

Revitalizing Downtown Beulah

Open-air restaurant to replace collapsed bowling alley

By Jacob Wheeler
Current Editor

It was 7 a.m. on Tuesday, February 18, when Elaine Newbold got the call from the Benzie County Sheriff’s Department that the vacant Beulah bowling alley’s roof had collapsed under yet another onslaught of snow and that parts of the building lay sprawled across Benzie Boulevard.

“My first thought was, ‘Oh my God,’” says Newbold, who together with her husband, Randy, have owned the building for three years. (No one has bowled there in eight years, however, since Mike Messina ran the business.) Randy had left town on business the day before, so it was up to Elaine to deal with the mess.

Five months later, the eyesore in the heart of downtown is slowly but surely starting to blink awake.

Behind a temporary plywood wall facing the street, the Newbold’s contractor is busy hammering and sawing away. Elaine hopes

that the project will be ready for the community to view this fall.

The Newbolds envision a restaurant in an attractive, open-air courtyard that faces Benzie Boulevard in the space that was once occupied by the bowling alley lanes. The bar and indoor seating will remain on the south side of the building, and retail shops will occupy the north side. Once complete, the Newbolds hope to sell the space to a restaurateur. Elaine says that several interested bidders have already approached them.

“Whoever runs it will have the opportunity to create their own thing,” Elaine says. “This is an opportunity to have a great business in Beulah and give the town some energy. This building was pretty much half the downtown, and it was vacant space. We hope it will bring more businesses and energy downtown. That



A clean sweep for the former Beulah bowling alley. The brick entrance was restored by fifth-generation masons. Photo by Aubrey Ann Parker.

would help not just the village but all local businesses.”

Elaine admits that some had misconceptions about what the Newbolds intended to do with the vacant space, but that

has changed as people see progress on the building.

“Everyone is pretty excited about the energy coming in here to rebuild,” she says. “Instead of it just being vacant for the last eight years.”

Long-time Beulah Business Owners

The Newbolds also own Crystal Lake Adventure Sports, the only kayak and standup paddleboard outfitter on Crystal Lake and an instigator behind popularizing standup paddleboarding in Northern Michigan. For 20 years, the outfitter has been an important part of Beulah’s summertime economy: as ubiquitous to the tourists in downtown Beulah as Crystal Crate & Cargo, Northern Décor, East Shore Market, L’Chayim, and the Cherry Hut.

Crystal Lake Adventure Sports will host the second annual Up North Standup Paddleboard Classic on Saturday, July 19.

Please see Bowling on page 11

The Bard Is Back in Benzie

How now, you rump-fed ronyon?!

By Aubrey Ann Parker
Current Contributor

“In nature, there’s no blemish but the mind; None can be called deformed but the unkind.”

Once again, strange folk descend upon the forest of our fair Tank Hill to haunt us with epic tales of tragedy and then, with a change of outfit, beguile us with raucous comedies. They call themselves actors, others call them thespians. They worship strange creatures, but none stranger than the one they call the Bard, who compels them to act out his plots for days on end, in rain or blistering heat, with little rehearsal. He pays them naught but in the cheers or jeers or tears of their beggar audience.

Back for their 11th season, the Lakeside

Shakespeare Theatre (LST) will again be performing one tragedy (*Richard III*) and one comedy (*Twelfth Night*) in Frankfort on alternating evenings from July 15 through July 25 (with the exception of taking one night off on July 21).

Richard III is known for being one of Shakespeare’s bloodiest plays, and LST says that their rendition promises “loads of creepy conniving on the battlefield and in the throne room, as Richard of Gloucester ascends to the throne



Bring your own chairs, blankets and picnic baskets to get the most out of Lakeside Shakespeare performances. Photo by Aubrey Ann Parker.

through betrayal (and beheadings) of his own royal family.” Meanwhile, *Twelfth Night* features Viola and Olivia, two heroines who meet

by chance after a shipwreck, and LST is sure to add their popular indie-folk, sing-a-long musical stylings to this comedy that is full of “secret identities, hidden feelings, drunken revelries, [and] true love.”

The idea of Elizabeth Laidlaw as a way of connecting Chicago’s thriving theatrical community with both the full-time and seasonal residents of Benzie County, LST began in 2003. Every year since, a team of two dozen or so actors, stage managers, sound-effect gurus, and directors has spent two weeks rehearsing and performing here in the northland, in addition to about six weeks of rehearsals in Chicago before they get here.

This year, the company began rehearsing in Benzie County on Sunday, July 13, running through the first half of *Richard III* from just

Please see Lakespeare on page 10

Santa on Main Street

The little toy store that could

By Susan Koenig
Current Contributor

Frankfort’s Corner Toy Store is a wonderland for kids of all ages. There are Bruder trucks, Janod wooden toys, Carolle Baby Dolls (tres French), Calico Critters, Playmobil (an old favorite), and LEGOS (the most popular), and an entire aisle of Breyer brand’s horse and farm-themed creations. There is even a “pet section,” where dog and cat owners can spoil their furry friends. Throughout the store, the shelves are packed but still easy to peruse. Owners Ben and Amy McRae are the proud parents of three children — ages four months, three years, and seven years — which certainly qualifies them as discerning toy buyers.

“We’re not going to compete with Walmart,” says Ben. “We like to carry what the big-box stores don’t. Our inventory is a little more education-oriented, and we choose



Lions and tigers and horses? Photo by Aubrey Ann Parker.

our own lines and styles.”

Ben, who received his management degree from Northern Michigan University, is the son of Corner Drug owner Richard MacRae. Ben began to sell the pharmacy’s overstocked toys

Please see Toy Store on page 2

Dunesville Festival Returns

July 25-27 outside Lake Ann

By Staff Reports

Dunesville — the popular Northern Michigan outdoor music festival, born of the Dunegrass Festival in Empire and recently known as the Sleepy Bear Music Festival — returns to the Harm Farm, just outside Lake Ann on July 25 through July 27.

Headlining performers include Larry McCray, the Standing Hamptons, New Third Coast, Magdalen Fossum, and Big Dudee Roo. Check out the full line-up, directions to the festival, and ticket prices at www.DunesvilleMusicFestival.com.

Brandon Wittig of Phoenix Productions and Mary Alice Brooks of Bliss Fest are co-producing the festival, which has endured bumps in the road since moving from downtown Empire to rural Benzie County (including a near rainout in 2013), but



Dunesville Music Festival at the Harm Farm. Photo by Aubrey Ann Parker.

Please see Dunesville on page 7





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Toy Store

Continued from page 1

online, and he would choose unused old and discontinued brands. A lively Internet business ensued, so Ben and Amy decided to open for retail sales. In addition to the storefront, they still sell online Ebay, Amazon, and through their own site The-CornerToyStore.com directly. The toys are housed in the former storage rooms that were previously occupied by two popular area physicians, Dr. Thacker and Dr. DeGuia.

“We’ve changed and adapted to the times with the eCommerce website,” Ben says. “We use these tools to allow us to stay open year-round, providing employment for locals who would otherwise struggle to find work in the winter.”

Tired of hearing people say, “Oh, I didn’t know you were back here,” (this is their fifth anniversary), the store now displays flags and other colorful signs of occupancy outside for all to see.



Toys for kids of all ages are available at The Corner Toy Store in Frankfort. Photo by Aubrey Ann Parker.

Next door, Corner Drug has been in operation under various owners for more than 100 years. Richard MacCrae bought it in 1998. When Walenta’s Variety Store closed last fall, the MacCraes saw a need to offer some of those goods to their customers, so they re-vamped the entire drug store and started carrying some houseware items, party supplies, a dollar department, and then expanded their beach toys, school supplies, and summer items (fireworks, too!).

“We’ve had an overwhelming response to the revamp,” Ben says. “And while people are very sad that Dan Walenta retired, they’re happy that we are carrying so much of what he used to have.”

Visit the online store at TheCornerToyStore.com or visit in person at the Corner Toy Store, 401 Main Street, Frankfort, and wish them a happy anniversary.

The Corner Toy Store is open seven days a week: Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Saturday 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Sunday 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Jazz Trio

From Staff Reports

Crystal Mountain Resort welcomes the return of Robin Connell and her jazz trio, as they are set to play at Michigan Legacy Art Park on July 18. Considered one of Grand Rapids’ best, Connell taught Jazz for 20 years at Interlochen Arts Camp. Among her more famous students are Norah Jones and Eldar Djangirov.

Reviewer Anna Kisselgoff of *The New York Times* says, “Robin Connell is nimble at the piano in her clever arrangements,” and freelance jazz reviewer Bill Milkowski says that her “striking material showed harmonic sophistication and a tinge of haunting introspection... This is a composer of great promise and definitely worth watching.”

Equally at home as a jazz pianist or jazz pianist/vocalist, Connell performs regularly in clubs, concerts, and private parties as a solo pianist and as the leader of her own jazz trio-quartet. Connell is an instructor at Aquinas College and Grand Rapids Community College (GRCC). She directs Shades of Blue, a premier jazz vocal ensemble at GRCC. Additional education credentials include directing award-winning student jazz bands and attending music education conferences throughout the United States.

Connell has performed with numerous jazz greats including Al Hirt, Ron Miles, Vincent DeMartino, Hugh Ragin, Jason Palmer, Marcus Belgrave, Ricky Ford, Ted Nash, Harold Mabern, and Jason Stubblefield. Married to trombonist Dr. Paul Brewer, the two met while faculty at Interlochen and often work together as performers and educators. Connell also plays with her step-son, bassist Matt Brewer.

All concerts take place at 7 p.m. at the Art Park’s outdoor amphitheater. Because Summer Sounds is underwritten by generous sponsors, a suggested donation of \$10 for admission directly benefits Michigan Legacy Art Park — its sculpture, grounds, and programs.

Rides for those needing assistance begin at 6:15. The audience is encouraged to bring lawn chairs, blankets, and picnics. Chairs will be available for rent or purchase. To order a custom, gourmet picnic dinner for two, delivered to you at the concert, with pricing starting at \$24.95, call Crystal Mountain at 231-378-2000. In the event of rain, concerts will be held indoors at Crystal Mountain and signs will be posted.

LOCAL DOLLARS MAKING CENTS


Independent retailers return more than three times as much money per dollar spent than their big-box chain competitors, according to the American Independent Business Alliance. The Corner Toy Store is a great example of this; from the American Cancer Society’s Relay for Life and BACN donations to Rotary Foundation Scholarships and Toys for Tots, Ben and Amy give back locally. In addition, they use local small businesses for their website, inventory, advertising, and printing.




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Family Charter Fishing in Frankfort

One fish in the boat

By *The Man with Fishy Hands*
Current Contributor

My grandfather always said that trolling on Lake Michigan is only as enjoyable as the funniest person on the boat. This is truest if you don't know how to catch fish. (Sorry Grandpa!) Mastering how to rig and run long-lines, planer boards, Dipsy Divers, and down-riggers in combination with myriad new lures and types of line becomes even more challenging when combined with atmospheric and seasonal changes that affect fish behavior.

Fortunately for Frankfort, Captain Dave Rommell has all the necessary expertise for a great time on the water, and he's a really nice guy. Many of his clients are visiting families who just want a fun day and some fresh fish to take home, while others are experienced anglers who want to learn more about successfully targeting salmon and lake trout in specific ways or seasons. As a third-generation charter captain — likely the only one in Northern Michigan — after his grandfather, "Big Bob," and father, "Little Bob," as well as a third-generation bait and tackle store owner, Captain Dave can help you out. He can also tell you just about anything you want to know about the history and future of the local fishery.

Frankfort is Captain Dave's hometown and a port he feels that people often overlook. "It's an old pet peeve of mine," he said, "that Frankfort doesn't get any of the attention, when in reality our fishing is every bit as good as in Manistee and Ludington."

Throughout the spring of this year, it would have been easy to think that Frankfort provided the best fishing anywhere, since Captain Dave consistently landed daily limits on lake trout by trolling the prominent drop-off in Platte Bay.

"But we're not going to do that today," Captain Dave told *The Betsie Current* when we planned our trip for late May. As with any confident expert, he wasn't going to chase easy-pickings to show off to a group of

reporters and certainly not at the expense of a chance to learn new trends before anyone else in the area. "We're going to see if any early [king salmon] have moved in yet. We probably won't catch any fish, just so you know."

We met at Jacobson's Marina following almost two weeks of cool, foggy, and eerily calm lake conditions. I asked if he had updated his prediction for the evening's catch as we motored past the Coast Guard station toward the historic lighthouse.

"If you wanted to pick the worst salmon-

Dave's wife Amanda lamented, "He'll buy bins of yard sale stuff if there's even one Jensen chrome fluted lure in there because it's his favorite, and Jensen doesn't make it anymore."

"Change of plans," Captain Dave said to his father Little Bob, who had been piloting the boat in silence. At 3.3 miles offshore in 171 feet of water, the surface temperature dropped suddenly from 53 to 46 degrees. "We're gonna stop here. This is ideal for steelhead."

Father and son set four planer boards and three downriggers so quickly to target fish in 60 feet of water that I hardly had time to long for a stopwatch. We trolled northward for several hours with no bites. As it turned out, one flawless 10-pound steelhead was our only catch that evening. One fish at least meant that he would not be refunding the price of the trip, his guarantee, which he has only had to do twice in 11 seasons of chartering.

Two weeks after our trip, I dropped into Big Bob's Up North Outfitters — the store that the Rommells own on Main Street in Frankfort — just to talk shop. Amanda was there, but Captain Dave was on the water. The door chimed after a few minutes and, instead of a Sunday customer, a petite woman entered carrying a towering trophy. The brass plate on its base recorded each winner of the Bihlman Memorial Fishing Tournament since 2000. Conspicuously absent from the list were Captain Dave and his Tiny Bubbles Charter Fishing. How could this be?

"He's not competitive at all," Amanda told me. "Dave's not a tournament kind of guy."

But the Bihlman is for a good cause, so Captain Dave, Little Bob, and a crew of about half a dozen other family members and friends had entered. Entry fees and donations to the tournament benefit Camp Quality, which offers "a chance for kids with cancer to just be kids," in the words of a former camper who spoke before the prize ceremony.

An hour later, we gathered under the Mineral Springs Park pavilion for the tournament's weigh-in. Topping the list was Captain Dave Rommell with a two-fish combined weight of 29.45 pounds. I found him — tanned red and laughing with everyone who passed by — cleaning large chrome-bright kings on the tailgate of a Chevy pick-up. A retired couple had just asked him for some salmon to take home; the fish had been do-

nated by the fishermen, and there was a line of people waiting to grab a bag of filets to take home for a donation to Camp Quality.

"Whatever you want to donate. It's for the kids," Captain Dave said, dropping pink filets into a Ziplock bag.

While some charter captains and bait shop owners can be prickly about their secrets, Captain Dave makes sure that everyone can take part in the fun, whether they charter with him or merely stop into Big Bob's for some friendly advice. Stop by and ask him what presentations he used to catch his trophy kings for the Billhman Tournament. He's sure to tell you with a smile.

Be sure to check Big Bob's always up-to-date "Fishing Report" at www.Bigbobsupnorth.com before you plan your next trip out on the water.



Calm water can make for poor salmon fishing conditions but lovely sunsets. Photo by Aubrey Ann Parker.

fishing conditions imaginable, it would look like this," he said with a huff of laughter, looking out at the glass-smooth bands of water that trailed out before the boat into a bank of fog, as if guiding us toward disappointment.

While watching the sun set and waiting for something to bite, we talked gear. Increasing water clarity in Lake Michigan makes lures more visible earlier in the season and later each evening than ever before, meaning more opportunities for success exist along with greater pressure on the quality of an angler's "presentation," or the way that the lure, line, and movement combine to entice a fish to strike.

Many Great Lakes salmon trolling techniques and the gear that they require were perfected off the coast of Washington state and the relatively new adoption here of meat rigs — which present salted fish filets inside of flashy harnesses — are no exception.

"The new stuff is scary to some people," he said. "You can end up with a tangled mess."

A mess that is both expensive and useful only for salmon.

While new gear is often great, Captain

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

CONSTANTLY FLOWING

Mondays

Music with Miss Char at Benzie Shores District Library at 630 Main Street in Frankfort. 10-11am

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

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

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

Tuesdays

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

Pick-up soccer for all skill levels at the fields behind Watson car dealership in Benzonia. 7pm.

Dance Benzie: Improvisational partner dancing at the Mills Community House in Benzonia. Free, donations welcome. 8-10pm.

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.

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

Beulah Music in the Park until Thursday, August 14. 7-8pm

Steve Fernand will be singing songs from the last century from 6-9pm throughout the summer. Call 231-360-5344 for more information or to RSVP.

Saturdays

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

Join a Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore ranger for a different walk or talk or hike every Saturday — there’s always something happening at 1pm. To find out what’s happening, visit <http://goo.gl/aLUdAG> or call 231-326-5134 for details.

ON THE DOCK

Tue - Fri, July 15 - 25

Lakeside Shakespeare Theatre once again presents one tragedy (*Richard III*) and one comedy (*Twelfth Night*). *Richard III* will be performed July 17, 19, 22, and 24, with a preview performance on July 15. *Twelfth Night* will be performed July 18, 20, 23, and 25, with a preview performance on July 16. Regardless of weather conditions, all performances will begin at 7pm at Frankfort’s Tank Hill, just down the hill from Paul Oliver Memorial Hospital and across the street from St. Ann’s Catholic Church. Performances are free for all ages, but donations are greatly appreciated. And make sure to sign your kiddos up for the children’s workshops that will be taking place July 22 to July 25. Check out <http://www.lake-sideshakespeare.org> for more information.

Thurs - Wed, July 17 - 23

Frankfort summer resident Lesa Chittenden Lim will show works that she created with pastels, pastels with watercolor, and etchings at Live For Art Gallery in Beulah. 231-882-9370.

Thursday, July 17

Artist talk with John DeHoog and Brian Nelson at the Oliver Art Center in Frankfort. Nelson is a sculptor of metal, and DeHoog makes innovative furniture and sculpture. Both artists defy traditions and inspire with their creativity. This free artist talk is offered in partnership with the Jean Noble Parsons Center and Eastern Michigan University. Admission is free, but space is limited. <http://goo.gl/C7A0EY> 5:30pm.

Thursday, July 17

Young Guitar Duo play at Stormcloud Brewing Company in Frankfort.

Thursday, July 17

United Methodist Women’s 10th annual Very Cherry Smorgasbord at 537 Crystal Avenue in Frankfort. We have cherries of some form in every dish (with the exception of the potatoes). There are no advance ticket sales; tickets are at the door only! Costs \$12 for those 13 years and older, \$6 for ages 4 to 12, and free for children 3 and younger. 231-352-4723. 5-7pm.

Friday, July 18

Summer Sounds Series features Robin Connell Jazz Trio at Michigan Legacy Art Park at Crystal Mountain. Bring a picnic or refreshments are available for purchase. Suggested donation of \$10 per person. <http://goo.gl/WesV8I> 7-9pm.

Friday, July 18

Opening reception for Dennison Griffith, Andrew Otis, and Carol Stewart at the Oliver Art Center in Frankfort. There will be wine and appetizers. The event is free and open to everyone. <http://goo.gl/C7A0EY> 5-7pm.

Saturday, July 19

Benzie Conservation District’s water tour at Pearl Lake Access Site on Wagner Road. Join us for our second water tour of the year. www.benziecd.org 231-882-4391. 9am-12pm.

Saturday, July 19

Port City Arts & Crafts Fair: when this outdoor arts & crafts fair’s former name was the Elberta Craft Fair, it was located at the Elberta Waterfront Park, however, the name and the location have been changed to Frankfort’s Market Square Park. 231-352-7251. 10am-4pm.

Saturday, July 19

Come see Wings of Wonder Raptors at the Darcy Library in Beulah. Sign up for event reminders at [Facebook.com/DarcyLibrary](https://www.facebook.com/DarcyLibrary). Every Saturday a fun event, beginning at 11am.

Saturday, July 19

Michigan Legacy Art Park Fundraiser at Stormcloud Brewing Company in Frankfort.

Tuesday, July 22

Sciencetastic Storytimes presents “Magical Music with Shelly” at the Darcy Library in Beulah. 6pm.

Monday, July 21

The True Falsettos play at Stormcloud Brewing Company in Frankfort.

Wednesday, July 23

Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy’s Trail Building at St. Pierre Trails. Help expand the trail system at Arcadia Dunes! Whether you are brand new to Arcadia Dunes or are in the midst of an on-going love affair with the place, trail building is a great way to learn about this amazing property. Volunteers will learn a brief history of the preserve from GTRLC staff, as well as the technique and theory behind sustainable trail design, before heading out to help construct the final three miles of a new five-mile loop. Plan to meet at the St. Pierre parking area. Dress for the weather. Bring water and comfortable shoes. All other tools will be provided. Trail building is a somewhat strenuous activity, but all participation levels are appreciated. Please RSVP by visiting www.gtrlc.org/events or call us at 231-929-7911. The event is free. 2-4pm.

Wednesday, July 23

36th annual CSA Arts & Crafts Fair: find decorative, whimsical, and wearable art at

the Assembly Ball Field on M-22 at Crystal Lake, just outside of Frankfort. More than 100 artists from all over Michigan and beyond will be selling decorative art, pottery wall hangings, oil paintings, watercolors, fine photography of local landscapes, jewelry made with everything from old silverware to semi-precious stones, wooden objects of art – vases, bowls, birdhouses, children’s delights – American Girl doll clothes, books, handmade toddler outfits, handcrafted herbal soaps, paper goods, baskets, furniture, and much more. Rain or shine. The food tent will offer breakfast, lunch, and snacks, including donuts, pizza, and beverages. There will also be a bake sale. From 9am-2pm, the Cottage Treasures Sale will run next door to the ball field, just inside the Assembly Building. 816-304-4123. 10am-4pm.

Wednesday, July 23

Plant It Wild’s features Vern Stephens, who will present “Grasses, Ferns, and Sedges” at 7pm at Trinity Lutheran Church in Frankfort. 7pm.

Thursday, July 24

Alfredo plays at Stormcloud Brewing Company in Frankfort.

JUST AROUND THE BEND

Thur - Wed, July 24 - 30

Oil landscape paintings by Pam Spicer of Glencoe, Illinois, will be featured at Live For Art Gallery in Beulah. Instead of an Open House on Thursday, Spicer will present an artist talk on Tuesday, July 29, at 5:30pm. 231-882-9370.

Friday, July 25

Grow Benzie’s fifth annual Farm Party will feature a meal crafted by an array of the area’s finest chefs, restaurants, bakeries, vineyards, brew houses, and distilleries. Call director Debbie Querry at 231-352-6157 or visit www.GrowBenzie.org for tickets and more information about the Farm Party. 6:30pm.

Friday, July 25

Summer Sounds Series features Michigan-based bluegrass band Lindsay Lou & The Flatbellys at Michigan Legacy Art Park at Crystal Mountain. Bring a picnic or refreshments are available for purchase. Suggested donation of \$10 per person. <http://goo.gl/WesV8I> 7-9pm.

Friday - Sunday, July 25 - 27

The Dunesville Music Festival is a family-friendly atmosphere with lots of great music, arts & crafts, food, and fun. Various stages to accommodate an all-Michigan line-up with workshops and activities to promote a strong

PUBLISHING DATES 2014

April 17
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July 17
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August 28
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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. © 2014, *The Betsie Current*, all rights reserved. www.BetsieCurrent.com

emphasis on encouraging youth and family. Festival organizers are bringing many new talents to the spotlight and promoting local artists, too. They intend on creating a lasting impression that will keep you and your family excited for the future of Dunesville. The volunteer staff looks forward to helping to ensure the safety and enjoyment of all. The festival is at 4846 Hulbert Road in Lake Ann. <http://goo.gl/4mCa7i> 231-651-9713.

Monday, July 28

Awesome Distraction plays at Stormcloud Brewing Company in Frankfort.

Tuesday, July 29

Sciencetastic Storytimes presents “Flights of Fancy with Kris” at the Darcy Library in Beulah. 6pm.

Tues - Wed, July 29 - 30

Back by popular demand, Mike Bishop returns to the CSA for two days of bird-banding demos. Sponsored by the Benzie Audubon Club. benzieaudubon.org 231-871-0503 From 6-8:30pm on Tuesday and from 8-11am on Wednesday.

Thur - Wed, July 31 - August 6

Oil paintings by Janet Grissom will be featured at Live For Art Gallery in Beulah. 231-882-9370

Friday, August 1

Benzie Conservation District’s Little Platte Lake water tour at North Branch Creek on Deadstream Road. Join us for our third water tour of the year. www.benziecd.org 231-882-4391. 9am-12pm

Friday, August 1

Summer Sounds Series features Lee Murdock at Michigan Legacy Art Park at Crystal Mountain. Bring a picnic or refreshments are available for purchase. Suggested donation of \$10 per person. <http://goo.gl/WesV8I> 7-9pm.

Saturday, August 2

“It’s Delightful, It’s Delovely, It’s Cole Porter” is spirited musical revue in the Upper Hall of Mills Community House in Benzonia that will get your toes tapping. All proceeds help to fund the building’s next stage of renovation. Pre-performance complimentary desserts, wines, and other drinks will be available beginning at 7:30pm, with the performance beginning at 8pm. <http://bit.ly/1mEjcjw> Call 231-882-0591 to reserve a seat, arrange ticket payment, or for more information. Tickets are \$30. One night only!

Saturday, August 2

Put your best foot forward! Join us for the Benzie Home Health Care 34th Annual Walk-A-Thon, a beautiful morning walk along the shores of Crystal Lake. Enjoy a delicious brunch and help Benzie Home Health Care to provide care for Benzie County seniors. Join a team, pledge a walker, donate time, or resources -- you can make a difference! The walk will be in the morning, beginning at Bel-lows Park on South Shore Drive. Call Mary Dykstra at 231-325-0138 or email bcshhc@

sbcglobal.net For more information. <http://www.benziehomehealthcare.org/>

Thursday, August 7

Paul Oliver Memorial Hospital Auxiliary’s 32nd annual Tour of Interesting Places features a delightful variety of homes in and around Frankfort. This year’s theme is “Frankfort Through The Ages,” guiding participants through some of the many fascinating homes in the immediate area. Call Beverly at 703-298-9428 for more information and to RSVP. 10am-4pm

Thurs - Wed, August 7-13

New paintings by Columbus, Ohio-based abstract painter Sharon Dougherty will be on display at Live For Art Gallery in Beulah. Nature and the art of various cultures inspires Dougherty’s intuitive abstract pieces. Her work can be found in various public and private collections throughout the United States. 231-882-9370

Thurs - Wed, August 7-13

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Friday, August 8

Oliver Art Center’s annual fundraiser will be a lot of fun. If you want to support artistic, cultural, and economic vision in your community, please plan on attending this fun evening that does so much for so many.

Friday, August 8

Grow Benzie’s Golf Tournament at Crystal Lake Golf Club just outside Beulah. Call director Deb Query at 231-882-9510 or email growbenzie@gmail.com for more information. www.growbenzie.com/ Noon-8pm.

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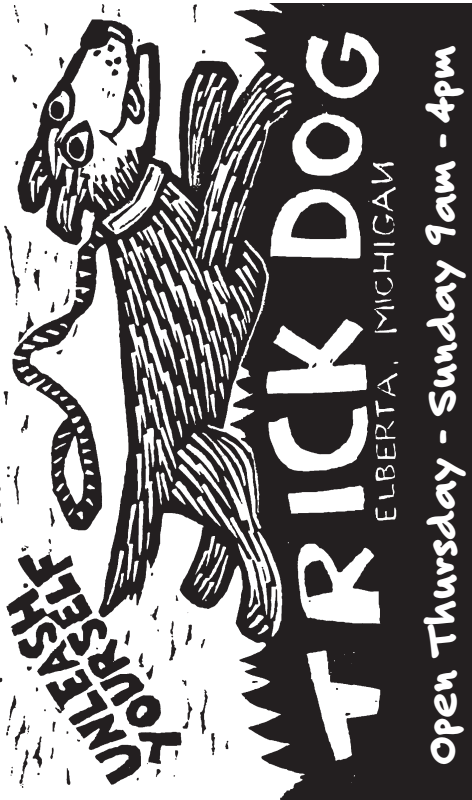
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Biking and Hiking the Betsie Valley Trail

122 years after construction, the trail shows thoughtful vision

By Kelly Ottinger
Current Contributor

From 1892 until 1951, passengers of the Ann Arbor Railroad enjoyed transport from Toledo through the hardwood forests between Ann Arbor, Owosso, and Cadillac all the way to the Lake Michigan port towns of Frankfort and Elberta. Freight trains continued to travel the route, and rail cars were loaded onto ferries crossing over to Wisconsin, through 1985.

The trains stopped running that year. By 1994, tracks and ties were removed. The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Benzie County government, and a group of benevolent friends all recognized the recreational potential of the beautiful, relatively flat corridor that runs along the forested Betsie River shore to Betsie Bay and Lake Michigan.

In 1993, the benevolent friends organized into a nonprofit called the Friends of the Betsie Valley Trail (FBVT), with its mission being to “advocate, promote, and encourage the development and successful operation of a recreational trail on the former Ann Arbor Railroad corridor in Benzie County.”

The property is owned by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and is being developed, operated, and maintained by a partnership with the MDNR and the Betsie Valley Trailway Management Council. Years of fundraising and hard work, both political and physical, have resulted in one of the hidden gems in Michigan’s biking trail system, the Betsie Valley Trail.

“This has been a wonderful addition to the Benzie County community. It has fulfilled all the goals that we had envisioned,” says Bill Olsen, chairman of the Betsie Valley Trailway Management Council.

TripAdvisor.com ranks the Betsie Valley

Trail as Frankfort’s third most popular attraction. Reviews of the trail on Michigan’s Rails-to-Trails website are enthusiastic:

“My wife and I do very little biking, but the trail from Frankfort to Beulah has become a Must Do for us when we visit this scenic area.”

“...trail offers a lot of shade with a pretty much flat and level surface.”

The Betsie Valley Trail runs 22 miles from Thompsonville to Frankfort and Elberta along Betsie Bay to Lake Michigan. It passes through the village of Beulah, where it hugs the gorgeous shoreline of Crystal Lake for three miles. Aggregate limestone portions of the trail – the 13 miles closest to Thompsonville

path of the Betsie River, which has 93 miles of linear shoreline between its origin in Green Lake, near Interlochen, and the mouth that flows into Betsie Bay and Lake Michigan. The upper Betsie River – with steelhead salmon running in the fall, along with chinook and coho in the lower river, as well as walleye and brown trout during other times of year – is a Benzie County nature enthusiast’s recreation destination. The river can be canoed from Thompsonville to Elberta, with portages needed at Thompsonville and Homestead dams and, occasionally, a few other areas during low-flow seasons.

Nuts and bolts of the trail

The trail is predominantly flat, but there is a 50-foot gradual incline over five miles between Beulah and Aylsworth Road.

There is a replicated train station in Beulah that serves as a visitor center, complete with trail guides and restrooms. There are also public restrooms at the beach area in Frankfort. The trail passes through Thompsonville, Beulah, Frankfort, and Elberta, all of which have restaurants, ice cream shops, and places to buy snacks.

Off-road parking for the trail is available at these locations: Frankfort, Elberta, River Road (near Adams Road intersection), Mollineaux Road

(near M-115 intersection), and Beulah. Bicycles can be rented from businesses in: Thompsonville, Beulah, Frankfort, and Elberta.

There are no camping spaces available along the trail route. However there are campgrounds within driving distance of the trail. (Visit Frankfort-Elberta.com for more information.)

Dogs are allowed on the trail, but they must be kept on leash and any waste must be disposed of immediately. The exception to this is the two-mile length of privately owned property around Crystal Lake, where the trail is for service animals only.

The Benzie Bus has bike racks and will accommodate bikes inside the buses when the racks are full. Special stops can be arranged for people wanting to ride the trail only one direction. To arrange special stops, call 866-325-3380 at least 24 hours in advance, although sometimes last-minute requests can be accommodated.



Riders enjoy the Betsie Valley Trail near the M-115 intersection. Photo by Aubrey Ann Parker.

and for 3 miles along the shore of Crystal Lake – are packed firmly enough for road bike use, but hybrid and mountain bikes roll better on those portions. The approximately 6.5 miles between Mollineaux Road and Frankfort-Elberta are asphalt, accessible to wheelchairs and rollerblades (this portion of the trail is designated ‘non-motorized use only’). Snowmobiles can access the 13 miles from Thompsonville to Beulah from December 1 through March 31.

The trail partially follows the winding



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Grasses, Ferns, and Sedges

Plant It Wild presentation on July 23

From Staff Reports

Vern Stephens will present “Grasses, Ferns, and Sedges” on July 23 at 7 p.m. in the Johnson Community Hall in Trinity Lutheran Church at 955 James Street in Frankfort. Stephens will discuss the need for grasses in landscapes and the expansion of the use of sedges and ferns in landscapes as they become avail-

able. Grasses, ferns, and sedges have been under-used in landscape design. Learning about the benefits, sizes, textures, and uses for these plants will help homeowners to create beautiful and beneficial garden habitats.

Stephens is well-known in our area for having worked on grassland restoration at Saving Birds Thru Habitat in Omena, the Arcadia Dunes Preserve Grassland in Arcadia, FALC grasslands at the former Frankfort Golf Course, a 90-acre grassland project for Grasshopper Sparrows near

Northport, and two grassland projects in Harbor Springs and Alanson. Stephens is a member of the Wildflower Association of Michigan (WAM), having served on the board of directors for several years.

Stephens recently retired as a senior wildlife assistant from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources Wildlife Division, where his work specialized in grasslands and invasive species management.

Stephens, his wife Susan, and their son Zachary live on a 40-acre farm in Laingsburg, where they operate Designs By Nature, LLC, a native plant nursery and native landscape consulting company.

Each year they work with conservation groups throughout Michigan hosting native plant sales and workshops. They will be hosting a Michigan native plant sale at the same time as the presentation on July 23.

The event is free to the public.



Little Bluestem Grass (schizachyium scoparium). Photo courtesy of Plant It Wild.

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

- ACROSS
- 1 Metrical unit
 - 5 Arabian judge
 - 9 Grandfather of Saul
 - 12 Exude
 - 13 Sleeping
 - 14 Mountain on Crete
 - 15 Javanese carriage
 - 16 Weed
 - 17 Computer generated imagery (abbr.)
 - 18 Alcott heroine
 - 20 Sable
 - 22 Article
 - 25 Nat'l Endowment for the Arts (abbr.)
 - 27 Garland
 - 28 Time period
 - 29 International (abbr.)
 - 31 And other: abbr. (2 words) (Lat.)
 - 34 Sinbad's bird

- 35 Fr. author
- 37 Amer. Dental Assn. (abbr.)
- 38 Wing (pref.)
- 40 Grape syrup
- 41 Jap. fish
- 42 Article (Fr.)
- 44 Negative population growth (abbr.)
- 45 Deviate
- 46 Necktie
- 49 Droop
- 51 Male person
- 52 Baseball equipment
- 54 Eth. Danakil people
- 58 Pointed (pref.)
- 59 Afr. tree
- 60 Polish rum cake
- 61 Footlike structure
- 62 Direct
- 63 Poetic foot

ANSWER TO PREVIOUS PUZZLE



- DOWN
- 1 Before some vowels (pref.)
 - 2 Tumor (suf.)
 - 3 Free
 - 4 Monad
 - 5 Felis (2 words)
 - 6 Amateur Boxing

- Assn. (abbr.)
- 7 Skin (suf.)
- 8 Utopian
- 9 Wink
- 10 Wayside
- 11 Pour
- 19 Camelot lady
- 21 Female ruff
- 22 Manmade protective mound
- 23 Owl's cry
- 24 Moon of Saturn
- 26 Hindu soul
- 30 Pulka (2 words)
- 32 City in Judah
- 33 Den
- 36 Legend
- 39 Race the motor
- 43 Palmetto
- 46 Thunder sound
- 47 People
- 48 Subtract
- 50 Taro
- 53 Yarn measure
- 55 Federal Aviation Admin. (abbr.)
- 56 Antiballistic Missile (abbr.)
- 57 Mortar beater

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		42		43		44				45		
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61				62					63			

Plant It Wild is a Michigan native plant organization with a mission is to foster greater awareness and appreciation of the fragile natural environment of our region. Through direct efforts, they work to preserve, protect and promote the natural beauty of the area and its plant communities. Contact Lynise at (231) 889-7020 or Carolyn at (231) 352-6962 for more information about Plant It Wild or the Grasses, Ferns, and Sages presentation on July 23.

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Crystal Mountain’s Complete Cuisine

Taste the local difference at two dining locations

By Ian Richardson
Current Contributor

The talented and knowledgeable culinary staff at the Thistle Pub & Grill and the Wild Tomato Restaurant & Bar pride themselves on Crystal Mountain Resort being a destination for excellent dining. Building on the philosophy of an active and balanced lifestyle, chefs craft peak-performance meals that are both healthy and delicious by proudly showcasing local products from over 30 local producers in their cooking so that you can “taste the local difference” of the resort’s four-star dining experience. Whether you’re a family that is staying at the resort or you’re a couple looking to make a special date-night trip to Thompsonville, Crystal Mountain offers a place to enjoy some of the finest dining in Benzie County. Below, *The Betsie Current* showcases our favorites on the menu.

Thistle Pub & Grill

With Celtic-inspired ambiance, dark wood interiors, and an intimate setting, the Thistle, located in the Kinlochen lodge, is Crystal’s fine-dining establishment. The menu features the finest ingredients that are prepared at the hands of skilled chefs. Open for lunch at 11 a.m. and dinner at 5 p.m., the Thistle is a favorite for resort guests and locals alike to indulge in a special meal or drinks.

This July 17 through 19, stop by the Thistle Pub & Grill to enjoy the extremely popular Farm to Table series. The series features a custom-designed, full *prix-fixe* (fixed price) menu comprised of local, in-season products that are sourced in and around Benzie County, including ingredients from Crystal’s own vegetable and herb gardens.

Brunch options include Scotch eggs, made with Michigan eggs and local sausage, or the impressive Betsie rock steak, with your choice of beef or ahi tuna that is cooked and served on a heated rock from the Betsie River. Thistle Pub also offers a selection of signature sandwiches, such as the piled-high Michigan turkey and avocado, featuring Sanders bacon and Michigan cheddar, which is then slathered with a spicy aioli on sourdough bread.

Pair these with one of the many craft beers that are available, including Twisted Thistle, the pub’s signature ale. Stop by for Microbrew Mondays, when a flight of craft beers cost only \$7, or Wine on Wednesday, when flights are \$10.

Dinner features include the Wagyu New York strip steak, cooked to perfection with a silky morel mushroom sauce or the blackened chicken Alfredo, which features moist Michigan chicken that is blanketed in a Parmesan cream sauce and served atop tri-color fettuccine.

Dessert selections include house-made,

New York-style cheese-cake with a buttery pecan praline crust or dense and fudgy chocolate flourless torte. A warm-from-the oven crisp that highlights in-season fruit — topped with a scoop of ice cream from the Hill Top Soda Shoppe (Benzonia) — is a delicious way to enjoy Michigan’s harvest.

End the night in memorable fashion with an array of dessert wines, ports, and cognacs, along with more than 25 selections of single malt scotch whiskey. Indulge in a handcrafted cocktail, such as the ‘Dark and Stormy,’ featuring New Holland Amber Rum, or an antioxidant martini containing Raspberri vodka along with cranberry and blueberry purees to keep you feeling healthy and happy.



Chefs craft meals that are both healthy and delicious with local produce. Photo courtesy of Crystal Mountain Resort.

a fruit and yogurt parfait that is topped with homemade granola or Irish steel cut oatmeal, both peak-performance items. Favorites include the house-made sausage gravy and biscuits and the farmer’s breakfast that includes eggs, meat, potatoes, and house-made toast. The Northern Michigan skillet — loaded with potatoes, caramelized onions, mushrooms, organic Michigan white cheddar cheese, two eggs, and toast — can tame even the biggest of appetites.

Enjoy your morning breakfast with a glass of local Cream Cup Dairy (Kaleva) milk or a gourmet coffee. They also carry Light of Day Organics’ specialty-blended teas (Traverse City), including Peaceful Peninsula green tea or lemony ginger Sunshine Tisane.

Beginning at 5 p.m., the dinner menu is designed *a la carte*, allowing diners the ability to custom design their meal by picking the components they want.

Popular starters include bacon and cheddar ale spread served with pita chips and sweet potato fries with a cinnamon honey or chipotle remoulade. Home-style bacon-wrapped meatloaf with a house-made BBQ sauce or the Cajun-style mac-and-cheese — which features blackened crawfish and asparagus — are sure to hit the spot.

The walleye plate has a locally sourced filet that is rubbed with garlic and dressed with a lemon tarragon butter, then broiled to tender flakiness that allows the fresh flavor of the fish to shine; a side of quinoa with roasted corn, lime, and cilantro pairs extremely well with the fish.

The crisp buttermilk chicken is paired with a local honey and bourbon dipping sauce. The creamy toasted risotto with asparagus and forest mushrooms, dusted with pecorino cheese, is a delightful companion. Vegetarians can enjoy a number of great dishes, including a curried black bean burger with pico de gallo or a spinach and mushroom lasagna.

Pub-style offerings include a grass-fed Angus beef burger, topped with smoky Michigan cheese, and a short-rib sandwich that comes with a spicy horseradish aioli and bubbly provolone cheese served on a baguette.

For dessert, indulge in a slice of the decadent peanut butter pie — featuring Naturally Nutty Peanut Butter (Traverse City) mousse, chocolate ganache, and an Oreo crust — or the warm brownie sundae topped with Hill Top Soda Shoppe ice cream and hot fudge sauce.

A full bar menu features local beers and wines. Or try a selection from Wild Tomato’s extensive margarita menu or have a martini made the way you like.

The Wild Tomato open for breakfast every day throughout the summer but not for lunch — they close at 11 a.m. Instead, head to the Thistle, which opens at 11 a.m. The Wild Tomato is open for dinner based on Crystal Mountain’s occupancy, so make sure to call 855-955-5146 ahead of time to make a reservation.



Enjoy the selection of wines and beers, many from Michigan, with your meal. Photo courtesy of Crystal Mountain Resort.

Wild Tomato Restaurant & Bar

Open daily at 6 a.m., the Wild Tomato Restaurant offers family-friendly dining that focuses on seasonal, Up North comfort food. Golfers hoping for an early round will appreciate the quick and friendly service. The popular breakfast buffet is a sure way to fill up before heading out for a day of activities. Families will appreciate that, with a paying adult, two children (ages eight and under) eat free from the kids’ menu or the breakfast buffet. For a light start to the day, you can get



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Entrepreneurs Grow at Grow Benzie

Farmers’ market, classes, and an incubator kitchen

By Kelly Ottinger
Current Contributor

It’s a powdery blue building, recessing into a hillside not far from Benzonia on the south side of M-115. You might miss it, except for the large sign that advertises the Farmers’ Market on Mondays from 3-7 p.m. and all the “hoop houses” (greenhouses) out back. Grow Benzie — what in the world is that?

Grow Benzie is actually a combination of land, hand-grown crops, resources, instruction, mentoring, and an incubator kitchen — all providing a piece of the entire pie that is their mission: “Grow Benzie Inc. is a community nonprofit farmstead, dedicated to enriching lives through education in agriculture, nutrition, job training, and life skills.” The focus of the mission is to “re-energize people by teaching new skills, thus building confidence and independence. To provide an environment to help adapt people’s lives to our changing economy.”

Long before the whole foods movement launched or “eating clean” was a catch phrase, a group of like-minded citizens saw the value of returning to a more basic and self-sustaining way of life. In 2008, a 3.7-acre abandoned farm was purchased, and it came with a 5,000-square-foot nursery building and a 3,200-square-foot house.

“These were absolute visionaries,” Grow Benzie president Bonnie Smith says of this founding group. “They saw the small farmer as “the man” — the person who had the power to find innovative ways for regenerating the land.”

The group, along with volunteers, continued to clear the land and make improvements. They also began offering a farmers’ market. In 2011, the first institutional greenhouse was built, one of three such historic structures on the farmstead was reconstructed, and 4,000 pounds of tomatoes were harvested. By 2012, a second greenhouse was restored, and work was begun on the pride of Grow Benzie: the incubator kitchen.

As the local food movement gained popularity, people began to search for alternatives to processed and factory-produced food. The Grow Benzie team saw a need for a place where individual entrepreneurs could legally make and package small quantities of food for wholesale or retail sales.

“People starting in these businesses usually can’t afford to build their own licensed kitchen,” Smith says. “And they might not know how to do labels, packaging, and those types of things. We are here to give them a leg-up for starting their own business.”

The incubator kitchen opened in June 2013, and already it has several food businesses, licensed through Michigan, making their products there. Produced at Grow Benzie are:

- **Bacon Berry:** food truck
- **Betsie Bay Bread**
- **Daniela’s Delectables LLC:** artisan jams and pastry assortment, some gluten-free
- **Grandmother’s Hot Fudge Sauce**
- **Granola Empire LLC:** granola bars, cookies, scones, and more
- **Sweet Cheeks Treats LLC:** cheesecakes, brownies, cupcakes, and more from 16-year-

old proprietor, Madeline Mummey

- **Up North Global LLC:** old-world inspired Mediterranean dishes, such as spinach rolls, cranberry baklava, feta rolls, and stuffed grape leaves

Grow Benzie welcomes all potential entrepreneurs and can help with items such as local contacts for liability insurance, licensing procedure, and marketing. The following series of classes were held in the fall of 2013, and similar seminars are now being planned for those who may be interested: ‘How We Did It: The Story of Wee Bee Jammin’ from Bear Lake,” with owner Simone Scarpace; “Marketing Part I: Your label,” with Marcus Christian of Pickle Print and Marketing from



Kids learn about growing vegetables in a hoop house at Grow Benzie. Photo courtesy of Grow Benzie.

Traverse City; “Taking Reasonable Risks: Insurance for Your Business,” with Sue Webber from Webber Insurance of Benzonia; “Marketing Part II: Price? Package? Promotion?” a case study of Food for Thought with owner Timothy Young of Honor; “Getting Started: How to Take the First Steps,” with Lisa Richter, kitchen manager of Grow Benzie’s Incubator Kitchen; “I’ll Sell Your Product: How to Get Retail Ready,” with Alex Pineau from Evergreen Market of Williamsburg; “How to Package Your Product: Glass or Plastic? 8 oz. or 16 oz.?” with Mary and Terry from TM Klein & Sons from St. Charles.

Entrepreneurs can come from other-than food-related walks of life. The basement of the house on Grow Benzie’s property holds a sewing room, complete with a large table of 12 machines and shelf after shelf of fabric squares. This space would lend itself well to a variety of handicraft efforts, and Smith has high hopes for future endeavors there.

On the other side of the basement, herb seeds are germinating for the next crop of greenhouse seasonings to accompany the tomatoes, peppers, onions, and other vegetables that will either be sold at the weekly farmers’ market or used to produce Grow Benzie’s private-label, value-added products which are planned to be available for sale in the fall.

Recognizing that societal change often needs to begin with youth and build upward, Grow Benzie has worked hard to establish strong relationships with local schools. Budget cuts have eliminated important life-skills training in the areas of home economics and industrial arts, and Grow Benzie volunteers have stepped in where they can to fill the void. An example of this is the Platte River Elementary’s hoop house, obtained through a Grow Benzie grant award from the Natural Resources Conservation District. The structure was built by Grow Benzie volunteers and community members. Programs utilizing

the hoop house, as well as expanded “farm-to-table” classes inside the school, are taught to K-6 grade students by FoodCorps Service members with Grow Benzie volunteer assistance.

Beginning this fall, Kirk Jones — the owner of BeeDazzled, Sleeping Bear Farms, and St. Ambrose Winery — will join an initiative in which skilled Grow Benzie volunteers will teach after-school programs, training Benzie students who are interested in industrial arts. They will build beehives, as well as large and small shipping crates for Jones’ businesses. Volunteers such as Jones are needed to help these important youth initiatives take hold and grow.

“Our success will depend on what type of volunteer base we can build,” Smith says. “We have a core base of seven or eight volunteers, and although it has been difficult to find new ones, there are certainly those gems around.”

Besides a solid volunteer base, Grow Benzie, like any other visionary nonprofit, could always use funding. While the organization has been successful with grants, such funds tend to cycle out and new sources of funding must be found to maintain programs.

Grow Benzie’s major fundraising event, the fifth annual Farm Party, will be held Friday, July 25, beginning at 6:30 p.m. The public is invited to come enjoy a meal created by an array of the area’s finest chefs, restaurants, bakeries, vineyards, brew houses, and distilleries. Tickets are \$65 each, or a basket of 10 for \$500.

For tickets and more information about the Farm Party, or volunteering for Grow Benzie, call Director Debbie Query at 231-352-6157, or visit www.GrowBenzie.org.

Humans of Benzie

By Suyeon Yang
Current Intern

“Can you describe your art style?”

“I love going outside and drawing landscapes in Benzie County. Landscape paintings are my favorite. Using many colors and short and broken brush strokes are my style. For 12 years in England, I learned oil and outdoor painting. I’ve been a painter for 45 years.”



Dunesville

Continued from page 1

Dunesville still boasts a positive family vibe and celebrates local Northern Michigan music talent.

“We got wet and cold all weekend long last year, but the vibe was strong and we felt the pressure to keep moving forward. So here we are presenting Year Number Two of a new beginning,” says Wittig, who admits to being smitten with music at a young age. “As a child, my mom would sing to me and play her albums of all genres. I think that may be how music sank deep into my heart.”

Wittig was a regular volunteer at Farm Fest and other popular music festivals around the state.

“I came to realize that the much loved ‘DunesFest’ here at home needed some love and hard work to continue to grace the music scene,” Wittig says. “Being a local enthusiast, I couldn’t just let it go away, so I got involved and last year took over production.”

The festival will feature workshops, youth and family activities, and multiple stages to accommodate an all-Michigan line-up. This year’s festival will shine the spotlight on many new local artists. On-site camping is available.

DUNESVILLE’S LINEUP


- Adam Hoppe
- Alison Lewis and String of Ponies
- Arming the Amish
- Bandura Gypsies
- Big Dudee Roo
- Biomassive
- Blue Dirt
- Bluewater Ramblers
- Brett Mitchell
- Bus Stop Poets
- C-2
- Cold Tone Harvest
- Jack Elliot
- Jenny LaJoye
- John Phillips Michael Godmar Project
- Kung Fu Rodeo
- Larry McCray
- Magdalen Fossum
- Michael Michalski Jr
- Michael & David Rosteck
- Natural Reaction
- New Third Coast
- Nicolas James & Clouds
- Pistil Whips
- Ribo & the Flavinauts
- Sierra Casidy Creamer
- Skunk n Kal
- Standing Hamptons
- Steven Leaf and the Expats
- Sweet Joe Williams and the Preachers Daughter
- Tony LaJoye Trio
- The Vermeers



Photo by Aubrey Ann Parker

DunesvilleMusicFestival.com

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Lakespeare

Continued from page 1

after breakfast until just before lunch. A short break for the peak of summer heat in the afternoon – during which, most cast members apparently nap – they then ran through the second half of the tragedy. On Monday, July 14, the cast then spent morning and afternoon running through *Twelfth Night*.

Given that the preview performances on Tuesday and Wednesday, July 15 and 16, are full dress rehearsals that are attended by the public, that means they’ve been in Benzie County just over 48 hours before they begin performing.

It’s a very intense process, Laidlaw admits. “At 25 hours a week, it’s typical for a full-length show to rehearse for six weeks. But we rehearse two full-length shows in six weeks, so we have about 14 rehearsals per show. It’s an insanely fast process.”

Fortunately, many of the actors are seasoned at this. Sure they have “newbies” each year, but the company also has several “veteran” actors, Laidlaw says, some who have been with LST more or less since the beginning. When the “newbies” ask if the timeline is even possible, she responds, “Trust me, it can be done. But it’s logistically insane.”

Yet, despite the insanity, they keep coming back. Christy Arington, LST’s education director, is in her 10th season, having participated every year except the first. Arington says that performing Shakespeare in Benzie County is like no other audience experience.

“It’s almost like our audience is the final participant in this thing that we do,” Arington says. “So sharing this with them is amazing, and that’s why I keep coming back – because there is nothing that duplicates this experience. We could all get other jobs in the summer that would pay us a lot more money, but this? This is special. This is magic.”

From year to year, the company cycles people in and out depending upon their availability – Lily Mojekwu (Margaret in *Richard III* and Maria in *Twelfth Night*) took a year off but has returned for her fifth season; Jill Rafa (Lady Ann in *Richard III* and Fabian in *Twelfth Night*) took a year off but has returned for her seventh season – but this is the first year that the show will go on without Laidlaw. This summer, Sara Gorsky has taken over as managing director, because Laidlaw has had to spend her time in Chicago shooting a film.

“When people can’t do the shows, they are really sad. This is my year, my turn to be really sad,” Laidlaw sighs. “But we’ve built something that doesn’t require just one person. It’s a huge team effort, and if one member of the

team has to step out, we have this incredible group of people who are going to keep the ship afloat. I really trust that.”

Now in her fourth season with LST as she takes the helm, Gorsky will not only be found behind the scenes – she plays Viola, one of the leads in *Twelfth Night*, as well as Catesby and Murderer #1 in *Richard III*. Gorsky echoes Arington’s sentiments about the Benzie County audience being a top reason for return.

“We all work for a lot of different companies in Chicago – as an actor, you work wherever you get cast – but the audiences here are really unique to all audiences that I’ve ever had. I feel like they are involved and excited about Shakespeare and about the plays and about supporting this company in a way that I don’t see every-where,” Gorsky says.

As for why audiences keep coming back – and why they are growing to now include patrons from Manistee, Charlevoix, Traverse City, and beyond – Laidlaw and Gorsky attribute the quality of the productions. They talk about LST’s approach to Shakespeare with terms like “accessibility” and “reach.” Oh, and “fun.”

“We don’t make it something that people can’t grasp or attach themselves to,” Laidlaw says. “The experience of seeing Shakespeare outside is fun. So you’ve got an excellent, high-quality production, fantastic actors, and a very approachable experience to some of the greatest plays ever written.”

Gorsky concurs. “Sometimes when you think of Shakespeare and the language, it’s hard to understand what they’re saying because it’s older English,” Gorsky says. “But our actors are so good – they have such clarity – that even people who might not know what all the words mean can understand the stories really well and understand the characters and relate to them.”

Another way that LST makes 15th and 16th century Shakespeare accessible is they shake things up. From composing their own catchy soundtrack for a comedy to setting a contemporary scene for a pair of star-crossed lovers, the group finds new and interesting ways to envision the Bard’s works. Last year, for instance, Juliet could have easily been a summer-resident teen in her polo shirt and tennis skirt, while Romeo’s buddies sported Frankfort Panthers’ purple and gold under their leather jackets.

Sometimes, though, it’s the venue that makes these timeless plays come to life. When LST made the switch from its original Elberta location (at the amphitheater in Waterfront Park, near the Lifesaving Station) to its current Frankfort location (at Tank Hill Park,

just down the hill from Paul Oliver Memorial Hospital and across the street from St. Ann’s Catholic Church), the company was putting on King Lear. On opening night, a family of deer walked across the forest ridge behind the stage. During one performance of Macbeth the next year, vultures were circling above while the witches, who were covered in blood, were coming out of the forest. Also in 2011, a neighbor dog was on a jaunt in the woods with Queen Titania’s fairies during A Midsummer Night’s Dream.

For the two weeks that they are here, the players live and eat together; they work and play together. This year, six college interns are living in a loft space above a garage, while about one-third of the company is currently holed up at La Rue House in Elberta.

Once rehearsals slow down and production gets going, the group will spend their days pre-performance swimming Benzie County’s waters and biking its trails.

Jeff Christian (Richard in *Richard III* and a sea captain in *Twelfth Night*) is a founding member of LST who re-

members being nervous that no one would show up on opening night of the first show back in Elberta. Now LST drums up more than 1,000 audience members per season.

So why does Christian – who has been here every summer since that first except for one – keep coming back? Once again, it’s the Benzie County audience. He feels like he “gets to know” audience members who come multiple nights, and he loves that he can talk with them, something that doesn’t happen “in a normal theater situation.”

Not only do the players talk with audience members, they occasionally even use them as props – tripping over someone’s chair during a comedy or faux-whispering into someone’s ear during a monologue. Moreover, a pair of actors may rifle through your picnic basket, picking out what they want and carrying it off with them.

“For some reason – I don’t know why – but people just love it when we steal their food and their beer,” Laidlaw says. “They offer it up, ‘No, take mine!’ I don’t know what that’s about, but I think it’s hilarious.”

Richard III will be performed July 17, 19, 22, and 24, with a preview performance on July 15. Twelfth Night will be performed July 18, 20, 23, and 25, with a preview performance on July 16. Regardless of weather conditions, all performances will begin at 7pm at Tank Hill in Frankfort. Performances are free for all ages, but donations are greatly appreciated. And make sure to sign your kiddos up for the children’s workshops that will be taking place July 22 to July 25. Check out <http://www.lakesideshakespeare.org> for more information.



Audience members watch a performance at Tank Hill. Photo by Aubrey Ann Parker.



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M-22 Internet

From Staff Reports

Based in Arcadia, the M-22 Internet Project is currently providing reliable, high-speed Internet service to Benzie and Manistee counties. The M-22 Internet Project began in the spring of 2012, when a group of Arcadia, Blaine, and Joyfield residents joined together to provide unlimited, high-speed Internet to homes and business. Steady expansion along the M-22 corridor continues, and the company now offers service in portions of Onekama, Gilmore, and Crystal Lake townships, as well as the City of Frankfort. With the demand increasing, they plan to expand coverage around Crystal Lake and along portions of US-31 in the coming months.

What makes this particular Internet provider stand apart from others? The M-22 Internet Project uses wireless technology to provide a high-speed connection – which is comparable to a wired connection to a cable modem – and is far superior to satellite services. Unlike cellular- or satellite-based services, or an Internet connection through a data card or other portable device, the M-22 Internet Project allows users to transmit virtually unlimited data without incurring penalties or overage fees. Not only does the M-22 Internet Project offer fast, reliable, and unlimited Internet access, but the service also has very low latency, which is superior to that offered by satellite or cellular connections and enables subscribers to watch online video through services such as Netflix and to engage in video conferences using Facetime or Skype.

“Our customers have the ability to transmit as much data as they want, which is a major advantage of the M-22 Internet Project,” says M-22 Internet Project assistant manager Joe Frederick. “In addition, we also offer much faster speeds than cellular and satellite companies.”

The process of obtaining the M-22 service is simple. A professional service technician will install an antenna (usually a small dish approximately, 14 inches in diameter) on or near your house and will provide a wireless router that creates a password-protected wireless network for you and your guests. The installation will be tailored to your specific needs, and the entire process typically takes between two and four hours.

The M-22 Internet Project is based in the village of Arcadia with an office at 3480 State Street. Check them out online at M22project.com. Email project@m22project.com or call 231-794-2180 for more information.

Bowling

Continued from page 1

The family-friendly event features both a recreational and competitive race. Participants depart from Beulah beach and paddle a three- or six-mile triangle on Crystal Lake, then travel to Lake Michigan, a 4.6-mile downwind duel from Point Betsie to Frankfort beach. The inaugural event attracted 100 participants last year, and Elaine hopes to add 150-200 more racers this year.

The Paddleboard Classic gives downtown Beulah a mighty boost in business, and come this fall, or perhaps by next summer, Elaine hopes that a thriving restaurant in the former bowling alley space will be another shot in the arm for this quaint village between US-31 and Crystal Lake.

“The village of Beulah is going through a regrowth period right now,” says Elaine, who describes the local economy as being in the valley of a 20-year cycle.

The Five Corners Watch and Clock Shop is vacant, so is the Brookside Inn on US-31. But the bowling alley has long been the elephant in town. A decade ago, by contrast, Beulah was buzzing, and there wasn’t a vacant storefront around.

“What else does Beulah need?” Elaine asks. “The more retail and shopping, the better. We need to get the right businesses in here.”

What Beulah Needs

“We need more retail stores, more variety. The more the merrier,” echoes Kitty Elly, owner of Northern Décor.

“Beulah needs a shot in the arm,” chimes in L’Chayim’s Jonathan Clark.

“Something to draw folks here year-round,” says Cindy Frieswyk at the Market Basket.

“What we need in Beulah are more people,” says Crystal Crate & Cargo owner Sally Berlin. “We need to enhance the look and vitality of this place. You can’t legislate that or zone it. You need to encourage people to do it on their own. We need more activity, more business, more people around.”

Berlin agrees with Elaine Newbold that Beulah hit the bottom of a 20-year cycle, and for that she cites the national economy. Tourism spending depends on discretionary income, of course, and the 2008-09 Great

Recession had a nasty trickledown effect on Beulah. But she sees signs of a local upswing. “I’ve had a busier Fourth of July than the last couple years,” Berlin told *The Current*. “I’m feeling that the economy is finally improving. And when everyone does well, then we all do well.”

One great asset for stimulating community and business is the Beulah Boosters, a nonprofit that has supported the village since 2004. Spearheaded by Vicki Carpenter and Phil Downs, the Boosters have helped the village to find and secure grants to enhance the downtown screetscape, plant eye-catching Michigan Department of Transportation



Allison Schoenlein won the Women’s Recreational Division during last year’s inaugural Up North Standup Paddleboard Classic. Photo courtesy of Crystal Lake Adventure Sports.

signs on US-31 at both entrances to Benzie Boulevard, revitalize the park and Crystal Lake waterfront, and, most recently, fund the new fishing dock. Carpenter likes to quote Margaret Mead’s famous line: “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

“We need to focus on the ‘Up North’ resort culture,” Carpenter says. “Good, quality things that help build better memories for tourists and keep them coming back to Beulah. People love to tell you their history here. This little town has made many memories.”

Did you catch Ian Richardson’s story “A Day in Beulah: a small town with a big city soul” in our July 3 edition? It’s the perfect guide for how to spend a day in Beulah. Find archived copies of The Betsie Current at Charlie’s Natural Food Market at the top of the M-115 hill, next to the fitness center, just outside Frankfort.

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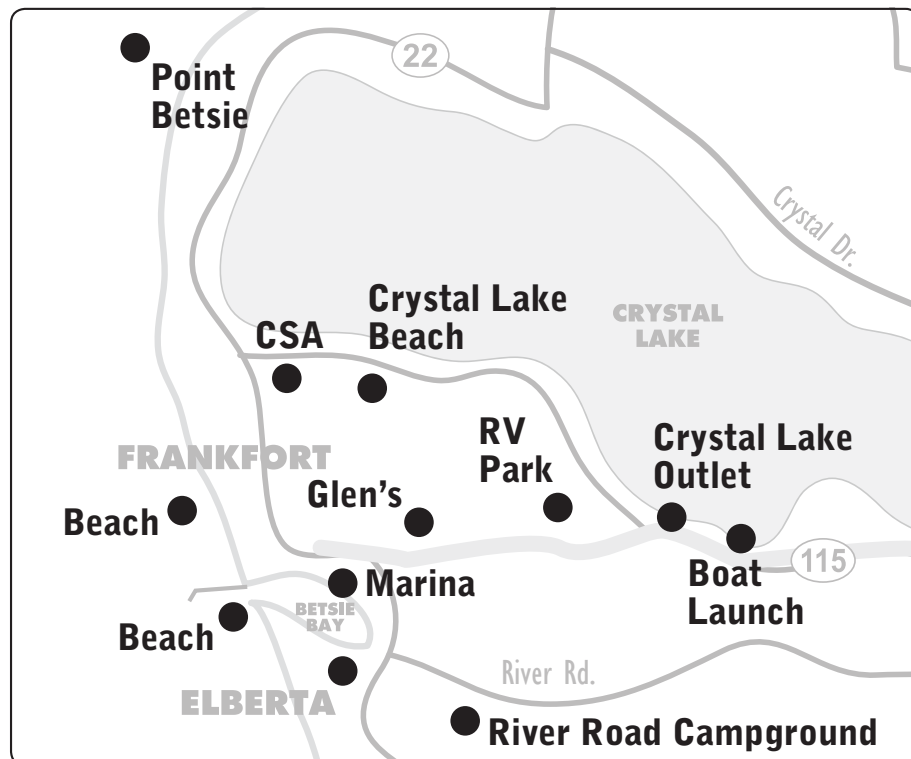
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