

The Betsie Current

Volume V, Issue 1

Spring 2016

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Benzie Promise

Sending every kid to college

By Aubrey Ann Parker

Current Contributor

If every adult in Benzie County donated \$300 right now, we could send every 2016 high school graduate from both Benzie Central and Frankfort to college.

Chew on that a minute, would you?

“Talk about an excellent way to spend less than a dollar a day,” says Matt Stapleton, principal at Frankfort High School.

Programs that unilaterally give money to students just for graduating—oftentimes regardless of grades or class standing—are called “Promise” scholarships. These programs have been cropping up far and wide over the past decade, but Michigan has more than a dozen Promise scholarships, which is the most of any other state in the nation.

The programs have a wide range when it comes to the amount that is awarded: the

Baldwin Promise, for instance, gives a total of \$5,000 per year for four years to each student, whereas the Kalamazoo Promise gives the entire cost of tuition to any Michigan public school and a handful of private schools, too.

In Baldwin, a very small school district, they have seen college attendance increase from only 12 of the 32 graduates in the class of 2005 to nearly everyone from the class of 2015. In Kalamazoo, a very large

school district that graduates more than 500 students each year, they saw an additional 1,000 students enroll within the first year

of the Promise’s implementation, and the student population has increased by close to 3,000 students since 2005 when the program was first announced.

Every school district gets \$7,250 per pupil per year in funding from the state. In Kalamazoo, the increase in the student population has allowed the district to hire more than 100 new teachers; they have upgraded facilities; they have passed bonds to build new schools.

Moreover, researchers have found that Kalamazoo Promise students are one-third more likely to graduate from college within six years of finishing high school than their pre-Promise peers. Additionally, the Promise brings in close to \$5 in benefits for every \$1 invested, based on the projected increase in wages over 30 years for students who otherwise would not have graduated from college.



Benzie Central and Frankfort will graduate close to 150 students on Sunday, June 5. What if we could send them all off to college? Photo by Aubrey Ann Parker.

Please see Promise on page 9

Solar Power Is Coming to Benzie

Electrifying the county, one roof at a time

By Jim Dulzo

Current Contributor

Seemingly strange, but definitely true: Rooftop solar power works well in Northern Michigan. It is not too cloudy, or too northerly, or even too expensive, thanks to sharply falling prices. In fact, it now makes good financial sense to invest in solar. It earns very safe, increasingly respectable returns.

For the price of a modest home addition or small new car, someone with a suitably sunny roof can install a rooftop system that can drastically cut or eliminate their electric bill, permanently add to their home’s value, and earn a rock-solid five to 10 percent on their investment for at least 25 years, and quite likely longer than that.

But knowing where to start, whom to call and hire, and how to finance this slightly exotic thing remains challenging.

That is where the brand-new “Groundwork Shines” solar campaign comes in. Using Michigan-made panels, local installers, special state-backed financing, and guidance from the Traverse City-based non-profit Groundwork Center for Resilient Communities (formerly the Michigan Land Use Institute, which was founded and based in Beulah), the Shines program is all about making “solarization” easy for everyone, including homeowners, local building code departments, and our hearty band of local solar installers.

Groundwork Shines will start a pilot program in Grand Traverse, Leelanau, and—yes—Benzie counties. The target areas will



Dave Gardner installs solar panels on a garage roof in Frankfort. Photo by Aubrey Ann Parker.

be downtown Traverse City and Frankfort, but rural residents are also encouraged to participate. For now, the program is focusing on residential solar installations, with a goal of 200 installations before the end of the year, but the hope is to branch out to commercial businesses in the future.

Talk to folks like Frankfort’s Ted and Marcia Curran who installed solar on their home three summers ago, and they will tell you that a modest solar system is a very good idea. The Currans first put up 12 panels, and the following year, they decided to add eight more to charge their electric car.

“Ted and I are extremely pleased with our solar system,” Marcia says. “It is relatively

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Helping Women On Their Way

Benzie Area Christian Neighbors fills community need

By Kelly Ottinger

Current Contributor

Hope Kochis—now 38, born and raised in Benzie County—became a teen statistic when she dropped out of high school without graduating. Although she obtained her GED by age 18 and then started her own successful cleaning business, by age 27, Kochis was a single mom of three who was beginning to despair. She worked long, hard hours, yet she was still struggling to provide for her children.

“The turning point for me was when I had a child who was in high school, and I could not afford to pay for her driver’s training class,” Kochis says. “It was only \$250, and I had to borrow the money from my mother. I thought to myself, ‘This has got

to change. I have to get a college degree.’”

A journey like hers is difficult. Statistically, women returning to school during an already busy time of life make up one of the largest slices of the non-traditional student pie. Their particular slice of pie also statistically represents the students who are least likely to complete their degrees. Scheduling, childcare, transportation, lost wages from second jobs, exhaustion, and the expense of classes and textbooks are often insurmountable



Hope Kochis is the first ever WOW facilitator. Photo courtesy of BACN.

barriers as women return to school.

A Program Is Born

Kay Bond was the executive director of Benzie Area Christian Neighbors (BACN) back in 2008, but she had been listening to the stories of women like Kochis for years. Historically, people had come to BACN for help with basic needs such as food, clothing, and utilities. However, Bond saw a new trend taking hold—people were also seeking ways to complete the education that was needed to help lift them out of poverty.

Bond’s heart was especially touched by the plight of women who were trying to return to school with the odds stacked so solidly against them.

While the wheels of the economic

Please see WOW on page 10

Bailey Barnes: A Gap Year

Questions & Answers with community faces

As the temperatures rise and the days lengthen, spring gives way to summer. For many Benzie County teenagers, that means high school graduation and the big transition to universities and colleges, whether that be at Northwestern Michigan College in Traverse City, at a school downstate, or at an Ivy League school on either the East or West coast.

But college immediately after high school is not for everyone. Taking a gap year—also called a “sabbatical year”—has become increasingly popular. During this time, students may participate in academic courses, learning a trade, language studies, art studies, volunteer work, travel, internships, sports, and more. Oftentimes, gap years are described as a way for students to become more independent and to learn more about their interests before engaging in university life and picking a major and/or a profession.

Last year, *The Betsie Current* profiled Liv Buzzell, a 2015 Frankfort graduate who was embarking on a gap year to the Netherlands. Deciding that we would like to see what is on the other side

of this coin, we are now profiling Bailey Barnes, a 2015 Benzie Central graduate who just returned from her gap year.

Barnes's life and family are firmly rooted in Benzie County. Her maternal grandfather was Alan Vigland, who owned the Vigland Gallery in Benzonia, and her father is serial entrepreneur Jim Barnes, owner of Eco-Building Products, Elberto's Taqueria, and Crystal Lake Catering, and former owner of Northern Delights and The Roadhouse Mexican Bar & Grille. Young Bailey Barnes chose to stretch her wings to see what awaited on the other side of the world, but now she's back.

Continuing with our interview series on impactful Benzie County characters, *The Betsie Current* caught up with 19-year-old Bailey Barnes when she returned from her overseas travel earlier this month.

THE BETSIE CURRENT: What did you do after graduating last spring from high school?

BAILEY BARNES: I worked at Elberto's Taqueria and Crystal Lake Catering Company through Labor Day. In early September, I left for the National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS), where I spent three months on an “expedition.” During my expedition, I rock climbed, white-water kayaked, rafted, canoed, canyoneered, winter camped, and backcountry skied in the Rocky Mountains of Wyoming and Utah. This experiential education actually earned me 16 college credit hours, plus Wilderness First Aid certification, Leave No Trace training, and Avalanche Awareness training. Intangibly, my NOLS experience taught me self-awareness, self-confidence, leadership, risk-assessment, and risk-management skills. After three months of exploring and studying, I returned home for two and a half months to work for Eco-Building Products. On February 14, I began a solo backpacking trip for two and a half months throughout Europe. I began in Istanbul, Turkey. From there, I visited Greece, Italy, France, the Netherlands, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, and Norway—many of these countries I chose because I could visit friends who were on gap year themselves [Liv Buzzell in the Netherlands] or who I met

when they studied abroad at Benzie [Elliot Taguchi in Denmark and Emma Husøy in Norway; profiled in the second issue of *The Betsie Current* in 2015].

CURRENT: Why was going on a gap year important to you? How did you fund it?

BARNES: I took a gap year because I needed time between schooling to rest, learn about myself, go beyond my comfort zone, live outside of Michigan, camp, travel, meet worldly people, eat tasty food; the list goes on and on. To sum it up, I was hungry for an adventure—one that I didn't feel like college/university could provide for me. As a young child, I never thought much about college. As

lose motivation to move forward and better myself. It's just too easy to enjoy the comfort and forget all that's going on in the world. The challenge, for me, in the business that I'm in, is the short season in which I have to make my living. Since the time period is so short, the summers can be both emotionally and physically tiring. But, once again, that's also the reward; I can work hard all summer and then take four or five months off to travel, without losing my job or feeling guilty about missing work.

CURRENT: What else does Benzie County need?

BARNES: Benzie County needs to keep encouraging youth to follow their dreams and passions. We need to teach kids that there are more options than going straight to college.

CURRENT: What other things are you involved with? How did you get involved with them, and why are you passionate about these causes? What are some ways that you give back to the community?

BARNES: I recently got involved with Crystallaire Adventures. At age 17, I took a trip to Isle Royale through Crystallaire Adventures; it was a 12-day excursion that was truly an eye-opening experience for me. It sparked my love for backpacking. After I returned from NOLS

last fall, I began the application process with Crystallaire and was offered a job to lead six children in the wilderness for five days this coming August. I am looking forward to this new opportunity, because I find great peace and pleasure in the wilderness, and I am more than excited to share my love for the outdoors with children.

CURRENT: What is your proudest achievement?

BARNES: I have two—both of the trips that I took during my gap year. I spent three months thriving in Wyoming and Utah's wilderness, and then I backpacked through Europe. These two experiences taught me so much, and I'm so appreciative for what I've learned.

CURRENT: What are your favorite local events and activities?

BARNES: The farmers' markets, both Elberta and Frankfort. I really enjoy making the rounds twice a week, saying hello to local farmers, and seeing all of the delicious and fresh produce. Sometimes, I even get to hear the amazing Liv Buzzell playing lovely tunes. I also love walking on the beach, bonfires, singing, knitting, drawing, laughing...

CURRENT: What's your perfect spring day look like in Benzie County?

BARNES: The perfect spring day for me is 60 degrees with sunny skies and a slight breeze. I'd enjoy a lovely breakfast with hot tea. I'd go on a hike or ride or kayak, and then have a picnic. Later on, I would go back home to eat dinner with friends and family. To end the evening, my we'd do some sort of craft- or art-like activity and watch a movie or listen to music.

CURRENT: What would you tell others who are thinking of going on a gap year?

BARNES: Always strive for more and never stop moving.

Elberto's Taqueria opens on June 16. Trips this summer with Bailey and Crystallaire Adventures are still available; check out CrystallaireAdventures.com for more information.



Bailey Barnes, manager at Elberto's Taqueria, just returned to Benzie County after a gap year spent in the Rocky Mountains and abroad. Photo by Aubrey Ann Parker.

I got older, my lack of interest never changed. I knew that I wanted to do something, and I knew it wasn't going to be immediately college. I added it up, and it was roughly \$22,000 to take a gap year and do what I wanted to do. I funded it mostly by years and years of saving money—I started working for my dad when I was 11 or 12, and over the years, I always put it into savings. I hate spending money. Also, through NOLS, I was able to receive \$3,500 worth of scholarships. And, of course, my Bailey's Burrito Campaign, birthday, holiday, and high school money also played a role in covering the costs.

CURRENT: What did you learn about yourself over the past year?

BARNES: I am capable of more than I ever thought I was. Growing up, I wasn't anxious, but I was often—let's say—wary, doubtful, concerned, etc. I let my concern and second-guessing hold me back a lot; I didn't take up as many options as I could have. But during my two trips, I've done so many things that put me way, way out of my comfort zone. I did things that I never thought I'd do in a million years. It has been an incredibly powerful experience in my life, overcoming this obstacle. Sometimes, especially now that I'm back home, I feel my concern taking over again. It's not gone, by any means, but it has become less controlling of my mindset and my actions.

CURRENT: What are your plans now that you're back in Northern Michigan?

BARNES: I got back in May. I moved home to enjoy my family, to once again work, and—of course—to enjoy the beautiful summer. Now that I'm back, I intend to work and plan for my next adventure abroad... The plan now is to take another year to travel. I'm currently thinking about backpacking Chile or New Zealand.

CURRENT: What is the hardest part about being young in Benzie County? What are the biggest challenges and rewards of working and living here?

BARNES: The hardest part of growing up in Benzie is also what makes Benzie so great—comfort and reliability. Sometimes, I find that when I'm comfortable and at ease, I



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A Hospice Cat's Last Visit to Benzie

After many summers on her favorite porch

By Beau Vallance

Current Contributor

She visited here maybe 40 times in her life, coming for the entirety of 16 summers, plus on the annual trips up to open our cabin in the spring and to close it in the fall. She made her final visit here last April, and she even felt strong enough to take a staggering little stroll through her favorite routes in the weeds. Two months later, we brought her ashes back to scatter in those beloved weeds. She was our sweet little old girl, our cat, Cassie.

Cassie didn't just travel up here from downstate though—in her lifetime, Cassie visited eight states. She never traveled by air, though her orange tabby brother had done so twice as a kitten, before it was clear that he needed a playmate; we drove Cassie home, tiny and trusting, from the shelter.

After that, she traveled by car many times, riding in the passenger seat or, sometimes—if her brother hadn't claimed the spot first—on my lap, her soft black fur always within reach. She had a practice of barfing within the first and then (*how did she know?*) the last mile of any trip, but in between she was calm; we always traveled with a litter pan, as well as paper towels for that first and last mile.

I would often sing a made-up song for her. It was to the tune of "Clementine" and involved her many adventures with road trips and open-door greetings.

Over the years, her adventures included visiting the guest rooms of friends and relatives, walking leashed in neighborhoods and down our lane here, sunning herself in patches of myrtle, needing rescue from perches in high places—a motel shower, kitchen cabinets—and watching the world go by from a succession of screened porches.

Her porch in Benzie was her favorite, though. Here, she saw deer. She slept in all-day sunbeams, and on hot days, she did her "otter thing," stretching out on her back. She twitched her behind while watching chipmunks on the steps. She watched birds on the wire. And for the last three summers of her life, she found a vantage point from which to watch baby robins hatch, grow, and fly away. She just watched the birds, but her always-sweet demeanor could not mask the fierce hunting instinct that she and her brother had for indoor mice and the occasional bat (always tested for rabies, always negative).

Aside from the screened porch, her favorite changes here over the years were small ones—more cat beds in sunny spots, better screens making for bigger open windows, the growing collection of baseboard and

space heaters. (Though she was dismayed when we began replacing the nice hot light bulbs near some cat beds with more energy-efficient CFLs.)

And there is much she never even knew or realized about our life Up North at the cabin—she never noticed, for instance, the water softener (her fragile kidneys demanded bottled water) or the changing refrigerators (all kept her leftover-fish-dinner treats the same temperature). She never knew that she had Benzie cousins: friendly cats who wander a floor at Paul Oliver Memorial Hospital, cheering up the residents. Since she didn't see the appeal of the beach at Point Betsie on her one visit there, her only presence at a beach wedding later on was a photo stuck in the sand.



A gentle young kitten slept with Cassie (black) during her last months. Photo courtesy of Beau Vallance.

Cats outlive their kidneys is how I understand it, and kidney failure is often their fate. This is also true of very big cats, including the tigers, lions, and cougars at the Exotic Feline Rescue Center in Center Point, Indiana, where I am a tour guide when we're not in Benzie. The Center has lost a number of older tigers and cougars to renal failure, usually around age 20—a good, long life, but always a sad goodbye. The same was true of our 16-year-old Cassie.

We eventually added subcutaneous hydration to Cassie's daily routines, a new skill for us. "Sub-Q" injects fluid into the space under the skin (subcutaneous tissue) from where it can slowly be absorbed into the blood and the body; it just takes a few minutes.

I can't count the bags of fluid that we went through, but it was easy, and each little dose kept her comfortable as her kidneys gradually began to shut down. Cassie seemed to

know that the process was helping her: she hunkered down—even purred—each time.

On her last visits to Benzie, we brought fluid bags, along with many meds and her latest favorite canned foods. Here, we did the hydration with the bag hooked high on the screened porch, so that Cassie could sit in a favorite sunny spot or sometimes on Jack's lap.

Cassie was a hospice cat for most of her last year. She made it to 16, with the help of many professionals, including those at Platte Lake Veterinary Center, where two summers ago the doctor offered a shot that "might give her one more comfortable day" after what had seemed like the last and final crisis. Three days later, a Sunday, the scene was repeated at Bay Area Pet Hospital after another "last" crisis... but our defiant Cassie lived comfortably for 40 weeks more.

We helped to reduce her small world into something even smaller, making warm beds closer to her food dish. She ate lots of fish. She had lost her brother two years before, and a gentle new kitten slept with her during her last months.

Her final short visit to Benzie, to open the cabin last spring in April, was a montage of her life here. She slept in slanting sunshine. She walked in the weeds—leashless now, since she wasn't going anywhere fast.

She climbed up a stepstool beside the bed and slept with us. She looked out the screen to the winding lane and the lake beyond. She watched chipmunks. She had ceased barfing in the car, and her last road trip home to Indiana was peaceful. She was very tired.

Not long after, finally too weak to do anything but sleep, she gave us the sign that everyone had told us we would recognize when we saw it—she crashed into a corner of a closet; she was telling us that she couldn't give any more, that she was ready to go. She managed to purr as I held her on that last morning, and she died peacefully on Jack's lap at the hands of a kind doctor.

Cassie's ashes came back to Benzie last summer, scattered along her favorite walks in a place that she didn't know by name but had come to love for 16 summers.

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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.

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. (Begins June 6.)

Tuesdays

Stretch and tone with Jean at Oliver Art Center. Email annamallien@gmail.com if interested. 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. (Begins June 2.)

Benzie Shores District Library 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-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; we'd love your company! Need help? If you are having troubles with a current project, bring it along, and we'll help you get it straightened out. Call Michele at 231-383-5716 with any questions. 1-3pm.

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

Zumba 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 County Council on Aging at Honor Township Hall. 1-3pm.

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

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

Thursdays

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

Stretch and tone with Jean at Oliver Art Center. Email annamallien@gmail.com if interested. 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 of Beulah. 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. Call 231-383-1883 if interested. 3-4:30pm.

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

Coloring & Creativity Club for Adults at Darcy Library of Beulah. 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 will be 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 of Beulah. 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 that you can borrow our picture 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 beautiful waterfront. 9am-1pm.

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.

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

Every day through June 15:

Bag-A-Brown fishing competition is open to all anglers, by land or by boat in Benzie County and Arcadia only. Register at Big Bob's Up North Outfitters in Frankfort prior to fishing. \$20 entry fee lets you weigh up to three fish (but you are only eligible for one place). Money and prizes available! Call 231-352-5360 to learn more.

Thursday, May 26

20th annual Paul Oliver Memorial Hospital Auxiliary's Golf Benefit on the Mountain Ridge Golf Course at Crystal Mountain in Thompsonville. Four-player scramble with a shotgun start. Players will also have an opportunity to celebrate—or commiserate—their golf scores at the barbecue buffet immediately following the game. Tickets are \$100 and include green fees, cart, prizes, and dinner. Door prizes and raffle. All proceeds to POMH. For tickets or more information, call Diane Miller at 231-352-8016. 11:30am-6pm.

Thursday, May 26

Community Garden Open House and Work-
bee at Grow Benzie, which offers 27 community garden plots. Each 25-by-four-foot plot is available for a \$25 rental fee per season, which includes access to water, garden tools, and Grow Benzie staff/volunteer support. This open house is an opportunity for interested folks to come and rent a plot, or just to help us weed and get ready for the season. (Extra plots are used for growing food for local pantries.) Call 231-882-9510 with any questions. 12-3pm.

Thursday, May 26

Book publisher Doug Weaver will read excerpts and discuss the book *Storm Struck: When Supercharged Winds Slammed Northwest Michigan* at Grow Benzie. Merrith Baughman from the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Park Service will also be joining to give an update on clean-up efforts at the

park and to share information about all of the events planned to celebrate this year's Centennial Birthday of the National Parks. \$15. 5pm.

Friday, May 27

Ol' Time Gathering at The Gathering Place. Enjoy food, music, and fun. Music starts at 6pm with a potluck dinner at 7pm. Donations accepted. All ages invited!

Friday, May 27

Alfredo Improvisational Quartet at St. Ambrose Cellars. Alfredo is the product of singer/percussionist Al Pityo and guitarist Frederik Stig-Nielsen's improvisational dreams, and the band has grown slowly over time: after three years, now there are four members, including bass player Chris Kuykendahl (who joined in the fall of 2013) and drummer/soulful vocalist extraordinaire Bill Frary (who joined in the summer of 2015). 6-9pm.

Friday-Saturday, May 27 - May 28

Always a Bridesmaid: The Benzie Community Players are happy to announce their upcoming show, a comedy written by Nicholas Hope, Jessie Jones, and Jamie Wooten. In this hilarious romp, four Southern friends swear to keep their high school promise of being in each other's weddings, no matter what. Over the span of 30 years, these friends for life continue to show up for each other, wedding after wedding, determined to honor that vow, in spite of fist fights at the altar and runaway brides. Trying to keep everyone in line is Stephan, played by Cory Bissell. Libby Ruth, the hopeful romantic, is played by Maria Wolowiec; rock-solid Deedra is played by Julie VanAntwerp; Charlie the earth nugget is played by Rachel Evans Higgins; the one and only Monette is played by Jeryl Colby; and the bride, Kari, is played by Randi Lyn Stoltz. Join the Benzie County Players for yet another great show to start your summer—and the wedding season—off right. Call 231-409-6686 with questions. Tickets are available at the door or pre-sale tickets are available at Kilwin's Frankfort. All performances will be held at the Mills Community House in Benzonia. 7:30pm.

Saturday, May 28

Birding with Keith Wesphal: Hike the Michigan Legacy Art Park at Crystal Mountain Resort with Keith, an active birder for 48 years, to identify birds by their song. Bring your binoculars to spot birds that make the 30-acre preserve their home each spring. Meet at the Art Park trail head. Suggested \$5 donation. For questions, call 231-379-4963 or email director@michlegacyartpark.org. 8-9:30am.

Saturday, May 28

Glen Haven Days: Find Your Park with a visit to a historic Great Lakes village and U.S. Life-Saving Station (USLSS) during Glen Haven Days at Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore. Join park rangers and volunteers for hands-on activities that will bring Michigan's maritime history of the early 1900s to life—watch a blacksmith at the forge, discover the unique history of one of the area's founders, visit a general store, learn how different tools used in logging shaped this area, participate in a shipwreck rescue, and much more. Park pass required, otherwise free! 10am-4pm.

Saturday, May 28

Memorial Day Commemoration: The Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War joins the Benzie Area Historical Society in honoring the Grand Army of the Republic, Bruce Catton, and the Civil War Veterans of the Benzie Area. Call the Benzie Area Historical Museum at 231-882-5539 or send an email to info@benziemuseum.org for more information. Meet at the Benzonia Township Cemetery. Free event. 11am-12pm.

Saturday, May 28

Spring hike led by local botanist Judy Kelly, who taught botany and environmental science at Henry Ford College in Dearborn for 25 years. An expert naturalist and president of the Michigan Botanical Club, Judy and her husband retired in 2015 to Lake Ann. Come out to identify and observe bird species, wildflowers, ferns, lichen, trees, and more. Sponsored by the Benzie Conservation District as part of their Educational Series. To register,

contact Aimé Merizon at 231.882.4391 x 11 or aime@benziecd.org. Meet at Railroad Point Natural Area at the DNR trail head at Mollineaux Road, Frankfort. Free. All ages welcome. 2-4pm.

Saturday, May 28

Grand Re-Opening Party at The Cabbage Shed: The event begins at 3pm and will feature live music, complimentary appetizers, and drink specials. The band Awesome Distraction will play from 5-9pm, followed by the Theo Batzer Band at 10pm.

Saturday, May 28

11th annual Michigan Beer & Brat Festival at Crystal Mountain. Kick off the summer with this Memorial Day weekend tradition. Enjoy live entertainment while sampling an enormous selection of Michigan's finest microbrews, local hard cider and mead, and gourmet brats from northwest Michigan markets. Participating breweries include Stormcloud, Bell's, North Peak, Founder's, Short's, Right Brain, and more. Held outdoors, slopeside. Buy your tickets ahead of time online for \$25 per person or \$30 the day of; tickets include one beer glass and five tokens. A full pour is 1-2 tokens; half brat is 1 token; full brat is 2 tokens. Additional tokens will be available to purchase for \$2 each. (Free for ages three and under.) Event is 4-8pm (unless you already bought your VIP tickets, then you can arrive at 3pm). Scarkazm, a power trio from Traverse City, will play from 3-5pm. The Vintage will play from 5:30-8pm. A Back to the Future Car Event will be taking place, which means British cars and electric vehicles, including the Tesla Model X SUV, will be on display.

Saturday, May 28

Camp & Crafts Childcare: Let us entertain your child while you Beer and Brat! This childcare program is open to children ages 12 and under. Dinner included: Hot dogs, chips and watermelon. Cost is \$39, with \$5 off for multiple-child discount. Before and after care is also available for \$10 per additional hour needed. Advanced reservations required: call 888-968-7686 ext. 7000. 4-8pm.

Saturday, May 28

Stage Grand Opening at Lake Ann Brewing Company: The stage is officially open! Come welcome Lenny Treble on Memorial Day weekend. He plays a collection of blues, folk, country, rock, and R&B, along with some original material. Free. 5:30-8:30pm.

Saturday, May 28

2-Year Anniversary Party: KLT on site at 5pm, live music by Scarkazm starting at 9pm. \$1 hot dogs, \$2 BBQ pork sandwiches, \$2 beer and shot specials throughout the night! Come celebrate two great years with us at the Laughing Horse Saloon, 15888 Lindy Road, Thompsonville. 5pm-2am.

Sunday, May 29

3rd Annual North Mitten Half Marathon and 10k races on a combination of paved roads, dirt roads, and trails. The North Mitten route consists of primarily flat, open trails on Crystal Mountain's property and will not climb the mountain. Both races will start and finish at the white slopeside tent near the Crystal Clipper chairlift. This is a great spring race for beginners and experienced runners! Event is capped at 500 runners. Runners must register online. For more information, call 888.968.7686, ext. 7000. Marathon costs \$70 pre-registered or \$75 the day of; 10k costs \$45 pre-registered or \$50 the day of. 8am start.

Sunday, May 29

Water's Edge Pool Party at Crystal Mountain. A splashin' good time! Enjoy a live DJ, games, and pool fun. 5-8pm.

Monday, May 30

Memorial Day.

Tuesday, May 31

MakerSpace Club at the Darcy Library of Beulah. Play Minecraft, build with Legos, color, create something unique using our random craft bin, teach yourself to code, and the like. Also be sure to check out Grow Benzie's Hive Minded wood shop and cooking programs for high schoolers. 5-7pm.

Wednesday, June 1

Youth Writer's Club for Kids & Tweens: Share what you're working on—novel, comic book, or anything else—and if you'd like, you can get feedback from your peers. Darcy Library of Beulah. 3-5pm.

Wednesday, June 1

Writers Club for Adults & Teens: Share what you're working on—novel, comic book, or anything else—and if you'd like, you can get feedback from your peers. Darcy Library of Beulah. 3-5pm.

Wednesday, June 1

Computer Basics at Benzonia Public Library: Local computer whiz Dustin Wolpoff will be on hand to answer your questions and offer help for baffling issues. Stop in and let Dustin help you unlock the mysteries of your computer. These sessions are free! 5-6:30pm

Saturday, June 4

Bike Benzie.

Saturday, June 11

The Benzie County Sheriff's Department is holding a free self-defense class, designed for women. The class will be held at the Benzie Central High School wrestling room, 9300 Homestead Road, Benzonia. If you would like to register, please call the Sheriff's Office at 231-882-4484. 9am-1pm.

Saturday, June 11

14th annual Northern Michigan Alliance for Lupus Walk in memory of Josephine Vanham: A walk along the Betsie Valley Trail from Frankfort to Elberta, then back. The goal of each Walk is to help the Alliance for Lupus Research (ALR) to further its mission to prevent, treat, and cure lupus by raising funds for lupus research. All participants are encouraged to raise a minimum of \$25, and 100% of the money you raise will support cutting edge lupus research programs to fight an autoimmune disease that affects predominantly young women. Contact Amy Gillard at ajgillard@charter.net or 231-347-4775, or check out LupusWalkFrankfort.org for more information. Registration begins at 9am at Mineral Springs Park in Frankfort. Walk is from 10am-12pm.

Wednesday, June 15

6th annual K-9 Hausso Memorial Golf Outing, hosted by the Benzie County Sheriff's Department. This event is in honor of the patrol dog who started the Benzie K-9 program; Hausso passed away in January 2011 due to natural causes. K-9 Ena was retired in June 2012. With the funds raised from the last two golf outings, the Sheriff's office was able to purchase a new patrol dog -- his name is Dasty. The funds raised at this year's golf outing will fund continued training, vet expenses, food, and equipment for patrol dogs, as well as food and vet expenses for retired K-9 Ena. \$65 per person or \$260 per team; price included 18 holes of golf at Crystal Lake Golf Club, with hot dogs served at the turn and a steak dinner after. A raffle will also be held during dinner. Prizes will be awarded to the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place teams, with prizes also awarded for closest to the pin and longest drive, for both men and women. Must be registered by Friday, June 10. If you would like to register, please call the Sheriff's Office at 231-882-4484. 11am.

Saturday, June 18

ORV class, courtesy of the Benzie County Sheriff's Department. A parent or guardian must accompany a child under the age of 10. Please call Kyle Rosa at the Sheriff's Office at 231-882-4494 for more information. Pre-registration required. Betsie River Sportsman's Club, 14451 Egan Road, Thompsonville. 9am-3pm.

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Cabbage Shed 2.0

Elberta's cultural watering hole re-opens

By Jacob Wheeler

Current Editor

The tasteful nude painting of "Francine" has disappeared from behind the bar, but The Cabbage Shed's funky, welcoming vibe has hardly changed under the ownership of Colleen and T.J. Hudson, the management of Tony and Beth (Hudson) Roethler, and the musical coordination of Colleen's nephew, Ryan Zuker. Keeping it a family affair, the Roethlers are running the bar and restaurant for Beth's parents, the Hudsons, just as Becky (Clapp) Hunt ran it for her father, Jim Clapp, who sold The Shed on November 6, 2015, after 30 years of business.

"We made a promise to Jim that we'd change the interior appearance a little bit to make it more functional, but we wouldn't compromise the culture and history of what The Shed is all about," says Tony Roethler. "There's a sense of joy and camaraderie when you walk into this place—this is Elberta's gathering place for any occasion."

Tony would know. He and Beth held their wedding reception at The Shed on July 11, 2011, after a ceremony on the Frankfort beach. [See photos of their matrimonial celebration on The Shed's website at CabbageShed.com.]

Tony is a veteran of the food business. He worked in a grocery store as a kid in a small town in Iowa. He met Beth while working for the Maggiano's chain of Italian-American restaurants, and he has held nearly every position in the industry, from dishwasher to chef to general manager, including his latest stint in Phoenix. But he tired of working long weeks in a corporate environment and missing time with his family.

"I couldn't look myself in the mirror any more," Tony recalls. So when Tony's mother-in-law, Colleen Hudson, called him last June and asked if he would consider moving to Northern Michigan to manage The Shed, Tony jumped at the opportunity.

"We'd been talking about making a change in lifestyle," says Tony, who together with Beth has two daughters, three-year-old Jameson and 10-month-old Emerson. "We didn't want to raise our girls in a large city."

Clapp accepted an offer from the Hudsons in October 2015, and they kept the news discreet. Clapp and daughter Becky Hunt threw a send-off Halloween party, attended by hundreds, before The Shed closed for the winter. The deal was inked on November 6, and Tony and T.J. (his father-in-law, whom he calls "Dad") loaded up a

margarita, called the "Elbertarita."

Under Tony's direction, the menu has also taken a turn toward the Mediterranean. He saw a need for Italian-American food. In particular, The Shed will serve family-style, three-course, Italian meals for private parties in the restaurant's northern annex, which accommodates 75 people. The restaurant will cater specifically to wedding rehearsal dinners.

And the music hasn't skipped a beat.

Fittingly, the Alfredo Improvisational Quartet was the last band to play at last



The new crew at The Cabbage Shed, which features some familiar faces. Photo courtesy of The Cabbage Shed.

U-haul and drove straight from Phoenix to Elberta in mid-February.

"We took turns sleeping on a mattress in the back of the truck," Tony says. "Luckily, the weather wasn't bad during the drive."

The Cabbage Shed continues to feature live music, eight handles of Michigan craft beer, and old menu favorites such as the Glarum Grill and the "famous" Shed Borscht. Frankfort's Crescent Bakery supplies the bread, the soft drinks are Williamsburg-based Northwoods Soda, the ice cream is Moomer's, and the kitchen will get its produce from the Elberta Farmers' Market this summer. If you're into south-of-the-border eats, try the fish tacos or green chili mac & cheese, and wash it down with The Shed's sangria or their fresh twist on a

year's Halloween Party, and they also opened The Shed's new era on April 1. The popular Thursday night "open mic" at 8 p.m. has returned, and frequently features Jim Clapp, himself.

Though they have been open for about two months, the Roethlers and Hudsons will host an official Cabbage Shed grand re-opening party on Saturday, May 28, beginning at 3 p.m. The event will feature live music, complimentary appetizers, and drink specials. The public is welcome. Awesome Distraction will play from 5-9 p.m., followed by a to-be-determined closing act at 10. To read "The Cabbage Shed: A Musical History," a story that we ran last fall on Clapp's reign, check out our website at <http://bit.ly/1MRx0zl>.



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The Cabbage Shed Revisited

An interview with Jim Clapp, en route back to Elberta from Florida

By Susan Koenig

Current Contributor

So the famous Cabbage Shed, Jim Clapp's dream since he bought the property in 1972, has been sold. Shortly after its 30-year anniversary party on Halloween, the keys changed hands last fall, and after renovations over the winter, the place opened up about two months ago under the new ownership.

Tongues are wagging now regarding the new owners, ambiance, music, food (*will things change?*), and what is Jim Clapp going to do now?

We at *The Betsie Current* decided to find out. We caught up with The Shed's founder on his way back north after a winter in sunny Florida, and we asked about his new life, his dreams, his goals, as well as his hopes for The Shed and what he will miss most about his former life.

What I miss about being the owner of The Shed:

"The hustle and bustle. Not me having to hustle and bustle, but being around our great staff as they buzz hither and yon, setting up for a busy night, or watching them put out that extra effort during a rush, even though they may be tired and ready to put their feet up. We've had so many wonderful and memorable employees.

The music, of course. Having the chance to perform and to meet—and sometimes to play—with such talented musicians has been great!

Our customers. We always tried to provide a comfortable, accepting—and dare I say loving—environment for anyone who honored us with their presence. A lot of my friendships started at The Shed.

Working with my kids. The biggest plus for me has been being able to work with Becky and Dan, to get through the stressful times (what times aren't stressful in the restaurant business?); scary times; many, many funny and joyful times. I was never really sure what my father did for a living; he disappeared into the [Brooklyn] subway every morning and re-emerged every evening, but I really didn't know exactly what transpired between those events. My kids know exactly what my work has been, and they've seen how I deal with employees, customers, vendors, etc. They've seen who I am, complete with all the blemishes. And I've had the chance to really know them as adults—they have no blemishes.

What I don't miss:

All the work. Running a restaurant is very hard, stressful, exhausting work. And as much as I've loved it, as I've gotten older, it has become increasingly difficult, even though Becky had been doing virtually all the real work for the past 15 years or so. I can't say enough good about Becky's management of The Shed.

Dealing with governmental agencies. Filing reports. Worrying about people getting home safely from The Shed. Hoping that

someone would show up to hear the expensive band we'd booked.

What's next for me?

I'm really looking forward to getting back to Elberta and seeing what the new owners, Colleen and T.J. Hudson, have done with The Shed. I hear good things. I'll get to enjoy the place without having any of the concerns of ownership, and I'll have more time to spend with my kids and grandkids. And I'll still get to play music there, now and then [at Thursday night "open mic" at 8 p.m.].

Winters in St. Petersburg [Florida] are pretty great. Our apartment is on a lake in the downtown area—lots of good restaurants, entertainment venues, shopping, etc. Walk or bike to everything. I've been able to perform a bit, which has been fun. I even took a painting class this winter. Abby and I are really enjoying apartment living. Lots of socializing, partying, music-making with people we've come to care about. It's kind of like living in a fraternity house, but you have your own bathroom, and there are no panty raids. Then there's the homeless community I hang out with pretty regularly—also a fun group. Apart from the very long drive [1,500 miles], this is a nice life, going back and forth.

Romance at The Cabbage Shed
Find your mate (or someone else's) waiting for you in Elberta
(Originally published in *The Betsie Current* in 2006)

There is something about The Shed that allows one to feel comfortable going in alone to sit at the bar or at a table, even if only strangers are present. The bartenders and servers are cute and friendly, happy to introduce one person to another, but you can also feel free to introduce yourself, because the ambiance is like a beach bar. This is not a place where females feel they must be escorted. On a Saturday night, there are easily as many singles as couples of all ages.

Local Carolyn Smeltzer was out with the girls one Saturday night in 1987, scoping out the guys who came in the front door, when she spied Dr. George Ryckman, who had actually spied her first, coming over to introduce himself (he made it easy). Within an hour, that debonair George was holding Carolyn's hand, and six months later they were married (and still are).

Melissa Chatterton had just begun working at The Shed in 2000 when she met Jason Witmer, also an employee. The two married on the beach in Elberta and had a beautiful wedding reception on the transformed lower deck of The Shed. They now live in Colorado and have two children.

This writer met her "soleman" Steven Fernand in the winter of 2001 while he was performing with The Benzie Playboyz on The Shed stage.

There are many more of us happy Shed couples out there, so put on your favorite outfit and head to Elberta for a relaxed evening of summer (or winter) fun.

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The Betsie Current is a free tabloid, published 12 times this year and distributed throughout Benzie County. Advertising inquiries, comments, suggestions, critiques, articles, photos, poems, and letters are welcome. © 2016, *The Betsie Current*, all rights reserved. www.BetsieCurrent.com

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Scott Tucker: Sleeping Bear's New Leader

Questions & Answers with community faces

Earlier this month, the National Park Service (NPS) named Scott Tucker as the new superintendent of Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore. He will begin his assignment in mid-June. Tucker, a 19-year veteran of NPS, is currently the superintendent of Lewis and Clark National Historical Park, which includes seven units along the Columbia River and the Pacific Coast from Long Beach, Washington, to Cannon Beach, Oregon.

Sleeping Bear's current deputy superintendent, Tom Ulrich, had been among the candidates considered for the job. However, a recent NPS retiree with deep knowledge of the government organization told *The Betsie Current* that new executives are almost always brought in from a different park. Meanwhile, Ulrich says that he thinks Tucker will be "great" for Sleeping Bear, and he plans to remain as deputy superintendent.

Continuing with our interview series on characters who impact Benzie County, *The Betsie Current* caught up with Scott Tucker a couple of weeks ago.

THE BETSIE CURRENT: Congratulations on being the new superintendent of the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore. What drew you to our area and this job?

SCOTT TUCKER: As anyone living in the area already knows, Northern Michigan is a spectacular place not only to visit but also to live, raise a family, and work. The resources of Sleeping Bear Dunes were a draw for me as a tourist and as a National Park Service professional. Being able to work alongside a great team in a community that values the resources and a place that my family holds dear makes this an ideal location for us.

CURRENT: How much time have you spent in Northern Michigan? Do you have any favorite spots in or qualities about our National Lakeshore?

TUCKER: I have spent several summer vacations in Northern Michigan over the past 10 years. The University of Michigan alumni family camp on Walloon Lake has been our base for exploration of the area. Sleeping Bear Dunes, Torch Lake, Traverse City, Mackinac Island, and other towns in between have all been destinations for my family. In particular, I fell in love with Sleeping Bear Dunes when hiking the Empire Bluffs Trail back in 2010.

CURRENT: Over the past decade, Sleeping Bear Dunes has made an about-face and embraced recreational opportunities within the Park, such as creating and promoting the Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail—a popular multi-use bike trail—while also preserving much of the Park as wilderness. What is your perspective on such recreational use, even when that means paving former footpaths and attracting more people to areas that were once less utilized?

TUCKER: I see one of my roles as a superintendent in the National Park Service as helping the public to create connections to our resources in ways that are meaningful and useful to them. Helping to foster the next generation of stewards requires providing multiple opportunities for the public to interact with a park in their own way. I look forward to hearing from the community and the Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes about the benefits and impacts of the increased recreational opportunities.

CURRENT: In general, what are your goals and aspirations for Sleeping Bear Dunes under your watch?

TUCKER: My aspirations and goals may—or will likely—change over time. Once I am on the ground and discover the pulse of the staff, the Park, and the public, our leadership team will then work together in creating a joint vision. That being said, my philosophy as a manager is to put the Park in an even better position for the future.

CURRENT: You are currently the

participation, and a strong leadership team allow me the opportunity to make a sound decision that meets our primary mission to preserve and protect the natural and cultural resources for the next generation.

CURRENT: How about your biggest joy while working for the National Park?

TUCKER: There are so many great experiences

I have had in my NPS career; it is difficult to choose. In my top five list would be: (1) leading interpretive programs for visitors at all of the parks where I have worked, and seeing the moment when the story "clicks" for the visitor, (2) participating in the 2008 and 2012 Presidential Inauguration planning in President's Park, (3)



Scott Tucker is the new superintendent of Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore. Image courtesy of the National Park Service.

superintendent at Lewis and Clark Historical Park in the Pacific Northwest. Before that, you worked in Washington, D.C., at President's Park, the Smithsonian Institute, the National Mall, and the U.S. Holocaust Museum. These are urban parks compared to Sleeping Bear. What unique skillset does that give you, and how might your urban experience translate here in rural Northern Michigan?

TUCKER: I have been fortunate to work at a variety of natural and cultural sites of national significance. My current position in Astoria, Oregon, has me in a multi-dimensional park with wetlands, beaches, coastal dunes, coastal prairie, forest, and recreational hiking trails—all centered on a story of exploration, science, and discovery. Lewis and Clark is in a town with a population of 10,000 and a county of 30,000 residents, with the closest commercial airport nearly 100 miles away. So the rural aspects of my current park directly translate to Northern Michigan, minus the snow. The skillset I bring is one of communication; employee and community partnerships to lead the park in a collaborative direction. Parks are very complex operations, and Sleeping Bear Dunes has a strong leadership team with individual expertise in areas that are specific to natural and cultural resources. My job is to remove the barriers so they can do their jobs, while ensuring NPS policy, regulations, and laws are followed.

CURRENT: What has been the biggest challenge that you have faced while working for the National Park Service, and how did you resolve it?

TUCKER: My biggest challenge as a manager in the National Park Service has been managing expectations: the task of meeting visitor and community expectations while balancing the operational needs of the Park, with limited resources—the hard decisions that have to be made, never fully satisfying everyone at the table. Knowledge, science, communication, partnerships, community

starting a "Park Prescription" program at Lewis and Clark where doctors prescribe National Park recreation as part of a healthy lifestyle to patients, (4) achieving the highest Park employee job-satisfaction survey results in the Pacific Northwest and (5) seeing a family spend their vacation and making lifetime memories in a National Park.

CURRENT: We understand that your family has roots in Michigan. Where are you and your wife from? Care to mention your two young children?

TUCKER: I am a Colorado native, growing up in the suburbs of Denver. Both sides of my wife's family go back generations in Michigan; she grew up in Lansing and graduated from the University of Michigan. She also spent her childhood summers in Northern Michigan, including camp on the Leelanau Peninsula and three summers at the National Music Camp in Interlochen. Our 4-year-old daughter and 8-year-old son have loved visiting the state and look forward to the move and experiencing all that Michigan has to offer.

CURRENT: May is warmer than April, but it still is not yet summer. Any idea when you will take your first dip in Lake Michigan?

TUCKER: If my daughter has anything to say about it, we will make the plunge five minutes after we arrive!

CURRENT: Presently, Port Oneida is a vast and virtually undeveloped historical area within the Park. Do you have any special vision for this unique farming community?

TUCKER: I look forward to listening to the community and the Preserve Historic Sleeping Bear friends group for their direction and vision. I already have the Port Oneida Fair and the Port Oneida run on my calendar in August!

This year marks the 100th birthday for the National Park Service. As part of its year-long centennial celebration, Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore (which itself was founded in the 1970s) has planned a variety of recreational and cultural events to encourage the public to explore and enjoy the National Park. In particular, the #findyourpark social media campaign aims to introduce a new generation of Americans to their Park. Visit Sleeping Bear's website for more information: <https://www.nps.gov/slbe/learn/news/100-things-to-do.htm>



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Promise

Continued from page 1

In the case of Kalamazoo, the Promise money came from “anonymous” wealthy donors, though many people think it was the Stryker family or perhaps even Derek Jeter. But in Baldwin, the money came from the people.

Over breakfast at a local restaurant one nondescript day, Richard Simonson told his friends that they should all start asking everyone they knew to give some money so that local kids could go to college. And that is just what they did: they asked everyone—even school employees and summer residents—to donate \$500. If you were not able to pay it up front, you could get on a payment plan. They raised \$160,000 in a year.

So what does all of this mean for Benzie?

Well, there are roughly 13,500 residents of Benzie County who are 21 years of age or older, according to 2014 estimates from the U.S. Census. If each of these adults donated \$300, that would total more than \$4 million to be divided among the roughly 150 students who will be graduating from Benzie Central and Frankfort schools on Sunday, June 5. If divided equally among them, each student would walk away with \$27,000 from that \$4 million pool, which is enough for one year at the University of Michigan, the most expensive public school in the state, before any other type of financial aid or scholarships are taken into account.

Imagine what a program like this could do for our kids. Imagine what a program like this could do for our school districts. Imagine what this could do for our local economy, bringing young families to Benzie County to live, work, and play—making money here, spending money here, increasing the tax base here.

“This is a great idea for attracting young families to our community,” says Scott Kubit, who has been teaching at Benzie Central High School for nearly two decades.

A Promise program can come in many shapes or sizes, and the \$300 amount that is suggested in this article is just that—a suggestion. And by no means am I trying to belittle the work of so many local organizations who donate close to \$100,000 in scholarships to students at both schools each year. Rather, my hope is that this idea gets the wheels turning in the heads of some of Benzie County’s movers and shakers.

A Benzie Promise might not be the solution to all of our woes, but it should—at the very least—demonstrate the potential when a community comes together as a whole to invest in the education of our children. What can be done? Why aren’t we doing it?

Higher Education Costs in Michigan

A college degree costs more than double what it did a generation ago, according to *Bridge Magazine*, even after taking inflation into account. And prices are rising all the time—in 2015, tuition rose an average of 2.78 percent at Michigan universities, according to *MLive*.

Annual Cost of Undergraduate Attendance*

- Northwestern Michigan College: \$15,870 (\$7,145 commuter)
- Northern Michigan University: \$18,906
- Western Michigan University: \$20,304
- Ferris State University: \$22,512
- Central Michigan University: \$22,922
- Michigan State University: \$26,874
- Michigan Tech University: \$27,677
- University of Michigan: \$27,812
- Aquinas College: \$28,820
- Hope College: \$41,250
- Calvin College: \$43,850
- Alma College: \$48,268
- Kalamazoo College: \$53,461

*Tuition, fees, room & board, books, supplies, other expenses, before any financial aid is assessed.

Michigan Promise Programs

- Baldwin Promise:** Offers up to \$5,000 per year for four years to a four-year public or private university or at a community college.
- Battle Creek Promise:** Offers tuition at Kellogg Community College.
- Bay Commitment of Bay City:** Offers \$2,000 per year toward a community college or public university.
- Benton Harbor Promise:** Offers two years of tuition at a community college or four-year university.
- Challenge Scholars of Grand Rapids:** Offers college scholarships that can be used at any Michigan public university, Grand Rapids Community College, Aquinas College, or Davenport University for high school graduates who attended Harrison Park or Westwood middle schools.
- The Detroit Scholarship Fund:** Offers two years of tuition at metro-Detroit community colleges.
- Hazel Park Promise:** Offers up to \$2,000 per year for two years at a community college or four-year university.
- Holland-Zeeland Promise:** Offers tuition and room & board to a community college or four-year university for low-income students who have demonstrated community service.
- Jackson Legacy Scholarship:** Offers up to \$1,000 toward tuition at Jackson College, Baker College of Jackson, or Spring Arbor College.
- Kalamazoo Promise:** Offers tuition for Kalamazoo Public School graduates to attend community college, public university, or a number of private universities.
- Lansing Promise:** Offers Lansing Public School graduates up to 65 credits at Lansing Community College (enough for an Associate’s Degree) or the financial equivalent at Michigan State University.
- Mason Promise:** Offers two years of tuition at Lansing Community College for Mason Public School graduates.
- Muskegon Area Promise:** Offers funding for up to an Associate’s Degree at Muskegon Community College or Baker College of Muskegon to students who graduate with a GPA of 3.5 or higher.
- Northport Promise:** Offers up to \$2,000 per year toward a community college or public university.
- Pontiac Promise:** Offers up to the cost of the equivalent of an Associate’s Degree at a community college or four-year university.
- Saginaw Promise:** Offers up to \$2,727 per year to a community college or \$8,000 per year to a four-year Michigan public or private university.

List courtesy of *Bridge Magazine* and *MLive*.

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 10:30 am at Community Center – 19900 First Street
 10:45 Children’s Sunday School
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Food Pantry: Mon & Thur 9 am – 12 pm
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<http://www.ComedyCrystalLake.com>

A sequel to the classic booklet, “The Tragedy of Crystal Lake” (1922), being a summary chronicle with many more sidelights, of a tale written in two parts, describing a seemingly ill-fated historical event, so epochal in its nature as to have had a permanent bearing upon the development and future of Benzie Co., Northwest Lower Michigan, together with myriad viewpoints of its diverse characters and sundry locales &c, &c.

The real-life story of the attempt by Archibald Jones to build a slack-water canal from Crystal Lake to Lake Michigan in 1873 has elements of tragedy and comedy - a serious beginning and a happy ending - with foibles of human nature and consequences of bold venture: the dramatic lowering of a very large inland lake and the creation of a long sandy beach.

WOW

Continued from page 1

downturn were being set in motion, Bond set different wheels in motion for a new program at BACN—Women on their Way (WOW). The WOW program drew from the experience of successful area businesswomen and their willingness to help guide other women down the educational path. Participants were connected to area resources that could help with everything from the enrollment process to financial assistance and childcare. Perhaps the most important aspect of WOW was group meetings, where the women could gather and share their struggles, all the while coaching and encouraging each other.

“Going back to school can be terrifying for an older student,” says Alicia Rusch, BACN’s program coordinator. “Before they even try to begin classes, sometimes the paperwork of enrolling or trying to connect to financial assistance is simply overwhelming. Then they get to campus and feel absolutely lost. It’s so helpful to have someone who has been there to guide them through each step.”

Rusch, currently attending school to complete her own degree while working full time, knows first-hand of what she speaks—she is going for a Bachelor’s of Business Science in Organizational Management through Spring Arbor University, and she wants to follow that up with a Master’s degree from Michigan State University.

The Journey of Hope

By the fall of 2008, Kochis had registered at Northwestern Michigan College in Traverse City, and she began classes the following January. While she was grateful that her cleaning business allowed her to schedule jobs around schoolwork, she still struggled to overcome many of the barriers to her goal. After being in school for about a year, Kochis heard about a new program at BACN—the WOW program—from some of her clients, Joan and Dr. Will Wolfe, who served on BACN’s community relations board. Kochis ended up joining one of WOW’s first meeting groups, formed by eight women in various stages of educational goals (many with whom she still remains close).

WOW participants applaud that BACN is there as a resource for women, to help with all kinds of things during their years as students. Some women need help feeding their families, some cannot afford the gas to drive to classes, and some need internet access in order to complete online classwork.

“I never needed food,” Kochis says. “I have a close-knit family in the area with freezers full of meat, and no one would have let me go hungry. But there was a time when I could not pay my car registration, and I needed that car to get back and forth to classes. Later, there was a point when I could not afford that month’s car insurance. BACN stepped in both times, and I was able to continue my studies.”

WOW’s Next Chapter

In the years that followed, the WOW program experienced growth that became difficult to manage under the original framework. By the end of 2014, the leadership put the program on a brief hiatus while they determined the most effective ways to continue. They knew that they needed a new model.

Then in 2015, BACN was awarded a grant from the Seabury Foundation to prioritize WOW. A new steering committee was formed, and the decision was made to hire a part-time WOW facilitator, instead of depending on volunteer leadership. The Seabury funds covered program costs, but funds were still needed to pay for the WOW facilitator.

In March 2016, BACN’s current executive director, Gerri VanAntwerp, approached Sue Webber, founder of Webber Insurance in Benzonia, to see if she would consider being the initial investor for the WOW facilitator position. VanAntwerp thought that Sue Webber would be a great mentor for the program, since Webber Insurance has enjoyed more than 30 years of successful business in the area and received the Benzie County Chamber of Commerce’s 2015 Outstanding Business Member of the Year Award.

“WOW is just right up my alley,” Webber says of why she decided to participate in the program. “Education is so important, and helping our area women to achieve these goals is very meaningful to me.”

Webber not only provided the initial gift for the WOW facilitator position, she also connected BACN to other grant opportunities. Moreover, she invited area businesswomen to a luncheon on April 26, 2016, that explained the WOW program. Between Webber Insurance, The Pierce Family Foundation, the Willoughby Rotary Foundation, and individual donors, the WOW facilitator position has been covered for the first year.

“For WOW to stabilize and grow, it needs consistent leadership,” Rusch explains. “We have a great steering committee and are excited to prioritize WOW in a way that we’ve not been able to before.”

In addition to the traditional format, WOW will also begin offering workshops that are designed to help participants gain confidence through mastery of new skills. Examples of these workshops include self-defense, kayaking, and basic car maintenance.

And what ever became of Hope Kochis?

Not only is she now a college graduate with a Bachelor’s degree in Family Life Education from Spring Arbor University, but she is also BACN’s first paid WOW facilitator. After a short break, Kochis will be returning to school for her Master’s degree, with the goal of a career in Marriage and Family Counseling.

BACN could not have found a more perfect person to help guide other women through their college efforts, and as WOW facilitator, this person could not have a more perfect name: Hope.

Kelly Ottinger is fundraising coordinator for BACN. For more information on the WOW Program—to enroll, volunteer, or donate—contact Hope Kochis at 231-822-9544.

Solar

Continued from page 1

maintenance free, cranks out a lot of power, and I love charging my all-electric car, a Nissan Leaf, from the solar panels. We had saved some money, and it just seemed like the right way to use those funds. And now it is saving us on our electric bills.”

Marcia Curran added that a solar campaign is a good idea for Benzie—and for Michigan.

“We totally support the Groundwork Shines program and hope that Benzie residents will take advantage of it,” she says.

How It Works

Groundwork Shines has been gaining steam for a few months. It sparked up this past winter, when half a dozen installers, some solar advocates, educators, and a few attorneys met every other week at the Groundwork office to figure out how to make it easier for folks in this part of the state to ‘go solar.’

What we came up with is pretty cool—sign up with Shines online, and Groundwork’s “solar scout” will provide an on-site assessment of how much solar power your home



Jim Barnes sells solar panels, and he also has them installed on his garage in Frankfort. Moustache not included. Photo by Aubrey Ann Parker.

needs and the price tag for installing it. Then, if the customer wants to proceed, the scout will gather all the data for a complete, building code-ready engineering design for a specific, properly sized, efficiency-minded solar package. The scout will also estimate the dividends that the system will earn; provide a local installer to build it and help with any financing; and follow up to make sure that everybody is happy.

One key to the Shines program is that it is aimed only at those who are truly serious about solar, which helps to make the process a lot more efficient. By doing a bunch of the behind-the-scenes work, the Shines scout is able to cut the workload of the installers, which also helps to cut the price for the homeowner.

The Shines scout spends three to four hours gathering all sorts of information about the home, the roof, energy use, layout, and many technical items. The resulting engineering plan is highly valuable—and permanently useful for that house. The service costs \$600 and serves as an initial down payment on the full project. But even if the homeowner holds off, the plan is ready to go at a later time.

But why wait? Every incentive points to that now is the time to act.

Why Go Solar?

Solar power works really well, is now reasonably priced, and—for those with suitably sunny roofs—is the right thing to do for more independence, lower utility bills, cleaner air, and slower climate change.

1) **The price of solar is at a record low.** Three years ago the U.S. Department of Energy launched its Sunshot program. One of its goals was to get the cost of rooftop solar systems down, as close to \$3 per watt as possible—a pretty big drop from the then-going

rate of about twice that. That would mean a 5,000-watt (or 5-kW) system with about 20 panels, typical for many homes, should cost about \$15,000 before any rebates. As this goes to press, it looks like Shines systems will range from a bit over that \$3 rate for the smallest systems to a bit under it for the largest systems. This means that our program is doing its job of making solar power affordable for homes in Benzie County and beyond.

2) **Substantial federal incentives have been extended.** You can still get a 30 percent income tax rebate on the cost of installation, and that cost can actually include reshingling your roof. There is no guarantee those incentives will be extended, and every day that you do not take advantage of them is an opportunity lost for cutting your electric bill.

3) **Quality financing is available for Michigan residents.** Michigan Saves is a non-profit lender that specializes in backing energy-efficiency and clean-energy projects for homes, small businesses, and schools in Michigan. Michigan Saves maintains a list of vetted energy contractors who are allowed to participate in the special loan programs, and all of the installers who will be working with the Groundwork Shines program will have this certification. An added bonus: This means that your installer can help walk you through the process of getting a Michigan Saves loan. The loans are fairly easy to procure, with a process that is similar to a car dealership calling a bank for an auto loan, albeit with far more favorable terms—up to 10 years, often at rates below 5 percent. For our 5-kw model home mentioned above, this means that a household paying about \$75 per month for their electric bill will pay \$160 per month for a 10-year loan. However, at the end of that loan, the homeowner will not have to pay for electricity ever again, and they are now saving close to \$1,000 per year on the electricity that they would have otherwise been buying. So, even with a loan, solar can make sense, thanks to a small monthly loan payback. And when the loan is paid off, you essentially have free power.

4) **Electricity prices are going up.** Consumers Energy, which serves Benzie County, raised its rates earlier this year and has applied for another increase with the Michigan Public Service Commission. Generally speaking, electricity rates go up 1 or 2 percent a year. The more that they go up, the more worthwhile your solar investment becomes, because you are effectively saving more money every year. So the return on your investment will almost certainly improve over the life of the panels—a minimum of 25 years.

5) **Solar home-improvement projects have high real estate values.** According to a recent study by the National Renewable Energy Laboratory, solar will add to a home’s sale value significantly more, on a dollar-for-dollar basis, than many other kinds of home improvements. So even if you are not planning in being in your home long enough for the seven- to 10-year payoff, you should still be able to recoup your investment.

Clearly, solar is heating up in our neck of the woods. With little promotion beyond announcements at area meetings—including at Frankfort’s City Hall earlier this month—the Shines program has garnered some good press, and people have already begun signing up on the website. Look for more solar events and workshops coming to Benzie County this summer.

Jim Dulzo, the senior energy policy specialist for the Groundwork Center for Resilient Communities, is a Beulah resident and plans to put solar on his own roof this summer using the Shines campaign. If you would like to learn more about Groundwork Shines, especially about how installers and other community folks conspired on this sunny-side-up opportunity, visit GroundworkCenter.org/Shines.



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Bagels Are Back

“L’chayim, Beulah. To life!”

By Jacob Wheeler
Current Editor

The Benzie hamlet on the shores of Crystal Lake epitomizes the Hebrew blessing: “L’chayim, to life!” For in this town, it takes more than a blaze to wipe out a popular business.

Jonathan Clark’s L’Chayim Delicatessen suffered a devastating kitchen fire on August 29, 2015, that put Benzie County’s bagel consumption on hold until this spring. Employee Denise—who comes in at 3:30 a.m. on baking days—discovered the fire before it spread. No one was hurt, no other structure was damaged, and blessings were counted. But what a setback.

“It was crazy cool,” Clark says. “Living in a small town, there’s nothing like it. But we’re glad to have the experience behind us.”

From the black-and-white checkerboard tiles on the floor to the works of local artists that hang on the red wall across from the wrap-around glass-front counter, not much has changed inside the deli. Starting from scratch after a fire means that Clark could have potentially changed a lot of things, things that maybe had bugged him for years.

“We thought about efficiency and what we could move here or there to make the space work better,” Clark explains. “But we decided that we actually really liked the way that everything was set up, and it couldn’t get much better than how we’d had it to begin with.”

L’Chayim’s Beulah location reopened on



Jonathan Clark at the Beulah L’Chayim, where the wall is still red, the floors are still checkerboard, and the bagels are still tasty. Photo by Aubrey Ann Parker.

“It really sucked,” Clark says. “Being out of work for eight months was a terrible experience. I learned that I’m not ready for retirement.”

Still, he had nothing but good things to say about L’Chayim’s employees, the insurance adjusters, and the community, in particular. Within days of the accident, 500 locals threw an impromptu fundraiser for the deli at the old Central State Bank building, now a gallery owned by Karen Roberts and Mike Madden.

On top of that, Gretchen Boekeloo let the L’Chayim team use the kitchen at The Roadhouse Mexican Bar & Grille in Benzonia to prepare for a catering event that had been pre-scheduled for the same day as the fire.

May 4, followed by the Frankfort spot on May 16. Clark says that everyone has told him, “We’re happy you’re back. We missed you!”

And sales are up 20 to 25 percent over this season in previous years—be that due to the hunger for bagels or the desire to continue supporting a friend in need.

This month, find the works of artist/realtor Julie Bowman Williams on The Wall at the Beulah L’Chayim. To read “Benzie ABCs: Art, Bagels, and Community,” a story that we ran last fall on the fire and the subsequent fundraiser, check out our website at <http://bit.ly/1YbBdHL>.

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A Bridge Story

Protecting bridges and saving fish on the Betsie

By Jacob Wheeler

Current Editor

Avid Benzie County fishermen may not know it, but the work of the Traverse City-based Conservation Resource Alliance (CRA) is integral to protecting cold-water-loving species such as steelhead, trout, and salmon in our streams.

The CRA was established in 1968 to preserve and protect Northern Michigan's waterways, wildlife, and forests. The alliance currently protects 16 watersheds in 13 counties, from Beaver Island to the Pere Marquette and Manistee rivers. Here in Benzie, CRA focuses on the Betsie and Platte rivers, both important spawning grounds in the spring and the fall.

The Conservation Resource Alliance—together with partners that include the Benzie

in. Bally says that the CRA first identifies significant environmental concerns in each watershed that the organization works in. Then the CRA gathers appropriate partners together to determine solutions and to raise funds to implement those solutions.

Two years ago, the CRA worked with the Benzie County Road Commission to replace a century-old bridge here that was originally made with concrete and timber. The project—which Bally dubbed “a glorified Lego kit”—cost approximately \$150,000 and received matching state funds. According to Bally, the structure was deteriorating, cement was fracturing, and the bags of concrete that had been left by volunteers more than 20 years ago had done little to prevent the eventual crumbling of this road crossing. The river was only eight feet wide and constricted, causing pool formations downstream.

“We raised grant dollars to build a timber



Bridge work before (top) and after (bottom). Photos courtesy of Conservation Resource Alliance.

County Road Commission and some grant-giving organizations—have built timber bridges across three points on the Upper Betsie, one of the coldest tributaries to the Betsie River. In July, they will replace yet another road crossing, this time on Red Creek, a tributary to the Betsie, near Thompsonville.

Reinforcing these aging and ailing bridges opens up the river channel and lets the stream—and the fish—flow more naturally beneath them.

One place that has been redone is at the intersection of Nessen and Bentley roads, rustic two-tracks to the northeast of Thompsonville where the Upper Betsie makes a bucolic meander through rural Benzie County before feeding the main Betsie River, which eventually dumps into Frankfort and Elberta's Betsie Bay and Lake Michigan.

This stretch suffers from warm water temperatures during the high summer months, according to Kim Bally, a project manager and biologist with the CRA. Yet fishermen rely on the health of these tributaries, because the Little Betsie and Deer Creek are cold-water havens for trout and great nurseries for steelhead and salmon.

“Because the previous structure was so undersized here, high-water events—from snowmelt to storm events—would get funneled through the old structure, create more white water, and create a large pool,” Bally says. “Increased water velocity is tough for fish in the early stages of their life, especially when they have to fight the current and get upstream.”

But now, the Nessen-Bentley intersection flows freely, thanks to the CRA stepping

bridge that helped open the river channel,” Bally says. “The Little Betsie is a state-designated natural river. So not only is the bridge structurally sound now, it's aesthetically pleasing, because it ties in with the natural feeling of the area. And it allows water and fish to move more freely.”

The Nessen-Bentley bridge is one of 100 road crossings over the Betsie and its tributaries, Bally estimates. If each of those crossings is undersized, structurally compromised, or bleeds sand from the roadbed into the stream, that is 100 different sites of impact. Bally stresses the need to replace bridges while they are still functioning, because CRA's grant sources do not operate in emergency mode.

Furthermore, climate change threatens more extreme weather events, such as heavy rain or severe storms that will cause high-water events.

“With climate change, you can't just fix one site, you have to look at all of them,” Bally says. “You need to make sure that if the stream can get through here, it can also get through downriver as well.”

Jacob Wheeler is a contributor to NatureChange.org, a new online magazine that covers conservation and climate change in Northern Michigan. CRA is among a host of environmental nonprofits that sponsors Nature Change. Watch Nature Change's interview with Bally and a video story about the Upper Betsie at NatureChange.org. And look for more Nature Change stories that impact Benzie County in The Betsie Current this summer. Learn more about the CRA at RiverCare.org.



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