

Treasure Hunt Off the Frankfort Coast

Gold fever attracts media frenzy

By Jed Jaworski

Current Contributor

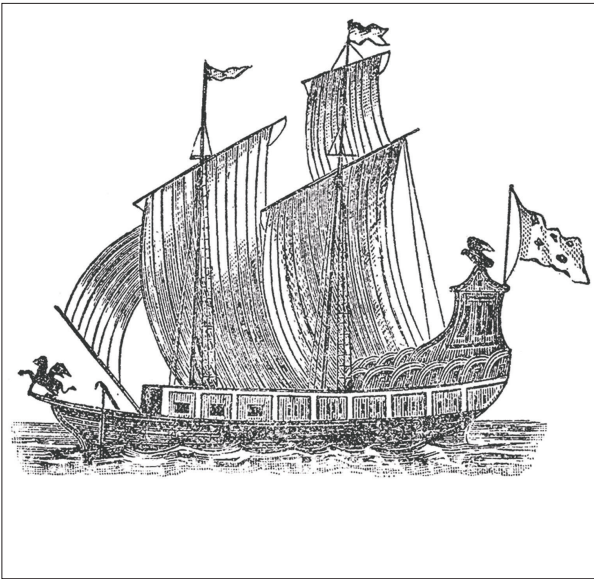
With all the talk lately of shipwrecks and sunken treasures off the Benzie County coastline, locals couldn't help but notice when a fleet of officially marked state vehicles, police, and media descended upon the Frankfort boat launch ramp on the morning of June 9. The visitors boarded four boats—including both a State Police and a Coast Guard vessel—then, under the cover of thick fog, disappeared offshore.

"Could this have something to do with the recent frenzy over gold treasures?" onlookers wondered from shore.

People love a good story, and a tale of lost gold treasure, shipwrecks, and two unlikely heroes determined against all odds to

find the hidden bounty resonates with many. Based on a 40-year-old deathbed confession about a treasure that sank off Frankfort in the 1890s, treasure hunters Kevin Dykstra and Frederick Monroe have traversed more than 1,200 miles in their modest family boat, searching off the Frankfort coast to locate a treasure that they believe lies just offshore.

The treasure is thought to be \$2 million dollars worth of Confederate gold, concealed in a boxcar that sank into the depths of Lake Michigan after being cast off the deck of a storm-tossed ferry. One could imagine such a tale while waiting in line at the Frankfort post office if they stared at the stunning mural



The Griffon, the first European vessel to sail Lake Michigan, is the holy grail of Great Lakes shipwrecks.

of Car Ferry #4 jettisoning box cars in a 1924 storm. The legend also includes a second tale about a safe, full of jewels, aboard a "sunken boat with a cabin."

Historical research attempts to substantiate the claims, however, are clouded by a series of extremely unlikely coincidental twists and turns over the past century.

"We believe this treasure is out there," Dykstra says. "Or we certainly would not have put this much effort into it."

From the Big Screen to International News

To date, historians have found little validation to the pair's claims, which read like the script from Richard Brauer's film *Lost Treasure of Sawtooth Island* starring Ernest Borgnine

Please see Griffy Gold on page 3

Bottoms Up in Lake Ann

Lake Ann Brewing Co. is actually "open today." Red Door Café brews community.

By Jacob Wheeler

Current Editor

Like ripples in a pond, Northern Michigan's microbrewery scene is spreading from Traverse City into the surrounding rural counties. Stormcloud Brewing Company opened two years ago in Frankfort, Hop Lot opened last month in Suttons Bay, and this week, Matt Therrien will pour his first pints at Lake Ann Brewing Co. (Early this fall, the Cedar Rustic Inn will convert into a microbrew pub, also.)

From Traverse City to Benzie to Leelanau, cheers!

Therrien, who worked for years in his family's construction and masonry business, has converted Guy Gray's original Snack Shack—which was built in 1945 in the heart of Lake Ann—into a cozy, northwoods-



Matt Therrien serves customers at his newly opened Lake Ann Brewing Co. Photo by Aubrey Ann Parker.

inspired brewpub that feels like your grandpa's hunting cabin or a scene from an L.L. Bean catalogue. The ceilings are low, and the walls sport beadboard and plaid paneling. Coleman

can ales including his "Listen Chief IPA," "Aral Hills Pale Ale," "Village Blonde," "Lake Ann Amber," "Mr. P's Porter," and "Mr. Blue Sky

lanterns hang against the back wall, and a Pabst Blue Ribbon statue and a "fisherman's thermometer" adorn the shelf above the bar. (Therrien's uncle delivered PBR for 30 years.) There's no television at the bar, because Therrien "hates T.V."

Despite the PBR homage, you won't find any generic beer on tap at Lake Ann Brewing Co. Therrien will serve craft Ameri-

Wheat," which is less sweet than those made with German hefeweizen yeast.

"I like bananas and cloves in my nutbread, not in my beer," Therrien says.

After homebrewing for 20 years and making what he admits at first was "terrible beer," Therrien couldn't pass up the opportunity to open a brewpub in downtown Lake Ann. The vacant building had gone into foreclosure in 2011, and when Therrien first eyed the space two years ago, he thought it was a wreck.

"I looked at the building and said 'no way.' A year later, I looked again, and the idea began to grow on me," he admits. "How often does the best location in town sit available for years?"

Therrien eventually negotiated Honor Bank to a favorable price at half the building's original listed value. It was clear to him that

Please see Cheers on page 6

They Came, They Saw, and They Got It

Pilgrims on the North Shore of Crystal Lake

By Beau Vallance

Current Contributor

They have passed through from points far and near over the years, friends from elsewhere who were curious about our "cabin in the woods." Some stayed with us, others occupied a family cottage down the road. They all seem to have been charmed, despite rather rudimentary unheated lodging and (in our cottage) a very small shared bathroom, which does at least have a door. Some have even been charmed enough that they followed up by buying their own places in Benzie County.

We started making a list, and here is a sampler of stories of people and their visits to Benzie for a day or a week. Almost all are

couples, and all are grown-ups, middle-aged or more—this story does not involve kids playing in the lake.

A geologist and an attorney came from Memphis. He explained about how glaciers actually do move. She took nonstop photos of amazing Dunes details. They fed the baby foxes living under the cottage deck. After they left, she wrote a poem featuring the "Oreo cows"—Belted Galloways—that grazed in the fields behind us. They sent a thank-you gift of salad plates (far nicer than any-



Visitors to Benzie County enjoy kayak trips on our many waterways. Photo by Beau Vallance.

thing in our kitchen, with its dishes that had been left by the previous owner).

A St. Louis bookstore owner and his bride, a therapist, had a week here one September as a wedding gift from us along with dinner at The Manitou. Who knew their week would include 9/11? We phoned to alert them of the news (quite possible they had not heard) and to describe how to get into the cottage down the road to find an old TV that might work. They sent us a gorgeous skillet, which we still carry between our real home and Benzie.

As mentioned, our bathroom is tiny and extremely basic. A professor friend from Memphis came to visit right after we upgraded an ancient tub with a minimal shower. The

Please see Pilgrims on page 6

Suz McLaughlin: Still Grinning After All These Years

Questions & Answers with Community Faces

By Aubrey Ann Parker
Current Contributor

Following a life downstate in the East Lansing area, working for the Department of Mental Health, Suz McLaughlin moved to Benzie County and became a cook. A really good cook. Her catering company, Still Grinning Kitchen, has been a favorite in this area for more than 20 years.

McLaughlin's business is probably best known for her appetizer platters of fresh, local (when possible) veggies and cheese spreads that typically are piled high with asparagus, green beans, pickled beets, carrots, and cherry tomatoes, as well as homemade pita chips. The cheese spread, on its own platter, is as big as a birthday cake and just as pretty, topped with olives, red onion rounds, lemon zest, artichokes, and loads of parsley. (Chances are that if you've been to an event at Betsie Bay Furniture or the Elizabeth Lane Oliver Center for the Arts, for instance, you've probably enjoyed these platters!)

McLaughlin herself, however, is probably best known for her activism on local issues ranging from supporting local foods to fundraising for local scholarships, from advocating for fresh water to participating in the crafting of zoning ordinances.

Continuing with our interview series on Benzie County characters, *The Betsie Current* caught up with McLaughlin while she was buying fresh produce at the Elberta Farmers' Market.

THE BETSIE CURRENT: How/when did you get started working with food?

SUZ McLAUGHLIN: I kinda like to eat, and I come from a long line of good cooks—even my mom, who clearly states she doesn't cook. My first job at the tender age of 15 was with food.

CURRENT: Can you explain what it is that you do and how you are different from other caterers in the region? How has the 'local foods' movement helped to advance your work?

McLAUGHLIN: First, in the catering world, I'm ancient! Second, I believe in and was raised on good food, sometimes right from our own backyard. I am very privileged to have had this foundation for my own version of 'Good Eats.' This is what I attempt to give the folks that I work with—it's a food-style, a life-style. I am very grateful to live in a particularly bountiful area of Michigan, second only to California in the diversity of our crops. I am also fortunate, due to my food foundation, of always celebrating, seeking, utilizing, and enjoying local foods. This isn't a new thing for me; it's a lifelong endeavor. We have, finally, farmers' markets almost every day of the week! This is huge and saves me so much time from running around to everyone's farms or gardens. I love supporting these amazing, hard-working individuals who produce such beautiful food products; I wish more folks would make this a regular part of supporting their community.

CURRENT: Is there a busy season for you or is it pretty constant year-round? What kinds of gigs do you do, and what kinds of gigs do you like doing best?

McLAUGHLIN: I am very fortunate to have some events [sprinkled throughout] most of the year. But certainly the typical 'season'—

maybe April through the holidays—keeps me busier. It's somewhat interesting to see this ancient caterer go from graduations, weddings, and showers to funerals, memorials, and 50th wedding anniversaries. I get to do the most interesting gigs and meet amazing folks in beautiful areas, even the big boats. I was able to do the first wedding at Point Betsie Lighthouse, just after the county took it over, with a wonderful young couple. Things were fairly rough on site, but their love of this particular landmark and their enthusiasm was infectious! And I had an opportunity to work on as 'kosher' a wedding as possible, with all the traditions. Catering is a privilege: many times you are assisting in the celebration of the best of a particular event in someone's



Suz McLaughlin at the Elberta Farmers' Market. Photo by Aubrey Ann Parker.

life—even in a funeral or memorial, this is the case.

CURRENT: How have you seen your work grow? And how do you hope it will continue to grow? What's next? Or are you happy with how it is now?

McLAUGHLIN: I'm actually kinda seeing my work not grow so much—remember that ancient part. But it has become more solid and perhaps more focused. I always say it takes a village to help me do this, and I have been most fortunate to work with some of the best folks! They make it possible for me to maintain what I do. I am very happy, but I also seek to always evolve, too. What that specifically means, I have no idea!

CURRENT: What are the favorite products to make, the year-after-year stand-by products that everyone loves? And what things are new this year that you're testing out? How do you get inspiration—from things you read, things you eat elsewhere?

McLAUGHLIN: Thanks long ago to a dear friend now long gone, I was gladly thrust into the world of chocolates! What a lovely opportunity to play, and boy what interesting things I have learned. As for what's new, I am very excited that a new friend will be coming from Okinawa—a fellow veg-head—and I know I will learn much from her. Last year, I learned about traditional Polish cuisine from another friend; I got pretty good at the assembly line of pierogi, paczki, and, yup, vodka! Friends from Scotland will add to this eclectic assortment, as well. My inspiration comes from almost everyone, everywhere and anywhere: a la Julia [Child], one of my all time faves!

CURRENT: How have things changed over your tenure as a business owner in Benzie? What are the biggest challenges and rewards of working and living here? What's the best or most rewarding part of your job? What's the toughest part?

McLAUGHLIN: Yes, I've been catering for about 20 years, but I also had a B&B for a while, too. Now, I also rent rooms in my eclectic home. What are the biggest challenges and rewards of working and living here? Challenge: Earning a decent living! Reward: You are only limited by your own imagina-

tion! The most rewarding thing is definitely the people I get to work with. The toughest part is standing for what seems like 9 million years—seriously, if standing was an Olympic Sport, I would win!

CURRENT: What are some ways that you (and your business) give back to the community? What other things are you involved with, and how did you get involved with them?

McLAUGHLIN: Like all other local businesses, I am asked to help out a lot; as much as possible, I always try to find a way to be supportive. I am a sucker for anything environmental, any individuals or families facing hardships, and anything that is community oriented. I'm a board member for the Friends of Betsie Bay, the Benzie Community Water Council [which has put on the Benzie Water Festival for the past five years], and the Benzie Solar Initiative, which are all environmental causes with a public education component. I'm also on the board of the Northern Michigan Culinary Arts Community, which puts on community dinners and discussion at Grow Benzie. For most of these groups, I help out with fundraising for local scholarships. Most recently, I am thrilled to be a part of the Steering Committee for the Betsie River/Crystal Lake Watershed Management Plant. I've learned such a great deal from all of these experiences. I was fortunate to be

'on the ground floor,' so to speak, for most of these organizations—I was raised to believe and participate in the principles of giving back and community involvement. This is how I choose to build my community!

CURRENT: How have you seen Benzie County change since you first got here? What are your hopes for the area in the future?

McLAUGHLIN: Well, I remember going to a meeting and being told that I should not let people know my political beliefs. My response is this: I hope we, the people, lift our collective noses from our grindstones and speak up about what kind of community we desire. I loved this quote from several years ago, it's been a model for me: "Communities can be shaped by choice or they can be shaped by chance. We can keep on accepting the kind of community we get or we can start creating the kind of communities we want." —Richard Moe, former director of the *National Trust for Historic Preservation*.

CURRENT: What else does Frankfort need? What does Benzie need?

McLAUGHLIN: In my humble opinion, we need to listen and learn from one another more. We need to abolish the common phrase, often heard: "Because that's the way it's always been done!"

CURRENT: What are your favorite local events and activities? Any favorite dining, recreation, or hiking spots? What's your perfect summer day look like in Benzie County?

McLAUGHLIN: Funny question, as I am rather crazy cramming in work [during the summer], like so many others this time of year, but the idea of a lovely day to admire the beauty and playing in whatever fashion appeals at the time is rather delish! Most of my faves these days take place in winter, actually. I love having time to attend the lively, always interesting League of Women Voters weekly discussions or just a meal with my dearly beloveds or supporting a local cause. I love hiking and exploring everywhere in this gorgeous area! In winter, I am a practicing hermit with wonderful people-time now and then.

Want to book Suz McLaughlin and Still Grinning Kitchen to cater your next event? Email her at stillgrinningkitchens@gmail.com.



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Griffy Gold

Continued from page 1

that was shot in Frankfort in 1999.

Though Dykstra and Monroe have yet to find the gold, they have made other discoveries during their search that have garnered attention. Ross Richardson—the diver with MichiganMysteries.com who discovered the area’s infamous rumored treasure ship *Westmoreland*—says, “When you sonar search that much lake bottomland, you’re bound to find something.”

Dykstra and Monroe released a statement last year indicating that, three years ago, they had accidentally found what they believe was LaSalle’s 1679 sailing vessel *Griffon*, the first European vessel to sail Lake Michigan and the holy grail of Great Lakes shipwrecks. When they found the wreck, the pair have said, they saw what looked like drawings they had seen of the figurehead on the *Griffon*, so they reported it to the State of Michigan. (The two have also said that they are not really focused on the *Griffon*, but rather they want to find the gold.)

These statements garnered an exclusive news scoop by WZZM TV near their hometown of Muskegon and have since generated a frenzy of attention by Great Lakes historians and the media.

WZZM announced more recently that the pair found an undiscovered sunken tug, possibly owned by a prominent jeweler, with an unopened safe that matches the description of one supposed to contain gold and jewels. The report spread like wildfire and exaggerated its way from the next day’s edition of *USA Today* and *The New York Times* to the *Daily Mail* in London within less than 24 hours.

Dykstra and Monroe again reported the discovery to the state, indicating they will abide by Michigan law and not disturb the wreck site or open the safe. They released shaky video snippets of the two wrecks, but the clips did little to support their claims. Nevertheless, media outlets shared them broadly as “see it with your own eyes” footage.

Truth and Skepticism

Experienced divers and maritime historians, on the other hand, determined from the video footage that the alleged *Griffon* was likely a small wooden steamboat. The “treasure tug” was swiftly identified as the small steam freighter *Jane*, which sunk carrying 500 bags of concrete in 1927 to the south of Frankfort. *Jane* was discovered in the 1990s and documented in “as found” condition by a collaboration between a civilian diver and the State of Michigan.

A video was posted to YouTube that showed the newly discovered *Jane* wreck and discussed the preservation dilemmas associated with new shipwreck finds. [You can view it at BetsieCurrent.com.]

What Dykstra and Monroe claim to be the ship’s safe is clearly visible in the video’s

footage and is actually a square cook stove sitting in the galley.

Valerie VanHeest, of the Shipwreck Research Association in Holland, shared the frustration of many historians and underwater archeologists.

“I fear sensationalizing can minimize the significance of real discoveries and important history,” VanHeest says. “Not every shipwreck is going to have gold treasure or a mysterious safe aboard it. We work hard to preserve a lot

of the ship’s cook stove is a jewel-filled safe. The two unassuming men seem to make friends easily wherever they go. The pair has been very cooperative and upfront with the City of Frankfort, according to city superintendent Josh Mills.

“I don’t see how this can be a bad thing for Frankfort,” Mills says. “They are paying their own way, it’s drawing a lot of attention to our area, piquing people’s interests, and sharing some of our real history. I hope this inspires

us as a community to reengage with our maritime history. Kevin and Frederick have even helped us to organize, train, and fund our Fire Department Dive Rescue Team.”

It seems that everyone is benefiting from this treasure tale—the media gets a hot human-interest story, the preservation community gets public interest in maritime history, Frankfort gets national and international media attention, Dykstra and Monroe get the public’s encouragement, and people constrained by work or family can live vicariously through their quest for adventure.

Whether or not gold is discovered, the real offshore treasure remains the remarkable collection of shipwrecks that are uniquely preserved in the cold fresh water of the Great Lakes. Our region’s colorful maritime history and lore has fed the imagination of generations. The rich texture of the harbor with its historic structures nestled between the wooded hills and the vast open horizon to the west offers something that other harbors choked with plastic boats and condominiums can’t offer.

Yet, just this month, the rail-ferry loading dock in Elberta—eligible to be considered a National Historic Landmark—was tossed into dumpsters and hauled away, despite numerous adaptive reuse proposals and appeals to save them. No commemorative plaque will ever portray the heavy, riveted steel structure that allowed the very first train to cross the open and unprotected waters of the Great Lakes nor the countless trains after that for a century.

Media may devote headlines and airtime to extraordinary and glamorous legends such as Confederate gold lying off the Frankfort coast. But our local history narrative should not forget the unique history of the rail ferries, the lifesavers, the shipwrecks, and the treasure seekers. If we want to continue to capture the imagination of those who walk our shores, we must make a conscious effort to keep our unique maritime heritage alive and not sit idly by as it is hauled off to dumpsters or spun by the media machine.

Jed Jaworski is a regional maritime historian and diver, previously employed with the Michigan Maritime Museum, Manitou Passage State Underwater Preserve, S.S. City of Milwaukee National Historic Landmark, and Northwest Michigan Maritime Museum.



A fleet of officially marked state vehicles descended upon Frankfort on the morning of June 9 before disappearing into the fog. Photo by Jed Jaworski.

of amazing, true history on the lake bottom, not fantasy.”

The *Jane* preservation video was viewed fewer than 100 times prior to Dykstra and Monroe’s find. Within 24 hours of their treasure safe claim, however, it was being viewed around the globe.

Skeptics of the pair’s intentions postulate that they may just be hyping their way to a reality TV contract. It is difficult to accept that Dykstra and Monroe, who are smart enough to coordinate a GPS-integrated sonar search, can’t conclude that the vessel they are calling a tug has no tow bits or that the wreck claimed to be the *Griffon* is twice the *Griffon*’s size and 200 years newer. Additionally, the treasure hunters have not integrated with the larger maritime-preservation community to assist in researching or investigating sites before making public claims or involving state investigators.

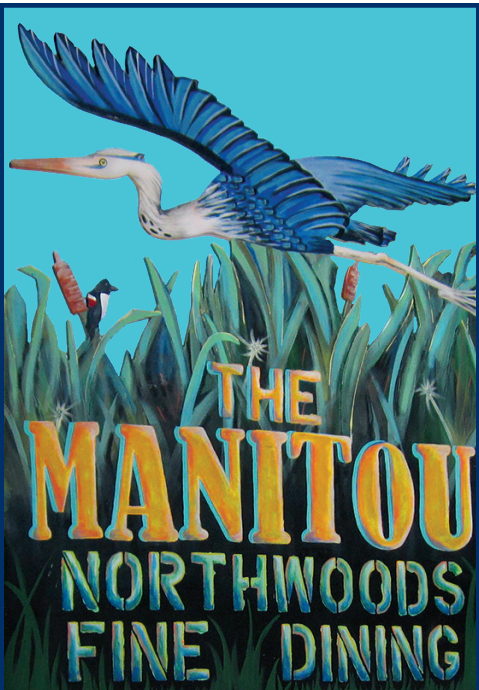
Gold Fever

Back at the Frankfort launch ramp on June 9, the flotilla has returned, and aboard is state archeologist Wayne Lusardie. His mission was to investigate Dykstra and Monroe’s claim of finding the *Griffon*.

“It is most definitely not the *Griffon*,” Lusardie says. “The discovered vessel appears to be a tug that burned to the deck. We already know the suggested safe aboard the *Jane* is the vessel’s cook stove from examining archived video footage of the wreck.”


When asked if he is concerned about such casual claims of undiscovered shipwrecks and treasure, Lusardie answers, “This is my 17th *Griffon* claim investigation. I am happy people are interested enough in our maritime history to bring our attention to something like this.”

Perhaps it is simply “gold fever” that has convinced Dykstra and Monroe that a previously discovered steamer wreck full of concrete is an undiscovered treasure tug and that



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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 (+ 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. 10-11am.

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

Tuesdays

Honor Farmers’ Market in Maley Park. 9am-3pm.

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

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

Tangle Time: Tangling is a simple way of creating designs from repetitive patterns. It is easy to learn, portable, fun, relaxing, and can be enjoyed by all ages 12 and up. Bring your own materials—cardstock, paper, fabric, jewelry, clay, wood, rocks—or use those provided. Benzonia Public Library at 891 Michigan Avenue in Benzonia. 2:30-4:30pm.

Zumba classes at The Gathering Place in Honor are open to the general public and taught by Suzanne Waring. 6-7pm.

Pick-up soccer at Memorial Park across from Shop & Save and behind Watson Benzie car dealership in Benzonia. Open to ages 12 and up. All skill levels encouraged. 6-8pm.

Wednesdays

Open studio at the Oliver Art Center. Participants are strongly encouraged to become members and to contribute a donation of \$2 per visit. 10am-4pm.

Tai Chi for beginners. Space is limited, so please contact Aimé Merizon at 231-645-3711 or artis4anyone@gmail.com to register. Suggested donation is \$10 per session. Darcy Library at 7238 Commercial Street in Beulah. 11am-12pm.

Knit 2gether at Darcy Library in Beulah. Crocheters also welcome. 1-3pm.

Thursdays

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

Computers with Carol at the Darcy Library in Beulah. Ask Carol computer-related questions. 1-5pm.

Quilting at Darcy Library in 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. 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.

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

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

Fridays

Pilates sculpt with Anna at Oliver Art Center. Email annamallien@gmail.com if interested. 9-10am.

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

Jessica’s Restorative Yoga class at the Oliver Art Center is a great way to unwind after a busy week. 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. 7-8:30pm.

Saturdays

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 trailhead. Suggested \$5 donation. 8:30-10am.

Frankfort Farmers’ Market at Open Space Park on Main Street, between 7th & 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.

Lego Saturdays at Benzonia Public Library. For boys and girls ages 6 to 106. Dates will vary, so call 231-882-4111 to see if there will be Legos on Saturday!

Sundays

Integrative Yoga 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. 10:30am-12pm.

ON DECK

Thursday, June 18

Days of Action, Used Book Distribution: United Way and UPS will be distributing gently used children’s books. Combat Summer Learning Loss and join us for Days of Action. Benzie Shores District Library. 11am-1pm.

Thursday, June 18

Monthly meeting of the Darcy Library Book Club. The book for June is “Burnt Toast Makes You Sing Good,” by Kathleen Finn. (Meet Kathleen in June as part of Off the Page.) Learn more at on.fb.me/1lg8dTK. 1:30pm.

Thursday, June 18

Heroes Summer Reading Series: Stories with Chris and Victoria Mekas, local shop owners. Victoria grew up here in Benzie County and has since returned to open several local businesses, including Petals & Perks and Hilltop Soda Shoppe Ice Cream. Chris and Victoria

spend much of their time giving back to their community, so they are true local heroes! Stories will be followed by a craft. Benzonia Public Library. 3-4pm.

Thursday, June 18

Business After Hours with the Benzie County Chamber of Commerce provides a very effective networking opportunity with both current and potential clients. Enjoy hors d’oeuvres, a 50/50 raffle, door prizes, and a member raffle. This event is sponsored by Benzie County Council on Aging and Benzie Home Health Care. Hosted at The Gathering Place in Honor Plaza. 5-7pm.

Thursday, June 18

Super Awesome Robot Ninja Book Club at Darcy Library. Learn more at on.fb.me/1G8z1UB. 5:15pm



Blake Elliott will play at St. Ambrose Cellars on June 19th from 6-9pm.

Friday, June 18 - Saturday, June 20

Igniting His Fire of Love: The 3rd Annual Big Tent Revival is hoping to reach all who wish to receive and love Jesus Christ. Hear the life-changing words of Pastor JR Stevens and music by his guitarist Aaron Hinton on both Friday and Saturday nights. Matt Moore and Modern Day Cure will perform Friday evening. Jow Guerra will perform Saturday evening. There will be bouncy houses, soap carving, horse grooming, face painting, horse-drawn wagon rides, and a petting zoo. This event is free, but donations will be accepted. Any questions, feel free to contact HTtabernacleOffice@gmail.com or 231-383-4026. Hilltop Tabernacle at 383 Hoadley Road in Benzonia. Family events are Saturday 2:30-5:30pm. Main event is 6:30-9:30pm.

Friday, June 19

Born in Ann Arbor, Michigan, Blake Elliott took both sets of her parents’ last names to create her stage moniker. Raised with a piano- and guitar-playing mother and an Interlochen-trained percussionist father, Blake was around music her whole life. Inspired by the beauty of her home state and this big adventure called “life,” she writes songs that tell stories of love and heartbreak, dive bars, good whiskey, and everything that can come from them. St. Ambrose Cellars at 841 S Pioneer Road just outside Beulah/Honor. 231-383-4262. 6-9pm.

Friday, June 19

Them Travelin’ Birds, a nomadic folk/neo-jug duo who crisscross the country on a seemingly non-stop tour, will be stopping in Frankfort. During the past year, the duo has played more than 200 shows in 40 states. They endear audiences with their jazzy roots and West Coast punkgrass approach to American music. Learn more at on.fb.me/1FXtL6U. Check them out at Stormcloud Brewing Company in Frankfort from 8-10pm.

Saturday, June 20

Clean-up Day in Lake Township at the town-ship hall. 8am-12pm.

Saturday, June 20

“Dog Days Of Summer” Yard Sale and Pet Adopt-a-thon at Coldwell Banker Schmidt Realtors at 6919 Frankfort Highway in Ben-zonia. All proceeds to benefit the Animal Welfare League of Benzie County. 8am-4pm.

Saturday, June 20

14th annual Antique Vehicle & Muscle Car Show at Mineral Springs Park in Frankfort. Registration is \$10 per vehicle on the day of the show. Registration from 8-11am, judging from 9-11am, door prizes from 1-2pm, and awards from 2-3pm. Awards will be handed out to the top 25 vehicles in the show. Tro-phies for Best of Show, Masonic Choice, Best Engine, Paint, and Best Interior.Participant judging only. \$10 entry fee per vehicle. Call 231-352-7251 for more information.

Saturday, June 20

Boater’s Safety Course for anyone 12 and older. Students should plan to eat before class. Following completion of the course, boater’s safety certificates will be awarded. Call 231-882-4484 ext 227 Monday through Friday from 8am-4pm to register for the class. Class will be held at the Benzie County Sheriff’s Department in Beulah from 9am-1pm.

Saturday, June 20

Free yoga class at the Lake Michigan beach in Frankfort is open to the public. Bring a beach towel. All proceeds from cash donations will be given to the Benzie County Animal Shelter. Look for the orange flag between the piers. 9:30-10:30am.

Saturday, June 20

19 annual outdoor craft fair in Downtown Frankfort on Main Street between 3rd and 5th streets. More than 80 artists. Call the Frankfort-Elberta Chamber for more infor-mation 231-352-7251. 10am-4pm.

Saturday, June 20

Elberta Solstice Festival will include music by Medicinal Groove, Platte Plains Wolf Pack, Blue Dirt, Alfredo, The Standing Hamptons, Cousin Curtiss, G Snacks, and the Jimmy Olsen Band. Food vendors, beer, games, and fireworks. Late-night shuttles via the Benzie Bus. Go to bit.ly/1kWijl8 for a schedule of events. Elberta Waterfront Park and Life Sav-ing Station. 12pm-2am.

Saturday, June 20

Fundraiser for Crystal Lake & Watershed Association: 20% of all sales at Stormcloud between the hours of 4-6pm will be donated to CLWA. Through the Stormcloud Builds Community program, we select a charitable organization that we believe is making a dif-ference in Northern Michigan, and we help to share its message and raise money to help with its efforts. The CLWA is a nonprofit organization of concerned local citizens and environmental professionals who are com-mitted to protecting the integrity of Crystal Lake for the enjoyment of future generations. Learn more here on.fb.me/1Sixi7E.

Saturday, June 20

Chairlift Rides with Entertainment: Enjoy panoramic views of three counties and top-of-the-mountain attractions including live

musical entertainment by John Pomeroy. Cash bar available at the top of the mountain. Tickets are available for \$6 per person at the base of the Crystal Clipper Quad Chairlift, located in the center of the frontside slopes at Crystal Mountain Resort. Call 888-968-7686 ext. 7000 for more information. 7-9pm.

Saturday, June 20

Fairies and Forts: the 2015 summer kick-off event and children’s concert at Michigan Legacy Art Park. What better way to usher in the celebration of long summer days than to sing, dance, and use your imagination in a natural setting? Includes crafting, hiking, and a kids’ concert at 3pm featuring Miriam Pico, a popular singer and songwriter from Traverse City who sings from the heart. Pico’s angelic tones are playful, engaging and joyful, always with something meaningful to say. After the concert, around 4pm, Pico will lead participants on a march to the Fort for the an-nual raising of the flag. Children of all ages are invited to create their own fort or fairy house, flower tiaras, fairies, flags, and drums. Fai-rytale storytime from 2:30-3pm is sponsored by the Betsie Valley District Library. Children can enjoy face painting and refreshments while getting creative with crafts. The event requires general Art Park admission, which costs \$5 per adult, and is free for children. At 4:30 when the event is over, participants are encouraged to do an Art Park Bingo sheet on their hike back through the Park.

Saturday, June 20

Star Party: View the sky with the Grand Traverse Astronomical Society and Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore park rang-ers who will be identifiable by the red glow bracelets on their wrists. The solstice is the last full day of spring, and the sky events here provide a great way to kick off your summer sky-viewing schedule. See the sun up-close at Pierce Stocking Scenic Drive, Stop #3, from 4-6:00pm. After the sun sets, view the night sky from 9-11pm. (Star parties will be canceled during inclement weather, and deci-sion is usually made three hours in advance. Call 231-326-4700 ext 5005 for a voicemail with the decision. For evening events, bring bug spray and a flashlight for the walk back to your car.)

Saturday, June 20

With his performing career already spanning eight years, 20-year-old Jacob Latham— a roots rocker from Bloomington, Indiana— performs with a maturity and stage presence beyond his years. On tour to support the release of his first full-length album, Jacob is well versed in the sounds of musical greats such as Bob Dylan, Johnny Cash, and Tom Petty. Jacob has toured extensively through-out the Midwest and has also played shows from coast to coast. He was a finalist in the troubadour competition at Colorado’s famous Telluride Bluegrass Festival. Learn more here on.fb.me/1MFKQqe. Stormcloud Brewing Company. 8-10pm

Sunday, June 21

Fathers’ Day.

Sunday, June 21

Stormcloud Birthday Bash. Lawn games, hap-py hour specials for dads, beer-can chicken, beer cake, and live music. At Stormcloud Brewery in Frankfort. Noon-11pm.

Monday, June 22 - 25

Nuts 4 Nature: Day Camp for 9- to 12-year-olds with the Benzie Conservation District. This will be an engaging, educational program for young people. Come for one day, or come for all four days! Please call (231) 882-4391 or email aime@benziecd.org to register. Benzie Conservation District at 280 South Benzie Boulevard in Beulah. \$10 per day or \$35 for all four sessions. (Discounts available for multiple family members). 1-4pm

Wednesday, June 24

Nature Hike with the Grand Traverse Re-gional Land Conservancy: tour the new trail at Fruithaven with GTRLC’s Angie Lucas, who will point out the property’s unique features, including flora and fauna, while meandering this beautiful hilly preserve. Directions: http://goo.gl/maps/al66H. Prop-erty Info: http://goo.gl/BufdNz. Please dress for the weather, wear comfortable shoes, and bring water. The hike will be approximately 2 miles in length and includes hills. Visit www.gtrlc.org or call 231.929.7911 to RSVP. 10am-12pm.

Wednesday, June 24

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 com-puter. These sessions are free! 5-6:30pm.

Thursday, June 25

Beulah Music in the Park featuring “Saldaje,” New Old World Folk. Free family fun. Bring a chair or blanket to the downtown Beulah Park. Brought to you by the Crystal Lake Community Business Association along with many gracious sponsors. Visit www.clcba.org for more info. 7-9pm.

Friday, June 26

Volunteer Thank You and Soiree at Oliver Art Center. Not a volunteer yet? Come meet the team and kick off our 2015 season with a private preview of Pier Wright’s solo show. New, current, and past volunteers are invited to share drinks, light fair, and conversation. 3:30pm.

Friday, June 26

Opening Reception for Pier Wright | SOLO. Pier’s high-energy synthetic abstract paint-ings have made his gallery a must-see for visitors to Northport for over a decade. He will exhibit a large series of small framed paintings made on Duralar plastic, along with his sculp-tures, and very large paintings on aluminum created just for Oliver Art Center. 5:00 pm

Friday, June 26

Food writer Kathleen Flinn comes to Benzie with her newest book, “Burnt Toast Makes You Sing Good: A Memoir of Food and Love from an American Midwest Family.” Chosen as a 2015 Michigan Notable Book, Flinn mixes memories of her Michigan family with treasured recipes. The Seattle-based author came to national attention with her New York Times bestseller, “The Sharper Your Knife, the Less You Cry”. Benzonia Public Library. 7pm - 8pm.

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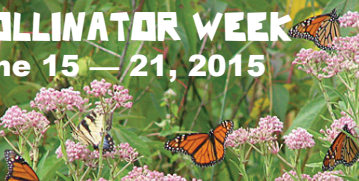
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Cheers

Continued from page 1

the bank—and the community—desperately wanted an owner. He closed in the spring of 2014. Ever since then, the community has helped Therrien to decorate the space.

“A lot of the stuff we have in here is stuff we reclaimed,” Therrien says. There are church pews from Bayview Wesleyan Church, stools from Union Street Station in Traverse City, chairs from Hermann’s European Café in Cadillac, and a framed portrait of Italian chef Tony Pisari, a former owner of the building. “So many people have come and dropped off stuff and said, ‘Hey, we thought you could use this.’ The nice thing about being in total artistic control is that I can hang things up and no one will complain.”

Last July, his wife Jennie convinced him to place a sign out front announcing that the brewery would be “open tomorrow.” The advertisement was a joke, of course—the building needed to be gutted, renovated, and retrofitted to brew seven barrels of beer at one time. All summer, fall, and winter, the sign remained, though Therrien tired of the incredulous gawks of passersby. (“You’re opening tomorrow? But the place is a wreck!”)

Therrien jokes that this week, when Lake Ann Brewing Co. officially opens, he may replace “open tomorrow” with “open today!” He never wants to see the “tomorrow” sign again. (Though now the mantle behind the bar sports a sign that reads, “Free beer—tomorrow!”)

Therrien expects to be busy. After all, he now has the only watering hole in Almira Township in northeastern Benzie County, a rural tract that is home to more residents than the entire year-round population of Elberta, Gilmore, and Crystal Lake Townships, plus the City of Frankfort, combined. Bucking the predominant trend of other rural Midwestern communities, Almira has witnessed explosive growth in recent years, as the population surged from 2,811 to 3,645 between 2000 and 2010. Lake Ann sits roughly 12 miles from bustling Traverse City, giving its residents access to the urban job market.

“I never realized until I was working here on the brewery how much traffic comes through Lake Ann,” Therrien says. “It’s had population growth without any commercial growth. The town square is basically the same. The footprint of the business district hasn’t changed in 30 years.”

Therrien quips that he recently walked into Lake Ann Grocery at 5 minutes to 10 p.m. to purchase electrical breakers and couldn’t believe the amount of foot traffic inside the rural grocery store.

“It’s like Meijer in there,” he jokes. “And now we’re the only place in town to get a beer.”

Caffeinated Community Center

Matt Therrien’s brewery isn’t the only sign of resurgence in Lake Ann. The warm and eclectic Red Door Café opened last August and has quickly become a popular community oasis. Greta and Travis Kemp, 32-year-old Northern Michigan natives who returned home three years ago from Chicago, and Greta’s parents, Lori and Gary Florip, are co-owners.

The genesis of the café was an early 2014 citizens’ gathering dubbed a “2033 meeting” that would envision Lake Ann 20 years from now. Those in attendance agreed on the need for a community gathering space. The elder Florips—who are members of the village and township boards—stepped forward and, together with Greta, offered to open the café in the building that, in the past, has housed everything from a fire hall to a church.

“There was no place in Lake Ann where you could sit and hang out,” Greta says. “The meeting prompted the idea. We needed a space for a decent-sized group of people. And opening a café was something we’d always talked about.”

The village began leasing the space last spring to the Florips, and Red Door Café opened on August 8 to rave reviews.

“I’m proud of how the space feels,” Greta says. “Whenever someone enters, they’re shocked. It’s not what they expected from the exterior of building. It feels very warm. I painted all the colors myself, and all the artwork on the walls are from local artists whose work is for sale.”

Seated at one of six vintage tables or on cozy couches in the backroom you’ll likely find cabin-bound vacationers checking their emails before going “off the grid,” toddlers playing in the “small fry café” with donated children’s books, local artists discussing their muses over coffee, or an amateur pianist tickling the ivories on the café’s performance stage. Or perhaps a young couple enjoying a first date in the dark turquoise-colored booth.

“Hang out as long as you like,” Greta says. Meanwhile, the speakers play local folk music phenom Joshua Davis’s familiar cover songs from his recent national run on the NBC show *The Voice*. Davis and other Michigan musicians affiliated with the Earthwork Music Collective have played on stage here when the café was a mobile church, run by Pastor Justin Grimm.

The scent of Higher Grounds fair-trade coffee wafts from the kitchen. Also available are milk from Shetler Dairy, tea from Light of Day Organics, baked goods from Biga Better Bagels, and gluten-free products from Third Coast Baked Goods and Daniela’s Delectables. Above the coffee bar looms a gigantic “Lake Ann flag,” designed by Greta’s brother, Erik Florip, that is for sale at the café.

The message is clear: the owners of Red Door Café care deeply about supporting local community, art, music, and food that is healthy, delicious, and ethically made.

Greta and Travis Kemp are happy to have left stimulating and hip—but crowded and sometimes overwhelming—Chicago for the northwoods of Lake Ann.

“I missed the outdoor space,” Greta says. “Chicago has Lake Michigan. But if you go, there are hundreds of other people right next to you.”

The Kemps join a trail of “boomerangs” migrating back to Michigan to impact their home communities. Their two kids, son Hunter, who turns five this month, and daughter Brooklyn, who is 21 months old, are frequent visitors to the small fry café children’s area.

“Lake Ann is definitely rejuvenated,” Greta says. “We want to make this a place where locals don’t have to go to Traverse City to get what they need. I think the younger generation is taking pride in this community and making it a fun place to be.”

Lake Ann Brewing Co. is located in the heart of the village’s downtown and just north of the lake for which the village is named. The brewery will serve six to eight of Therrien’s beers and 20 brews in all. The brewpub will also serve local ciders, wines, and meads from St. Ambrose Cellars, Tandem Ciders, Left Foot Charley, and Acoustic Draft Mead. Lake Ann Brewing Co. is open Tuesday-Saturday from noon until 11 p.m. Come high summer, the schedule may expand to include Mondays. Limited snacks will be available for purchase, or feel free to bring in a pizza from Stone Oven next door. The Red Door Café is open Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday 7 a.m.-4 p.m. Tuesday 7 a.m.-8:30 p.m. Saturday 8 a.m.-4 p.m. Sunday 8 a.m.-2 p.m.

Pilgrims

Continued from page 1

professor and my Jack—each at least 6’4”—set to work re-working the bathroom floor. Two big guys using a chainsaw in that tiny room: it’s a memorable and terrifying image, with a successful outcome. We painted the floor bright green and left on a weekend trip with our cats because the oil paint took forever to dry, though it now seems to be indestructible.

One couple—longtime friends from another life back East—were enjoying our limited lake view despite a cold rain when from our living room, by phone, they made an offer on a lakeside place in South Carolina that they had never seen. They knew the area, wanted a lake, asked us how stupid it was on a 1-10 scale to buy that lake place, sight unseen. I, looking at our lake, said, “Maybe a 2?” They bought, moved, and then ordered custom desks (delivered!) from Heart 2 Heart in Honor. They now teach film courses for retirees in their town on the lake down South, and they may come up for the Traverse City Film Festival this year.

In addition, a few visits have been followed by property purchases up here, too. One example includes some St. Louis friends—a museum educator and an architect—who stayed at our place with and without us, rented three times in the CSA (once during Katrina, with no TV), and started scouting properties. They bought a house, sight unseen, in Frankfort, where she has become active in the Oliver Art Center. She and I meet for bike rides and lunch fairly regularly. We prize her color pencil sketch of our cabin, complete with its hanging baskets of fake flowers (the image looks better than the actual building).

Friends from our current life in Indiana have included a doctor and his wife—serious cooks who run a B&B back home and who arrived having fully researched all sources of local wines, cheeses, gourmet meats, and pies. They moved into the family cottage and felt right at home, invited us for drinks and hors d’oeuvres from their shopping sprees, and biked a lot. They plan to come back.

Other Indiana friends—serious bird-watchers—stopped here between points north and an appointment near Grayling to see a warbler. I took him kayaking on Herring Creek and on the North Fork of the Upper Platte River; extremely leisurely kayak trips because mostly we floated, listening and watching. (They noticed that there was not one clock in the cottage and then sent us one after their visit.)

Colleagues from Indiana passed through on their wedding trip from her parents’ cabin near Odon, and destinations here included Michigan Legacy Art Park at Crystal Mountain Resort in Thompsonville, an aunt on the south shore of Crystal Lake, and our screened porch.

Last year, another Indiana friend was checking out at The Bookstore in Frankfort, when Dwight Reed, the owner, noticed her hometown on her driver’s license and made the connection to us; within minutes, she and her buddies were having drinks on our porch, leaving with maps for the next time.

But another old friend from U-of-M days has visited so many times that we can’t remember when she first saw Benzie; she builds it into her plans, all the way from New Jersey, like something completely normal.

We’ve watched so many people come, see, feel the vibes of a time-out kind of place. They experience what it’s like to live Up North in a place that is far from frenzy. They love the light slanting through our woods. They take a canoe out on Crystal Lake and finally believe that you can see ripples on the sandy bottom at depths of 40 feet. They love the Oreo cows (now gone, alas) and the wild turkeys. They don’t mind sharing a bathroom, or encountering mouse turds. They get it, why we would leave home for the summer to be here.

Now they have Benzie memories of their own, and some even have their own places up here. This summer we expect more pilgrims and more stories. Don’t we all?



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Solstice Festival Rises Again

Elberta’s phoenix from the ashes

From Staff Reports

The Elberta Solstice Festival, a community mainstay since 2002, returns to Waterfront Park this year on Saturday, June 20—the longest day of 2015. The sun will rise at 6:03 a.m. and set at 9:25 p.m., marking the pinnacle of summer.

This day has been celebrated since ancient times by Celts and Slavs with dancing and bonfires to give the sun energy and to ward off evil spirits.

The future of the Elberta Solstice Festival, however, was cast in doubt last year when the Village declined to run the festival.

But determined citizens wouldn’t let the popular tradition die. Recent transplants Frederick Stig-Nielsen and Betsy Mas [a young couple who were featured in *The Betsie Current* last year] were approached by Bill Soper and Josh Herren, locals who have run Solstice for many years, for support in reviving the festival.

“I care about this tiny community, and it seemed as though people were truly disappointed when it appeared Solstice was not going to be held,” Mas says. “Solstice is hands down the largest event held in Elberta. It attracts nearly 800 people each year. This is good for local business. More importantly, I see the festival as a forum to gather as a community. We live in such a hectic time, there are not many opportunities to relax and hang out with our neighbors.”

The Solstice Festival celebrates the longest day of the year with events and entertainment for the whole family beginning at noon and ending at 2 a.m. Local restaurants and caterers will offer a variety of foods and also serve local craft beer, wine, and mead. Activities for children include horse and pony rides, bounce houses, and kids’ games until 5 p.m.

A stellar line-up of musicians and bands will play blues, indie, rock, funk, and techno, along with sideshows going on all over the park. The line-up includes Medicinal Groove, Platte Plains Wolf Pack, Blue Dirt, Alfredo, the Standing Hamptons, Cousin Curtiss,

the G-Snacks, and the Jimmy Olson Band. Stick around for fireworks at dusk, which can typically be seen from across the bay in Frankfort, also.

The details of this year’s festival are almost identical to those of prior years, and that’s purely intentional.

“It has been such a success in the past that we didn’t feel the need to change a good thing,” Mas says.

In addition, Benzie Bus will run a free shuttle from the Frankfort Craft Fair, going on from 10am-4pm, to the Solstice Festival, as well as a late-night shuttle back to Frankfort.

“It’s a way for everyone to have a great time celebrating the solstice and get home safely,” Stig-Nielsen says. “It is a community event, so



Audrey Gollan takes a break from “sledding” down the Elberta hill on cardboard to eat some candy at the Elberta Solstice Festival. Photo by Aubrey Ann Parker.

we wanted to give people the chance to enjoy each other and the summertime festivities without endangering our community.”

Elberta’s relaxed, genuine, and creative vibe attracted the couple—both of whom recently passed the law school bar exam—to move here from Portland, Oregon.

“Our beach is generally free of crowds,” Mas explains. “There is less traffic, fewer storefronts, just more space, in general, to breathe.”

Is there something uniquely “Elberta” about the Solstice Festival?

“Maybe it’s a combination of our laidback, welcoming vibe, coupled with the physical beauty of Waterfront Park, Betsie Bay, and Frankfort as a backdrop, not to mention music on the deck of the historic Life Saving Station,” she replies. “When I think about Solstice now, I think about how lucky I am to be part of a community that is willing to step up, support each other, donate time and money, extend trust and faith in a very new organization, all so that we, as a community, can spend the longest day of the year together, celebrating the beauty around us and each other. It’s a beautiful thing.”

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The Betsie Current

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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. © 2015, The Betsie Current, all rights reserved. www.BetsieCurrent.com



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