Lakes through advocacy, volunteering, education, and research. Beaches all over the country are encouraged to participate in their “Adopt-a-Beach” program. The Benzie Conservation District joined the program in September 2017 for the annual Global

This particular event in May, coupled with the documentary showing, was co-sponsored by the Benzie Plastics Awareness Coalition (BPAC), a sub-group of the Benzie Conservation District that arose after a seminar that was presented on microplastics at the Freshwater Summit.

The group began by researching Benzie’s grocery outlets and surveying how many plastic bags are used each month—their original initiative was to reduce the plethora of single-use plastic bags that are handed out in Benzie County, but, unfortunately, a new public act (signed into law in December 2016) prohibits local ordinances from banning plastic bags or charging customers a fee for using them.

BPAC has since focused on presenting programs to local, concerned groups about plastics and the concept of zero-waste living. Plastic straws are also a product that BPAC would love to see no longer being used in Benzie restaurants.

“Plastics have unconsciously become a large part of our daily lives,” Merizon says. “We want people to stop and think a moment before making a purchase—*can I buy this product fresh, without plastic packaging, or bring my own container?* Or before heading out—*do I have reusable bags/cutlery/to-go cups in my car or purse?* It’s really that simple. We’ve been lulled into a mindset of plastic. How often do you buy one item at a store, and it is dumped into a plastic bag before it’s handed to you? That’s ridiculous. But, recycling is not the answer, either; it’s only a band-aid. We really need to put pressure on our manufacturers and marketers, for a bigger impact in quelling the massive production of plastics.”

Plastics probably made up about 20 percent of the beach pick-up haul in May, Merizon estimates.



Beaches all over the country are encouraged to participate in the Alliance for the Great Lakes’s “Adopt-A-Beach program. After much success at the inaugural September 2017 event, the Benzie Conservation District scheduled several events for spring and summer 2018. Photo by Aimé Merizon.

Coastal Clean-up Day, and it proved to be so popular, that they decided to add clean-ups throughout the spring and summer of 2018.



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Clean Water Campaign

Speakers and musicians come together

By Staff Reports

up to the 2018 elections.

Phase Two: Music

During the summer of 2018, the campaign will produce music events across the state. After the primaries are over in early August, they will ramp up for a big tour that will feature regionally and nationally renowned musical talents. These shows will be produced across the state; each show will include insightful conversations with guest speakers about Michigan’s freshwater lakes, plus great music, fresh foods, tasty beverages, and fun for all ages.

Event at Grow Benzie

In that vein, the Clean Water Campaign has planned an afternoon of music and food, with special speakers and plenty of inspiration, information, and celebration.

“Benzie County is a place where people are cultivating community resilience through groups like Grow Benzie and events like the Benzie County Water Festival, which has been going on for 8 years now,” Bernard says. “So it makes sense for us to do a Benzie County event.”

Activist heroes Hans Voss and Jim Lively of the Groundwork Center (formerly the Beulah-based Michigan Land Use Institute, MLUI) will speak about the efforts of “Oil & Water Don’t Mix” and the impact of the Clean Water Campaign.

The Great Lakes are the largest group of freshwater lakes in the world; this region is home to 30 million people and more than 3,500 species. Michiganders stand united in cherishing and protecting our Great Lakes, yet there have been failures in leadership from state officials recently that have put our lakes at risk and which have endangered citizens who rely on clean drinking water for survival.

From the failure to shut down the Line 5 pipeline at the Mackinac Straits to the catastrophic damage that has been inflicted by the water crisis in Flint, the Great Lakes Basin is facing a pivotal moment in its history.

Using storytelling and music events across the state to amplify the groundswell of public support for clean water issues, the Clean Water Campaign—which began just a few months ago—represents an opportunity to help place clean water issues front and center in the year building up to the 2018 elections by urging every candidate who is running for public office to make a strong stand on the key issues that affect Michigan’s waters.

According to Seth Bernard, founder of the Clean Water Campaign and renowned Michigan bard, it is time for Michiganders to partake in their democracy and to come together in the 2018 elections to elect leaders who will hear the call to protect our waters.

“This is an all-hands-on-deck moment for Michigan citizens to come together to protect the Great Lakes and the universal human right to clean, safe, affordable drinking water,” Bernard says.

The main goal of the Clean Water Campaign is to build an informed constituency across Michigan that will go out to the polls in 2018. The Clean Water Campaign seeks to be a social movement that uses the arts to motivate groups and individuals to step into advocacy and stewardship that will create lasting and meaningful change, specifically in three areas:

- 1) Fixing Flint and preventing another crisis from happening;
- 2) Shutting down the Line 5 oil pipeline in the Mackinac Straits before it ruptures;
- 3) Prioritizing public water over private corporations.

How Does It Work?

“Our objective is as clear as Lake Michigan on a bright summer day,” Bernard says. “We want to protect the future of our water by spreading awareness for clean water issues in the 2018 elections and empower the public to elect candidates who will ensure clean, safe drinking water for all people, end the Nestle bottling loophole, and shut down Line 5! We aim to achieve these objectives through two phases in the upcoming year.”

Phase One: Storytelling

The first six months of the Clean Water Campaign, which began in January, focused on storytelling and the development of a documentary series, to be released online. A team of documentarians have been speaking with citizens across Michigan who have shared their experiences and interactions with water, with the intent to bring personal stories about the Great Lakes to the forefront. The goal of these videos is to spread awareness for clean water issues across the state by making a strong, strategic, and heartfelt case for water in the year building



Seth Bernard is a renowned Michigan bard. He is also the brains behind the Clean Water Campaign, which has an event at Grow Benzie on Sunday, June 22. Photo courtesy of Anna Sink/Local Spins.

Michigan’s beloved poet Jaime Delp will read from her works about the preciousness of water.

Bernard will perform a set and do an interview with Grow Benzie’s own Josh Stoltz, who is chair of the Benzie Community Water Council that has put on the Benzie County Water Festival since 2010.

Kalamazoo’s Jordan Hamilton is a cellist, singer, rapper, and beatmaker and a rising star in the Midwest music scene; Jordan will perform his own set and will also accompany Bernard.

The event will take place on Sunday, June 22, from 1-4 p.m. at Grow Benzie at 5885 Frankfort Highway/M-115, between Benzonia and Frankfort. Suggested donation for entry is \$15, but no one will be turned away for lack of funds; larger donations will be graciously accepted. All contributions will help with continued production of excellent videos, podcasts, events, and online content to help protect the Great Lakes and the universal human right to clean, safe, affordable drinking water.

Editor’s note: Both Aubrey Ann Parker and Jordan Bates, co-owners and editors of *The Betsie Current*, are board members for the Benzie Community Water Council.



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Smoke, Stories, and Song

Beach Bards Bonfire turns 30

By Norm Wheeler
Current Contributor

Who knew?! No one imagined that an idea hatched on bar stools at Art’s Tavern (the source of many brilliant ideas) by Bob Sutherland and me more than 30 years ago would live so long.

Sure, both of us loved storytelling, and we also loved the Stone Circle poetry gatherings that took place 10 miles north of Elk Rapids, with tellers Max Ellison, Terry Wooten, Taelen Thomas, Louan Lechler, Anne-Marie Oomen, and Ray Nargis. But we agreed that it was just too far to drive on a Saturday night, when you live where the summer sun and sweet breezes off Sleeping Bear Bay demand that we stay right here.

“Let’s start our own fire,” Sutherland said.

“There’s a fire ring at The Leelanau School, down by the beach,” I replied.

There yago! The die was cast. And then, how fortuitous that both Oomen and Nargis were about to spend most of their time in Leelanau County and were excited to help birth another “by heart” (the only rule) circle of poetry!

Like it was yesterday, I remember that first fire on the solstice in 1989, when Sutherland led the children’s hour with his interactive “Blackbirds” bit; his tall tales; *Little Orphan Annie*; and his original, brilliant basketball epic, *Coach Arthur and the Knights of the Round Ball*—“THAT WAS A FOUL, REF!!!” (I eventually heard Sutherland’s material so many times that I knew it all by heart, as well, and stole much of it—thanks, Bobby!—for later collaborations with Patrick Niemisto in our Luunappi show of kid’s poems, stories, and songs that we have performed hundreds of times all over the state, mostly at the Leelanau Outdoor Center and on top of Prospect Hill at The Homestead Resort, where, sadly, we have been replaced by karaoke.)

At that first fire, I recited freshly memorized pieces, like *The Zax* and *The Sneetches* by Dr. Seuss. Oomen shared *The Single Grain of Rice* teaching tale. Then, after the sunset break, the adult hour commenced with Les Dalglish on guitar, Nargis’s “Francis Bushman” poem, and Oomen’s “When I am Old,” all of these to become Beach Bards staples over the years, poems that got those gathered around the fire to lean in and listen, like kids at the library.

When Nargis moved to Minnesota and Sutherland got busy with his Cherry Republic empire, new bards stepped in.

Campfire veteran and children’s entertainer Fuzz Foster anchors the children’s hour now. Bronwyn Jones shares delightful Mary Oliver poems, and Joe VanderMeulen brings both humor and pathos with his Tony Hoaglund pieces and a sweet poem about the birth of a lamb. These pieces are still the daily bread of Beach Bards Bonfire,

as they are shared almost weekly and seem to be appreciated by returning listeners, despite the repetition.

Jim Ribby—an Elk Rapids Stone Circle regular who is also a Civil War re-enactor and a reciter of Robert Service and Walt Whitman—joins in several times every summer. Most of the local musicians have joined in: Niemisto and Skellenger, Bryan Poirier and John Kumjian, Laura Hood many times, Les Dalglish when he can, Pat Harrison, Tim Burke, and many young singer-songwriters over the years who were just passing through or only here for the summer.



The Beach Bards Bonfire at The Leelanau School in Glen Arbor has been attracting musicians, poets, storytellers, and listeners of all ages since its inception more than 30 years ago. Photo by Aubrey Ann Parker.

Part of the magic for all of us regulars is the variety and talent of folks who are here for only a week each summer.

Raconteur Robin Knott from Kalamazoo is a frequent participant, with both stories and songs. Michael Deren, with his squeezebox and history songs, is a welcome returner. The Good family from Grand Rapids often joins us, with Tom’s delightful renditions of Ian Frazier and Barbara Hamby, plus two of the Good youngsters juggling or delivering a hilarious rendition of *Who’s On First?* (Of note: Tom Good now leads a storytelling fire along the river in Grand Rapids a couple of times each summer, and it is modeled on the Beach Bards Bonfire.) Several folks show up annually to play guitar and sing, and one does a great song about sharing around the fire, a song which is dedicated to the Beach Bards. Benzie County’s Jed Jaworski is always a special treat, with all of his knowledge of shipwreck lore from the Great Lakes—when he spins a yarn, you can almost see the mariners struggling against the wind and water on the nearby beach, just across the fire and through the trees.

There have also been astonishing performances by those who only showed up at the bonfire once or twice but dazzled us with their talent.

Making the hike, Terry Wooten and Taelen Thomas came once, and, in a way, those Stone Circle poets blessed our fire that owes so much to theirs up in Elk Rapids. We once had a drunken barbershop quartet (is that a redundancy?), and once a speech by T.V. and movie star Lane Smith, a graduate of The Leelanau School. Three Ph.D students from Stanford showed up a couple of years ago and together recited the entire *Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*.

Old Town Playhouse actor Michael Nunn delivered an amazing monologue as an old cowboy. Jeff Kagan and Paige Doughty appeared randomly one night and performed their brilliant and original science teaching songs, as they do professionally in the Colorado schools for the rest of the year. We have heard wonderful versions of songs from *Frozen* and rap renditions of “Alexander Hamilton” by extremely talented young people during the children’s hour. And just last week, a woman from somewhere else with actor’s chops shared the delightfully bawdy X.J. Kennedy poem, *In a Prominent Bar in Secaucus One Day*.


Each fire is the same, but different. You never know what you are going to hear, from the classic *Casey at the Bat* to the harvested poems of local writers like Michael Delp (“North”); from “The Finn Who Would Not Take a Sauna” to “Oh What a Luxury” by Garrison Keillor. The wind howls or whispers,

the waves crash or just lick the shore, the clouds tumble or the stars twinkle.


That is the beauty of an open forum. It is no tech, no screens, no pages—just by-heart poems, stories, and songs, shared by people who are circled around fires and gazing into each other’s faces. The original oral tradition for thousands of years, the magic of fire light and measured voices, the susurrus of the breeze and the punctuation of the waves.

Norm Wheeler is a retired teacher, spending most of his working days at The Leelanau School in Glen Arbor, where he taught English, physics, and astronomy. The 30th summer of the Beach Bards Bonfire continues on Friday nights this summer through August 3 on the beach at The Leelanau School, 1.5 miles northeast of Glen Arbor on M-22, beginning with children’s hour at 8 p.m. It still costs only \$1 per being. Show up to just listen, or decide to share a story, song, poem, or performance—the only rule is that you cannot “read it;” it must be memorized “by heart” or ad-libbed on the fly. In addition to Beach Bards on Friday nights, Wheeler hosts public stargazing and constellation lessons two nights a week all summer long at the observatory at The Leelanau School, right on the Lake Michigan beach. A clear night provides the perfect setting for a star-filled sky, made even more visible by a 14-inch Celstron Telescope. You will see plenty of heavenly objects in bright, brilliant detail. Adults \$4, students \$3. Weather permitting. 10-11:59pm.

A version of this article originally published in the Glen Arbor Sun, a semi-sister publication to The Betsie Current. The Glen Arbor Sun is owned by Jacob Wheeler, son of Norm Wheeler. #nepotismandstuff



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