

BIRCH Barker

vol. 78 issue 1

Weekend of
May 23
2026

The official publication of the Birch Lake Yacht Club

BirchLakeYachtClub.com

- No matter your speed, power boats must travel **COUNTER CLOCKWISE**.
- Go slow near other boats, rafts, and the shore. You are responsible for your wake.
- Stay 100ft from shore, other boats, and rafts when you are traveling over wake speed.
- When pulling a skier, wakeboarder, wakesurfer, or tuber, you **MUST** have an observer at all times.
- There must be US Coast Guard approved life vests for every person on board, as well as one throwable device (e.g., seat cushion).
- All children 5 and younger **MUST be in a USCG Type 2** life jacket (PFD) when aboard any boat. Many common life vests are NOT Type 2 PFDs. Check the label!
- All boats must have a horn, fire extinguisher, and valid registration on board.
- Jet skis have many special rules. It is your responsibility to know and obey the laws!



2026 BIRCH LAKE CALENDAR

May

- 23 - BLYC Board Meeting, 9am
- 23-25 - Memorial Day Regatta
- 30 - Commodore / VC Party

June

- 6 - Trivia Night
- 10 - Card / Game Night
- 13 - Spaghetti Dinner
- 20 - BLYC Board Meeting, 9am
- 27 - Kidz Regatta

July

- 3 - Port-a-Pit Fundraiser
- 4 - Boat Parade, 3pm
- 4 - Fireworks
- 4-6 - Fourth of July Regatta
- 5 - Pancake Breakfast, 8:30-11am
- 15 - Card / Game Night
- 18 - BLYC Board Meeting
- 24 - Ladies Golf Outing

August

- 1 - Corn and Sausage Roast

2026 BLYC Directors

Officers

- Commodore: Steve Frew (E)
- Vice Comm: Ron Niezgodski (W)
- Secretary: Mike Sheffieck (W)
- Treasurer: Deb Spratt (N)
- Fleet Capt: Bob Niezgodski (W)

Directors

- John Ball (E)
- Dave Carroll (W)
- Barb Cassidy (E)
- Ed Chester (E)
- Tim Cole (H)
- Liz Cover (E)
- Sue Davis (E)
- Julie Dickey (E)
- Ronni Eshleman (S)
- Bernie Garceau (E)
- Amber Grundy (E)
- Deb Hall (C)
- Vickie Rogers (C)
- Rick Russwurm (N)
- Ray Scholes (S)
- Scott Troeger (E)
- Phil Vitale (E)
- Sandy Vitale (E)
- Dan Waxman (E)
- Sue Williams (S)

Committee Chairs

- Water Quality: Patrick Welch (S)
- Homeowners Association: Blair Garceau (E)

COMMODORE'S COMMENTS

It's Memorial Day weekend! As we enjoy the holiday with family and friends, please pause to remember all of the brave U.S. military service members who have been killed or wounded from the Revolutionary War through today. It is sobering to reflect that roughly 1.31 million have died, with about 1.45 million wounded. It is because of their sacrifices that we can enjoy the blessings of liberty.

Our 2026 social season got off to a great start with the BLYC Spring Dinner at the Hotel Elkhart. The weather was beautiful, and the outdoor rooftop bar was packed with happy Birch Lakers. When dinner was called, the crowd moved into the top floor ballroom. Tom Cassidy gave a beautiful and inspirational prayer, and then a delicious plated three-course dinner was enjoyed by all. After dinner, your Commodore reported on events over the winter, and the plans for this season. Then a large group returned to the outdoor bar.

Planning for this season started last fall in small group meetings with our Directors. Thank you, Directors, for all of your great ideas and excellent advice.

Our clubhouse hosts its first social event of the year on Saturday, May 30, with the Commodore-Vice Commodore party. While you are there, check out our beautiful newly

repaired wooden deck, and the sparkling clean clubhouse interior. Many thanks to the ladies who cleaned the clubhouse: Sue Davis, Deb Hall and Sandy Vitale. And many thanks to the men who planned, demolished and rebuilt the deck: Ron Niezgodski, Bob Niezgodski, John Ball, Bob Baumgartner (foreman), Tim Cole, Kevin Goodin (procured materials), Bud Hall, Dave Hogoboom, Bob King, Bill Luecht, Scott Troeger, Phil Vitale, and Brad Zesinger.



Teamwork in Action

Many thousands of dollars were saved.

Our full social calendar is possible only with the leadership of our wonderful Event Chairs. Many thanks to Blair Garceau, Holly Troeger and Sue Willians (Trivia Night); Dave and Donna Hogoboom and Sue Davis (Card and Game Nights, doubled to 4 nights this season); Deb Spratt and Peggy Geik (the return of the Spaghetti Dinner); Tom and Megan Caplis (Don Harman Kidz Regatta); Ron Niezgodski and Tim and Chris Cole (Port-A-Pit); Dan Waxman (Boat Parade); Bernie Garceau (Fireworks); Bob Niezgodski and Ron Niezgodski (Sailing races and Regattas); John Ball (Men's Golf Outing); Andy and Lori Snider (Corn and Sausage Roast); Ron and Kathy Niezgodski (Fall Dinner); Ronni Eschelman, Vanessa Wozniak and Deb Runser (Women's Style Show); *continued...*

The Barker will consider ads, photos, and editorial content for publication. Email items to birchbarker1@gmail.com.

For editorial concerns, contact editor Amber Holleman at birchbarker1@gmail.com or 574-315-0227.

For delivery concerns, contact Ron Niezgodski at birchbass1@gmail.com or 269-476-9317.

For all other BLYC matters, contact Comm. Steve Frew at stephenbfrew@gmail.com or 239-315-1177.

DEADLINE for submissions is always **NOON** on the Tuesday of the week before publication.



The 2026 Birch Barker is generously sponsored by Culver's. See ad on page 3

Bill Luecht and John Luecht (Bad Patty Crockpot Challenge). I hope I haven't missed anyone, and apologize if I did!

American's 250th birthday is fast approaching. Let's make our great Fireworks Event Chair Bernie Garceau happy, and get those donations in! Please see Bernie's report about fireworks,

which you can find at the bottom of this page after the upcoming events section.

Stay safe, and have a great Memorial Day weekend!

~ Commodore Steve Frew



Tomb of the Unknown Soldier

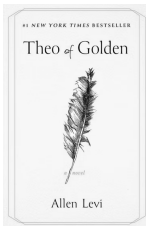
UPCOMING EVENTS

Ladies Weekly Golf

We usually tee off Monday mornings and follow up with lunch after the nine-hole "adventure." We don't keep track of scores and welcome all levels of players. The only judgment and competition is with yourself. If you have questions or are interested in golf or just lunch, contact Blair Garceau (269-476-9862).

Book Club

The first book club meeting of 2026 will be on June 22, hosted by Ronni Eshleman. The book will be *Theo of Golden*. Any questions, or if you'd like to join in the fun, contact Jackie Frew: seeitall8@gmail.com or call/text 708-285-2999.



★ ★ ★

COMMODORE— VICE COMMODORE Party!

★ ★ ★

SATURDAY, MAY 30 @ 5:00 PM

★ Please wear red, white, and/or blue ★
as we open the clubhouse for America's 250th year!

Please Bring a Dish to Share

★ Contributions to ★
help stock the bar
for a great season
are welcome!

★ A-M: Appetizer
★ N-Z: Dessert

★★★ *See you all there!* ★★★

TRIVIA NIGHT

Grab your
FRIENDS
NEIGHBORS
FAMILY
and come to

at the BIRCH LAKE YACHT CLUB!

Previous Trivia Nights have been very popular – so don't miss out on the fun!
You can either form your own team or just come individually and we'll get you on a team.
Teams can be anywhere from one to eight people.

<p>WHEN:</p> <p>SATURDAY, JUNE 6TH</p> <p>DOORS OPEN AT 6:30</p> <p>TRIVIA BEGINS PROMPTLY AT 7PM!</p>	<p>WHERE:</p> <p>BIRCH LAKE YACHT CLUB</p>	<p>BRING:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your own drinks • A dish to share (either an appetizer or dessert) • Paper and pen • Your wallet (for 50/50 raffle and to buy mulligans – good for free answers!)
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BLAIR GARCEAU (269-475-9862) **QUESTIONS?** **SUE WILLIAMS** (269-298-2839)
contact

Spaghetti Dinner

Saturday, June 13

→ 5:00 pm – 7:00 pm →

Join us for a delicious evening at the
Birch Lake Yacht Club

Enjoy spaghetti with choice of
homemade meat sauce, alfredo sauce,
or marinara sauce (limited)
Salad, bread, dessert,
and lemonade or iced tea

*Bring your family, friends, and appetite
for a fun community dinner night.*

No tickets needed. Adults **\$15.00**
Pay at the door: Children 10 and under **\$10.00**

FIREWORKS UPDATE

The 250th anniversary of the founding of the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA falls on Saturday July 4th this year, and the BLYC is planning a fantastic celebration for all Birch Lake residents to enjoy.

The final event of the day will be the annual fireworks display to close out a perfect day. This year is a *Big Deal* because the 250th anniversary actually falls on a Saturday; the perfect day to celebrate with fireworks.

The Yacht Club worked hard to get the Saturday evening commitment from the display company this year. What could be better?

The display will be a little longer this

year with a wider variety of pyrotechnics, which as usual, comes at a cost. This year will be a little pricy, but it is **OUR 250th Anniversary** and we want a great display.

We are asking every household to help support this last event of this day that our kids and grandkids will remember. The next big USA anniversary that falls on a Saturday will be the Tricentennial on July 4th, 2076. And we would like our kids to remember what a great fireworks display they all watched 50 years earlier.

To make the fundraising a little easier this year, one of our BLYC members decided to help with an extra incentive to donate. Keith and

Julia Remington, and their Culver's Restaurants have committed to match the next \$5,000 worth of donations that come in from around the lake. That is correct, the Remington Family, along with the help from Culver's Restaurants, are taking this generous step by helping the lake community cover the cost of this 'Fireworks Celebration Capstone.'

Let us ALL do our part; we all need to send in our fireworks donations to give the Remington's and Culver's additional donations to match.

Let's make this a 4th of July and 250th birthday party celebration to remember.

Thanks all,
Bernie G.

ODDS AND ENDS

THANK YOU to all of our 2026 Barker advertisers! Please check them all out on the BLYC website and support our advertisers. The Birch Barker is delivered **free** to all Birch Lake residents because the advertising revenue covers all of the printing costs, website hosting, and our new membership platform. Publication and distribution is all managed by volunteers.



The Printed Barker

The Birch Barker is delivered to all of the homes on Birch Lake each week, and is available online at

birchlakeyachtclub.com

The submission deadline is noon on Tuesday of the week before publication. Contributions can be emailed to

birchbarker1@gmail.com.

To buy an ad or for more info, contact Amber at birchbarker1@gmail.com or 574-315-0227. Advertising rates are posted at

birchlakeyachtclub.com/advertise

Yacht Club Building Use

For information on the rules and requirements, or to make arrangements to use the Birch Lake Yacht Club building for a non-BLYC event, call or text Sandy Vitale at 269-858-8184, or email sv6102@gmail.com.

Boat Parade Theme Reveal!

This summer's Fourth of July Parade will be on Saturday July 4th starting at 3pm and the Parade's Theme-----FAVORITE TEAM!!!

Start working on your boat's theme going back to your high school, college or hometown professional team. Or go with one from a movie! (Bad News Bears)

Also, this year we have a second way to participate for those of you who don't enter a boat..... Decorate your pier, dock or just suit up all your shoreline family and friends in your team's gear to show your BEST TEAM SPIRIT! Cheer on the boat participants as there will be trophies given to both boat and shoreline participants.

Questions or comments, contact Dan Waxman at DWaxman131@outlook.com or call his cell.

Birch Lake Floating Keychains are still available for purchase for \$5.00 each. 100% of proceeds go to the Water Quality Fund. Text or call **Jennifer Ball** at 574-535-3733 or **Cindy Bernaciak** at 773-401-9191 to get yours.



Birch Lake Yacht Club
FIREWORKS FUND
 Our goal for 2026 is \$26,000
 Contribute now at
<https://tinyurl.com/BLYCfireworks>



Slow Down Signs

"Slow Down" signs are available for lake home owners. Contact Blair Garceau (269-476-9862) if you need a sign for your yard. Courtesy of the BL Home Owners Association.



WELCOME to DELICIOUS

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|---------------|------------------|
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2026 BIRCH BARKER SPONSOR

BIRCH LAKE YACHT CLUB DUES

Support the BLYC and the entire Birch Lake Community by becoming a member!

The Birch Lake Yacht Club (BLYC) is a 501(c)(7) non profit organization

What your BLYC dues and donations support:

- Monitoring water quality, which helps keep Birch Lake clean, and improves our ability to respond swiftly to treat and eradicate invasive species.
- Maintaining the Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs) around the lake.
- Producing and distributing the printed Birch Barker every week in the summer (and online every month in the off season).
- Publication of a biennial Directory.
- Fundraising for, planning, and carrying out the 4th of July Fireworks show.
- Providing a forum and means for handling lake-wide concerns with local governmental issues.
- Helping to fund and host a variety of community-building activities.



BLYC dues are NOT used to purchase alcohol for events. All events sponsored by the Yacht Club are organized by volunteers. In 2024, the BLYC Board of Directors voted to make all events revenue-neutral and to not spend any Yacht Club funds on alcoholic beverages.

NEW in 2026!

We are excited to introduce a new membership platform this year for BLYC memberships! This platform – called JoinIt – allows us to take online membership payments, collect donations, and take payments for events like the Spring or Fall Dinner. JoinIt also gives us an online directory that is only accessible to current BLYC members. It's entirely up to you what information you want to put into the directory to be shared with other BLYC members.

When you get to the JoinIt page, **make sure to click the blue "JOIN" button under the membership type you're interested in.** Don't click log in at the top right of the page, because you won't be in the system if you haven't joined yet.



Scan here to go to Join It

You can also make donations to the BLYC online. We are using a platform for donations called Zeffy that allows nonprofits to accept payments with no fees, but they automatically select a donation to Zeffy on the checkout screen. If you choose to pay online with the QR code, **you can avoid paying any credit card fees by choosing "other" from the dropdown menu and entering \$0 in the box.**

You can also mail in a paper form:

<p>Membership Fees</p> <p>\$ _____ BLYC member dues (\$50 per year)</p> <p>\$ _____ Associate member dues (\$15 per year) (non lake residents)</p> <p>\$ _____ Homeowners Association (\$10 per year)</p> <p>\$ _____ Sailing Fees (\$15 per year)</p> <p>\$ _____ Water Quality donations</p> <p>Donations</p> <p>\$ _____ General Fund</p> <p>\$ _____ AED Fund</p> <p>\$ _____ Barker Donations</p> <p>\$ _____ Building Fund</p> <p>\$ _____ Fireworks Fund</p> <p>\$ _____ Safety Fund</p> <p>\$ _____ Water Quality / Milfoil Program</p> <p>\$ _____ Other Donations (please specify: _____)</p> <p>\$ _____ TOTAL CONTRIBUTION</p>	<p>Make checks payable to: BLYC and mail to: Deb Spratt, Treasurer 18100 Farmington Hills Dr South Bend, IN 46637</p>
	<p>or pay online at https://app.joinit.com/o/blyc/</p>
	<p>Name _____</p> <p>Lake Address _____</p> <p>Phone _____</p> <p>Email _____</p>

2026 BIRCH LAKE DIRECTORY

Every two years, we publish a new Birch Lake Directory. In 2026, BLYC members will also have access to the online directory through Join It (see above).

If you would like to update the information that is published in the printed directory, you can submit the new information by scanning the QR code below, or by mailing the printed form to:

Amber Holleman
63250 Birch Rd
Vandalia, MI 49095



Please only include information you want printed in the directory!

BLYC Directory Update

Cottage number: _____ Lake Address: _____

Last name(s): _____

First name(s): _____

Off lake address (if applicable): _____

Phone #1 _____ Name for this phone # _____

Phone #2 _____ Name for this phone # _____

Email address(es) _____

Children's names: _____

2026 BLYC OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

BLYC OFFICERS

Commodore

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stephenbfrew@gmail.com

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Treasurer

Deb Spratt (N)
debspratt@comcast.net

Secretary

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mcsheffieck@gmail.com

Fleet Captain

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rjniezgodski@gmail.com



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Liz Cover (E) 574-849-1429
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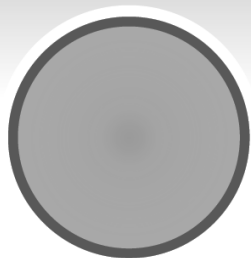
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Blair Garceau (E) 269-476-9862
blairgarceau@gmail.com
Homeowner's Association Chair



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SPRING DINNER



<-----
 This one's a throwback Spring Dinner photo from 2019. Harrison Grundy (6 months old) with Dan Waxman. Harrison is now 7!



scan for more (& color) photos
 <-----

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WATER QUALITY REPORT: WINTER FISH KILLS

After a winter with variable temperatures and lots of snow, you may see dead fish or other aquatic animals in Michigan lakes and streams as water warms up and ice and snow cover melt. The Department of Natural Resources reminds everyone that, while such sights can be startling, it is normal for winter conditions to cause the death of some fish and other creatures such as turtles, frogs, toads and crayfish.

"Winterkill is the most common type of fish mortality event," said Aaron Switzer, DNR fish production program manager. "It can be particularly common in shallow lakes, ponds, streams and canals during seasonal changes. It's a natural phenomenon, and these events are localized. They typically do not affect the overall health of fish populations or fishing quality."

Shallow lakes with a large amount of aquatic vegetation and soft bottoms are more prone to winterkill, particularly when thick ice and deep snowpack reduce sunlight for the plants. Canals in urban areas also are quite susceptible, due to the large amounts of nutrient runoff and pollution from roads, lawns and septic systems that flow into these areas, especially after large storm events.

Fish also may be affected by rapid changes in water temperature due to unseasonably warm or rapidly warming temperatures, leading to stress and, sometimes, mortality. Fish can become easily stressed in winter due to low

energy reserves because feeding is at a minimum in winter. They are then less able to handle low oxygen and temperature swings. That could be the case this year, with record or near-record cold temperatures and the large snowfalls Michigan experienced and the potential for rapid warming in the coming months.

Dissolved oxygen is required by fish and all other forms of aquatic life. When daylight is greatly reduced by ice and snow cover, aquatic plants stop producing oxygen, and many die. The bacteria that decompose organic materials on the bottom of the lake use the remaining oxygen in the water. With oxygen reduced, other aquatic animals die and start decomposing, and the rate that oxygen is used for decomposition is additionally increased — leading dissolved oxygen levels in the water to decrease even further, creating a cycle of increasing winterkill.

Fish and other aquatic life that die in late winter may not be noticed until well after the ice leaves lakes, as the animals may be temporarily preserved by the cold water.

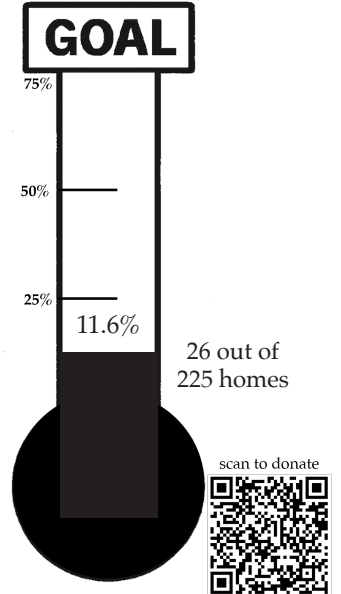
"If you see dead fish as a result of winterkill, the fish may appear fuzzy. This is because of secondary infection by fungus, but the fungus was not the cause of death," said Switzer. "The fish actually suffocated from a lack of dissolved oxygen from decaying plants and dead aquatic animals under the ice."

Visit the DNR website for more

information on fish kills in Michigan.

You can report fish kills at <http://Michigan.gov/EyesInTheField>; these reports are valuable to the DNR's management of aquatic resources in Michigan. If you suspect a fish kill is due to non-natural causes, call the nearest DNR office or Michigan's Pollution Emergency Alert System at 800-292-4706.

**Birch Lake Yacht Club
WATER QUALITY FUND**
Our goal for 2026 is to have 75% of homes on the lake contribute.
Contribute now at
<https://store.birchlakeyachtclub.com>



THE SIX COMMANDMENTS OF BIRCH LAKE WATER QUALITY

- I. Thou shalt prevent the spread of Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS).
- II. Thou shalt minimize surface runoff.
- III. Thou shalt minimize the effects of waves.
- IV. Thou shalt protect and expand Natural Shorelines.
- V. Thou shalt not allow phosphorus, nutrients, and other undesirable chemical elements to enter our lake.
- VI. Thou shalt remain informed and active about other Water Quality issues.

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FLEET CAPTAIN'S CORNER

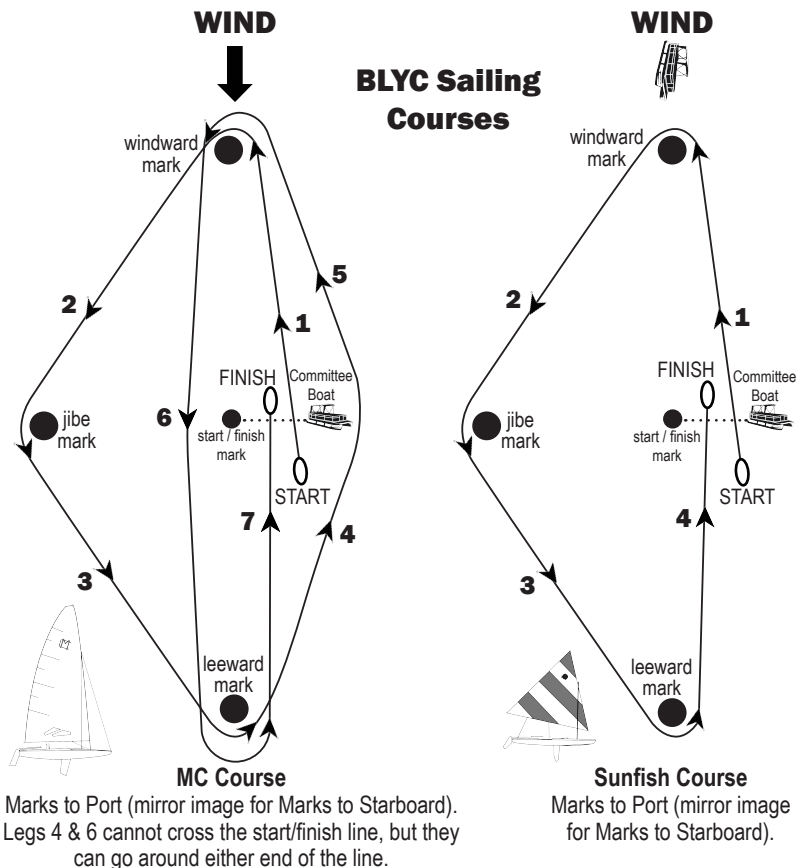
Happy Memorial Day and unofficial start of summer. Unfortunately, with Memorial Day falling earlier than normal, a lot of storms, and sub-60-degree water temperatures, not many sailboats have been put in the lake yet. As a result, there will be no Memorial Day Regatta this year. This is somewhat common, but we have been trying to host this event more in recent years. I am crossing my fingers for a string of good weather to warm up the lake a bit, so we can kick off the sailing season soon. Also, I am hoping the string of windy Sundays in a row we have had persists. In any event, if you happen to get your sailboats in the lake this weekend and there is wind, go out and have a sail. It is a great way to get out to enjoy the lake, and the fuel is very cheap.

~Fleet Captain Bob Niezgodski, rjniedzgodski@gmail.com

P.S. If you are or know anyone in general who has an interest in learning to sail, let me know! We would be happy to help out in any way we can. Could be finding a loner boat, a sunfish to sail, or finding a sailor to give lessons.



Lonely Sailboats



Sundays are SAILING DAYS!
Races typically start at 11am
Please steer clear
of the course!

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CAMP T CORNER

Over the past few years, you may have noticed that we have started referring to our camp as Camp T or Camp T on Birch Lake, rather than Camp Tannadoonah. This change is part of a thoughtful and deliberate effort to address cultural appropriation in our past and to make better, more respectful choices moving forward.

There has been a growing movement within the American Camp Association, as well as among camps and youth-serving organizations across the country, to recognize traditions and practices that may have caused harm to Native communities. You can read more about ACA's cultural responsiveness work here: <https://www.acacamps.org/resources/inclusion-belonging/cultural-responsiveness>

As part of this effort, we reached out several years ago to the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi, whose ancestral homeland includes the land where our camp is located. We met with cultural education representatives, gave them a tour of camp, and shared information about our songs, legends, traditions, and name. They took that information back to the Representation Outreach Board at the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi for further discussion. Among their recommendations was that we stop using the name Camp Tannadoonah.

Our camp was founded in 1921 and was originally called Wohelo Camp. In 1923, the Camp Fire Girls who were part of our early program used a book called *The Book of Names* to choose a new name for their camp. Published in 1915 by Camp Fire leaders, the book claimed to contain Native words and English translations. Camp Fire Girls were encouraged to select "Indian Names" for themselves from the book, and the girls chose "Tannadoonah," which the book said meant "lives out of doors." Years later - when I was a camper and counselor - campers were taught that Tannadoonah meant "a gathering of friends, on a hill, above a lake, among the trees."

Neither meaning was accurate. The book contained words created by its authors - words that were made to sound Native, but were not actually from Native languages. The Pokagon educators

explained that because the word was invented by non-Native people, assigned meaning by non-Native people, and intended to imitate Native language, it was problematic for us to continue using it as our camp name.

We recognize that the girls who chose the name, the authors who wrote the book, and the generations of campers who repeated the story - including many of us who loved the name deeply - did not intend harm. Everyone here at Birch Lake knows that I love Camp and care deeply about it. But good intentions do not erase impact.

At the same time that children in Camp Fire, Girl Scouts, and Boy Scouts were choosing "Indian names," making up words they believed sounded Native, dressing in costumes meant to resemble Native ceremonial clothing, and playing with Native-themed dolls, actual Native American children and families were being forced by the U.S. government to stop speaking their languages, wearing ceremonial dress, singing their songs, dancing their dances, and practicing their traditions. That history matters.

It does not mean those children meant harm. Many believed they were showing admiration or respect. But we know more now. And when we know better, we have a responsibility to do better. That is why we reached out to the Pokagon Band and asked for their guidance.

An analogy someone once shared with me has stayed with me: If I make food for a sick friend and bring it to their house, I am trying to be kind and helpful. But if my friend says, "Thank you, but I'm allergic to carrots and I can't eat this," then I have a choice. I can listen and bring something different next time, or I can continue bringing food with carrots because I don't think carrots are really a problem. At that point, my good intentions no longer matter as much as my refusal to listen.

In the same way, once the Pokagon Band shared that the name Tannadoonah was hurtful and problematic because of its inauthenticity, continuing to use it would mean deliberately disregarding their perspective. We want to be good neighbors and respectful members of



this community, including to the Native people whose ancestral land we occupy. We asked for their guidance, and we are choosing to honor it.

For now, we are using the name Camp T on Birch Lake. We are continuing to work with the Pokagon Band, as well as with a marketing firm, to determine the best path forward. At the same time, we have recently separated from the national Camp Fire organization and become an independent nonprofit. That means we also need to develop a new name for the overall organization that operates Camp T and our three other community programs.

There is a lot of change happening. But it is happening for good reason: to better serve the youth in our community, to build stronger relationships, and to become a more thoughtful, respectful, and inclusive organization. I hope that our Birch Lake community can understand and support us in these goals.

~Miss Amber



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BIRCH LAKE HISTORY: CAMP KILOQUA

Editor's Note: This season in the Barker, we plan to feature different properties on and around the lake each week, with historical information about the families who have lived there, photos, and stories. If you would like to submit content about your home at the lake, we will gladly accept new submissions! Please send to birchbarker1@gmail.com

Many people at Birch Lake know that at one time there were two camps on the north shore: Camp Tannadoonah, owned by the South Bend Council of Camp Fire, and Camp Kiloqua, owned by the Mishawaka Council of Camp Fire. Camp Kiloqua had a mix of cabins, platform tents, and a lodge they called Dodge Lodge, which also served as the dining hall. In early references, it was spelled Camp Kil-Lo-Qua.



"This excellent waterfront provides top swimming facilities for Mishawaka Camp Fire Girls at Camp Kil-Lo-Qua, their new summer camp at Birch Lake, Vandalia, Mich. The clear water and sandy beach provide excellent swimming for the young campers who must observe the "buddy" system as a safety measure for swimmers." South Bend Tribune, August 2, 1951.

Camp Kiloqua was originally owned by the Elkhart YWCA and was purchased by the Mishawaka Council of Camp Fire in 1951 through a land contract agreement. In 1957, Camp Fire raised \$57,000 to pay off the remaining balance and officially owned the camp outright. A 1961 South Bend Tribune article described Camp Kiloqua as "one of the finest [camps] in this part of the country."

The camp was located in the northeast corner of Birch Lake, with the property stretching up the hill to Harvey Street. The organization also owned the land across the road surrounding Prang Lake, which the Camp Fire girls



Dodge Lodge in 1951

affectionately called "Candy Hill" because the land had been purchased with proceeds from candy sales.

In the late 1960s, the South Bend and Mishawaka Councils of Camp Fire explored the possibility of merging. However, in 1968, the Mishawaka Council suspended merger discussions and ultimately voted against the merger. Unfortunately, the council was no longer able to sustain Camp Kiloqua financially and sold the property around 1970.

Some Birch Lake residents - Bill King and Herm Kruggel - purchased the property and operated it as a basketball camp for a number of years. Dodge Lodge was later sold to a private owner and converted into a residence. Over time, the Kiloqua property was divided and sold for private homes along what is now Kiloqua Woods Lane. The land where Dodge Lodge once stood is now owned by Artie McElwee, who preserved the original fireplace when building his home on the site.



Dodge Lodge Fireplace, 1953

When Camp Kiloqua was sold, the Candy Hill property was transferred to the South Bend Council. In 1975, several cabins and a bathhouse were built there, and the area was used for counselors-in-training and older camper programs for a few years. However, the South Bend Council was facing significant financial strain, including debt owed to the National Camp Fire organization, declining camp enrollment, and mounting facility repair costs. Eventually, the Candy Hill property was no longer used and sat vacant for many years before being sold to a Birch Lake

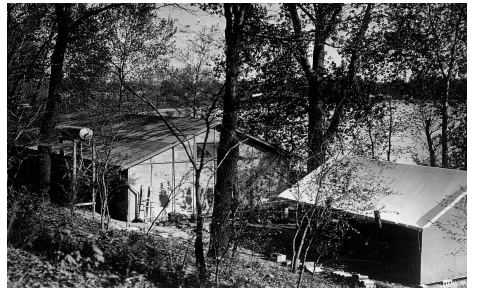


Campers in the platform tents in 1956

resident in 1998.

A 1975 South Bend Tribune article, written by an unknown former Kiloqua camper, reflected nostalgically on her years at camp. She concluded with these words:

"But Camp Kiloqua is gone. The main and upper levels now are used for a basketball camp. Candy Hill has another owner. But even today as I look out across the lake from the second level, I can still see those 70 twinkling wish candles. If my wish only could give Camp Kiloqua back to Mishawaka girls..."



Kiloqua Cabins from above, 1957



Inside Dodge Lodge, 1953



Candy Hill cabin under construction in 1975

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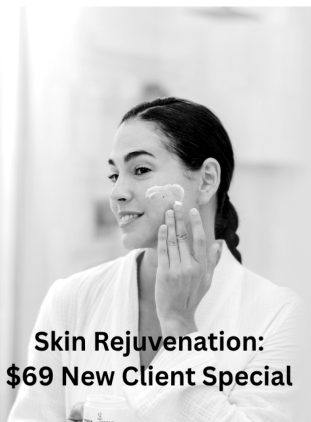
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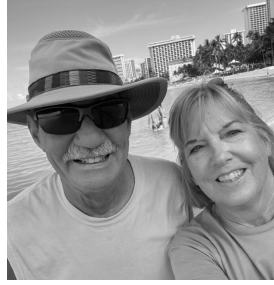
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BARKER KIDS OF THE WEEK



Maggie Williams, granddaughter of Pat and Sue Williams, won Rookie of the Year for riding in the IU Women's Little 500 bicycle race this spring. Her team, Novus, placed 7th. Congratulations Maggie!



Bill and Sherry Holleman spent a week in Hawai'i before beginning their trek back to Michigan for the summer. They plan to arrive here at the end of May.

Want your kid to be a Barker kid of the week? Send your photos to birchbarker1@gmail.com



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EMERGENCY HEART DEFIBRILLATOR (AED) locations on Birch Lake

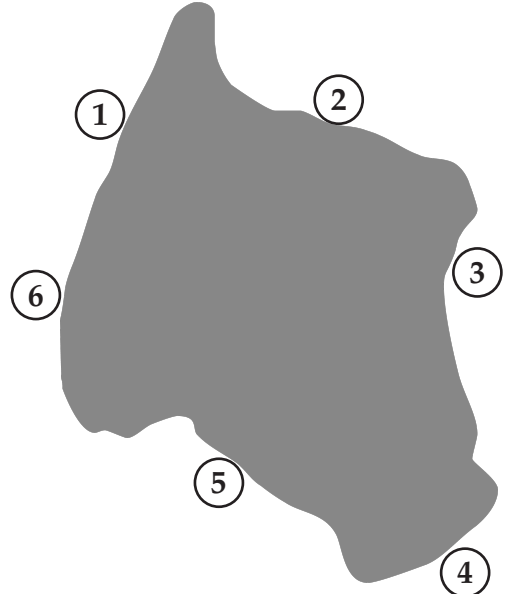
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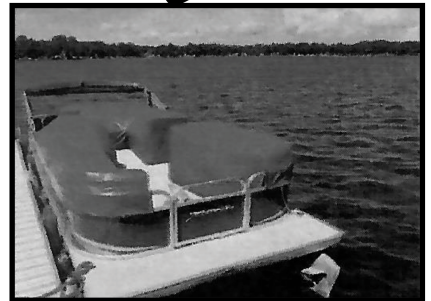
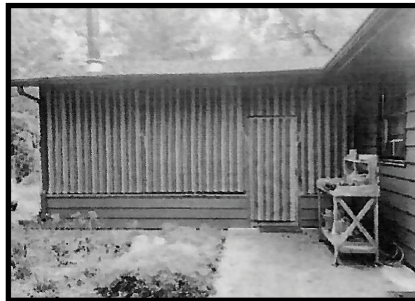


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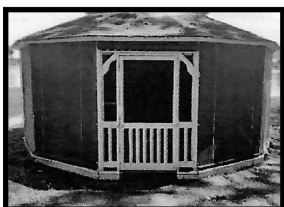
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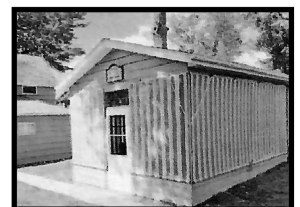
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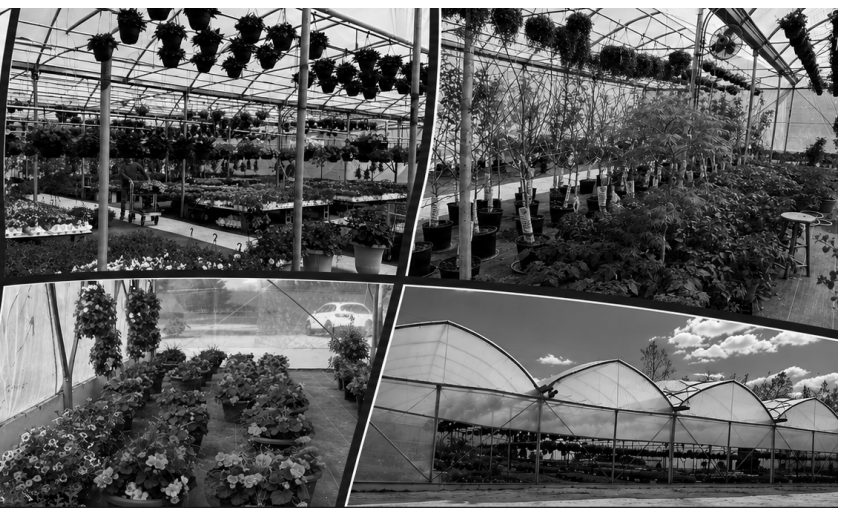
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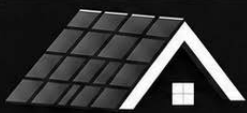
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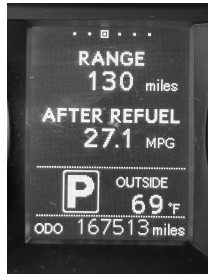
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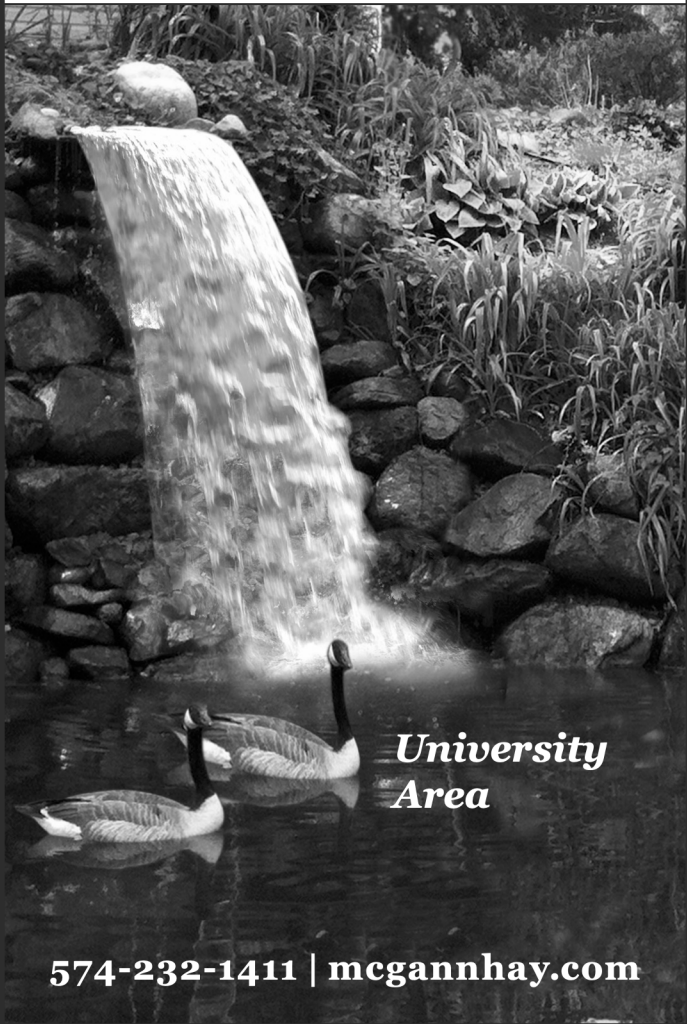
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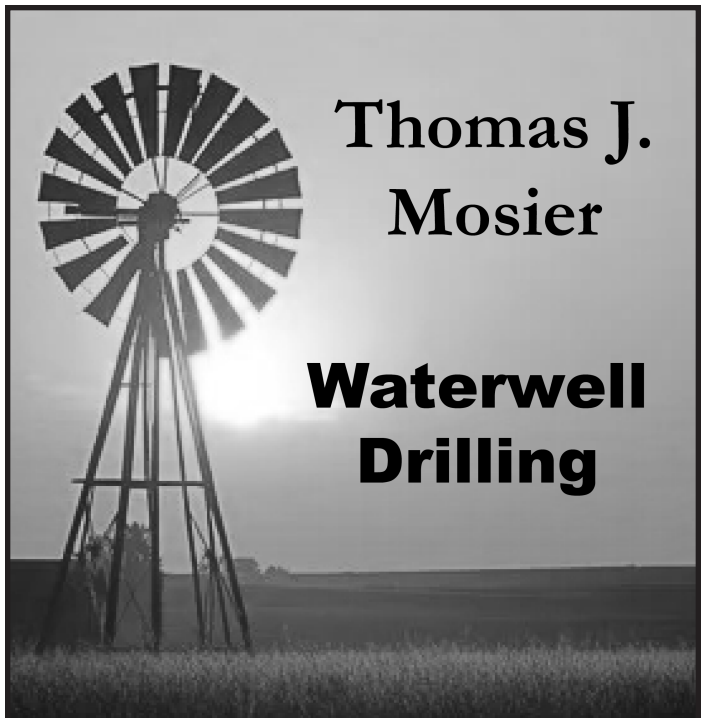
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