



Volume 39, Number 48 Thursday, December 7, 2023

## Preserving Priceless Landscapes

*by Edmund Lawler*



Volunteers attack invasive species in March at Sugarwood Forest Preserve during a monthly stewardship workday.

**B**eyond the magnificent beaches, dunes and marinas along Lake Michigan's shores lies an equally striking ecosystem of woodlands, wetlands and farmlands that lends Berrien County, Mich., its rural and natural character.

Preserving more than 2,100 acres of the county's priceless open space and natural landscapes is Chikaming Open Lands, a non-profit organization that protects habitats for plants and animals such as wildlife corridors, breeding grounds and refuges for endangered species.

Humans also are welcome in 15 of the 21 nature

preserves where they can hike, bike, cross-country ski, bird watch, fish or simply contemplate nature's handiwork in the hush of a pine forest.

"People want to live in communities that have open space and parklands and preserved natural areas," says Ryan Postema, COL's executive director since 2016.

For nearly a quarter century, the organization has been preserving in perpetuity some of the special places in the southern half of Berrien County. COL is a member of Land Trust Alliance, which comprises nearly 1,000 conservancies throughout

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Ryan Postema has led Chikaming Open Lands since 2016. Photo by Edmund Lawler

## Preserving Priceless Landscapes

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the United States protecting lands and waters that benefit everyone.

**As its name suggests, COL is based in Chikaming Township, with its office along Red Arrow Highway in Sawyer, not far from Warren Dunes State Park. But its work extends well beyond Chikaming, which translates to “water” from one of the Algonquin languages.**

Postema allows that the organization’s name might be too limiting, considering its expansive strategic plans for the next 10 to 15 years. But the enormous goodwill and brand equity built up by Chikaming Open Lands is too valuable to risk for a rebranding at this point, he believes.

COL was founded in 1999 by Peter and Jeannie Van Nice and Steve and Jean Smith, two Chicago couples with second homes in Southwest Michigan. The name Chikaming Open Lands was inspired by another land trust: Openlands, a Chicago-based conservation organization.

Initially, COL was an all-volunteer organization primarily focused on improving water quality and protecting habitat in the Galien River Watershed in the southwest corner of Berrien County, more popularly known as Harbor Country. The conservancy is governed by a volunteer board of directors.

In 2009, COL hired Randall Rood as its first full-time executive director. He was succeeded in 2011 by Chris Thompson, who began building a full-time staff and developing programs that connected the community to nature. Postema, who has a degree in fisheries and wildlife from Michigan State University, joined the conservancy in 2013 as a land protection specialist. He was named executive director after Thompson’s death in 2016. COL honored Thompson’s memory in 2019 by naming a 49-acre tract in Three Oaks the Chris Thompson Memorial Preserve.

Bob Mueller, co-founder and treasurer of Harbor Country Hikers, says the hiking club is attracted to COL preserves because of its accessible trails.

“They build trails soon after acquiring a property,” he said. “They are just great places to hike.”

Many of their hikes have been led by Postema or members of his staff.

Among Mueller's favorite COL sites is Burns Prairie Preserve in Galien.

"COL has planted acres and acres of wildflowers," he says. "It's like walking through a Monet painting."

He adds that the "psychic benefits of hiking in the woods are significant. I know I feel a lot better when I've gone for a walk in the woods – and many people feel the same."

The area's natural beauty should not be taken for granted, Mueller says.

"I worry about what might have happened to some of these natural areas if they weren't preserved," he said. "They could have become residential or commercial developments. There is nothing wrong with that, but it's good to have protected open lands as well."



Volunteers blaze a trail in COL's newest property: the Myron Perlman Nature Preserve near Buchanan, Mich.

About half of COL's 2,100 acres is nature preserves acquired through donation or purchase, and are protected for a variety of conservation values, such as ensuring a wildlife habitat. Fifteen of the nature preserves are generally open to the public, but six are not fully open because their ecosystems are too fragile to withstand human visitation, or because the preserve is too small to support a trail system.

The other half of the acreage is what's known as conservation easements. Postema explains: "A conservation easement is a voluntary agreement with a private landowner that places restrictions and limitations on what can be done on the property to preserve some type of conservation value, for example, preserving the wildlife habitat or preserving forest area.

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“The primary limitations,” he explains, “are limited development on the property, limited subdivision of the property, as well as whatever the donor/landowner wants to protect.”

The agreement, Postema adds, is subject to negotiation between the owner’s goal for the property versus COL’s vision for it.

“For example, one landowner may not want to see any type of commercial timber harvest on their land. We might restrict that,” he explained. “But another landowner might be interested in doing commercial timber harvests for the economic value. Generally, that’s OK with us, provided there are guidelines and management plans for the harvest. For example, we would not want to see a clear cut, but rather a selective removal of trees that is sustainable.”

Postema says a conservation easement “can be hard to grasp sometimes and hard to see its benefit. But it does benefit the community by protecting wetlands or animal habitats, and by balancing development with ecology.”

Because COL’s 33 conservation easements are not open to the public, people don’t see tangible benefits. Except for a small plaque noting the easement, there is no signage, Postema says.

Landowners who agree to placing their property into a conservation easement often see income or property tax benefits, not to mention the psychic

benefits of knowing their land will be preserved forever in its current state.

For land acquisition and land protection, COL uses a mix of grant funding and individual contributions. For restoration or habitat-management projects, COL often seeks federal or state grant funding. At the state level, it has received grants from the Department of Natural Resources, Department of Environmental, Great Lakes and Energy and Department of Agriculture.

“For operational/building expenses, we are funded nearly entirely from gifts by individuals,” Postema says. “Our operating budget this year is just over a half a million dollars, with 90 percent of that coming from individuals.”

The conservancy also is building an endowment, which so far has gone untouched to allow funds to accrue.

Engaging the community at the grassroots level is critical to financing COL’s future, according to Postema. In addition to making most of its nature preserves available to the public with no entrance or parking fee, the organization aims to reach full-time residents, second homeowners, visitors and tourists with its mix of programming and educational outreach.

Under the direction of Grace Fredenburg, COL’s education and outreach coordinator, the organization sponsors a variety of community-focused activities to draw people to nature. Some come as volunteers, others visit simply to enjoy nature or participate in an activity in one of COL’s nature preserves.



Ryan Postema leads the “Winter Tree ID” event in Sugarwood Forest Preserve.

One of the most popular draws is the annual No. 10 Trail Challenge. More than 400 participants at the most recent event in July selected 10 of 15 trails that range from South Haven, Mich., to Valparaiso. Some trails are on COL preserves, but many are on trails in neighboring counties in Northwest Indiana and Southwest Michigan.

Hikers who register for the event take selfies at stations on the trails and submit their photos to social media channels. Hikers who conquer 10 of the trails get a \$10 gift certificate to a sponsoring business. The heartiest hikers who traverse all 15 trails are entered into a raffle for a \$100 gift certificate that can be redeemed at one of the event's sponsoring businesses.

Another crowd-pleaser is the annual Enchanted Forest event, where young and old gather for a day at Halloween time in COL's Robinson Woods and Flynn Woods nature preserve for costume contests, pumpkin painting and hikes on the preserves' haunted trails.

COL hosts monthly stewardship days when volunteers help improve a nature preserve through activities such as building or extending trails, or by helping to control invasive species like barberry, multiflora rose and autumn olive.

To engage area school students, COL hosts its annual Mighty Acorns environmental program that connects them to meaningful interactions with local ecosystems. The eight-year-old program includes a classroom curriculum and field-study trips on COL nature preserves led by staff and volunteers. More than 500 students participate each year. For some, it's their first walk in the woods.

COL's newsletter and colorful social-media posts help keep people abreast of the latest activities.

As for the future, COL plans to extend its primary service area beyond the 12 townships and 11 incorporated municipalities in the southern half of Berrien County. According to COL's recently updated Land Conservation Plan, it will expand its service area over the next 10-15 years to include four additional townships in the central part of Berrien County.

"In the next few years, there will be a focus on



A controlled burn at Chris Thompson Memorial Preserve in April 2021.

Buchanan, Niles and Berrien Springs as we seek new opportunities and do more programming and outreach in those areas," Postema says.

COL's newest preserve is near Buchanan. The Myron Perlman Nature Preserve, dedicated in August, is a 45-acre biodiverse property that includes farm fields, wetlands and hiking trails that wind through a sprawling beech-maple forest. The property was donated to COL in December 2022 by the landowners, Julie Dorfman, Jerry Herst and Anne Krantz. It is named in honor of Krantz's late husband, Myron Perlman.

COL and Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy partnered to protect the property. SWMLC holds a conservation easement on the land, while COL owns and manages the new preserve.

"We want to find more opportunities for land protection," Postema says. "The Land Conservation Plan identifies different priorities, different focus areas within the service area, such as a high-quality natural habitat that has unique ecological features like wetlands or a bog."

In Chikaming Township, he says, COL would like to expand on its existing preserves to create larger, more impactful sites. It also would like to interconnect properties with trails that run from one preserve to the next. The trails might even extend to other parks or preserves not owned by COL.

"We'd like to have an impact across a broader geography and build more support in those communities to generate more financial support," Postema says. "There is a natural opportunity for us to grow and offer those services to the community and provide the social and ecological benefits of land conservation."

(Visit [www.chikamingopenlands.org](http://www.chikamingopenlands.org) for more information.)

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### Jingle Berry Bash

The Jingle Berry Bash to raise funds for LaPorte's Arts in the Park is from 10 a.m.-8 p.m. Monday, Dec. 11, at Wana Pizza, 1601 Lincolnway Ave., LaPorte.

The event includes karaoke, live music, a Christmas raffle, silent auction, bake sale, kid's crafts and a visit from Santa. The schedule is:

- Carols with Carol Loveless on piano at 11 a.m.
- Bret and Kyle Oscarson (The Oscos) at noon.
- Joan Davis and Donovan Diedrich (Roxy Music) at 1 p.m., with an encore performance (Diedrich soloing) until 3 p.m.
- Christmas karaoke at 3 p.m., followed by Kids' Carols at 3:45 p.m.
- LaPorte Little Theater Club, "The Magic of Christmas," at 4:30 p.m.
- The Blue Sky Music Band at 5 p.m.
- Santa and Mrs. Clause at 5:30 p.m.
- Lakeshore School of Performing Arts at 6:40 p.m.
- Agape Worship Team at 7 p.m.

### Holiday Pancake Breakfast

A holiday pancake breakfast, complete with time to visit with Santa, is from 8-11 a.m. Saturday, Dec. 9, at St. Luke United Lutheran Church, 2000 E. Coolspring Ave.

The breakfast will feature all-you-can-eat pancakes and sausage, along with a yogurt-and-top-pings bar. Bake sale items will be sold.

Tickets, which are \$10 for adults and \$5 for children, can be purchased at the door or in advance at [www.stlukeunitedlutheran.org](http://www.stlukeunitedlutheran.org). Call (219) 879-9415 for more information.

### Madrigal Concert

The 14th annual Madrigal Concert, complete with costumed actors, singers and instrumentalists, is at 3 and 6 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 10, at First United Methodist Church, 121 E. Seventh St.

The group will perform holiday music and skits. A free-will offering is suggested.

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## One City, One Sound

Nearly 1,000 vocalists and instrumentalists will kick off the holiday season during Michigan City Area Schools' free "One City, One Sound" at 7 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 7, in the Michigan City High School gymnasium, 8466 Pahs Road.

Attendees are encouraged to take a canned good/non-perishable food item for The Salvation Army; monetary donations also will be accepted.

The performers include:

- 560 voices in a choir of fifth- and sixth-graders from all eight MCAS elementary schools, as well as 145 voices in a chorus of students from Barker and Krueger middle schools.
- 85 voices in the Michigan City High School Beginning Chorus, Concert Choir, Treble Chorale and City Singers.
- 200 instrumentalists (grades 7-12) playing in MCAS middle- and high-school concert bands, the MCHS percussion ensemble and MCHS jazz band.

Each group will perform individually, and the closing number involves all bands and choruses in a selection called "A Holiday Sing Along." Other numbers include "Carol of the Bells," "Sleigh Ride," "African Alleluia" and "Zat You Santa Claus?" MCAS music teachers will lead their groups; the combined numbers are directed by MCHS Choral Director Michelle Howisen and Band Director Frank Gast.

This year's concert is broadcast live on the MCAS YouTube Channel and on Access LaPorte County Channel 98. It also will air live on WEFM (95.9 FM).

After the concert, traffic departing the high school on Pahs Road using the east drive will exit only to Johnson Road. The west drive will exit only to Woodland A.

## LP Presentation of Handel's "Messiah"

First United Methodist Church of LaPorte, 1225 Michigan Ave., will host a community production of Handel's "Messiah" at 6 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 10.

The free performance in the church sanctuary includes a chamber orchestra, soloists and choir. Soloists are: soprano Victoria Schemenauer, alto Brittney Hale, tenor Casey Constant and bass Julius C. Miller III. Juan Carlos Alarcón is the music director and Dylan Engquist Bajo artistic director.

## Duneland Weavers Guild

Duneland Weavers Guild meets at 10 a.m. Saturday, Dec. 9, at Washington Evangelical Free Church, 3805 LaPorte Ave., Valparaiso.

The meeting serves as the annual fundraiser, complete with a potluck lunch. Guests can bid on many items.

Visit [www.dunelandweavers.org](http://www.dunelandweavers.org) for more details.

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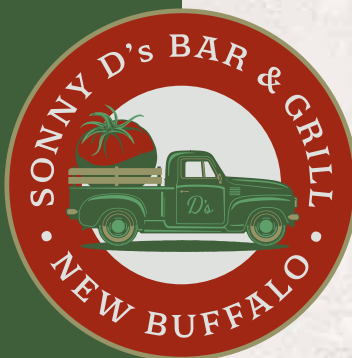
Beacher file photo from the 2022 Holiday at the Pops by Bob Wellinski.

LaPorte County Symphony Orchestra will host the 29th Annual Holiday at the Pops at 7 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 9, at LaPorte Civic Auditorium, 1001 Ridge St.

This year's program, conducted by Charles Steck, longtime principal trumpet and former LCSO associate conductor, includes holiday selections such as the suite from "The Polar Express," "March of the Toys" from "Babes in Toyland" and familiar favorite carols. Featured soloists are Kathleen Lang on bagpipes alongside the Pipes and Drums of Culver, as well as LCSO's new executive director Emily Yiannias, a classical soprano, singing "O Holy Night." The choral group Illumination will be featured on several numbers.

Balcony tickets, which are general admission, cost \$25 for adults and \$10 for children. Balcony seats and the doors open at 5:30 p.m. Food and beverages will be sold.

Visit [tinyurl.com/3tvn6dt5](http://tinyurl.com/3tvn6dt5) for reservations and additional information.



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## Thoughts: Commission Lawsuit and Related Real Estate Practice Changes

A jury (I will leave the place unstated) recently found that the Realtor® MLSs have created a process whereby the Seller agrees to pay both his listing broker and any cooperating brokers to sell their house a fixed amount. Is unfair and too expensive. The arguments are: A) the MLS systems fix commission rates for everyone in the business; B) these rates are too high; C) the rates for the buyer agent would surely be much lower if the buyer knew how much their agent was being paid by the seller.

The jury seems to have concluded the whole process is a collusion by agents and their associations, and MLSs, to keep commissions needlessly high and basically unknown by the buyer.

The decision is serious. The National Association of Realtors is confident it can overturn this decision on appeal. But the proposed penalties are high, and the MLSs and I would have to change how we work if this decision is sustained. No idea, then, what I will actually do.

My reaction has been one of disbelief. The decision just does not describe what I have done every day for the past 43 years. I admit there have been a lot of changes in what I do. It has become harder to know what and how to help people buy and sell properties, and harder to get the job done.

It is true that I see how much all the listing brokers are offering to pay me as a buyer agent. And I certainly think I have a sense of what the market rate for commissions generally is where I represent buyers and sellers. But the numbers I see are not all the same. They regularly vary by 25% or more. And the split between buyer and seller agents is not always equal, as I find out when the property closes and I see how much more the listing agent got paid than I did.

Furthermore, I change my commission rates based on the price of the property and what kind of property it is by as much as 33%. And I sometimes give multiple sales or repeat clients a different rate than a new client selling just one property.

Sellers ask me for a lower rate. I usually

refuse, and they agree to my rate. If I think the property will sell quickly and I will otherwise lose a good listing if I do not take the lower commission, I will lower my rate; that rarely happens. It's 1% or 2% of my listings. People who cut fees usually are not good sellers.

My Buyer Broker Agreement that all my buyers sign in Michigan, as required by law, explains how I am going to get paid. Some of my fellow agents are not satisfied with what has been offered by the listing broker, so they get an additional fee from the buyer. Some buyer brokers will not become a buyer's agent without some upfront fee that is non-refundable.

A related argument is mixed in with the collusion theory.

The theory is that the buyer agent no longer does much since they do not spend a lot of time showing properties. True, we do not spend as much time driving people around as we used to. But the work we do once we sit down to write an offer and continue to do until we congratulate the new owners of a house is much more complicated. It is more time-consuming, and requires much more expertise than when I started in 1980.

Back in 1980, the Buy and Sell was one page. The sellers regularly got to stay in the house 30 days after closing free with no problems. There were no home inspections. Appraisals were simple and quick. The bank told you in a few days that the loan had, or had not, been approved. Zoning was something I rarely paid attention to. There were very few condos or coops and association rules. There was no title insurance, just a review of records by the attorney for the buyer. We never discussed how much money the seller will pay the buyer to stay over 5 days beyond closing, and what will happen if the seller stays longer.

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## Indiana Dunes National Park

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- **Drop-In Volunteer Program (Trash Trekkers) from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. daily in December at Indiana Dunes Visitor Center.** Trash Trekkers is a no-hassle volunteer option that helps keep trails and beaches clean. Temporary passes are available. Visit [tinyurl.com/2p83798v](http://tinyurl.com/2p83798v) for more details.



*The Visitor Center is at 1215 N. Indiana 49, Porter. The Paul H. Douglas Center is at 100 N. Lake St. in Gary's Miller Beach neighborhood. Call (219) 395-1882 or visit [www.nps.gov/indu](http://www.nps.gov/indu) for details.*

## Indiana Dunes State Park

*The following program will be offered:*

- **Happy Owl-idsays from 1:30-3 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 16.** Humane Indiana Wildlife Director Nicole Harmon will introduce native Indiana Dunes owls and discuss their adaptations and characteristics. Meet at the Nature Center auditorium. The program is outside unless the weather is poor.

*Indiana Dunes State Park is at 1600 N. County Road 25 East (the north end of Indiana 49), Chesterton. Call (219) 926-1390 to register for programs.*

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## Widening the Circle

Parenting children at any age is an unruly task. But one of the most difficult things about parenting married children is getting used to splitting time at the holidays with their in-laws. Traditions are decades in the making, so change is not an outcome parents ease into without a struggle. Eventually, we come to the realization that to achieve and maintain peace and harmony within our extended families, a shift in perspective is necessary.

When my children were in school and still (mostly) living at home, I hosted the annual Thanksgiving meal for my extended family. This production involved setting two kids' tables: one for the under-8-year-old crowd and another for the teens. Gathered around the multigenerational adult table were grandparents, siblings and spouses from both sides of our family, as well as a stray friend or two.

Over the years, some of those friends became more than the odd-numbered invitee. They became permanent members on the Thanksgiving guestlist. Their presence was expected and enjoyed. Perhaps, I daresay, more anticipated than a few of the obligatory guests. Rob was one of those people. It didn't matter who I placed on either side of Rob at the crowded adult table. If it was my quirky brother-in-law, Rob found something to laugh about with him. And if my often-contentious brother sat at Rob's end

## That Girl, This Life

Julie McGue



of the table, at the end of the evening, the two traded a wink and a slap on the back over an inside joke.

Several years after Rob had become a Thanksgiving regular, my sister-in-law quizzed my husband. "Why isn't Rob here this year?"

"His Dad isn't doing well. He traveled out East to be with him."

"Too bad. I'll miss him at my end of the table. He always added a nice twist to the dinner conversation."

My husband and I shared a secret smile over that comment. Rob's company was desirable for more reasons than his easy nature and amiable chatter. We had observed that Rob's presence set people on their best behavior. If Grandpa dared press Uncle Howie's trigger points, the barbed retorts were less onerous than usual. If the table's dialogue touched on politics, it skipped off quickly and lingered on more comfortable topics like travel, electronics, movies and restaurants. Rob and our other non-relative guests provoked discussion around shared interests and ideas instead of stoking the fires of controversy.

Before our permanent move to Michiana in 2016, two of my daughters married. Those nuptials set in motion the true division of family holiday celebrations. It meant that over subsequent years, the long dining room table was set at Thanksgiving and

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Christmas for far more or far less than the usual amount of company. And as my siblings' children married, my brothers and sisters became infrequent guests at our table, too. This continual shift in the landscape of holiday celebrations is something I'm still getting used to.

This past Thanksgiving weekend found me in New Jersey with my daughter, two grandsons and her husband's extended family. With my three other adult children and their significant others off celebrating with in-laws, I realized I was blazing a new trail: This would be the first time I would travel alone to celebrate a holiday with only one of my kids. And even though I consider my son-in-law and his folks my kin now, I had become unwittingly — and yes, a bit unwillingly — the odd-numbered guest.

I dwelled on this self-pitying thought for maybe five seconds, before images of past Thanksgivings came to mind. I remembered our friend Rob. Like me, Rob had been the odd-numbered guest at our table for years. He had accepted his role and risen to the challenge. He enjoyed the time spent with our extended family, and they returned the sentiment. As I slipped into the long holiday weekend, Rob became my guidepost.

When I boarded the plane to chilly Newark, instead of feeling bad that my holiday was not all that it once was, I vowed to make the best of it. Just as Rob had done. I'm pleased to report my favorite holiday weekend went off without a hitch. I enjoyed the one-on-one time with my grandsons, daughter and her in-laws. I engaged in conversation with my daughter's neighbors, my son-in-law's aunts, uncles and cousins. The dining room reminded me of the room where I used to set up for my own gatherings. One long table draped with a colorful cloth. Flickering candles illuminated pleased faces as plates were passed. Eyeglasses steamed up as hot food was dished out. While children whined and adult dialogue hopscotched from current news to forthcoming travel, no one fully landing on the land mines of politics or other divisive issues. If someone pressed the buttons of fellow family members, it happened in a far-off corner or long after dessert was served.

For me, Thanksgiving this year was a memorable evening. Still, I think of Rob and the other friends who bravely joined past celebrations in my own home. While I cannot be certain my singular presence improved the overall dialogue at Thanksgiving dinner this year, I expect it played a role. As I reflect on this, I realize the benefits that widening the circle offers to the reluctant and willing.

It is not easy to consider changing or shifting traditions. As I anticipate more split or shared holidays with the families I consider my kin, I have these words to share from someone much wiser than me: *"The problem with the world is that we draw the circle of our family far too small."* Mother Teresa.

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in  
Theatres

## "The Holdovers" is Simply Wonderful

by Andrew Tallackson



Three Oscar-worthy performances in one film (from left): Dominic Sessa, Da'Vine Joy Randolph and Paul Giamatti.

Alexander Payne needs to make more movies.

His films ("Election," "About Schmidt," "Sideways," "The Descendants"), I suppose you could call them comedies, but not in the tidy, conventional sense. He finds his characters amusing, even as a dark undercurrent attaches itself to them. Typically feelings of loneliness and alienation.

"The Holdovers" may be his most bittersweet. In anyone else's hands, it would have been a raunchy sitcom, but here, as a love letter to '70s cinema, it showcases his fondness for an intensely character driven story, with misfits driving the bus at every turn.

The bare bones of the story has the structure for raunch. In 1970, right at Christmas break, five students at a New England boarding school are the only "holdovers," meaning that for whatever reasons, they stay on campus while everyone heads home. Their caretaker? The grouchy, loathsome professor. In the '70s, the film might have been a spiritual cousin to "Animal House." The "holdovers" devote their break to making life hell for the professor, tormenting him, all while trying to make their respective virginities ancient history.

Hilarity ensues. Right?

But for Payne, working from a screenplay by David Hemingson, the scenario is a gateway to explore



## "The Holdovers"

Running time: 133 minutes. In theaters. Rated R for language, some drug use and brief sexual material.

who these people are. These cast aways.

A few of the holdovers are "types." The football star. The entitled racist. Then, the football star's father orchestrates a last-minute ski trip, leaving a trio of dejected souls on campus. That is the heart of "The Holdovers." We have Paul Giamatti, back with his "Sideways" director, as Paul Hunham, the despised classics professor. The remaining student: newcomer Dominic Sessa — a complete natural — as Angus Tully. The third member of their party? Mary Lamb, a grieving mother who runs the school cafeteria. She's played by Da'Vine Joy Randolph (Hulu's "Only Murders in the Building") in a revelation of a performance.

When Giamatti finds the right role, he disappears so entirely into it, you stop seeing any trace of a performance. What he creates here is someone content with his own isolation. A good book, some alcohol, that's all he needs. And like his "Sideways" character, he's stopped moving forward in life. The mundane, the routine, is a buffer from taking risks.



Newcomer Dominic Sessa (left) more than holds his own with the movie's heavyweight cast.

Everything about Giamatti in the film feels weary. Exhausted by, well, everything.

That's why Angus and Mary are ideal thorns in his side. Randolph — hilariously profane in "Only Murders in the Building" — dials it down to extraordinary subdued levels. She is a moving study in persistence amid loss. Her pain is *very* real, where, when the anguish erupts, it breaks your heart. And Sessa creates a complicated teen. Smart, wounded by family. Acts of aggression are cries for attention. He feels like a real kid.

Everything about "The Holdovers," as Payne's ode to the 1970s, has a natural, unforced quality. What do I mean? There is no gloss to it. No attempt to make everything look like a movie. It relies on natural sunlight, everyday surroundings. Classic rock and folk tunes. And, here's the kicker, a refusal to settle for easy resolutions. Paul, Mary and Angus do not necessarily find life a banquet by the end, but they see things clearer. What the next step should be. And for these characters, that is worth celebrating. Giamatti, Randolph and Sessa create three people who appreciate what they've brought to each other. All three deserve Oscar nominations.

And like "Sideways," Giamatti gets the last laugh. A singular line of dialogue that is enough to make the most stern-faced cynic erupt with laughter, all while the unknown awaits with great promise.

I loved this movie.

Contact Andrew Tallackson at [atallackson@gmail.com](mailto:atallackson@gmail.com)

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# Turkey Walk Time

Families again returned to Friendship Botanic Gardens, 2055 E. U.S. 12, for its free Gobble Gobble Turkey Walk on Thanksgiving Day (Nov. 23). Children could count paper turkeys hidden throughout the trails for a chance to win a prize.  
All photos by Bob Wellinski



## “Saltburn” is a Bitterly Acidic Take on British Society

by Andrew Tallackson

in  
Theatres



Jacob Elordi (left) and Barry Keoghan star in “Saltburn.”

Good golly, Emerald Fennell is twisted.

I first encountered her in “Call the Midwife,” the BBC period drama in which she played a nurse tight-lipped about her sexuality. There was such a gentleness to the character, a sweetness to her, she was the light in a series that could go dark.

Then came 2021 in which she balanced an acidic take on Camilla Parker-Bowles in Netflix’s “The Crown” with writing and directing the Oscar-winning “Promising Young Woman,” a #metooera revenge tale with a final twist so delicious, you left the film pumped up by scum getting its just desserts.

Now, with “Saltburn,” Fennell goes full dark. It’s Jane Austen by way of “The Talented Mr. Ripley” and “Parasite.” A savage attack on British society. It’s almost *too* dark, oppressively so near the end... but it says something about Fennell and her killer cast that, whether you like it or not, it holds you firmly in its grip.

Set at Oxford in 2006, the movie stars Oscar-nominee Barry Keoghan (“The Banshees of Inisherin”) in full wounded puppy dog mode. He plays Oliver Quick, who knows he’s not accepted. Attending on scholarship, he’s a stark contrast to the other students, most of whom are filthy rich.

Almost immediately, he is drawn to Felix Catton



### “Saltburn”

*Running time: 131 minutes. In theaters. Rated R for strong sexual content, graphic nudity, language throughout, some disturbing violent content and drug use.*

(Jacob Elordi), who represents everything he is not. Charismatic, handsome, born into wealth. A friendship commences, although it seems Felix views Oliver as a charity chase, inviting to stay with him and his family over summer break.

Felix hails from a family that lives at Saltburn, an obscenely palatial estate that’s too much home for one family. But that is part of Fennell’s acidic take on her characters. Felix’s family, which includes Richard E. Grant as his father and Oscar-nominee Rosamund Pike (wickedly hilarious) as his flippant mother, are surrounded by so much wealth, they no longer appreciate it. They go about their days, their conversations, with bored, snobbish entitlement.

The first impression “Saltburn” gives off, particularly from the trailers, is that it’s a class-based LG-BTQ love story. Not exactly. In fact, sexuality is the malicious edge of the movie. Sex is manipulation, a



Rosamund Pike is wickedly funny throughout the entire film.

way to inch personal ambition along its path.

Keoghan's performance is bold. The character is full of surprises so the story becomes a tale of who's exploiting whom. The actor alternates between sheepish moments, a desperation to belong...and a sneaky way of pushing the right buttons of each family member. In fact, it is Alison Oliver, as Felix's sister Venetia, who has the best scene, accurately sizing up Oliver as to who he is and what he wants.

By the last act of "Saltburn," Fennell is merciless. No sentimentality, no affection for her characters. She draws blood, so much so, the movie nearly becomes unrelentingly grim. You smile at the blistering irony as the family, dealt a shocking blow, still maintains an air of British aristocracy, gathering for a midday meal. But by this point, there is no moral center to the picture.

Until the final twisted twist.

Like "Promising Young Woman," Fennell saves her best surprise for last. In some respects, you've figured it out, but not to the depths of depravity on display. You leave the theater in a daze. Fennell has danced into darker realms. *Literally.*

It's an audacious way to end a movie, I'll give her that. Did I enjoy the film? The verdict's still out...

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## Back in “The Box”

You could say we have come full artistic circle at Box Factory for the Arts in St. Joseph, Mich.

We went there in 1989 as the newly minted Dunery Press seeking marketing assistance. That’s when “The Box” was operating as Williams Bros. Paper Box Manufacturing. We had heard they could make some fancy display boxes for our trade paperback books of fiction, and the friendly folks at the funky old factory at 1101 Broad St. delivered some amazing goods to us. We just wish we had some left for our archives. Oh well. But if you run across one of those lovely, little white boxes with our Dunery Press logo emblazoned on it, please treasure it with our compliments, for it is truly an artifact of Michigan manufacturing history.

So, we got off to a good start with Box Factory in 1989 as customers of their fine boxes.

Not so much in 2015, when I went to what had become Box Factory for the Arts to market a memoir of my father we published, Life with a Laryngectomee. An officious woman basically barred me at the door, saying, in essence, that “*we don’t want nobody nobody sent,*” to quote the title of Milton Rakove’s oral history of the Mayor Richard J. Daley years in Chicago. Meaning, I was not a member, didn’t live in St. Joe and most especially was not known to her.

I left in a huff, vowing never to return.

Fast forward to 2023, oh say, late summer 2023.

My friend, Terry Choate, noted I was having a blast taking watercolor classes at River Valley Senior Center in Harbert, Mich., and asked to see my portfolio.

MY PORTFOLIO?!?

At the suggestion of another watercolor student, I had purchased an artist’s portfolio and been inserting my paintings in it. After a few months, my portfolio was nearly full of fairly credible work. View-worthy watercolor paintings by Yours Truly.

So, yes, I told Terry I would be happy to bring my portfolio to Box Factory, where she maintains a light-filled studio, and, well, leave it to her judgment. She was not long in pronouncing it: She found two paintings worthy of entry in the Annual Members Show in the galleries, and two for sale in the gift shop, the Art Market. First, I had to shell out \$35 for an annual membership. That was no problem, given all the big bucks I rake in from *The Beacher* and South Shore Health & Racquet Club in St. Joe, where I teach swimming.

Next step: Frame those four paintings and attach the requisite wire hangers. Terry said she had the means and material in her studio to do all that. All I had to do was help her pick out the frames and mattes from her voluminous collection, accumulated over a lifetime as a working artist.

When I asked Terry how much she wanted in return for such a gracious favor, she said, and I quote,



Hey, whose work is that hanging in the window at Box Factory?

*“Just treat me to a good meal at a great restaurant in Saint Joe.”*

The means right down Broad Street, at Clementines riverside restaurant. After framing the four paintings, we celebrated with a gala luncheon along the St. Joseph River, at said restaurant, on a golden, fall afternoon.

All that remained was paperwork. Terry walked me through all of that, and I was back in “The Box.”

Most notably on the cold, clear night of Friday, Nov. 10, when Natalie and I walked up Broad Street to Box Factory. I was just wondering where my two pieces were mounted in the Annual Member Show in the galleries when I perchanced to look through one of the front windows. What should my wondering eyes behold but “Dragon Flies” by none other than Charles K. McKelvy.

Moi?!?

Oh, yes, oh yes!!!

Proof in the front window that I had, indeed, made it into my first art show. I floated into Box Factory that night, and that night only got better and better as I had complete strangers compliment me, as an artist no less. They liked my “Dragon Flies.” And those who took typing in high school in the Dark Ages — like me — got the reference to the typewriter keyboard in my painting of a vintage typewriter,

titled "QWERTY." (Hey, it endures alright, as you will see if you take a moment to examine the keyboard of your desktop computer.)

We don't have a smart phone, or mobile device, or whatever, so we had to rely on the kindness of strangers to play the two songs I chose to complement my two paintings, in harmony with the show's theme: "Remembering Songs of Youth." Teens figured it out in no time flat; they played "Somewhere Over the Rainbow" for "Dragon Flies" and "Paperback Writer" by the Beatles for "QWERTY." Did I mention that the recording of the rainbow song was by Judy Garland in the pre-tornado scene from "The Wizard of Oz?" Well, now I did; young Judy was delightful, even in black and white, and I am certain my "Dragon Flies" creation fluttered its gossamer wings in time to her crooning.

As I said, it was a wonderful night for this-here, old artist. We oohed and aahed over the other art, schmoozed with the other artists and, of course, hung out with my "art sponsor," Terry Choate.



Natalie snapped her happy hubby with his watercolor tribute to old typewriters, "QWERTY."

Terry screened, just for us, a video she produced for the show: a celebration of her class of 1959 at Hinsdale (Ill.) Central High School. Terry was all over that high school (hey, she is still a mover and shaker) and, well, she was almost as lovely then as she is now.

But before sending us off into the cold, clear November night, Terry extracted a promise from Yours Truly to dust off his licorice stick and appear for a forthcoming Open Mic Night at Box Factory. How do you say "no" to the artist who guided you into

Going to be gone for a while?



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Artist Terry Choate is photographed with one of her entries in the Annual Member Show in the Galleries at Box Factory for the Arts.

your first art show ever?

You don't.

I dusted off the old licorice stick and agreed to play a clarinet tune or two on a given Wednesday night, or two, at 7 p.m. EST at Box Factory. Admission is only \$5, but I get in for free as I am one of the "performers." Visit Box Factory from noon-4 p.m. EST Thursday-Sunday (until 6 p.m. Thursday). And pay a virtual visit at [www.boxfactoryforthearts.org](http://www.boxfactoryforthearts.org) before you go. And please, know that the Annual Member Show remains until Jan. 14, 2024.

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- South Central Junior-Senior High School, 9808 S. County Road 600 West, Union Mills, 8:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 12.

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## MCHS Raider Team Earns Awards

Michigan City High School's Marine Corps Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps competed in a Raider competition Nov. 18 at Indianapolis Ben Davis High School.

Raiders requires cadets to work together on objectives roughly based on skills in combat. The Wolves won the Tug-of-War event, placed second in the Physical Fitness Challenge and earned third place in the Rope Bridge, Sandbag Relay and Tire Flip.



Lance Cpl. Charles Gasaway (left) and 2nd Lt. Matthew Wilson give it their all, supported by 1st Lt. Marcus Mantel, in the Tire Flip event.

"Our cadets really improved from our first meet," the senior Marine instructor, Maj. Tom McGrath, said in a press release. "Since this is our first year doing Raiders, I think we are building a solid foundation from which to have really competitive teams in the future."

The Marine Corps will host the National MCJROTC championship at Boswell, Pa., the last week in April. The Wolves hope to obtain an at-large berth. If that happens, the trip, like all MCJROTC activities, is done at no cost to MCHS nor the student; instead, the Marine Corps funds all expenses.

The cadets will support MCHS and the community after returning from Thanksgiving break. They compete in a military drill meet Dec. 2 at Portage High School. That night, they will march in the Michigan City holiday parade.

Cadets will provide Color Guards for the four home boys basketball games in December, as well as at the LaPorte County Courts Veterans graduation ceremony. They also will support Michigan City Area Schools' "One City One Sound" holiday concert, along with supporting The Salvation Army.



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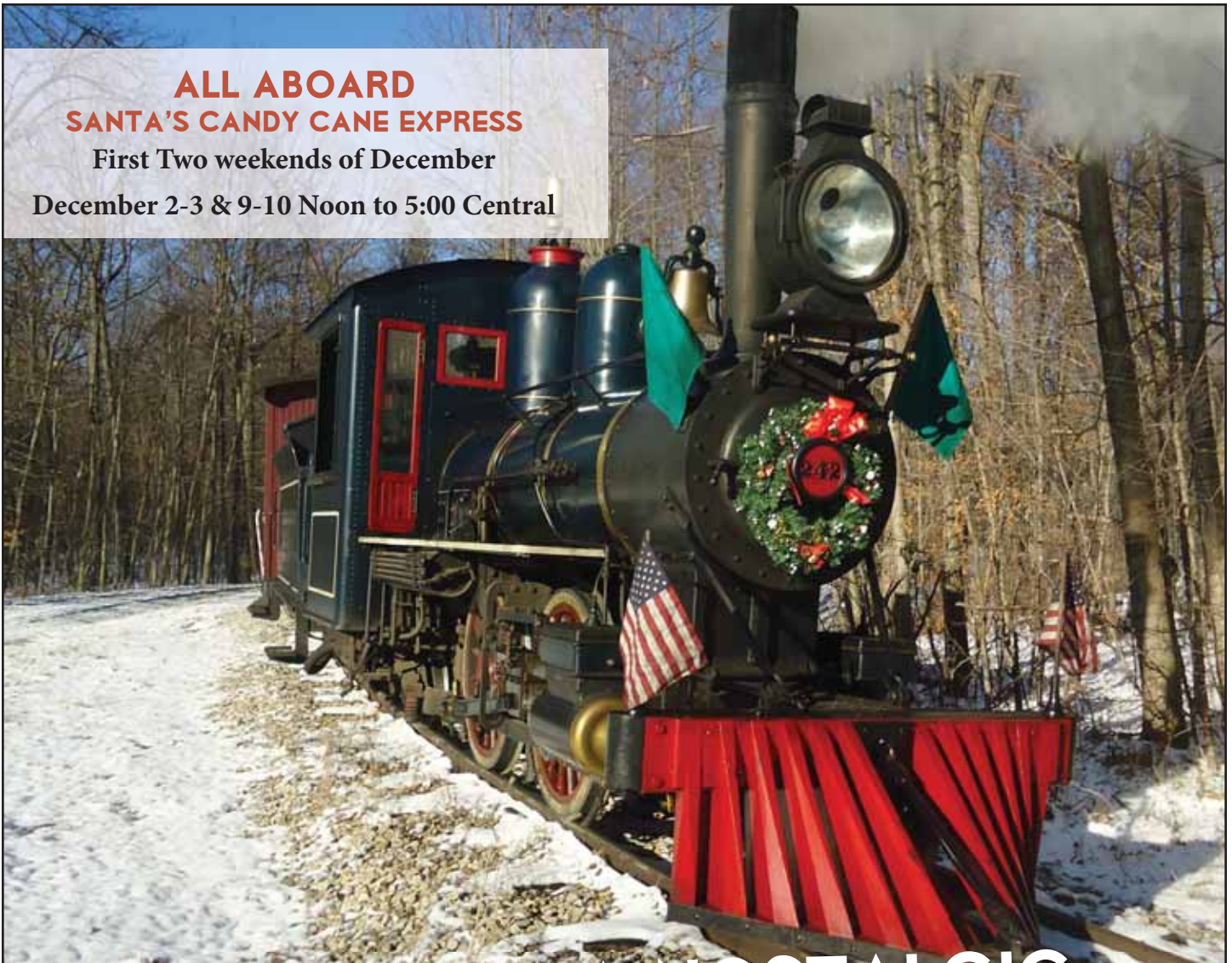
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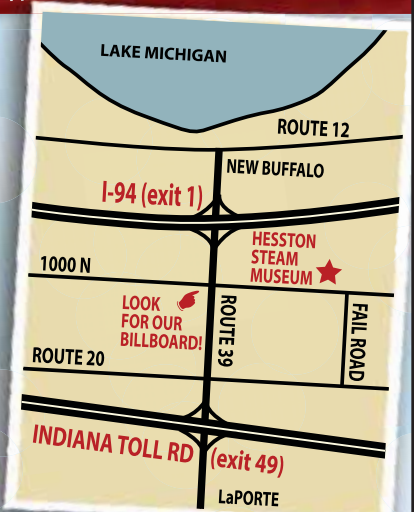
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Professional Abraham Lincoln portrayal Kevin Wood will share the story of America's 16th president at 11 a.m. EST Saturday, Dec. 9, at The Studebaker National Museum, 201 Chapin St., South Bend.



Kevin Wood as Abraham Lincoln.

Wood will shed light on Lincoln growing up on the frontier, his family, his lack of formal education, his love of reading, different jobs he had and how he got his nickname, "Honest Abe." Afterward, visitors can participate in a themed craft, followed by a photo with Wood next to the Lincoln carriage.

The cost is \$10 for adults or \$5 for members, while children 12 and younger are free. Make reservations at [www.studebakermuseum.org](http://www.studebakermuseum.org)

Call (574) 235-9714 or (888) 391-5600 for more details.

**Community Chorus Concert**

Michigan City Community Chorus will present its annual free Christmas Concert at 4 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 9, at Immanuel Lutheran Church, 1237 E. Coolspring Ave.

The group, formerly directed by the late Lee Meyer, is now directed by Deb Topolski and accompanied by Anthony Holt. A variety of music will be performed and refreshments served.

Donations will be accepted.

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### KAC Annual Members Show

Krasl Art Center will host its annual members show Dec. 9-Jan. 21, 2024, with a free preview party from 6-8 p.m. EST Friday, Dec. 8.

The show features work not only by current or new members, but also by Berrien County residents. Existing members who bring a non-member to exhibit can receive a free fan-level membership renewal for 2024 and free fan-level membership for his/her friend. All artists are eligible for the People's Choice Award.

The preview party includes music, small bites and a cash bar before the presentation of the Members' Award at 6:30 p.m. EST.

Also, Sara Alexis, winner of the 2022 Members' Award, will present a small solo exhibit in The Lounge at KAC. Born in Lansing, Mich., she lives with her husband and daughters on a wooded home- stead in Decatur, Mich. Her forte is wood art.

In conjunction with the exhibit, "Pizza with the Artists" is from 6-7 p.m. EST Thursday, Dec. 14. The free program, a pre-registered event, allows guests to hear from artists about their work.

KAC is located at 707 Lake Blvd., St. Joseph, Mich. Call (269) 983-0271 or visit [www.krasl.org](http://www.krasl.org) for details.

### Sustainable Gift Wrapping Workshop

A workshop that highlights a sustainable ap- proach to gift wrapping is from 1-4 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 16, at Barker House, 444 Barker Road.

Em Racine, Save the Dunes community engage- ment coordinator, will lead the hands-on workshop, focusing on a cohesive wrapping theme with upcy- cled paper, ribbons and found materials. The pro- gram is hosted by Save the Dunes and Michigan City Sustainability Commission.

The \$25 cost covers materials to wrap two to three gifts, refreshments and class fees. Participants also can take materials (an old duvet cover, brown paper bags) to use or share with the class. Coffee, hot co- coa and treats will be available.

Visit [tinyurl.com/3wr7zkax](http://tinyurl.com/3wr7zkax) for reservations or more details.

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1. Striking Beauties	34	10
2. Pin Ball Wizards	30	14
3. Pin Pushers	18	16

**HIGH INDIVIDUAL GAMES** **SCORE**

1. Carolyn Wiggins	182
2. Dottie Brinckman	170
3. Nancy Kubath	168
4. Tammy Vouri	166
5. Kathy Osborne	162
6. Diana Holt	150

**SPLITS**

Tammy Vouri	2-7
Deb Novak	3-10
Kathy Osborne	2-7

**THREE STRIKES**

Carolyn Wiggins (twice)

Nov. 28, 2023

TEAM STANDING	WON	LOST
1. Striking Beauties	37	11
2. Pin Ball Wizards	32	16
3. Pin Pushers	29	19

**HIGH INDIVIDUAL GAMES** **SCORE**

1. Nancy Kubath	179
2. Sarah Blank	174
3. Shelley Dunleavy	172
4. Tammy Vouri	159
5. Deb Frederick	152

**SPLITS**

Tina Sonderby	3-10
Debbie Novak	5-6
Carolyn Wiggins	2-7
Jean St. Peter	3-10
Shelley Dunleavy	3-10
Nancy Klausner	2-7

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Nancy Kubath

**New Buffalo Township Library**

- **Christmas Cardmaking Workshop (ages 7 and older).** The program is at 6 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 14. Sign up at the library.
- **"Letters to Santa."** Children can write to Santa for a reply by sending letters to: Santa, 33 N. Thompson St., New Buffalo, MI 49117

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- Read to a Dog Sessions for all ages from 10:30-11:30 a.m. Tuesday and 4-4:45 p.m. Wednesday.
- Lego Club on Fridays-Saturdays.
- Story time at 10 a.m. Mondays.

*All times are Eastern. New Buffalo Township Library is located at 33 N. Thompson St. Call (269) 469-2933 for more details.*

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### In the Area

**Dec. 7** — “One City, One Sound,” 7 p.m., Michigan City High School gymnasium, 8466 Pahs Road. Free; non-perishable food item for The Salvation Army/monetary donations accepted.

**Dec. 7-10** — “Murder on the Rerun,” Footlight Theatre, 1705 Franklin St. Times: 7:30 p.m. Thur.-Fri., 2 p.m. Dec. 9-10. Tickets: [www.footlightplayers.org](http://www.footlightplayers.org)

**Dec. 8** — Build a Button, 4-5 p.m., Michigan City Public Library, 100 E. Fourth St. Info: (219) 873-3049.

**Dec. 8-10, 15-17** — “The Magic of Christmas: A Musical Review,” LaPorte Little Theatre Club, 218 A St. Times: 7:30 p.m. Dec. 8, 2 p.m. Dec. 9-10, 7:30 p.m. Dec. 15-16, 2 p.m. Dec. 17. Tickets: adults/\$17, seniors/\$16, students/\$13. Reservations: [www.laportelittletheatreclub.com](http://www.laportelittletheatreclub.com)

**Dec. 9** — Holiday pancake breakfast, 8-11 a.m., St. Luke United Lutheran Church, 2000 E. Coolspring Ave. Tickets: \$10/adults, \$5/children. Info/reservations: [www.stlukeunitedlutheran.org](http://www.stlukeunitedlutheran.org), (219) 879-9415.

**Dec. 9** — Genealogy Help, 9 a.m.-1 p.m., Michigan City Public Library, 100 E. Fourth St. Info: (219) 873-3049.

**Dec. 9** — LaPorte County Sheriff’s Office Children’s Magic Show, 10 a.m., auditorium at former Boston Middle School, 1000 Harrison St., LaPorte. Free.

**Dec. 9** — Michigan City Community Chorus free Christmas Concert, 4 p.m., Immanuel Lutheran Church, 1237 E. Coolspring Ave. Free-will donations accepted.

**Dec. 9** — LaPorte County Symphony Orchestra 29th Annual Holiday at the Pops, 7 p.m., LaPorte Civic Auditorium, 1001 Ridge St. Balcony tickets: \$25/adults, \$10/children. Reservations/info: [tinyurl.com/3tvn6dt5](http://tinyurl.com/3tvn6dt5)

**Dec. 10** — 14th annual Madrigal Concert, 3 & 6 p.m., First United Methodist Church, 121 E. Seventh St. Free-will offering.

**Dec. 11** — Jingle Berry Bash (Arts in the Park benefit), 10 a.m.-8 p.m., Wana Pizza, 1601 Lincolnway Ave., LaPorte.

**Dec. 11** — Any Book Book Club (adults only), 5-6 p.m., Michigan City Public Library, 100 E. Fourth

St. Info: (219) 873-3049.

**Dec. 11** — Animals of the North Pole! (with live reindeer), 6-7 p.m., LaPorte County Public Library, 904 Indiana Ave. Info: [www.laportelibrary.org](http://www.laportelibrary.org)

**Dec. 12** — Page Turners Book Club, Richard Paul Evans’ *The Christmas Promise*, noon-1 p.m., LaPorte County Public Library, 904 Indiana Ave. Info: [www.laportelibrary.org](http://www.laportelibrary.org)

**Dec. 12** — Diamond Painting for Adults, 5-7 p.m., Michigan City Public Library, 100 E. Fourth St. Info: (219) 873-3049.

**Dec. 12** — Virtual Author Talk with Stephanie Land, 1-2 p.m., through LaPorte County Public Library, 904 Indiana Ave. Registration: [www.laportelibrary.org](http://www.laportelibrary.org)

**Dec. 12** — Holiday Crafting, 4:30-5:30 p.m., LaPorte County Public Library, 904 Indiana Ave. Info: [www.laportelibrary.org](http://www.laportelibrary.org)

**Dec. 13** — Tinkercad 3-D Modeling, 4-5 p.m., Michigan City Public Library, 100 E. Fourth St. Registration: (219) 873-3045.

**Dec. 13-14** — Holiday Stuffie Sleepover, Michigan City Public Library, 100 E. Fourth St. Info: (219) 873-3049.

**Through Dec. 31** — Work by Michigan City Art League, The Legacy Center Gallery at Queen of All Saints Catholic Church, 1719 E. Barker Ave. Legacy Center hours: 6 a.m.-8 p.m. Mon.-Thur., 6 a.m.-6 p.m. Fri.-Sat., 6 a.m.-3 p.m. Sun. Info: [kd3627@hotmail.com](mailto:kd3627@hotmail.com)

**First and Third Mondays** — Singing Sands Toastmasters Club, 6:30-8 p.m., Senior Health/Wellness Center (old hospital ER, Barker/Buffalo).

**Mondays in Michigan City** — Bingo, Moose Family Lodge 980, 2107 Welnetz Road. Doors open/8:30 a.m., early birds/9:30 a.m., regular Bingo/10 a.m.

**Mondays in LaPorte** — Weekly line dance lessons, Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 1130, 181 W. McClung Road. Cost: \$5. Beginner lessons, 2-3 p.m. Improver lessons, 3-4 p.m. Info: (219) 363-8301.

**Tuesdays** — Bingo, St. Stanislaus Kostka Catholic Church, 109 Ann St. Doors open: 3:30 p.m. Bingo: 6 p.m. \$45 entrance fee (includes all cards). Info: (219) 336-3099.

**Tuesdays in December** — Creative Tech Activities, 3:30-5 p.m., Michigan City Public Library, 100 E. Fourth St. Info: (219) 873-3049.

**Thursdays in December** — Needle Arts Club to Warm Up America Joining Night, 5:30-7 p.m., Michigan City Public Library, 100 E. Fourth St. Info: (219) 873-3049.

### In the Region

**Dec. 8** — The Bergamot: A South Shore Christmas, 8 p.m. EST, The Acorn, 107 Generations Drive, Three Oaks, Mich. Tickets: \$40 + \$6 convenience fee, \$65 + \$6 convenience fee (reserved). Info: [www.acornlive.org](http://www.acornlive.org)

**Dec. 9** — Duneland Weavers Guild, 10 a.m.,

Washington Evangelical Free Church, 3805 LaPorte Ave., Valparaiso. Info: www.dunelandweavers.org

**Dec. 9** — Abraham Lincoln program, 11 a.m. EST, The Studebaker National Museum, 201 Chapin St., South Bend. Cost: \$10/adults, \$5/members, 12 & younger/free. Reservations: www.studebakermuseum.org

**Dec. 9-Jan. 21, 2024** — Annual members show, Krasl Art Center, 707 Lake Blvd., St. Joseph, Mich. Free preview party: 6-8 p.m. EST Dec. 8. Info: (269) 983-0271, www.krasl.org

**Dec. 9** — Heartache Tonight: A Tribute to The Eagles with Tom Carey and the Ghost Runners, 8 p.m. EST, The Acorn, 107 Generations Drive, Three Oaks, Mich. Tickets: \$40 + \$6 convenience fee, \$65 + \$6 convenience fee (reserved). Info: www.acornlive.org

**Dec. 10** — School of American Music Student Recital, 3 p.m. EST, The Acorn, 107 Generations Drive, Three Oaks, Mich. Free. Info: www.acornlive.org

**Dec. 10** — Christmas at Copshaholm, 4-7 p.m. EST, The History Museum, 808 W. Washington St., South Bend. Tickets: \$15, \$10/members, \$5/youth 6-17, free/5 & younger. Reservations/info: www.historymuseumSB.org, (574) 235-9664.

**Through Jan. 4, 2024** — Annual Members' Exhibit, Chesterton Art Center, 115 S. Fourth St. *Free artists' reception:* noon-2 p.m. Dec. 9. Info: (219) 926-4711, www.chestertonart.org

**Through Jan. 14, 2024** — Berrien Artist Guild annual member show, Box Factory for the Arts, 1101 Broad St., St. Joseph, Mich. Info: www.boxfactoryforthearts.org

**Through Jan. 18, 2024** — Janice Sonnenberg paintings, The Village Gallery at Pines Village Retirement Communities, 3303 Pines Village Circle, Valparaiso.

**Through May 12, 2024** — "Indiana Lore," South Bend's The History Museum, 808 W. Washington St. Hours (Eastern): 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Mon.-Sat., noon-5 p.m. Sun. Admission: \$11/adults, \$9.50/seniors, \$7/youth 6-17, free/members. Info: www.historymuseumSB.org, (574) 235-9664.

**Mondays** — Pickleball, 5:30 p.m. EST, New Troy (Mich.) Community Center, 13372 California Road. Free, donations welcome. Info: (269) 426-3909, friendsofnewtroy@yahoo.com

**Saturday-Sunday in December** — Warm Up to Winter, 1-3 p.m., Chellberg Farm, Mineral Springs Road between U.S. 12/20, Porter. Snow conditions: (219) 395-1882.

**Vickers Theatre** — *Now Showing:* "The Holdovers." Rated R. Times: 3:30 p.m. Dec. 8-9, 3:30 & 7 p.m. Dec. 10. *Also:* "Miracle on 34th Street," 7 p.m. Dec. 7. *Also:* Holi-Dazzle: Holiday Drag Show, 8 p.m. Dec. 8. *Also:* Holi-Dazzle: Queer Comedy Night, 8 p.m. Dec. 9. All times Eastern. Theater address: 6 N. Elm St., Three Oaks, Mich. Info: www.vickers-theatre.com, (269) 756-3522.

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[www.reprographicarts.com](http://www.reprographicarts.com)**December is once again upon us.** Time knows no boundaries when you grow old. Almost time for that timeless carol "12 Days of Christmas." Although, I feel "Silent Night" and "7 O'clock News" from an old Simon & Garfunkel LP is more appropriate for the past year for many reasons. Call Lefty for a chat about it. Ready for some great Christmas gift ideas at pre-inflation gouge prices? OK, here comes Fatty with his bag of crap. Kids sets \$35. Titleist Vokey, Cleveland, Titleist, Ping, Cobra wedges \$39. Great selection of stand, cart and Pro Tour bags \$29-\$99. Big drivers \$29-\$149. Putters most brands \$19-up. Blade, mallet, old school and some belly long styles. Hickory shaft putters ideal for bar, rec room or man cave, \$35. Tall shoes starting at \$20 a pair. Hundreds of misc. lose clubs and all things golf, \$7 and up. **Call Lefty, Olive, Pogo, Yogi or Buddy the Elf for an appointment at (219) 873-0858. Namaste, Lefty.****A Call Away Transportation and Wine Tours** offers transportation needs for weddings, bachelor and bachelorette parties, wine tours, airport or just a night out! Call today to book your next event at (219) 214-0820.**A Call Away Executive Housekeeping.** We are new with plenty of availability! Residential & commercial, boats & yachts! We are one call away!!  
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**Dirty Thirty by Janet Evanovich** (hardcover \$29.99 retail in bookstores and online; also available as an eBook and an audiobook. 327 pages.)

We all have our guilty pleasures, and mine are the books about Stephanie Plum: bail-bond recovery-agent extraordinaire.

As the title suggests, this is the 30th book about Steph. Evanovich has remained true to her character, so you can count on adventures, love, humor and self-reflecting by Stephanie about where her life is going, especially her love life.

One thing's for sure, you'll never be put to sleep by her adventures.

Stephanie lives in Trenton, N.J., and works for her cousin, Vinny, in his bail-bonds office. Her job is to pick up bond recipients who fail to show up for court, take them to the courthouse and get them rescheduled. Not always a simple or safe job.

Fair to say, Stephanie's love life is more dangerous than her day job. Joe Morelli, a Trenton police detective, is the original "Italian Stallion," and likely the best candidate for family life — some day. Then Ranger came along, the epitome of tall, dark and handsome. Former military black ops, he now owns a high-tech security service. He also makes Stephanie's heart beat faster. She knows he's put a GPS tracker on her car to keep tabs on her, but that's OK, because it's saved her life more than once. Also, he's handy to have around, as he can get information on a felon's whereabouts faster than she can.

This time, Morelli is called out of state for a trial in Florida, and he's brought over his big, but lovable dog, Bob, for Steph to babysit. He's been known to chew up everything from sofas to steering wheels, so he requires constant surveillance. Steph also knows that with Morelli far away, the attraction to Ranger will be hard to handle.

Steph's friend and office partner is Lula, a big, bodacious black woman. She's a former 'ho who loves her tight black spandex skirts and sparkly tops showing off her more than ample boobs. Donuts, chicken, pizza and more are her standard fare for breakfast, snack time, lunch, snack time, supper and snack time. But, she has a heart of gold, is funny as heck and carries a big handgun in her purse, one Steph's afraid she will take out and shoot somebody sometime.

There's also Steph's parents and grandma, who are a hoot. Mom lives in fear of losing her daughter and spends a lot of time in the kitchen — there's always a bottle of booze she thinks is well-hidden — to get her through the day. Grandma Mazur, the

## Off the Book Shelf

by Sally Carpenter



octogenarian, has considered becoming a cop and passes on neighborhood gossip to Stephanie she learns by attending all the funeral wakes, where they have good refreshments. Her dad just watches TV or drives a taxi to make extra money...or maybe just to get out of the house.

Steph and Lula have had some interesting people to pick up for skipping bail bonds. This time is no different...maybe even more exciting? Scary? Dangerous? Maybe all of the above...

Steph counts on the check she receives for each bond skipper, and this time, pickings have been slim, so she takes on guys she'd rather not.

First up is a confusing case, or should I say cases, that intersect in a most interesting way. Martin Plover, local jewelry store owner, was robbed by Duncan Dugan, out on bail and now MIA. The same day, "Nutty" Manley, hired by Plover as a security guard, is accused by Manley of stealing several trays of diamonds from his safe. He's also missing.

Nutsy and Lula both end up sleeping in Stephanie's apartment (don't ask why), which mysteriously is firebombed one night. Steph's car is trashed — she's used to that by now — and it's back to Ranger for help in tracking down everyone concerned, and figuring out why someone wants to kill her. Besides, she needs to borrow a car, and Ranger has a whole fleet of them.

You'd be hard-pressed to find a more attention-grabbing bunch of people. Did I mention that Lula thinks a mythical creature is entering her apartment and stealing her clothes at night? Don't try to figure out what's really going on — just sit back and enjoy the ride. All will be revealed in good time! Well, maybe not all, as the story ends with a real cliffhanger that ensures there will be Book 31.

*The final word:* Evanovich has picked one quote from each of Steph's books and included them at the end of this one, and they are all winners! Here's one from Ranger in Book 8: "I'm disappointed. Usually when I'm with you a car explodes or a building burns down."

Yeah, that's life with Stephanie Plum. It's bodacious.

Till next time, happy reading!



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## FEATURED AGENT

### MTM Realty Group would like to *Welcome* **Miranda Sebesta**

I'm just wrapping up my first year of Real Estate and looking forward to many more at MTM Realty. I became a REALTOR, because I truly love helping people. It is a wonderful addition to being a part-time personal trainer, which I've been for over 14 years. I enjoy cooking for and entertaining family and friends.

My Husband and I are "empty nesters", except our spoiled poodle. Our niece, who I was the caregiver for, is off to school and I am ready for this next chapter.



**You can reach Miranda at : 219-229-8355**

### *Miranda's newest listing.....*

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