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SUPERIOR NEWS

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Vol. 2, Issue 24

Your source for positive community news!

Dec 27 - Jan 9, 2025

Candy Cane Lane delights visitors to downtown West Branch



Photo by Deanna Surbrook
Chelsey Klaski, and her daughter, Allison Maynard, enjoyed their visit with Santa Claus.



Photo by Deanna Surbrook
Mrs. Claus, a.k.a. Karen Brabo, set up a bakery and kids were able to decorate their own Christmas cookies.

BY DEANNA SURBROOK

Several hundred area residents took the stroll down Candy Cane Lane on Saturday, Dec. 13.

The entire day, from Breakfast with Santa at Buccilli's Pizza, right down to the band, AMF, rocking it out at Loggers



Photo by Laura Bender
Alivia Zimmerman and Anna Philbrick and their puppies enjoy a visit to Candy Cane Lane.

Depot, the day was jam packed with activities for the entire family.

Other activities included cookie decorating at Mrs. Claus's Bakery, visits with Santa, horse drawn carriage rides, the Ugly Sweater 5k, coloring, story time and let's talk about the shopping.

Dozens of vendors lined Houghton Avenue selling their wares. Downtown businesses were packed. Not only did they provide refuge for cold visitors, cash registers were ringing like Jingle Bells. A magical day was had by all who attended.

OH Theatrical Troupe competes in 'Thespies'



Courtesy photo

The Ogemaw Heights Theatrical Troupe, and ITS Troupe 8775 took 15 students to the Michigan Thespian Festival in Lansing on Dec. 12 and 13. At festival, students were able to participate in various workshops focusing on different elements of theatre, including dance, vocal lessons, stage combat, improv, and tech elements such as sound, lighting and design. They were also able to watch two other schools

TROUPE continues on page 13 »
The Ogemaw Heights Theatrical Troupe recently visited the state capital. Pictured front row (l-r): Laney Revord, Nadia Hosted, Naomi Hosted, Skylar Smith, Hilda Potter, Evelyn Fanfalone. Middle Row: Addison Siemienski, Riley Baksa, Sadie Syerson, Taylor Vervoort, Oliva Cummings, Kieran Oliver, Kendra Temple. Back Row: Colten Hill, Jesse McNicholl.

The Light that leads home

BY PASTOR JIM WESTHEIM

As the Christmas season settles over our community - twinkling lights on porches, carols echoing in stores, and families gathering around warm tables - we're reminded that this time of year carries a unique kind of hope.

It's the hope that light still breaks into darkness. It's the hope that none of us are forgotten. And it's the hope that God still meets us exactly where we are.

The Christmas story in Luke 2 tells us that on an ordinary night, in an ordinary field, a group of shepherds suddenly found themselves surrounded

by the brilliance of heaven. They weren't priests or scholars or influencers of their day.



PASTOR JIM WESTHEIM

They were working-class men keeping watch over sheep in the dark. Yet God chose them to be the first to hear the news of Jesus' birth.

There's something deeply comforting in that truth. God's light doesn't wait for perfect conditions - it shines right into

LIGHT continues on page 9 »



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With everything changing daily, if not hourly, we would advise that you call ahead to be sure the event is still scheduled.

Ongoing
Mondays - Disabled American Veterans meet the third Monday, 5 p.m. at the VFW/American Legion Post 496 E. Houghton Ave. in West Branch. Call 989-473-3416.
Mondays - Rose City Lions Club meets the second and fourth Monday, 6:30 p.m. at the Log Cabin in the Rose City Park. Call Ed 989-387-0609.
Mondays - (Second of each month) Coalition of Hope 9 a.m. Meeting virtually. Suicide prevention, intervention and post-vention. Call 989-345-5571.
Monday - (Third of each month, April-Dec.) Ogemaw County Genealogical and Historical Society 12:30 p.m. at the Trinity Episcopal Church, 100 E. Houghton Ave., West Branch. Call 989-701-2525.
Tuesdays - Kiwanis Club of West Branch meets at noon at China Inn, 601 W. Houghton Ave. in West Branch. Call 989-345-0978.
Tuesdays - Rose City Area Historical Society meets the second Tuesday of each month at 7 p.m., April through November, except August. Meet at the Rose City Lions Club Cabin. Call Cathy 989-345-5659.
Tuesdays - T.O.P.S. (Take Off Pounds Sensibly) weigh in at 1-1:30 p.m., meeting starts at 1:30-2 p.m. Ogemaw Hills Free Clinic, 2106 S. Gray Rd. in West Branch. Call Robin 989-343-0592.

Tuesdays - (First of each month) West Branch Creative Arts Association meeting, 7 p.m. located at 124 N. Fourth St. in West Branch. Call 989-345-1451.
Tuesdays - (First of each month) West Branch Area Retail Merchants Association meeting, 6 p.m. Held at the West Branch City Police Department. Call 989-345-5226.
Tuesdays - (Second of each month) Christian Motorcycle Association 6 p.m. for food and fellowship, 7 p.m. business meeting at G's Pizzeria, 200 W. Houghton Ave. in West Branch. Call Gary 989-343-9876.
Tuesdays - (Fourth of each month) Rifle River Quilt Guild 9:30 a.m. at the K of C Hall, 601 Columbus Dr. in West Branch. The meeting will be followed by a Show and Tell, mini-classes, quilting tips, demos and time to sew. Bring your sewing machine, a project and your lunch. Any level of quilter is welcome. Call Diane 989-345-7206.
Tuesdays - (Third of each month) Cardinal Optimist Club of Skidway Lake. Third Tuesday 5:30 p.m. at Café International, 4761 Sage Lake Rd. in Prescott. Call Janet 989-387-2640.
Tuesdays - (Second of each month) Survivors of Suicide Support Group 6:30 p.m. Call Vicki 989-510-0911 or info@coalition-ofhope.net for location. National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 800-

273-8255 or text 741741.
Tuesdays - (Fourth of each month) Ogemaw County Democratic Party 5pm at China Inn downtown West Branch. Call Ken at (989) 345-1066.
Tuesdays - (Fourth of each month) Ogemaw County Republican Party meeting 5:30 p.m. at G's Pizzeria in downtown West Branch. Call Kristine 989-343-5120.
Tuesday - (Last of each month) Diabetes Support Group 1-2 p.m. Medical Arts Center, diabetes education conference room. Call 989-343-3276.
Wednesdays - West Branch Area Business and Professional Women's Organization meets the second Wednesday of the month at 5:30 p.m. Different locations each month. Call 989-745-4067 for information.
Wednesdays - (First of each month) Veterans coffee hour 9-10 a.m. Held at the Ogemaw County Commission on Aging, 1528 S. M-33 in West Branch. Call 989-345-3010.
Wednesdays - (First and third) Grief Support Group 6:30 p.m. Faith Alive Church, 2945 Hansen Rd. in West Branch. Open to the entire community. Call 989-345-5440.
Thursdays-GriefShare Support Group. 2-4 p.m. Fresh Start Community Church, 690 Campbell Rd., West Branch. March 7 through

May 30. \$20 for workbook. Scholarships available. Call Brenda 989-312-0105 for registration or info.
Thursdays - (First and third of each month) Newborn Parent Support Group 6-7:30 p.m. MyMichigan Health - West Branch in the executive dining room. Call 800-999-3199.
Thursdays - Northern Blend Sweet Adelines meets every week 7 p.m. at Logan Township Hall, 4507 E. M-55, Prescott. Call Ellen 989-345-0978.
Thursdays - (Second and fourth) Sit & Knit, 1 p.m. Knitting, needlework, and friendship. Whatever you craft. Ogemaw Commission on Aging, 1528 S. M-33 in West Branch. Call Alicia 989-345-3010, ext. 201.
Thursdays - (Third of each month) Rose City/Lupton Chamber of Commerce meets at 6:30 p.m. at the Rose City Council Chambers. Call Carl 989-473-3268.
Thursdays - Optimist Club of West Branch meets at 7 a.m. at the Loggers Depot in West Branch. Call 989-942-6608.
Thursdays - The Ogemaw County Fair board meets the first Thursday of each month in the main building at the fairgrounds. Call 989-345-5393.

Jan 31
Texas Hold'em Tournament, Saturday, Jan. 31, hosted by Max-Well Therapy Center, 2 p.m., West Branch Moose Lodge, 1731 W. State Rd., West Branch. Max-Well's goal is to enhance the lives of kids through the use of animal assisted activities. For more information, visit www.maxwelltherapycenter.org.

Feb 14
St. Joseph Trivia Night, Saturday, Feb. 14, 5 p.m. to 10 p.m., Knights of Columbus Hall, 601 Columbus Dr., West Branch. \$25 per person, sold by tables of eight. Dinner and two drink tickets included. Tickets are not sold at the door. Contact St. Joseph School, 989-345-0220, for tickets.

Apr 14
Fourth annual 'Nite at the Races', hosted by Max-Well Therapy Center, Saturday, April 11, 5:30 p.m., Knights of Columbus Hall, 601 Columbus Dr., West Branch. Max-Well's goal is to enhance the lives of kids through the use of animal assisted activities. For more information, visit www.maxwelltherapycenter.org.

To place your event in the Community Happenings, email information to deanna@superior-news.com

FAITH & WORSHIP

God is love

"No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."
 —Romans 8:37-39 NIV

God is love. And He loves us all no matter where we are in life. God's love is unconditional. God's love is without limit. God loves us so much and his love is so deep that nothing can change his love or stop him from loving us.

God loves us in all seasons of life. God loves us every second of everyday. God loves us. God's love is permanent. God's love can never fade away.

God loves us and because of his love he cares for us. God Himself his love. God is full of love.

When I am waking up it's God loving me, God loves me in every situation and his love is always present in our lives. Even when I am not feeling well, his love is still there and yes I am not feeling well but that does not stop God from loving me, God does not want me to be in pain but his love is present to heal me of the pain. When I feel disappointed God loves me.

When I have failed God loves me. We need to start believing and accepting that God is love and he loves us deeply.
 — www.SermonCentral.com

Gladwin Cornerstone Baptist Church
 3925 Round Lake Road,
 Gladwin, MI 48624
 989-426-6897
 Sunday School 9:30
 Morning Worship 10:30
www.gladwincornerstone.com
 Pastor Scott Bradstreet

Churchill United Methodist Church
 501 E. State Rd.
 (corner of State and Morrison roads)
 989-685-2350
Worship & Children's
Sunday School: 11:30 a.m.
 Rev. Helen Alford

Calvary Baptist Church
 235 Minzer Ct. • West Branch
 989-345-1651
 Sunday School - 9:45 a.m. all ages
 Sunday Worship 11 a.m. • Youth Group - 5:30 p.m.
 Sunday Evening Service - 6 p.m.
WEDNESDAY
 Youth Group - 6:30 p.m. • Awana - 6:30 p.m.
 Wednesday Prayer Meeting/Bible Study 7 p.m.
 Pastor Tom Teall • Youth Pastor Josh Pierce
www.cbcwb.org

Edward's Community Church
 4520 Greenwood Rd., West Branch
 989-345-4227
 Pastor Jon Scott
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 Worship Service 11 a.m.
 (Greenwood Rd. west of S. M-30)

Hale Methodist Church
Everyone Welcome! Pastor: Mike Tullis
 Sunday Worship - 10am; Sunday School - 11am

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 & Candlelight Worship
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 FB & IG: Hale Methodist Church



BY LAURA BENDER

(Written in 2010)

Dear Elmer,

It's Christmastime again. Last week when I was out to sea on USS New York, my husband, Ken, (you'd like him) brought down the boxes of decorations from the attic and before I got home, had hung your sleigh bells on the front door. I love how they jingle on our way in or out, and they were especially cheery to hear when I arrived home after 10 days at sea.

How is it you've been gone for 16 years and can still bring joy to others? Here's the story of the bells:

I remember when we met. I was greeting parishioners on my first Sunday as pastor of my first church. I felt inadequate and awkward; secretly wishing the real minister would show up and take charge. You shook my hand and asked if you could show me around town the next day. The patriarch of the congregation, you were more than 50 years my senior. It seemed silly to imagine I could be your pastor.

The next day you picked me up and we drove to the cemetery. This surprised me. When we arrived near the more recent interments, we got out of the car. "Let me tell you about your congregation," you'd said as you pointed to various graves. "Let's start

The Christmas Bells

with their parents. That will help you understand why those people are the way they are," you'd said grinning.

You know, Elmer, the stories you told me that day gave me valuable insight into the dynamics in our church. And when later in the day you took me to the other churches and helping agencies in town and introduced me as your pastor, I started to think, or at least hope, that perhaps I could be. But nothing made me feel as welcome as when we visited your wife, Evelyn's, grave and after telling me at length about her, you looked right at me and said, "You know, she'd have liked you." It was the best compliment I could imagine.

Although making me welcome was your goal for that day, I know it was not the whole story. You were also getting things settled. At 80 you knew you would not live much longer, and you needed to make plans. So, you took me to visit the graves of people you'd known and loved throughout your life and then got down to business.

"One day you'll bring me here and leave me," you'd said. "And when you do that, I don't want you to feel bad. I've lived a good

life. I've outlived most of my closest companions. When you bring me here, Pastor, remember, you're really bringing me home."



LAURA BENDER

I guess I should not have been surprised when five years later, on my last Sunday as your pastor before I transferred to my next church, I got a phone call after lunch. "Elmer was found dead in his recliner," the voice said.

"But I just saw him a few hours ago. How can he be dead?" But you were. After worship you'd gone back to your house, settled in your favorite chair and gone home to be with Evelyn and all those people to whom you'd introduced me. And the last thing I did before I left that church for good was take you up the hill in the cemetery and leave you, just as you'd said I would. I didn't feel bad doing it. It's not that I didn't miss you; we all missed you. You were a sweet and caring man. But I didn't feel bad because I'd been able to do for you exactly what you'd asked me to do — send you home to that place we both know is wonderful.

Now since it's Christmas again, Elmer, I must report to you on

BELLS continues on page 20 »

New Beginnings Lutheran Church
 960 S. M-33, next to Ogemaw Heights High School,
 West Branch, MI
 Pastor Daniel Jansen
 989-836-6133
Sunday Service - 9 a.m.

Ogemaw Heights High School Machining Class is 'out of this world'



Photos by Laura Bender
 The expanded Machining Classroom at Ogemaw Heights High School. Left, Hunter Zettel shows a sample of the precision-tooled part created for NASA. Pictured right, Camden Walker, Preston Garth, Hunter Zettel and their teacher, Kyle Sisco.

BY LAURA BENDER

"Look! Up in the sky!"
 "It's a bird."
 "No, look higher."
 "It's a plane."
 "Look even higher."

"It's the International Space Station carrying hundreds of precision-tooled parts manufactured by Kyle Sisco's Machining Class at Ogemaw Heights High School."

In 2019, Ogemaw Heights won a NASA HUNCH (High Schools United with NASA to Create Hardware) award to create parts for experiments on the International Space Station. They have been filling orders from NASA ever since.

"I try to connect education with the real world," Kyle said. "My students get a lot of gratification from fabricating items that will really be used."

Not everything they make gets sent into space.

"We've made signs for the school entrance, soft jaws for a local machinist's lathe, even floor drain covers for the high school bathrooms," Hunter Zettel said.

"Some of the drain covers were designed to look like spiderwebs. A few look like the Death Star," Preston Garth said.

Among other items they have recently manufactured were divot tools and markers for the Roscommon Canine Unit's golf fundraiser, and bullet-shaped key chains for local veterans.

Kyle's students are expected to be creative not only in their designs, but in their approach to a project.

"My students plan a part, design it using CAD/CAM software and take responsibility to see it through to completion," Kyle said.

"Mr. Sisco takes a hands-off approach," Hunter said. "He gives us guidance and makes sure we are safe, but it's up to us to see a project through. If we get stuck, or if something doesn't work, he leaves us to figure it out."

"I don't want to rob them of the ability to learn, develop patience, overcome mistakes and

keep trying until they get it," Kyle said. That approach was ingrained in Kyle as an OHHS student by his teacher, Shawn Petri, who is currently superintendent of the C.O.O.R. Intermediate School District.

"His passion for machining was contagious," Kyle said. "It's because of him I chose to make this a career, and I feel honored to have followed him in 2007 as the next instructor."

The machining program began at Ogemaw Heights in 1970 when the U.S. Navy gave the school fabrication tools and machines they no longer needed. Over the years, it has expanded and modernized to prepare students with the skills and credentials necessary to be immediately employable in good-paying jobs as soon as they graduate.

Many of the advanced students in Kyle's classes take part in a co-op program, which gives them additional experience and after-school employment that pays far better than most jobs available for teens.

"We get to leave at noon, get school credit for our work, and get paid," a group of Kyle's students said. "Plus, the companies get to see our potential to become permanent employees."

All of Kyle's students learn how to use CAD/CAM software. Many also receive industry certification on multiple pieces of equipment.

"Mr. Sisco won't let us be certified until we get 100 percent on the test," Hunter Zettel said. "He makes us retake it until we do, so we know we are qualified."

Students in the machining class are also preparing to send a team to a national competition called Project MFG, sponsored in part by the Department of Defense. On Project MFG's website is this statement:

We believe skilled trades are essential to national strength and economic prosperity. We value hands-on learning, innovation, collaboration, and opportunity. By connecting students, educators, industry, and the government, we

empower individuals and communities through real-world experiences that highlight the importance and dignity of modern manufacturing careers.

While that is Project MFG's mission statement, it is also an apt description of what Sisco has been embodying in his classroom at OHHS for the last 19 years as he prepares his students for meaningful and lucrative careers.

To maintain connection with stakeholders, Kyle and his students meet periodically with an advisory board of local machine shop owners to discuss current industry trends, select classroom projects and create co-op learning opportunities.

Recently, OHHS received a grant to purchase a state-of-the-art fabricating machine for its expanded shop. Local business owners sent representatives to become certified on the equipment, resulting in a dozen nearby manufacturing companies purchasing their own machines. Since the OHHS students are also certified, as soon as they graduate, they will be immediately employable by these companies.

This is Kyle's legacy and a reason his students love him: he makes them learn by doing, instills confidence in them that is well earned, and prepares them for careers that will both support and challenge them throughout their lives.

Oh, and because of him, they will always have "out of this world" NASA bragging rights.

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KIWANIS OF WEST BRANCH

Gourmet Nuts are still available for \$25. You can buy yours at Mercantile Bank, Bucks Country Cookin', and West Branch City Hall. If you want to help, come be a part of our team. The Kiwanis Club meets at noon on the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month at the G's Pizzeria. Anyone interested in learning about our organization is welcome to attend. If you would like to be a guest speaker to show us what you do, call Denny at 315-725-1199. If you want to help the children of West Branch and around the world, we are here.



DENNY SHUMWAY

us with the influx of families. We supported over 270 families in the month of November. You can add to your grocery bill at Meijer Store with card found at the checkouts or customer service. We will take donations every Wednesday of the month from 8:30 to 11 a.m. We are located in the outreach building behind the Trinity Episcopal Church, 100 E. Houghton Ave., PO Box 543, West Branch. We want to thank those that have donated. If bad weather, call ahead at 315-725-1199 to see if we are open. We are open every Wednesday from 9-11 a.m. or until we run out of food. Families can come once a month.

We want to thank the high school students, St. Joseph Elementary School and the Northland Credit Union for their donations from Thanksgiving until now. We want to thank those individual donors also for their generosity at this special time. We also have several businesses to thank, Starbucks, General Dollar stores of West Branch and St. Helen, and last but not least, KFC. This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

FOOD TRUCK

The food truck will be at the First United Methodist Church on the corner of Fairview and State roads on Jan. 16, 2026. Line-up at 9 a.m. This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

ACTION CLUB

The Aktion Club continues to collect bottles and cans. You can call 315-725-1199 and make arrangements for pick up or drop off locations.

We were in the Christmas Light Pole competition and had a hot chocolate stand at the Santa Train.

Those with special needs interested in joining our club, you have to be over 18 and completed school. Come on the second Wednesday of the month at noon at the First United Methodist Church on the corner of Fairview and State roads.

OGEMAW COUNTY FOOD PANTRY

We are looking for donations of food or money to help

Very cold but successful Art Walk and Wine Tasting event

BY SALLY A. REA

The night sure was cold and I mean cold, but we have our good old diehards who show up no matter what the weather is. It was really a fun group who entered our museum. The head count was 340 and last spring we had over 500.

Artist Randi Mae Ames was our artist and was working on her pencil art. She had a great collection to offer to the public.

Alan and Marcia Doss were our servers of the fine wines they chose. The Dosses always dress up for our event and this time they were "Vikings." The people really enjoyed Alan and Marcia because they would explain how to taste a wine and the secrets to swirl the wine around in your mouth and give a few seconds to enjoy the flavor.

We had different kinds of

cheese which everyone enjoyed and nobody ate the crackers. I had cut the cheeses in bigger chunks and that's what they liked. Sylvia Sobo was my helper and we put the cheese into purple cabbages which was very attractive. I want to thank Pete and Samantha from the "Silver Lining" for the great job they do organizing this event. I really enjoy working with them.

The museum is closed now until May 21, 2026, when we will return to our regular days, Thursday and Fridays from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. If you need more information, call the curator, Sally Rea, at 989-343-0177 and she will be glad to meet your needs for research, getting into the museum

for a tour, or buying some of our Driving Tour books, Prescott history, Centennial Farm forms, and our RADA cutlery.

Be sure to watch for a reenactment encampment at our own Irons Park right here in West Branch. The people will be portraying 114th Pennsylvania Infantry and will be in the park Friday, July 10, Saturday, July 11, and Sunday, July 12. Mark your calendar right now and watch the newspapers for further information. Did you know that the soldiers' families followed their loved ones while they were in the service? For more information call Lois Bergquist at 989-915-8597.



SALLY A. REA
CURATOR & HISTORIAN
OGEMAW COUNTY
MUSEUM

God's Christmas gift to us

BY DR. EDWARD PESZKO

Jesus Christ is God's Christmas gift to us. God's Christmas gift to us is wrapped up in Jesus which gives us all the benefits and blessings of God.

In Jesus, your past is forgiven, you get a purpose for living, and you get a home in heaven.

Jesus came to replace your guilt and shame with forgiveness. Jesus came to replace the frustration in your heart - with peace. Jesus came to replace your worry and anxiety with confidence. Jesus came to replace your depression with meaning and purpose. If you trust Jesus, He can replace your confusion with clarity. But we must invite Jesus in and open the door of your heart.

It doesn't matter what religion or no religious background at all. God didn't send Jesus to bring us religion. He came to make a relationship with God very possible.

On the first Christmas night, an angel announced the purpose for the birth of Jesus Christ.

God's Christmas gift to us has three unique qualities. First, it's a priceless gift that Jesus paid for it with his life. Christmas is a time for celebration! Each day is a gift from God and He encourages believers to find joy and celebrate

it. We are called to acknowledge God's hand in the present moment and to choose rejoicing, rather than being consumed by other concerns. We are encouraged to focus on the present and find happiness in the gift God has given, and live with contentment and peace.

Second, it's the only gift you will ever receive that will last forever. Christmas is a time for Salvation!

Salvation is receiving eternal life and a restored relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ. This is a two-part process: an initial event of being saved through the faith and a lifelong process of living out salvation which is a lifelong journey of following Jesus' teachings and God's will.

Third, is a practical gift that you will use every day for the rest of your life. Christmas is a time for reconciliation. Reconciliation is the restoration of a broken relationship between God and us through Jesus Christ, which removes hatred and establishes

peace. God in His love, provides the solution by making Jesus, who is without sin, for us. This made it possible for God to reconcile the world to Himself without counting people's sins against them.



DR. EDWARD PESZKO

For Celebration:
Psalms 118:24 (NLT)
This is the day the Lord has made. We will rejoice and be glad in it

For Salvation:
Galatians 4.4 (NLT)
But when the right time came, God sent his

son, born of a woman, subject to the law.

For Reconciliation:
Romans 5:11 (NLT) 2 Corinthians 5:21 (NLT)

So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God because our Lord Jesus Christ has made us friends of God.

5:21 For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ.

Dr. Edward Peszko is a local, retired physician. He and his wife, Beth, live in the West Branch area.

A fresh start for students in 2026

BY GAIL HUGHEY

For students, the new year is a natural checkpoint. This is a chance to renew academic goals, strengthen study habits, and build confidence for the months ahead. While classrooms play a vital role, research and experience both show that family support at home is one of the strongest drivers of academic success.

Setting clear, realistic goals is a powerful first step. Families can sit down together to talk about what the school year has looked like so far and what students hope to improve. Goals might include raising a math grade, reading more, staying organized, or simply keeping up with homework assignments. Writing these goals down and revisiting them

regularly helps keep students motivated and accountable.

Daily routines also matter. Consistent times for homework, reading, and sleep create stability that supports learning. In busy households, predictable routines help students manage their time and reduce stress.

Families don't need to be experts in subject matter to be supportive. Asking questions about what students are learning, celebrating effort (not just grades), and showing interest in school activities sends a clear message that education matters.

environment at home is another key ingredient. A quiet place to study, access to books or learning materials, and limits on screen

time during homework hours all contribute to better focus. Even small steps, like reading together or discussing current events at the dinner table, build critical thinking and communication skills.

Make 2026 the best year ever and build habits that last far beyond this school year. Happy New Year from the West Branch-Rose City Area Schools!



BY GAIL HUGHEY
SUPERINTENDENT, WEST
BRANCH-ROSE CITY
AREA SCHOOLS

Creating a positive learning

Ogemaw County Superior News

The Ogemaw County Superior News is published the second and fourth Saturdays of the month and distributed in West Branch, Rose City, Prescott, Lupton, Alger, Skidway Lake and Hale. It is available at newsstands for 75 cents per issue or annually for \$50.

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Deanna Surbrook
deanna@superior-news.com
989-482-7695

Marketing & Sales Director

Kathryn Collins
kathy@superior-news.com
989-450-6163

Copy Editor

Nancy McLaughlin

Circulation

Lois Bergquist

Writer

Laura Bender
laura@superior-news.com

Historical Writer

Sally Rea
sallyrea2184@gmail.com

Special Contributors

Jamie Stout-Shirkey

Newspaper Pagination

Emily Reed

Contributors

Denny Shumway, Julie Darnton
April Harkey-Mason, Gail Hughey,
Peter Fabbri, Dr. Edward Peszko,
and Phil Durst

P.O. Box 603
West Branch, MI 48661
Ph. 989-482-7695

Remodel sneak peek and other news from the Skidway Lake area



The remodel of the Mills Township Hall is underway. Courtesy photo

BY APRIL HARKEY-MASON

I was able to get a sneak peek at the remodeling of the new Mills Township Hall. The partitioning walls were removed where all the patient rooms had been. They opened it up and new trusses have been installed. This will be the new meeting room. It will be much larger than the meeting room at the old township hall. The wiring for electric, speakers, zoom, cameras and phones will all be done next before the drywall. The monthly meetings will be done with zoom to allow those that cannot make it to the meetings in person to still be able to watch the meeting and speak if they wish to the board. This can be done on your cell phone or any device that has internet access.

Mills Township will soon have a website up and running for all our community to access. It will have links to the cemetery information, parks, ordinances, as well as many other features. You will

even be able to pay your taxes online. It is so nice to have Mills Township taking steps into the modern way of doing things.

You may have noticed some of our street Christmas lights are not lit up. When Consumers Energy put the new poles in, they missed hooking up the outlets for some of the poles. They will be working on getting that done.

You also may have seen the big wreath back on the triangle sign as you enter Skidway Lake; it was in bad shape and the ladies at the hall worked all day and refurbishing it with new lights and decorations. Thank you, ladies, for your hard work.

The Mills Township Board made the decision to leave the

parks' gates open for winter fishing. With cameras installed we should be able to catch any vandalism being done.



APRIL HARKEY-MASON

If there are problems the board will resent that decision and lock things back up.

I hope you are keeping warm with this cold spell. Remember to take measures to keep your pipes from freezing. Leave your cupboard doors open where you

have pipes. If you have a septic field that could freeze, cover it with straw to help insulate it.

Attached is a photo of the new hall progress on the meeting room.

Remember, if you have any news to share with me, call or text 989-578-8768. Until next time, God bless.

MSU Extension and W-P Schools partner to enrich student experiences



The Whittemore-Prescott Elementary Student Council from 2024-25 planned a school dance. Courtesy photo

BY JULIE DARNTON

Whittemore-Prescott Area Schools and Michigan State University Extension have built a unique partnership that expands opportunities for students through a shared funding model. This collaboration supports Karen Collins, a Children and Youth Program Instructor based at Whittemore-Prescott Elementary School, who brings innovative programs to the school community.

When the partnership began, the vision was simple: provide more afterschool programs for students. That vision quickly grew into something much larger. Karen leads the Cardinal Kids Club, an afterschool program that gives students a safe, engaging space to learn and play.

She established an elementary student council, empowering sixth graders to develop leadership skills and have a voice

in their school. In the last few years, she has guided students in producing a school play - an experience that fosters creativity and teamwork. She maintains a classroom specifically for science experiments and her classroom features an axolotl (an aquatic salamander) and a bearded dragon to spark interest in science and responsibility for the students.

Bryan Crainer, interim superintendent and elementary principal, emphasizes the impact:

"We would not have the time or staff capacity to do as many things as Karen has for our school. The partnership we have with MSU Extension allows us to create more opportunities for our students."

Over time, Karen's role has evolved to meet changing needs. She continues to find creative ways to keep students engaged and add value to the work of other teachers in the school. Today, the partnership remains strong and continues to evolve. What started as an effort to expand afterschool programming has grown into a model of collaboration to nurture leadership, creativity, and community among students.

This shared funding approach demonstrates how MSU Extension works to create meaningful experiences for youth. For Whittemore-Prescott, it's more than a partnership. It's a commitment to helping every student thrive.



JULIE DARNTON DISTRICT DIRECTOR MSU EXTENSION

West Branch celebrates a year of Community, Creativity, and Comebacks - with even more ahead

BY PETER FABBRI

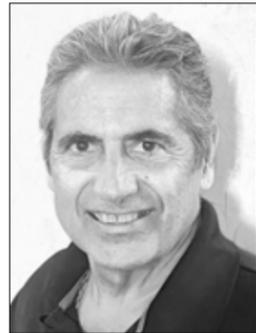
As the final days of the year settle softly over West Branch, the glow along its newly renovated, walkable downtown feels brighter than ever. It's a fitting scene for our community that has spent the past 12 months rediscovering its energy, elevating its traditions, and celebrating the people who make this small-town shine.

Downtown West Branch has become the backdrop for a packed calendar of events that drew families, visitors, and longtime locals back to Main Street. From the ever-popular car shows to the farmers market, the season kicked off with a renewed spirit of togetherness. Local eateries expanded outside seating, boutiques spilled colorful displays onto their sidewalks, and the charm of lighted curbside parking made evening visits easy and inviting.

Fall brought its own flavor of festivities. The inaugural Oktoberfest filled downtown with music, award winning wood carvers, artisans, and children's laughter echoing between storefronts. The newly enhanced pedestrian friendly streets complete with new benches, widened walkways, and fresh landscaping proved to be the perfect stage for food vendors, live performers, and shoppers seeking unique goods from local merchants.

December, as always, transformed West Branch into a postcard-worthy holiday destination. The Holiday Art Walk & Wine Tasting event showcased works from local artists in more than 20 participating businesses,

coupled with samples from local wineries. Storefronts glowed with Christmas décor, lampposts were wrapped with greenery and lights, and the downtown movie theater offered seasonal showings that drew festive crowds. Combined with extended shopping hours and the unmistakable warmth of small-town customer service, the holidays highlighted everything residents love about West Branch.



PETER FABBRI

But perhaps the greatest celebration is not any single event - it's the renaissance that downtown has witnessed as a whole. Renovations completed in recent years have not only beautified the district, but sparked renewed interest from entrepreneurs, artists, and community organizers. The result has been a year of packed sidewalks, full event calendars, and a sense of momentum that continues to build.

As 2026 approaches, West Branch looks ahead with excitement. Plans are already underway for the new Gathering Place, enhanced seasonal festivals, and new collaborative events that highlight the creativity and resilience of the community. Local business owners express optimism that the coming year will bring even more opportunities to showcase what makes downtown special: its welcoming atmosphere, its one-of-a-kind shops and dining, and its commitment to connecting people.

As West Branch closes the book on an extraordinary year, the message is clear - it is a town that celebrates not just events, but each other. And the best is yet to come.

Candy Cane Lane

« Continued from page 1



Hayley Cooper shows off the beginning of her Christmas masterpiece.



Dozens of runners lined up for the Ugly Sweater 5K.

Photo by Deanna Surbrook

Photos by Deanna Surbrook



Olivia Alward's smile is as pretty as the picture she's coloring.



Photo by Laura Bender



Madison Aldrich visited Mrs. Claus's bakery and decorated her own Christmas cookie.

Photo by Deanna Surbrook



Ayden Bellinger and her mom, Aimee Bellinger, braved frigid weather and a running surface covered in fresh snow to complete the Ugly Sweater 5K.

Photo by Laura Bender



Harper and Leah Reed help the Grinch find his Christmas joy.

Photo by Laura Bender



Hannah Elliott, a first-grade teacher at Surline Elementary School, read the kids a silly Christmas story.

Photo by Deanna Surbrook



The event wrapped up the day by the band, AMF, performing at Loggers Depot. Pictured are band members Michael Schulz (l) and Darrin Hunter.

Courtesy photo

Michigan Works! Region 7B Ogemaw County Alumni of the Year - James Speer



Courtesy photo
 Pictured (l-r) are Ogemaw County Commissioner Jenny David; State Representative Michael Hoadley; James Speer, surrounded by parents Christine and Joseph; Michigan Works! Region 7B Ogemaw County Career Advisor Jean Hollenbeck; and Michigan Works! Region 7B Executive Director Mark L. Berdan.

James Speer named Ogemaw County Alumni of the Year

On Monday, Dec. 8, Michigan Works! Region 7B celebrated six outstanding alumni, one business, and one community partner at a recognition event held at the beautiful Riverwalk Place in Gladwin.

This annual event honors past participants who have worked hard to overcome barriers and achieve success - with encouragement and support from Michigan Works! Region 7B. Alumni were recognized among their peers by Michigan Works! Region 7B staff, local elected officials, workforce development board members, legislators, and loved ones. Each honoree received certificates of recognition and a gift.

Representing Ogemaw County is James Speer.

When the Vitro DBA Pittsburgh Glass Works plant in Ewart closed its doors in 2020, it marked more than the end of a job for James Speer - it was the beginning of a transformation.

For two years, James had worked as an operator, proud of his contribution to a company that suddenly no longer existed. Amid the uncertainty of the pandemic, he found himself at a crossroads, unsure of what came next but determined to build a career that would last.

Through a CareerScope Assessment at Michigan Works! Region 7B, James discovered strengths in management, art, and production. As he considered his time in manufacturing, a new path began to take shape: Industrial Engineering Technology offered the perfect combination of what he loved most - design, problem-solving, and innovation.

With the support of Ogemaw County Career Navigator Jean Hollenbeck, James took a bold step forward and enrolled at Central Michigan University in May 2021 under the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) program,

pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Industrial Engineering Technology.

Returning to school as an adult learner brought new challenges. James had to balance coursework, family responsibilities, and the emotional weight of starting over.

"Returning to school as one of the oldest students in my program was daunting," James said.

With Jean's guidance and encouragement, however, James stayed focused and built skills.

In May 2024, James graduated with a 3.2 grade point average, earning certification in FANUC Robotics Handling Tool Operations and Programming, and joining the Society of Collegiate Leadership and Achievement.

By December 2024, he applied for a Machine Cell Lead position with DOW/Corning at their new solar components facility in Hemlock. He aced the interview and now earns \$36 per hour, working in an industry that's shaping the future of clean energy.

James said that he is grateful for the encouragement and support he received from Jean and Michigan Works! Region 7B throughout the process.

"Obtaining my degree was the hardest thing I've ever done, but it's also the most rewarding. Jean Hollenbeck was my guiding star at Michigan Works! - a real-life fairy godmother. Her support reminded me that I wasn't alone, and her belief in my potential inspired me to keep going," James said. "Thanks to her and this program, I now look at the future with hope and optimism."

Honored in addition to James were Calvin Snellenbarger, Arenac County; Victoria Humphrey, Clare County; Alecia Vaughn, Gladwin County; John McBride, Iosco County; Brittney Willis, Roscommon County; Clare County Road Commission, Employer of the Year; and Sacred Heart Mission, Gladwin - Inspiring Community Partner of the Year.

Obituaries

Ivan Francis Lewis June 9, 1931 - Dec. 14, 2025

Ivan Francis Lewis, age 94, passed away on Sunday, Dec. 14, 2025, at The Brook in West Branch, Mich. Born on June 9, 1931, in Louisville, Ill., Ivan lived a life rich in service, passion, and love. He lived in West Branch since 1993, formerly of Wayne, Mich.

Ivan dedicated 31 years of his professional life to the Ford Motor Company, culminating in his well-earned retirement in 1993. His steadfast work ethic was only surpassed by his commitment to his community, where he was an active member of the First United Methodist Church in West Branch. His involvement extended beyond the church, as he was a cherished member of the Kiwanis Club and the Masonic Lodge, both in West Branch and Wayne.

With a heart full of adventure, Ivan found joy in hunting and fishing. These pastimes were not just hobbies for him; they were avenues through which he shared his knowledge and passion with others. Shortly after the enactment of the hunter safety law, he became a certified hunter safety instructor and an NRA firearms safety instructor. For several years, he devoted his time to teaching others, imparting crucial safety lessons that

will resonate through generations.

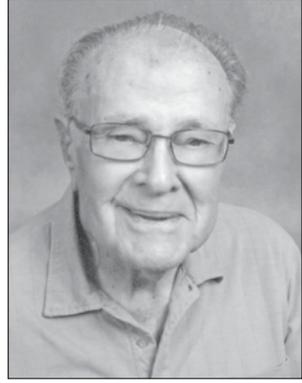
Ivan was a proud veteran, having served in the Naval Reserve from 1950 to 1957. This time in service instilled in him values of dedication and a sense of duty that, along with his many interests, shaped the man he became.

He leaves behind his beloved children, Gregory (Nancy) Lewis of New Boston, Mich., Paul (Amy) Lewis of Pickney, Mich., and Joy (Bryan) Schroeder of Fort Gratiot, Mich., and his son-in-law, Ron Morris of Ohio. His legacy continues through his grandchildren - Tara, Jessica, Joshua, Matthew, Kristen, Katie, Michael, Nancy, Angela, and Katherine, and 13 great-grandchildren who will remember him for his kindness and wisdom.

Ivan is preceded in death by his cherished wife, Doris "Jackie" Lewis; his daughter, Gail Morris; his parents, Arnold and Mae (Bailey) Lewis, and his siblings, Dale Lewis and Hazel Randall. Their love and memories will forever hold a sacred place in the hearts of those who

knew him.

As we celebrate the life of Ivan Francis Lewis, we remember a man whose spirit was as vibrant as the sun and whose heart was as deep as the waters he loved to fish. He leaves behind a legacy of love, teaching, and community service that will inspire all who had the pleasure of knowing him.



Visitation at Steuernol & McLaren Funeral Home in West Branch was on Thursday, Dec. 18, with a Masonic Service. The funeral service with veteran honors was on Friday, Dec. 19, at the First United Methodist Church in West Branch with visitation preceding. Pastor Michelle Forsyth officiated.

Memorial contributions can be made to the First United Methodist Church, West Branch, Kiwanis, and Alzheimer's Association.

Online condolences can be shared at www.steuernolmclaren.com.

Nancy Ellen Prentice

Nancy Ellen Prentice, age 81, passed away on Monday, Dec. 15, 2025, from a lingering illness. She was from West Branch, Mich.

Nancy is survived by her husband, LeRoy Prentice and two sons, Lee Allen and Gary Wayne of St. Helen, Mich.

Nancy and LeRoy were married for 62 years. She worked at Surline Middle School as a

teacher's aide for the girl's gym class and was also in charge of the Safety Patrol System for some time. She loved the color purple and some of the girls at school called her the "purple lady."

Cremation has taken place. Arrangements were handled by Steuernol & McLaren Funeral Home in West Branch. www.steuernolmclaren.com



Maxine Marion Hock

Dec. 5, 1930 - Dec. 13, 2025

Maxine Marion Hock, age 95, born on Dec. 5, 1930, in Saginaw, Mich., passed away peacefully on Saturday, Dec. 13, 2025, in Palm Harbor, Fla., surrounded by her family. She lived a long and fulfilling life, dedicated to caring for others.

Maxine had a remarkable career as a nurse, serving for many years at both Standish and Saginaw hospitals. Additionally, she worked for Dr. Dolby and Dr. Casten in Standish, Mich., where her compassion and dedication shined through in all she did. After retiring, she took on the role of caregiver for her mother, who worked as a housekeeper for Fr. Joseph Kluonius at St. Anthony's in Mackinaw City. Maxine later enjoyed taking over that role herself, bringing joy and care to those around her.

A fun-loving and caring person, Maxine enjoyed many hobbies and interests throughout her life, especially those time

spent with family. She moved to Florida in 1992, but previously resided in Mackinaw City and Saginaw areas. Her favorite years were spent at Crystal Bay Mobile Home Park in Palm Harbor, where she cherished her time and friendships.

Maxine is survived by her son David (Mary Jane) Hock of Houghton Lake, Mich., daughter Barbara Mecomber of Houghton Lake, Mich., son Edward (Linda) Hock of West Branch, Mich., and daughter Mary (Steve) Webb of Indian Shores, Fla. She was a proud grandmother to 12 grandchildren and 22 great-grandchildren, as well as four great-great-grandchildren. She is also survived by her brothers, Robert Koski and George Koski.

She was preceded in death by her husband Robert E. Hock, her daughter Susan Fant, her brother Harold Koski, along with her parents Walter and Mary (LaLond) Koski, and son in law Jeffery L. Mecomber.



Visitation was held on Monday, Dec. 22, 2025, at St. Joseph Catholic Church. The funeral mass followed. Father Al Pillarelli officiated.

Maxine's memory will live on in the hearts of all who knew and loved her.

Memorial contributions can be made to the charity of your choice in Maxine's memory.

Online condolences can be shared at www.steuernolmclaren.com.



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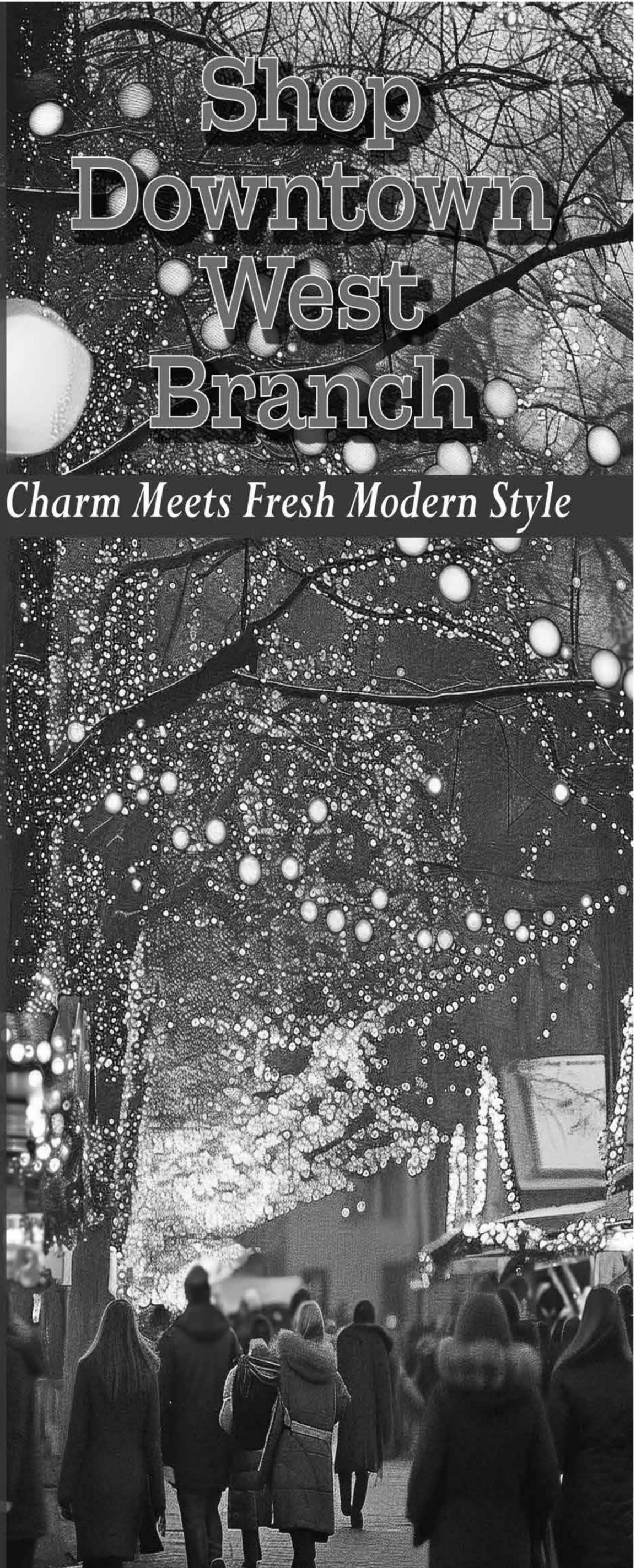
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Light

« Continued from page 1

real lives. It reaches people who feel overlooked, overwhelmed, or unsure of what the next step should be.

Those shepherds weren't seeking God, but God was seeking them. And He still is.

The angels announced a simple but life-changing message: "A Savior has been born... He is Christ the Lord."

And with that announcement came direction - go and see Him. The shepherds didn't have all the details. They didn't know the whole story. But they had enough light to take a step.

That's how God often works in our lives too. You don't need the whole map when you have the Light of the world.

Sometimes all He gives us is the next step: a nudge toward forgiveness, a moment of courage to pray again, the quiet sense that there is more to life than what we can see. He gives just enough illumination to move us forward.

And when the shepherds followed the light, they found Jesus - the One who came not to judge the world, but to save it. They encountered hope wrapped in swaddling cloths. They met peace lying in a manger. When God's light finds you, it always leads you toward life.

The shepherds returned to their fields changed. They went back to the same jobs, the same responsibilities, the same routines - but they weren't the same people.

Something had awakened in them. When heaven's light touches your heart, you don't go back the same.

Maybe this season finds you in a place that feels like those dark fields - busy, tired, or unsure. Or maybe you're searching for meaning, direction, or a sense of belonging. The good news is this: the same God who met the shepherds meets us too. His light still shines. His hope still calls. And His love still leads us home.

Here are three simple steps that can help you move toward that light this Christmas:

1. Pause long enough to notice the light.

Step outside one evening and look at the Christmas lights around you. Let them remind you that God brings beauty into the dark places. You're not meant to carry life alone.

2. Take one small step toward God.

You don't have to have all the answers. You don't have to feel "spiritual." Just open your heart. Whisper a prayer. Attend a service. Read the Christmas story again. One step can start a new journey.

3. Share gratitude with someone this week.

A message. A call. A simple "thank you." Gratitude opens the heart and makes room for hope - sometimes more than we realize.

This Christmas, may you experience the light that finds you

right where you are and leads you where you belong.

And may the hope of Christ shine warmly over your home,

your heart, and this beautiful valley we share.

Jim Westheim is a local pastor,

who serves at Faith Alive Church in West Branch and Grace Valley Church in Saginaw.

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Christmas Parade lights up downtown West Branch



Photos by Deanna Surbrook
Frigid temperatures hovering around seven degrees didn't deter folks from coming to downtown West Branch to watch the annual Christmas Light Parade, sponsored by the West Branch Area Chamber of Commerce. This year's theme was "Home for the Holidays." From fire trucks blaring their horns, marching veterans, lighted floats, Santa, himself, and much more, the parade had it all, much to the delight of the young and not so young, alike.



Parade

« Continued from page 10



FOR UNTO US A CHILD IS BORN, UNTO US A SON IS GIVEN.
-ISAIAH 9:6



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'Shop with a Hero' brings Christmas joy to area children



Photos by Laura Bender

Ninety children enjoyed shopping with local heroes at the annual "Shop with a Hero," coordinated by the Ogemaw County Sheriff's Office, on Thursday, Dec. 18, at the West Branch Walmart. Each child received a \$100 gift card to purchase gifts for family and friends. A fun and festive time was had by all. Pictured above, a large gathering of first responders and military await their opportunity to assist local children in their search for the perfect Christmas present.



When it was Girard VanHoorelbeke's turn to shop with a hero, he led Deputy Timothy Chmura, Whittemore Prescott's School Resource Officer, right to the case displaying Mine Craft games. Girard's mom, Danielle Foster was happy with the selection.



Jim Dantzer, a member of the Ogemaw Fire Department, accompanies Jase, 9, and Greyson, 3, as they hunt for their perfect Christmas presents. The boy's mom, Rachelle Goodpasture brought them to the event.

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Celebrating good times at St. Joseph School



Courtesy photos

St. Joseph School students had a successful Santa's Workshop. The Advent season is the season of preparation for the coming of Christ at Christmas and the second coming of Christ. The students, including Aaliyah Cline (pictured), were joining their gifts with God's gift of Jesus to celebrate the birth of Christ. In addition to the celebration of Christmas, pictured below, they celebrated George Siterlet's service and Honor Flight to Washington D.C. George shared his experience of his Honor Flight and some stories from his time serving our country. We are grateful and blessed for George's service to our "One Nation Under God."



Troupe

« Continued from page 1

perform their full-length fall performances on the main stage.

The Troupe also competed in Thespies, where they performed pieces for the judges and were adjudicated based on their performance, receiving feedback for

encouragement or improvement. This year, they entered six events: Skylar Smith and Olivia Cummings: duet musical theatre; Taylor Vervoort and Naomi Hosted: duet musical theatre; Jesse McNicholl: solo musical theatre;

Laney Revord: solo musical theatre; Sadie Syerson: solo dance, and the entire Troupe performed a group musical theatre number. All six pieces earned a score of "Excellent."



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Judge Mary Beebe & her husband, Dennis

wish everyone a safe & Merry Christmas & Happy New Year!

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Craig Scott
Ogemaw County Commissioner
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Merry Christmas & Happy New Year!

Aktion Club celebrates the Christmas season



Courtesy photos

The West Branch Aktion Club, which is made up of special needs adults, were in the holiday spirit this year. Not only did they provide hot cocoa at the Santa Train, but members also decorated a light pole in Irons Park.

Merry Christmas

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See answers on page 23



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Local dairy farmers help those in need



Courtesy photo
Local dairy farmers Becky Rosebrugh and Sarah Smith help with the Food Giveaway on Friday, Dec. 12.

**BY PHIL DURST
MSU EXTENSION**

On Friday, Dec. 12, local dairy farmers joined with the regular Food Truck crew to help serve all those who came with a variety of groceries at the First United Methodist Church in West Branch. Tony Rosebrugh, a local dairy farmer, said that dairy farmers were giving back to their community by sponsoring the truck and pitching in to help.

The Food Truck program is from the Food Bank of Eastern Michigan. It is a regular service in the area started by Howie Hanft more than 20 years ago and led now by his sister, Lisa Curnow, to serve any with food insecurity. The next one at this location will be on Jan. 16, 2026, beginning at 9 a.m. Information about upcoming Food Trucks is posted monthly on the Facebook page "Free Food Give Away".

Last month, at this stop, more than 400 families were served. Each family received milk and cheese, meat, bakery products, vegetables, canned goods, rice, noodles, peanut butter, dried fruit, cereal, snacks, and this month, skin care cream. Some boxes got salad bowls, some received cakes, whatever was in the packed semi-trailer that arrived, but all were filled with love.

According to Curnow, the demand for food has increased from around 300 families per month to now over 400 due to the economy and the cold weather. This Friday, each who came also got a hearty "Merry Christmas!"

Dairy farmers were interested in being involved because their

farms produce food that people need. They produce milk from healthy, comfortable cows. There are approximately 30 farms in Ogemaw and Iosco counties with a total of around 9,000 dairy cows. Each dairy farm is a family business that provides a huge benefit for the community.

Those farms are an important economic driver in the area. It is estimated that these farms generate over \$50 million per year in sales of milk and cattle. Much of that income is spent locally on labor, feed, veterinary care, supplies, vehicles and repairs. Those dollars feed the economy as they turn over and over in various businesses.

Local dairy farmers employ approximately 170 individuals, some locally born and others foreign-born, in order to provide great care for the cows. Each employee is not only an integral part of the farm, but also an integral part of the community.

Dairy farmers take pride in giving back to the community in a number of ways including hosting school class visits, serving in township positions, school boards or volunteer fire departments, as well as sponsoring youth ball teams and now, for the first time, by sponsoring a food truck for the community.

Curnow said that the group is always accepting funding and helpers. If your family or business is able to donate or volunteer, reach out to Lisa Curnow at 989-345-0381. Roy Smith, a dairy farmer, said after helping, "it just makes me feel good to help. I'll be back."

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MyMichigan Medical Center in West Branch achieves Primary Stroke Center certification

MyMichigan Medical Center West Branch has earned Primary Stroke Center certification from the Accreditation Commission for Health Care (ACHC), elevating its previous designation as an Acute Stroke Ready Hospital. This certification ensures patients

in the region have access to faster, more advanced stroke care closer to home.

Primary Stroke Center certification is awarded to hospitals that meet rigorous standards for rapid stroke evaluation, timely administration of clot-busting

medication and the delivery of other evidence-based therapies.

“Our team is incredibly proud to have earned Primary Stroke Center status. This achievement reflects our steadfast commitment to delivering exceptional stroke care and meeting the needs of

our community,” said Ray Stover, president of MyMichigan Medical Centers in West Branch and Gladwin. “Access to life-saving treatment is vital in rural communities—especially in emergencies like stroke when every minute matters. Every emergency room functions as a short-term critical care unit, and it’s essential to go to the nearest ER during a medical emergency, particularly a stroke. Earning this certification demonstrates our commitment to providing emergency stroke care that is both high-quality and technologically advanced. We are honored to be receive this recognition, which reinforces our mission to serve West Branch, Ogemaw County, and the surrounding areas.”

Certification is a process through which health care organizations demonstrate compliance with national standards. Certification by ACHC reflects an organization’s dedication and commitment to meeting standards that facilitate a higher level of performance and patient care.

According to the American Stroke Association, stroke is the

number two cause of death worldwide and is a leading cause of disability. Because stroke, or “brain attacks,” affect blood flow to the brain, rapid and effective treatment can save lives and offer the best chance of limiting the extent of long-term damage.

Should a higher level of care be needed, MyMichigan Health’s Neuroscience Centers in Midland and Saginaw provide advanced medical treatment. MyMichigan Medical Center Saginaw, the region’s only Comprehensive Stroke Center, delivers the highest level of stroke care with rapid diagnosis, advanced technology and specialized intervention for complex cases. Across the MyMichigan Health system, patients benefit from an experienced team of physicians and surgeons skilled in complex brain, spine and cerebrovascular conditions — ensuring leading-edge care is always accessible close to home.

Those interested in more information about stroke may take a free stroke assessment or learn more about MyMichigan Health Neurosciences at www.mymichigan.org/neuro.

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‘The Grown-Up Troop’ sets first meeting

BY LAURA BENDER

Were you a Girl Scout back in the day? Did you enjoy hanging out with your friends at meetings, making crafts and doing community service projects?

Those days don’t have to remain just pleasant memories. Rachele Macera, owner of Safe Haven Doula, is starting a new group called The Grown-Up Troop, a community-building group for women who are looking for connection, creativity and purpose. Each month the group will gather for a hands-on craft to indulge their creative side or an activity

like a short hike to build community. Periodically, they will select a community project, such as a small park cleanup or making love boxes for seniors on Valentine’s Day, as a way to care for others.

The first meeting was held on Dec. 12, 2025, at Safe Haven Doula. If you are interested in joining the troop, contact Rachele at safehaven.doula@yahoo.com for time and additional information. It is Rachele’s hope that this group will provide women of all ages a way to feel supported and involved.

Bells

« Continued from page 2

how my other assignment is going. You remember, the one about the bells? It was a snowy day when you gave them to me. The church youth group had stopped at your house to sing carols, and as you’d done every year, you’d come out on your porch to jingle the bells. They were real sleigh bells that had come off a sleigh you’d ridden in as a child, and the sound of them accompanying carols never ceased to bring a smile to our faces. A treasure, it surprised me when, on what turned out to be your last Christmas, you called me back as the teens headed toward the next house. Placing the bells in my hand, you gave me the assignment: “Make sure you find a way for them to bring someone joy each Christmas,” you’d said.

Well, Elmer, here is this year’s report: Tonight, my husband was invited to play Santa Claus for the children whose Navy parents are

not yet halfway through a nine-month deployment. These sailors will not be home for Christmas, nor were they there for Thanksgiving. They will miss Easter with their families and even Memorial Day. But tonight, when they heard your sleigh bells, their faces brightened with expectation, for Santa, who is not subject to Navy deployments, was arriving as scheduled, just as you did in heaven.

So, thank you, Elmer, not only for helping me to become your pastor, but for your perpetual Christmas gift, which warms our hearts every year — that of finding ways to bring joy to others. Oh, and my husband, Ken, he’d like you, too!

Love always, Pastor Laura

PS: It’s now 2025. You’ve been in heaven for 31 years, yet your joyous bells still ring!

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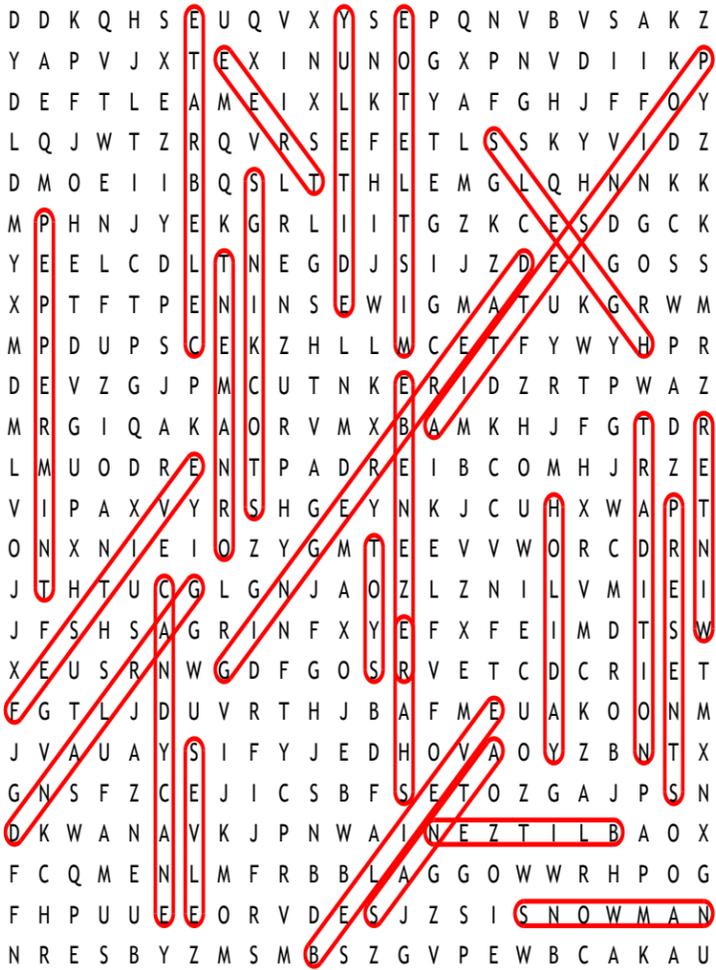
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West Branch Collision

Toys for Tots brightens over 400 area children's Christmas



Courtesy photo

The Ogemaw County Toys for Tots held its toy distribution on Thursday, Dec. 11, at the Knights of Columbus Hall, in West Branch. Children newborn to 16 years old are eligible. This year, over 400 kids in Ogemaw County benefitted from the all-volunteer organization. "We are always so thankful for the support of the community," said Coordinator Shannon Wiley. "Also, thank you to all the volunteers that braved the weather to come out and help." She also thanked Buccilli's Pizza, Culvers and KFC for all the food donations.

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year



Pictured: left to right Cody Nahs, Brett Hughey, Corbin-Robert Mitchell, Brad Hyde, Aiden Danitz, Tanner Hughey, Brian Hughey and Gary Hughey.

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Ogemaw County Seeks

County Administrator/Controller

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2025-2026 School Year – 2nd Semester

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Applications for student enrollments are available and will be accepted from January 2, 2026, through January 22, 2026.

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Note: Students who are currently 'schools-of-choice' students should NOT reapply as the original application continues active as long as your student remains enrolled.

**CITY OF ROSE CITY
REGULAR MEETING
DECEMBER 2, 2025**

Mayor Mike Samples called the Regular Council Meeting of the City of Rose City to order at 6:00 p.m. on December 2, 2025.

Present: Don Freeman, Claire Myers, Scott Hamel, Ashely Herrick, Brent Hinkley

Absent: none

Others present: Clerk Jennifer Hurley, Treasurer Carol Lee Butler, DPW Co-Supervisor Anthony Evans, Jeremy Card, Josh Leisen and Theresa Erickson.

A Motion made by Mr. Hinkley and seconded by Mr. Hamel to approve the agenda. Ayes: All. Nays: None. Motion carried.

A Motion made by Mrs. Myers and seconded by Mr. Freeman to approve the Minutes for the November 18, 2025 Regular Rose City Council Meeting. Ayes: All. Nays: None. Motion carried.

A Motion made by Mr. Hinkley and seconded by Mr. Hamel to pay bills as presented, in the amounts of \$10,147.75 from the Common Cash Account and \$400.00 from the Sewer Account. Ayes: Mr. Freeman, Mrs. Myers, Mr. Hamel, Mrs. Herrick, Mr. Hinkley. Nays: None. Motion carried.

A Motion made by Mrs. Myers and seconded by Mr. Freeman to approve Rose City Area Fireboard FY26 Budget Ayes: Mr. Hinkley, Mrs. Herrick, Mr. Hamel, Mrs. Myers, Mr. Freeman. Nays: None. Motion carried.

Theresa Erickson gave an EDC report.

Anthony Evans gave a DPW report.

Carol Lee Butler gave a Treasurer's report.

Michael Samples gave an EMS report.

Josh Leisen with Huron Pines addressed the Council regarding Metcalf Park Dam project.

A Motion made by Mr. Hinkley and seconded by Mr. Hamel to adjourn at 6:29 p.m. Ayes: All. Nays: None. Motion carried.



Thank You 2025 Light Pole Decorating Contest Participants!

West Branch Aktion Club



www.visitwestbranch.com

Celebrate West Branch

Ann's Hair Affair

Lumber Jack Lodge

Music in the Park

MyMichigan Health

OHHS Student Council

MSU Extension

OHHS Girls Basketball

Northland Area Federal Credit Union

Reds Property Maintenance

Ogemaw Heights FFA

Villa At West Branch

Performance Plus Quick Oil Change

West Branch Business & Professional Women

Team Hodges

Wildwood Yoga

West Branch Candy Cane Lane

Wolverine State Credit Union

Congratulations 2025 Light Pole Decorating Contest Winners!



Best Overall

Wolverine State Credit Union



2nd Place

Northland Area Federal Credit Union



3rd Place

West Branch Candy Cane Lane



4th Place

Lumber Jack Food & Spirits



People's Choice

Northland Area Federal Credit Union

The West Branch Visitors Bureau would like to thank City Council, West Branch Department of Public Works, MyMichigan Health, West Branch Area Chamber of Commerce

A VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS and Happy New Year!

from our
WEST BRANCH VETERINARY SERVICES
family to yours!

We would like to extend our thanks to our amazing clients, wonderful team and dedicated doctors for another successful year and we look forward to a great 2026!



Dr. Scott Smith, Dr. Sara Stein, Diane, Jenna, Jenn, Kathy, Danielle, Sara, Pam, Jazmine, Jess and Tina

989-345-5363
1938 Dam Road, West Branch
www.westbranchvet.com
Monday - Friday 8am to 4:30pm
Please note our office will be closed for the holiday on Dec. 23 - Dec. 29
We will be open Dec. 30th (8am to 4:30pm) & Dec. 31st (8am to 1pm)
Closed January 1st, then open Jan 2nd (8am to 4:30pm)