BIRCH Barker

vol. 78 issue 15

The official publication of the Birch Lake Yacht Club

BirchLakeYachtClub.com

Weekend of
August 29
2026

The Commodore's Trophy is awarded annually at the Fall Dinner to an individual or to a couple, in recognition of their many years of outstanding Service to the Birch Lake Yacht Club. This year's trophy was awarded to the couple of Camille Athanas and Bill Butler. Camille and Bill are lifelong residents of Birch Lake who have always been very active in volunteering to help in many events each season, eagerly tackling whatever job needs doing. They both can often be seen helping to set up for events, serving food, and cleaning up afterwards. With her high energy and attention to detail, Camille exemplifies the expression "Cleanliness is next to godliness." Camille and Bill were active sailors for many years, and Bill still often volunteers on the committee or safety boats to help support the sailing program. Congratulations, Cam and Bill, for your well-deserved Commodore's Trophy! You are loved and appreciated here at Birch Lake! ~Past Commodore, Steve Frew

2026 BIRCH LAKE CALENDAR

September

5 - 6 - Labor Day Regatta
9 - Card / Game Night, 6:30pm
12 - Sailing Awards
19 - BLYC Board Meeting, 9am
26 -Bad Patty Crockpot Challenge

2027 BLYC Directors

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Commodore: Ron Niezgodski (W)
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Water Quality:
Patrick Welch (S)
Homeowners Association:
Blair Garceau (E)

COMMODORE'S COMMENTS

The Fall Dinner has come and gone, a great time was had by all, with good food. This event is one of the last times we all get together this year, but I hope to see many of you at the Crock Pot Challenge. I hope you bear with me; I am a talker, not a writer.

First, I want to announce our new Vice Commodore, Keith Remington. Thank you, Keith, for serving in this role. Also, a great shout-out to the Commodore Award recipients, Cam and Bill Butler, who always do a great job of helping out at most of our events and have been a big part of our community for a long time. Thank you both.

Next, a big thanks to Tim at Pig Headed Catering, also known as Pig and Pizza, located near Corey Lake, for providing some excellent food for this event. A special thanks to all the servers who helped out serving the food and cleaning up, Vickie Rogers, Patty Russwurm, Stacia Andriano, Lori Snyder, Bruce Wagner, Leslie King, Amber Holleman, and the rest of the Birch Lake Family that lent a hand. Last but not least, a very special thank you to our outgoing Commodore Steve Frew for his leadership over this past year.

As for next year, I am looking forward to it: the Spaghetti Dinner, Port-A-Pit, the Corn & Sausage Roast, and all the other events. I do want to try something different, though. We need to get the younger people more involved. Message, email, text, or call me and let me know any ideas you may have to help in this matter. Also, let me or the Fleet Captain know if you or anyone you know wants to get into sailing. You don't need a sailboat; we will find one for you to sail out and join in on the fun! I am going to try very hard to make the upcoming year fun for all.

~Commodore Ron Niezgodski

Passing of the torch (or flags). 2026 Commodore Steve Frew, 2027 Vice Commodore Keith Remington, and 2027 Commodore Ron Niezgodski

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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. Ron Niezgodski at ***birchbass1@gmail.com*** or **269-476-9317**.
NEW DEADLINE for submissions is **11AM** on the **MONDAY** of the week before publication.

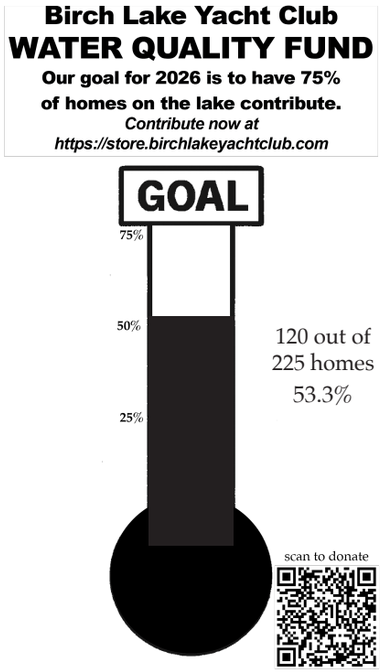
EVENTS AND NOTES

Thank you!

My sincere apologies! In my speech at the Fall Dinner, I apparently lost my place in my notes, and failed to thank the following people: Thank you to Bernie Garceau for leading the great Fireworks effort, to Camp T for being the launch site, and to all those who helped with clean-up at Camp the next morning! I hope that I did not omit anyone else, but if I did, please let me know, and I will be sure to make amends. Thank you. *~Former Commodore Steve Frew*

AED Support Needed

Our six (6) AEDs around the Lake require periodic battery and pad replacements so they are always ready when needed. The batteries have a four (4) year life and were last replaced in late Summer 2024. The pads have a two (2) year life and were last replaced in Fall 2025. That means next Fall we will need to replace the pads again at a likely cost of more than $2,100 in total. We currently have not received enough in AED donations to cover this impending cost. When you are reviewing your future donations to the Yacht Club please consider a donation toward our AEDs. Our Lake Community appreciates it!



Ladies Weekly Golf

This year we tee off on Thursday 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).

New BLYC Directory

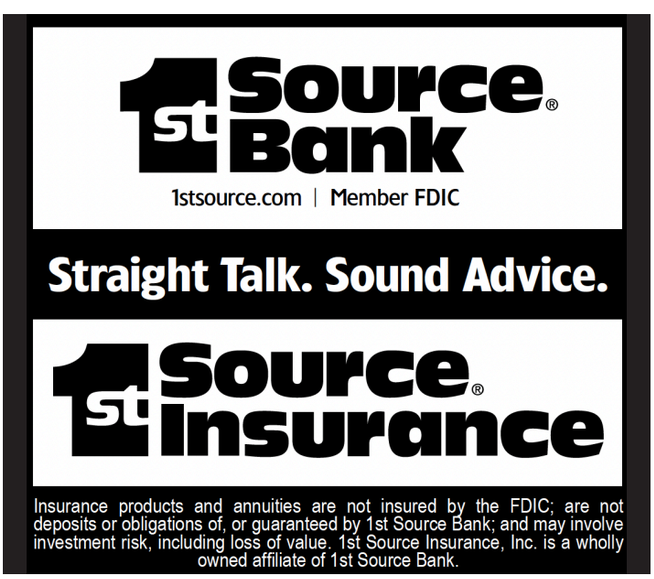
The 2027 BLYC Printed Directory is now available! There is a complimentary copy for all current BLYC members; non-members may purchase a copy for $5. Extra copies are also available for purchase. To pick up your directory, or purchase an extra, please contact Amber at ***birchbarker1@gmail.com*** or 574-315-0227.

BLYC ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORT

Here are the Birch Lake Yacht Club Fund Balances at 7/31/2025 and 7/31/2026 and commentary from your Board.

COMPARATIVE 7/31/2025 vs 7/31/2026 FUND BALANCES & COMMENTS

FUND	7/31/2025 FUND BALANCES	ACTIVITY FOR YEAR ENDED 7/31/2026	7/31/2026 FUND BALANCES	BOARD COMMENTS
Water Quality	$55,153	$1,464	$56,617	**No immediate issues**. Donations slightly exceeded the $17,100 in expenses this year so we didn't build our "fighting reserve" by as much as we hoped. Our excellent Water Quality Committee continues to monitor our Lake's health, treat the Lake's invasive milfoil and prepare for the next invasive species.
BLYC Improvement	$5,858	($2,980)	$2,878	**Increasing issue** related to expected future need for $6k to $10k to replace the water well installed in 1961. Our nearly $3,000 in net costs this last year included the deck replacement -- just the cost of materials due to volunteer labor -- and the unexpected need to remove a large, damaged tree in the parking lot after the Spring storms.
Sailing	$2,412	($61)	$2,351	**No issues.** The balance can cover expected expenses and other equipment replacements.
Fireworks	($630)	$10,254	$9,624	**Continuing concern.** Donations and sponsorship for 2026's Show more than offset the cost. However, to be fiscally responsible our goal is to have virtually the entire cost of the following year's show on deposit before we sign our contract in the Fall each year - meaning **we need $9,300 by September 30th to meet our donation goal.**
General	$29,208	$8,399	$37,607	**Mostly good news with one concern.** Several items contributed to our higher balance: Higher Net Revenues from: 1) Four dinners and events and a fund raiser netting a total of $5,540; 2) A $2,500 donation to the Barker; 3) $2,570 in increased Barker net advertising revenue; and 4) Dues and miscellaneous donations exceeding general costs by $190; Offset by Higher Net Expenses from: a) The cost to replace AED pads exceeding donations by $1,400; and b) $1,000 in costs for the Club's on-line software for 2027 and 2028. **AED donations need to increase** to pay for next Fall's pad replacement and to start to build a reserve for the eventual replacement of the units.
Totals	**$92,001**	**$17,076**	**$109,077**	



WATER QUALITY

This week's Water Quality article is a follow up to a previous article contributed by Water Quality Committee member Zack Nickell regarding responsible boating practices.

Beneath the Wake: How Smart Boating Protects Our Lakes from the Bottom Up

When we think about boat safety, our eyes naturally focus on what is happening on the surface: watching for swimmers, keeping a safe distance from docks, and avoiding collisions. However, an invisible environmental crisis is unfolding directly beneath our hulls.

Every time a boat accelerates, turns, or plows through shallow water, its propulsion system sends powerful currents straight down to the lakebed. This underwater turbulence - known as prop wash or jet blast - can fundamentally alter a lake's ecosystem. By understanding the physics of how different watercraft interact with the lake floor, boaters can adopt simple, actionable habits to minimize sediment disruption and keep our waters clean, clear, and safe.

The Hidden Danger: Sediment Resuspension and Algae Blooms

The bottom of a healthy lake is usually covered in a thick layer of fine silt, organic muck, and decaying plant matter. This layer acts as a natural vault, trapping large concentrations of nutrients, most notably **phosphorus**. When a boat's propulsion system stirs up this sediment, it triggers a chain reaction of negative water quality impacts:

- **Algae Blooms:** Releasing trapped phosphorus into the sunlit upper layers of the water acts as a massive dose of fertilizer. This directly fuels the growth of toxic cyanobacteria (blue-green algae), which can ruin beaches, kill fish, and harm pets.
- **Loss of Clarity:** Churned-up silt can remain suspended in the water column for hours or even days. This blocks sunlight from reaching beneficial native underwater plants, disrupting the entire food chain.
- **Destruction of Habitats:** The physical force of underwater turbulence tears up native weed beds and smothers fish spawning grounds in heavy layers of displaced mud.

Operational Guidelines by Vessel Type

Different boats interact with the lakebed in completely unique ways. To minimize your ecological footprint, follow these tailored operational guidelines based on what you drive.

1. **High-Horsepower Pontoons & Tritoons (e.g., 200–300+ HP)**
   Modern tritoons carry heavy, large-block V6 or V8 engines. While they look like gentle cruisers, their massive torque can disrupt the lake bed at surprising depths.
   - **Physics:** During heavy acceleration (the "hole shot"), a high-HP pontoon experiences severe **stern squat.** The bow rises, and the heavy motor tilts downward, blasting a high-velocity stream of water diagonally at the lake floor.
   - **The Impact Depth:** Under hard acceleration or at mid-speed "plowing" velocities (8–15 MPH), a 300 HP propeller can churn up bottom sediments in water **up to 15 to 20 feet deep.**
   - **Eco-Driving Guideline:** Never hammer the throttle in shallow or mid-depth waters. Idle out slowly until you reach a depth of **at least 15 to 20 feet** before accelerating to get on plane. Once fully on plane, the boat levels out, and the thrust shoots horizontally, reducing bottom impact to just 6–10 feet.

2. **Standard Pontoons and Runabouts (e.g., 40–150 HP)**
   Smaller fiberglass runabouts and standard twin-tube pontoons have less weight and torque, but they are frequently operated much closer to shore.
   - **Physics:** While a standard boat has a shallower draft, its propeller still digs down deeply when transitioning from a standstill to a plane, creating a temporary downward column of water.
   - **The Impact Depth:** Standard motorized craft can actively disrupt lake beds in depths of **up to 10 to 12 feet** during acceleration.
   - **Eco-Driving Guideline:** Adopt a minimum "10-Foot Depth Rule" for high-speed operation. Maintain a slow, no-wake speed until you are safely over waters deeper than 10 feet. When navigating shallow channels under 5 feet, trim your motor up slightly and maintain the lowest possible RPMs to prevent the skeg and prop wash from scouring the bottom.

3. **Personal Watercraft (PWCs / Jet Skis)**
   Jet skis do not have exposed propellers; instead, they use an internal impeller pump to create jet propulsion. This creates two distinct environmental hazards: downward jet blast and upward vacuum suction.
   - **Physics:** PWC hulls squat heavily during takeoff, pointing the high-pressure jet nozzle downward. Simultaneously, the intake grate underneath the hull acts like a powerful vacuum cleaner, pulling water—and loose debris—upward into the machine.
   - **The Impact Depth:** A hard PWC takeoff can forcefully blast sediment at depths of **6 to 10 feet**. Furthermore, accelerating in water under 3 feet creates enough suction to vacuum rocks and weeds off the floor, which can destroy the PWC's internal impeller and wear ring.
   - **Eco-Driving Guideline:** Never start your engine or throttle up in water shallower than **3 feet**. To eliminate sediment disruption and protect your watercraft's cooling system from clogging with mud, wait until you are over water that is **5 to 6 feet deep** before pinning the throttle.

4. **Wake Boats (Vessels in Wake-Sport Mode)**
   Wake boats are mechanically engineered to push the stern of the boat as deep into the water as possible using internal ballast tanks, wedge devices, and hull shaping.
   - **Physics:** Wake boats operate in a perpetual state of "plowing." Because they intentionally resist getting flat on plane, a massive portion of their engine's horsepower is directed diagonally downward to plow a deep trench through the water.
   - **The Impact Depth:** Studies show that a wake boat operating in wake-sport mode can forcefully push turbulence and resuspend sediment at depths **surpassing 20 feet**.
   - **Eco-Driving Guideline:** Keep ballast tanks empty and wake-shapers disengaged when traveling near shorelines. Only engage your wake-enhancing equipment when you are **at least 500 feet from shore** and over water that is **at least 20 feet deep**.

The Universal Rule: Avoid the "Plowing" Zone

Regardless of what watercraft you operate, the absolute most destructive speed for water quality is **semi-planing or plowing speed** (roughly 6 to 12 MPH). This is the transition zone where your bow is high, your stern is buried, and your engine is working its hardest.

To protect our lakes, your operational strategy should always be binary: **either idle at a true "slow, no-wake" speed** where the hull sits completely flat, **or accelerate cleanly onto a level plane in deep water.** Avoiding the middle "plowing" zone near shallow areas is the single most effective choice a captain can make to protect the aquatic environment.

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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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.

Scan here to go to Join It

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.

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:

Membership Fees

$ _____ BLYC member dues ($50 per year)
$ _____ Associate member dues ($15 per year) (non lake residents)
$ _____ Homeowners Association ($10 per year)
$ _____ Sailing Fees ($15 per year)
$ _____ Water Quality donations

Donations

$ _____ General Fund
$ _____ AED Fund
$ _____ Barker Donations
$ _____ Building Fund
$ _____ Fireworks Fund
$ _____ Safety Fund
$ _____ Water Quality / Milfoil Program
$ _____ Other Donations (please specify: _____)

$ _____ TOTAL CONTRIBUTION

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FLEET CAPTAIN'S CORNER: A FANTASTIC DAY OF SAILING

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

This past Sunday turned out to be a wonderful day for sailing. It started out with little wind in the morning, but the wind built up fast. By the time the races started, the wind was fantastic, and by the end, we were pushing our limits. I was very glad to see a few more MCs joining us this weekend, with Amber Holleman and Rick Harman sailing. During the upwind leg, the sailors had to really heel out to keep control of the boats and sail as fast as they could. It was a ton of fun.

Everyone kept safe, but there were a few boats that bumped and a few flips. Pat Welch flipped on the first lap but righted his MC like a champ and finished the race. The rule is that you have to right your ship by yourself to not be disqualified. Our three safety boats were around to help, but were thankfully not needed.

The second MC race was a close one, with Scott barely eking out 1st, Rick taking 2nd, and Barb not far behind in 3rd. The last race was particularly thrilling for me. Again, the three aforementioned MCs were neck and neck at the end, but amongst them were Herb Cleveland and I fighting for 3rd and 4th in the Sunfish class. Herb got the 3rd while I got the 4th. This doesn't happen that often, especially in a wind like the one we had. It was quite exhilarating to try and navigate the finish line surrounded by the MCs, but everyone did it safely. As for the MCs, it was Barb, Rick, and Scott for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd. It hasn't been the best year for sailing so far, but a day like last Sunday makes up for that fact. It was truly a fun day!

~Fleet Captain, Bob Niezgodski

P.S. I want to say a big thank you to Steve Plaia, Bill Butler, Bob King, Buzz Rasmussen, and Rick Doolittle for coming out, taking pictures, serving as the safety boats, and especially for the quick response when Pat flipped. On a day like last Sunday, you all are greatly needed and appreciated.

SAILING SEASON STANDINGS

MC Scow Standings

	23-Aug	23-Aug	23-Aug	Total	% Races	Average	Season
	9	10	11	Points	Finished	Points	Rank
MC Scow Sailor							
Scott Troeger #1489	1	1	3	18886	85.7%	1573.8	1
Barb Cassady #2506	2	3	1	21460	100.0%	1532.9	2
Rick Harmon #852	3	2	2	8743	42.9%	1457.2	3
Patrick Welch #1979	5	4	4	8676	42.9%	1446.0	4
Bill Luecht #1579	CB	CB	CB	19993	100.0%	1428.1	5
Phil Vitale #500	DNS	DNS	DNS	7070	35.7%	1414.0	6
Amber Holleman #1173	4	5	5	3961	21.4%	1320.3	7
Gigi Cassady (crew for Barb C)	DNS	DNS	DNS	0	14.3%	0.0	8
Eliza (crew for Rick H)	DNS	DNS	DNS	0	21.4%	0.0	8
Max (crew for Rick H)	DNS	DNS	DNS	0	21.4%	0.0	8
Tory Troeger (crew for Scott T)	DNS	DNS	DNS	0	21.4%	0.0	8

Sunfish Standings

	23-Aug	23-Aug	23-Aug	Total	% Races	Average	Season
	17	18	19	Points	Finished	Points	Rank
Sunfish Sailor							
Rick Russwurm	2	2	1	20101	68.4%	1546.2	1
Stewart Spratt	1	1	2	24739	84.2%	1546.2	2
Amy Troeger	DNS	DNS	DNS	10580	36.8%	1511.4	3
Pete Soldato	DNS	DNS	DNS	2965	10.5%	1482.5	4
Herb Cleveland	3	3	3	17346	63.2%	1445.5	5
Connor Caplis	DNS	DNS	DNS	8439	31.6%	1406.5	6
Bob Niezgodski	4	4	4	26694	100.0%	1404.9	7
Max Parnell	DNS	DNS	DNS	4182	15.8%	1394.0	8
Marlee Soldato (crew for Pete S)	DNS	DNS	DNS	0	10.5%	0.0	9

Key and Scoring Information

DNS (Did Not Sail) does not count against season score, however ***sailor must complete 2/3 of races to qualify for season****

DNF (Did Not Finish) or DSQ (Disqualified) scores as last place (if 5 boats started the race, you will be scored as 5th place).

DNF, DSQ are not counted toward minimum number of races needed

CB - sailor who serves on Committee Boat receives their season average place as of that date - counted toward season total.

Season Points are awarded on Square of 40 system (1st = 40 squared = 1600, 2nd = 39 squared, etc.)

Season Place = total season points / number of races attempted

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CAMP T CORNER: DREAMS FOR THE FUTURE

Over the years, I have talked often about my hopes for Camp T - that we will continue to grow, improve our facilities, expand our programs, and serve more children and families. We have already come a tremendous distance in the past 20 years, but there is still so much potential for what we could do in the coming years.

These projects are not part of any immediate plans. Each would require careful preparation and would be a part of a major fundraising campaign. But big improvements begin with big dreams, and I want to share three projects that I would love to see become part of Camp T's future.

The largest and most transformative project would be the construction of a **new, year-round Dining Hall** between the sports field and Harvey Street. Don't worry! We love our current Dining Hall, especially the beautiful dining room. The current dining room could become much-needed indoor program and gathering space. The kitchen could be transformed into dedicated space for arts, STEM education, or other hands-on activities.

A larger dining hall would allow us to increase our summer capacity and welcome more campers each week. Designed for year-round use, it would also create new opportunities for off-season events, outdoor education programs, retreats, and rental groups.

Its location would improve both safety and traffic flow. Delivery vehicles and trash trucks could enter directly from Harvey Street and access the back of the building without driving through camp. A long front porch facing the sports field would provide a welcoming place for campers and families to check in and out, conveniently located near our parking area.

Join us for Grown Up Camp!

The Camp T Gathering of Friends is a grown-up camp weekend for adults ages 21 and older. Enjoy favorite camp traditions like archery, campfire cooking, crafts, and canoeing - along with adult-only fun such as cocktail cruises on Birch Lake and late-night songs around the campfire. It's a chance to unplug, relax, reconnect, and experience the magic of camp all over again! This year's grown up camp takes place September 25-27.

The second dream project is a **high ropes course**, which would add an exciting new dimension to the Camp T experience. During the summer, it would give campers opportunities to challenge themselves, practice teamwork, build confidence, and discover that they are capable of more than they knew. A ropes course would also strengthen our off-season programming. We could offer team-building experiences for schools, youth organizations, nonprofit groups, and businesses.

The third project would be a new **Health and Leadership Lodge** on the site of the current Main Lodge, overlooking Birch Lake from the southwest corner of camp. It would house a modern health center designed to meet the needs of our campers and staff. Our current nurse's cabin could then be repurposed as additional summer staff housing.

This new lodge would also provide housing for seasonal staff and potentially for year-round staff. During the summer, it would include a comfortable place where staff members could relax and recharge during their time off. Meeting and gathering spaces would allow the building to serve leadership programs, retreats, training sessions, and special events throughout the year. With its view of Birch Lake, it could become one of the most beautiful and versatile spaces at Camp T.

These are big dreams that would require significant planning and effort. They would not happen all at once, and they would not happen overnight. My vision is for a Camp T that serves more children, offers more year-round programs, provides better facilities for campers and staff, and remains a gathering place for generations to come. These dream projects would help ensure that the camp we love continues to grow, thrive, and change lives far into the future.

~Miss Amber

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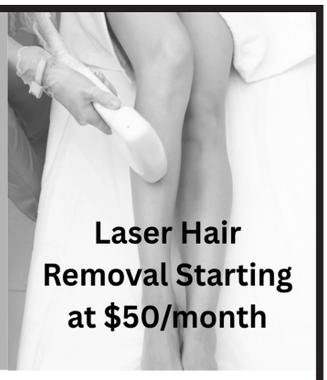

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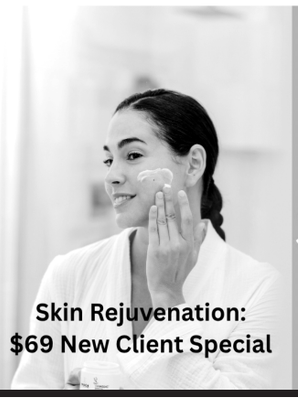

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BIRCH LAKE HISTORY: COVE COTTAGE

For Sue Walters Wagner, Birch Lake was part of the family long before she and her husband, Bruce, purchased their own cottage in 1990. Her connection to the lake reaches back through the Fulmer, Asire, Walters, and Foote - and to childhood visits that left Sue certain that someday she wanted a place of her own on Birch Lake.

The first piece of Sue's Birch Lake story began with her grandmother, Lena Walters, whose son Francis Walters was Sue's father. Lena married Frank Foote in 1930. Frank and Lena purchased property in Sylvan Shores (south shore) in 1940 and subsequently built the cottage where Claude Petit now lives (S047). Another one of Lena's sons - Dick Walters - had two daughters who also fell in love with Birch Lake. His daughters were Sally (Walters) Everett Beck and Becky (Walters) Kinsella.

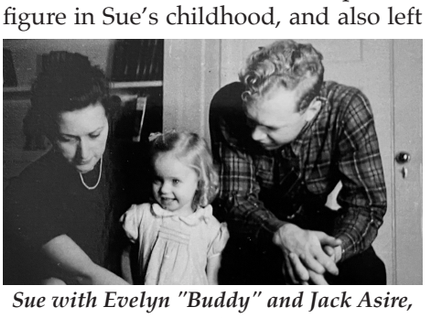
Sue's mother, Helen Fulmer Walters, was the sister of Floyd Fulmer; which made Sue and Evelyn "Buddy" Asire first cousins. Jack and Buddy Asire, along with Ruth and Floyd Fulmer, were among the earliest residents of the Cove, purchasing their lots in 1946 and 1947. That made a second connection to the lake, this one on her mother's side of the family.

The Walters family, circa 1941. Helen (Fulmer), Sue, Joyce, and Francis Walters.

As a child, Sue frequently came to the lake to visit her Foote grandparents. She was always eager to get into the water. She arrived ready to swim, prompting her grandparents to tease, "Sue, you're going to wear out Birch Lake!"

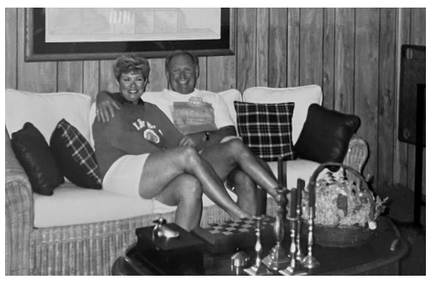
Sue remembered the Foote cottage in remarkable detail, especially the balcony that stretched across the upstairs, with the bedrooms opening onto it. Many years later, when the home was included in a Birch Lake house walk, Bruce finally had the chance to see the inside. He found that it looked exactly as Sue had always described it.

Frank Foote was an important figure in Sue's childhood, and also left a lasting physical mark on Birch Lake. Frank designed and manufactured the lake's weir dam, and Clarke Zesinger helped him install it. More than seven decades later, the dam remains in place.



Sue with Evelyn "Buddy" and Jack Asire, circa 1940

Sue married Bruce Wagner in 1979, bringing together a large blended family with five children between them. By the mid-1980s, Bruce and Sue had begun seriously discussing the possibility of owning a lake cottage. For the next five years, they drove throughout northern Indiana and southern Michigan, looking at lake properties. But Sue's heart was always at Birch Lake.



Sue and Bruce at Cove Cottage in 1991

They considered three different Birch Lake properties over the years. In 1989, while looking at the Reith rental, Sue gazed toward Woodland Cove and announced, "I want to live in the cove." Less than a year later, that wish would come true.

On May 6, 1990, Bruce and Sue drove down Woodland Drive and spotted a "For Sale" sign behind the Treichel house. The house was a mix of finished and unfinished spaces, and the lower level was still filled with building materials. But Sue and Bruce could see its possibilities.

"We can make this work," they decided. They began negotiating, and within a week they had a signed contract for their cottage in the cove. Once the agreement had been signed by the Treichels, Bruce immediately began tearing things out and preparing for renovations. They officially took possession on June 16, 1990, and named their new Birch Lake home "Cove Cottage."

The house had been started in 1972 by Earl and Virgina Witt. The structure was complete when Earl died, but the interior remained in varying stages of completion. While working on the house, the Witts lived in the shed behind it, with an outhouse nearby. Rich and Ruth Treichel purchased the house in 1978, and largely used it as a rental until selling it to Bruce and Sue in 1990.

They quickly became immersed in the Birch Lake community. In the summer of 1994, Tim and Irene Steffan stopped by and invited Bruce and Sue to go for a boat ride. During the outing, they asked Bruce to become the next Vice Commodore of the Birch Lake Yacht Club. Bruce declined, because he didn't want to write a Barker column every week! Sue agreed to take on the role instead. She served as Vice Commodore in 1995 and Commodore in 1996.

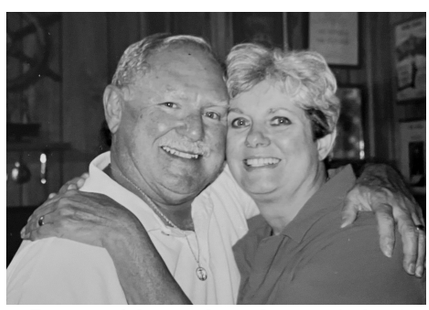
Sue at Birch Lake, September 1990

Sue became well known around Birch Lake for her writing. Beginning in 2001, she contributed to *Birch Barker* using the pen names "Sunny Waters" and "Sandi Beach." When Sunny Waters went on vacation, Sandi Beach would step in as her replacement. Sandi was a little edgier than Sunny, giving Sue the freedom to have fun with her readers.

One of Sue's most memorable creations was a column about the cove's beloved "Aunt" Loretta Drolet (*Birch Barker, July 21, 2001)*. According to the story, Aunt Loretta gone to Saint Ann's church to deliver her contributions for the annual bake sale. Finding the door unlocked, she let herself inside, setting off the alarms and summoning the police. Sue wrote the tale so convincingly that many readers believed it to be true!

One of the special things about life at the lake is the way that friendships often transcend generations. When Bruce and Sue moved into their cottage in 1990, Bruce became friends with their 10-year-old neighbor, Nick Bergan. Their friendship continues today, more than three decades later. Today, another young neighbor, Lauren Snider, has become close with "Mr. Bruce," often stopping by to chat and get a treat from his snack basket, which he keeps stocked for the neighborhood kids.

Bruce and Sue never made Cove Cottage their year-round residence, although the house could accommodate them throughout the year. Cove Cottage represented the fulfillment of Sue's childhood dream - a return to the lake where her grandparents once warned that she might wear out the water. Through family ties, neighborhood friendships, BLYC service, memorable Barker columns, and summers together at their cottage, Bruce and Sue became part of the fabric of Birch Lake. Sue passed away in 2008, but Bruce continues their legacy at Birch Lake today.



Bruce and Sue at Cove Cottage in 2004

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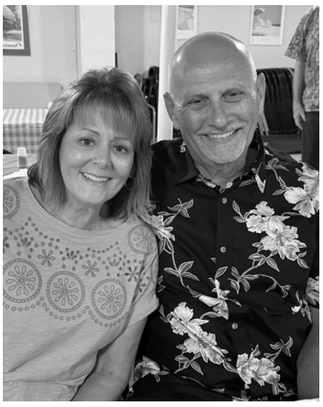

scan for color photos <------

BARKER KIDS OF THE WEEK

Everett Schlemmer celebrated his 13th birthday at Birch Lake with 6 friends and his brother Calvin. Grandparents Blair and Bernie Garceau, east shore) loved having them.

The boys swam from the Garceau's to the Machalleck's, with the safety boat alongside.

The grownups had fun, too!

Gathering of friends for "Mimosa Sunday"

Tom and James from Mosier Well Drilling to the rescue (again!) at Camp T last week.

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

Jason and Lori (Machalleck) Noyer with Katha and Mike Machalleck

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(AED) locations on Birch Lake

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3. **East Shore:** Vitale Home
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4. **Southeast Shore:** Troeger Home
   63696 Birch Road
5. **South Shore:** Crawford Home
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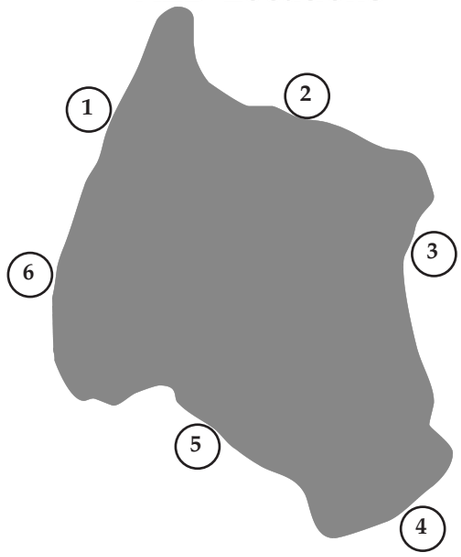
6. **Southwest Shore:** DeYoung Home
   63255 Storey Hill Street

All units are on the **ROAD SIDE** of the property and accessible by vehicle or on foot.

AED Locations



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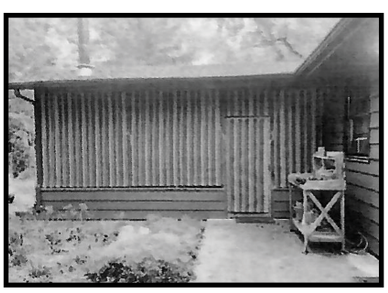
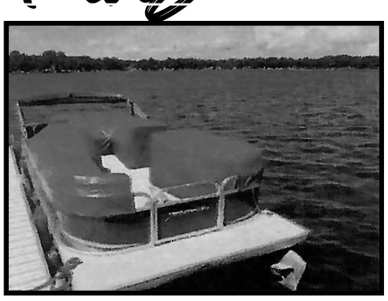

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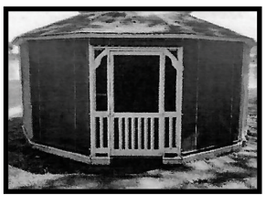

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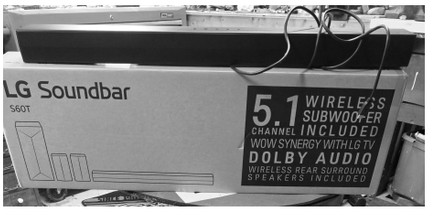

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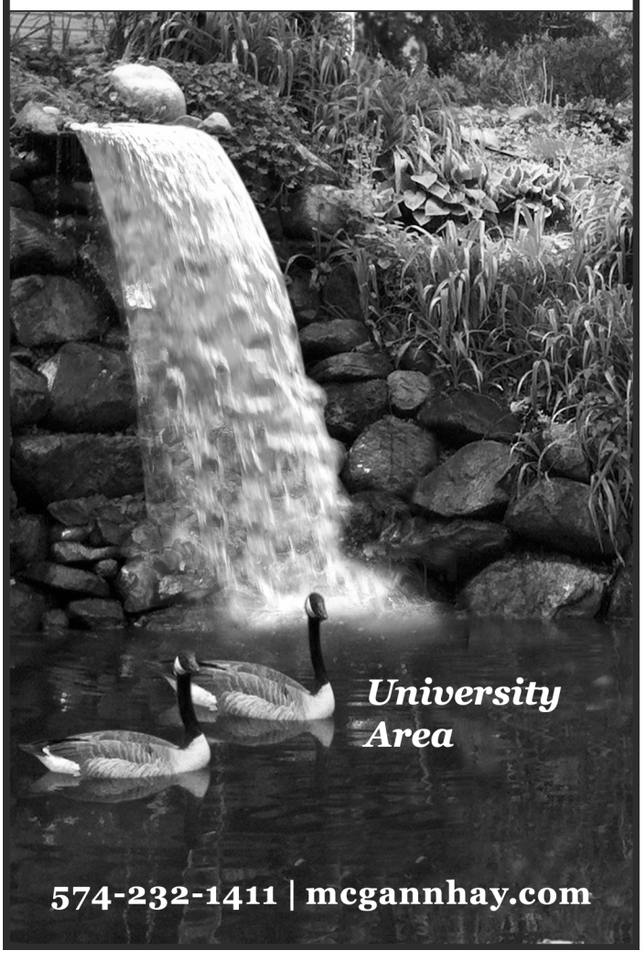

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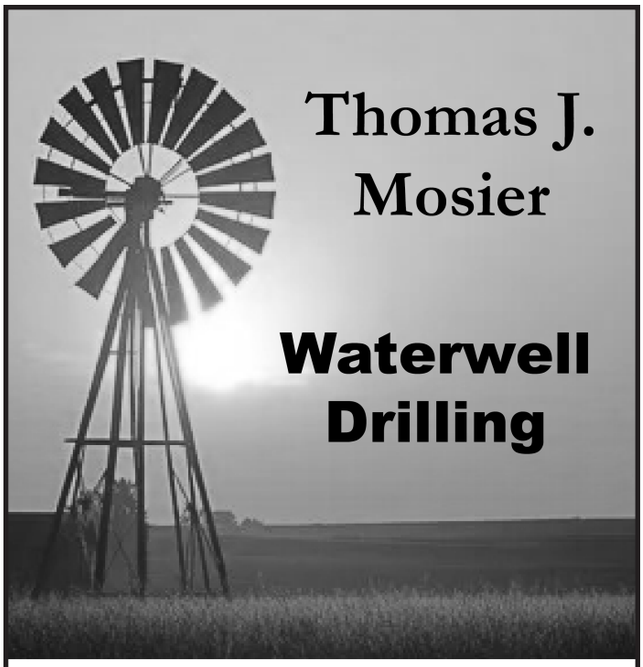

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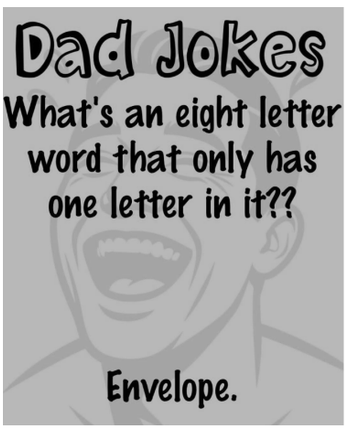

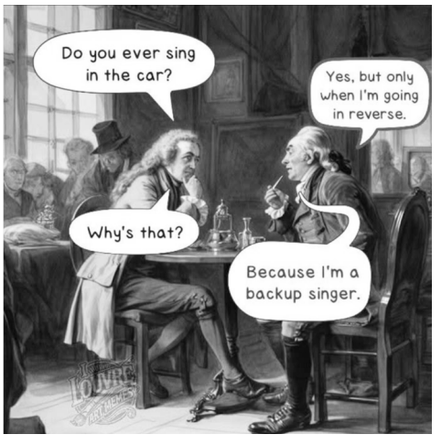

Where do sheep go to watch funny videos?

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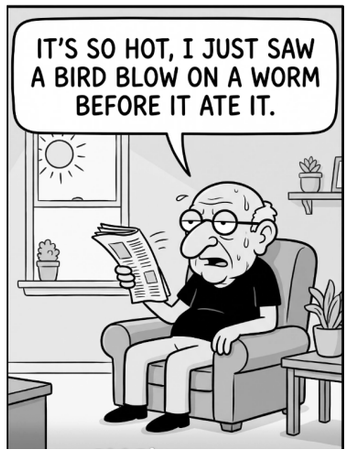

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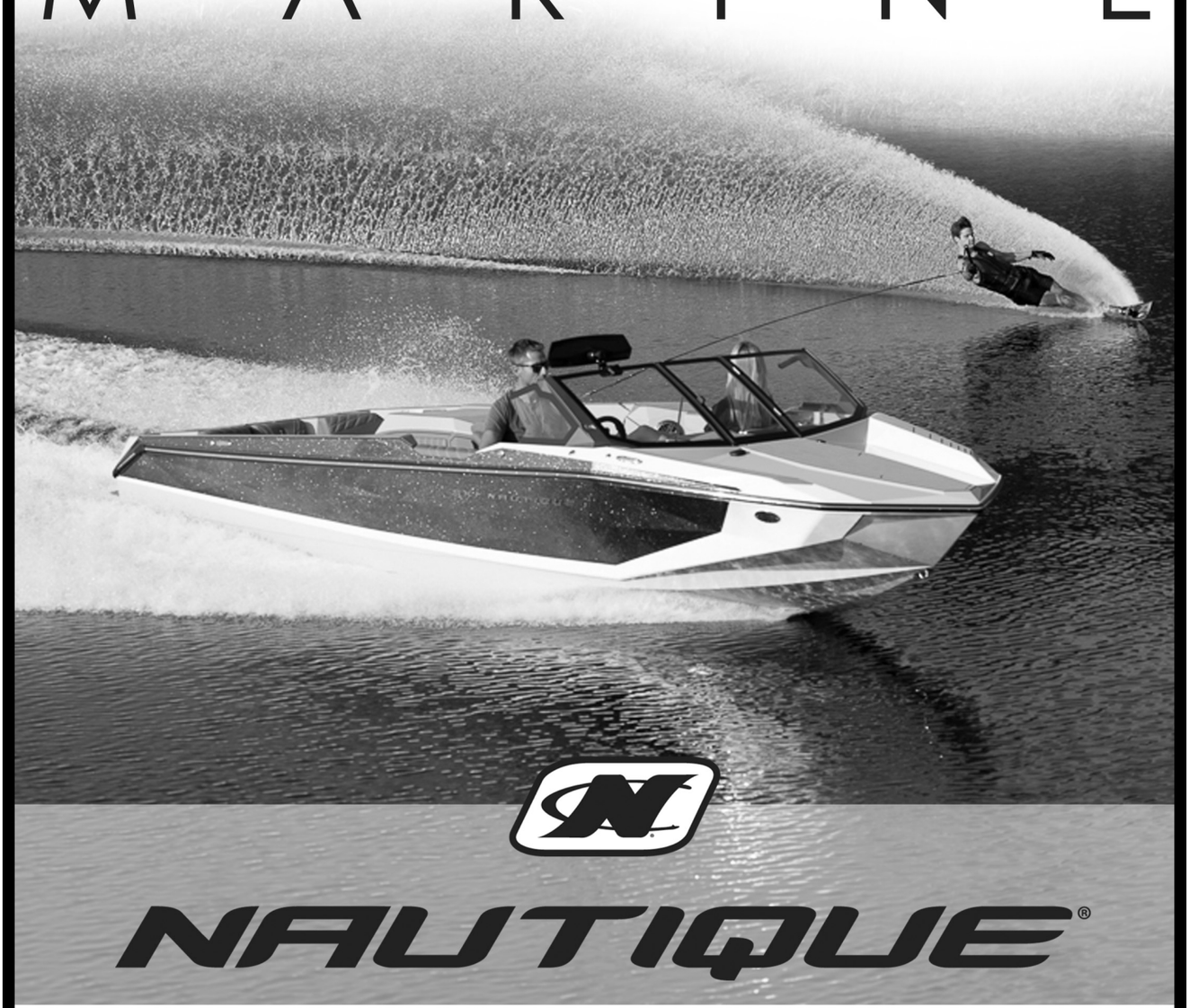

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