

Stormcloud—Michigan's Best New Brewery—Set to Expand

New brewing and bottling plant coming to Frankfort

By Jacob Wheeler
Current Editor

Stormcloud Brewing Company has pulsed new, year-round energy into downtown Frankfort since it opened three summers ago. The venue is dynamic, the events are quirky, the crowd is upbeat, and the beach is just two blocks away. But head brewer (and co-owner) Brian Confer's beer is why *MLive* named Stormcloud as "Michigan's best new brewery" earlier this month.

Following a public poll—during which 30,000 votes were cast, nominating more than 100 breweries—John Gonzalez and Amy Sherman, who host *MLive's* Michigan Best series and *Behind the Mitten* broadcast, traveled 2,500 miles throughout the mitten state and sampled more than 300 beers.

"On this search, we were looking for new breweries that are making exceptional beer. Period," Gonzalez says in a press release.

Gold medal for Stormcloud, thanks to Confer's handcrafted, Belgian-inspired ales. (Suttons Bay's Hop Lot Brewing Co. narrowly missed a medal by finishing fourth).

"Each and every beer we sampled [from Stormcloud]



Stormcloud's Rick Schmitt and Brian Confer. Photo by Aubrey Ann Parker.

was just about perfect," Sherman says. "Add to this the great sense of community that Stormcloud has created in Frankfort, and you have a winner."

But Stormcloud has even bigger news to unveil. The brewery will break ground—potentially as early as this fall—on a new brewing and bottling plant in the industrial park at the foot of the Gateway Arch in downtown Frankfort. Production could begin as early as next summer.

The 10,000-square-foot plant, on a six-acre plot next to M-115, will allow Stormcloud to increase capacity and distribute bottles and kegs of its award-winning beer all over the state. Co-owner Rick Schmitt told *The Betsie*

Please see Go Drink on page 11

Dump Day

Enthusiastic unloading

By Beau Vallance
Current Contributor

Twice each summer, our township offers a free Clean-Up Day. Many townships do this. We call it Dump Day, and we plan our lives around it every June and August. We hoard unusually large trash for weeks, and on two Saturday mornings, we join a line of trucks, vans, trailers, and ordinary cars, crammed with stuff that no longer has any use to anyone. (But occasionally there is a treasure to be picked up.)

For each Dump Day, Lake Township parks two huge dumpsters behind Township Hall. A line forms early in the morning on the shoulder of M-22, just past Riverside Canoe Rentals, even before the dumpsters arrive. The dumpster drivers are greeted by cheers from the line of vehicles—cheers for the men in big trucks, coming to save us from the mountains of unwieldy discards that have accumulated

over weeks, years, even decades. [I wrote a story about other "men in big trucks" who come to save the day for *The Betsie Current* last year: bit.ly/28RTUe9]

An army of at least a dozen fearless volunteers in work gloves stands ready to help us unload. We have spent years accumulating stuff and maybe an hour loading our vehicles, but it takes mere minutes for these volunteers to empty each vehicle until, suddenly, it's



Dump Day. Photo by Beau Vallance.

all gone.

Dump Day in Lake Township started more than 15 years ago, with the intention of discouraging people from driving to the middle of nowhere along a back road and dumping their trash there. The two Dump Day events each summer cost our township about \$11,000 a year, and two dumpsters each day are just enough. (Though one year, a third was called in when the two filled early; an unusual number of mattresses, I was told.)

Not everything is accepted. Automotive batteries and tires, chemicals, motor oil, paint thinners, and yard waste top the list headed ITEMS NOT ACCEPTED. "Concrete, cement, refrigerators with Freon

are also not accepted," says the township newsletter each spring.

Mostly what we see in the waiting line is rubbish—boards with bent rusty nails, wiring, rolled-up carpeting, foam rubber, screens, plumbing, doors, windows, fence posts, punctured water toys, microwave ovens, mops, mattresses that you would not want to touch, lots of broken things. This year, someone brought in 10 broken black-and-white TVs.

Metal things are sorted out by scrappers, whose flatbed trailers collect stoves, lawn mowers, signs, pipes, wheels. They will take these salvaged finds to the scrap yard, where they will turn them in for a profit. It's great, because this means money in their pockets, but it also means more room in the township dumpsters for more non-metal stuff.

Stuff also gets deliberately rescued from Dump Day. One year, a weathered, flat-

Please see Go Dump on page 11

Go Wild, Go Native

Fall is the time to plant Michigan natives

By Cheryl Gross
Current Contributor

In my nine years of working with Michigan native plants and educating myself and others about their benefits, the message has changed. Early in my experience with the topic, the idea was primarily "right plant, right place." Then, it was to "please consider" including a Serviceberry (*Amelanchier laevis*) or a Highbush Cranberry (*Viburnum trilobum*) to feed birds in early spring and summer—a little here and a little there would help.

But now, the need is more serious; our insects and pollinators are in steep decline. For example, commercial honeybees suffered a 44 percent decline in 2015. The United States Department of Agriculture says there have been hive

declines up to 90 percent in some areas, which is extremely troubling and causing many states to take action against the use of especially harmful pesticides, GMO seeds, loss of habitat for pollinators, and neonicotinoids ("neonics" for short)—originally developed for flea and tick treatments—that are now being used to treat insects on plants; they are documented to kill both butterflies and bees.

To combat the loss of pollinators, it is imperative that all landscapes include beneficial plants; those which are native to this region are essential.

Fall is a perfect time to plant. It is also wise to evaluate your gardens and landscape



Highbush Cranberry (*Viburnum trilobum*) flower with detail of the inflorescence. Photo courtesy of Wikipedia.

at the end of summer to decide what is working and what is not—by springtime, we tend to forget. I, for one, have several transplants planned in my yard for once things begin to cool down: I will be moving my Golden Alexanders (*Zizia aurea*) from the front of my yard, where they grew too large, to my backyard. The placement of one Blue-eyed Grass (*Sisyrinchium montanum*) is pushing-over a Harebell (*Campanula rotundifolia*), so it will be divided and moved to the former Golden Alexander location. A Horsemint (*Monarda punctata*) volunteered along the edge of the walk, and it will also be relocated.

Create A Safe Haven In Your Yard

From our use of pesticides to our paving of prairies to build cities, humans have had a dramatically damaging impact on the plants in our environment. We can,

Please see Go Wild on page 9

Forgotten In Flint

What does the government owe to Flint’s poisoned immigrant community?

By Jacob Wheeler
Current Editor

Like many in Flint’s Latino immigrant community, Yaquelin Vargas says she did not learn until late January that Flint’s drinking water had been poisoned with lead. Vargas, a U.S. citizen, says she drank tap water while she was pregnant and as she first began breastfeeding her daughter, Lydia, now eleven months old, who suffers from lead poisoning.

Vargas knew last year that she needed to stay hydrated while pregnant. But the tap water at her home on Flint’s east side was making her ill.

“Keep drinking water,” she rememberesh-er doctor telling her. “It will help the baby.”

Flint residents were told to stop drinking the city’s water on October 1, 2015, after the state belatedly confirmed high lead levels due to leaching from pipes into the water supply. News reports and government directives rolled out over the weeks and months that followed. But for a variety of reasons, Yaquelin Vargas and her father, Sergio, say they did not become aware of the threat until January, only a few weeks before Yaquelin Vargas’s infant daughter, Lydia, would be diagnosed with lead poisoning.

“I feel responsible for hurting my daughter,” Vargas says. “We had no idea.”

Stories like that of the Vargases are not uncommon among Flint’s Latino immigrant community of roughly 4,000 individuals, a group that includes nearly 1,000 undocumented residents. In a city where delayed revelations about lead-poisoned water ignited international outrage, perhaps no corner of Flint learned of the threat posed by lead later than its Spanish-speaking residents.

The reasons are complex, as are the moral questions, including this one, surely to be a source of fervent debate in a nation riven by immigration politics: Does the government have a duty to take extra measures in an emergency to reach immigrant communities that may be wary of, or actively avoiding, government help? Activists say that the missed connections in Flint also carry lessons for policymakers, first responders, and community activists themselves about how to more effectively communicate with hard-to-reach groups during a crisis.

Reaching the Hard-to-Reach

In Flint, Michigan National Guard members distributed Spanish-language flyers door-to-door after the lead crisis broke publicly. But some wary residents—on edge from stepped-up federal deportation raids—either

did not read them or did not trust the information provided. More alarming, community activists say, were inaccurate early announcements that Flint residents would need to show photo identification to receive free bottled water. There were also confusing, inaccurate rumors about why the water tasted bad. The dearth of local Spanish-language media did not help.

And many immigrants—the undocumented, in particular—live in an information blackout, surprising to many in the broader community. As community organizers, churches, and other advocates worked to fill the communication gap in late January, they found that some local Latinos had only learned of the water crisis from relatives in Mexico, who saw international television reports being broadcast from Flint.

Sapphyre Cross, who runs a Spanish-language radio show in Flint, says she was wary last fall of sounding false alarms about the foul-smelling water to a community that was already worried about federal enforcement efforts.

“I didn’t want to spread mass hysteria if I didn’t have my facts straight,” says Cross, who co-hosts *The Pete Mata Show* on WWCK FM-105.5 on Sunday mornings. “Once it was confirmed by the governor’s office, we got the word out. But if I had been wrong, they would have had my head on a platter. I feel terrible. I apologized to the community for not telling them sooner.”

A Tragic Silence

For Yaquelin Vargas, life events conspired to leave her cut off from the larger world.

Until recently, the journey of this 21-year-old native of Nueva Rosita in Coahuila, Mexico, had resembled the American dream.

Vargas and her father, now American citizens, moved to Flint six years ago after successfully bidding on an affordable home. Three years ago, while enrolled at Genesee

Early College, she won an American GI Forum beauty pageant. She was taking classes at the University of Michigan-Flint and interning at the Hurley Medical Center to become a pediatric nurse.

Then her father became too ill to work, and Vargas quit her studies to take care of him. In their simple home, there is no radio or television.

They knew that E.coli bacteria had been found in their tap water, and they were told to boil it. She says they were then told that they could drink the water, if they used a filter. But

throughout Vargas’s pregnancy—and after Lydia’s birth, on September 12, as the infant breastfed—mother and grandfather say they never caught wind of lead in the water.

However, Vargas began to suspect something was wrong in early January, when Lydia was not tracking the movements of Vargas’s finger. But it was

not until late January, when a volunteer from nearby St. Mary’s Catholic Church knocked on their door, that the Vargas family says they were first told to completely abstain from using Flint’s tap water.

Flyers Sent, But Not Read

January turned out to be a busy month for community outreach in Flint. On Tuesday, January 5, Governor Rick Snyder finally declared a state of emergency in Flint, as the city’s story splashed across front pages worldwide. Six days later, the Michigan Department of Technology, Management, and Budget printed 15,000 handbills with relevant information about the water crisis that were written in Spanish and Arabic, according to state public information officer Ron Leix.

Once the emergency was declared, the state acted quickly to make free bottled water and filters available to Flint residents. But two strategic decisions hindered outreach to some in the Latino immigrant community.

First, the state made the seemingly reasonable decision to deploy the National Guard, the State Police and Red Cross workers to canvass neighborhoods with bottled water for drinking and bathing—all in uniform and strangers to most residents. Advocates for Flint’s Spanish-speaking residents say that many people were afraid of these uniformed visitors; afraid of being apprehended and deported for being in the United States illegally; leery because of the legal status of someone in their household. Many chose simply not to respond to knocks on their front door.

“The timing of the water distribution in Flint was unfortunate, because it came at the same time as the Obama administration stepping up raids for folks with recent removal orders,” says Susan Reed, managing attorney at the Michigan Immigrant Rights Center. “We in the advocacy community were aggressively telling people—undocumented or not—not to open their doors to people without search warrants.”

Second, some Flint fire stations—which were among the first water pick-up locations—initially asked residents for government-issued photo ID in exchange for free water when they opened in January. Eventually, fire stations stopped asking, but not before reports about photo IDs spread quickly among immigrant families.

On Monday, January 22, Flint resident Tina Vasquez tweeted that “undocumented folks are reporting that they are being asked for a government-issued ID in order to get water at distribution centers.” David Kaiser, a spokesperson for the Michigan State Police, told *Yahoo News* the following day that photo ID “is not required, it’s just requested” and that residents’ addresses were only being tracked to ensure that free water, filters, and supplies were actually going to residents of Flint, as well as to get a better handle on where help was most needed in the community.

But some did not get the message. State public information officer Leix confirms that miscommunication prompted at least one fire station to ask for IDs, despite that the state issued a press release on January 22 confirming that photo ID was not required. At Fire Station No. 1—temporarily turned into a water-distribution center—a National Guardsman required photo ID before handing over a case of bottled water to each car that lined up.

“During a disaster is not the time to think about someone’s immigration status,” Leix says. “We heard rumors on social media that [the ID request] was being used as an opportunity to find undocumented workers. But we tried to debunk that. We sent out a press

Migrant farmworker and Hispanic immigrant communities in Benzie County and throughout Northern Michigan similarly live in the shadows, oftentimes without government help.

According to the United States Department of Agriculture’s National Agricultural Statistics Service, Michigan employs nearly 50,000 migrant and seasonal farmworkers statewide. Leelanau County is one of five counties that hosts between 2,000 and 5,000 workers, while Grand Traverse has between 1,000 and 2,000 and Benzie has between 500 and 1,000.

Fortunately, when crisis hits here—be it a natural or man-made disaster (such as the Flint water crisis)—these communities can turn to Father Wayne Dziekan (director of the secretariat for Justice and Peace at the Diocese of Gaylord) or Gladys Muñoz, two local advocates with their ears to the ground who have been providing help for nearly two decades.

Father Wayne Dziekan: 231-409-1387
Gladys Muñoz: jpac3@juno.com
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release immediately. Still, it was a concern. Every disaster is new. You learn things from every disaster, from outreach to logistics.”

As water donations picked up at local fire stations, members of the Michigan National Guard were going door to door to help residents.

Thomas Vega, staff sergeant and public information officer for the Michigan National

A Boost from TV

The difficulty in reaching Flint’s Spanish-speaking community did not receive wide publicity until late January, with coverage by local television reporter Natalie Zarowny on ABC12 WJRT.

At Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church in northern Flint, parish member and attorney Victoria Arteaga says that she encountered “a few dozen families who said they didn’t know” of the water crisis. Most of the written information about the water crisis that had reached the church was only written in English. “So we translated it ourselves,” Arteaga says.

“When the crisis hit, I went to Guadalupe for help,” says Maricela, an eastside resident, who asked to be identified by her first name only. “I trusted them. They were compassionate in those first days and said, ‘We’re gonna take care of you.’ Unlike the fire stations, the church didn’t set a limit on how much water I could get. We have four people in our house and needed more than one case of water a day.”

That weekend, January 23-24, community volunteers—alarmed by the television report—set out to knock on doors and spread the word among Spanish-speaking residents about the danger of drinking the water. Cross, the radio host, says that is how a Spanish-speaking volunteer from St. Mary’s Catholic Church met Yaquelin Vargas.

Juani Olivares, who chairs the Genesee County Hispanic/Latino Collaborative, an advocacy group, estimates that 95 percent of the people whom volunteers encountered that weekend were unaware that lead had contaminated Flint’s water supply or that the lead-poisoned water posed a health risk, particularly to children.

“We realized we needed to do something, because the problem [of people not knowing]

was bigger than we were told,” Olivares says.

The impact was immediate. Deacon Paul Donnelly, of St. Mary’s Catholic Church, was interviewed by reporter Natalie Zarowny and used his Channel 12 airtime to tell viewers they could get water from the church without identification. Bookkeeper and secretary Kathy Tomczyk says that she witnessed “an explosion” of people on the morning of Thursday, January 28, who needed cases of water to drink and bathe themselves.

“We’ve been taking care of them ever since,” Tomczyk says. “You don’t have to be Catholic to come here and get water. We don’t care about your skin color, your nationality, or your sexual preference. These are all God’s children.”

Truckloads of donated water pallets have arrived at St. Mary’s from all across the country, including Rhode Island, Virginia, and Kansas. And still, it is not enough. St. Mary’s gave out 1,054 cases of water during one week in early May, Tomczyk says, and she expected those numbers to increase as fire stations stopped distributing water.

Lessons Learned

How could the city and state have done a better job of reaching out to Flint’s undocumented community at the height of the water crisis? Advocates say that those responding to the lead crisis in Flint can learn lessons from elsewhere in the country.

Henry Fernandez, a senior fellow at the Center for American Progress, a progressive public policy research and advocacy organization, lauded how New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg’s administration reached out quickly to that city’s undocumented immigrant community when Hurricane Sandy hit in 2012.

Even before the hurricane reached the city, the government released an online guide in Spanish and other languages answering questions about disaster assistance. The first question: “Am I eligible for any disaster assistance if I am undocumented?” Yes, the guide answered, and listed specific city, state, and federal services available to them.

“They were very engaged,” Fernandez recalls. “They had the infrastructure in place, the people in place, and pathways for this to be done. When Hurricane Sandy hit New York, it caused a major crisis that hit people both who were undocumented and who weren’t. The way Bloomberg handled it was consistent with New York City’s overall strategy of embracing and welcoming immigrants and making sure they’re safe. But it’s really important to lay that groundwork beforehand.”

A law that guarantees government officials will not ask for photo ID during a crisis would also help, says Ryan Bates, executive director of Michigan United, a nonprofit activist group. California has such a law, and Bates says that he hopes to convince lawmakers to introduce such a bill in Michigan.

Bates says he believes ID was initially

required at Flint fire stations because officials were more concerned that residents would take commercial advantage of the handouts, rather than use them for daily living, or that people would come from outside of Flint to collect free water.

“There’s an unfortunate gut reaction from public officials that folks in communities like Flint are suspect,” Bates explains. “We should treat people as victims who need help.”

Fernandez says the outreach effort in Flint shows that the government needs to take a broader approach to reaching immigrant or non-English-speaking communities. Rather than relying so heavily on the National Guard going door to door, he says that including schools in the outreach effort would have helped disseminate health alerts more effectively.

When President Obama introduced his 2012 Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) legislation, commonly known as the “Dreamers Act,” Los Angeles public schools sent home letters with each Latino immigrant student explaining how family members could apply.

“We often say that immigration reform could bring people out of the shadows,” Fernandez says. “But people in the shadows are often already very connected to government, through local schools.”

Immigration lawyer Susan Reed says, now that lead poisoning is being documented, it is imperative for Michigan to expand Medicaid eligibility to include not just children who are U.S. citizens but all Flint children, including the undocumented or those holding Green Cards. Under current law, a noncitizen must have a Green Card for five years to be eligible for Medicaid.

“We haven’t seen clear communication from the state as to the health status for non-citizens,” Reed says. “How do we ensure that folks who don’t have status continue to have access to monitoring and intervention? They should have that after being poisoned by lead. They should be certified as victims.”

But Anna Heaton, the governor’s press secretary, responded that it is federal law that prevents undocumented immigrants from enrolling in Medicaid.

“This population most often seeks health care from free clinics and federally qualified community health centers, of which there are several in Flint,” she says. “We are working with those locations, as well as with charitable and religious organizations, to encourage blood lead-level testing and to ensure resources exist for follow-up health care. If more resources are needed in the future, we will work with these organizations to address those needs.”

A version of this story was first published by Bridge Magazine on May 24, 2016.



Yaquelin Vega did not learn that Flint’s drinking water had been poisoned until late January, three months after Michigan’s governor declared a state of emergency. Her daughter, Lydia, has been diagnosed with lead poisoning. Photo by Jacob Wheeler.

Guard, arrived in Flint on Sunday, January 14 to begin overseeing the outreach effort. Within days, guard members began delivering palm cards printed in English and Spanish with information on nutrition, free water tests, and instructions for using free filters. They left information sheets on doors when no one was home or attached them to the water bottles themselves.

“They were definitely getting information out into the community,” Vega says. “But we also learned troubling information that the undocumented folks were afraid to come to their door. We heard rumors circulating through the community, spread by activists, that the National Guard was going to turn people’s names over to immigration authorities and have them arrested. Those rumors were false, and—as a Hispanic myself—I took them personally.”

But Vega also tries to stay positive.

“Most of the time, someone sees one of us in uniform, and they think that’s someone they can trust,” Vega says. “The majority of the people in Flint wanted us there, to help. We played a small role, but in my mind, it was one of the most important roles.”

The Betsie Current

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

CONSTANTLY FLOWING

Mondays

Pilates with Anna at the Oliver Art Center in Frankfort. Email annamallien@gmail.com if interested. 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. 231-525-0601. 10-11am.

Yoga + Pilates + Strength = Fitness Fusion at Oliver Art Center. 10:30-11:30 am. Call Beth at 770-235-9306.

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: join us for euchre, cribbage, and rummy, too! 12-1pm.

Zumba at The Gathering Place. Your first class is free, and then it's only \$3! All ability levels are welcome. 2:30pm.

Grow Benzie Farmers' Market at 5885 Frankfort Highway (M-115) in Benzonia. 3-7pm.

Tuesdays

Stretch and tone with Jean at Oliver Art Center. 9-10am.

Honor Farmers' & Flea Market in Maley Park. Across from the shopping plaza and senior center with plenty of off-road parking. 9am-3pm.

Benzie Shores District Library offers technology assistance. Learn to download ebooks, audiobooks, and magazines to your personal devices. 10am-12pm.

Music by the Melody Makers at The Gathering Place. 10:30am-12pm.

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. 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 at The Gathering Place. 6pm.

Yoga with Kari at Pleasant Valley Community Center in Arcadia. Call 231-383-1883 if interested. 6-7:30pm.

Wednesdays

Zumba at The Gathering Place. 8:30am.

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

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 \$1.00 per card or bring a prize. 12:30-1:30pm.

Matter of Balance with the Benzie Council on Aging at Honor Township Hall. 1-3pm.

Local computer whiz Dustin Wolpoff will be on hand after lunch to help navigate your computer, tablet, or smartphone. He will meet with everyone individually for a 15-minute appointment, so sign up at The Gathering Place in advance. A donation of \$2 is appreciated. 1:15pm.

Yoga with Kari at the Oliver Art Center in Frankfort. 231-383-1883. 5:30-7pm.

Steven Fernand, 20th century "Ballads a la Bossa." Cold Creek Inn, Beulah, 6:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. Wednesdays, Fridays, Saturdays.

Thursdays

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

Stretch and tone with Jean at Oliver Art Center. 9-10am.

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.

Quilting at Darcy Library. 2:30-5:30pm.

Storytime for preschoolers at the Benzonia Public Library in the Children's Room. Miss Amanda will lead us through an informal time to socialize, make new friends, and hear great stories, followed by a craft or whimsical coloring sheets. 3-4pm.

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. 3-6pm.

Yoga with Kari at the Ware Farm of Bear Lake. 231-383-1883. 3-4:30pm.

Storytime with Kris at Darcy Library. 4:30pm.

Coloring & Creativity Club for Adults at Darcy Library. 5:30-7pm.

Fridays

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

Fun Fridays at Benzie Shores District Library: Kids and their parents/caregivers are invited to join us! Programs are free and targeted at preschool children, though kids of all ages are welcome. For the parents, are you tired of technology? Coloring for Grown-ups is a stress-free hour of coloring while the kids play. Everyone welcome. All materials supplied by the library. 10-11am.

Fridays with Britt: Drop in for a garden tour, ask questions, and learn tips from Grow Benzie's greenhouse manager about soil health, seed starting, and garden planning. Free, donations accepted. 10am-12pm.

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

Family Storytime: Gather 'round for stories, rhymes, and songs with Ashley at the Darcy Library. Storytime is designed for children ages 2-5, but all are welcome. Children must be accompanied by an adult, and be sure to sign up for a library card so you can borrow our books to read at home! 3-3:45pm.

Crystal Mountain Farmers' Market in Thompsonville. 3-6pm.

Saturdays

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

Yoga + Pilates + Strength = Fitness Fusion at Oliver Art Center. 10:30-11:30 am. Call Beth at 770-235-9306.

Farmers' Market and Flea Market at the Interlochen Eagles #3503 at 20724 Honor Highway/US-131, three miles west of



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Interlochen. Consisting of Michigan-grown fruits and veggies, flea marketers, cottage-food vendors, artisans, arts & craft vendors, and independent reps. 12-4pm.

Sundays

Integrative Yoga with Jessica at the Oliver Art Center. Young or old, novice or seasoned practitioner, yoga is for everyone! Explore yoga on your own terms and discover all that it can do for you. Adult drop-in fee is \$15, student/senior drop-in fee is \$10. Call 231-620-3528 if interested. 10:30-11:30am.

ON DECK

Thursday, August 18

The Milky Way Galaxy at the Center: A Talk Summary by David G. Penney, Ph.D. at the Betsie Valley District Library. In this presentation, Dr. Penney will talk mainly about the core of the Milky Way and how it can affect us. The core is contained in the central bulge, at the center of our galaxy. This structure is found in millions of other galaxies. Thankfully, we are 25-28,000 lightyears away from our core. It cannot be seen by the naked eye or even by visible light



“Hey Steve, *tern* around.” “What, I don’t see anything, Alex.” “Haha. You are so *gull*ible, Steve.” Photo by Noah Sorensen.

with the most powerful telescopes. This is because of the distance, the gas and dust clouds in the way, our perspective, and the fact that we are inside of our galaxy. The core has low surface brightness, so a night sky must be very dark for details of the Milky Way to be seen. The core is a place totally unlike our own. At our stage of science it is a mysterious place. It is highly congested by stars, large and small, old and young.

In the core, instead of the sky being dark as it is at night on earth, it is ablaze as if it were daytime, with millions of stars shining brightly. The levels of radiation of all types, magnetic fields, stray particles, star debris, etc., and danger in general, is very much higher. Lurking at the center of the galactic core is a supermassive black hole (SMBH), equal in mass to 4.1 million suns. This black hole is capable of “eating” stars - even hundreds of stars. Library located at 14744 Thompson Ave., Thompsonville.



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Friday & Saturday, August 19 & 20

40th annual Frankfort Art Fair is the largest two-day art fair in Frankfort. More than 175 artists. Market Square Park.

Friday August 19

Michigan Legacy Art Park Legacy Gala. The event features live and silent auctions, sparkling wine reception, locally-sourced dinner, live music and the presentation of the Legacy Award. \$75. (231) 378-4963. 6pm-9pm

Friday-Sunday, August 19-21

National Coho Salmon Festival. This year’s National Coho Festival will be held the weekend of August 19, 20, and 21, 2016 in the riverside village of Honor, MI. This year’s festival committee has crafted a kid-friendly, fun-for-all weekend with a jam-packed event list including many annual events folks have come to expect, as well as exciting new additions like the “Hole in One Challenge”, “Kids Movie Night” and the “Isaac’s 3-on-3 Basketball Tournament”. For a complete list of events, please visit www.nationalcohosalmonfestival.org.

Saturday, August 20

Isaac’s 3-on-3 Basketball Tournament. 3rd-8th grade 3-on-3 basketball tournament in memory of Isaac Julian Ryan-McKinnon! The purpose of this tournament is to raise money for the National Coho Festival, Inc. & the Isaac Julian Legacy Foundation to further the future of the festival & scholarships given annually in Isaac Ryan-McKinnon’s honor. We hope this tournament will give the youth from the surrounding communities a chance to participate in a positive, competitive event. Platte River Elementary School 11434 Main St., Honor. 231-218-0655 9am

Saturday, August 20

Used book sale at Benzonia Public Library. On the porch & front lawn. Thousands of books! Great bargains! Sponsored by the Friends of Benzonia Public Library. Benzonia. 10am.

Saturday, August 20

Friends of the Benzie Shores District Library Annual Booksale. Frankfort. 10am-2pm.

Sunday, August 21

The Benzie Area Symphony Orchestra will be featuring Laura Osgood-Brown, soprano from Interlochen Arts Academy. She will be performing “The Letter” from the opera Eugene Onegin by Tchaikovsky. Romeo and Juliet by Tchaikovsky will also be performed. The BASO will also perform works by Rimsky-Korsakoff, Verdi, and Rachmaninoff.

Benzie Central High School Auditorium 7pm-8:30pm.

Tuesday-Sunday, August 23-27

Manistee County Fair. Celebrating 140 years! Shows, Racing, Exhibits, Games and more! SJO Motocross, Michigan Truck & Tractor Pulls, T-N-T SideXSide Drag Racing, New Stock Car races, & Night of Destruction Demolition Derby. www.manisteecountyfair.org

Wednesday, August 24

Arcadia Dunes Nature Hike. Join GTRLC for an evening hike at the beautiful Old Baldy trail at Arcadia Dunes: The C.S. Mott Nature Preserve. Staff will point out key natural features and discuss the property’s history. Dress for the weather and wear comfortable shoes! To RSVP please visit: www.gtrlc.org or call 231-929-7911. 7pm-9pm. Directions: <https://goo.gl/CQsYXX>

Thursday, August 25

Universally Accessible Trail Hike at Arcadia Dunes. Join GTRLC at Arcadia Dunes for an informational hike along the soon-to-be built universally accessible Overlook Trail. Hikers are encouraged to bring questions they might have about the new path. This is a short, 1 mile hike through beautiful coastal woodlands terminating in a gorgeous bluff view of Lake Michigan. Please bring water and comfortable shoes. To RSVP please visit: www.gtrlc.org or call 231.929.7911 10am-12pm.

Friday-Sunday, August 26-28

Benzie Fishing Frenzy, a three day salmon fishing tournament. Tournament HQ is at the Mineral Springs Park Pavilion in downtown Frankfort. Captain’s Meetings are at 7:30pm on Thursday and Friday with on-site registration beginning both days at 5:30. Ladies fish Friday. 2 ladies required per team, \$100 entry, weigh your best 5. The main event on Saturday and Sunday has 3 divisions: Pro - \$400 entry, Weigh Your Best 10 daily / Am - \$300 entry, Weigh Your Best 10 daily / Big Fish - \$100 entry, Weigh your single biggest fish per day. 333 is also available - weigh your best 3 fish in 2 days. Entry is \$100 (333 only available for \$150). For more information on the Tournament contact Scott at 231-690-1102.

Saturday, August 27

Benzie Radio Controllers 19th annual AIR SHOW! FUN day of Flying. Many Radio Controlled model aircraft, fixed wings, helicopters, warbirds, jets, and more. Refreshments available, just bring chairs! Free Admission - Goodwill donations accepted. <http://www.benziearearc.com/> 10am-3pm.

Saturday, August 27

Archibald Jones Day! Who was Archibald Jones? Find out why Beulah celebrates “The Man Who (Allegedly) Pulled the Plug at Crystal Lake.” This event is held every other year (even numbered years). Stacy Leroy Daniels, a native of Benzie county, read the “Tragedy” of Crystal Lake as a young boy. After becoming a professional environmental engineer, he came to wonder more about the uniqueness of Crystal Lake: What caused the lowering of the Lake? Who was Archibald Jones – a scapegoat to be blamed for an ill-conceived project, or a “bootstrap engineer” to be celebrated as a hero? 11am-2pm.


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Noah Sorensen, Instagramming It

A hobby photographer

Born in Fairbanks, Alaska, in 1981, Noah spent his childhood in Alaska and Northern Michigan. While he was growing up, Noah’s father was an Alaskan fisherman, so the family would spend summers in the far north. A Frankfort High School graduate, Noah attended Earlham College in Indiana, receiving a

degree in psychology in 2004. While living in New York City in 2012, Noah began taking pictures of the city on a regular basis and posting them to social media. By the time he moved back to Northern Michigan in the summer of 2014, Noah was addicted to the hobby and posting a picture almost every day. Noah loves

being outdoors in the beauty of Northern Michigan and sharing what he sees through his photography. In 2016, he launched Noah Sorensen Photography and has been selling prints and working freelance jobs. He also works online as a Trademark Researcher in New York City. The best way to view his work is on Instagram.





Noah Sorensen Photography
(347) 500-2121
nsorensenphoto@gmail.com
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Jay White: Land Consulting Services

Questions and Answers with community caces

As we reported in our last season of *The Betsie Current*, real estate sales are up in Benzie County—2015 was a record-setting year for many Benzie County brokers, measured both by units sold and total revenues. According to the Traverse Area Association of Realtors (TAAR), 372 single-family homes were sold in Benzie in 2015, compared to 318 the year before.

Likewise, the real estate market has rebounded nationally after being flooded with bank foreclosures and rock-bottom deals following the 2009 economic recession. Inventory levels of homes and properties for sale have diminished since 2013, and the buyer's market period of 2009 to 2013 has quickly become a seller's market in many areas in Northern Michigan.

In such a seller's market, it is a good idea to have a buyer's agent like Jay White to represent you.

White grew up in Kalamazoo and graduated from Portage Northern High School. He then attended Calvin College in Grand Rapids, before moving to Frankfort in 1973. Just a year later, in 1974, White started the Firestone Tire & Auto Service on Main Street in Frankfort, and then he sold it in 1986.

In 1987, White began his career in real estate as a member of the sales and development team at Crystal Mountain. In 1989, he became the associate broker for the company. In 1993, White was named Crystal Mountain's vice president of Real Estate Sales and became one of Benzie County's top realtors. From 1998 until 2009, White was also part owner and vice president of Sleeping Bear Realty.

White retired from Crystal Mountain in 2014 to start his own company, Land Consulting Services, an Exclusive Buyer Agency Brokerage company in Frankfort.

Now White is an associate broker—specifically a buyer agent, meaning that he only represents people who are purchasing properties.

Continuing with our interview series on impactful Benzie County characters, *The Betsie Current* caught up with Jay White and asked how important it is to have representation as a buyer in a real estate purchase.

THE BETSIE CURRENT: What is a buyer agent and how does it benefit a buyer?

JAY WHITE: Traditionally, the way it used to work [for real estate transactions], is that both the buyer and the seller may have worked with the one agent; the same agent, who was the listing agent for the property. But, in reality, the listing agent's only fiduciary responsibility was to seller, so the listing agent couldn't really represent the needs of the buyer in a transaction. In other words, the relationship was really with the seller—the seller is the agent's client, and the agent is doing the best that he/she can to sell the house for the client. A listing agent cannot coach a buyer on what price to offer, and there is confidential information that they cannot share with the buyer. This puts the buyer at a disadvantage in a transaction. My role, as an exclusive buyer agent, is to always represent the best interest of my buyer clients. I do not take any listings, so I never represent the seller. Traditionally, if I were a listing agent, I would talk about the highlights of the property and not talk about its negatives. But being a buyer's agent, I can be very objective about the properties that I see; focus on what really works best for the buyer, regardless of who has the property listed. I really become more of a consultant than a salesperson. I can say things to my clients that I would not be able to say to a buyer if I were representing the seller: in terms of

current market conditions, condition of the home, or my feeling about the property in terms of its value today and what its resale value may be in the future.

CURRENT: What is an exclusive buyer agent's relationship with the listing agents?

WHITE: Without good listing agents, I would not have any inventory for my clients to buy. Each of us has a role in taking care of our customers and our clients. My role is to represent my clients exclusively, to help them find the best property to fit their needs and budget. The listing agent's role and responsibility is to do the best job that he/she can to market and get the highest amount possible for his/her client. I work collaboratively with the listing agent to bring our contracts together. Successful listing agents understand the importance of cooperation and working with other agents to get their properties sold. The day of being able to "double dip" in being the listing agent and the selling agent is becoming much more infrequent than in years past, as many people are looking for representation as a buyer vs.

new era?

WHITE: It is a challenge today to keep up with activity. So many times I hear, "Oh, that realtor never called me back." It is unfortunate that that happens in our business. I think all of us get busy, especially this time of year and I don't think it is ever intentional for any realtor not to get back to someone. But, like in any other business, you get overwhelmed in the summer time, and it is hard to keep up. We have some excellent agents in our area and we are very fortunate to have them. Marketing today is more than an ad in the newspaper; its more than a sign in the yard. It is extensive marketing with good photography and good presence with the websites that are out there, like Realtor.com, Zillow, Trulia, and many others. It has really been a big change in our industry. It used to be that Realtors were the keepers of the information, and you had to come to us to ask for that information. Nobody really knew about it, unless we put it in the newspaper for sale. Today, it is just the opposite. The buyer—my clients—walk in to my office and say, "Here are 10 properties I like, can you help me sort through them and see them?" One of the programs that I use is Client Connect, which allows me to input my client's criteria for the property that they are looking for into the MLS system, and it sends out anything matching their criteria and allows them to sort through the listings and set them up as favorites, or possibles, or even reject a property so that they do not get any more notifications about the property. I probably have 60 clients right now that I am working for, and there is no way that

I could keep all of their singular interests in mind every time I see a new listing. Daily in my geographical area, there are probably 10 to 25 new listings every day.

CURRENT: Do you have some tips?

WHITE: Don't fall in love with a property. Try to be as objective as you can be. When you fall in love, you tend to overlook things. You need to remain objective if you are going to negotiate a contract in your best interest. Define the area and the community that you want to purchase in and get comfortable with that. Seek pre-approval from a lender. Seek a good buyer representative. Regionally—and this is just the way I look at property—the value of real estate is based upon the community that it is in, for the most part. So as you have a more vibrant, successful community, the higher the property values; it is about community, services, good retail, support services, hospitals and schools. And then, of course, waterfront is one of the strongest contributors to value whether it's direct waterfront or just views of the water with nearby access.

CURRENT: What's your perfect summer day look like in Benzie County? How would you spend it?

WHITE: Working hard for my clients to find the right property and then celebrating with them when we successfully negotiate a sale. I enjoy walking or riding my bike to most showings in town and at the end of the day—especially Mondays—you'll find me playing beach volleyball on the Frankfort beach with friends. I have a wonderful wife, Jody, three grown children and seven grandchildren: and spending time with them is the best part of my life.

To learn more about Jay White and his Land Consulting Services company, check out his website: LandConsultingServices.com



Jay White, owner of Land Consulting Services. Photo courtesy of Jay White.

just being a customer. The buyer-beware era of real state is gone; home inspections barely existed 15 years ago, but that has all changed.

CURRENT: How do you evaluate the value of a property?

WHITE: When you break down a property and look at it, there are a lot of things that indicate where value is. We will look at sold comps [comparable properties] that compare to our property within the market area. Finding accurate enough comps to help us determine the market value of a home per square foot and then comparing that to the property we are looking at is one of our first steps. Followed by a series of other questions, for example; How long has the property been on the market? Have their been price reductions in the past? What did the property sell for previously? How much has the current owner invested in the property to improve it? We look at all those details and then make adjustments based upon today's market. There are a lot of factors that go into the offer amount. We try to break that down into those segments and also look at the value of the raw land and the current cost of construction. The cost of construction is up significantly right now, and it is difficult to build a home anywhere near the price that you can buy an existing home. New construction is going to cost you at least 30 to 40 percent more than existing.

CURRENT: Are you paid by commission?

WHITE: Yes, however my clients pay no additional fee for my exclusive service in most transactions because nearly all properties on the market have a sales commission for buyer's agents built into the sale price. In most cases, the fee that I receive from the transaction comes directly from the built-in seller paid commission and not from my client.

CURRENT: What are some challenges of this





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Go Wild

Continued from page 1

however, act to restore and improve the pollinator/plant/soil relationship.

What are we—as gardeners, as citizens—to do? Plant Michigan native plants!

It does not matter the size of your property or its location. Each of us can have an impact. Using Michigan native plants, we can match the plant to the soil, moisture, and sunlight. We can landscape using plant communities and include canopy, understory, shrubs, perennials, ferns, grasses, and ground covers. Each one of these plants participates to create an ecosystem—a web of life—to support insects, reptiles, amphibians, small mammals, birds, and more.

For example, to a bird, a turf lawn and the typical non-native foundation plantings around a home look like a desert—dry, brown, and dead. Though a homeowner may put out a spattering of bird feeders, most baby birds do not eat seeds or suet; rather, most baby birds are fed live bugs. This means that adult birds may survive in the classic yard, but their hatchlings will not. It is not an ecosystem that is designed for bird habitat, which would include shelter, food, and water for raising a family.

To help, homeowners can offer cover from predators by making a brush pile of fallen sticks, by holding off on trimming hedges and bushes, and by planting trees. They can add birdbaths and ponds. They can mature from thinking that bugs in the yard are “yucky.”

Bring On The Bugs

Don't like the thought of bugs? What about butterflies? They are insects. And who doesn't like seeing butterflies in their garden? But wait, butterflies are nectar-feeding bugs. They are adults. So what did they eat when they were caterpillars? Plants. And usually only *one* kind of plant. (Such picky eaters.)

Most insects have a one-to-one relationship with a certain plant. Some are generalists and will eat anything, but most are not—think Monarchs and milkweed. The butterfly can nectar feed on a wide variety of flowers, but the egg is laid on only one kind of plant, milkweed. The caterpillar grows and develops and ages into a chrysalis on only one kind of plant, milkweed. No milkweed = no Monarch butterflies. Lose the plant, lose the bug.

And the cycle continues: as mentioned, most baby birds eat only bugs, and since bugs are picky eaters, they often eat only one plant. If the bug is a Michigan native, then the plant that it eats is also a Michigan native. No Michigan native plants mean no bugs, no butterflies, no baby birds.

What Can Be Done?

As a gardener, a citizen, remove as many non-native plants from your property as is reasonable. Replace them with beautiful and beneficial Michigan native plants. Plant the right plant in the right place. You will be rewarded by creating a beautiful ecosystem on a micro-level in your yard, thereby supporting the pollinators who provide 33 percent of the food that we eat.

It is not a mystery to figure out what is native and what is non-native. In the 1850s, when Michigan was being surveyed for statehood and our county lines were being drawn, men walked with survey stakes and chains and made notes on the soil type, moisture, plants, animals, and—well, heck—everything that they saw. Those records are still available; Michigan State University and the University of Michigan maintain lists of plants that were here prior to European settlement. [Check out the information at MichiganFlora.net.]

When designing a garden for pollinators and bugs, begin with a variety of flower shapes: simple, such as a Tickseed (*Coreopsis*); semi-complex, such

as a Harebell; and complex, such as a Columbine (*Aquilegia*). Second, give thought to bloom season. For instance, a Serviceberry will bloom early in spring and provide edible fruits by June. Beard-tongue (*Penstemon*) will bloom early in summer, as will Golden Alexander. By late summer, a Michigan native garden is abuzz with activity on St. John's Wort Shrub (*Hypericum prolificum*), Purple Coneflower (*Echinacea*), and Goldenrod (*Solidago*). Purchase Michigan native plants from trusted nurseries.

Cheryl Gross is an Advanced Master Gardener and president of Plant It Wild.

Invasives: How They Got Here

A piece of the bigger American immigrant pie, Michigan saw its first French explorers in the 17th century, with another arrival of the French and the British in the early 1800s. During the late 1800s, there was an influx of varied European immigrants, mixing their traditions and cultures with those of the state's previous settlers. Although most immigrants at that time were subsistence farmers, some were highly skilled, and the efforts of these people helped to diversify the crop base here.

For instance, the Germans settled predominantly in southeastern Michigan and in Saginaw and Berrien counties, “areas that proved to have excellent farmland,” according to MSU's **History of Agriculture in Michigan**. Meanwhile, the Danes, another group of skilled farmers, specialized in growing potatoes to the northeast of Muskegon. The Dutch arrived in 1846 and introduced celery, and the area around Grand Rapids remains a Dutch stronghold with much celery still being grown there. The Finns settled on the eastern edge of the Upper Peninsula's mining district, and they worked hard in the mines to raise enough money to buy farms. The Irish and the Italians also came to Michigan for the mines, leaving behind famine and few economic opportunities. People left Poland and Hungary due to political and social revolts, the latter group championing sugar beet production in Michigan's thumb region.

But sometimes these European immigrants, intentionally or unintentionally, also brought plants from “home” that were not so good. For this, they should not be chastised, though. They did it innocently. They brought bits of what they knew with them; they did not know that, decades later, these plants would harm our ecosystem.

Some have become invasive and damaging, such as Garlic Mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*), which was brought as a garden plant, used for food and medicine. Colts-foot (*Tussilago farfara*) was also brought for medicinal purposes. Wild parsnip (*Pastinaca sativa*) is nothing more than a garden escapee, planted intentionally and then left alone to reseed itself wherever and whenever.

Meanwhile, the invasive phragmites (*Phragmites australis*) came from the days when ships used solid ballast instead of water ballast; they dug up some dirt from the area where the ship was docked—and that often included the plants that were growing in that shoreline dirt—and depoisted the load elsewhere.

Not to mention the ornamental invasives that have been planted on purpose for more than a century because of their pleasing looks, potential damage be damned: nurseries offered (and still do offer) exotic imports from Europe and Asia for “fashion” in our landscape. In the 1980s, even I bought into the idea of imported pest-free plants, promoted by a nursery in Plymouth that I frequented.

Our innocence and our mistakes need enlightening and correcting, and fortunately many people are starting to get it.

For more information about Michigan native plants, check out the Xerces Society, the National Wildlife Federation, Monarch Watch, and Plant It Wild.

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Beulah Village Park

Archibald Jones Day
Saturday, August 27,
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Beulah Village Park

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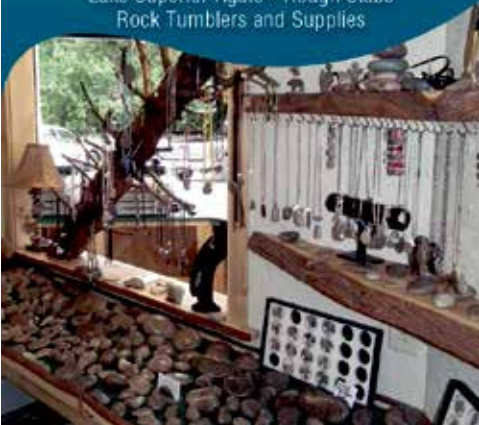
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Monster Weed

Battling Japanese knotweed in Manistee

By Joe VanderMeulen

Current Contributor

About three years ago, Mary Hurley and her neighbors at Harbor Village in Manistee noticed an unpleasant change nearby. What once was a relatively contained population of *Phragmites australis*, the invasive European wetland plant, was giving way to a rapidly expanding population of Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*). This fast-growing, woody, invasive shrub was taking over the roadsides near their neighborhood and marching across the hillsides, too.

Japanese knotweed is an invasive species, which means that it is not native to the United States in general, nor to Northern Michigan specifically. Invasive species can cause real economic harm, as well as harm to human

infrastructure. It grows not just in the right-of-ways but onto private property. So even if the city took this on by itself, there still needs to be efforts with adjoining property owners.”

Enter the Northwest Michigan Invasive Species Network.

“One of the biggest problems with Japanese knotweed is that it’s able to spread not only by seed but also by fragments,” says Katie Grsesiak, ISN coordinator. “So if you mow or cut the Japanese knotweed and throw it in a compost pile, for example, even a piece as big as an inch long can grow into a whole new plant.”

The effects of climate change on the region could aid this invasive.

“As the temperature increases, as our winters get less severe overall, Japanese knotweed has a competitive advantage,” Grsesiak explains. “It’s able to stay growing a little longer, putting more resources into its roots when the frost doesn’t kill it. When that little fragment doesn’t die, Japanese knotweed is able to continue growing.”

Grsesiak and Mikula believe that the most effective way to control Japanese knotweed is to use herbicide, which has proven effective in combatting phragmites in nearby regions. (Phragmites is also a rhizome re-



A roadside enclave of shrubbery consisting of Japanese knotweed. Photo courtesy of NatureChange.org

health. Japanese knotwood causes harm both to the environment and to our infrastructure—to our roads, to our buildings—because it is able to bust right through foundations.

“Prior to this, our main concern had been phragmites, which we see in the water features all around us,” Hurley says. “We were thinking that was the evil weed to be eradicated. Suddenly, it started being replaced by *this* plant, which we now know is Japanese knotweed.”

Japanese knotweed has a powerful will to dominate the landscape; it is reminiscent of the monster alien plant in the movie, *Little Shop of Horrors*.

Imported from Asia, this non-native plant grows at an incredible rate, forming a dense, almost impenetrable wall of wide green leaves and stalks that resemble bamboo, rising eight to 10 feet high and spreading across the landscape. Knotweed is also a reproducing nightmare, sprouting from even small pieces of the plant stems or roots (called rhizomes). Its spreading rhizomes can penetrate asphalt and crack concrete to send up more plants. It simply outcompetes native plants, blocking sunlight but also releasing chemicals into the soil that interfere with the growth of other plants.

Hurley and the Harbor Village Association got to work researching the problem and soon discovered the Northwest Michigan Invasive Species Network (ISN). Created to help contain and control the most damaging populations of invasive pests in our four-county area, ISN began working with the neighborhood group and reached out to the City of Manistee, as well.

“This plant has encroached into the roadway,” says Jeff Mikula, director of the Manistee Public Works Department. “We tried to trim it back. It comes back bigger and nastier than ever. We’ve also seen that it pokes through the asphalt, and so it’s very destructive to the

producer.)

Fields Ratliff, habitat management specialist with ISN, explains how the herbicide is used.

“The chemical application of Japanese knotweed is a full-year spray using a pump backpack sprayer to mist and cover the leaves of the plant,” Ratliff says. “That’s 90 percent of what we do. We also use a pump application for areas where the plant is near sensitive trees or shrubs. We cut it off, lay it down, then we fill the stump with the product. That goes down in the roots and kills it, and we don’t have to worry about getting the full-year spray on other sensitive plants.”

ISN recently received a new grant from the Michigan Invasive Species Grant Program, which Grsesiak says, provides the funds to work both with private landowners and the City of Manistee to tackle this growing population of invasive species.

“We’re happy to know that the city is taking part in it,” Hurley says. “While we’re already treating it, we know that—if we eradicate it on our property and it’s not eradicated elsewhere—it’s not going to do us a lot of good.”

A version of this story was published on NatureChange.org, as well as a video that helps to describe the coordinated effort now underway in the City of Manistee to control and eradicate Japanese knotweed. The work is being supported by citizen groups, the City of Manistee, and the Invasive Species Network, with funding assistance from the Michigan Invasive Species Grant Program under the Michigan Departments of Natural Resources (DNR), Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), and Department of Agriculture and Rural Development.

Go Drink

Continued from page 1

Current that he is excited to make inroads in Grand Rapids and the Detroit area. Stormcloud currently sources its beer to 33 different locations around Northern Michigan. The brewery employs 60 in high summer; Schmitt estimates that Stormcloud will add another five to eight workers at the brewing and bottling plant. “The time is right to brew more beer,” says Jim Kunz, a silent partner behind Stormcloud. Kunz bought the building, previously occupied by the old Caddy Shack golf shop, where the brewery now sits in downtown Frankfort. “The stars aligned for us with the opportunity to buy this property.”

When Stormcloud opened in June 2013, Kunz, Schmitt, and Confer expected that the business would grow and that the need would arise to make more beer and pump up the distribution. The brewery has succeeded enough to beat all financial projections. The team will work with Kalamazoo-based Byce & Associates to design the new plant. State Savings Bank will help finance the venture. Best of all, Stormcloud now has momentum on its side, following the prestigious award

from *MLive*. “We are both ecstatic and humbled to be named Michigan’s best new brewery,” says Schmitt, who was sitting in his office when the results were announced and quickly began receiving text messages of ‘congratulations’ from friends and employees. “Breweries in our state are making incredible beer right now, and to be publicly recognized with the nine other breweries on *MLive*’s ‘Top 10’ list is a true honor for us at Stormcloud.”

Kunz, who first saw the news via Twitter, admits that he is biased about who deserves to call themselves the best brewery in Michigan. “You can never go wrong with the Rainmaker,” Kunz says. “The saison that Brian brews is also wonderful.” However, the brewmaster, himself, does not want an oversized reputation to spoil his hops. “We’re making every effort to brew world-class examples of traditional Belgian ales,” Confer says. “Collectively, the Trappist abbeys of Belgium have about 12,000 years of brewing experience. We’ve been brewing beer here at Stormcloud

for a little more than three years, so we have a little catching up to do.”

Read in our online archives about Stormcloud’s first year in action: BetsieCurrent.com/index.php/Toasting-Town/

ters or contracts that shaped her career? Or maybe these were unrelated Lahtis who were replacing their mailbox, who had never heard of actress Christine. But why was it being pitched? New owners?

Sometimes the stories are nostalgic. One summer, I gave up a shredded nylon beach chair, an oddly difficult decision. My first cat—my old orange tabby soulmate named MacDuff—had had a stroke the previous summer. The day of his stroke, I tearfully took MacDuff to Dr. Susan Daly at Betsie River Veterinary Clinic to have him put down, but she told me, “Putting him down would not be wrong, but he could come back! They can come back from strokes!” I took that as encouragement and brought him back to our cottage. For weeks, I sat in that nylon beach chair under the trees and watched as he relearned to walk, staggering in his patches of myrtle. Often he sat peacefully on my lap, and I cherished his brave little self. He made it five more weeks and died quietly back at home in Indiana after a second stroke, his beloved sister Cassie curled near him.

By the next Dump Day, the chair was shredded and doomed. I thought twice, given its history, but ultimately added it to the debris in my car. Finally in position next to the dumpster and those fast workers, I hesitated again, holding the torn chair. A big strong worker watched me and said, “So, maybe you’d rather keep that chair?” I replied, “I sat in it with my sick cat last summer. He died not long after...” and we pitched it into the dumpster. Then, when I was back in the car about to drive off, the worker stopped his busy actions, leaned down beside my car, and talked to me at length about his cat. She had died just months before; he missed her, too. I told him that I still cried when I thought of MacDuff. He understood. The chair had disappeared into the dumpster, but I left that busy place of discards with a sweet memory of a brief interaction with a stranger, both of us grieving cats that we had loved and lost. All because of a broken chair. It was a Dump Day moment.

Go Dump

Continued from page 1


bottomed, wooden rowboat was perched atop a load on a trailer, too beautiful to destroy: one of the workers claimed it, to recycle as a planter. Another year, I rescued a rather crude oil painting. At the time, I was teaching teachers how to use art in their classrooms, and this painting became a test case for an aesthetic puzzle: handmade, original, a recognizable sunset scene with realistic colors, but was it “art?” Would an art museum want it, and if not, why not? Might some other kind of museum welcome it, and why?

And size is no problem! One summer, my sister and I took two sofas in a pick-up truck and watched the dumpster’s jaws consume them. The guys working the project tell of boats that have gone in, and one recent summer, with my sister’s truck, we contributed just that—a neighbor’s hopelessly damaged sailboat. This August, another sailboat rolled in, carrying mattress springs.

There are stories behind the things being left at Dump Day. Those two sofas, for example—the daybed from the old cottage had been featured in decades of family snapshots (the small girl sitting with her grandmother in one photo has long since finished graduate school). That couch, never lovely, had fit a space and served a purpose for years. The other sofa, cumbersome and clad in an unmistakably 1960s turquoise plaid, had been in an unheated cabin when we bought it a decade before. We waved goodbye as the machinery chewed them up. Those sofas had lived long and useful lives, and they deserved a farewell.

We can’t really know the stories of things that are not ours, but clues are tantalizing—a perfectly good mailbox with the name “Lahti” painted on it: isn’t the actress Christine Lahti from Michigan? Did that mailbox handle let-

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