BIRCH Barker

Weekend of
September 5
2026

vol. 78 issue 16

The official publication of the Birch Lake Yacht Club

BirchLakeYachtClub.com

10-boat Flotilla last Friday evening. Summer's not over yet!

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COMMODORE'S COMMENTS

Hello Birch Lakers. As we are winding down another Summer, we were informed that another member of our Birch Lake Family has passed away. Coach Bill Doba was called to a new life. He had an esteemed career spanning Mishawaka, IU, and Washington State, where he led many young men onto the right path. After his coaching career ended, he ended up at Birch Lake, where he continued mentoring younger people in his own way. He will truly be missed by all. I will always remember Coach, whose birthday was coming up on September 7, which I shared with him.

On a happy note, Tim Burchell had his Annual Shore Party this past weekend, and I had a chance to meet so many new people from the south and east sides. A great time was had by all, with renewed and new friendships made.

As the season comes to an end and so many of us depart for our other homes and winter callings, let's keep in mind what you would like to see happen next year. Let's get more people involved in what happens at the Lake. I'm working on pulling a partial schedule of events for next year with the hope of adding some new events.

We are still looking for someone to step up to run the Spaghetti Dinner and someone to help run the fireworks. Please get involved with what happens at the lake. Yes, it's extra work, but it's also very rewarding at the same time.

~Commodore Ron Niezgodski

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

Moon Reflection on the Lake - submitted by Celia Fallon, who says "When I can see the moon reflecting on the lake, I know it's going to be a great day."

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See ad on page 2

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. 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

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!

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.

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.***

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).

Water Quality Woodworking

My friend Marc Caenepeel not only serves on the Birch Lake Yacht Club's Water Quality Committee, but he also does beautiful woodworking. Marc likes to combine those interests by donating his time to do woodworking, in exchange for contributions to the Water Quality Fund. A few years ago, Marc repaired the split leg on my grandparents' antique cherrywood spool bed, and it's now in a bed-and-breakfast in Salem, Indiana. Recently, Marc made this display board to match three others, for some additions to my collection of American Indian artifacts. So if you need some woodworking done and want to help Water Quality at the same time, give Marc a call.

~Steve Frew

Birch Lake Yacht Club

FIREWORKS FUND

Our goal for 2026 is $26,000

Contribute now at https://tinyurl.com/BLYCfireworks

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.

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WATER QUALITY: LARRY LARGEMOUTH

Hi. Larry Largemouth here.

You know, the big bass that lives under Coach's pier. Me and the boys are gonna miss him. Especially after his family asked that all donations be made to the Birch Lake Water Quality Fund in his name. Folks like him and his family really care about our little slice of paradise. Heck, he even practiced "catch and release" so we could keep growing, raise families, drive to soccer practices and become Barker subscribers. Nice guy, that Coach.

We also want to thank the Water Quality Committee: Paul Fallon, Terry Dugan, Jennifer Ball, Cindy Bernaciak, Rick Russwurm, Ron Niezgodski, Tom Kuhn, Zach Nickell, Jamie Green, and Pat Welch. Ain't none of them up for Angler of the Year, but they sure keep the lake clean and pretty.

And we'd be acting Crappie Crazy if we didn't thank all the residents who contributed to the WQ Fund this year. Thank you to those who generously donated or participated in the raffles. For those that didn't, well, we have a pretty strong Goose union here and I'm sending a few of the boys over to do some yard jobs.

Funny how those folks think the lake is invincible. Maybe because she really seems to be. The reality is that the WQ committee is treating 30% more of the lake for invasive weeds since last year. They now treat 3 ½ acres in three spots compared to 2¾ acres in 2025. On average, treatment costs have risen 35% over the last three years, while donation levels have remained about the same. Let me put things in a human perspective: If expenses continue to rise (at say 20% per year) and donations stay the same (like they have in the last three years), y'all are gonna run out of money to treat the lake in five years. Here's what you humans call a cash flow projection:

Birch Lake Water Quality Cash Flow Projection						
	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031
Beginning Balance	$55,153	$56,617	$54,668	$48,623	$37,663	$20,805
Donations (Flat)	$18,530	$18,530	$18,530	$18,530	$18,530	$18,530
Expenses (20% Growth)	$17,066	$20,479	$24,575	$29,490	$35,388	$42,466
Net Increase (Decrease)	$1,464	($1,949)	($6,045)	($10,960)	($16,858)	($23,936)
Ending Balance	$56,617	$54,668	$48,623	$37,663	$20,805	($3,131)

Us with gills, we're worried. In bass speak, you'll have killed the golden minnow. So, what to do?

Play Powerball every week? Take the remaining balance down to Four Winds and let it ride on red or black? Or, you warm blooded mammals could consider creating a WQ fund that has 501c3 status whereby all donations are tax deductible. Word has it there are almost $30,000 in pledges waiting if you could create it.

Hey human, run me another one of those cash flow projection thingy's. This time with an extra $30,000 each year:

Birch Lake Water Quality Cash Flow Projection						
	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031
Beginning Balance	$55,153	$56,617	$84,668	$108,624	$127,666	$140,811
Donations (Flat)	$18,530	$18,530	$18,530	$18,530	$18,530	$18,530
Annual Pledges		$30,000	$30,000	$30,000	$30,000	$30,000
Total Donations		$48,530	$48,530	$48,530	$48,530	$48,530
Expenses (20% Growth)	$17,066 (actual)	$20,479	$24,574	$29,488	$35,385	$42,462
Net Increase (Decrease)	$1,464	$28,051	$23,956	$19,042	$13,145	$6,068
Ending Balance	$56,617	$84,668	$108,624	$127,666	$140,811	$146,879

Much better. Even I can wrap my fish brain around a surplus of $147,000 after expenses. It may not be Wilt's 100 or DiMaggio's 56, but if you ask me, just a big old bass living under Coach's pier, it looks better than a fat mayfly in the evening.

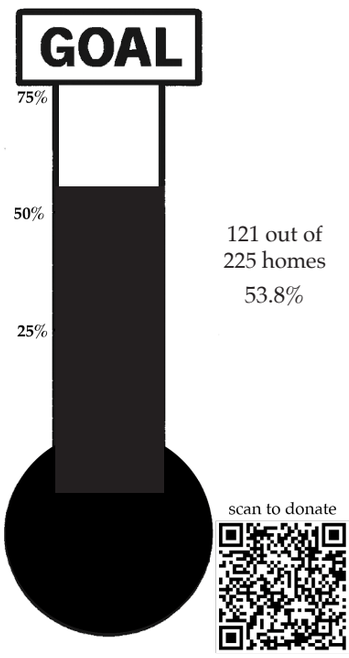
Thanks again to a great season, swimming in the best lake and living under a legend's pier. Nothing fishy about that.

~Larry

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.

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



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SALUTE TO THE COACH

Written by Rick Doolittle in honor of Coach Bill Doba's 75th birthday, Rick submitted this to the Barker in honor of Coach.

WOW... Seventy-five years of Good Livin'
It's been a hell of a ride,
From New Carlisle to Pullman
With wife Judy at his side.

With stops in Angola,
Goshen and Mishawaka too,
Purdue and Indiana University
Before the Citadel's white and blue.

All this in preparation
For Bill's ultimate coaching fate,
A seventeen year tenure at
The University of Washington State.

It's hard to tell this story without
Remembering Judy, even through of few tears,
After all she was Team Doba's Captain
For over forty three years.

Coaching for his entire adult life
Bill had a most successful career
Acknowledged by Halls of Fame inductions
And being named PAC 10 Coach of the Year.

But coaching for Bill was about the players
Not accolades, victories or cheers, but
Giving his boys a good base in life
That will guide them for the rest of their years

The Dobas loved their time
in Pullman... make no mistake
But they chose to settle here with us
On our beautiful Birch Lake.

Since the day Bill moved here
Adorned mostly in Cougar dress,
He adjusted quickly to the easy lake life
While eliminating all the coaching stress.

Describing Cook Doba as a Gourmet
Might sound a little bit silly
That's before you've tasted
His famous 'Kick Ass' White Chili!!

A master story teller
and to all of us a great friend
Quick with a smile and kind word
and always a helping hand to lend

A wonderful father to
Beth, Scott, and Kris and
With grandkids' special events
Of course he would never miss.

We salute this remarkable fellow
Early this September
With the hope and trust that tomorrow
This event he will still remember.

Now join me and raise your glasses high
Let the Manhattans Pour
Here's to your 75th Birthday, our friend
May you Celebrate Many Many
More... HERE... HERE
Oh I almost forgot... GO COUGS!!!

Scan here for Coach Doba's obituary
<-----

Anonymous Gift to AEDs

A very kind resident made a significant gift toward next year's AED pad replacements in honor of the amazing life of Coach Bill Doba. Like a life-saving AED, Coach saved and turned around many young lives. Thank you to this wonderful angel who knows how much Coach will be missed and remembers him as a force of nature.

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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 RAINY DAY

Unfortunately, it was another weekend without sailboat races. The rain held through the time we scheduled to sail, so we had to cancel the races. The wind would have been great, maybe too good, for sailing later in the afternoon. The annual Labor Day Regatta is scheduled for this Saturday and Sunday, with Monday being a make-up date. Let's hope for good wind on at least two of these three days.

Regattas are always fun events, so if you have a sailboat and haven't sailed with us yet this year, come on out. You could even end up winning an award. The Labor Day Regatta is the last weekend of the year for sailboat racing on Birch Lake, so let's go out with a bang and get as many sailboats out there as possible!

Labor Day Weekend Regatta Saturday and Sunday starting at 11am. Monday rain date. Please steer clear of the course!

Also of note, the Sailing Awards are scheduled for the following Saturday, September 12th, at 11:00am at our home on the west shore. If you're a sailor, part of the support team, or interested in learning about sailing on Birch Lake, come by and join us. As always, if you are interested or know someone who is, don't hesitate to reach out to another fellow sailor or me; we would love to help in any way we can!

~Fleet Captain, Bob Niezgodski

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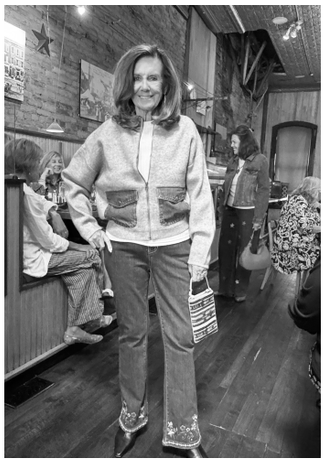
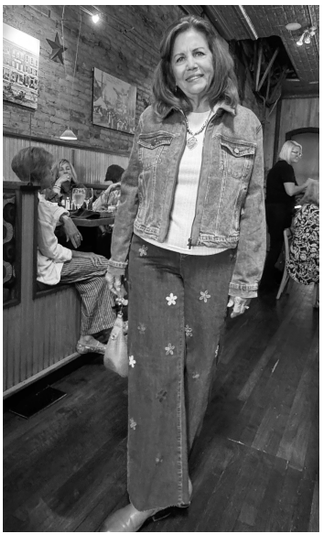
LADIES STYLE SHOW AND LUNCHEON

Last Wednesday, 45 ladies attended the Birch Lake Style Show and Luncheon at the Wood Fire Trattoria in Dowagiac. Six beautiful ladies modeled fall fashions from The Marshall Shoppe in Dowagiac. The models were Angela Bergan, Di Wozny, Meredith Guyton, Lisa Rodriguez, Jan Temple and Julie Dickey. From all the shopping bags seen leaving the store, I think many people loved the outfits that were modeled! Thank you to Ronni Eshleman for planning and coordinating the event and Vanessa Wozniak for handling the sign-in and name tags.

scan for color photos <------





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CAMP T CORNER

What if you could return to summer camp for a weekend - without being responsible for anyone but yourself?

The Camp T Gathering of Friends, our annual grown-up camp weekend, will take place September 25–27. Open to adults ages 21 and older, it is a chance to step away from the responsibilities of everyday life and enjoy a laid-back weekend in the woods.

Grown-Up Camp includes many of the traditions people remember and love about summer camp. You can try your hand at archery, make something at crafts, cook over a campfire, paddle a canoe, take a hike through the woods, or go for a swim in Birch Lake. The weekend also includes a few activities created especially for the grown-ups, including cocktail cruises on the lake and late-night songs and conversations around the campfire.

Best of all, someone else will do all the cooking and cleanup for you! You can enjoy your meals without planning a menu, shopping for groceries, preparing the food, or cleaning up afterward. Your only job is to relax, have fun, and decide what you would like to do next.

The Gathering of Friends is not just for former Camp T campers or staff members. No previous connection to camp is required, and you do not need to know camp songs, understand camp traditions, or have any special outdoor skills. The weekend is open to anyone who would enjoy getting away for a few days, spending time outside, and experiencing the magic of camp.

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.

Gather a group of friends, and you can have your own cabin for the weekend. Spend your days exploring camp and your evenings catching up around the fire. Or come on your own and meet new people. The relaxed atmosphere makes it easy to join an activity, start a conversation, or simply find a quiet place near the lake and enjoy the view.

There is no pressure to fill every minute. You can participate in as many activities as you would like, or none at all. Go for a boat ride. Take a walk in the woods. Sit on the dock. Read a book. Laugh with old friends. Make new ones. Stay up late singing around the campfire.

At its heart, the Grown Up Camp is an opportunity to unplug, reconnect, and enjoy the simple pleasures that make camp special: fresh air, good food, campfires, time on the lake, and the company of friends.

The "real world" will still be waiting when the weekend is over. From September 25–27, come leave it behind for a little while and experience Camp T as a grown-up.

~Miss Amber

Saturday evening appetizers

Camp Songs in Morris Lodge

Cocktail Cruise on the Tiki Boat

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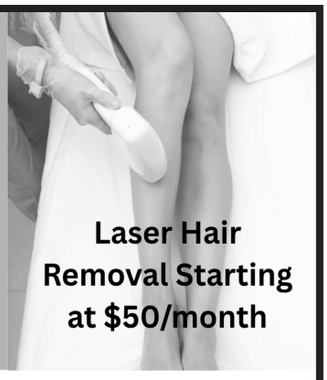

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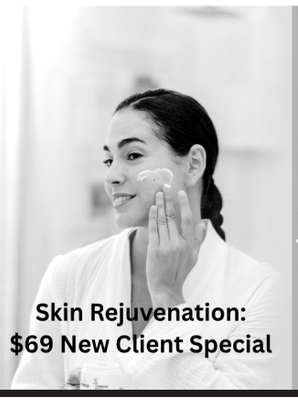

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BIRCH LAKE HISTORY: COACH DOBA

For "Coach" Bill Doba, his wife Judy, and their three children, Birch Lake became a summer retreat during his years coaching high school and college football. Eventually, it would become the place he called home after his retirement from coaching.

The Doba family first rented the Dufour cottage (E120) on Birch Lake in 1974. Their daughter Beth had just finished 2nd grade, and remembers that the cottage had neither a clock nor a TV. Her mother, Judy, "thought she'd died and gone to heaven." They had no work to do, and nothing but family time for two weeks. They returned to Birch Lake every summer for the next few years, until they moved to Bloomington, Indiana in 1977. While living in Bloomington, they spent time at Lake Monroe whenever Bill could get time away from work.

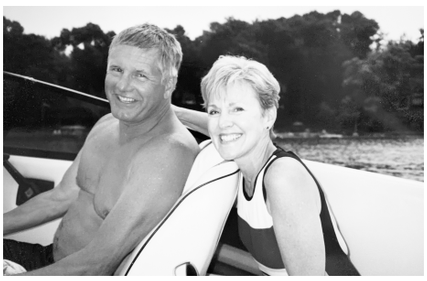
Coach and two of his children at the lake in the 1970s

In 1989, Bill began the chapter of his career for which he became nationally known, when he joined the football staff at Washington State University. By 1994, the family was spread out across the country. Judy decided they all needed to spend time together, and so they rented a cottage at Birch Lake. The following summer they bought their own cottage on the south shore (S093).

Judy with their three children in the lake, 1970s

After 14 years as an assistant coach, Bill was named Washington State's head coach in December 2002. Birch Lake provided an important refuge throughout his demanding years of coaching. It was a place where coaching responsibilities could briefly give way to family time.

Bill never stopped teaching; he helped untangle fishing lines from the end of the dock and showed them how to reel in bluegill. He taught all the kids how to fillet a fish. Rick Doolittle taught him how to teach others to ski, and then Coach taught their children, grandchildren, and innumerable

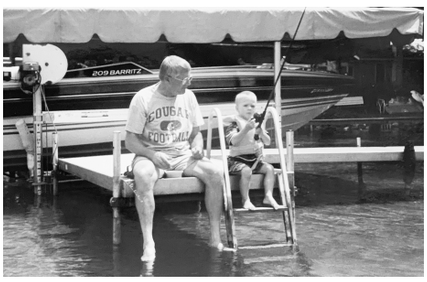


Coach and Judy at the lake

friends to waterski. He prided himself on the method he developed to teach waterskiing.

In the summer of 2003, Bill and Judy purchased the cottage on the south shore (S048) where he would spend the next two decades. Judy was Bill's partner throughout the many moves and long seasons that came with a life in coaching, and they envisioned retiring together at Birch Lake. During their 43 years of marriage, Bill and Judy raised three children, and became grandparents to six grandchildren. Judy died in 2006 following a four-year struggle with cancer.

When Bill's coaching career ended in 2007, he left Washington and returned to the Midwest to be closer to his children and grandchildren. Birch Lake became his year-round home. His children and grandchildren were living in Pennsylvania and Indiana at the time, and retirement allowed him to be more involved in the lives of his six grandchildren.



Fishing with one of the grandchildren

Life after football was not entirely quiet. Bill continued to attend practices and coaching clinics, maintained relationships with former players and returned to Washington State for special events. He also traveled widely on fishing adventures, including trips to the Yukon and the Amazon. But Birch Lake remained home. In a 2012 interview, he described a retirement filled with fishing, family and memories of Washington State, which he still called the greatest time of his life.

Bill became deeply engaged with the Birch Lake community. He regularly golfed with the Birch Lake Men's Golf

Coaching a young skier

group. He volunteered at Yacht Club events, and in 2022 he was selected as Grand Marshal of the Fourth of July Boat Parade.

Coach Doba undoubtedly had an impressive career. He coached high school teams in Goshen, Angola, and Mishawaka. His Mishawaka teams won three conference championships and the 1974 team advanced to the state championship game. He joined Lee Corso's staff at Indiana University in 1977, followed by coaching positions at Purdue University and The Citadel. His defenses produced numerous All-Conference players, All-Americans, and future professionals. His first year as head coach at Washington State the Cougars finished 10-3, defeated fifth-ranked Texas in the Holiday Bowl, and ended the season ranked ninth nationally. Coach Doba shared 2003 Pac-10 Coach of the Year honors with USC coach Pete Carroll.

Doba family gathering at Birch Lake

But his successes on the field were never what he was most proud of. For Bill, the greatest rewards of coaching were the young men whose lives he helped shape. Friends, colleagues and former players remembered him as humble, loyal, and genuinely interested in the young men he coached. He took particular pride in players who completed their degrees and built successful lives after football. The championships, bowl victories, and honors mattered, but his true legacy was in the generations of athletes who continued to call him "Coach" long after their playing days were over.

Across the country, Bill Doba will be remembered as a successful football coach, a defensive expert, and a mentor who helped generations of young men. At Birch Lake, he will also be remembered more simply: as a father and grandfather enjoying his family, a teacher, a golfer, a fisherman, and a friend.

Judy and Coach at the lake with their grandkids in 2002

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BARKER KIDS OF THE WEEK

Tim Burchell with a few friends, during the 10th Birchacola Bash. Their shirts say "Birchacola 2026. It's not my fault. (it's Tim's)"

Back to school for the Grundy kids. Elyse in 10th grade, Harrison in 2nd grade, Kieran in 4th grade, and Avery's senior year this year.

Drone images of Neil Troeger slaloming, submitted by Stewart Spratt. You can also view the 4-minute drone video by scanning the QR Code. --->

A Throwback Kids of the Week: Aunt Loretta Drolet with her sister Rose, and Sue Wagner. Summer 2003.

Cass County COA

Summer Concert Series

Friday, June 26: *The Van Dyke Revue*

Friday, July 24: *Whistle Pigs*

Friday, August 28: *Whiskey Retreat*

The COA's Summer Concert Series is back by popular demand. Join us at the COA Lowe Center's Pavilion for some great music and an opportunity to purchase food from our food truck vendors. Bring a chair or blanket enjoy three FREE outdoor concerts!

Food is available from 5:30-7:30pm
Concerts begin at 7:00pm

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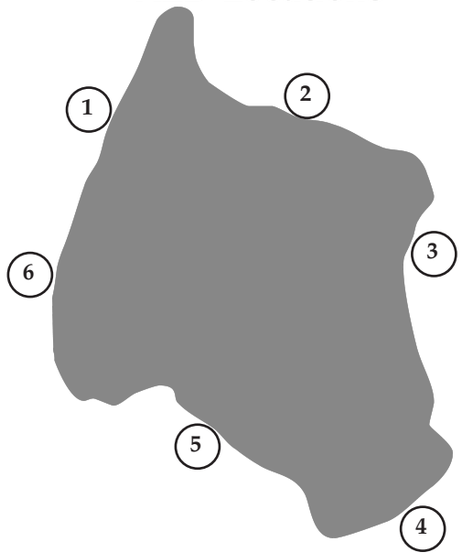
EMERGENCY HEART DEFIBRILLATOR
(AED) locations on Birch Lake

There are six (6) automated external defibrillator units (AEDs) on Birch Lake. The boxes that contain these devices are located at the following locations:

1. **West Shore:** Sheffieck Home
   62875 Birch Lakeview Drive
2. **North Shore:** Smitley Home
   14859 Birch Northshore Drive
3. **East Shore:** Vitale Home
   63174 Birch Road
4. **Southeast Shore:** Troeger Home
   63696 Birch Road
5. **South Shore:** Crawford Home
   15046 Birch Lakeshore Drive
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



IN AN EMERGENCY

1. **CALL 911** and report the emergency and the patient's location.
2. Pull the box open, remove the orange-colored unit, take it to the patient, and open the device by pressing the white lever at the bottom.
3. An automated voice will guide you through the setup and use of the defibrillator. Follow directions as they are given.
4. Continue to follow the instructions, and **stay with the patient until emergency personnel arrive.**

This message is brought to you by the Birch Lake Homeowners Association.

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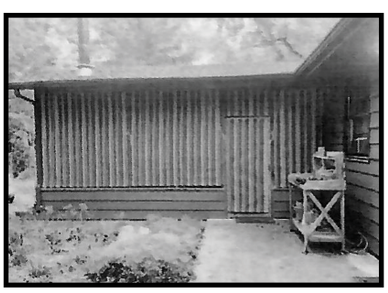
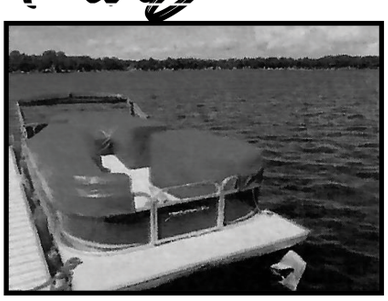
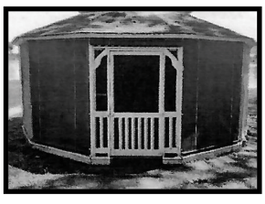



CUSTOM CANVAS COVERINGS



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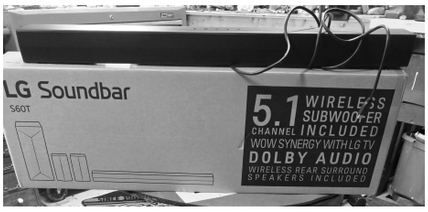
LG soundbar with subwoofer and rear surround sound. Brand new, only thing taken out of box was soundbar, never used. Call Deb at **219-765-8691**. $175.00



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Radio control model airplanes (7) in various stages of construction. Some engines, one old radio. Stop by the Green's cottage at 15128 Birch Lakeshore Drive, September 4 – 6.

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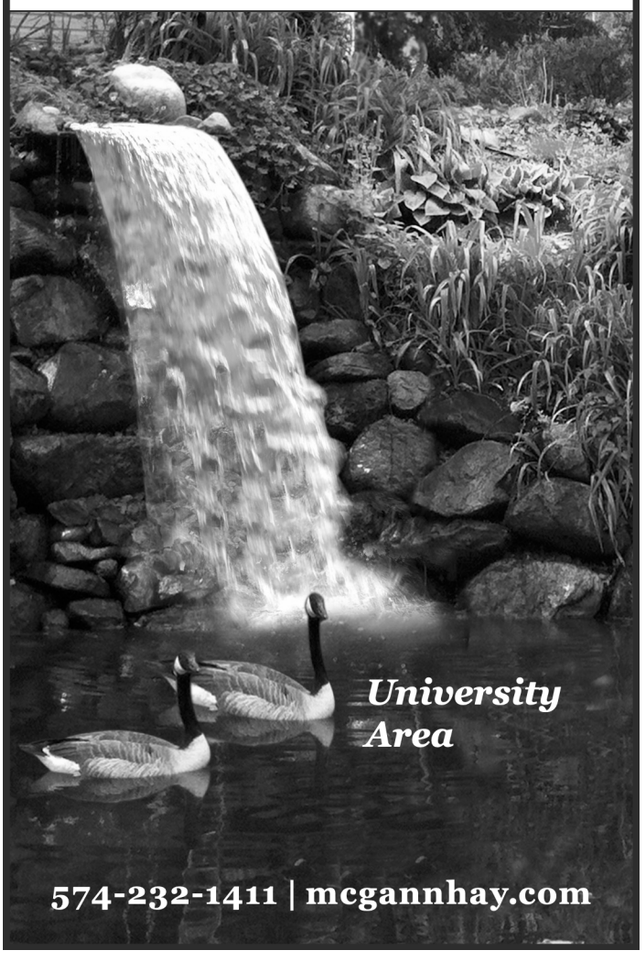

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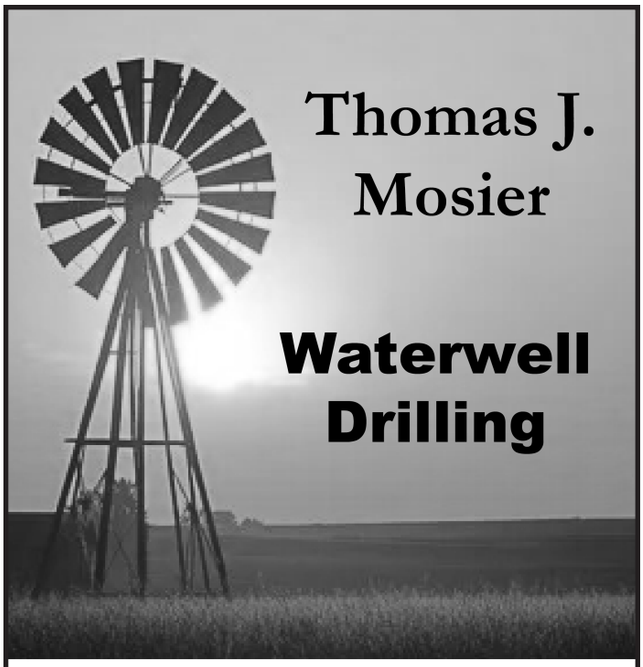

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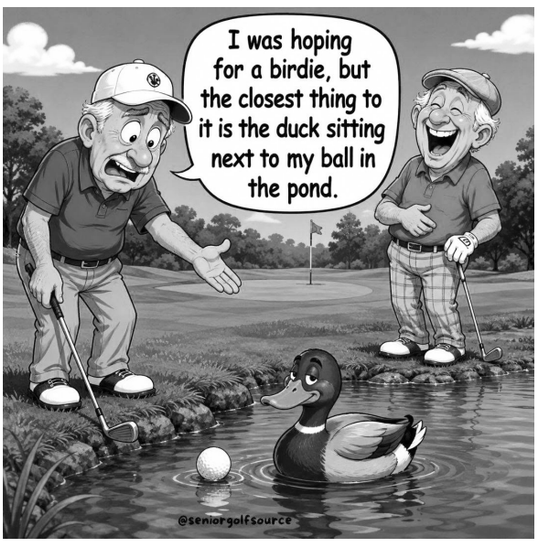
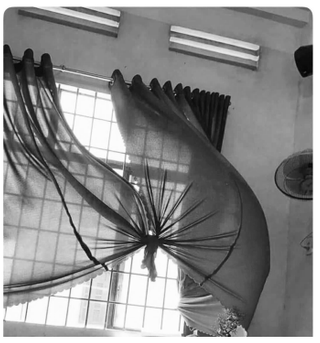


"I do agree that spending time together makes for a healthy marriage. However, me carrying your golf clubs isn't my idea of spending time together."

I'm "That store used to be a field" years old

Dolly just visited me I'm shaking



If you feed a sheep a diet rich in iron, will it produce steel wool?

I propose from now until Dolly Day (9/25) we call any thing with "dollar " in the name after Dolly. As in, I'm taking ten Dollys down to Dolly Tree to buy some Dolly Day cards.

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