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Santa Project Celebrates 15th Year

The Phelps Fire Department and Auxiliary are preparing for the 15th annual Phelps *Santa Project*, bringing Christmas cheer to local children and families in need. The Phelps School District provides coordinators with each participating child's age, gender, clothing size, and a suggested gift, without sharing personal information. Volunteers purchase, wrap, and deliver the gifts to the school for distribution. The project relies entirely on community donations and the generosity of local residents who help make the holidays brighter for Phelps children.

Donations may be mailed to Phelps *Santa Project*, PO Box 32, Phelps, WI 54554. Checks should be made payable to Phelps Firemen's Auxiliary, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Donations are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law. The deadline for 2026 donations is Wednesday, December 2nd. Dick and Debbie Ryan, project coordinators, look forward to another successful year of bringing holiday happiness to local children.

Land O' Lakes *Christmas Tree Lighting* Set

Land O' Lakes will celebrate the holiday season with its annual *Christmas Tree Lighting* on Sunday, December 6th, on the front lawn of the Town Hall. Families and visitors are invited to enjoy an afternoon of holiday activities and festivities.Activities begin at 2:45pm with horse-drawn wagon rides, continuing until 4:45pm.

Santa and Mrs. Claus will arrive at 3:00pm to visit with children and hand out gifts. Guests can enjoy hot chocolate and cookies, along with two fire pits and a warming tent. At 4:45pm, Alyssa Imse will lead Christmas caroling, followed by the *Tree Lighting* at 5:00pm. A fireworks display by John Voss will conclude the celebration.

The event is sponsored by Seniors Making Memories, with support from community donations and volunteers. For questions or more information contact Mrs. Claus at 720-891-2771.

Conover Sno-Buddies Named AWSC Club of the Year



Photo provided by Sno-Buddies

Accepting the 2026 AWSC Club of the Year award on behalf of the entire clubs' membership were several board officers and club members. (L-R): Lori Heideman-AWSC President/Presenter; Kelly Kraetsch-Secretary/Treasurer; Sue Krull-Membership Coordinator; Bob Krueger-Director; Molly Krueger-Member; Scott Hildebrandt-Landowner Liaison; Colten Krueger-Member; Duane Hunt-Director; Dan Beck-President; Sarah Beck-Member; and Dave Konopacky-Member.

The Conover Sno-Buddies Snowmobile Club received the 2026 Association of Wisconsin Snowmobile Clubs (AWSC) Club of the Year award during the organization's annual convention in Manitowoc, October 23rd-25th. The award recognizes an outstanding club among nearly 600 statewide, with judging based on membership growth, trail grooming, fundraising, community involvement and participation in snowmobile organizations.

Club President Dan Beck said the membership is humbled by the recognition and proud of the work of current and past leaders. He also noted that the award reflects the dedication of the many snowmobile clubs throughout Vilas County working toward the same goals.

The Conover Sno-Buddies maintain more than 50 miles of scenic Vilas County trails, offering riders everything from smooth railroad grades to forest trails. A dedicated team operates the club's two Tucker Sno-Cats, maintaining safe, well-marked and carefully groomed trails. The Conover Town Park Park & Ride, at 4685 Park Circle, provides convenient trail access.

Fundraising helps cover equipment and grooming expenses. BIG CA$H and Groom-to-Ride raffle tickets, along with Buy One, Get One Free beverage punch cards, are available at local businesses.

Upcoming events include the 8th annual *Poker Run*, beginning December 19th and ending with a drawing at Twin Lake Pub on February 27th, and the *Trailside Roast* on January 16th at intersection 500.

New members are welcome. Meetings are held the second Tuesday of each month from September through March. Membership information and event details are available at conoversnobuddies.com.

Phelps Students Enjoy Outdoor Learning

Phelps High School students spent two days at Lowenwood in Land O' Lakes on October 28-29 for a hands-on learning experience combining education, outdoor activities and teamwork.



Photo provided by Sherrie McFarland

Phelps students participated in a hands-on learning experience at Lowenwood in Land O' Lakes.

Students participated in bridge-building, capturing the flag, nature writing, hiking and canoeing. They also learned to identify trees and toured Lowenwood's "Green Machine," an all-natural wastewater treatment facility, where they even discovered banana trees growing inside the building.

The overnight trip also gave students a taste of dormitory living and time to strengthen friendships. An added highlight was gathering together to watch the Brewers win the World Series.This was the third year Phelps High School has visited Lowenwood, and the experience has become a popular tradition for students.

The trip was made possible through a grant from the Land O' Lakes Fish and Game Club, with additional support from the Phelps School Board, Phelps Woman's Club and Phelps Booster Club. Lowenwood provided the setting and welcomed students for two days of learning and exploration.

The experience gave students an opportunity to learn outside the classroom, try new activities and make lasting memories.

Tipsy Housewife–*pg 2* • **Border Happenings**–*pg 3-4* • **Pastor's Window**–*pg 4* • **Border Business**–*pg 5*
Natural Connections–*pg 6* • **Health & Wellness**–*pg 7* • **Keeping You Posted**–*pg 8* • **Classifieds**–*pg 8*

THE TIPSY HOUSEWIFE • Perfect Easy Turkey

by Chef April Lee



April Lee Wiencek is a Chef, Social Media Influencer, & Food Blogger from Chicago and part time in Watersmeet.

Thanksgiving in the Northwoods calls for a warm kitchen, a full table, and something delicious in the oven. What it does not require is spending the entire day worrying about a turkey. There are enough things to coordinate without giving that bird your undivided attention.

My Perfectly Easy Thanksgiving Turkey skips the complicated brine and constant basting. Seasoned butter goes underneath the skin, apple and onion go inside, and the oven does the work. Once roasting, leave it alone. Opening the oven repeatedly only lets the heat escape.

The biggest favor you can do yourself happens before Thanksgiving: give your turkey enough time to thaw. Allow approximately one day in the refrigerator for every 4-5 pounds, plus an extra night for the uncovered refrigerator rest in this recipe. A frozen turkey is not something you want to discover on Thanksgiving morning.

I bake my stuffing separately because I love those buttery, crispy edges. It also makes the oven schedule easier. Once the turkey is cooked and resting, the side dishes get their turn. That half hour is valuable kitchen real estate.

My other holiday essential is a reliable meat thermometer. Cooking times help you plan, but the thermometer tells you when dinner is ready. Save the guesswork for how many helpings of mashed potatoes everyone will eat.

Wishing you a Thanksgiving with good food, good company, and enough turkey left for a sandwich!

Makes: 12-16 servings.

Ingredients:

- 1 whole turkey, 15-20 pounds, completely thawed
- 2 sticks salted butter, sliced
- 1 large sweet onion, halved
- 1 large red apple, halved
- 4-6 garlic cloves, peeled
- Approximately 3 tablespoons vegetable oil
- Salt, black pepper, garlic powder, onion powder, sage, and poultry seasoning, to taste

Instructions:

1. The night before roasting, remove the packaging, neck, and giblets. Pat turkey dry inside and out. Lightly salt and pepper; refrigerate uncovered overnight in a roasting pan that fits comfortably.
2. Season butter slices, apple, and onion with listed seasonings. Use additional salt sparingly, especially with a turkey already treated with a salt solution.
3. Place 4 tablespoons of butter inside the cavity with the apple, onion, and garlic. Gently loosen the breast and leg skin; distribute the remaining butter underneath.
4. Rub exterior with oil and season again, remember, it is salted already. Preheat oven to 475°F.
5. Roast uncovered for 15 minutes. Without opening the door, reduce the temperature to 350°F. Continue roasting, approximately 13 minutes per pound at this lower temperature. Do not baste.
6. Begin checking around 3 hours. Continue cooking until a thermometer reads at least 165°F in the thickest breast and innermost thigh and wing, avoiding bone.
7. Remove from oven, rest about 30 minutes before carving. Use this time to finish your side dishes.

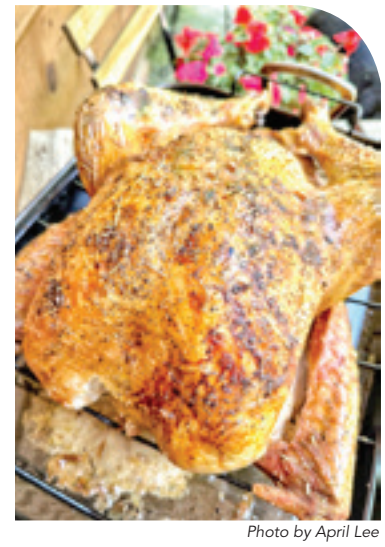


Photo by April Lee

April Lee Wiencek, The Tipsy Housewife is a Chef, Social Media Influencer, & Food Blogger from Chicago that spends lots of time in Watersmeet. Check out her blog at thetipsyhouswife.org, follow on Instagram @thetipsyhousewife, or TheTipsy Housewife.org for recipes.

White Pine ATV Connector Trail

MI-TRALE (Michigan Trails and Recreation Alliance of Land and the Environment) and the Village of White Pine, Michigan, celebrated the grand opening of the 16-mile Potato Farm (PF) ATV Connector Trail on October 21st with a ribbon-cutting ceremony attended by community members, local businesses, DNR representatives, and ATV riders. The new connector provides legal ATV access from White Pine to Michigan's existing designated trail system, opening the door to hundreds of miles of riding opportunities throughout the Western Upper Peninsula.

Carp Lake Township Supervisor Mike Hinrichs said the connection will bring additional summer tourism and business to the village while allowing residents and visitors to legally access the trails.

The project was made possible through partnerships involving MI-TRALE, the Michigan DNR, MDOT, North Country Snowmobile Club, Carp Lake Township, Ottawa National Forest, Ontonagon County Road Commission, and community volunteers.

MI-TRALE President Don Helsel said the organization was proud to partner with White Pine on a project that expands outdoor recreation, supports local businesses and encourages tourism and economic growth.











Ad provided by the Auxiliary

BORDER HAPPENINGS

ANNOUNCEMENTS • • •

★ **Featured in this issue.**

Thanksgiving: Nov 26.
Small Business Saturday: Nov 28.

School Info: 2026-2027
NPSD:
-Teacher In-Service: Nov 23-24.
-Thanksgiving Break: Nov 25-27.
Phelps:
-Teacher In-Service: Nov 23-Virtual.
-Thanksgiving Break: Nov 24-27.
Watersmeet:
-No School: Nov 16-17.
-Thanksgiving Break: Nov 25-27.

*** WI Deer Hunting Season:**
-Bow: Sept 12-Jan 3, 2027.
-Gun: Nov 21-29.
-Muzzleloader: Nov 30-Dec 9.
*** MI Deer Hunting Season:**
-Bow: *Til Nov 16, Dec 1-Jan 1.*
-Gun Season: Nov 15-30.
*Please Check Hunting Schedule on DNR Websites to confirm dates before hunting.

CONOVER • • •

Lutefisk & Meatball Dinner: Pioneer Lk Church, Dec 6, 4pm.

Town Board Meetings: Conover Center, 2nd Thurs, 6pm.

Conover Lions Club: info@conover-lions.com or www.conoverlions.com.

Conover Clerk's Office Hours: Mon-Thurs 9am-2pm. Events at www.townofconover.com/calendar.

Conover Post Office Window: Mon-Fri 8:45am-12:45pm & 2-4pm; Sat 9-11am.

Conover Chamber: M/Tu/W 9am-3pm. Th/Fr by appointment.

Conover Transfer Station Hours: Wed 1-4pm; Sun 8am-1pm.

LAND O' LAKES • • •

Black Friday Glow Party: Bent's Camp, Nov 27.

Ornament Workshop: Library, Nov 28, 11am-1pm.

Breakfast with Santa: Gateway Lodge, Nov 28, 8-11am. ★

Whobilation Christmas Celebration: Nov 28, 10am.

Christmas Craft Sale: School, Nov 28, 9am-2pm. ★

VFW Christmas Party: Dec 5, Apps 4pm, Dinner 6pm.

Holiday Art Bazaar & Open House: LOLA, Dec 6, 10am-4pm. ★

Town Christmas Tree Lighting: Town Hall, Dec 6, 3-5pm. ★

Snowmobile Benefit Breakfast: ★ Sunrise, Dec 12-13, 7:30-11am.

LIBRARY:
LVD Tribal History: Nov 18, 4pm.
Cinnamon Roll Baking: Dec 4, 11am.
Book Clubs:
-Books n' Brew-Eight Hundred Grapes: Brew's Pub, Nov 19, 6:30pm.
-Being Mortal: Dec 8, 10am.
-Survival of the Nicest: Dec 14, 10:30am.
Movie-*The Breadwinner:* Dec 10, 1pm.
Storytime: 1st & 3rd Tues 10:30am.
Mah jongg: Tues 1-4pm. Text Deanie 715-367-1983 for info.
Lego Club: 1st & 3rd Wed, 3:30-4:30pm.
Library Explorers-Homeschool: 2nd & 4th Thur, 10:30-11:30am.
Board Meetings: 2nd Wed, 9am.
Friends Library Mtg: 1st Thurs, 10am. May-Nov & Jan.
Open: M/Tu/Th/F, 10am-4pm; Wed 10am-6pm; Sat 10am-1pm. For more info call 715-547-6006.

LOLA PROGRAMS:
Coffee & Canvas-Gnomes: Nov 14, 10am.
Linocut Printmaking-Xmas Cards: Nov 16, 10am-4pm.
Gnomes on Wood: Nov 19 & 20, 10am-3pm.
-Wild Rice & Fanning Basket Presentation: Nov 27 & 29 5-7pm, Nov 28 12-2pm.
Rug Hookers: Mon 9am.
Watercolor Wed: Wed 10am-2pm.
Fiber Friday: Fri 10am-2pm.
Beading Friday: Fri 1-3pm.
**Classes at LOLA unless noted. Visit website or call 715-547-3950.

A.A. Meeting: Town Hall, Sun 2pm.

Pickleball: School, M & Th (except no school days) 3:35-6:30pm.

VFW Stateline Post 8400 Meetings: Veterans Center, last Mon, 6pm.

StateLine Auxiliary VFW 8400 Mtg: Veterans Center, 2nd Tu, 5pm.

Headwaters Food Pantry Pick-up: Olympic 76 St, 1st & 3rd Wed, 8:30-11:30am. 715-547-6060.

Planning & Beautification Meeting: Town Hall, 2nd Wed, 11am.

Town Board Meetings: Town Hall, 3rd Wed, 6pm.

Yoga: Town Hall, Thurs:
-Gentle/Chair: 9-10am.
-Hatha: 10:30-11:45am.

American Legion Post 464 Meets: Town Hall, 2nd Thurs, 6pm.

American Legion Auxiliary Mtg: Town Hall, 3rd Thurs, 4:30pm.

LOL Chamber Meeting: 3rd Thurs, 7:30am. Public welcome.

Qigong: Town Hall, Fri 9-10am.

LOL Town Hall Hours: Mon-Thurs 9am-3pm.

LOL Chamber Office Hours: Mon-Fri 9am-2pm.

Post Office Window: M-F 9:30am-1pm & 2-4pm; Sat 9:30-11am.

Dump Hours: Tu 8am-3pm; Th 12-4pm; Sat 8am-4pm.

PHELPS • • •

Holiday Tree Lighting: Downtown, Dec 5, 4-6pm. ★

LIBRARY:
Storytime: Tues 2pm.
Hours: M/Tu/Th/F 10am-4pm; Wed 2-6pm; Sat 10am-1pm. For more info call 715-545-2887.

Phelps Women's Club Meeting: Community Center, Mon 1pm. Call 715-617-0308 for date.

Phelps Historical Museum: By Appointment. Call Pauleyn 715-617-5551 for info.

Phelps Chamber Meeting: Community Center, 3rd Tues, 5pm.

Phelps Town Board Meeting: Community Center, 2nd Wed, 6pm.

Phelps/LOL Lions Club: 3rd Thur 6pm. Rollie Alger at 715-545-2711 or Brian Blank at 262-302-0458.

Phelps Chamber Office Hours: M/Tu/W/F 9am-3pm.

Phelps Post Office Window: Mon-Fri 8am-12:15pm & 2:15-4pm; Sat 9-11am.

Phelps Town Hall Hours: Mon-Thurs 9am-12pm and 1-3pm.

Phelps Transfer Station Hours: Sat 9am-12pm.

WATERSMEET • • •

Ottawa Visitors Ctr: M-F 8am-4pm.

A.A. Meeting: Spiritual Center; Tues/Thur/Sat 7pm. (All Open Topic) Call 906-366-0067 for more info.

ISCCW Meeting: Town Hall, 2nd Tues, 9am.

Town Board Meeting: Town Hall, 3rd Wed 4:30pm.

Planning Commission Meeting: Town Hall, 1st Thur, 5:30pm.

American Legion Post 417: Community Center, last Thur, 5pm.

Watersmeet Town Hall Hours: Mon-Fri 9am-11:30am, 12-3pm. Visit www.watersmeetmi.gov.

Transfer Station Hours: M/T/Th/F/Sat 8am–4pm.

Watersmeet Post Office Window: Mon-Fri 9:30am-12:30pm & 1:30-4pm; Sat 9:15-10:45am.

BEYOND THE BORDER • • •
BOULDER JUNCTION•

Arts & Craft Show: Community Center, Nov 27, 10am-4pm.

Cookie Walk: Acorn Lodge, Nov 27, 4pm.

Christmas Walk: Downtown, Nov 27, 4-8pm.

EAGLE RIVER •

Old Fashioneds Up North: Eagle Waters Resort, Nov 14, 6-9pm.

Holiday Bazaar: Kalmar Center, Nov 21, 9am-3pm.

Wi-Doess Wine Walk: Downtown, Nov 21, 12-5pm.

Bingo: Kalmar Ctr, Mon 6 & 7pm.

HAPPENINGS
>> continued on page 4

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General Manager: Sheila Bernier
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Next issue: November 27, 2026
Submissions by: November 14, 2026

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HAPPENINGS
>> continued from page 3

OLSON MEMORIAL LIBRARY:
Holiday Photo Booth: Dec 5.
Book Club-*Tom Lake*, Nov 16, 4pm.
Habitat for Humanity: Nov 19, 2pm.
Angel Tree Toy Donation: Until Dec 18.
Academic Success: M/W 9am-12pm.
Writers Group: Alternating Mon 1-3pm.
Memory Cafe: 2nd Mon, 10am.
Ukulele Jam: Mon 2-3:30pm.
Genealogical Society Meeting: 1st Mon 4:30-6:30pm.
Storytime: Tues 10am.
Grief Support: 1st Thurs 1pm.
Free Mending: 1st Sat 10am-12pm.
Hours: M 9am-7pm; T-Th 9am-6pm; F 9am-5pm; Sa 9am-3pm.
For more info 715-479-8070.

MINOCQUA •
Holiday Market: The Waters, Nov 20-21, 9am-6pm

PRESQUE ISLE •
LIBRARY PROGRAMS:
Fiber Arts: 1st & 3rd Tu 12-3pm.
Story Club: 1st & 3rd Wed,10am.
American MahJongg: Fri 1-3pm.
Hours: M/W 9-6; T/Th/S 9-12; F 9-3.
Call for more info 715-686-7613.

SAYNER/STAR LAKE •
Christmas Downtown: Nov 28-29, 10am-5pm.

ST. GERMAIN •
Christmas Bazaar: Community Center, Nov 14, 9am-3pm.

Tree Lighting Celebration: Downtown, Nov 28, 4pm.

UPPER MICHIGAN •
Christmas Bazaar: Ewen/Trout Creek School, Nov 21, 10am-2pm.

MI-TRALE Meeting: Stannard Town Hall-Bruce Crossing, 1st Mon 7pm.

From the PASTOR'S WINDOW • *by Pastor Rob Yerks*



Rob Yerks serves as the pastor of Watersmeet Bible Church. He is a graduate of Contenders Discipleship Initiative (CDI).

The Good Shepherd - Part 5

"Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me." (Psalm 23:4)

The 23rd Psalm is one of the most recognized and beloved passages in all of the Scriptures. Throughout the centuries, Christians everywhere have taken great comfort in these verses. This song was written approximately 3,000 years ago by King David; a man who was a shepherd by trade. However, even though a great deal of time has passed and the world is a much different place now, modern Christians can still take great encouragement and comfort in these verses. These benefits are most impactful when we consider them in the light of the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ.

Here, we have what may be the most well known and most comforting line of this beloved psalm. Sheep are generally rather timid animals. However, in the presence of their shepherd they need not fear any evil befalling them, because one of the shepherd's primary roles is that of protector of the sheep. David spoke of this when King Saul expressed concern when David was about to confront Goliath. David's response was that in the line of duty as a shepherd, he had struck down both lions and bears when they threatened his flock. *(1Samuel 17:34-37)* David knew full well the protecting power of a good shepherd, therefore he drew great comfort knowing that the Lord was shepherding him.

Additionally, David drew great comfort from his shepherd's tools, the rod, and the staff. These two implements were standard issue for shepherds. The staff was long and slender, and used for gently guiding the sheep. The rod was shorter, stouter, and often with a big knob on the end. It was used as a weapon to clobber predators. The sight of these implements comforted David in that he knew that his Shepherd was well equipped for His job. David's Shepherd will guide the sheep through the dark valley into the green pastures beyond, and He is prepared to deal with any predator that might be lurking in the shadows.

We likewise, can take comfort in our Good Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ. Even though we all must one day walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, we need not fear evil befalling us. Our Good Shepherd has Himself gone that way before and has struck down death rendering it powerless over those who take shelter in the Good Shepherd. Our Lord is well equipped both to guide us, and to ward off any evil that we may encounter on the way. Therefore, we may be comforted in the dark days of this life and we need not fear the dark valley that comes upon us at the end. Our Shepherd will guide us through the darkness to the glorious light that lies beyond.

See You Sunday ~ Pastor Rob.
Pastoryerks@gmail.com, 906-358-4744.

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Three Bears Wins Event of the Year

The *Three Bears Sled Dog Race* in Land O' Lakes has been named the International Sled Dog Racing Association's (ISDRA) 4-Dog Sled Event of the Year for 2025-2026. Produced by the Wisconsin Trailblazers Sled Dog Club, the race was recognized for its high-quality competition, professional organization and commitment to the standards of ISDRA. The award highlights the dedication and passion of the organizers in providing an outstanding experience for mushers and helping promote the sport of sled dog racing. In recognition of the honor, ISDRA will announce the award on its official Facebook page and waive the sanctioning fee for one class at next season's race. The recognition celebrates the Wisconsin Trailblazers Sled Dog Club's continued contributions to the sled dog racing community and the success of the *Three Bears Sled Dog Race* in Land O' Lakes.

BORDER BUSINESS • The American Dream Part 1

by Dale Kleffman



Dale Kleffman is the Branch President and a Loan Advisor at Select One Mortgage in Land O' Lakes.

For generations, the American Dream meant starting with little, working hard, taking risks and building a successful business or career. Small businesses have long been the backbone of communities, creating jobs, supporting local economies, and providing a path to financial independence.

Today, however, starting a business from scratch is becoming increasingly difficult as private equity firms and large investment groups expand into industries traditionally dominated by independent businesses.

Consider two people entering the same industry. One uses personal savings, a bank loan, and perhaps a mortgage on the family home to get started. The other has the financial backing of an investment firm with millions available for acquisitions, equipment, marketing, and expansion. Both may have the same business skills, but they are hardly competing on equal terms.

Private equity firms are increasingly purchasing and combining businesses in fields such as landscaping, plumbing, heating and cooling, healthcare, insurance, and other local services. Larger companies can benefit from greater purchasing power, financing, staffing, and market reach.

There are advantages to this approach. Larger organizations may operate more efficiently, invest in technology, and create opportunities for growth. Selling a business can also provide a well-earned financial reward for someone who spent years building it.

But what happens to the next generation of entrepreneurs when independent businesses are increasingly absorbed by larger organizations? Could this growing concentration of business ownership be another reason small-town Main Streets struggle to maintain diverse, locally owned businesses?

Small-business ownership has historically been an important pathway to financial independence and a strong middle class. It also keeps decision-making and investment closer to home.

Private equity is not inherently the problem, nor should successful investors be criticized for making money. The concern is whether the growing concentration of capital is making it increasingly difficult for ordinary people to compete.

The American Dream has never guaranteed success, but it should guarantee opportunity. We must ask whether today's economy still provides a realistic chance for someone with a good idea and a willingness to work to build something of their own.

Phelps School's *Students of the Month* for October

Adrienne Trollan (11th Grade) & Camille Karvonen (8th Grade)

"Adrienne is very helpful in the library and is respectful to myself and my students when we see her in the halls."
-Mrs. Susor



"Camille has been willing to try new things this year and has a positive attitude."
-Mrs. Vold







Ad provided by Andy Viramontes



NATURAL CONNECTIONS • Wintertime Porcupine

by Heaven Walker



Heaven Walker is a Naturalist & Education Director and works at the Cable Natural History Museum.

It was an early morning at the Cable Natural History Museum as I loaded up the van with our MuseumMobile totes, gearing up for a full day teaching about animal adaptations in the schools. Every being has a fascinating set of adaptations that help them to survive in their habitat, and it is one of my favorite topics to teach about.

Heading north on HWY 63, the beautiful scenery never fails to keep me entertained as I drive through the picturesque nature of the Northwoods. While my thoughts wandered, a large dark spot high in a distant tree caught my eye. At first, I thought it might be a squirrel drey–a large nest of twigs and leaves built high in a tree. But as I got closer, I realized that it was a porcupine! Once my excitement calmed down, curiosity began to take its place. I began to wonder why exactly this porcupine was high up in the tree on this fall morning. The answer may lie within the feeding strategies of the North American porcupine.

Once the vegetation has begun to go dormant for the fall and winter, porcupines change how they forage for food. They shift from their spring/summer strategy of feeding on ground vegetation and leaves to heavily relying on trees and shrubs in the fall/winter, often spending large amounts of time in a single tree. They target the cambium and phloem layers, the living, growing area between the bark and the water-carrying sapwood, responsible for transporting sugars. This transition from a wide variety of foods available in the summer to nibbling trees in the winter is a drastic drop in nutritionally valuable food for porcupines.

Porcupines, like many animals, eat a large amount of food in the summer to put on weight for the coming winter. On average, porcupines will begin winter with around 50% body fat–similar to a polar bear or seal. However, porcupines have thrown the typical winter survival strategies to the wind. They don't hibernate to avoid poor food availability, spend time in burrows to conserve heat and energy, or cache food to not spend energy foraging. Instead, they hang out in treetops, exposed to the elements, as they spend energy feeding on food with the nutritional content of cardboard. But recent studies show they still manage to only lose an average of 35% body fat over the winter! This lack of fat loss shows they have adapted to survive on a poor diet in harsh winter conditions. But how?

Studies show that a porcupine's metabolic rate slows in the winter, lowering their energy intake requirements. These low energy requirements, partnered with a high tolerance for dietary imbalances, moving very little while foraging, and their large fat stores at the beginning of winter allows them to mitigate body mass loss and survive winter.

The porcupine's impressive adaptations don't stop there. Once more nutritionally valuable food is available, they are able to immediately put those nutrients to work and gain weight back. This is not a typical ability of many herbivores. Even when good food becomes available, other herbivore species are unable to quickly change how their bodies are being regulated and processing food, making them incapable of properly using those nutrients, and unable to gain weight immediately. Once again, the porcupine is proving to be an extremely adaptable species.

One of the best known adaptations of porcupines are their quills. These walking pincushions sport roughly 30,000 quills–specialized, hollow hairs that cover the porcupine's body. Quills are a porcupine's main defense against predators, and are a particularly mean one. As if getting stabbed by pointed quills isn't enough, each quill is equipped with microscopic, downward pointing barbs. Once embedded into flesh, the barbs catch on tissue like many tiny fishhooks, making removal viciously painful and dangerous if the quill breaks off inside the tissue. But the brutality of a porcupine's quills doesn't end there. Those tiny barbs hook farther into flesh the more the victim moves, and body heat makes them expand–making them even more painful and difficult to remove the longer they are embedded.

Between their unusual adaptations to survive winter, and their intricately hazardous quills, porcupines are a natural wonder. I could be entertained for days by the complex adaptations they have developed to survive in their habitat. Much to my surprise, while driving back along HWY 63 after teaching all day, the porcupine I saw earlier that morning was still there. No doubt they were putting those winter adaptations to use as they foraged for twigs and bark high in the tree.



Photo by Emily Stone

Close up with a porcupine, look at those quills!

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HEALTH & WELLNESS • Little Things In Life

by Dr. Doug Tansor



Dr. Doug specializes in full family and pet chiropractic services at Up North Wellness Center in Land O' Lakes.

I love that kids are so honest and straightforward. When I asked my boys what they're thankful for at Thanksgiving time they said, "I'm thankful that we get to eat turkey on Thanksgiving. And I'm happy and 'fankful' for my babysitter's paint." The older I get, when I pause to think about what I'm thankful for, it's honestly the little things in life that are the best. Thankful when my family gets together in the same room, thankful for another sunny day, thankful for another busy day in the office. It's always good to aspire to goals and dreams down the road and to constantly be working towards something. But I honestly think the beauty in life appears when you learn to appreciate the "ordinary days". Personally I found this growth after becoming a dad and every time I look back at pictures and see how much the boys have grown in a short amount of time I think to myself– did I enjoy enough time over the past x months or was I too busy working? Usually after reflecting for a few minutes I remember our many bike rides out front, matchbox cars played with, books we read, meals we cooked together, trips to the children's museum or farmers market, or a visit to grandma and pa and think, yea we've been doing enough, time just passes by too fast.

While being busy at the office the past few months we've also gotten a few difficult phone calls. We had a dog who went from being able to walk and play to tetrapelegic (unable to move all four of their legs) with no explanation at all. We had another dog owner call saying their dog was unable to lay down without yelping in pain– their dog was trying to fall asleep while sitting up. We had another dog who randomly didn't want to hold their head up, eat, or play. I feel so thankful that in all three of these cases, when I applied the animal chiropractic techniques I learned in post graduate school that all three of these dogs responded so well. Cherry went from having no feeling in all four paws, to standing on her own, to taking a few wobbly steps at a time, to being able to walk across the room and go potty on her own again. Ivy is resting comfortably again, and Nala is starting to be her spunky self again. Every time we talk with a dog owner, we explain every dog is different with how they respond to chiropractic care. Some dogs respond after two treatments, some dogs need consistent care over a few weeks, and occasionally we see very acute dogs that with a combination of chiropractic care and medication from their veterinarian, unfortunately it's just time for that dog to cross the rainbow bridge. I'm especially thankful for all the days I get to watch chiropractic care give dogs more time with their owners. As D.D. Palmer (founder of chiropractic) once said, "Do not forget that chiropractors did not treat diseases. They adjust causes, whether acquired, spontaneous, or the result of an accident." The reality is that I never know how each dog (or person) will respond to chiropractic care. I apply the principles of chiropractic by removing interference on the nervous system (brain to body connection) by restoring motion to restricted or arthritic vertebral segments and then wait to see how the human or animal responds. Traditional chiropractic philosophy holds that the body possesses an internal, self-healing capacity which is truly remarkable. I'm grateful to bring these principles to our northwoods community everyday. Happy Thanksgiving to you and your family!



Photo by Doug Tansor

Dr. Doug has owned and operated a family practice since 2014 specializing in full family chiropractic care, as well as treating high caliber athletes such as NHL, NFL, and UFC competitors. Dr. Doug also is certified in animal chiropractic and loves working with senior pets (dogs, cats, and horses). Doug's family has had a home in Land O' Lakes since the early 50's and he has grown up spending many summers in the Northwoods of Wisconsin.







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KEEPING YOU POSTED•

by Karol Wilson



On September 19th, in Washington, DC, the United States Postal Service issued the Christmas Cookies Forever stamps, in four designs, in a double-sided booklet of 20 stamps. Four new designs in this booklet of 20 stamps celebrate the Christmas season. Each stamp features a colorful, decorated sugar cookie in the shape of either a Christmas tree, a stocking, a wrapped present, or Santa's face. Art director Greg Breeding designed the stamps with cookie baker and decorator Kyrie Johnson. Sarah Cramer Shields photographed the cookies.

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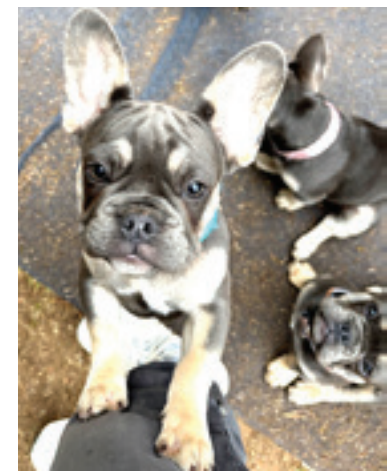
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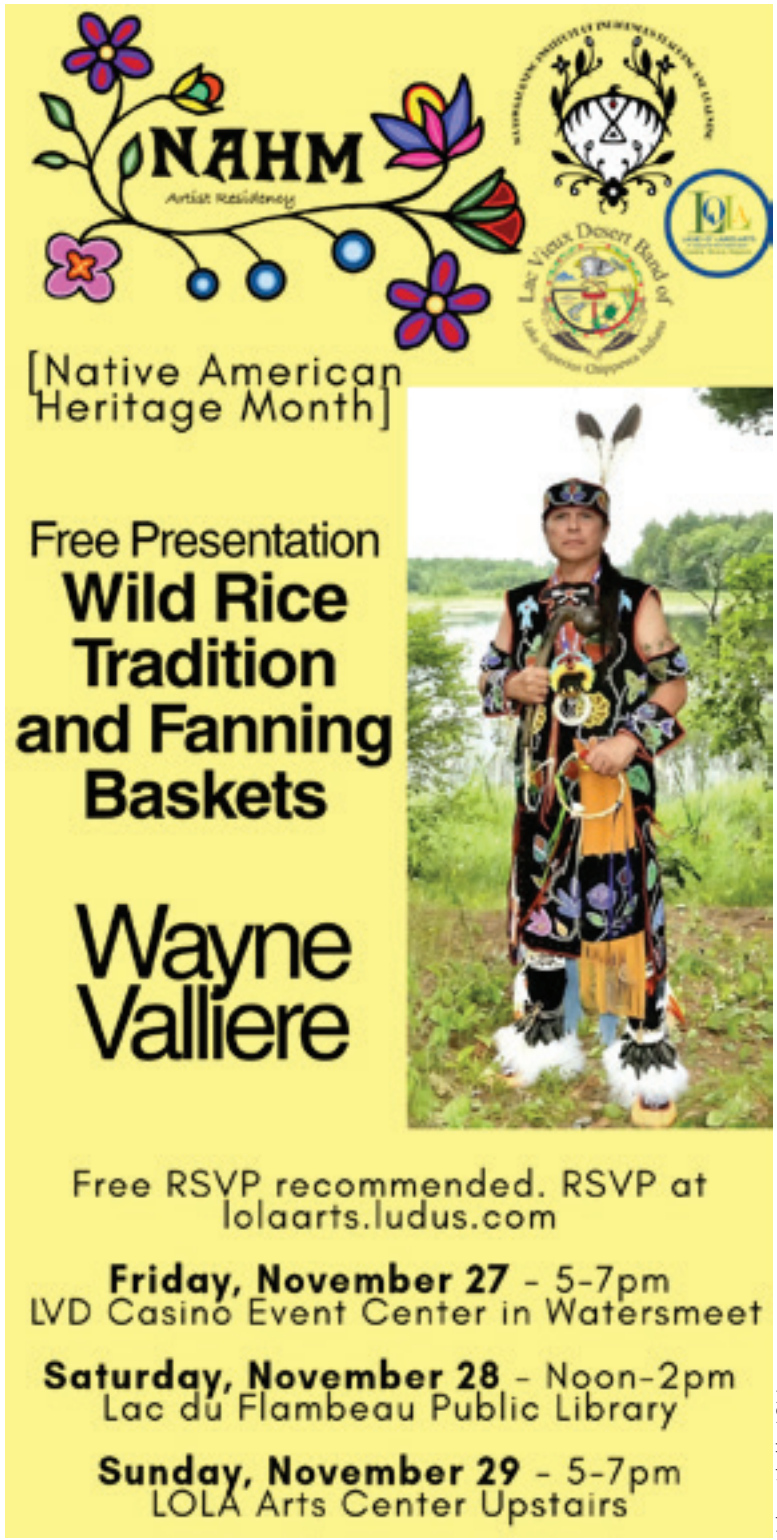
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ITEMS FOR SALE: Cub Cadet 3x30" track snowblower-used 3 seasons-$1400; Eskimo Propane 8" Ice Auger-less than 25 holes drilled-$150; Quick Wood Splitter-5hp tecumseh-older machine-vertical only-$230. Please take all for $1400. 920-210-3804. #112726

Open Pickleball in Land O' Lakes

The Land O' Lakes courts are officially buzzing. All are invited to join. Whether you are an experienced "kitchen" strategist or someone who has never held a paddle in your life, our local friendly pickleball meetups are open to all skill levels. Our current players are primarily in the intermediate range but are happy to introduce newbies to the game. We currently play at the Elementary School on Town Hall Road. Please check on the TeamReach App to check in or to just see if the school is available. We play on Mondays and Thursdays at 3:35pm, after the kids and school buses have left. Please do not try to enter prior to this time for security reasons. Our TeamReach code is 54540IN, or you can call Scott at 608-334-5335.

Hope to see you there with your indoor shoes. If you're looking for some long rallies, good laughs and a chance to meet your neighbors you should give it a shot.



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