

The Betsie Current

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Summer 2014

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Toasting the Town

Stormcloud Brewery and Cru Cellars celebrate one year in Frankfort

By Jacob Wheeler

Current Editor

Six years before Stormcloud Brewing Company opened next to The Garden Theater in downtown Frankfort, Brian Confer realized that he wasn't going to retire as a photographer — making ends meet was too difficult.

His profession was quickly going digital, so Confer turned the film-processing dark room in his Elberta studio into a room for home-brewing beer. He called it "Stormcloud." The brew room had everything Confer needed: good water, a huge sink, and space to make as much of a mess as he wanted. Three or four batches later, the artisan knew he wanted to focus on Belgian-style beers — primarily ales that emphasize malts and fruity, yeast flavors.

"I wanted to be different than what Traverse City offers," Confer says. "Our theory was that there are so many great (India Pale Ales) in T.C., who would drive 45 minutes for another IPA? We could take a risk and

do something completely different, specializing in a niche-focused attraction."

The risk paid off. Stormcloud upgraded from a studio-sized brew room to a full-sized brewery last June, quickly becoming one of Benzie County's favorite destinations. Even after Frankfort's typical tourism season subsided post-Labor Day weekend, patrons kept returning to Stormcloud. Though Northern Michigan's long and arduous winter of 2014 encouraged hibernation, Stormcloud routinely packed the house during Wednesday trivia nights. The brewery will celebrate its first birthday in style on Friday, June 20, with beer-can chicken and free birthday cake.

Just how well did Stormcloud fare during its first year? Confer and co-owner Rick



Schmitt expected to brew roughly 400 barrels of beer during their first 12 months of operation. Instead, they'll roll out barrel number 775 some time in June. (Revenues from the winter months were quadruple what they had expected.) In addition to serving downtown Frankfort, Stormcloud's

beer is poured in approximately 20 restaurants throughout Northern Michigan, from Pentwater to Antrim County. Those exports have the potential to broaden Frankfort's



Cru Cellars owner Torrey Bingham lets the wine breathe. At Stormcloud, Rick Schmitt and Brian Confer prepare for another pint. Photos by Aubrey Ann Parker

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Discovering Benzie's Handmade Soaps

Soap makers focus on high-quality soaps with natural ingredients

By Kelly Ottinger

Current Contributor

"We've been using handmade soap for a year or two after discovering it at a local store. They discontinued it, and I've been buying it from Florida ever since. I would really like a local source. I cannot imagine going back to Dial." — Joann Miller

Miller will be pleased to learn there are some great local sources of handmade soap here in Benzie County — from natural and herb-infused to bars that are felted with alpaca wool. Most of the local soaps are made by the cold-process method, which involves several steps, and a lengthy curing (drying) period once the bars are cut. Makers and users alike swear that the end result is worth every effort.

Benefits of Using Handmade Soap

Many people begin using handmade soaps after experiencing allergies to the chemical ingredients and fragrances in commercially mass-produced soaps. Others find handmade

soaps help them to better manage skin issues such as eczema, psoriasis, or simply dry skin. Still others turn to these more natural alternatives because they want to buy locally made products or adopt a more 'green' lifestyle.

In cold-process soap-making, lye combines with fats to create hard bars (a process called saponification). This process allows for the glycerin byproduct to remain in the bars. Glycerin is an excellent natural moisturizer, keeping the bar's lathering action from completely stripping skin's natural oils during bathing. Soap makers choose different fats and oils for the characteristics they bring to the bar. Many people use olive oil as a predominant oil in their recipe, because of both the relatively low amount of lye needed and also because olive oil is especially nourishing to the skin. Other oils are added for lathering properties: for instance, coconut oil brings frothy lather, while castor oil brings a slower, creamier lather. (Most shampoo bars contain a fair amount of castor oil to help give the

proper lather for that function.)

How Is Soap Made?

Any hard bar of soap uses lye in the recipe. That said, the presence of lye does not mean the soap will be the harsh old farm soap made by many a great-grandmother. Modern recipes generally use as little lye as needed to create a solid bar.

Some common terms for lye include: potash, sodium hydroxide, alkali, crystals of alkali, and NaOH. Some ingredient labels skip naming lye altogether by stating that the soaps contain "saponified oils of ..." (Saponified simply means that the oils have gone through the process of mixing with lye to create a solid bar of soap.)

First, lye is mixed into water, causing an instant heat reaction. Lye water is caustic, and the soap maker must take care to neither come in contact with the lye water, nor inhale its fumes. Lye water can only be mixed in stainless steel or glass containers.

Any solid oils are then melted, and any

Please see Soapy on page 5

Bike Benzie

Returns June 14th



Created by the Benzie Sunrise Rotary Club of Beulah, the Bike Benzie Tour is an annual charity ride for the benefit of area youth. Back for a sixth year, the event will once again begin and end at Crystal Mountain Resort in Thompsonville.

In addition to tour rides of 30, 62, and 100 miles, riders can also opt to participate in the new Fondo to experience the challenge of a timed ride. There will be a separate "Yes We Can" ride for people with disabilities. Registration begins at 6am and is \$55 for a single adult or \$140 for a family. Learn more www.bikebenzie.org or call 231-882-0791.

Mother Nature's Pre-Columbian Biodiversity Initiative

Living with fire in Northern Michigan

By Jed Jaworski

Current Contributor

Residents of Northern Michigan, like much of the nation, are reevaluating our long-held perceptions of fire in the environment. Fire professionals, ecologists, and climate experts are all telling us that fire will be in our backyards, but can we actually live with fire? The answer is that we may have little choice.

Prior to European settlement in Northern Michigan, fire was a frequent force in nature. Mother Nature would see to it that a low-intensity ground fire would sweep the forest floor of flammable debris, cull sick or injured trees, check invasive species and infestations, condition and enrich soils, propagate fire-dependant species, and most importantly "fire temper" the forest so that it was less likely to

be destroyed by fire in the future.

How frequently and how intensely fire occurs is called a fire regime. For our area, the regime was a low-intensity "house-keeping" ground fire about every 25 years and a high-intensity "crown fire," which consumes nearly everything, about every 400 years. The high-intensity fires would happen when large areas of a forest were sick, infested, or dying so that what may have been an unhealthy aged pine forest may now be



An intentional burning of 170 acres of the Arcadia Marsh in April 2013. Photo courtesy of Jed Jaworski.

come a young healthy prairie — nature's force for creating biodiversity. An important aspect of fire tempering was the fire pruning of low

hanging and dead limbs on living trees; by the time that the tree grew to maturity, it had experienced many fire cycles and no limbs existed within 12 feet of the forest floor, hence it was unlikely for a ground fire to climb or "ladder" into the tree to become a large and devastating crown fire.

The Native Americans, seeing how well fire worked in nature, began managing fire for their own interests. They roughly doubled the amount of naturally occurring fires, improving their environment, and thus their food harvesting and hunting opportunities. When Europeans settled here, that balance was suddenly and drastically altered. Intensive logging with poor land-stewardship practices set our area up for disasters, which we are still

Please see Fire on page 7

Ingemar Johansson on Honor's Role

Questions & Answers with community faces

From staff reports

Ingemar Johansson is president of the Honor Area Restoration Project (HARP). He is also known throughout Northern Michigan as a member of Song of the Lakes, a popular folk band. Check out HARP's website at Restore-Honor.org.

This is part three of *The Betsie Current's* interview series with local characters who are having an impact on Benzie communities.

THE BETSIE CURRENT: What's new with HARP this summer? What's next on your plate?

JOHANSSON: We are working on two things primarily. Firstly, to see that the owner – currently the County – takes the “Question Mark building” down and replaces it with something that will add value to the community and that people in the area wish to see developed. Some ideas floating around include for someone to develop a storefront with rental units/condos on top, an office building, a green space, or a parking lot. Secondly we would like to see a park be created just west of the village on the 52 acres along the east/north bank of Platte River. This site is a pristine area that would create access to the river and that could be enjoyed by residents and visitors alike. The potential is unlimited. It could fit an accessible fishing dock, a picnic area, a gazebo, a small concert venue, a green space, a visitor center, etc. Both of these pursuits fit into the big picture of what our community members expressed at the 2011 Envision Honor forum at Platte River Elementary School. This is what drives HARP to continue our efforts to revitalize the area. We have made a commitment to strive to be non-political, volunteer-based, transparent, community-driven, and positive in all of our actions. This commitment is sometimes challenging for progress in the short term, since it entails combating fear of change in a gentle way. We believe, however, that it is essential for long-term success since trust is earned over time, and engagement of the community at large is based on trust. We're in it for the long term.

CURRENT: If all the chips fell into place, how would Honor be transformed? How might the town look?

JOHANSSON: As was expressed at the 2011 Envision Honor event, we would have an improved streetscape and a downtown that

would make existing businesses thrive, as well as attract new entrepreneurs to establish themselves in the area. Also, access to the river would be improved, new recreation facilities would be established, the community would become more walkable and bike-able, and Honor would be the gateway to the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore. Those are the priorities that our community has expressed.

CURRENT: If Honor were revitalized, what impact might that have on the rest of Benzie County?

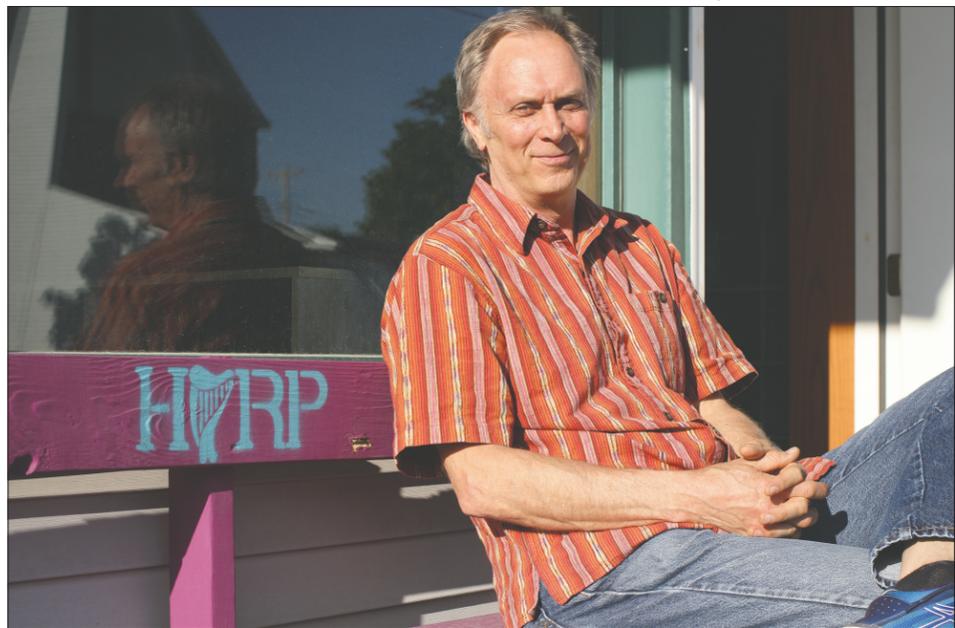
JOHANSSON: Like any successful economic development efforts, it would benefit the entire county and beyond. Honor is located in the center of the county. It was once the hub of activity of the county, and it could be so again.

got their act together and paid for help. They went through the process we went through, and today Dundee is thriving and beautiful. All the stores are occupied, and the streetscape is welcoming and homey. People love to visit this lovely berg.

CURRENT: What are the most unique questions that you've gotten about HARP and its mission?

JOHANSSON: The first predictable question that meets us is, “When is the Question Mark building coming down?” It is amazing how infamous it is and what a tough time it is to get it down, due to legalities and such. But the community will make it happen; we predict it will happen this year.

CURRENT: What are you most excited about



Ingemar Johansson, president of the Honor Area Restoration Project (HARP). Photo by Aubrey Ann Parker.

CURRENT: Are there particular communities that you hope to emulate in the effort to restore Honor?

JOHANSSON: HARP board member Beverly Holbrook moved 28 years ago from Dundee, Michigan. Dundee was a pretty little village with a town square, but [the need for] shopping and work sent many to the bigger cities of Monroe and Toledo, Ohio. When Beverly left, the last [establishment] getting ready to close was the town bar. The one thing in Dundee's favor, though, was that US-23 ran along the outskirts and M-50 ran right through town, not unlike US-31 in Honor. Cabella's decided to camp out by US-31, and the townspeople

for this coming summer in Benzie County?

JOHANSSON: The summer itself is exciting, following the hard and long winter that we had. There is nothing in the world as precious as a summer in Benzie and Leelanau counties. We have so much to offer with the great people living here, the beaches, the rivers, the dunes, and everything that surrounds us. There is a reason why people drive long distances to stay for a short time. And Honor is right in the middle of it. We have so much potential with our area. It's up to all of us to stick to the vision that has been expressed and make it come true, one step at a time.

CURRENT: Ingemar: you're known far and wide for your music as a member of Song of the Lakes. How has Benzie County influenced the band's music over the years?

JOHANSSON: Our band was born in Frankfort in the early 1980s, and we have sung the praises of Benzie County ever since. Many, if not most, of our songs are inspired by Lake Michigan, the beaches and dunes and the overall beauty of the area. I really believe that we have made an impact on tens of thousands of people in Michigan and beyond and their awareness of the region in general and Benzie County in particular. As a matter of fact, we have closed our shows with our original song “Benzie Rover” since the beginning of the band. To this day, people of all ages come up to us and want to share their stories of how they have associated the area with our music.

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Living with Tourette's

By Stacy Pasche
Current Contributor

It started with a cough. My son, Augie, just shy of 4 years old, was recovering from a cold and had a persistent cough. Weeks went by and he was still coughing. We took him to the doctor, who suggested possible allergies. He gave us a few samples of Singulair and sent us on our way. Two weeks later, the cough just went away. No red flags. Kids do strange things all the time.

A few months later, we noticed Augie was constantly blinking his eyes. The optometrist found nothing wrong, so again we ignored it, and it went away. Same with the humming and odd breathing that he started shortly after the eye blinking. I'm a reference librarian by trade, so I started researching these symptoms. I learned that 10 percent of all children have childhood "tics" that are harmless. Just ignore them, and they will go away.

Then the stomachaches started, and the throat clearing got worse. We were referred to an allergist, who determined a tonsillectomy and adenoidectomy were needed. After the surgery, things seemed to improve. Augie had a symptom-free school year, but the tics were back once summer started.

By August of that year, we couldn't ignore things any longer. Augie was blinking so badly that he couldn't see. He couldn't complete a sentence without clearing his throat. Sometimes when he cleared his throat, he would move his chin down to touch his shoulder. We went back to the doctor, only this time we weren't told that there was nothing wrong; we were referred to a pediatric neurologist. Although there are many luxuries that are associated with living in Northern Michigan, close proximity to a pediatric neurologist is not one of them. The wait time to see a neuro at DeVos Children's Hospital in Grand Rapids was four months.

Four months is a long time to not know what's happening to your child. My mother suggested Tourette Syndrome (TS). I laughed at that suggestion, as I was only familiar with Tourette's from its portrayal in Hollywood. TS is flailing limbs and the shouting of obscenities; my kid just blinks, coughs, and moves his head. Tourette's was the guy on that L.A. Law episode from long ago that I'm ashamed that my brother and I openly mocked (sadly, if you Google "L.A. Law Tourette syndrome," the first result is a YouTube clip entitled "funny tourettes scene from 1989." It wasn't funny then and it sure isn't funny now). I spent an entire afternoon researching Tourette Syndrome and soon realized I had a complete misunderstanding of the disorder. From all that I read, a strong suspicion was building that Augie's symptoms fit the description for TS.

According to the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, "Tourette Syndrome is a neurological disorder characterized by repetitive, stereotyped, involuntary movements and vocalizations called tics." Although the disorder was first discovered in 1885, little was known about it in this country until the 1970s when the Tourette Syndrome Association of America was formed. Average onset for TS is between the ages of 3 and 9 years old. Symptoms increase and typically peak during adolescence.

When we finally saw the neurologist, my suspicions were confirmed - Augie was

diagnosed with Tourette Syndrome during the fall of 2011. His symptoms were considered mild, and no treatment was deemed necessary at the time. We informed his teacher, who went above and beyond to make sure Augie was supported and had all the necessary tools that he needed to be comfortable at school. Then, the symptoms disappeared as quickly as they had started.

The waxing and waning of symptoms is normal with TS. In Augie's case, it seems there are external triggers in the spring and fall that exacerbate his tics. We learned that waxing and waning of symptoms is not just limited to tics; people with Tourette Syndrome usually have what are called "co-morbid" conditions, the most common being Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). By the spring of 2012, our normally happy little guy had turned into a sad little Eeyore. He would get off the bus and cry. He was overcome with separation anxiety. A visit to the psychiatrist told us that we were now in the Tourette's Plus Club - Augie was diagnosed with OCD and a mild case of ADHD.

The tics are annoying, but we've learned that OCD can be just as bad, if not worse. While the tics take over the body, OCD causes Augie's brain to get "stuck." Minor disappointments become exaggerated in his head until he becomes so upset that he doesn't remember what upset him in the first place.

The Tourette Syndrome Association's Youth Ambassador program trains young people with TS, their siblings, friends, and classmates to speak about TS before their peers at school, sports leagues, camps, etc. We were fortunate at the time of Augie's diagnosis that one of these ambassadors was living in Leelanau County. The Michigan chapter of the Tourette Syndrome Association is in the process of changing hands, and currently there is no support group in northwest lower Michigan.

We wanted Augie to meet some other kids with TS, so in the summer of 2013, we traveled to Green Bay, Wisconsin, to participate in a Tourette Syndrome Awareness walk. Wisconsin has a very active TS support network, with chapters in Green Bay, Milwaukee, and Madison. We had lived in Milwaukee for five years prior to moving to Northern Michigan, and Augie was actually born there. He was very excited to visit the home turf of his beloved Green Bay Packers.

While talking to the other TS parents in Wisconsin, I realized how similar all of our



Augie (left) and sister Nora (right) enjoy a Brewers game at Miller Park after the race. Photo courtesy of Stacy Pasche.

stories were. Many of us started with referrals to allergists or eye doctors. We are all upset that Tourette Syndrome is the only disorder still openly mocked and treated like a joke in the eyes of Hollywood. We recognize that awareness events like the one in Green Bay really matter. Research money is desperately needed to not only find a cure but also to better understand what causes TS. Since Augie's diagnosis, two more children at his school have been diagnosed, bringing the total to three confirmed cases of Tourette Syndrome at Frankfort Elementary.

I personally feel the clock ticking for a cure. We're fortunate that, so far, his symptoms have been mild, but I've heard more than one parent say, "My child's symptoms were the worst at age 11." My son just turned 10. Symptoms traditionally escalate in adolescence. Changes happen overnight. Augie could wake up tomorrow and not have control, and there is no greater motivator than fear. We have just returned from another trip to Green Bay to attend our second TS Awareness walk. As of today, Team Pasche has raised over \$1,200 for TS research.

Augie is really looking forward to going back to Green Bay. As he said, "These kids are just like me, you know? Packers fans."

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Open House

At the Oliver Art Center

By Jenny Robertson

Current Contributor

Mark your calendars for Oliver Art Center's (OAC) upcoming three-day Open House, which runs Friday, June 27, through Sunday, June 29. Activities kick off with a reception for art center members and volunteers on Friday from 5-6 p.m. People considering membership are also invited to attend (art center membership benefits include a quarterly newsletter, invitations to special events, and discounts on class registrations). At 6 p.m. the artist Rufus Snoddy, whose vibrant, thought-provoking paintings and sculpture are currently on display in OAC's galleries, will give a talk, with an after party to follow from 7-8 p.m.

On Saturday, from 10 a.m.-1 p.m., art center instructors will give class demonstrations in visual art and clay. And in the afternoon, a new display about the art center's history will be unveiled, and several presentations will shed light on the area's rich history.

Local realtor Bob McCall will give a slideshow on Frankfort's early days, drawing from his collection of almost 600 postcards and old pictures. McCall, who taught Michigan history before serving as Frankfort's high school principal for 30 years, says, "I've always been kind of a history nut. I remember all the stories I've heard from old-timers."

Jonathan Hawley will launch his new book, *From Artisans to Artists: Betsie Bay's Historic "Island" Story*, which looks closely at the heritage of Betsie Bay leading up to the construction of the Coast Guard Station and the Oliver Art Center.

If you've always wanted to know more about the Coast Guard, Saturday afternoon is your chance, as active duty Coast Guard personnel will be available for a question-and-answer session.

Sunday, June 29, will be fun and family-friendly. There'll be hands-on activities and demos in clay, drawing, sidewalk chalk, and much more: a full day of free kids' classes, from noon until 4 p.m. The three-day open house is a kick-off to the Art Center's busy summer season, and a great time to sign up for summer classes before they fill up.



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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Mondays

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

Friends of the Library needs volunteers to help sort for the annual book sale. 10:30-11:30am in Frankfort. If you are interested in helping, please call 231-352-4671.

Open sewing studio at Grow Benzie, 5885 Frankfort Highway (M-115), Benzonia. 6-9pm.

Music with Miss Char at Benzie Shores District Library in Frankfort, beginning June 23 from 10-11am.

Tuesdays

Benzie Shores District Library offers assistance with technology. 10am-12pm. Learn how to download ebooks, audiobooks, and magazines to your personal devices. 630 Main Street in Frankfort.

Improvisational partner dancing at the Mills Community House in Benzonia. 6pm-10pm. One-hour class (for a fee) taught by James and Maia of Zipper Dance, followed by 3 hours of open dance (free/donations welcome).

Thursdays

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

Story hour with Miss Julie at Benzie Shores District Library in Frankfort. 10-11am. 231-352-4671

Open Mic Night at the Cabbage Shed in Elberta. 8pm. 231-352-9843

Beulah Music in the Park from 7-8pm beginning Thursday, June 26, until Thursday, August 14.

Saturdays

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

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thing happening at 1pm. To find out what's happening, visit <http://goo.gl/aLUdAG> or call 231-326-5134 for details.

Friday, June 13

Opening reception for the solo exhibit of Rufus Snoddy at the Oliver Art Center in Frankfort from 5-7pm. Wine and snacks provided. Free event, donations welcome. 231-352-4151

Friday, June 13

Plant It Wild presents a 1.5-mile walk among the dune wildflowers. Meet at 10am at the Mt. Baldy Trailhead parking lot in Arcadia Dunes Preserve on M-22, south of Joyfield Rd. Details at <http://plantitwild.com/>

Friday, June 13

Water Walk, a perfect pre-Fathers' Day film, will show at The Garden Theater in Frankfort at 7pm. Watch a father and son retrace the 1,000-mile Marquette-Joliet journey, from the top of Michigan down to the Mississippi at St Louis. <http://bit.ly/1oCGjuK>

Friday, June 13 - Thurs, June 19

How To Train Your Dragon 2 and *XMen: Days of Future Past* will show every night (rain or shine) at the Cherry Bowl Drive-In in Honor. Gates open at 7:30pm. First film begins at dusk. 231-325-3413

Saturday, June 14

Summer reading program begins at the Benzie Shores District Library in Frankfort. 231-352-4671

Sunday, June 15

15th Annual David Bihlman Memorial Fishing Tournament. 5am start. Weigh-in at noon. \$60 for boat/captain & \$10 angler (includes lunch). www.gtasfa.com.

Sunday, June 15

Fathers' Day

Wednesday, June 18

Chartered field trip to Dow Gardens in Midland led by Durette Upton with the Oliver Art Center. All-inclusive cost of \$50 for travel, lunch, tour, and a chamber concert during lunch. Space is limited. All-day excursion. 231-352-4151

Wednesday, June 18

70th Birthday Party and Open House for the Benzie Conservation District in Beulah. Live music, local food, and more! 4-7pm. 231-882-4391

Wednesday, June 18

Backpacks and Books: The United Way will be handing out backpacks and free books to children at the Benzie Shores District Library

in Frankfort from 11am-1pm.

Thursday, June 19

Business After Hours with the Benzie County Chamber of Commerce at Labadie's Summer Place Casuals just outside Honor. \$5 donation. 5-7pm

Thursday, June 19

Great Books Discussion Group at the Benzie Shores District Library in Frankfort from 3:30-5pm. Check out this month's discussion book at the library.

Saturday June 21

Crystal Lodge Antique Vehicle & Muscle Car Show at Mineral Springs Park in Frankfort. Registration from 8:30-11am, judging from 9am-1pm, and awards at 2:30pm. Awards for 1st and 2nd places in many different classes, as well as best of show, Masonic choice, best engine, best paint, and best interior. Participant judging only. \$10 entry fee per vehicle. Call Grant Sowa 231-651-9906 for more information.

Saturday, June 21

3rd Annual Betsie River Clean Sweep with the Benzie Conservation District. The day starts off with a pancake breakfast at Benzonia Congregational Church at 8:30am. If you have a kayak or canoe, great! If you don't, please contact us and we will find a boat for you to use. Email lisa@benziecd.org or call 231-882-4391.

Saturday, June 21

Outdoor craft fair in Downtown Frankfort on Main Street this year (not in Market Square Park) between 3rd and 5th streets. More than 80 artists. 10am-4pm. Call the Frankfort-Elberta Chamber for more information. 231-352-7251

Saturday, June 21

Elberta Solstice Festival at the Waterfront Park and Life Saving Station. From noon to 2am, enjoy music, food, beer garden, games, and fireworks. Schedule of events <http://bit.ly/1kWiJl8> or call Jennifer Wilkins 231-651-0798 for more information.

June 23 - June 26

Nuts for Nature: For kids ages 9 to 12 at the Benzie Conservation District in Beulah. This will be an engaging, educational program for young people -- come for one day or come for all four days! Cost: \$10 per day or \$35 for all four sessions. 1-4pm. Email lisa@benziecd.org or call 231-882-4391 to register.

Tuesday, June 24

Spanish Discussion Group at the Benzie Shores District Library in Frankfort from 7-8pm. 231-352-4671



P.O. Box 90 • Frankfort, MI 49635
Phone: (612) 804-5975
editor@BetsieCurrent.com
ads@BetsieCurrent.com

Editors: Jacob Wheeler, Jordan Bates
Contributors: Kelly Ottinger, Aubrey Ann Parker, Jenny Robertson, Jed Jaworksi, Stacy Pasche

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. © 2014, The Betsie Current, all rights reserved. www.BetsieCurrent.com

Soapy

Continued from page 1

liquid oils are added to these melted solids. Once both the lye water and the oils have cooled to room temperature, they are mixed together. The saponification process happens as oil and alkali molecules mix and bond in the soap pan. The soap mixture is continually stirred to help this process. Once the soap mixture thickens, essential or fragrance oils can be added, as well as colorant or botanicals. The soap mixture is then poured into a mold.

Newly poured soap enters a thermal period of 18 to 24 hours, during which the mixture continues to heat. In winter, soap makers often pile blankets around the mold to help assist the thermal process; some place the soap molds directly into a low-heat oven for a few hours first. Once the thermal period has ended, the soap is solid enough to remove from the mold and cut into bars.

Once cut, soaps continue to cure for a period of four to eight weeks, depending on the recipe. During this time, excess moisture evaporates from the bars, leaving harder and milder bars. Soft soaps which have not completely cured are safe to use, but they will melt away almost immediately the first few times that they are used.

Handmade soaps will enjoy their longest shelf life when allowed to thoroughly drain between each use. Problems occur when soaps are allowed to sit in water and 'gel' on the bottom. The gel washes away quickly, taking much of the bar with it. Use of a draining soap dish helps combat this problem, as does letting bars dry in non-humid areas of the house after bathing.

Three Unique Benzie Soap Experiences

Creation Pharm (2760 River Road, Frankfort) makes and sells their own soap and skin care products, made from herbs and botanicals that are grown on their own farm. They also hold workshops for those who would like to learn how to make soap. Founder Anna Sangemino and her husband Mike Hulbert definitely have the credentials to do this.

Anna began growing herbs and making her own soaps in 1982. Today, Creation Pharm, Inc., which makes Creation Soaps, sells soaps and facial products in more than 300 retail outlets across the United States (and they ship worldwide). Using Sangemino's recipes, Hulbert authored *The Country Living Handmade Soap Book; Simple Recipes for Crafting Soap at Home*, which was published in 1997 and again in 2003. In 2003, Creation Pharm soaps were featured on national television during a segment of QVC's Home Shopping Network. The soaps sold out in 13 minutes.

The farm, near Betsie Bay, is a family-owned and operated business. The soaps are still handmade in relatively small batches, and the skin care product sales have grown right along with those of the soap. "We like to say we're a 'farm to face' business," says Sangemino. The soaps come in varieties such as Frankincense & Myrrh, Wild Yam & Gingko Phyto, and a special Aloe & Eucalyptus all-in-one shampoo bar. For information

and operating hours, call 231-352-9600.

BeeDazzled (6289 River Road, Benzonia) began as a family cottage bee-keeping business that made consumable items from bee byproducts. Owner Sharon Jones began making soaps, candles, and other skincare products in her own kitchen, eventually relocating to the shop's present location on River Road.

Customers can watch soaps being made mere feet from the cash register in the fabulous-smelling BeeDazzled retail shop, a quaint little rough-hewn building that was built into a hillside in the Betsie River Valley. The soaps are still kettle-made in small batches. "What sets our soaps apart are the amazing skin-conditioning and healing effects from beeswax, which is in every bar we sell," says Jones.

BeeDazzled soaps come in bars, hand-rolled balls, and hexagon shapes that are imprinted with honeycombs and bees. Of the

more than 30 varieties sold in the shop, Jones says the bestsellers are Aunt Bea's Lavender with cocoa butter, Pollen Pleasure, Honey Oatmeal, and Peppermint Patch. For information and operating hours, call 231-882-7765.

Crystal Lake Alpaca Boutique (4907 River Road, Frankfort) lets you watch soulful-looking alpacas as they graze in the fields, and you can also purchase handmade soaps that are felted with alpaca wool. The soaps are certified organic, triple milled for long life, and scented with a variety of essential oils, then hand-felted with 100 percent alpaca fibers.

Felted soaps are created by taking wool roving – cleaned of impurities (and sometimes dyed) – and using hot water and motion to work the wool into the soap bar. No washcloth is needed when bathing with felted soap, as the wool serves as the cloth. As the soap is used, the wool continues to shrink right along with the bar. Eventually you are left with the empty wool, which will be highly fragranced and can then be dried and used as a sachet.

"There is no fiber that's warmer, softer, or stronger than alpaca," says Chris Nelson, owner. "We don't make the soaps ourselves, but we get them from a wonderful source who does. They smell fantastic and there are scents like Aloe & Cucumber and my personal favorite, which is Lavender with Chamomile." Nelson adds that alpaca wool is the perfect felting material, due to its strength and softness — the felted soaps will be durable and will lather well, but without scratching. For information and operating hours, call 231-920-7085.

For more handmade soaps further downstream, visit:

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Kelly Clare concentrates as she dips candles at Beedazzled. Photo courtesy Beedazzled.

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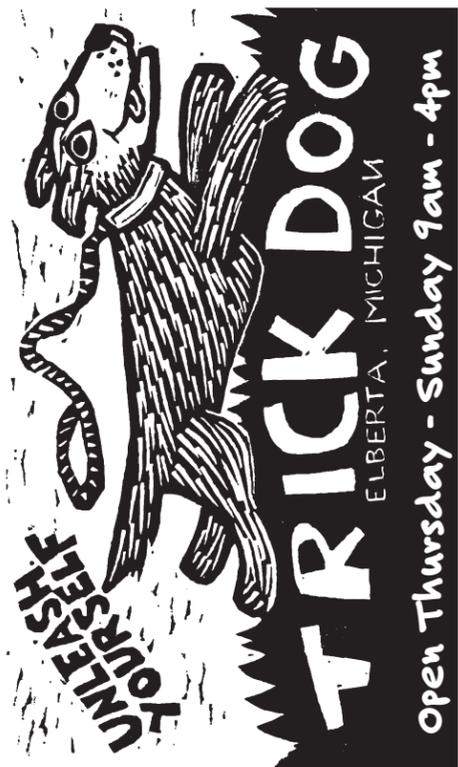
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Toasting

Continued from page 1

exposure and promote its brand. “Someone drinking our beer in Pentwater might see where it’s brewed and say, ‘Let’s go to Frankfort!’” offers Schmitt.

Next door, The Garden Theater is also owned by Schmitt, together with his wife Jennie, their partners, Marci and Blake Brooks (who is vice president and chief financial officer of State Savings Bank), and 13 other couples who together bought 26 percent of the company. “We bought and renovated the theater in 2009, and that led us to realize that Frankfort was ripe for a brew pub,” says Schmitt. “The microbrewery was, at some level, the byproduct of an open and vibrant theater. It created an opportunity for synergies and partnerships,” such as this winter’s Dark & Stormcloudy Film Series, which paired dark comedies with Confer’s handcrafted dark brew. (Stormcloud is owned by the Schmitts, the Brooks, and 15 small investors. They lease the space from minority owners Jim and Kris Kunz.)

Stormcloud is much more than a bar; it’s a place for the community to gather, and that’s by design.

“Our idea was to create a destination that was truly a ‘third place’ for people,” explains Schmitt. “The first is home, and the second is work. We wanted an inviting environment where you could come and drink beer or read, work or play board games with your family. A century ago in Europe, every little town had a brewery, which was where you could go to hang out.”

Stormcloud has just one television, and it’s only on during special sporting events rather than to provide the background that typifies many bars. “And we don’t have a hostess to seat people, because we want people to mingle and meet one another,” says Schmitt. “That’s why we have picnic tables out back where you can sit down and make friends.” To further encourage interaction with neighbors and strangers alike, Stormcloud features live music on Mondays and Thursdays all summer long. Check out StormCloudBrewing.com for upcoming events.

Communal gathering is not new to this

space. Longtime Frankfort residents will recall that a restaurant called “The 7 Spot” was here from the mid-1930s until the ’50s. The clock on the wall behind the bar at Stormcloud is the original clock from The 7 Spot. During the days of the car ferries, Schmitt was told, the venue was known for its steaks and chops. More than a dozen times, he estimates, Stormcloud patrons have told him, “I had my first drink here.” More recently, the space was occupied until 2012 by the Caddy Shack Golf Shop.

Today, Stormcloud’s interior is unique and inviting. Six different types of chairs and tables adorn the space — from Adirondack chairs on the patio to bar stools and high-top seats inside. Glance up and you’ll see ceiling fans, operated by a belt-driven pulley system. Rick and Jennie Schmitt discovered that design while dining two years ago at an

effect on the community; many a moviegoer or gallery-viewer will visit Stormcloud for a pint, but then go elsewhere to eat or shop. “More than once, I’ve talked to a guy at the bar who tells me, ‘This beer cost me \$2,000,’” Schmitt laughs. “His wife was at Betsie Bay Furniture buying a couch!”

Schmitt is a driving force behind creating more business in downtown Frankfort and a key player in the community. In addition to his ownership stake in Stormcloud and The Garden Theater, he chairs the Downtown Development Authority, serves as vice president of the Frankfort-Elberta school board, and sits on the boards of the Traverse Bay Economic Development Corporation and the West Michigan Tourism Association.

Upscale Wine, Laid-back Atmosphere

Cru Cellars also opened last June on Frankfort’s Main Street. Owners Torrey and Jennifer Bingham are Tampa residents, where the family has owned a wine bar of the same name for five years. The Bingham family have a second home on Crystal Lake, and Torrey and Jennifer were married at the Congregational Summer Assembly (she recently gave birth in January to their daughter, Ada).

But unlike the big city, Cru Cellars in Frankfort promotes a laid-back atmosphere where patrons can stop by, in flip-flops if they choose, on their way home from the beach. The wine bar also sells bottles to go, at reasonable



Cru customers make critical planning decisions with the help of a bartender. Photo by Aubrey Ann Parker.

prices, and boasts a unique and dynamic menu that puts a new spin on traditional Northern Michigan favorites. Torrey recommends the walleye with chorizo, for example, or the chicken that is prepared in a 36-hour brine, or the beer-battered whitefish sandwich (made with Brian Confer’s Rainmaker Ale from Stormcloud).

Cru Cellars features wines from around the world, but highlights locally made wines. “If you’re gonna be here, you gotta represent the Northern Michigan terroir,” says Torrey. “I like introducing people to what this part of the country has to offer.” Jennifer is a trained sommelier and was wine director at a popular wine bar on Michigan Avenue in Chicago before moving to Tampa.

The wine industry has surged on the nearby Leelanau and Old Mission peninsulas in the past decade. “We’re contributing to that,” says Torrey. “The spark was lit in Traverse City, but the glow is emanating outward.”

If you dine in, enjoy Cru Cellars’ comfortable, wooden décor. Gaze at the mural on the wall behind the bar, which features a photo of wine bottles that Jennifer took in Burgundy, France. Or take a guess as to what the “2068” on the giant sail represents (Torrey jokes that it’s the year he’ll retire).

Whatever you do, don’t feel compelled to dress up. Wine experts, gents in suits, and dames in summer dresses are welcome, but so are tourists just leaving the beach.

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Fire

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attempting to recover from. The term “slash and burn” was coined in the timber industry; the tops of the trees were left dead on the ground (“slash”), while the prime saw logs were hauled off. Slash blocked the movement of logs and the influx of homesteaders and farmers who wanted to clear the land behind the loggers, so it was lit afire to facilitate easy removal.

With much of the Great Lakes region a wasteland of logging slash in the 1870s and '80s, these slash fires burned for months. Smoke was so thick from smoldering slash fires that ships were colliding out on the lakes. In one year alone, more than 14,000 Michiganders became refugees of devastating wildfire; Holland, Manistee, and much of the thumb area were all lost to fire. To this day, the 1871 Peshtigo fire's toll of nearly 2,000 dead remains the worst casualty fire in U.S. history.

Because of these infernos, wildfire became public enemy number one.

Fires burned so intensely that they killed nearly everything in their path, literally sterilizing the ground. Unlike natural fires – where the landscape quickly recovers healthier than it was before – these fires devastated the land. Ash and fragile topsoils were eroded down slopes, choking streams with silt and acidity that shocked aquatic systems. For decades, the Civilian Conservation Corps and others attempted to control fires, stabilize erosion, and replant the forests. Today we see the successes of that monumental effort, but its shortfalls now leave us more vulnerable to fire than ever.

Our fear of wildfire and resulting willingness to spend a lot of money on the issue – along with technological advancements over the last century – have enabled us to become very effective at detecting and extinguishing most fires that occur; only the ones that get away make the news. Our National Fire Plan, insensitive to nature's desires, has historically been one of nearly complete fire exclusion from the environment. However, without natural fires occurring, our forests are no longer “fire tempered” and as a result are primed to increasingly burn out of control. Globally, 70 percent of forests are now degraded or declining due to a lack of natural fire. Add to that poorly conceived development patterns that place homes and communities in fire-prone areas, as well as climate change, and the recipe for disaster is coming together again.

The problem affects everyone from private landowners to local, state, and federal governments, from fire departments to the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, as well as State and National Forests and land conservancies. Local fire chiefs lament that “a few decades ago, we would respond to a fire in a farmer's field with our two engines; one would protect the farmhouse and the other would fight the fire. Today, we still have two engines, but now there are a dozen homes built around that field. There is simply no way to effectively get enough people and equipment to protect every home and still be able

to fight a wildfire. Something has to change.”

How changes will be implemented, and what changes will be implemented, is unclear. Should we allow – or even reintroduce – more fire into the environment, as Mother Nature desires, by letting some fires burn or setting prescription fires? In April of 2013, 170 acres of the Arcadia Marsh and some grassland holdings were intentionally burned in a prescription fire by the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy, much like many state and federal entities are conducting prescription fire to restore natural systems, improve habitat, and reduce our threat from uncontrolled wildfire in other local areas.

Another consideration is altering and improving our development patterns through zoning, building codes, and “safer from the start” development practices that attempt to avoid fire-prone areas. Michigan now has its first Firewise Community, with more communities considering opting in.

We can also take personal responsibility for making our homes fire resistant and no longer asking our town's fire fighters to put their lives on the line to save our houses in dangerous wildfire events. One-quarter of all fire fighter deaths are now occurring in the wildland/urban interface. Many communities across the nation have illustrated that we can very easily and cost-effectively modify our yards and homes to resist fire just as well as the home resists wind, rain, and snow by utilizing “Firewise” landscape design, maintenance, and building construction principals.

Consideration is also given to increasing education, planning, and preparedness by developing Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs), by adopting programs like “Ready, Set, Go,” and “Firewise,” and by improving the training and equipment for our first responders. Locally, Manistee and Wexford counties are presently preparing countywide CWPPs.

Fire is a force of creation. As we now understand, fire has an important role to play in nature and balancing the planet's ecosystems. It seems likely that the long-term solution will come from fire adapting our communities by embracing all the previous considerations and learning to live compatibly with nature, rather than erroneously believing we can continue to control or dominate it.

The Betsie Current will publish a series of articles further explaining and exemplifying how our local communities are learning to live with fire. Learn more by visiting www.firewise.msu.edu. Contributing writer Jed Jaworski resides on a turn of the century farmstead in Benzie County and has lived in the region for over 30 years working as a leader with many collaborative community based programs and projects. Jaworski has worked extensively in the emergency services field during that time, principally with federal, state and local fire-fighting entities as both a wildland and structural firefighter, and State of Michigan Forest Fire Officer. His multi agency training and experience with wildland/urban interface fire in Michigan and across the country is availed to the Michigan State University Extension's “Firewise” program as well as independent consulting to landowners, organizations and area governments.



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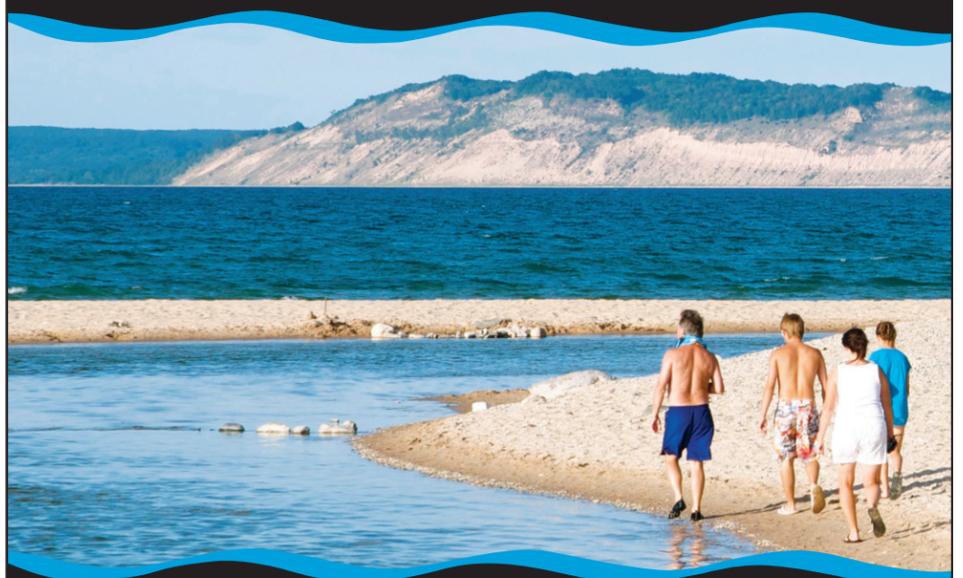
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