

Staying Connected

Incarcerated parents read aloud from the Benzie County jail

By Beau Vallance

Current Contributor

Over the past three months, 44 Benzie County children have heard their parents' voices, reading aloud to them. This is remarkable, because these voices were coming from jail.

Among the many things that children of an incarcerated parent miss out on is the special bonding that comes from sharing a book, and all that that means for future learning. Children develop literacy skills—listening, focusing, following—before they can actually read, and children who are read to start school with a larger vocabulary, higher reading readiness, and increased likelihood of school success, generally.

But for some children in Benzie County, the joys—and associated benefits—of having a parent read aloud to them have been beyond reach, until this spring.

Since April, the Remain In Touch program at the county jail has allowed children to hear an incarcerated parent reading aloud to them, and it has not cost taxpayers a penny. So far, 25 inmates have been recorded while reading books for their children, some repeatedly—44 children have received one or more CD recordings and books; a total of 102 books and CDs have been mailed home.

“[RIT] gives an outreach to the inmates that they wouldn't normally have,” says Lieutenant Daniel Smith, a Benzie County jail



A new reading program at the Benzie County jail. Photo by Beau Vallance.

administrator who enthusiastically supports the program, noting that inmates “absolutely” look forward to each session.

Why It Is Needed

Nationally, 5.1 million children under the age of 17 have had, or currently have, at least one incarcerated parent. Michigan ranks among the top five states in the nation for the percentage of children who have had a parent in jail: a total of 228,000 minors, or 10 percent of Michigan children, were affected as of 2011, the latest statistics from the Annie E. Casey

Foundation.

Knowing the statistics about early childhood development, Connie Eisenhart set out to address the gap between children and their incarcerated parents. Eisenhart taught in the Wayne-Westland Community schools before retiring to Leelanau County in 1995, and several of her students had incarcerated parents.

In 2016, Eisenhart founded Remain In Touch (RIT), a non-profit literacy program to help incarcerated parents in Leelanau County to stay connected with their children through

reading aloud via recordings. Eisenhart was inspired by a similar program downstate, in Washtenaw County, called Staying In Closer Touch.

RIT expanded to Benzie County this past spring.

Through this program, inmates in both counties have the opportunity to select a free book for each of their children, 0-12 years of age, as long as there is no personal protection order that restricts contact. As the inmate reads the book aloud, the story is recorded digitally, and then the recording and the book are sent to the inmate's children, allowing the parent to “remain in touch,” and thus bridging the gap that exists during the time of his/her incarceration, according to RIT's website.

How It Works

The Benzie program currently runs on only three volunteers. Kay Leers, a retired teacher and Benzie resident, coordinates the program and represents Benzie County on the RIT board of directors. She also coordinates the three volunteers, in addition to managing the inventory and mailings.

Every other Tuesday, a volunteer goes to the county jail, where there is a cart with more than 200 new books that have been purchased through donations. The books are grouped by age-appropriateness, for ages 0 to 12 years. The guard gives the volunteer a list of those

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Empire's Old Hardware Store

The tale of Fred Salisbury's wonderful life, just like George Bailey's

By Linda Alice Dewey

Current Contributor

If you were around this area in the late 1960s, '70s, or '80s, you might remember the old Ace Hardware store, located at the end of Empire's Front Street, adjacent to Joe's Friendly Tavern and the post office. That building, vacant now, is loaded with history.

Built around the turn of the 20th century, it started out as the Collins and Fry Hardware Store, a general hardware store to complement the Empire Lumber Company store, which stood where Deering's Market is now. The Empire Lumber Company operated from 1887 until 1917, and during this period, the company store served as the social hub for the community. The mill was destroyed by fire in 1906, was rebuilt, and then was destroyed by fire again in 1917. After the second fire, the mill was not rebuilt; the company store burned down later, in 1929, and was never rebuilt. (The lot stood vacant until 1946, when Deering's Market and Joe's Friendly Tavern were constructed.)

While the company store dealt in clothes, dry goods, food, even pots and pans, Collins and Fry, on the other hand, was more agricultural—it carried farm implements,



C.F. Salisbury Hardware and the Friendly Tavern in Empire, circa the 1940s. Photo courtesy of the Empire Area Museum.

tools, and items more typical of a hardware store.

In 1940, Chet and Jeanette Salisbury acquired Collins and Fry, renaming it C. F. Salisbury Hardware and Drygoods. Chet had graduated from Michigan State University during the Depression and had worked at Consumers Power. He had come north when the Works Progress Administration (WPA), part of President Roosevelt's New Deal, hired

him to employ more than 40 men to go out and kill the wheat leaf rust that had invaded the wheat crops. (Wheat leaf rust is a fungal disease that affects the stems, leaves, and grains of wheat, barley, and rye.)

“While he was here in Empire, he met my mother, one of the Deering family,” says 81-year-old Fred Salisbury, one of Chet and Jeanette's sons. “She had just gone away to college and became a registered nurse. They

married and stayed in Empire. We were living in the house on Niagara Street that my brother, Chet, lives in now.”

The couple traded the house for the hardware store, but business was bad when they first took on the store.

“Inventory was horrible,” says Fred Salisbury, who was four at the time. “It was full of old horse equipment, leather, saddles, bridles, and everything to harness a horse.”

That would change.

“Chet and Jeanette ran a very successful hardware, grain, feed, and full-line hardware store,” says Dave Taghon of the Empire Area Museum.

Ice, Hay, Clothing, Hardware—and Booze

Yes, C. F. Salisbury Hardware and Drygoods still sold harnesses, hay, and feed, but the store became much more.

“This was the business back in the '40s and '50s: the ice house, baled hay and feed, then clothing and fabric in the general store, housewares, hardware, and more,” Fred Salisbury says of the evolution of his parents' business model. “People could come in and buy their coveralls and even underwear, but no shoes.”

Additionally, the Salisburys opened the

Please see Hardware on page 7



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REALTORS

New Empire Development Moves Forward

MDEQ decision may open opportunity for Empire’s old hardware store and livery barn

By Linda Alice Dewey
Current Contributor

Named after the schooner, *Empire*, which was icebound nearby during a storm in 1865, the Village of Empire is a former lumber town on the shore of Lake Michigan. The one-time boom town now is home to around 375 year-round residents, according to the 2010 U.S. Census. The tiny village is located about 20 miles west of Traverse City and is nestled alongside the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore.

Like many beautiful, small, shoreline villages in Northern Michigan, Empire is figuring out its identity in the 21st century—what does the village want to be known for, and how can it attract people to the area, and not just for the summer?

An Empire real estate development firm thinks that it may have the answer. Empire Associates, owned by Empire residents Jim Bagaloff and John Collins, has cleared the first hurdle in developing a vacant three-acre strip of properties at the end of Empire’s Lake Street—the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) recently granted permission for a 20,000-gallon wastewater-treatment center.

The complex would include the old Salisbury/Ace Hardware store; the white house just south of it; the livery barn on the corner of Lake and Niagara streets; a yellow house across Niagara Street, to the north; and a quarter-mile strip of land along South Bar Lake.

Ideas for the site include, but are not limited to: a boutique hotel; some type of senior living; employee housing; an events facility; a restaurant, a brewery, or a cidery. If even half of these ideas come to reality, this could mean a boon for the village, whose development, to this point, has been plagued by the lack of a municipal wastewater system and lots that are too small for today’s septic field health-code requirements, according to

The view was just incredible.” Bagaloff put in an offer on Monday, and it was accepted on Tuesday.

During 1990-91, Bagaloff developed and parceled the Storm Hill property, then built half the homes. He now lives in the original 100-year-old house at the top of the hill, whose previous owner was Harvey Wilce, who once owned Empire’s mills.

Bagaloff’s business partner, John Collins,



The former barn livery sits vacant in downtown Empire. Photo courtesy of the Glen Arbor Sun.

the *Leelanau Enterprise*.

Although the Village Council revived talks earlier this year of a village-wide municipal system, Empire Associates is moving forward on its own, with a wastewater system to serve its four buildings. Bagaloff calls the recent MDEQ decision in favor of the project “a huge advantage—it opens up the opportunity to, really, any type of project.”

The next hurdle will be to attract investors. The developers have had some nibbles.

“We’ve got interested people, but no one’s come to the table yet for sure,” Bagaloff says.

began his career in the U.S. Navy. He then became vice president in charge of facilities for the University of Chicago, and now he owns a place on the beach at Storm Hill.

The Concept

Three years ago, when Bagaloff and Collins went into business together, they generated a concept for the site and took it to the county’s building inspector, Steve Haugen.

“It was doable,” says Haugen, who called the land “quite a strip of property. They would just have to go through some hoops to do some stuff.”

The Guys Behind The Project

Bagaloff is known for having developed Empire’s Storm Hill, a high-end residential development on Lake Michigan’s shore, just south of the public beach and South Bar Lake. Now an Empire resident himself, Bagaloff has owned property in this area since the late 1970s. He says that it took a little something extra to draw him to Empire, despite that he was coming north on business in the financial industry, selling pensions.

“I would go to Traverse City, then up to Charlevoix, and on to Petoskey,” Bagaloff says. “The thing about Leelanau County—there’s no roadway to bring you here. You’ve got to want to come here.”

One day, he was reading *The Wall Street Journal* in his East Lansing home, when a picture in an ad in the Friday real estate section caught his eye. The listing was by Lansing realtor Bill Martin, father of Glen Arbor realtor, John Martin. Bagaloff knew Bill and gave him a call. The next day, Saturday, he says that he “came up, saw the house, took a look out there, and said, ‘Holy smokes!’”

The first big hoop was solving the wastewater issue, since Empire has no municipal wastewater system. The MDEQ-approved plan is to construct a system that partially treats wastewater, before releasing it into two drainfields, measuring 60 feet by 60 feet, a relatively small footprint. Now that they know their capacity and can move forward, Bagaloff and Collins intend to be mindful of the community.

“We’re trying to do something that would be beneficial to the village,” Bagaloff says. “Something that would bring a little bit more life and activity to the town.”

Things like, on the upper floor of the barn—the “showcase” of the property—a movie night, then a dance night, a brewery or a cidery with a restaurant. Bagaloff raves about the structurally solid barn, which has sat vacant for years. The barn property slopes back into the hillside. Picture an open beer garden with a view of spectacular summer sunsets and year-round vistas of South Bar Lake and Lake Michigan.

“The second floor of the barn, it’s

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incredible,” he says. “It’s got a gambrel roof. It looks like a cathedral on the inside. The arches in there are all clear span, from one end to the other. It’s in two tiers; part of it’s elevated at one end, so it’s almost like a perfect hall, right away, for plays or for an entertainment facility, where you could have a band at the one end, with people dancing.”

Measuring 120 feet by 32 feet, the barn once housed horses and carriages.

“The barn was the livery. This was an industrial town, with the mills that were here in Empire,” Bagaloff explains. When people came to town for the day, they left their horses and carriages to be watered down and fed at the livery, where the horses stayed until the customer was ready to leave. In more recent days gone by, it became a county garage, which Bagaloff picked up as part of the Storm Hill estate, when he bought the complex in 1979.

“When we finish this,” Bagaloff envisions, “it’s going to have an outdoor patio area that’s going to have incredible views.”

But that is just one part of any number of larger concepts.

“If we did a boutique hotel, we were thinking about a horseshoe design” he says. “Where Front Street intersects Lake Street, you would look directly into a courtyard. The hotel would wrap around to the front.”

A stay at the hotel might include amenities like bicycles and kayaking on South Bar Lake as part of the package. Perhaps the hotel would be a coordinated complex, where you would have possibly a brewery, a restaurant, a cyclery, things like that.

“The beauty of the property is—we’re a block and a half from the beach, a block and a half from the library,” Bagaloff says. “We’ve got the post office right across the street, the store, a doctor, and a pharmacy.”

It is a senior-community planner’s dream, for sure.

There are other possibilities, too. Bagaloff says that the project could go in a totally different direction, like a pocket neighborhood, where there would be little cottages that are 1,100- to 1,400-square feet around a common courtyard. In that scenario, the barn could be used as an athletic club.

Seeking Input and Investors

Any business owner here knows that the area’s seasonality can pose financial feasibility issues. It is an economic balancing act between the extremely busy summers and the light winter traffic.

“How do you keep your employees in the off-season?” asks Empire business owner Paul Skinner.

Bagaloff sought to address this issue: “With the right concepts, I think you can do extraordinarily well. If you look at Cherry Republic as an example—even the restaurants in Glen Arbor—they’re managed well, and they’re successful. If you’ve got the right combination here, you’re just going to attract more people.”

Moreover, the complex itself could help to house employees—when asked whether there might be residences for workers, Bagaloff says that, with the white and yellow houses, they could house 20-30 people.

Now 71, Bagaloff feels that he is slowing down, and he wishes to downsize. To that end, he has already parceled the rest of his Storm Hill property. Perhaps one day, he says, he will live on one of the smaller lots on the back of the property.

Age is also the reason that he is not intent

on developing the Lake Street properties with Collins.

“It’s going to take investors with a little more time ahead of them to make it happen,” he says. “So that’s why we’re looking at investors.”

So, what about Empire’s dear old hardware store, which Bagaloff bought in 1992?

“The hardware store could be re-purposed into a general store, but it would be difficult to re-purpose without spending an awful lot of money,” he says, adding that, at one time, he tried to level the floors, but it was causing more damage to the building than it was doing good. “It started getting leaks and things. Frankly, the most attractive thing about the hardware store is its facade.”

As mentioned, there are many uses for the barn, but that would require taking down the hardware store and the white house on the other side of it.

“However,” Bagaloff adds, “it all depends on what the investors want to do.”

And what if investors have their own ideas?

“If an investor comes along and says, ‘Hey, we want to do it for ourselves,’ that would be fine, too.”

A version of this story first ran in our sister publication, the *Glen Arbor Sun*.



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Mondays

Barre Fusion (Barre + Yoga + Fitness) with Beth at the Oliver Art Center in Frankfort. 770-235-9306. 9-10am.

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.

Yoga class for seniors led at no charge by Michelle Leines at The Gathering Place Senior Center. 10579 Main Street in the Honor Plaza. 231-525-0600. 10-11am.

A volunteer will be at the Benzie Shores District Library to repair clothing while you wait. No formal wear or upholstery; no drop-offs. 10:30am-12pm.

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.

Grow Benzie Farmers' Market: Every Monday at 4pm and 5:30pm, there will be free cooking and nutrition-education classes. All are welcome! Fresh vegetables and fruits, baked goods, bread, jam, honey, maple syrup, artisan crafts, and more will be featured at each market! 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.

Stretch and tone with Jean at the Oliver Art Center. Email annamallien@gmail.com if interested. 9-10am.

Gentle yoga in the barn at the First



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Technology Tuesday: Benzie Shores District Library in Frankfort offers assistance with technology. Learn how to download ebooks, audiobooks, and magazines to your personal devices. 10am-12pm.

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.

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 at St. Ambrose Cellars. Register via text 231-218-0655. 6-7:30pm.

Steve Fernand plays Ballads a la Bossa at the Cold Creek Inn. 6-9pm.

Wednesdays

Pilates with Anna at the Oliver Art Center. annamallien@gmail.com 9-10am.

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

Fitness Fusion (Yoga + Fitness + Pilates) with Beth at Discover YOU Yoga & Fitness. 770-235-9306. 10-11:15 am. *

Michigan Legacy Art Park (Crystal Mountain) is offering ATV-riding tours to guests who may be unable to hike the rustic, hilly trails. Tours take place at 10am on Wednesday and Saturday mornings, from June 21 through August 12. Because seating is limited to five passengers, advanced registration is required for these tours. Tour is free with \$5 admission. 10am-12pm.

Open art 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.



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Yoga with Kari at the Oliver Art Center. Open to all levels; \$13 per session. 231-383-1883. 5:30-7pm.

The Storm Riders Cycling Club is rolling through beautiful Benzie County this summer. Join the rides every Wednesday, or just those that you can make! Explore rotating sections of rides 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!

Thursdays

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

Stretch and tone with Jean at Oliver Art Center. annamallien@gmail.com 9-10am.

Adult coloring at Benzie Shores District Library. All materials provided. 10-11am.

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 Rosie, the cute little dog! 1-5pm.

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 and child pair. It can be as fun or focused as a student prefers, 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 Ware Farm of Bear Lake. Open to all levels; \$13 per session. 231-383-1883. 4-5:30pm.

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

Fridays

Pilates with Anna at the Oliver Art Center. annamallien@gmail.com 9-10am.

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

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

Saturdays

Fitness Fusion (Fitness + Yoga + Pilates) with Beth at the Oliver Art Center. 770-235-9306. 9-10 am.

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

Michigan Legacy Art Park’s ATV-riding tours. 10am-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.

Steve Fernand plays Ballads a la Bossa at the Cold Creek Inn. 6-9pm.

*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 discoveryyogami.com.

ON DECK

Thursday, July 28
Beulah Music in the Park: Glenn Wolff & Robin Lee Barry. Free family fun. Bring a chair or blanket. 7pm.

Thursday, July 28
Last night to catch Lakeside Shakespeare Theatre’s *Merchant of Venice* at Tank Hill, 188 Park Avenue, Frankfort, near Paul Oliver Memorial Hospital. 7pm.

Thursday, July 28
Jazz organ trio Dot Org perform at Stormcloud. 8pm.

Friday, July 28
Blizzardpress is hosting a free marketing workshop: Learn How to Get Top Google Rankings. Hotel Frankfort. 9-10:30am

Friday, July 28
Last night to catch Lakeside Shakespeare Theatre’s *Coriolanus* at Tank Hill in Frankfort. 7pm.

Friday, July 28
Summer Sounds Concert Series: Nessa. Enjoy a concert in the woods at Michigan Legacy Art Park. This Celtic ensemble fuses traditional ballads and dances with elements of classical, folk, jazz, rock, and world music. 7-9pm.

Friday, July 28
Evan Burgess performs at Stormcloud Brewing Company. He doesn’t make set lists, so you pick the songs: anywhere from The Eagles to Whitney Houston to Metallica. 8pm.



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Saturday, July 29
Frankfort Street Sale. 9am-4pm.

Saturday, July 29
Grand opening for Nikolina’s BBQ Bistro, featuring Tiki-Licious by Josh Herron. Food truck and cart located in the parking lot of the former Big Bob’s Up North Outfitters in Frankfort. 11am-4pm.
Tuesday, July 32
The day you change your life for the better. Location: search deep inside yourself. When: for the rest of your life. Free.

Thursday, August 3
Painter Ellie Harold, fiber artist Elizabeth Rodgers Hill, and ceramic artist Beth J. Tarkington host “For the Birds” at Ellie Harold Art Studio & Gallery in Frankfort. This is the second group show for these three artists, featuring colorful, avian-related artwork in their respective media: oil paintings, felted and woven objects, and hand-built ceramic pieces. 11am-4pm.

Thursday, August 3
Beulah in the Park: Don Julin Quartet. 7-9pm.

Thursday, August 3
Invasive Species Work Day at the Elberta Dunes. Join the Invasive Species Netowrk and the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy as they work to remove invasive baby’s breath from Elberta Beach. Call 231-929-7911 to register. 9am-12pm.

Friday & Saturday, August 4 & 5
Friends of the Darcy Library book sale at the Darcy Library in Beulah. 10am-4pm.

Saturday, August 5
Sidewalk Sales in downtown Beulah and Benzonia. 10am-4pm.

Saturday, August 5
Walk-A-Thon: fun, friendship, caring, and giving to support seniors. This is a major source of funding for Benzie Senior Resources. Bellows Beach Park Pavilion, Frankfort. 7:30-9am.

Monday-Thursday, August 7-17
Session 2 of Summer Introductory Dance lessons with Arlene Larson, a registered teacher with the Royal Academy of Dance, at the Betsie Hosick Health & Fitness Center, just outside of Frankfort. Classes include: beginning ballet, beginning character dance, and pre-primary ballet. Class times, skill levels, and ages vary, so call 231-882-9314. Private and group lessons for more advanced students are available, upon request.

Tuesday, August 8
Free ride to the Traverse City Beach Bums game. Departing from Frankfort’s Family Fare at 5:30pm, Benzonia’s Shop-n-Save at 5:45pm, and Honor’s Benzie Bus station at 6:05pm.



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Wednesday, August 2 **Uncle Z 7-9 pm**

Sunday, August 6 **Jake Frysinger 6-8pm**


Monday, August 7 **Ron Kluck 7-9pm**

Wednesday, August 9 **Uncle Z 7-9pm**

Thursday, August 10 **Rhett Betty 7-9pm**

Saturday, August 12 **Alfredo 8:30-11:30pm**

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Reading

Continued from page 1

who want to read. Inmates choose from the cart of books, one book for each child. The volunteer sets up in the jail’s library with a recorder, and inmates are called in one by one; volunteers and inmates exchange no personal information, besides names.

The volunteer and the inmate shake hands, introduce themselves, and sometimes the inmate will ask for guidance in selecting from among the books. Some are adept readers, others less so, but become comfortable when reading “to their children” in the volunteer’s presence. (Grandparent readers are also welcome, and the Benzie program recently had its first grandparent reading to two grandchildren.)

The inmate reads aloud, sometimes with a short introductory or concluding comment—maybe the book was a childhood favorite of the inmate’s, or “This is a scary book!” for a child who is into horror stories, for example. If it is a short children’s book, the inmate usually reads the whole thing; if it is a “chapter book” for a child who can read, perhaps the first chapters are read aloud by the inmate, so that the child can continue reading on his/her own.

Recording sessions run until each participating inmate has read one book for each child, typically about two hours. On the program’s very first day, 21 books were recorded.

The volunteer burns the recording onto a CD, then mails the CD and the matching book to each child; each child at home receives an individually mailed package, addressed to him/her.. The book and the recording then belong to the child, who can then listen again and again, continue reading the book on his/her own, and share the reading with a sibling or with friends.

One child, reports a volunteer, listens to the recording every night at bedtime.

Bringing It To Benzie

Bringing the program to Benzie County has been a community effort, with partners including Benzie Cares for Kids, Benzie Early Childhood Workgroup (0-6) from the Human Services Collaborative, and Brilliant Books in Traverse City.

Eisenhart credits Sarah May, coordinator of the Benzie County Human Services Collaborative, with organizing the Benzie County branch of RIT after Headstart coordinator Jennifer Kelly read about the Leelanau program in an October 2016 article in the Leelanau Enterprise. Kelly invited Eisenhart to speak in Benzie County the following month.

“Sarah [May] really ran with it,” Eisenhart says, and less than five months later, the Benzie program was up and running.

The stories of the recording sessions show the value of the program. One man had the idea of reading a page aloud, then timing a silence that would be long enough for his wife, at home with the child, to read the next page, in effect taking turns, as they would if he were at home. Another, reading a book that he had not previously known, was astounded at the surprise ending.

“Whoa! I never saw *that* coming!” he said and laughed on the recording.

Another inmate had a baby who was born during his incarceration, and when the facilitator suggested reading to the baby, the inmate said, “Do you read to babies?” He was encouraged to introduce the newcomer to the sound of his voice through the program. One inmate, pressed for time, opted to read the back-cover summary of each book, one for each child.

Two inmates hope to donate to support the RIT program when they are out. One decided not to record after all, hoping to go home that day and not need it. Another predicted a long series of sessions, building quite a library for the child at home.

The Books

Staying In Closer Touch, the similar program in Washtenaw County, previously developed a master list of titles. RIT uses that list but also adds to it. Some well-known titles, among the 140 now on the list, include: *Good-night Moon*, *On the Night You Were Born*, *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, *All the Colors of the Earth*, *Sarah Plain and Tall*, *Where the Wild Things Are*, *Grace for President*, and *Paint the Wind*.

The program avoids religious books—they would have to cover *all* religions otherwise. Holiday-themed books with a limited “shelf life” are also avoided.

For security reasons, all books are brand new. 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. Brilliant Books donates the book-mailer packing.

The Results

No one involved in Remain In Touch can find a single downside to the program. It was approved quickly when proposed to the Benzie County Sheriff’s Office and jail staff.

“[RIT has been] nothing but positive for the inmates,” says Smith, the jail administrator. “There’s been no negative feedback—they really like it and absolutely look forward to it. They love doing it. It’s a great program!”

The inmates are nothing but grateful, and offenders who stay in touch with family are less likely to re-offend—studies have shown that prisoners who maintain strong family and friendship ties during imprisonment, and those who assume marital and parental roles upon release, have lower rates of returning to poor behaviors than those who function without family ties, expectations, and obligations.

“The inmates love the opportunity to connect with their children,” Kay Leers says. “Some have cried in gratitude, saying, “This is so wonderful, what you’re doing.”

The volunteers love the work. Leers, a retired teacher, has been involved in many literacy programs, but “this is different”; as a board member and coordinator, she says “I just feel uplifted, I guess.”

The best part, though, is that the children hear their parents reading to them at home, from real books.

For more information on the program, visit RemainInTouch.org. To donate to the program, visit that website or visit 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.



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Hardware

Continued from page 1

Friendly Tavern in the same building in 1940, the same year that they took over operations of the hardware store. At this time, the tavern had a license to serve beer and wine only. Later, the Friendly Tavern moved to its current location in 1946.

“We kept the tavern until my two uncles got out of the [Second] World War,” Salisbury says. At that time, the Salisburys gave the beer and wine license to one of Jeanette’s brothers, Warren Deering, who, together with other brother Mark, built the building that is now the home to Deering’s Market and Joe’s Friendly Tavern. Half of the building was Mark Deering’s, who put in a meat market, and the other half was the Friendly Tavern, run by Warren Deering. (Up until this point, the old Deering’s Market had stood at the current location of The Miser’s Hoard, down the street.)

According to the website for Joe’s Friendly Tavern, constructing the building was not easy, because building materials were in short supply: “Nails were hard to come by, cinder blocks were used because cement blocks were unavailable, and the roof tresses were made of green wood, which explains the ‘wavy’ nature of the current roof... also in 1946, Warren [Deering], Chet Salisbury, and a 12-year-old Fred Salisbury took a road trip to Muskegon, Michigan, where they purchased the bar and tables that went into the new Friendly Tavern. By the end of 1946, the Friendly Tavern was serving hamburgers and french fries, as well as beer and wine. The freshly ground burger came from Deering’s Market, next door.”

The Salisbury family lived above the hardware store.

“Back in those days, most people who owned drug stores, grocery stores, clothing or hardware stores—they lived above or behind the store,” says Salisbury, who recalls that there was a bell on the store’s front door. “We had an 1,800-square-foot apartment above our store. When we went upstairs for lunch or dinner, we would turn the bell on. If somebody came in the front door, the bell would go off in the kitchen, and we would run down the back stairs [to] take care of the customer.”

It’s A Wonderful Life
Years later, after leaving the nest, Fred Salisbury would move back home to Empire to take over the family business.

“My dad was really sick in 1966 and wrote me a letter,” Salisbury says. “I was in management with JC Penney and worked with them for 10 years. I had lived in Ann Arbor for four years. We opened an anchor store at a new shopping center there [Arborland]. Then, I transferred to Port Huron. But my father asked if I could come back and run his store. I really didn’t want to; the business had declined.”

Salisbury had a wife and three kids by then. Shortly after his father’s letter arrived, Fred Salisbury sent in his letter of resignation—and then another letter came, this one from Mr. J. C. Penney himself.

“He sent me a letter that said, ‘I hate to see you leave, but the best thing to do is go and help your parents out. Whatever you do is fine. We’ll give you five years, and you can have your job back,’ if things didn’t work out,” Salisbury says. “So we moved to Empire and lived above the store for three or four years.”

Every year after that, business increased. Salisbury transitioned the store out of

the clothing business. Then they got into television.

“Back then, the only thing you could get was black-and-white T.V.,” Salisbury says. “I researched color television and found Zenith T.V. was the best. We hired a service man, purchased a van, and got into the T.V. business. We were one of two dealers in the county selling color T.V.s. The other was in Suttons Bay.”

Changing the Business Model... Again
A few years later, when everyone around started to get into color T.V., Salisbury moved into the lumber business.

“Didn’t know anything about it, didn’t have any of the equipment, but went into it anyway,” he chuckles. That is also when, in 1969, he bought the Ace franchise, and the family store became known as Ace Hardware and Lumber Company.

Getting into lumber really helped Salisbury’s business. Otherwise, people in the area had to travel for miles to get lumber for the area’s burgeoning cottage business. Within a few years, he had built an addition onto the store that doubled its square footage.

Workdays were long. He had to load and unload dry wall and lumber by hand.

“I loaded the truck at night and would go out at 5 in the morning and deliver everything to the surrounding area,”he says. “It was hard work for five years before I hired someone.”

Eventually, they ended up buying several trucks and fork lifts, and the company prospered. Soon, Salisbury opened a kitchen center in Traverse City. Then, a customer who owned a log cabin company turned over the keys to the business for nonpayment—now Salisbury owned and operated Great Lakes Log Homes, which sold and shipped all of the materials for log homes to both the East and West coasts, with crews in some states putting the cabins up.

Then, long before the advent of big box stores—Lowe’s, Menard’s, Home Depot—he built the area’s first home building center in Grawn. Called “Homebuilders’ Warehouse,” it occupied 120,000 square feet and sat on US-31, where Pro-Build is located today.

At the time, his businesses employed many people: 20 in Empire and 160 in Grawn, after he closed the kitchen center. Through it all, wife Bea was at his side.

“All the time we worked,” he says. “My wife was the comptroller, and I did all the buying and staff management.”

In 1993, one of the trade magazines ran an article titled, “Small family business competes against the big boxes.” The five-page spread with six photos attracted attention.

“We had all kinds of phone calls from different chains and talked with all of them,” Salisbury says.

Then, in 1995, he sold both the Grawn and Empire stores to Wolohan Lumber, which already had a lumber yard in the area and 88 stores in the region—his timing was impeccable.

“I know the best time to sell a business is when it’s booming,” he laughs.

Fred and Bea Salisbury currently own Empire Self-Storage in two locations, Empire and Traverse City. They continue to live in Empire. You can see the beautiful, ornate, black and silver cash register—the kind you had to hit the button and turn the crank to operate—and other artifacts from the hardware store at the Empire Area Museum.

*A version of this story first ran in our sister publication, the **Glen Arbor Sun**.*

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