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# Senior Perspectives

KENT COUNTY EDITION

A FREE PUBLICATION

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MARCH | APRIL 2022

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**I-SPY JAN/FEB WINNER: EVELYN DEHAAN OF GRANDVILLE** The conversation heart was found in the History Lessons story on page 14.

### EDITOR & PUBLISHER

Michelle Fields  
michelle@seniorresourceswmi.org  
231-733-3523

### GRAPHIC DESIGN

Jay Newmarch  
CRE8 Design  
CRE8creative@gmail.com  
269-345-8845

### COPY EDITOR

Bonnie Borgeson

Happy  
**St. Patrick's Day**  
from  
**Senior Perspectives!**

### WRITERS

Emily Armstrong  
Liz Barnett  
Gil Boersma  
Michelle Fields  
Staci Gerken  
Richard Hoffstedt  
Cindy Hogg  
Dave Kampfschulte  
Jerry Mattson  
Louise Matz  
Tricia McDonald  
Jackie O'Connor  
Joe Stapel  
Kelly St. Martin  
Cathay Thibdaue  
Vonda VanTil

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**Michelle Fields**  
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BY MICHELLE FIELDS

Letter from the Editor Thank You!

Since November of 2018, Senior Resources of West Michigan has been delighted to bring you the Senior Perspectives of Kent County newspaper. Our amazing writers, advertisers and the team at Area Agency on Aging of West Michigan helped make this publication so enjoyable for our readers.

It comes as no surprise to anyone that the last two years have been challenging due to the pandemic. It is with sincere regret that we inform you that due to the unforeseeable circumstances related to the pandemic and its financial pressure on local businesses, we have decided to discontinue the Kent County publication after this issue. We have been able to keep going during these past two years due to the support and loyalty of our advertisers, but it is not sustainable going forward.

We are grateful for you, our readers, and

the dedicated writers and loyal advertisers for allowing us to put out an award-winning publication for more than three years. We thank the staff at Area Agency on Aging of Western Michigan for their partnership in this endeavor.

Many of the writers you have seen in this edition will continue in our original newspaper, Senior Perspectives on the Lakeshore. If you've enjoyed their writing and photography we encourage you to continue to read them, either by getting a subscription (info below) or reading online: seniorresourceswmi.org/senior-perspectives.

Thank you for reading Senior Perspectives, and your concern and caring for older adults.

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# All About the Kent County Senior Millage



BY  
JACKIE  
O'CONNOR

If you want to “Age My Way,” then you need to know about the Kent County Senior Millage. As your age starts reaching six decades plus, you might be wondering how to keep living in your existing home and staying engaged in the neighborhood and larger community you live in.

The Kent County Senior Millage allows us to do that. The Senior Millage has been funding older adult services since 1999 – over 23 years! Thousands of older adults participate in the services that range from healthy aging programs to Meals on Wheels to transportation and so much more. As we become more dependent on assistance, there are in-home services like homemaker and home repairs, personal emergency response systems, and adaptive devices to keep individuals independent and safe.

Thirty-two Service Partners provide over 51 unique services. The senior millage is a property tax that runs about \$20 a month on the average house in Kent County. It benefits older adults, their families, and the community. Families provide the most caregiving to an older adult as they

become dependent on others for assistance. If you provide the grocery shopping, the yard care or the transportation to a medical appointment, you are a caregiver. Millage services can address some of these needs, relieving the family caregiver of some of this responsibility.

Maintaining a house also requires attention as it ages and you age. Shoveling snow, fixing minor (light switch doesn't work) problems and major problems (new roof or furnace) benefits the community around a senior's home. If you are a neighbor of an older adult, you want their home to remain in good condition for their safety.

The Kent County Senior Millage will be up for renewal on August 2, 2022. The many programs and thousands of individuals will want to continue to benefit from its passage. You can help continue these great services by supporting the renewal of the Senior Millage.

For more information about the Kent County Senior Millage, go to [www.aaawm.org/kcsm](http://www.aaawm.org/kcsm). To help with the Senior Millage Campaign, call 616-256-0510.

*Jackie O'Connor is the Executive Director of Area Agency on Aging of Western Michigan. She has been working with older adults for over 40 years. Her hobbies include photography, hiking and visiting a new National Park every year.*

## Over 50% of funding Goes to Priority Services

These are services for the most at-risk older adults to help maintain their care and independence in their own homes.



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BY  
DAVE  
KAMPFSCHULTE

# My Life as a

# Groupie

Some groupies get their kicks from following rock bands. Others get theirs from facilitating groups.

Put me solidly in the latter category. I have been training facilitators and facilitating groups for over 40 years. They have come in all kinds of flavors: grief groups, adventure groups, new student groups, discussion groups, and my all-time favorite, The Decision-Making Workshop, for students who broke some kind of school rule and got to spend Saturday morning with me! Some revolve around a certain issue, like grief. Others might meet to create deeper understanding between group members. They all involve deeper than usual interaction between members. Many churches had subdivided into small groups to have that more intimate experience.

Groups are powerful because they build off the energy and experiences that each individual brings. If correctly facilitated, supported by some ground rules that the group agrees to, they shatter the harmful myth of the individual facing any challenge by going it alone. I call this the “John Wayne Syndrome.” We all grew up with the mythical, rough and tough, solo cowboy being able to handle any challenge without ever asking for help and never expressing an emotion. Shattering that myth is the first step of any group.

Life just isn’t that way. We are social beings and if we are honest with ourselves as we look back at our life, we see we have received help and given help often in our journey. The biggest hurdle is

overcoming this idea that we might look weak if we open up about ourselves and our challenges. It is safe to say that this is something we all deal with on some level.

In combatting this, I have found it helpful to choose the right door to enter. The front door of our psyche is often triple locked with all kinds of barriers stacked in front of the entryway. I have found it helpful to instead come through the back door by having participants start off

doing some fun activities that take them out of their normal range of experiences such as drawing how they see the world, talking about what they see in a picture, and making objects out of pipe cleaners centered on a common theme. I then ask them to explain their creations.

They readily  
talk about

how it speaks to them, not realizing of course that they are really talking about themselves, prompted by some very general, open-ended questions. All this breaks the ice a bit and builds trust as the group gradually moves on to the task at hand and the always present opportunity for conversation that goes deeper – kind of like a submarine slowly submerging. I participate right along with the group, as I can’t ask a group to go where I am not willing to go too. I have found that people crave intimate conversations like these.

As noted earlier, there is a group for just about everything. The common denominator is that sometime in this experience there is a personal story that is going to be told and that story is going to be listened to with respect and validation by the group.

As a result, several things happen. The top things I hear are: *People realize that they are not alone in their challenges, which is a very powerful realization. You are not the person I thought you were. We are more alike than different. I talked about myself in front of other people, which I never thought I could do. In talking about my challenges, I realize that others are farther down the road, and if they can do it, I can too! This is a very caring group that I have never encountered before.*

All of those are pretty powerful, affirming realizations that sprouted up from the broken pieces of the John Wayne myth. One participant said in his session ending feedback that *I tricked him and made him talk about himself.* Trying my best not to laugh right out loud, I asked him how I did that. He replied, *I don’t know. I just felt comfortable. But I still think you tricked us!*

That feedback illustrates so well why I am a lifelong groupie. Rock and roll can provide a great high, but there is no better high than facilitating and watching a group of individuals develop a space and a connection, where they trust one another to go to that deeper level. If you have been part of a group, you can attest to this. If you haven’t had a group experience, well, I encourage you to give it a try. You are never alone and you too can become a groupie.

*Dave Kampfschulte has been a hospice volunteer for 32 years with Spectrum Health Hospice and Harbor Hospice. He is the founder and Director of Amazing Circle Workshops and is the author of I’m Dying to Talk with You: 25 years of end-of-life conversations. He can be reached at dave@amazingcircles.net*



# Preventing Falls



BY  
JOE  
STAPEL

Falls result in more than three million injuries treated in emergency rooms annually, resulting in over 800,000 hospitalizations. Among older adults, 1 out of 45 falls causes serious injury, including 90% of hip fractures and 51% of traumatic brain injuries. The average direct cost of non-fatal falls resulting in injury is \$9,780 per fall. Falls lead to the deaths of more than 32,000 older Americans each year. In 2019, 34,212 older Americans died from preventable falls.

With one in four Americans aged 65 and older falling each year, it is wise to know the fall prevention strategies to help keep you safe.

## Here is a review of some safety tips to help prevent falls in the home.

1. Remove all scatter rugs. Repair frayed carpet by taping or tacking down loose carpet edges.
2. Arrange the furniture to allow adequate space for safe walking between and within all rooms.
3. Clean up spills immediately.
4. Use step stools to reach high shelves. Do not stand on chairs.
5. Place safety strips or a non-skid mat in the bathtub and install hand rails. Do not use towel racks for support when sitting or standing.
6. Keep closet doors and drawers closed to prevent bruises or tripping.
7. Keep walking aids within reach and have a night light or a flashlight within reach of your bed.

Review these statements to assess your risk of falling.

Answer Yes or No to each statement.

- I have fallen in the past year. Yes or No
- I use or have been advised to use a cane or a walker to get around safely. Yes or No
- Sometimes I feel unsteady when walking. Yes or No



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- I steady myself by holding onto furniture when walking at home. Yes or No
- I am worried about falling. Yes or No
- I need to push with my hands to stand up from a chair. Yes or No
- I have some trouble stepping up onto a curb. Yes or No
- I often have to rush to the toilet. Yes or No
- I have lost some feeling in my feet. Yes or No
- I take medication that makes me feel lightheaded or more tired than usual. Yes or No

If you answered YES to four or more statements, you could be at risk of falling. You may want to have a discussion with your doctor.

Stay safe and secure through these winter months.

*Joe Stapel has a degree in Criminal Justice from Ferris State University. He has worked full and part-time as a police officer for three different agencies in Muskegon County. He also was a Licensed Private Investigator in the State of Michigan for 9 years.*

*Joe worked for the Meijer Corporation Loss Prevention Department in Grand Rapids for 28 years as a Security Officer and as the company's first Safety Specialist. He worked for Baker College of Muskegon as the Campus Safety Director for 11 years with a staff of 27 armed officers and 8 dispatchers. Joe held the position of Ordinance Enforcement Officer for Laketon Township in Muskegon County for 3 and 1/2 years.*

*References: National Safety Council, University of Michigan, AARP*



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**Sunday, April 24 | 1:00 – 5:00 pm**  
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Caregiving is some of the most important work around. It's also some of the hardest. So why do it alone? There is a rich network of help in Grand Rapids that can make caregiving better for everyone. Come to our Caregiver Expo to connect with the community organizations, activists, and specialists that can help us all through the work of caregiving.

For complete list of participating organizations, as well as additional events and details visit [www.grpl.org/SeniorsBeWell](http://www.grpl.org/SeniorsBeWell).

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BY  
CINDY  
HOGG

# Having a Dog-Gone Great Time on Mackinac Island

The “Two E’s” – my granddaughters Esther and Elisabeth – are quite the dynamic duo, just 10 months apart and with matching irrepressible personalities. To celebrate their summer birthdays, I decided a trip to Mackinac Island (Esther’s first) would be just the ticket. Based on previous experiences with the two of them, I also decided another adult presence might prove helpful so I invited my 30-something daughter, Laura, to accompany us.

Certain things are part and parcel of any Mackinac Island experience and we jumped right into all of them, beginning with the Shepler ferry ride under the mighty Mackinac Island Bridge, the engineering marvel that spans the Straits of Mackinac between Lake Michigan and Lake Huron.

“Where does Lake Michigan end and



Lake Huron begin?” I asked the girls. They didn’t know.

“Ha! Nobody knows exactly – it’s a mystery.” The girls loved that.

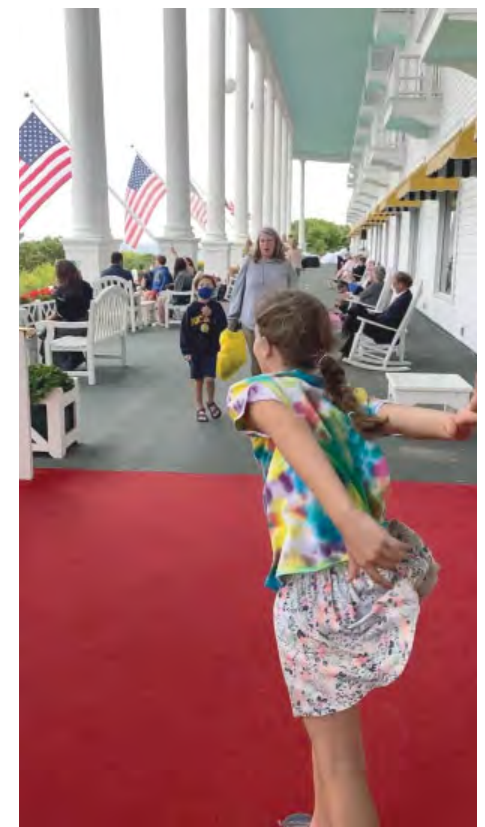
They already knew that because no cars are allowed on the island, everyone gets around on their own two feet (by walking or riding a bike) or – best of all – by horse. They absolutely swooned at the idea of riding around the island on horseback. When we told them we also planned to rent a carriage (with me driving), the girls were over the moon.

We decided to begin with bikes, as we had brought two of our own over with us on the ferry. We rented two more and started our tour. On this trip we didn’t make it all the way around the island but went as far as Arch Rock – not to be missed! – and stopped to scramble on large rocks along the lovely Lake Huron

shoreline.

Alas, the horse experiences did not pan out as expected. I had checked the carriage website before our trip and read, “No reservations accepted; first come, first served.” I neglected to notice that only applied to individual horse rentals and that carriages DO require a previous-day reservation. We were turned away for lack of a reservation. On top of that, children must be at least 10 years old to rent a horse to ride. It was a lovely sunny day but suddenly a dark cloud hung over my two granddaughters, ages 8 and 9. No carriage ride and no horseback riding around Mackinac Island.

Elisabeth bounced back from the devastating news but for Esther, she questioned how life might still be worth living. And when Esther decides to







It lasted about five minutes, but for the girls, they had ridden a large black horse named Prince!

Next, we visited the Grand Hotel, where they danced across the “longest porch in the world,” ordered ice cream from Sadie’s, and sampled some fudge we had picked up earlier. That’s sure to perk up spirits.

But what really redeemed the day?

Elisabeth loves dogs, but Esther *loves* dogs. And Mackinac Island was crawling with dogs. It seemed every third person had a dog (or two) on a leash and Esther had to stop and greet them all.

And then, down by the marina, she met a gorgeous white dog named...Esther. Now Esther is not an overly common name for a little girl. I would venture that it is an even less common name for a dog. Plus, Esther’s owners could have spent the same day on the island with us

without us ever crossing paths. And yet, here we were sitting next to each other... and Esther was hugging and burying her face in the beautiful white fur of a dog named Esther. It seemed like destiny, something almost magical. A snow-white, furry four-footed angel sent to gladden the heart of a little girl.

On the return ferry, I reflected that it had been a perfect trip. Perfect because it hadn’t been perfect. Perfect for teaching resilience in the face of disappointment—something Grandma is always trying to teach her grandchildren.



And also, that, sometimes, when you least expect it, you might just experience a miracle.

*Cynthia Hogg, LBSW, is the Care Counselor for the Alzheimer’s Association’s Dementia Support Program. She is a freelance writer whose passion is travel, especially with her grandchildren. She is the founder of the blog skipgentravelguru.com.*



put, no one can pout better. She shuffled along the sidewalk, head hung low.

What saved the day? Well, first we found a horse rental place where for a \$10 donation, the girls could be led on horseback around a small dirt patch. (Grandma calculated that she had just saved a bundle!)

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# What Is a Long-Term Care Ombudsman?

## An Inside Look at the LTCO Program



BY  
EMILY  
ARMSTRONG

You've likely heard of a Long-Term Care Ombudsman (LTCO), but aren't quite sure what this role does. The Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program got its start in 1972. Today, there is an ombudsman program operating in every state across the US. These programs work to resolve problems related to the health, safety, welfare, and rights of individuals who live in long term care facilities. A long-term care facility could include a skilled nursing facility, a home for the

aged (also known as assisted living), or an adult foster home. All ombudsman services are provided under strict confidentiality and at no cost to residents or their families. In Region 8, which covers a nine-county region (Allegan, Ionia, Kent, Lake, Mecosta, Mason, Montcalm, Osceola, and Newaygo), there are two assigned ombudsmen for the area working to advocate on the behalf of individuals and improve their quality of care.

**What are resident rights?** As a Long Term Care Ombudsman with the Area Agency on Aging explains, "These resident rights mirror the rights in any community. Just because a person's home might move from an apartment by themselves to a nursing home, doesn't mean they don't maintain resident rights such as dignity and respect, to be part of their own care plan, or to have the right to use their own personal possessions." The LTCO works to preserve these rights and regularly visits long term care settings to meet with residents. Confidentiality is of the utmost importance and they work to build trust with residents and address their concerns privately.

**What does this advocacy look like?** The LTCO replied, "Really, advocacy looks different for every resident. The main phrase we try to always keep in mind is what does the resident want? Ultimately this guides us in how to proceed. Once we obtain consent from the resident to advocate on their behalf, we are able to take action." Some cases relate to discharges and if a resident has the right to stay living in the facility or has the proper supports in



place in the community to be discharged. Other cases could focus on living conditions in the facility or working to fulfill an individual's personal wishes. An example of this advocacy might be a resident wanting to take their shower at 7 p.m. The LTCO would work with the long-term care setting staff to work through how they can potentially make this happen, what challenges they are facing, and try to come to a resolution. Each case is a little different, depending on the resident's needs.

If a family member is concerned about a loved one in a facility, there are options. "We always encourage the resident to try to address the issue with the long-term care setting first as they are their own best advocate. However, if they cannot or are not willing to, and there are still challenges/difficulties, then an ombudsman program is a great resource." You can find a list of further resources and learn more about the Region 8 Long Term Care Ombudsman Program at: [www.aaawm.org/litco](http://www.aaawm.org/litco). If you require assistance and would like to talk to a long-term care ombudsman, you can call (616) 245-9451 or (866) 485-9393.

*Emily Armstrong is the Public Relations and Communications Specialist at AAAWM. She enjoys exploring Michigan with her husband and their labradoodle, Moose. On the weekends you can usually find her cheering on the Spartans, camping, practicing photography, or reading.*

# Representative Payees Help You Manage Your Social Security



BY  
VONDA  
VANTIL

Some people who receive monthly Social Security benefits or Supplemental Security Income payments may need help managing their money. When we receive information that shows you need

help, we'll work with you to find the most suitable representative payee to manage your benefits. A representative payee receives your monthly benefit payment on your behalf and must use the money to pay for your current needs, including:

- Housing and utilities.
- Food.
- Medical and dental expenses.
- Personal care items.
- Clothing.
- Rehabilitation expenses (if you have a disability).

If you need help managing your benefits, tell a Social Security representative that there is someone you want to be your representative payee. Your representative payee should be someone you trust and see often, and who clearly understands your needs. Social service agencies, nursing homes, or other organizations are also qualified to be a representative payee. Ask them to contact us.

You can write to us within 60 days of being assigned a representative payee if you don't agree that you need one or if you want a different representative payee.

We also offer an option, called Advance Designation, which allows you to designate now someone to be your representative payee in the future.

In the event you can no longer make your own financial decisions, you and your family will have peace of mind knowing that someone you trust may be appointed to manage your benefits for you.

You can submit your advance designation request when you apply for benefits or after you are already receiving benefits. You may do so through your personal my Social Security account at [www.ssa.gov/my-account](http://www.ssa.gov/my-account) or by calling and speaking to a Social Security representative.

You can find more information at [www.ssa.gov/payee](http://www.ssa.gov/payee).

*Vonda Van Til is the Public Affairs Specialist for West Michigan. You can write her c/o Social Security Administration, 3045 Knapp NE, Grand Rapids MI 49525 or via email at [vonda.vantil@ssa.gov](mailto:vonda.vantil@ssa.gov).*



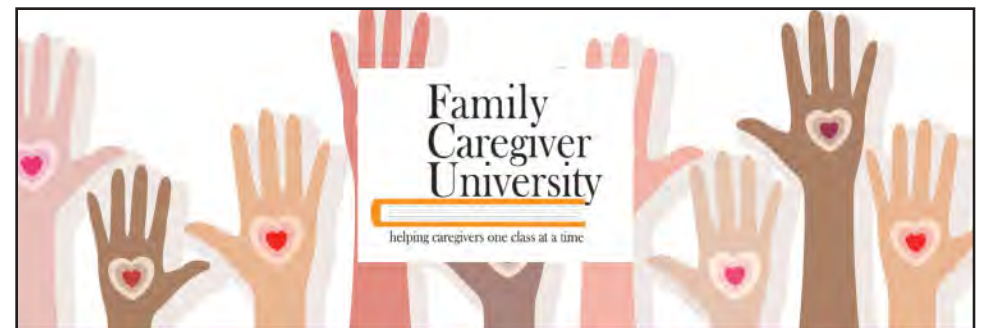
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Call: (616) 222-7032

Email: [registration@aaawm.org](mailto:registration@aaawm.org)



BY  
STACI  
GERKEN

## AAAWM Eats



### Blue Cheese and Steak Salad

Ingredients:

- 12-16 ounces steak
- 2-3 cups lettuce
- Cherry tomatoes
- Red onion
- Carrots
- Blue cheese

Dressing:

- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 tbsp balsamic vinegar
- 1 tbsp Dijon mustard
- 1-2 tsp honey
- Salt and pepper

Directions:

- Season steak on both sides with salt and pepper. Cook over high heat on either a grill or a stovetop to desired doneness. Let rest for several minutes and then slice into strips.
- Place washed and dried lettuce in a bowl.
- Whisk together the dressing ingredients. Pour over salad and toss to coat the lettuce.
- Wash and dry the veggies. Slice tomatoes in

half, thinly slice or chop the red onion, and grate the carrot. Place them on top of the lettuce in the bowl.

- Add sliced steak and desired amount of blue cheese.
- Enjoy!

*Staci Gerken is a Registered Dietitian and the Nutrition Contract Administrator at the Area Agency on Aging of Western Michigan where she works with congregate and home delivered meal partners in a nine-county region.*



BY  
CATHAY  
THIBDAUE

## Cathay's Cooking Corner

### Brownies with Frosting

Ingredients:

- 1/2 cup butter
- 1 cup white sugar
- 2 eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1/3 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1/2 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon baking powder

Frosting:

- 3 tablespoons butter, softened
- 3 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1 tablespoon honey
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 cup confectioners' sugar

Directions:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Grease and flour an 8-inch square pan. In a large saucepan, melt 1/2 cup butter. Remove from heat, and stir in sugar, eggs, and 1 teaspoon vanilla. Beat in by hand 1/3 cup cocoa, 1/2 cup flour, salt, and baking powder. Spread batter into prepared pan. Bake in preheated oven for 25 to 30 minutes. Do not overcook.



To make frosting: Combine 3 tablespoons softened butter, 3 tablespoons cocoa, 1 tablespoon honey, 1 teaspoon vanilla extract, and 1 cup confectioners' sugar. Stir until smooth. Frost brownies while they are still warm.

*Cathay is the Network Manager, Certified HIPAA Security Professional, Certified Medical Practice Security Professional, Certified PCI-DSS Security Compliance Professional, Certified Healthcare Cybersecurity Professional, and has a Certificate of Leadership in Healthcare Management Proficiency at Senior Resources of West Michigan. She also enjoys boating, fishing, and spending time with her family.*

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BY  
LIZ  
BARNETT

# Music My Teacher

**“Where words fail, music speaks.”** - Hans Christian Andersen

from deep within. The opportunity to express something beautiful and vulnerable is a gift that I have learned to embrace.

Music has taught me about connection. Billy Joel stated, “*I think music in*



When you think of music, what do you hear? A classical symphony? The crooning voice of Frank Sinatra or Ella Fitzgerald? Perhaps a tune from your heritage or a song that brings back good memories of days gone by. Music has dramatically shaped my life and I am profoundly thankful for what I have learned from music my teacher.

I was only eight years old when I stood on the stage, singing at my sister’s wedding. I learned that day that music was powerful! Since then I have brought the gift of music to thousands, and it still stands apart as one of the most important teachers in my life.

Music has taught me about expression. With words I can express thoughts, with my face I express humor or sadness, but with music I express my soul. I have often thought of music as painting the silence with a beautiful expression of what comes

*itself is healing. It’s an explosive expression of humanity. It’s something we are all touched by. No matter what culture we’re from, everyone loves music.”* I have seen music connect people from

different generations and cultures. Even language barriers disappear when music takes center stage in the heart of humanity.

Music has taught me about *beauty*. Tears often spring unexpectedly



to my eyes when a song comes on the radio or I hear children singing. Music is beautiful! It can be soft and haunting, wrenching the heart. It can be wild and free, making the listener want to dance! I have heard

love songs so profoundly beautiful it restores my heart. I have found my soul drawn to the heavens by the beauty of expressed lyrics, melodies and harmony. Incredibly, music is a gracious teacher and allows the freedom of choice. Beauty is decided on by the listener and the options to choose from are endless!

Music has taught me about *memory*. I have often shared music from the ‘30s & ‘40s with the senior population. I have seen individuals who have a hard time remembering light up when a special song is played.

They remember! Memories of days thought forgotten, lyrics that are not forgotten, people and places associated with a song, and the familiar tune bring the listener to another time and place. Smiles burst out and the silent becomes the singer! What a gift music is!

I am thankful that music has been my teacher for many decades and I look forward to learning more from this unexpected and beautiful companion!

*Hi! I’m Liz Barnett, the Outreach Specialist at the Area Agency on Aging of Western Michigan. I am privileged to be the mom of three adult children and am a new grandma this year! In my free time I enjoy hiking and home projects.*

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BY  
TRICIA  
McDONALD

## Authors of West Michigan

# The Power of Newspapers

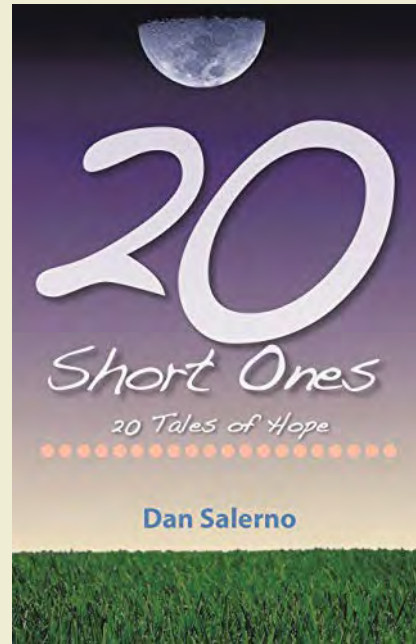
Newspapers were significant in Dan Salerno's childhood. He helped two older brothers with their Detroit *Free Press* and Detroit *News* paper routes. In addition, his father worked for the (then) New York Central Railroad and received free passes to travel by train. Wherever he travelled, he picked up the local newspaper and brought it home. Is it any surprise Dan learned how to read by reading newspapers?

After his dad brought home an old Underwood typewriter, Dan taught himself how to type, and in the first grade created his own weekly newspaper. His mom made a special bag so he could deliver it like a "real" newspaper.

Over the years, Dan worked as a freelance journalist for a number of magazines and newspapers. Then in 2013, he published his book *20 Short Ones: 20 Tales of Hope*, a collection of short stories that fit into the Christian faith-based fiction/romance genre. The book was revised in 2021.

Dan grew up the fourth of eight siblings whose names all start with the letter D. There are 20 years between the oldest and the youngest, and Dan is in the middle. "I am a typical middle child in temperament," he said. He grew up in West Michigan but traveled to Northern Ireland and Japan on church ministry trips. While earning his master's degree, he lived in New York City and worked for the National Coalition for the Homeless.

"There is something to be said for experiencing different cultures," Dan said. "Plus, reflecting on those experiences



gives you something to write about."

Some of those reflections became fodder for the short story collection in his book, in that they take place in Northern Ireland, Colorado, New York City, Chicago and Michigan (among other places). The common thread in the stories is relationships and in each, the beginnings of a relationship are explored.

The book is not a self-help book and doesn't offer information for relationship-building or romance, nor is it preachy. "The main take away I'd like for readers to have is hope," he states. Dan has always been interested in telling stories about relationships as he sees himself as socially awkward. "So much of everyday life makes it difficult to form solid friendships, but we need them."

Dan does his best thinking and reflecting through writing. "In general, writing has always been a natural way for me to make sense of things," Dan said. "I do my best thinking by writing my thoughts down."

His writing routine is to write something every day, "even if it's only a paragraph or two." He sees the process of writing as "a lot of fun," and the creativity of writing motivates him to continue.

Dan has also written a collection of Christmas stories and is currently working on a collection of stories about his mom's hometown, Metropolis, Illinois.

*Tricia L. McDonald is an internationally published author, public speaker, and writing coach. Her middle-grade book, The Sally Squad: Pals to the Rescue, was published in 2020. Her Life With Sally series (four books) is a compilation of stories chronicling life with her miniature bull terrier, Sally. Quit Whining Start Writing is a guide to help writers put away the excuses and get the writing done.*

*The Bookman is excited to continue featuring authors living in Western Michigan. Contact The Bookman to purchase and read this author's book.*



You are never too old to try something new. Try this fun experiment with your neighbor, friend or grandchildren.

### Try This

## Upside-down gardening

*You can test whether a plant knows which way is up and which way is down.*

**You'll need**

- Two large, fresh carrots
- Toothpicks
- Small sharp knife
- Small bowl
- Large glass
- Tweezers

- 1** Cut one carrot 1 in. (2 cm) from its large end
- 2** Cut other carrot 2 in. (5 cm) from its large end to hollow it out with knife and tweezers
- 3** Stick toothpicks in smaller carrot top and sit it over bowl with cut end in water. Stick toothpicks in larger carrot top, sit it on a glass and pour water in hollow center

**Fill hollow center with water**

**3** For two weeks, keep water in bowl so it touches small carrot top; also keep large carrot top's hollow center filled with water

### What happened?

Both carrots should grow leaves and stems



Instead of growing downward, the leaves on the large carrot will turn and grow upward



Source: Hunkin's Experiments  
Graphic: Helen Lee McComas, Paul Trap/TNS

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Game  
Page  
Answers  
on Page 23

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INSTRUCTIONS: Find as many words as you can by linking letters up, down, side-to-side and diagonally, writing words on a blank sheet of paper. You may only use each letter box once within a single word. Play with a friend and compare word finds, crossing out common words.

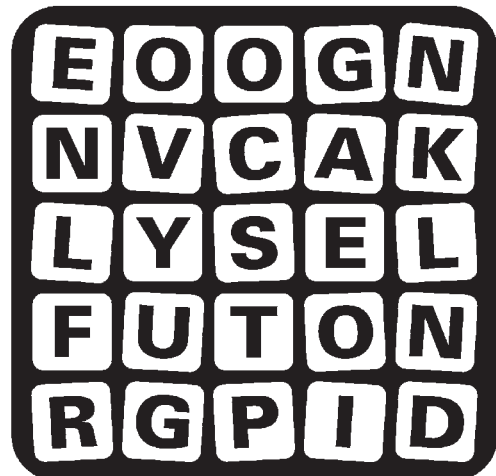
BOGGLE POINT SCALE

- 3 letters = 1 point
- 4 letters = 2 points
- 5 letters = 3 points
- 6 letters = 4 points
- 7 letters = 6 points
- 8 letters = 10 points
- 9+ letters = 15 points

YOUR BOGGLE RATING

- 151+ = Champ
- 101-150 = Expert
- 61-100 = Pro
- 31-60 = Gamer
- 21-30 = Rookie
- 11-20 = Amateur
- 0-10 = Try again

By David L. Hoyt and Jeff Knurek



Boggle BrainBusters Bonus

We put special brain-busting words into the puzzle grid. Can you find them?

Find AT LEAST EIGHT BODIES OF WATER in the grid of letters.

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INSTRUCTIONS: Find as many words as you can by linking letters up, down, side-to-side and diagonally, writing words on a blank sheet of paper. You may only use each letter box once within a single word. Play with a friend and compare word finds, crossing out common words.

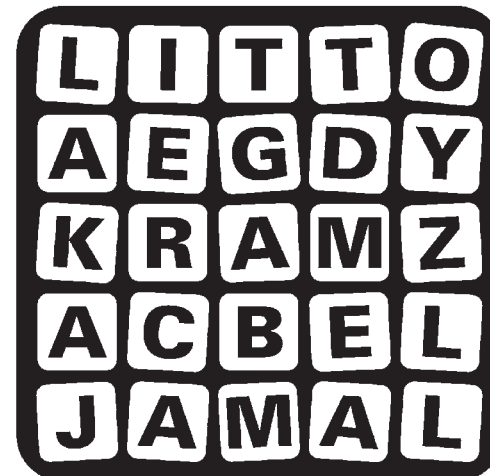
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By David L. Hoyt and Jeff Knurek



Boggle BrainBusters Bonus

We put special brain-busting words into the puzzle grid. Can you find them?

Find AT LEAST SEVEN TWO-SYLLABLE MAMMALS in the grid of letters.

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# JUMBLE

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

WEYRA

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NOGGI

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SORETE

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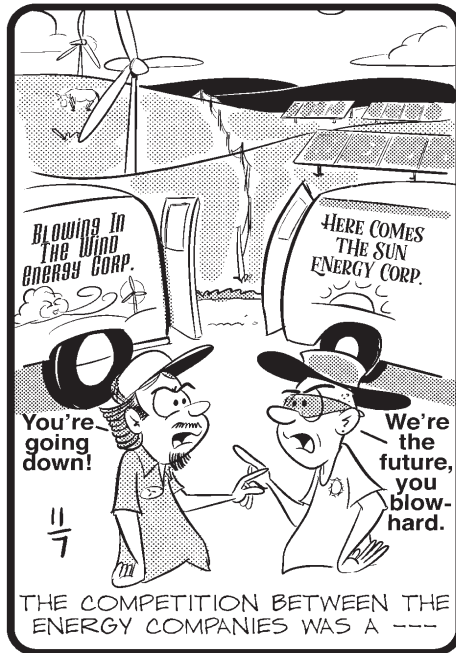
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Check out the new, free JUST JUMBLE app

## THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

by David L. Hoyt and Jeff Knurek



Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

# JUMBLE

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

NEGIS

○	○	○	○	○
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LNAFK

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TCLOHB

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LUNFAT

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# A Flash in the Sky



BY  
JERRY  
MATTSON

“Grandpa, what are those things on the roof of that old house?”

“Those are lightening rods. In a thunderstorm, if lightning struck the house it would go to one of the rods and a copper cable leading from the rods to a stake in the ground would absorb the energy and save the house.”

“Our house doesn’t have any of those. Does yours?”

“No.”

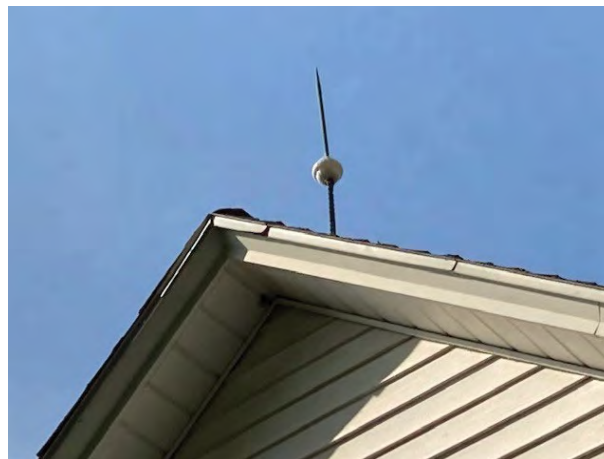
I hadn’t thought about lightening rods for a long time. When I was a kid, they were on almost every house in our rural neighborhood. When did they go out of favor, I wondered?

The ones Kyle had spotted were on an old farmhouse. They were probably three feet in length, each having a glass ball about midway on the metal rod. The ones from my childhood home were about the same length, without the decorative glass orbs.

“Let’s see if we can find any more of them,” I said. There was a good chance, since we were on a back road heading back to Muskegon from Coopersville. As we rode through farm country, we spotted several barns with shorter rods on them, but only one more house. Again, an older structure.

In times gone by, where property was used for agriculture, all trees were removed. On farmlands, often 40 acres or larger, the tallest structure might be a two-story house. A windmill, shed or barn could also provide a more direct path for lightning seeking contact with the ground. Lightning rods were then considered a necessity.

These same homes may now be surrounded by trees. The taller trees now may take a strike, saving the house.



In 2014, a friend of mine had lightning strike a tree about 40 feet from his home in the U.P. The top part of the pine tree exploded, leaving only about a twelve-foot stump. It left small pieces of wood scattered around the yard and on his house. Many other pieces were found stuck upright in the lawn, like misshapen wooden Jarts.

The strike followed a root that passed under a storage shed, damaging some aluminum trim around the door, shattering some plastic siding and melting an electrical outlet. The 25-foot path was marked by the ground, looking like a single-blade plow had been pulled through the area.

A scheduled visit was the next day, so my wife, Suzette, and I got to see the damage first-hand.



Lightning rods are not seen on many homes now, but taller structures including high-rise buildings, water towers and communication towers still have them.

Even with them, there is no guarantee against a fire. One person told me their house had rods on it and lightning struck about four feet away from one.

They were home at the time and the fire department kept damage to a minimum.

The old lightning rods still seen today may disappear the next time the roof is replaced. In the house I grew up in, when the roof was replaced, the long rods were replaced by much shorter ones. The next time, several years later, the rods were gone forever.

*Grounded home electrical systems and improved building materials have led to fewer rods on homes. Nearby strikes can be unnerving, however. One morning Jerry looked for damage where a “close one” hit near their home during the night. He found nothing, but is sure damage was done somewhere nearby.*

## Soul Food

# The Spirit longs for your renewal!



BY  
GIL BOERSMA,  
M.DIV., B.C.C.

After the snow and ice of winter, the renewal of the land with grass and flowers may renew our spirit as well. I am not suggesting that we cannot find spiritual growth any time of year. We might be challenged by the weather on any given day! I am suggesting that if you need a blessing or a renewal of faith, recognize your need and stay open to God's provision. Anyone can experience a dry or difficult stretch of time, just like an unexpected storm that changes your plans. If you are already on a trip, stopping for shelter or an over-night rest may be just what renews your energy and provides fellowship time with family or friends with whom you are traveling.

No matter what hardships or disappointments we experience in the journey of our lives, we must not let fear or failure define the totality of our lives. We are human, and there was only one person who touched this earth and remained perfect. The good news is that there are gifts of the Spirit that can heal us, guide us, and give great purpose to our lives; yes, any one of us! They are written in the New Testament. It took most of my life to recognize the gift that

God gave me, and I am happy with the one He chose. Remember, the gift of the Spirit is just that, a gift. We don't choose it, and just one makes a huge difference in our journey and in our relationships.

*"Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines."*

I Corinthians 12:7-11 (NIV)

*Rev. Gilbert Boersma, BBA, MDIV, is an Elder in the United Methodist Church, and a Retired-Board-Certified chaplain. His wife Sara is retired from Muskegon Community Mental Health and offers counseling privately, part-time. Their two sons, one daughter-in-law and four grandchildren also live in Muskegon. Gil offers "spiritual direction" for those who have interest. You may contact him by email: boersmagil71@gmail.com*



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# My first solo drive in my Dad's new car



BY  
DICK  
HOFFSTEDT

My dad never gave me too many warnings about things to watch out for as I grew up. As I approached my 16th birthday in the summer of 1950 and was about to receive my very first driver's license, he told me this: "Make sure you use the rear and side view mirrors."

Every Saturday evening, it was my job to walk approximately three city blocks to the local news stand and pick up the Sunday edition of the newspaper my parents liked. In nice weather this was not a big deal. Winter was another story.

Earlier that year my dad had purchased his first new car. It was a beautiful metallic green, four-door Pontiac Chieftain. He was so proud of that car but allowed me to use it to pass the driving part of my license test.

Around October or November of that year, it turned very cold...no snow but cold. Dad thought it was maybe time for me to solo, so one bitter Saturday night he gave me the keys and let me drive alone for those three short blocks. I was ecstatic. We lived on a side street that allowed curb parking on both sides of the street, which didn't allow much room for two cars to pass each other. I pulled away carefully from our curb and slowly crept down the street. Everything went just fine.

I spotted an empty space and carefully parallel parked that marvelous car. I was so proud of myself that I sat for a while savoring my accomplishment. I could see the little old man who ran the newsstand. I was so anxious to tell him I didn't have to walk anymore that I opened my door to get out and heard a very loud "WHACK" and noticed my car door was gone. It was lying across the street leaning on the other curb. The car that hit the door kept on going and turned

right around the newsstand and disappeared. I was frozen. Not from the cold but fear. There was no one around. The little old man at the news stand never budged. I had to do something. No phones were handy, so I simply got out, went and picked up the door and put it hastily in the back seat.

When I got home, I parked the car outside our house and went in. The first thing my dad asked was how it went. I told him there was something he needed to see. He came out, took one look and said calmly, "You didn't use the mirrors, did you?"

He didn't get angry and had the door fixed that week. He let me drive the car many times after that for a variety of errands. I never had another problem. I don't know if I could have handled such a situation so calmly.

By the way, we never did get the Sunday papers that weekend.

*Richard Hoffstedt was born to Swedish immigrants in 1934 and raised in Chicago. He is a U.S. Army veteran. He has been married to Shirley for 66 years. Richard has six children, five grandchildren and five great grandchildren. Richard is an engineer by profession. His interests are music, reading, travel, riding his adult tricycle, Mark Twain and John Steinbeck.*

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If you think someone is using your Social Security number, there are several other actions you should take:

- Contact the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) online at [www.ftc.gov/bcdp/edu/microsites/idtheft](http://www.ftc.gov/bcdp/edu/microsites/idtheft) or call 1-877-ID-THEFT (1-877-438-4338).
- File an online complaint with the Internet Crime Complaint Center at [www.ic3.gov](http://www.ic3.gov).
- Contact the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Identity Protection Specialized Unit by calling 1-800-908-4490, Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. – 8 p.m.
- Monitor your credit report.

**Question: How are my retirement benefits calculated?**

**Answer:** Your Social Security benefits are based on earnings averaged over your lifetime. Your actual earnings are first adjusted or “indexed” to account for changes in average wages since the year the earnings were received. Then we calculate your average monthly indexed earnings during the 35 years in which you earned the most. We apply a formula to these earnings and arrive at your basic benefit. This is the amount you would receive at your full retirement age. You may be able to estimate your benefit by using our Retirement Estimator, which offers estimates based on your Social Security earnings. You can find the Retirement Estimator at [www.ssa.gov/estimator](http://www.ssa.gov/estimator).

**Question: I’ve decided I want to retire. Now what do I do?**



**Answer:** The fastest and easiest way to apply for retirement benefits is to go to [www.ssa.gov/retireonline](http://www.ssa.gov/retireonline). Use our online application to apply for Social Security retirement or spouses benefits. To do so, you must:

- Be at least 61 years and 9 months old.
- Want to start your benefits in the next four months.
- Live in the United States or one of its commonwealths or territories.



BY  
VONDA  
VANTIL

**Question: I’m not sure when I’m going to retire so I want to estimate my retirement benefit at several different ages. What’s the easiest way to do that?**

**Answer:** Using our Retirement Estimator is easy at [www.ssa.gov/estimator](http://www.ssa.gov/estimator), and it’s the best way for you to get a good idea of what your monthly benefit payment may be after you retire. The Estimator gives estimates based on your actual Social Security earnings record. Keep in mind, these are estimates and we can’t provide your actual benefit amount until you apply for benefits. You can use the Estimator if you have enough work to qualify for benefits and aren’t currently receiving benefits. If you are currently receiving only Medicare benefits, you can still get an estimate. You can learn about this subject by reading our publication, Retirement Information For Medicare Beneficiaries, avail-

able at [www.ssa.gov/pubs](http://www.ssa.gov/pubs).

**Question: I am receiving Social Security retirement benefits and I recently went back to work. Do I have to pay Social Security (FICA) taxes on my income?**

**Answer:** Yes. By law, your employer must withhold FICA taxes from your paycheck. Although you are retired, you do receive credit for those new earnings. Each year Social Security automatically credits the new earnings and, if your new earnings are higher than in any earlier year used to calculate your current benefit, your monthly benefit could increase. For more information, visit [www.socialsecurity.gov](http://www.socialsecurity.gov) or call us at 1-800-772-1213 (TTY

1-800-325-0778).

1-800-325-0778).

**Question: Are Social Security numbers reassigned after a person dies?**

**Answer:** No. We do not reassign Social Security numbers. In all, we have assigned more than 460 million Social Security numbers. Each year we assign about 5.5 million new numbers. There are over one billion combinations of the nine-digit Social Security number. As a result, the current system has enough new numbers to last for several more generations. For more information about Social Security, visit our website at [www.socialsecurity.gov](http://www.socialsecurity.gov).

*Vonda Van Til is the Public Affairs Specialist for West Michigan. You can write her c/o Social Security Administration, 3045 Knapp NE, Grand Rapids MI 49525 or via email at [vonda.vantil@ssa.gov](mailto:vonda.vantil@ssa.gov).*

An advertisement for 'Advocates for Senior Issues'. The top part shows a photograph of a grand, classical building with columns. Overlaid on the photo is the text 'ADVOCATES for Senior Issues' in large, bold letters. Below that, a smaller text box says 'Advocates for Senior Issues is a non-partisan group empowering seniors through education and advocacy. The group meets regularly to advocate, learn, and socialize.' To the right of this text is a small logo for 'AREA AGENCY ON AGING OF WESTERN MICHIGAN'. Below the photo, the text 'Join us!' is written in a stylized font. The bottom section of the ad, on a dark orange background, lists 'Upcoming 2022 Meetings:' with dates 'Friday, March 18', 'Friday, April 15', and 'Friday, May 20'. It also specifies the time '10:00 am - 12:00 pm' and the location 'The Salvation Army Kroc Center'. At the bottom, it provides contact information: 'Questions? (616) 222-7015' and 'Or visit [www.aaawm.org/afsi](http://www.aaawm.org/afsi)'.

# Earning a Badge of *Courage*



BY  
LOUISE  
MATZ

Monday after New Year's Day I asked my pickleball friend Linda Peterson Parker (age 73) if she had a good holiday. To my surprise, she told me about her exciting adventure instigated by her friend Larry DeVoogd, age 93. Larry made reservations for the two of them to ride the zip line at the Muskegon Luge Adventure Sports Park. Linda was a little anxious, but definitely willing. Larry had hopes of being the oldest one to ride. He was disappointed that one older person had already been recorded.

According to the website for the park, the zip line distance is 1400 feet. It's a dual operation. You'll race alongside a friend with a view of the treetops over Muskegon State Park, traveling over the top of the winter and summer luge tracks. All zip line participants will get two runs down each side of the zip line. Each run

takes 50 seconds to one minute. Before zipping you will be outfitted by a zip line guide with a harness and helmet. You will then go to the top of the luge track sand dune where the zip line starting platform is located. A guide will attach your trolley and ensure your harness is properly secured. When ready, you'll be instructed to step off the 25-foot platform to begin your descent over the tracks and through the tree canopy to the landing platform, where zip line guides will detach your trolley.

CONGRATULATIONS LINDA AND LARRY. YOU DID IT!!! You earned your badge of courage. We are so impressed and inspired.

*Louise has been writing for Senior Perspectives for over ten years. She enjoys family time, reading, walking, biking, and golf. Pickleball and mahjonn have been added to the list since retirement. She also loves to join her husband for turkey hunting and fishing in the Florida Keys.*



# Caring for your potted Easter lily

If you just got a potted Easter lily for the holiday, follow the steps below on how to care for your plant

- Unwrap your plant immediately to prevent moisture buildup.
- Remove anthers, the tall stems that grow from the center of the bloom.
- Find a bright spot for it to grow. Avoid direct sunlight.
- Keep it cool. Keep away from heat sources or vents. Keep at 60°F to 68°F.
- Water when the soil is dry to touch. Promote growth by remove fading flowers.



Anthers

You can plant it outside and enjoy it throughout summer as well

Source: proflowers.com  
Graphic: Staff, TNS

# Ride link

Taking Seniors Where They Want to Go in Kent County

[www.ridelinkkent.org](http://www.ridelinkkent.org)  
(616) 774-1288

Kent County Senior Millage

## ANSWERS FOR GAMES ON PAGES 16 & 17

8	9	3	2	1	4	7	5	6
5	2	6	9	3	7	8	1	4
4	7	1	6	5	8	3	9	2
3	8	7	1	2	6	9	4	5
6	5	4	7	8	9	2	3	1
2	1	9	5	4	3	6	8	7
1	3	8	4	6	2	5	7	9
9	4	2	8	7	5	1	6	3
7	6	5	3	9	1	4	2	8

4	2	8	5	3	6	7	1	9
6	1	5	7	2	9	3	8	4
9	3	7	8	4	1	5	2	6
8	6	9	1	5	7	2	4	3
1	4	2	9	6	3	8	7	5
7	5	3	2	8	4	9	6	1
2	8	6	3	1	5	4	9	7
5	7	4	6	9	8	1	3	2
3	9	1	4	7	2	6	5	8

Answers - Boggle Game #1:

SEA GULF POND COVE LAKE  
OCEAN INLET LAGOON

Answers - Boggle Game #2:

TIGER ZEBRA CAMEL OTTER  
LLAMA JACKAL BADGER

ANSWER - JUMBLE PUZZLE #1:

SINGE FLANK BLOTCH FLAUNT  
He told them that he grew great coffee,  
but he was — FULL OF BEANS

ANSWER - JUMBLE PUZZLE #2:

WEARY GOING STEREO PUDDLE  
The competition between the energy companies  
was a — POWER STRUGGLE

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