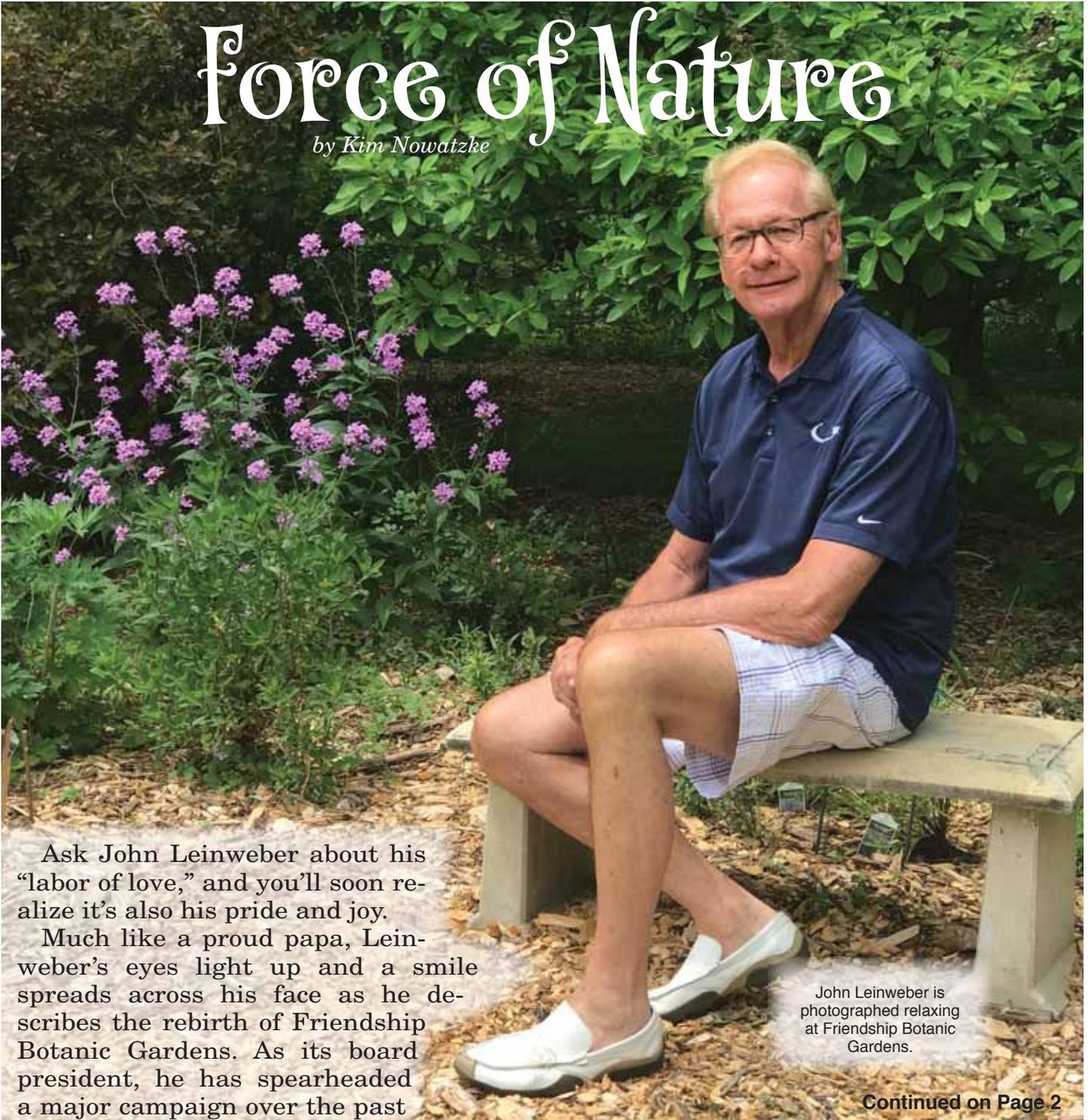




Volume 36, Number 24 Thursday, June 18, 2020

Force of Nature

by Kim Nowatzke



Ask John Leinweber about his “labor of love,” and you’ll soon realize it’s also his pride and joy.

Much like a proud papa, Leinweber’s eyes light up and a smile spreads across his face as he describes the rebirth of Friendship Botanic Gardens. As its board president, he has spearheaded a major campaign over the past

John Leinweber is photographed relaxing at Friendship Botanic Gardens.

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Force of Nature

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six years to revitalize the 105-acre location at 2055 E. U.S. 12.

Debuting in 1936, the non-profit nature preserve boasts breathtaking cultivated gardens, sprawling open spaces and forested woodlands that attract thousands each year for educational events, weddings and concerts, or to simply enjoy the magnificent beauty. Because of Leinweber's time, energy and financial resources, along with a dedicated and supportive board, staff, sponsors and volunteers, Friendship Botanic Gardens remains a true destination point and tranquil retreat.

"I love to chase achievement. I love to create," Leinweber said. "I believe in being the best you can be and things happen."

Things have certainly been happening at Friendship Botanic Gardens. But to appreciate the progress, one needs to take a step back in time to become familiar with its beginning and rich history.

The concept for what was called International Friendship Gardens originated with three brothers: Virgil, Joe and Clarence Stauffer from Wakarusa, Ind. Owners of a Hammond nursery, they created an ambitious horticulture exhibit for the Century of Progress International Exposition, also considered Chicago's second World's Fair, held in 1933-1934.

Michigan City residents Dr. Frank Warren and his wife visited the attraction that drew nearly 40 million people. They were particularly impressed with the Stauffers' "Peace and Friendship to all Nations" garden. When the brothers sought a permanent home for their exhibit, Warren, who developed Pottawatomie Park and the Warren Clinic,



The ArcelorMittal Children's Garden.

donated acreage at U.S. 12 and Liberty Trail that contained Trail Creek running through it. International Friendship Gardens opened in 1936 with 14 ethnic gardens, the Symphony Theater and Theater of Nations.



The Symphony Garden.

As described at www.friendshipgardens.org, the latter *“was built on an island with natural seating for an audience on an adjacent hillside and was the scene of ballet, drama and concerts, which brought thousands each week to enjoy ‘music under the stars.’”*

The Gardens’ mission of world peace based on the universal love of nature resonated across the globe. The attraction drew presidents and kings, as well as gifts of plants, seeds and statuary. Through the early ‘60s, the Gardens’ popularity grew. It thrived as a cultural cornerstone that provided a spectacular botanic treat for all who visited.

After the death of Virgil and Joe in 1956, and their sister, Sadie Ehret, who took over operations until her death in the early 1960s, Clarence and his wife, Frances, continued the family dream.

Jeanne Houck became an assistant to Clarence in 1970. When he died at 100 in 1986, she and her husband, Richard, took over operations of the Gardens, which were in a sad state of decline.

The Houcks organized a board of directors, enlisted the help of volunteers and turned the gardens

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Force of Nature

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into a public non-profit organization in 1995.

But, *“sadly, in the decades since their heyday, the gardens slipped from the public consciousness,”* Leinweber explained in Barbara Stodola’s 2018 book *Friendship Botanic Gardens*.

The Gardens suffered more setbacks in 2002 when two major arson fires destroyed the Alaskan Cabin with historical works and statuary, and the Service Building that contained tools and machinery. Left with a handful of volunteers and virtually no resources, the neglected and overgrown Gardens were in dismal shape.

Leinweber was first introduced to International Friendship Gardens through a friend, Steve Kahn. Seeing the “beautiful bones” of the attraction, Leinweber knew it was time to put his knowledge, skills and experience as a successful entrepreneur into action.

He recalled his mindset of “I’m going to make this thing happen – bring it back, bigger and better than it was ever was. And we’re doing it.”

Born in Chicago, Leinweber grew up in the South Holland suburb. He graduated from Northern Illinois University with a double major in speech and theater and a minor in history and political science. He was attending law school and working for Xerox when he decided to start his own business. Over the years, his enterprises included four document imaging startups among others. He currently owns Briar Leaf Golf Course in LaPorte.

“I liked business better than law,” he said, explaining with a smile, “I remember numbers and not people’s names.”

Since his involvement with the Gardens, numbers have been impressive. Visitors have increased from 2,000 to 3,000 in one year to 60,000; it’s estimated this will increase to 100,000 in the next five years.

Leinweber increased the board of directors from half a dozen to a dedicated and diverse group of 18. About 100 volunteers lend their time and talents to the organization. The Gardens now employs a staff of nine, which includes, among others, a communications director, four seasonal gardeners and a bridal coordinator. The Gardens have even become a source for interns. Emily Tickle came on board as a 2020 summer intern to assist with a variety of projects. Leinweber’s daughter, Triecia Roberts, is the business manager. And, Leinweber said, the Gardens “worked through” COVID-19 challenges with no layoffs or reduction in staff.

In 2015, the Gardens’ name evolved from International Friendship Gardens to Friendship Botanic Gardens to *“indicate a stronger emphasis on educational pursuits, to attract a wider and younger audience, and to signify the new direction in which the gardens are being taken,”* as stated in Stodola’s book.

“I take a big leadership role,” he said. “We get things done. I run it like a business. It took us a couple of years before we could take a deep breath.”

Leinweber has secured impressive donations from community supporters, including the Barker



The Celebration Pavilion

Welfare Foundation, Healthcare Foundation of LaPorte, Horizon Bank, Marquiss Electric, Arcelor-Mittal and the Michigan City Re-development Corp. Additionally, the family of Leinweber and his partner of 41 years, James Laughlin, have made sizeable monetary donations to the Gardens' rejuvenation, especially in the beginning of their involvement to kick-start the project.

Leinweber and Laughlin first purchased a weekend and summer home in Long Beach in 1981. Leinweber's interest in the area was piqued after hearing his mother's stories of her family travels here in the 1920s and 1930s. The couple permanently moved to the area in 2006 and currently own homes in Michiana Shores and Florida, as well as Firefly Farm, a picturesque 300-acre property situated in the countryside between Michigan City and LaPorte that also encompasses Swede Lake. At the farm, Leinweber's daughter, Jeanie Shuck, operates Firefly Adventures, which offers customized experiential pro-



Jonathan Searles' "Ribbon" sculpture at the front entrance gate.

gramming for individuals, groups and businesses via day camps, classes, workshops and retreats.

With his two local homes, Leinweber considers it "dual citizenship."

He especially appreciates the topography, dunes, forests, nature, proximity and the people.

"I think it's nice to live in a small community. People take care of each other here," he said. "This is where I belong. I'm a Hoosier.

"I should have been a farmer – I love it here," he added, laughing.

Over the years, Leinweber has served on the boards of the former Healthcare Foundation of LaPorte Hospital (now Healthcare Foundation of LaPorte) and United Way of LaPorte County. He currently is a board member of the Barker Civic Center Commission.

Friendship Botanic Gardens further serves the community through its many educational and cultural events. There's the popular Easter Egg-Stravaganza Egg Walk, which

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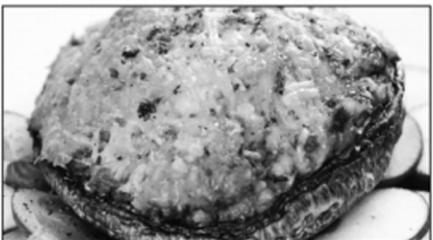
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Force of Nature

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The Chinese Bridge.

draws 2,000 participants. Although this spring's event was canceled due to the pandemic, the event is rescheduled for Aug. 2. Other successful events include the Reptile Romp, Bug Safari, Butterfly Bonanza, Lyric Opera, Haunted Trails & Family Fall Fest, Native American Celebration and Thanksgiving Day Turkey Walk.

The local attraction reopened May 1 after its COVID-19 closure. Staff closely follow CDC guidelines for social distancing and sanitary measures. For visitors without a Garden membership, a no-contact, call-in procedure is in place at the Welcome Cabin. Although some funding has been affected and some projects delayed because of COVID-19, none are critical. By the end of the month, all walking trails will be asphalted to better accommodate wheelchairs, walkers and strollers. Next May, plans involve offering kayaking along Trail Creek.

These are just a fraction of the improvements since Leinweber's involvement.

During four phases beginning in 2016, the popular ArcelorMittal Children's Garden was added for educational play experiences. Children can enjoy a playground set with slides, a wooden tower and climbing walls, in addition to a hydraulic pump to teach the origins of water, a butterfly garden, a garden of senses and permanently installed xylophones in the sound garden. A recent addition is the Whimsical Cabin, where children can watch a honeybee colony through an observation window. A new sculpture, "Cubist-Still Life with Figure," donated by Leinweber and Laughlin, adds beauty to the garden.

In 2018, the Gardens added the Horizon Bank A-Maze-Ing Labyrinth Garden. It consists of 500 chokeberry bushes visitors can use as a tranquil place of meditation, reflection, prayer or simply as a fun maze to master.

The new Healthcare Foundation of LaPorte Fitness Garden includes 13 cardiovascular aerobic

and anaerobic exercise machines overlooking Trail Creek. Last fall, a 28-foot fountain that shines with multi-colored lights at night was added to Lake Lucerne. The Barker Welfare Foundation made this possible.

The Gardens also are home to nine ethnic gardens, including the Romanian Garden, French Garden and Lithuanian Garden. Other groups, such as the Rotary Club of Michigan City, also maintain gardens.

Of significant importance is the first major structure built on the Gardens in nearly 100 years: the Celebration Pavilion on the edge of Lake Lucerne and the Persian Rose Garden. It seats up to 250.

"One hundred years from now, this will still be standing," Leinweber said. "Whatever we put in here is going to be quality."

He shared his future vision for the Gardens: a building with a meeting room, office space, café, gardening library and more that would operate during winter months.

"I want to make Friendship Botanic Gardens a destination for Indiana. We are achieving it and everyone knows it. I see all these people enjoying it — we are doing something good," Leinweber said. "It's busy on weekends and on weekdays. Look what we've created in six years."



John Leinweber is photographed with Rima Binder, Friendship Botanic Gardens second vice president, at the 2017 annual Lithuanian Heritage Festival.



The Friendship Botanic Gardens board at the 2018 annual fundraising gala. From left are Dan Todd, Mary Fox, Dr. Kevin Egan, Leslie Samelson, Craig Phillips, John Leinweber, Dale Maher, Stuart Franzen, Alexander deHilster and Richard Houck III.



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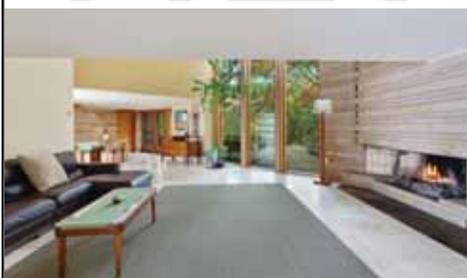
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For Fans of the Book, “Artemis Fowl” is a Total Bummer

by Andrew Tallackson

Just as I feared.

“Artemis Fowl,” after languishing in movie limbo for nearly two decades, is streaming on Disney+, banished from theaters not because of COVID-19... but because it’s a mess. A hot one.

Oh sure, there are times when Kenneth Branagh’s slick extract from Eoin Colfer’s fantasy series gets it right. And kids bored silly from self-isolation may be mildly entertained. Anyone who adored the book, though, will feel like they’ve been kicked in the teeth.

What the heck happened? The first book in Colfer’s eccentric series – the author describes it as “Die Hard” with fairies – is not like adapting “War and Peace.” All it requires is imagination and a wry sense of humor, something the clumsy script by Conor McPherson and Hamish McColl is sorely missing.

Among other things.

The book is about a snarky, über-smart 12-year-old criminal — left to his own devices amid a missing father and depressed mother — who believes abducting a fairy is the means to finding his father. That prompts a battalion from the fairy world, hiding in secret near the Earth’s core, to stake out Fowl Manor: a hostage crisis, but with fairies, dwarves and elves.

It takes 40 minutes into the movie’s scant 95-minute length before anything resembling the book emerges. Before then, we get curious black-and-white narration from a supporting character, news that Artemis’ mother apparently is dead, and father-son bonding between Artemis (Ferdia Shaw) and his father (Colin Farrell), who in the series doesn’t turn up until Book 2. We have fairy Commander Root: male in the book, here played by Oscar-winner Judi Dench, looking like she’s still pissed at having to appear in “Cats.” We get a villain, Opal Kobai, who in the series doesn’t arrive until Book 2, but here is envisioned as a hooded ninja chasing some nonsense called the Oculus.

On the page, Artemis is frequently one step ahead of his otherworldly pursuers. Here, he’s sort of a wimp. His bodyguard, Butler (Nonso Anozie), sturdy and unflappable in the book, is prone to fits of crying in the movie. Foaly (Nikesh Patel), the hi-

lariously overconfident centaur from the book, is tragically disposable on film.

Branagh’s vision of Haven City, though, enhanced by oodles of computer animation, is just as we envisioned it: dark, cavernous, with flashes of light humor. And when Artemis and Butler kidnap fairy police captain Holly Short (Lara McDonnell,



“Artemis Fowl”

Running time: 95 minutes. Rated PG for fantasy action/peril and some rude humor

well-cast), the movie snaps into action, finally existing as coherent storytelling. Branagh stages the fairy-police arrival with nifty effects and dry Celtic humor. We also realize that Josh Gad (Olaf from “Frozen”), as dwarf con-artist Mulch Diggums, is the only actor who appears to be having fun. He has the right energy, the most aggressive spirit of humor, that this series deserves.

I kept reminding myself during “Artemis Fowl” to relax, give it a chance. Movies are a different beast. They adapt. Consolidate. And I’m OK with that. At the very least, honor the author’s vision.

But by that account, “Artemis Fowl” hasn’t got a clue.

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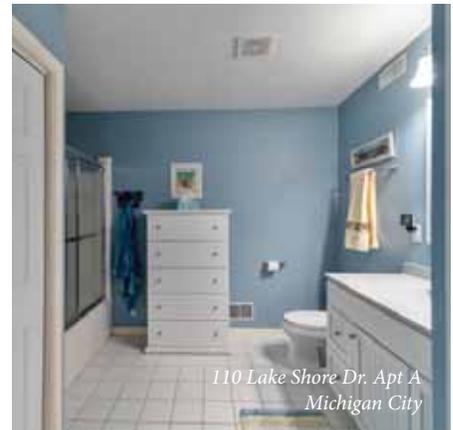
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“Spelling the Dream” Takes Inspiring Look at Indian Americans at National Bee

by Andrew Tallackson



Akash is the youngest contestant profiled in the Netflix documentary “Spelling the Dream.”

“Spelling the Dream” transforms a competitive arena that’s been covered to death into a surprisingly relevant and consistently uplifting experience.

The focus of this new Netflix documentary is the Scripps National Spelling Bee. The event, itself, can be seen on ESPN. The 2002 documentary “Spellbound” exhaustively interviewed youngsters in the 1999 competition, deleted scenes on the DVD release including Michigan City’s own Cody Pagels. The 2006 feature film “Akeelah and the Bee” remains a family favorite.

What “Spelling the Dream” explores is the surge in young Indian Americans as the event’s victors. Last year, in fact, saw top honors going to eight contestants, seven of whom were Indian American. Director Sam Rega takes a brisk look — the film is only 82 minutes — at the how and why of this trend, in the process conveying the spirit of the American Dream at its best.

The film attributes numerous factors to the shift in Indian Americans repeatedly triumphing at the national bee. Indian Americans arriving here and embracing immigrant dreams of American success. Indian-American children being fluent in more than one language. Spelling bees being a competitive event in which Indian-American children can flourish. And, in the best examples of what defines a supportive family, parents and siblings who back their children at every turn, and offer love, comfort and reassurance when they fall short of their dreams.

We meet a few of the kids. Akash is the youngest: adorable, precocious to the extreme, versatile to the

★ ★ ★ 1/2

“Spelling the Dream”

Running time: 82 minutes. Rated TV-G

point of appearing on “Dancing With the Stars.” Shourav, called the “Michael Jordan of spelling” by friends, wrestles with being overly confident. Ashrita is more subdued, honored her friends find her inspiring.

The movie does not shy away from the fallout of Indian-American children dominating the competition. Ugly, hateful comments dashed off in tweets that, ironically, are riddled with misspellings by smug white American adults. Rega, as director,

probably should have explored this issue in greater detail. The parent in me wanted to know how the parents of these children, who want nothing more than the best for their children, shield them, if at all possible, from such blatantly racist behavior.

Then again, Rega wants you leaving his film inspired. And you do, filled with images of parents leaping with joy when their children succeed, and hugging them without fail after they’re eliminated from the event. The American dream, at its best.

Contact Andrew Tallackson at drew@thebeacher.com



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Read and follow the instructions on the machine itself to avoid injury. Also, Health Commissioner Kristina Box encouraged patrons to remember social distancing and hand washing/hand sanitizer usage.

The equipment at Luhr is by the pond under the Kiwanis Shelter among the other fitness equipment, playground and kids fitness equipment. The one at Creek Ridge is under the Greenburg Shelter close to the trail and not far from the playground.

County parks are open from 7 a.m. to sunset daily.



The fitness equipment at Luhr County Park under the Kiwanis Shelter.

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The History Museum and adjoining Studebaker National Museum have reopened, resuming normal operating hours.

The schedule is (all times Eastern): 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday and noon to 5 p.m. Sunday.



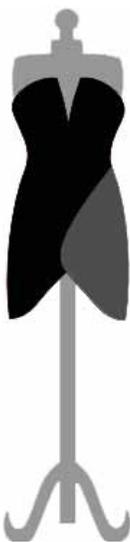
Interim Executive Director Brian Harding said in a press release while the museum was closed, staff sanitized galleries, walkways and visitor spaces. In accordance with St. Joseph County guidelines, visitors are required to wear masks when in the museum. For added protection, staff will wear masks when in public areas. Protective plexiglass windows are in place where tickets are sold. Signs remind that social distancing is in effect, and hand sanitizer is available.

The Oliver Mansion, Worker's Home and Kids-first Children's Museum remain closed due to social-distancing restrictions. Touchscreens and tactile exhibits have been temporarily removed or modified for safety.

Exhibits include:

- "World Famous: The Olivers and the American Dream," which tells the story of the Oliver family, its worldwide business and the community in which they lived.
- "The Final Frontier: Bendix and the Apollo Program," which details critical contributions of South Bend's Bendix Corp. to the Apollo missions.
- "Full Circle: Shakespearean Culture at Notre Dame."
- "Polished in Public, Fierce on the Field," which offers the history of the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League.

Admission is \$10 for adults, \$8.50 for seniors, \$6 for youth 6-17 and free for members. Admission also is free to health-care providers and first responders for the remainder of the year. Visitors can experience the adjoining Studebaker National Museum for an additional cost. The History Museum is located at 808 W. Washington St. Visit historymuseumSB.org or call (574) 235-9664 for more details.



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LB Civic President: Health, Safety Concerns Nixed July 4th Events

by Andrew Tallackson

The decision was not made lightly. Who in Long Beach, after all, does *not* relish the bond of family and friends, the sense of community, that come alive amid Fourth of July festivities?

But in early May, the Long Beach Civic Association canceled the annual celebration that includes a parade, food, fellowship, music and fireworks. This would have marked the event's 46th year. But as we all know, 2020 also is the year COVID-19 changed life as we know it, introducing concepts like social distancing and generating legitimate health-and-safety concerns within the general populace.

Even amid Gov. Eric Holcomb's Back on Track Indiana Plan, proceeding with the July 4th event yielded too great a risk, Long Beach Civic Association President John Mengel says. That's why options such as rescheduling, or waiting until closer to the actual date to decide, were discarded.

"The truth is, if there's a chance that we could infect just one person, the whole celebration's not worth it," Mengel told *The Beacher*. "My thought was, what would be most unfair is to pull the plug two weeks beforehand, when people had already planned around being here for the 4th. So for me, the earlier we do it, the better it is."



John Mengel (left) with Ed Verona.

"This thing is not going away anytime soon," he continued. "It's not going away until there is a vaccine and we get vaccinated. But for a lot of people, this could be a death sentence."

Mengel, a Long Beach resident for 43 years, has been a civic-association member for more than 15 years. Along with sponsoring July 4th festivities, the group considers nominees for parade marshal. It also plays a key role in the betterment of the Long Beach community, from restoring historical pillars on Lake Shore Drive and "Stop" signs to sponsoring "Movie in the Park" and buying new playground equipment at the town center.

Independence Day in Long Beach is an event steeped in tradition. Early, before the parade kicks off, the Higdon family presents the Old School Run, a 5K run or walk with no advance registration. The low-key event is more about fun, about reconnecting



Participants in the 2019 Long Beach July 4th Parade. Beacher file photo

with community, than it is about victors and prizes.

The parade, which embraces themed golf carts, bicycles, strollers, wagons, floats and walkers, kicks off at 10 a.m. Afterward, the crowd gathers in and around the food, music and information booths, the line for brats and hot dogs winding through throngs of people. Live music sounds from performers, while families spread out blankets nearby, laughing, gabbing with family and friends. Later that day, at dusk, they congregate at the golf course with countless others to witness the spectacle of elaborately staged fireworks.

Traditions exit within *The Beacher* as well. Amid all the festivities, we've photographed the same

group of women for 25 years or so.

Heidi Thibideau, Kelley Bruemmer, Abbey Neary, Laura Horn and Barbara Bates have been friends since childhood. Now in their 40s and with families of their own, they live everywhere from California, to Chicago, to Indianapolis, to LaPorte County. Nonetheless, they make it a point to see each other at Christmas and July 4. And, somehow, some way over the years the five always managed to have their picture taken by *The Beacher*.

Upon learning the July 4th festivities were canceled, the five had a group conference call, Thibideau said, everyone agreeing to find a way to see each other over the holiday while embracing social-dis-



The Beacher photographs these five women every year during July 4th festivities. Plans are under way to still publish a photo of them this year.

tancing practices.

"It's a tradition, and such a fun thing to look forward to," Thibideau said of July 4th in Long Beach. "This year, we will make the most of it. The most important thing is, we're all healthy and well. We'll figure out a way to be together this season."

(Plans are afoot for the ladies to send *The Beacher* a photo of them socially distanced together July 4.)

Mengel estimates between 3,500 and 5,000 people attend the festivities, depending on the weather, and which day of the week the holiday falls. Calling himself "the guy who cooks the brats," Mengel says the event each year includes up to 3,000 brats and 1,500 hot dogs. Volunteers begin cooking the food at 7 a.m., not just the brats and hot dogs, but also the diced onions and buckets of beer to flavor the brats. By the time the parade concludes, everything is about ready to go.

The event includes assistance with cleanup from local Boy Scouts. Individual contributions come into play. Brats and hot dogs are purchased at discounts from Al's supermarkets, the tents and tables contracted with Kabelin Ace Hardware, Mengel said. When the parade is over and it's party time, everyone brings friends to sample the food and enjoy the music. Subsequently, he said, social distancing is impossible.

That is why, he continued, canceling this year's event was the best course of action.

"Everyone came to the same realization," Mengel said, "that this is really unfortunate that we're in this situation, but what would be a *more* unfortunate situation...is to have one more person get sick."

Contact Andrew Tallackson at drew@thebeacher.com

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Fernwood Botanical Garden is open to the public, with an online, timed ticketing system created to maintain maximum safety and social distancing.

Everyone, including members, must schedule visits using online ticketing beforehand. No walkups are allowed.

The majority of Fernwood's staff worked off site March 17-June 2 in response to COVID-19 and subsequent stay-at-home orders. The plan for reopening provides for safe accessibility for staff and volunteers as well. Staff have cleaned and disinfected commonly touched surfaces. The Visitors Center remains closed, so check-in is held outdoors.

Fernwood's reopening plan reflects guidelines suggested for all public gardens published in May by the American Public Gardens Association.

Fernwood visitation information and guidelines are available at www.fernwoodbotanical.org. All dates and guidelines will be evaluated and adjusted if needed while monitoring ongoing local health and safety concerns.

Fernwood's hours are (all times Eastern) 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday and noon-5 p.m. Sundays. It is closed Mondays. The garden is located at 13988 Range Line Road, Niles, Mich. Call (269) 695-6491 for more details.

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3. Avoid damage to the roots. Large trucks cause soil compaction and digging up roots cause frayed wounds that can't heal and create access points for pathogens (fungi) that start root rot and weaken the trees structural stability. Lawn mowers can also cause damage to the root flares.
4. Protect the roots out to the drip line from any activity other than foot traffic. The drip line is simply the outside edge of the canopy. On a mature open grown oak, it can be a circle of 60 feet in diameter.
5. Consult an ISA Certified Arborist before doing anything to your tree.

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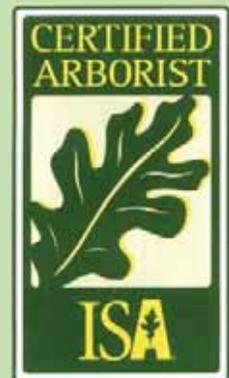
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“Homecoming” Season 2 is More

by Andrew Tallackson

The first season of Amazon Prime’s “Homecoming” made for good, but not necessarily great television. Bolstered by star wattage from Julia Roberts, along with charismatic work by newcomer Stephan James, the 10-episode series faithfully recreated the dread of 1970s conspiracy-theory thrillers.

It also was about four episodes too long: a compelling premise diluted by scenes that felt like killing time. The pretentious style needlessly filmed present-day scenes with iPhone crampness, and lifted musical scores from the ‘70s and ‘80s that geeks like myself recognized, but otherwise clashed with the tone of the material.

So it comes as a surprise that I found Season 2 of “Homecoming” more satisfying than its predecessor. Actually, calling it Season 1.5 would be apt, as the action overlaps with previous events, new characters mingling with the old. At only seven episodes, the length is more compact, the performances more persuasive. The style is consistent, with one *holy moly* twist at the end.

The first season of “Homecoming,” which debuted in late 2018, would have been at home with classic paranoia thrillers like Francis Ford Coppola’s “The Conversation” (1974) and Brian DePalma’s “Blow Out” (1981). Alternating between past and present — about a four-year gap — the story centers on Homecoming Transitional Support Center, which on the surface helps returning veterans cope with

PTSD, but in actuality wipes them clean of any war memories so they can return to combat with no emotional baggage. Driving the mystery is Heidi Bergman (Roberts), who in the present works as a waitress with little memory of her past. Four years earlier, she was a social worker for Homecoming, not quite clear about her facility’s true purpose. The



Janelle Monáe stars as a woman who wakes up in a rowboat with no memory of her past.

scenes between Bergman and veteran Walter Cruz (James) were the core of the series. The two actors were electrifying, the relationship between social worker and client teetering between empathy and attraction.

A bulk of the present-day scenes, though, involved a U.S. Department of Defense auditor (Shea Whigham) closing in on Bergman and Homecoming, with several episodes amounting to little more than filler, as if the show was dragging its feet before unleashing the goods.

Nothing sluggish about Season 2, though. The first shot, in fact, and it’s off to the races.

A woman awakens in a rowboat floating in a serene lake surrounded by mountains. Who is she, and how did she end up there? That is the mystery. The woman, whose name may be Alex, is played by Janelle Monáe (“Hidden Figures,” “Moonlight”),



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and her early confusion yields little answers, only flashes of information mostly propelled by acts of violence.

A mystery like “Homecoming” is all about the details, about seemingly unconnected pieces of a puzzle firmly locking into place. Any review is like an exercise in tripping over the spoilers. Suffice it to say, the woman is linked to Homecoming and Geist

made clear last time around, Season 2 can focus on the delicious enigma surrounding Alex, specifically, is she the hero, or the *anti-hero*, of her own story? Monae’s performance is potent, particularly in flashbacks that reveal detail by detail her link to the Geist Group. Suitably intense, with a few moments of vulnerability, this is proof Monae has the chops to pull off tougher material.

We appreciate, as well, the way this season weaves Walter into the fray. His presence yields a resolution that, once the cat is out of the bag, makes you gasp, then laugh — in a good way — at the ingenuity of it. Talk about a juicy payoff!

Amazon Prime initially ordered two seasons of “Homecoming,” the first season lifted from a podcast by Eli Horowitz and Micah Bloomberg. Season 2 brings this saga to a close. This is it. No more story to tell. Any ensuing seasons will have to start over from scratch.

My two cents? Stop while they’re ahead. This is as good a finish as any.



Oscar-winner Chris Cooper co-stars as Leonard Geist, the owner of the drug at the core of “Homecoming.”

Emergent Group, whose farm yielded the crop required for the Homecoming memory-loss drug.

We are reacquainted with Audrey Temple (Hong Chau), a Geist assistant with ideas of her own on profiting from the drug. That puts her in direct conflict with owner Leonard Geist, played by Oscar-winner Chris Cooper (“Adaptation,” “A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood”) in full Chris Cooper mode: grizzled, foul-mouthed, physically incapable of smiling. Leonard, it appears, was never fully informed of how his drug was being used...and he’s pissed off. James returns as Walter, his path crossing with Alex and Leonard. His story, it seems, is not quite over. Oh, and lest we forget perpetual scene-stealer Joan Cusack (“School of Rock”) as Francine Bunda, a foul-mouthed DOD rep with her sights set on the Homecoming drug.

Enough fuel for 10 conspiracy fires.

However, with Homecoming’s sinister intentions

Contact Andrew Tallackson at drew@thebeacher.com



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Footlight Announces Award Winners, Hall of Famer, Board

Footlight Players has announced the winners in its 12th annual awards ceremony.

Because of COVID-19, no banquet was held. Nonetheless, the winners are:

- **BEST LEAD ACTOR:** Dean Johanson, "Last of the Red Hot Lovers."
- **BEST LEAD ACTRESS:** Brittney Urban, "Gypsy."
- **BEST FEATURED ACTOR:** Andrew Vendl, "Doublewide, Texas."
- **BEST FEATURED ACTRESS:** Laura Meyer, "Doublewide, Texas."
- **BEST DIRECTOR:** Robert W. Komendera, "Doublewide, Texas."
- **BEST NEWCOMER:** Danielle Bilderback, "Doublewide, Texas."
- **BEST MUSIC/VOCAL DIRECTOR:** Lee C. Meyer, "Gypsy."
- **BEST CHOREOGRAPHER:** Laura Meyer, "Gypsy."
- **BEST SET DESIGN:** Floyd Colosky, "Doublewide, Texas."
- **BEST LIGHTING DESIGN:** Chris West, "Doublewide, Texas."
- **BEST SOUND DESIGN:** Declan Rice, "Doublewide, Texas."
- **BEST COSTUME DESIGN:** Sharon Kienitz,

"Doublewide, Texas."

- **BEST HAIR/MAKEUP DESIGN:** David Wilkes, "Doublewide, Texas."
- **BEST SCENIC ARTIST:** Joy Davidson, "Doublewide, Texas."
- **BEST SET DRESSER:** David Mikolajczyk, "Last of the Red Hot Lovers."

Chris West, the newly elected Footlight president, was inducted into the Hall of Fame for his service and for serving as building manager, lighting and sound department manager and on many committees.

Hailing from Danville, Ill., West moved to Michigan City for a job offer at Sullair, where he currently works as a warranty manager. He followed his wife, Lara, and daughter, Katelyn, to Footlight, becoming an integral part in 2018's "Annie." Technically, he has helped with almost every show, even trying acting during "A Doublewide, Texas Christmas" as the voice of Harley Dobbs. He has won Footlight Awards for Best Lighting Design for "The Drowsy Chaperone" and "Musical of Musicals, The Musical," Best Sound Design for "Dark of the Moon" and received the President's Award in 2019.



West

Also, Thom Nelson received the President's Award. He had been involved with Footlight since the 1993 production of "Mack and Mable." He was instrumental in renovating Footlight Theater, serving as a board member, working on many committees and making sure the group was entered in the summer and winter parades in Michigan City. He has appeared in "Jake's Women," "Fan Mail," "Two By Two," "Moonglow" and "The Mystery of Edwin Drood."

Footlight also has announced its new slate of board members/officers:

- President: Chris West.
- Vice President: Laura Meyer.
- Secretary: Tom LeDonne.
- Treasurer: William Wild.
- Board members-at-large: Denise Barkow, Bobbi Ann Lauritsen, Janice Rice.

The plan as of now is to open the 71st season with "Steel Magnolias" the first two weekends in September, followed by "The Miracle on South Division Street" in November, "Jerry's Girls" in February, "Drinking Habits" in April and "The Sound of Music" in June. The theater will follow recommended safety guidelines required because of COVID-19.

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“Made in Michiana,” “Martins in the Field” at MMAA

Midwest Museum of American Art will host “Made in Michiana: 40+ Years of the Best of Show” through Sunday, Aug. 2.

The exhibit includes sculpture, paintings and ceramics from the Elkhart Juried Regional Exhibitions and acquired for the MMAA Permanent Collection. Forty-three works are highlighted in the commemorative effort.

Every year since 1979, the museum has collected what the jurors of each Elkhart Juried Regional Exhibition have awarded as “Best of Show.” In 1993, the award was divided between three participants, thus accumulating two additional pieces for the collection. The museum purchases the Best of Show award for its permanent collection, with acquisition funds provided by museum patrons. Past recipients include Abner Hershberger, Bill Kremer, Tom Meuninck, A.J. Nafziger and Dora Natella.

Also running through Aug. 2 is “Karen Bondarchuk: Martins in the Field.”

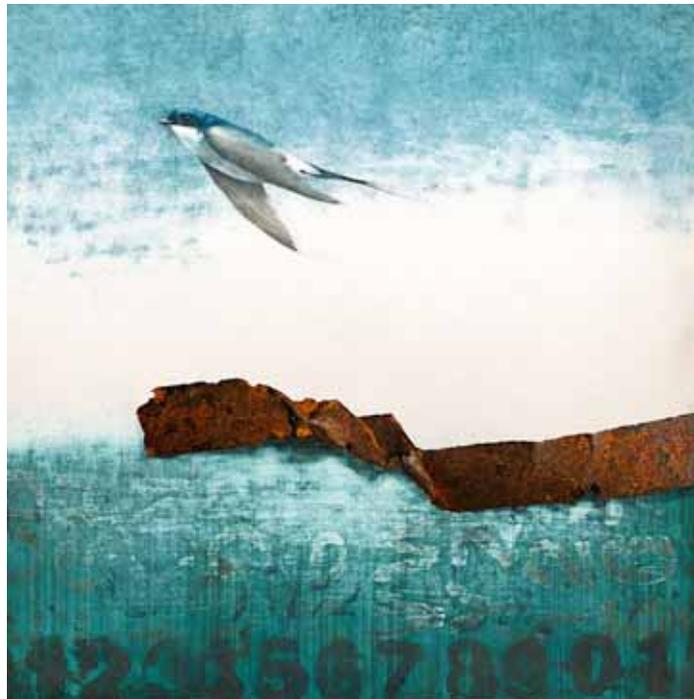
A Canadian visual artist living and working in the United States, she has exhibited widely in the U.S., Canada, England, France, Italy and India. She is a professor and foundation coordinator in the Frostic School of Art at Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, Mich.

Bondarchuk said in a press release the series is a metaphor for her mother’s personal journey of dislocation, resilience and dealing with Alzheimer’s disease.

“My mother’s maiden name was Martin, which initially inspired the use of the common house martin in these works, a bird my mother would certainly have known as a girl in London in the 1930s and ’40s,” she said.

Admission is: \$10 per adult; \$6 for ages 8-12; and \$8 for ages 13-18 and college students with ID. Hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. EDT Tuesday through Friday. The museum will not open on the weekends until after July 5, providing there is no further escalation in the COVID-19 pandemic.

The museum is located at 429 S. Main St.,



One of the works featured in “Karen Bondarchuk: Martins in the Field.”



Works included in “Made in Michiana: 40+ Years of the Best of Show.”

Elkhart. Email info@midwestmuseum.us or call (574) 293-6660 for details.

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Beach Area Business Reopenings

The following beach-area businesses have reopened in adherence with the "Back on Track Indiana Plan":

- Art+Science Works, 622 Franklin St., Tuesday-Saturday, 11 a.m.-5 p.m.
- Beach Bum Jewels, 622 Franklin St., Tuesday-Saturday, 11 a.m.-5 p.m.
- The Closet By Franklin Vintage & Chef Bizzaro Millinery, 717 Franklin St., Suite A, noon-5 p.m. Thursday through Saturday. Appointments can be made on days the stores are not open.
- Elle Salon, 113 W. Eighth St., Tuesday-Thursday, 10 a.m.-8 p.m., Friday, 10 a.m.-6 p.m., and Saturday, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.
- Hoity Toity, 731 Franklin St., Sunday-Monday, 11 a.m.-4 p.m., Tuesday-Saturday, 10 a.m.-6 p.m.
- Lake Life Social, 622 Franklin St., Tuesday-Saturday, 11 a.m.-5 p.m.
- Paris House of Bridal, 728 Franklin St. No walk-ins at this time; appointment only, with face masks required.
- Static Age, 621 Franklin St., Sunday-Monday, 11 a.m.-3 p.m., Tuesday-Saturday, 11 a.m.-5 p.m.
- Taverna Tonelli, 521 Franklin St., Tuesday-Sunday, 4-10 p.m.

Any beach-area businesses who would like to be included here can email the information to drew@thebeacher.com

Dunes Learning Center

With COVID-19 resulting in the cancellation of Dunes Learning Center summer camps, local youth now can purchase a Basic Nature Adventure Time Kit or NatKit shipped directly to them.

The NatKit box includes more than six hours of activities geared toward 8- to 13-year-olds, including experiments and scavenger hunts.

The Full Experience Kit includes more than four hours of interactive Zoom experiences on June 29-July 3. Children meet with naturalists in digital trail groups, bringing the total to more than 10 hours of activities.

The Basic NatKit costs \$49.95 plus shipping. The Full Experience NatKit costs \$99.95 plus shipping.

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Play Day Golf Outing

LaPorte Economic Advancement Partnership will host the 46th Annual Play Day Golf Outing on Friday, July 17, at Briar Leaf Golf Club, 3233 Indiana 39, LaPorte.

LEAP will adhere to social-distancing protocols. The outing begins with registration at 8 a.m., followed by a shotgun start at 9 a.m. The cost is \$595 for a team of four LEAP members. Sponsorship opportunities exist. The outing also will include several contests, including: Hole in One, Longest Drive, Fastest Hole and Putting.

Anyone who prefers not to be photographed should call (219) 324-8584 or email lindsayj@laportepartnership.com.

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Prayer to the Blessed Virgin

(Never known to fail.)



Oh, most beautiful flower of Mt. Carmel, fruitful vine, splendor of Heaven, Blessed Mother of the Son of God, Immaculate Virgin, assist me in my necessity. Oh, Star of the 'Sea, help me and show me, herein you are my mother. Oh Holy Mary, Mother of God, Queen of Heaven and Earth! I humbly beseech you from the bottom of my heart to succor me in this necessity. There are none that can withstand your power. Oh, show me herein you are my mother. Oh Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee (3x). Holy Mother, I place this cause in your hands (3x). Holy Spirit, you who solve all problems, light all roads so that I can attain my goal. You who gave me the divine gift to forgive and forget all evil against me and that in all instances in my life you are with me. I want in this short prayer to thank you for all things as you confirm once again that I never want to be separated from you in Eternal Glory. Thank you for your mercy toward me and mine. The person must say this prayer 3 consecutive days. After 3 days, the request will be granted. This prayer must be published after the favor is granted.



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NB Library Online Programs

The Friends of the New Buffalo Library continues its Community Forum virtual lectures with a Zoom presentation on Southwest Michigan winemaking at 7 p.m. EDT Tuesday, June 23.

The presentation by wine expert Rick Cooper and The Region of Three Oaks Museum's Nick Bogert explores how local vintners struggled to keep up with changing American palettes and modern marketing strategies.

Bob Myers of the Historical Society of Michigan returns via Zoom with a presentation on Harriet Quimby at 7 p.m. EDT Tuesday, July 7. Born in western Michigan, Quimby was the first woman in America to win a pilot's license (1911), and the first woman to fly the English Channel. She traveled as a feature writer for *Leslie's Illustrated Magazine*, wrote screenplays for five motion pictures (all directed by D.W. Griffith, including one that starred Mary Pickford), drove her own car and lived in a posh Manhattan hotel.

Forum programs will return to the library's Pokagon Room as soon as the state permits larger indoor gatherings and the library board reopens the room for public programs. Until then, plans are to continue using online platforms. Visit the library's Facebook page for log-in information.

Krasl Art Center Call for Artists

Krasl Art Center aims to showcase select regional artist projects created because of the COVID-19 executive shelter-in-place orders.

Projects will be displayed in KAC's artlab gallery through an intimate group exhibit. The artlab is a 367-square-foot venue dedicated to experimentation, installation and contemporary art.

Projects may reflect:

- Innovations in materials due to limited access to supplies.
- Shifts in content or concepts because of shelter in place.
- An increase in time available to devote to artistic practice, resulting in new work.

The exhibit will allow: original works and artist projects; individual and collaborative projects; all media; and a suggested limitation of one to three artworks per artist/art collaborative. Submit a brief description of the work(s) or project proposed, digital images of the proposed work (informal photos are OK) and a brief artist statement or link to artist website. The submission deadline is July 6, with artists notified by July 20. Works must be delivered by Aug. 24, the exhibit dates being Sept. 4-Nov. 29.

KAC is located at 707 Lake Blvd., St. Joseph, Mich. Visit <https://krasl.org/art/artist-opportunities/> for more information.





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LBCC Women's Golf Leagues



9-Hole League

June 4, 2020

Event: Low Net

Flight A

First Place: Carol Hennessey
Second Place: Donna Hennard, Eunie Nondorf
Low Putts: Paulette Harnach

Flight B

First Place: Jean Guerin
Second Place: Dottie Healy
Low Putts: Dottie Healy, Linda Wilson

Flight C

First Place: Sarah Blank
Second Place: Gloria McMahon
Low Putts: Gloria McMahon

18-Hole League

June 2, 2020

Event: Putting

"A" Flight

First Place: Melanie Davis
Second Place: Sue Luegers
Third Place: Cindy Levy

"B" Flight

First Place: Claudia Brennan
Second Place: Donna Hennard
Third Place: Linda Berringer

"C" Flight

First Place: Kathy Chlystun, Nancy Trainor
Second Place: Carol Sullivan
Third Place: Diane Rubey

LaLu Announces In-Person Classes

La Lumiere School is set to welcome students back to campus in mid-August for the 2020-2021 school year.

Head of School Adam Kronk announced the plan for in-person learning by email to the school community. He and his leadership team are devising a comprehensive strategy to mitigate as many risks as possible, including outdoor learning, temperature taking, virus/antibody testing, tracing, sanitizing, distancing and quarantining as necessary.

Advance preparations due to COVID-19 include examining the best available data on the virus, receiving guidance from health-care professionals and experts, and direct feedback from staff, students and families.

In-person classes will run until Thanksgiving break; afterward, students will complete final reviews and assessments remotely. Details on the spring semester will be solidified as the year progresses and updated information is available.

La Lumiere School is located at 6801 N. Wilhelm Road, LaPorte.

Michigan City Municipal Band

The 2020 Michigan City Municipal Band summer concert series is canceled due to health concerns related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The decision was based on health considerations for band members.

“We measured the performance space in the amphitheater. Following general physical distancing guidelines of at least 6 feet between people, we would only be able fit about half the band on the stage,” conductor Jeff Doebler said in a press release. “Experts on aerosols are suggesting that 9 to 15 feet between musicians would be safer.”

Doebler continued.

“Throughout the pandemic, we have been researching safe practices for musicians and audiences,” he said. “It would not be difficult for our Washington Park audiences to stay safe, as long as they adhered to physical distancing.

“Unfortunately, none of the papers, commentaries or videos released thus far about the aerosol distribution from musical instruments is based on peer-reviewed scientific study. Fortunately, more than 85 professional music associations are collaborating to fund empirical research that will be undertaken at the University of Colorado-Boulder and the University of Maryland. Colorado State University is planning a similar inquiry.”

The first concert of the 2021 season is scheduled for Thursday, June 10.



The American Red Cross LaPorte County Chapter will sponsor the following bloodmobiles:

- LaPorte County Annex, 809 State St., LaPorte, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Friday, June 19.
- LaPorte Civic Auditorium, 1001 Ridge St., LaPorte, noon-5 p.m. Monday, June 22.

Donors must be in good general health and feeling well, at least 17 (16 with parental consent) and weigh at least 110 pounds. Call (800) 733-2767 or visit redcrossblood.org for more details. Visit rcblood.org together for more details.

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Music in the Park Series

A tentative schedule has been announced for the Music in the Park series in Three Oaks, Mich.

Shows start at 6:30 p.m. EDT at Dewey Cannon Park. The lineup is:

- June 20: David Herrero.
- June 27: Bergamot (90 minutes).
- July 4: Andrew Fisher (90 minutes).
- July 11: Cielita Lindo (90 minutes).
- July 18: School of American Music.
- July 25: Modern Vultures.
- Aug. 1: Dehurricane duo.
- Aug. 8: Warren Dunes.
- Aug. 15: David Lahm and Steve and Mary E.
- Aug. 22: Henhouse Prowlers.
- Aug. 29: Stealing the Farm.
- Sept. 5: The Newporters.

New Buffalo Farmers Market

Starting Friday, June 19, patrons of the New Buffalo Farmers Market can pick up pre-paid goods at Merchant and Whittaker streets.

Those interested in vendor applications should email abbykvoss@gmail.com. Visit www.newbuffalo.org for more details.



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Off the Book Shelf

by Sally Carpenter

The Jane Austen Society by Natalie Jenner (hardcover, \$26.99 retail in bookstores and online; also available as an eBook. 304 pages.)

“And the society itself sounded like a band of misfits with negligible expertise and no head for business: a country doctor, an old maid, a schoolmarm, a bachelor farmer, a fey auctioneer, a conflict-averse solicitor, a scullery maid, and one Hollywood movie star.”

So what do these people have in common? A love of all things Jane Austen, of course. As the above passage suggests, what possible hope is there for this diverse group to start a society in memory of their favorite author? Especially with Great Britain reeling from the aftermath of World War II. However, I’m getting ahead of myself...

Our story begins in 1932 when a young college student visits the small village of Chawton, county of Hampshire, England, to find Austen’s house. She is Mary Anne and she meets Adam, a local farmer. He shows her the house once owned by Austen’s brother, James, where Jane lived for 10 years, and a conversation ensues in which the young lady persuades him to try reading Pride & Prejudice, followed, of course, by Emma — her favorite.

They talk, and Mary Anne tells of her yearning to become an actress. Adam tells of having to leave college during World War I after his brothers were killed in the war and his father taken by the Spanish Flu in 1918. They take leave of each other, never thinking they will see each other again. Adam decides to give Austen a try...

The years pass, and soon it’s 1945. Dr. Benjamin Gray is the village’s most eligible widower, losing his wife four years earlier to a bizarre fall. His No. 1 patient is Adeline Grover, eight months pregnant and a war widow. Unfortunately, the baby dies and Adeline is bereft. Mistakenly, Dr. Gray blames himself for the baby’s death.

Meanwhile, Dr. Gray has remained friends with Andrew Forrester, childhood friend and now the local lawyer and solicitor for James Knight. For more than a century, the Knight family has owned the house and land where Jane Austen once lived. Andrew is the father of Frances, the “old maid” mentioned above. She has been under his thumb all her life, yet he blames her for not marrying and producing an heir for the estate.

Evie Stone, the scullery maid, has been secretly

cataloging the more than 2,000 books in the Knight family library. Many books are priceless, but the big find is a letter written by Jane Austen to her sister, Cassandra.

Mary Anne, meanwhile, now called Mimi, has become a huge box office success in Hollywood and wants to buy a cottage in Chawton.

How this diverse group gets together makes a fine story in itself. But the real main character here is Jane Austen herself. Seldom in literature does a writer produce works that have had such a profound effect on its readers as she has.

You’ll be surprised which member of the group comes up with the idea for a society, but suffice it to say, there is a rough beginning, some unexpected turns of fate that almost make the whole project fail, and a surprising, but mostly satisfying ending.

Austen’s characters not only make an impression on these readers, but they also can recite whole passages from their favorite book. Reading these books takes them away from their own troubles and sometimes helps them to cope with life — “What would Elizabeth Bennett do?” “How would Emma handle the situation?”

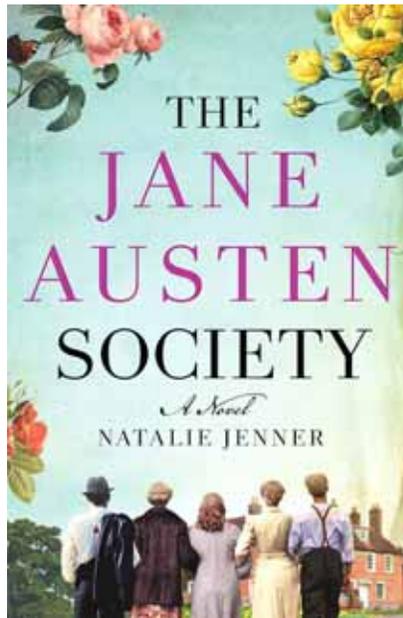
There is nothing trite about the story. Uplifting, it shows the power of the written word. We need books as much as they need us to read them.

They can bring people together to solve a problem or make a decision — as in the case of defying the odds to preserve Austen’s work through the Society. Yes, there is a connection these eight people have, finding out they are not so different from each other as they first thought, and through working together for a common cause, they forge a special bond.

This is a work of fiction — not historical fiction, but, according to her notes at the end of the book, Jenner tells us a Jane Austen Society was, indeed, founded in 1940 by Dorothy Darnell of Alton and continues to this day. The cottage Jane Austen lived in on her brother’s property was purchased and given to the nation of Great Britain in 1948 by a man whose son died in World War II.

That’s the information Jenner took from history to craft her own story. It is fine fiction and shows clearly the impact books can have on us. As one character put it, “...she was speaking about the characters as if they were real people. They had always seemed so alive to him — it had never occurred to him that anyone else might feel that way, too.”

Till next time, happy reading!



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Long Beach Trivia

Call, e-mail or DM us with your answer for a chance to win an exclusive Long Beach poster!

The answer will be revealed in the next issue.

Week 3: What did John Lloyd Wright design in 1931?

Week 2 Answer: Stop 20

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