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Vol. 3, Issue 8 Your source for positive community news! April 25 - May 8, 2026

Restoring joy with community support for Irons Park improvements



Photo by Laura Bender

A new playscape, which is also accessible for children with special needs, was recently completed in Irons Park in West Branch. Now, it just needs some happy kids running around and having fun, like Brecklynn Hein, 3, enjoying the new slide on a beautiful sunny afternoon.

BY LAURA BENDER
 Irons Park isn't just a park; it's a community destination providing a free, high-quality space for all residents and visitors since 1955. - The City of West Branch Recreation Committee

If you want to see what joy looks like, stop by Irons Park and look at the faces of the children playing in Fort Austin. Located in the northeast corner of the park, this gigantic play area was named in honor of Greg and Kim Clark's young son, Austin, who lost his

battle with leukemia in 1998. Initially, the dream of Bob and Brenda Griffin, it was built in five days in May 1999 by a team of local volunteers who wanted to create a place to delight the imaginations of children for years to come.

"A few years ago, the city manager, John Dantzer, applied for and received a grant for an



Photo by Deanna Surbrook

PARK continues on page 7 »

MSP detective protecting and serving for 31 years retires

After three decades of dedicated service, D/Sgt. Craig Johnson has officially retired from the Michigan State Police, closing a long and respected chapter in northern Michigan law enforcement.

Johnson began his career in 1995, after graduating from the 111th Trooper Recruit School. From the outset, he built a reputation for professionalism, steady leadership, and a deep commitment to the communities he served. Over the years, he was



Courtesy photo

RETIREES continues on page 7 »

Michigan State Police D/Sgt. Craig Johnson (r) recently retired after 31 years of dedicated service to the residents of the state of Michigan. He is pictured here with F/Lt. Michael Brown, commander of the West Branch Post.

County-wide Baby Shower promotes infant safety



Photo by Laura Bender

Jeremy Bewley, executive director of the Life Resource Center, delights children visiting his table at the County-wide Baby Shower.

BY LAURA BENDER
 Keeping babies safe is a community priority. To address this concern, several Ogemaw County organizations joined together on Friday, April 17, to host a County-wide Baby Shower to offer support and education for new and expectant parents. The event, held at Faith Lutheran Church in Prescott, provided many essential items for

babies as well as information about how to protect precious infants from preventable harm.

The event began with a resource fair which introduced families to healthy choices for baby and mom, doula

BABY SHOWER continues on page 9 »

Volunteers power the mission of the United Way

Volunteers are the life blood of the Ogemaw County United Way. Unlike some other surrounding chapters, OCUW continues to be comprised of an all-volunteer board. Board members meet quarterly and review grant applications annually to distribute funds donated by individual members of our community. The reliance on an all-volunteer board means every dollar donated to OCUW can be used for the maximum community impact.

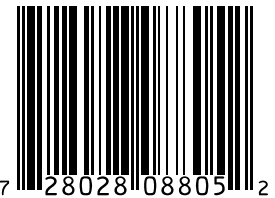
Our core focus areas are to improve access to quality healthcare and nutritious food, helping children reach their goals from early childhood to career success, and connecting people in need to programming that can offer them assistance in a time of need. By doing this, we hope to strengthen the capacity of our neighborhood partners to respond to local



challenges.

In keeping with this core focus, some of the programs who receive annual grants from OCUW are the Commission on Aging food

UNITED WAY continues on page 3 »





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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 G's Pizzeria in downtown 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 517-304-6971. We do not meet in the month of December.
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@coalitionofhope.net.

net for location. National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 800-273-8255 or text 741741.
Tuesdays - (Fourth of each month) Ogemaw County Democratic Party 5pm at the Ogemaw County Annex Building in 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 - (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

May 6-8
First United Methodist Church 2026 Rummage Sale., at the corner of Fairview and State roads. Wednesday, May 6, 9 a.m. to 7 p.m.; Thursday, May 7, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.; BAG. DAY Friday, May 8, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. All proceeds go to missions.

Jun 6
Surline PTO Color Run 2026, Saturday, June 6, 10:30 a.m. to noon, Ogemaw County Fairgrounds, 2300 Rifle River Trail, West Branch. Tickets available at surlinecolorrun2026@eventbrite.com.

Jun 10
West Branch Area Chamber of Commerce Golf Outing, Wednesday, June 10, West Branch Country Club, 1905 Fairview Rd., West Branch. For more information, call 989-345-2821.

Jun 20
2026 West Branch Community Airport Fly-In, Saturday, June 20, 8 a.m. to noon, West Branch Community Airport, 1519 Airport Rd., West Branch.

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

Apr 26

Pancake fundraiser for Rusty Showalter, Sunday, April 26, Horton Township Hall, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. For more information or to donate, contact Howie Hanft at 989-312-0973 or Emily Keister at 989-745-8632. Venmo @Rusty-Showalter.

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
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 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
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 Sunday Worship 11 a.m. • Youth Group - 5:30 p.m.
 Sunday Evening Service - 6 p.m.
WEDNESDAY
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 Pastor Emeritus Tom Teall
www.cbcbw.org

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 989-345-4227
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 Worship Service 11 a.m.
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 Women's Group,
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 FB & IG: Hale Methodist Church

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.

First United Methodist Church celebrates 60 years



Photo by Laura Bender

Bishop David Alan Bard, the presiding bishop of the Michigan Conference of The United Methodist Church, the Reverend Michelle Forsyth, pastor of First United Methodist Church of West Branch, and the Reverend Kristi Hintz, District Superintendent of the Northern Skies District (Northern MI and the UP) celebrated First United Methodist Church's 60th Anniversary on April 12.

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Herbal wisdom: Traditional remedies from Dragon's Meadow Farm

BY LAURA BENDER

Is it possible that the remedy for what ails you might be growing in your backyard?

Marcia and Alan Doss, owners of Dragon's Meadow Farm in Ogemaw County, have spent the last few years researching and experimenting with local, sustainable plants to create remedies for a variety of ailments.

"Plant based remedies have been used for thousands of years," said Marcia. "Over the last hundred years or so, we have lost much of the knowledge and skills needed to care for ourselves. I have read dozens of books, searched out obscure texts, and documented what I found relevant. I put these understandings to practical use in the creation of our products, all of which are made from plants found in Ogemaw County."

According to the World Health Organization, traditional medicine is "the knowledge, skills and practices based on the theories, beliefs and experiences indigenous to different cultures, used in the maintenance of health and in the prevention, diagnosis, improvement or treatment of physical and mental illness... Over the past 100 years, the development and mass production of chemically synthesized drugs have revolutionized health care in most parts of the world. However, large sections of the population in developing countries still rely on traditional practitioners and herbal medicines for their primary care."

In the United States, people often turn to traditional medicine and herbalism because it uses natural elements, is more affordable, eases concern about the side effects of synthetic medicines, and because it works.

According to the National Institutes of Health, herbal medicine

is often viewed as a complement to modern medicine, frequently used when conventional treatments are ineffective for chronic issues.

Marcia and Alan initially developed an interest in herbalism and natural farming because of Marcia's intolerance of many products available at grocery stores. When they retired, they established Dragon's Meadow Farm on 80 acres of M-55 east of the Ogemaw County Fairgrounds. There they raise Icelandic sheep, pigs, bees, chickens, and geese. They also forage for edible and medicinal indigenous plants, used to create teas, tinctures, and salves.

The Doss's most popular salve is called Boo-Boo Salve #2, with a mild lavender and honey aroma, created to soothe minor cuts and abrasions.

"I have been flabbergasted by the response," Marcia said. "We always ask our clients to give us feedback on our products. The list of things people are using this salve for gets longer every day. Among these are stings, bug bites, rashes, sunburn, acne, dry skin and lips, even hemorrhoids. People are also using the salve for sores and hot spots on their dogs, cats, and farm animals."

Besides Boo-Boo Salve #2, the Doss' have a variety of other herbal products including bug repellent, Dragon's Balm for muscle and joint pain, Dragon's Claw Anti-Fungal chapped feet and toenail fungus, drawing salve, mud masks for skin care, teas and tinctures and other items to promote lung health, reduce pain, encourage sleep and reduce headaches.

"I make a tea good for clearing sinuses and chest congestion," Marcia said. "My sister named it Creeping Crud Tea. That fits.



ALAN AND MARCIA DOSS

You need to add honey because it doesn't taste that good, but it gets rid of the crud in three days."

Marcia and Alan are in the process of compiling their knowledge of the edible and medicinal plants of Ogemaw County into a book to be published by the end of 2027.

"There is so much to know. It is not enough to know which plants do what," Marcia said. "Each plant has its own unique handling requirements. Sometimes we use the roots, sometimes the flowers or leaves, or we may use the whole plant. The different parts must be collected at specific times of the year and at different ages of the plant itself. For example, the burdock root used in the Dragon's Balm must be from a three-year-old plant, and the root must not be dug until late in the fall after all the summer's energy has retreated underground. We've spent a lot of time researching the properties of various plants in order to create our products."

Marcia and Alan Doss offer their herbal products for sale at the Rose City Farmers Market, 509 N. Williams Street. It is open from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. on Fridays and from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Saturdays. If you are interested in learning more, or arranging to make a purchase, call Marcia at 989-965-0592.

Michigan Works! Region 7B expands opportunities for local youth

A significant investment from the State of Michigan is opening new doors for young people across the region - and Michigan Works! Region 7B is right at the center of that momentum.

The Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity (LEO) recently announced more than \$4 million in grant funding through its Young Professionals and Young Professionals Plus initiatives. These funds are designed to help youth and young adults gain meaningful exposure to the workforce, build job skills, and earn income while exploring career pathways.

For Michigan Works! Region 7B, that means an allocation of \$196,644 in Young Professionals funding and \$58,422 in Young Professionals Plus funding, supporting efforts to connect local youth with real-world work experiences.

At its core, the Young Professionals program is about more than summer jobs - it's about shaping futures.

Serving individuals ages 14 to 24, the initiative focuses on young people who may face barriers to employment.

Through career exploration, work-based learning, and opportunities to earn industry-recognized credentials, participants gain a clearer understanding of their options and a stronger footing as they enter the workforce.

Michigan Works! agencies, including Region 7B, play a critical role in delivering these opportunities. By working directly with local employers, schools, and community partners, they create programs tailored to the unique needs of the communities they serve. This localized approach not only supports youth but also helps businesses address ongoing talent shortages in key industries such as healthcare, manufacturing, construction, and information technology.

State leaders emphasize that the



program is also about equity and access.

"With its focus on supporting underserved populations, including those with disabilities, the Young Professionals initiative prepares our future workforce to meet employers' needs," said LEO Director Susan Corbin. "This initiative empowers young people to explore different career pathways by removing their barriers to employment."

The impact is already visible. In 2025 alone, more than 600 young people across Michigan participated in Young Professionals programming, exploring a wide range of career interests and gaining hands-on experience that translates directly into employability.

YOUTH continues on page 6 »

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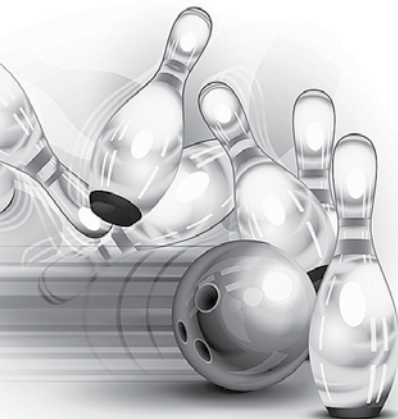
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United Way

« Continued from page 1

program, the Community Support Team, which offers financial aid to families of victims of severe illnesses, Rayola Inc., which assists children in the foster care system, Ogemaw County Child Protection Council which provides advocacy and intervention for child abuse victims, and Fresh Start Club of West Branch, which hosts a 12-step meeting to prevent substance abuse. This is not an exhaustive list. There are many more local charities that depend of OCUW funding.

In this bi-weekly column, the Ogemaw County United Way intends to focus on these partners so that you can see how your collective dollars are making a positive impact on our community, as well

as, spotlight the incredible work that our funded partners perform on a daily basis.

Because many local nonprofits rely on OCUW grants for their operating budgets, we are always looking for community members to help us with our mission to improve lives by mobilizing the caring power of communities for the common good.

If you'd like to help financially, contributions can be sent to Ogemaw County United Way at P.O. Box 588, West Branch, MI 48661.

For more information on volunteering or funding opportunities, you can reach out to us via Facebook or email at unitedwayogemaw@yahoo.com.

Museum receives silk wall hanging



SALLY A. REA
HISTORIAN AND
CURATOR

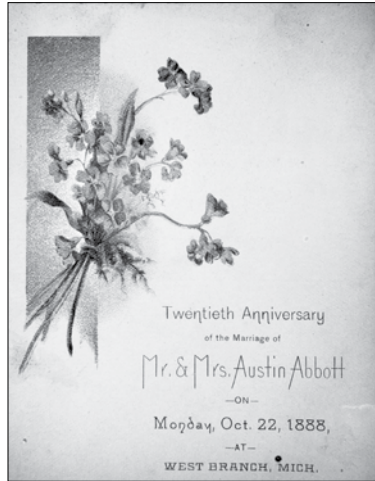
It is always so exciting when I get a phone call from a family member who has something to donate to our museum. In this case it is Abby Kealy, whose great-grandmother, Mary Jane "Mollie" Ostrom Abbott, made this wonderful wall hanging out of all silk materials. It is gorgeous and now hanging on the wall in our piano room in the museum. Abby's great-grandmother had a general store and it had a millinery department where she gathered all the pieces for her wall hanging. Mary Jane was so clever that she actually crafted into the quilt a ribbon from her West Branch Sunday School class. This wall hanging measures 34"x56".

Pictured above is a photo of Mary Jane and her husband, Austin Abbott. He was quite a mover and a shaker in West Branch. Austin had done as much to up West Branch as any of her citizens. He erected the West Branch Opera House, the Phoenix Block. He was full of energy and enterprise, and had the ability to make West Branch the queen of Michigan towns.

Charles Stewart Abbott was Austin's son. Charles was a member of the Detroit bar and also connected with several important

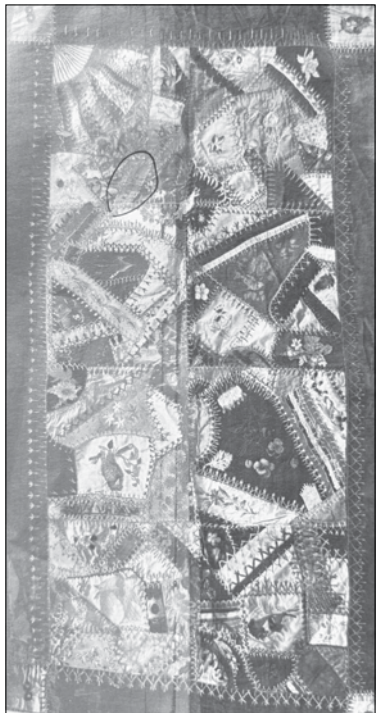


**AUSTIN AND
MARY JANE ABBOTT**



business corporations of which he was the organizer and promoter, in Lapeer, Mich., Nov. 3, 1872. Charles was a representative of one of the old families of the state, and is identified with history of Michigan from pioneer times. His father, Austin Abbott, was also a native of Lapeer, born in 1837, and was a son of Asel Abbott, who was moved from Massachusetts to Michigan when the work of settlement development had scarcely begun in the area of Lapeer. He cleared a farm in the middle of a settlement in the forest and was believed to have started the first shoe cobbler's shop in that section of the state.

I found this 20th Anniversary card in the folder on Abbott's history announcing their celebration:



Courtesy photo
The Ogemaw County Historical Museum recently received a vintage silk wall hanging.

Mr. and Mrs. Austin Abbott would like the pleasure of your company at the 20th Anniversary of their marriage on October 22, 1888, at West Branch, Mich.

Mr. Austin Abbott, Miss Mary J. Ostrom married Oct. 21, 1868 at Buffalo, N.Y. China wedding, Monday, Oct. 1888, at West Branch, Mich.

I talked to Amy Kealy and she thinks that they renewed their wedding vows Oct. 22, 1888, in West Branch. I am sending a copy of the original anniversary card to Amy along with this story. Amy has sent me some newspaper clippings which I will put in the Abbott file.

Information from great-granddaughter, Abby Kealy, Ogemaw County Historical Museum Records.

News from the Skidway Lake area

BY APRIL HARKEY-MASON

Good news! The Mills Township new hall is done, and they will be moving into the new building starting the week of April 20. The office will be closed until the move is complete. Doors will open on Monday, April 27. They will be hosting an Open House on the day of the monthly meeting on May 12, from 4 p.m. until the start of the regular meeting at 6 p.m. The public is invited to come on tour of the building, visit with everyone and enjoy some coffee and goodies. The attached photos were taken before all the furniture was in place.

With all the rain, it is sad to see all the damage to roads and property. Every road you travel in the area has flooding in one location or another. The rivers are raging and very unsafe. Please do not put yourself or others in harm by being on them. I am praying for relief soon.

On May 9, the Skidway Lake

Beautification Committee Club will be doing "Save Mother Earth Roadside Clean Up." Everyone interested is to meet at the Skidway Lake Library at 10:30 a.m. This is your chance to show you care about your community.

The Skidway Lake Library will be hosting Market Days on the first and third Mondays of the month starting May 4. The address is 2129 Greenwood Road. Vendors will get a 10x10 spot for \$10 per week, after setting up three times you get one week free. Set up by 12:45 p.m. Also, craft shows and free kids crafts at the Skidway Lake Library on the second Saturday of the month, March through August. Contact: prescottlibrary200@gmail.com

Mills Township is hosting a first annual 4th of July Festival on



APRIL HARKEY-MASON

July 3. Included in the festival is a craft show at the Skidway Lake Area Chamber of Commerce Hall, 2777 E. Greenwood Road. This will be a two-day show on July 3 and 4. Contact April Mason for details, 989-578-8768. Proceeds from table rental will go to the Chamber of Commerce.

Mills Township will also have a township-wide, curb-side pick-up for spring and fall. Each resident will be asked to call the hall if you plan to participate. You will be allowed to put out what would normally fit into a three-yard dumpster. More details to come on the date and times to call. This will be a great opportunity to avoid a blight complaint. If you live next door to elderly or disabled folks, offer them a hand to get things to the curb.

Remember, if you have any news to share contact me at 989-578-8768. Until next time, God Bless.

Letter to the editor policy

The Ogemaw County Superior News encourages all readers to submit letters to the editor for possible publication. Please limit letters to 200 words or less.

The author must include a daytime phone number as they will be contacted prior to publication.

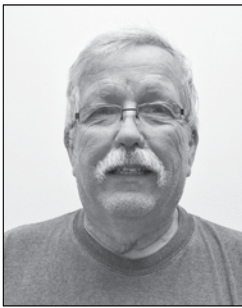
Unsigned letters will not be published. We reserve the right to edit and/or reject any letter.

Letters can be submitted via email to deanna@superior-news.com or by traditional mail to P.O. Box 603, West Branch, MI 48661.

KIWANIS OF WEST BRANCH

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, text Denny at 315-725-1199. If you want to help the children of West Branch and around the world, we are here.

KIWANIS CORNER



DENNY SHUMWAY

OGEMAW COUNTY FOOD PANTRY

The club needs donations of food or money to help us with the influx of families. You can add to your grocery bill at Meijer Store with a card found at the check outs or customer service. It is only \$10 added to your bill to help someone in need. We will take donations every Wednesday of the month from 8:30 to 11

a.m. We are located in the out-reach 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, text ahead to 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 those individual donors 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 monthly food truck will be at the First United Methodist Church on the corner of Fairview and State roads on May 15 and 29. Line-up at 9 a.m. This institution is an equal opportunity provider. See you there.

AKTION CLUB

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

Our next event is approaching fast. We are in the final stages of donating Buddy Benches to three of our local elementary schools. We are planning on many things this year: selling water at Music in the Park starting June 25. On the 4th of July we will be holding a cornhole tournament in Rose City Park starting at about 11 a.m. Look for the ads. Help us support organizations in West Branch.

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 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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Cardinal Optimist Club recognizes student excellence



BY LADONNA SCHULTZ

At the close of each marking period for students in school, members of the Cardinal Optimist Club of Skidway Lake (COCSL) proudly sponsor the Student of the Month Honors at Whittemore-Prescott Elementary School (K-6). Each classroom and physical education teacher selects one student to receive the Pete McNamara Student of the Month award. This recognition honors the memory of a fallen Optimist member while celebrating the values of character, leadership, and positive citizenship.

Students and staff gather for a school-wide presentation to celebrate the honorees, with parents and guardians invited to attend. The event creates a meaningful experience for both students and their families. Each recipient is presented with a COCSL pencil, a McDonald's Happy Meal certificate, generously donated by West Branch McDonald's, and a Student of the Month necklace. Most importantly, students are



JOSYLYN JAKUBIK



AMAYA ARMENDAREZ



MARVIN CONNER

recognized by their teachers and peers, fostering pride in their accomplishments.

This program reflects the strong partnership between Whittemore-Prescott Elementary School and the Cardinal Optimist Club of Skidway Lake. The club's motto, "Bringing Out the Best in Kids," is exemplified through this celebration, as members continue to encourage and recognize student

achievement, dedication, and success.

On April 16, awards were presented for both the February and March Students of the Month.

February recipients:

Joslyn Jakubik, Wesson Nader-Young, Brayson Kinsey, Savannah Weishuhn, Ryker Stringer, Jaxson Draves, Emma View, Amelia Laming, Brian Gagnon, Lonnie Thayer, Adelynn Gawne,

Addison Oliver, Jacey Williams, Colton Frye, Marvin Conner, and Marley Marsh.

March recipients:

Mason Brown, Joslyn McElroy, Jaelynn Lutz-Sapp, Madilyn Muckenthaler, Jasmine Schwab, Gunner Hosmer, Aaliyah Partlo, Pantera Young, Aria Salgado, Dale Cunningham, Sawyer Gyorke, Genevieve View, McKinleigh Brennan, Amaya

Armendarez, Malachi Conner, Harper Gyorke and Peyton Firman.

The Student of the Month program remains a valued tradition, recognizing students for their hard work, positive attitudes, and contributions to the school community. The Cardinal Optimist Club of Skidway Lake is proud to play a role in supporting this meaningful tradition.

Alternative Ed students attend West Branch Optimist Club meeting



BY JOE BELL
VICE - PRESIDENT
WEST BRANCH OPTIMIST CLUB

Recently, Mrs. Denise Leibold brought two of her students to talk to the West Branch Optimist Club about some equipment that we had helped to purchase for their classroom. Denise and brothers, Dominick and Doniven Smith, are part of the Alternative Educational Academy of Ogemaw. This allows students who may not do well in traditional school classroom settings to further their education through nontraditional classes.

The equipment we helped

obtain are magnets that can be used to make many different creations. The students can then use this hands-on process to help them understand how magnets function and interact with each other. Dominick and Doniven were very eager to share their experiences and creations with our club members who were in attendance.

The Optimist Club meets every Thursday morning at 7 a.m. Loggers Depot in downtown West Branch for breakfast. We would love to have you come and join us for breakfast and let us show you what the club is working on next to benefit the children of our community and the world!

We close each meeting by reciting the Optimist Creed, part of which states: "Promise yourself to talk health, happiness, and prosperity to every person you meet!"

What a great way to approach your life. 'Bye for now.'



Brothers Dominick (l) and Doniven Smith recently attended the West Branch Optimist Club meeting with their teacher, Denise Leibold. Both are students at the Alternative Education Academy of Ogemaw.

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St. Joseph School students helping those in need

The St. Joseph School family, parishioners and friends from the community got together to support Kids Coalition Against Hunger. Kids Coalition Against Hunger (KCAH) is a food packaging event to help fight hunger both locally and around the world. KCAH is a non-profit humanitarian organization dedicated to reducing the number of undernourished children through hands-on packaging. The school was able to package over 10,000 bags of food with the help of fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. What a blessing for everyone who participated and those receiving the food. Pictured, bottom right. Oliver Zettle lends a hand packaging food, as well as classmate Calan Ackerman, pictured top right. Also pictured below, Carly Parish, Lincoln Parish, Jan Wilber and Denver Parish.



Become Part of Their Legacy

Thoroughbred racing is known as the Sport of Kings, but the racetrack is just the beginning for these equine athletes.

CANTER Michigan has been providing off-track Thoroughbreds with lifesaving surgeries, veterinary care, retraining and rehoming since 1998, giving them opportunities for new homes and careers.



Donate • Adopt • Volunteer

www.canterusa.org/michigan



CANTER MICHIGAN

Youth

« Continued from page 3

For Region 7B, this funding represents an opportunity to build on that success - expanding partnerships with local employers and increasing the number of youths who can participate in meaningful work experiences.

“This is about building a pipeline,” workforce leaders across the state have noted. “When young people can see themselves in a career early on, they are far more likely to pursue it - and stay in their community to build their future.”

That outcome matters deeply in communities like those served

by Michigan Works! Region 7B, where retaining talent is key to long-term economic growth.

As summer approaches, local businesses are encouraged to get involved by offering work-based learning opportunities and employment for participating youth. For young people, it’s a chance to gain experience, confidence, and direction. For employers, it’s an opportunity to invest in the next generation of their workforce.

And for the region as a whole, it’s a step toward a stronger, more resilient future - one young professional at a time.

Park

« Continued from page 1



Photo by Deanna Surbrook

Oaklynn Willy, 2, of Prudenville, loves the new playscape. She was visiting the park with her grandmother, who said Irons Park was the nicest one around.

ADA-compliant playscape,” said Carol Adair, West Branch City Council member, who also serves on the Recreation Committee. “It was installed in the fall of 2025.”

This new addition next to Fort Austin is designed to allow greater access to play for children with disabilities, including those using mobility devices. Although the playscape has been available for use since last fall, it is still missing an essential element – a really cool name.

To that end, the City of West Branch Recreation Committee is holding a “Name the Playscape” contest. To suggest a name, visit <https://www.facebook.com/celebratewestbranchmi>. The deadline is April 24. When the winner is announced, that person will be invited to participate in the ribbon cutting ceremony for the playscape on May 21, at 4 p.m.

“With the addition of the new playscape and due to the age of Fort Austin, the Parks and Recreation Committee would also like to do some renewing and refurbishing,” Adair said.

Among the items on the wish list is additional fencing for the

playscape, more benches near the entire play area, the replacement of worn items within Fort Austin, power washing, repairing damaged wood, replacing tubing and tires, and painting the worn wood and metal. Caring for Fort Austin in this way will help ensure the safety and longevity of the structure.

Currently, the Recreation Committee is soliciting contributions from community members and businesses. The committee has established two fundraisers to encourage support. The first is the sale of fence pickets, which may be dedicated in honor or in memory of a loved one. Three hundred and fifty are available at \$50 apiece. The other is a simple request for donations to cover materials and costs and to ensure the improvements can begin as soon as possible. Community sponsor recognition for these contributions will appear when new, way-finding signage is installed in the park.

To make a donation, use the forms available on the city of West Branch website <https://www.westbranch.com/>

[newsdetail_T3_R1238.php](#). You may also find these forms on the West Branch City Hall, West Branch District Library and the West Branch Chamber of Commerce websites.

The City of West Branch Recreation Committee is a volunteer group working with city staff to support our community and recreation assets, creating a safe and welcoming destination for area families and visitors. Among their future goals for Irons Park is a wish list that includes repainting the iconic Iron Bridge, painting the pump house, painting trash receptacles, power washing the covered bridge, adding sun shades, artwork, and oversized Adirondack chairs for fun photo opportunities, and signage for the Riverwalk. Next time you stroll through Irons Park, or attend an event there, take a look around and ask yourself, “What can I do to help?”

“I’ve had so many people tell me they used to play on Fort Austin when they were kids,” Carol said. “We want their kids and grandkids to be able to enjoy it for years to come.”

Retires

« Continued from page 1



Courtesy photo

A retirement party for Michigan State Police D/Sgt. Craig Johnson (l) was held in his honor on Saturday, April 18, in West Branch.

assigned to the Alpena and West Branch posts, where he became a familiar and trusted presence to both colleagues and residents.

Throughout his career, Johnson took on a variety of roles that reflected both his experience and adaptability. In addition to his road patrol duties, he spent time with STING, contributing to specialized enforcement efforts aimed at stopping drug trafficking in the community. He rose through the ranks, retiring as a Detective Sergeant covering the counties of Ogemaw, Arenac, and Iosco. As such, he worked and had major impact on cases involving bank robbery, armed robbery, acts of terrorism, embezzlement and much more. His work in these assignments demonstrated not only his investigative skill, but also his willingness to take on challenging responsibilities in service to public safety.

At his retirement party on April 18, colleagues describe Johnson

as a dependable leader and mentor who consistently set a strong example for younger troopers. His ability to remain calm under pressure, combined with his practical knowledge of the job, made him a respected figure within the department. Many current and former law enforcement officers credited him with helping shape the careers of those who served alongside him.

However, Johnson was quick to point out, “I’ve been handed the reins of detective in a phenomenal department.

“The Michigan State Police stands for honesty, integrity, and courtesy,” he added. “For the past 31 years I’ve worked to honor those who came before me by upholding these values and traditions.”

In recognition of his 31 years of service, F/Lt. Michael Brown presented Johnson with numerous awards and accolades, honoring a career marked by dedication,

integrity, and competence. Brown told the large crowd in attendance that “It was a privilege and honor to be Craig’s post commander. He is one of MSP’s finest detectives and cares deeply for his community.”

The ceremony served as both a celebration of his accomplishments and a sharing of “Craig” stories from his co-workers. Guests were treated to humorous accountings of past law enforcement moments where D/Sgt. Johnson was always the butt of the joke.

Although he took some ribbing, everyone who spoke ended with appreciation for the impact he made within the Michigan State Police and the communities he protected.

For his part, Johnson humbly thanked his guests for taking the 31-year journey with him.

“Anything I accomplished in this job, I didn’t do alone,” he said. “Looking at all of you here I see dispatchers, post secretaries, firemen, prosecutors and fellow officers wearing both blue and brown uniforms who worked and helped me all the step of the way.

“I have to also thank my family for putting up with me when I came home cranky after a hard day at work,” Johnson added. “I couldn’t have done this job without your support.”

As Johnson steps into retirement, he leaves behind a legacy of service that will not be forgotten. His contributions to the Michigan State Police and to the people of Alpena, West Branch, and beyond stand as a testament to a career well served.

Johnson now looks ahead to the next chapter of life, carrying with him the respect of his peers and the gratitude of the communities he spent 31 years protecting.

AI isn’t coming - it’s already here

Across industries and communities, artificial intelligence is no longer a distant concept - it’s an active force shaping how businesses operate, compete, and grow. For many leaders, the challenge isn’t whether to adopt AI, but how to do it in a way that delivers real value.

A new regional webinar series, “to AI, Applied: From Orientation to Operational Use,” is stepping in to meet that need - offering a practical, no-nonsense pathway for business leaders looking to move beyond curiosity and into confident implementation.

Hosted as part of the AI Strategy & Execution Webinar Series, this four-part program is designed to guide participants through the full journey of AI adoption. From understanding the basics to building structured execution plans, the series focuses on real-world application rather than theory.

The sessions will be held every Thursday in May from 10 to 11 a.m., making it accessible for busy professionals to plug in, learn, and apply new strategies without disrupting their workday.

The series begins on May 7 with “AI Basics: What It Is & How to Actually Use It.” This session is tailored for non-technical founders and executives who are unsure where AI fits into their operations. Participants will learn how to separate hype from reality and identify where AI can deliver early, tangible wins.

On May 14, the focus shifts to a common frustration in “I’ve

Invested in AI — Why Isn’t It Delivering?” This session addresses stalled pilots and lack of return on investment, helping leaders understand why many AI initiatives struggle and how to get them back on track.

By May 21, the series moves into product development with “Product Roadmaps & the ‘Built but Can’t Launch’ Problem.” Designed for founders and product leaders, this session tackles the gap between prototyping and production - offering strategies to move innovations across the finish line.

The final session on May 28, “From AI Experiments to an Execution Roadmap,” brings it all together. Leaders will learn how to turn scattered efforts into a structured, scalable AI plan that integrates into daily business operations.

More than just a learning opportunity, this series reflects a broader regional commitment to innovation and workforce development. Sponsored by Michigan Works! and funded through the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity, the initiative underscores the importance of preparing businesses, and their teams, for the evolving digital landscape.

In a time when technology can feel overwhelming or uncertain, this series offers something refreshingly practical: clarity, direction, and a roadmap forward. Because in today’s economy, understanding AI isn’t just an advantage - it’s becoming essential.

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Heather Corene Kearns

Aug. 22, 1972 – April 18, 2026

Heather Corene Kearns (née Bergwall), born Aug. 22, 1972, passed away Saturday morning, April 18, 2026, surrounded by family, leaving behind a legacy of generosity and deep devotion to the people and community she cherished most.

A graduate of Tawas Area High School, Heather continued her education at Ferris State University. She went on to become a member, and eventual president, of the West Branch-Rose City School Board. In that role, she was a passionate advocate for students and staff alike, earning the respect and affection of the entire school community.

Heather gave tirelessly of her time to Ogemaw Heights High School, where she could often be found selling popcorn and slushies with her signature energy and humor. She also coached middle school volleyball for 10 years. Through her volunteer efforts, she helped raise funds that supported important school initiatives and scholarships, leaving a lasting impact on countless students.

Behind the scenes, Heather was an active member of Faith Alive Church in West Branch. She taught pre-school children for many years, adding her flair with games and crafts. She led Vacation Bible School, cooked hundreds of meals for others, and served wherever there was a need.

Faith Alive was stronger because of Heather, and the love and care she gave so freely will be deeply missed.

Above all else, Heather was devoted to her family. She shared a deep and enduring love with her husband, Bill Kearns. She found her greatest pride in being a mother to her two beloved children, Margaret and Matthew, and held a special place in her heart for Margaret's longtime girlfriend, Arden. Heather's love for them was fierce and unwavering. She was their biggest supporter and loudest cheerleader.

Heather was the eldest daughter of Mike and Buzz Bergwall, and a loving sister to Angie Deerman (Chad Deerman) and Kerri Buysens (Evan Buysens). She was also a proud and beloved aunt to Lauren Tibbetts (Nick Tibbetts), Jamen Deerman, Isabel Deerman, Max Buysens, Harper Buysens, Colin Kearns, Liam Kearns, Rynne Kearns, and Graeme Kearns. She adored each of them, and they adored her for her big heart, her fun spirit, and her unmatched ability to make any gathering more fun.

Heather embraced life with enthusiasm. She enjoyed knitting, golfing, cribbage, Westerns, bird-watching, and spending time with

friends and family. She loved music, especially when it was played loud, and had a gift for bringing energy and excitement

wherever she went. Simply put, Heather changed the atmosphere of a room just by walking into it.

To her family and to all who knew her, Heather was the heart and soul who held people together, a constant source

of strength, laughter, and love. She will be remembered for her generosity, her humor, her spirited personality, and her remarkable ability to make everyone feel seen, valued, and welcomed. Her presence brought energy and warmth, and her absence leaves a space that cannot be filled.

A viewing was held at Steuernol and McLaren Funeral Home in West Branch from 3 p.m. to 9 p.m. on Thursday, April 23. A funeral service took place at Faith Alive Church in West Branch at 11 a.m. on Friday, April 24, with visitation preceding.

Heather's memory will forever be a blessing to all who knew and loved her.

Online condolences can be shared at www.steuernolmclaren.com



Robert Arnold Wiles

Oct. 23, 1950 – March 31, 2026

Robert Arnold Wiles, age 75, passed peacefully from this life on Tuesday, March 31, 2026, at The Brook of Standish with his family by his side.

Born on Oct. 23, 1950, in Saginaw, Mich., he was the first of seven children born to Garth and Mildred Wiles of Saginaw.

"Bob" graduated from Buena Vista High School in 1968 and, shortly after, began a long, successful career in the retail field. He labored in gas stations, convenience stores, grocery stores, Walmart and Kmart, where he was manager of the receiving department at the time of his retirement. He had a second career as residential staff at AuSable Valley Community Mental Health, working with adults with mental illness and driving people to and from appointments. Lastly, he worked with court-appointed youth for the Ogemaw County Probate and Family Court. Wherever he worked, he enjoyed interacting with people.

Early in life, at age 20, he married Toni Etchison on Dec. 12, 1970, in West Branch, Mich. They were blessed with a son, Benjamin, in 1974 and celebrated their 55th wedding anniversary in 2025.

Bob loved hunting, fishing and being in the woods and on the water. He shared these pastimes with family and friends throughout his life. He read and studied the Bible

and was a man of strong faith in his God, which he also liked to share. He and his family spent three years in West Virginia doing just that.

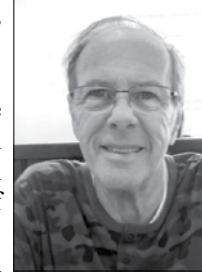
Bob is survived by his wife, Toni Wiles; his son, Ben (Dawn) Wiles; grandchildren Beau Wiles and Lilly Wiles; his sisters, Patty Cox and Susie Harley; his sister-in-law; Kim Wiles; his brothers, Mike (Judy) Wiles, Jim (Kris) Wiles, Steve (Bonnie) Wiles, and uncle Phil (Sue) Wiles. He is also survived by his brothers-in-law, Pat (Pam) Etchison, Dean (Martha) Etchison and Dennis (Christine) Etchison, as well as cherished cousins, nephews and nieces.

He was predeceased by his parents, Garth and Mildred Wiles; brother Tom Wiles; brothers-in-law Mike Harley and Rick Cox; father-in-law Donovan A. Etchison, and mother-in-law Lucille M. Etchison.

A Celebration of Life for Bob will be held on Sunday, June 14, 2026, at the Tolfree Wellness Park Pavilion in West Branch from 12-4 p.m., beginning with a brief service.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to the Ogemaw County Commission on Aging.

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



Lyle Gordon Johnson

July 21, 1932 – April 9, 2026

Lyle Gordon Johnson passed away on Thursday, April 9, 2026, in West Branch, Mich., at the age of 93. He was born in Lansing, Mich. on July 21, 1932, to the late F. Oscar and Ethel M. (Stephens) Johnson. His father died when Lyle was an infant. He and his brothers spent their summers, along with their cousins, on their grandparents' farm south of West Branch.

Lyle served in the United States Army, 11th Airborne from Oct. 1952-1954 making 20 jumps, and serving as a parachute packer and repairman, attaining the rank of Corporal.

Following his time in the service, he worked for 16 years as a barber in Lansing. He went on to work for the Michigan State Department of Licensing and Regulation from which he retired as an investigator, having also served as administrator to the Michigan Board of Barber Examiners.

Lyle married Jacqueline "Jackie" DeRosia, née Waidelich on May 31, 1986. They lived in Eaton Rapids, Mich., later moving to Lyle's family property south of West Branch where he spent

many summers with his family.

Lyle was an avid hunter and fisherman, and always looked forward to being on the water, on the ice, or in the woods. He loved to cook for family and friends, especially meals of the game he harvested or fish he caught.

Lyle previously served as an Elder for Calvary Evangelical Lutheran Church, Eaton Rapids, and Saint John's Lutheran Church, West Branch, where he and Jackie were congregants.

Lyle is survived by his daughter, Beth (Dave) Ziegler of Dexter, Mich.; step-children Dean (Sally) DeRosia of Phoenix, Ariz., Dale (Hao) DeRosia of Glendale, Ariz., and Sharon DeRosia Brady of West Branch, along with eight grandchildren, 10 great-grandchildren, and nephew Rich (Jennifer) Johnson, who was like another son to Lyle.

He was preceded in death by his beloved wife, Jacqueline Johnson; his parents, F. Oscar and Ethel; brothers Frank Johnson, Charles Johnson and wife Barb,

and Lowell Johnson and wife, Viola; son, Mark Johnson; son-in-law, Kevin Brady; in-laws, Rev. Carl Waidelich, Barbara Soll, Marena and husband Don Mikol, along with beloved cousins, aunts, and uncles.

The family would like to extend our sincere gratitude to the wonderful, dedicated staff of The Brook - West Branch and Compassus Hospice of West Branch for their kind and devoted care for our parents.

The funeral service, with military honors, was held at Steuernol & McLaren Funeral Home in West Branch on Monday, April 13, 2026, with visitation preceding. Pastor Carl Petzold officiated and burial was at Pine River Cemetery in Standish.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to Compassus Hospice of West Branch, or St. John Lutheran Church, West Branch.

Online condolences can be made at www.steuernolmclaren.com



Jacqueline "Jackie" Johnson

Aug. 2, 1929 – April 7, 2026

Jacqueline "Jackie" Johnson of West Branch, Mich., passed away peacefully on Tuesday, April 7, 2026, at the age of 96. She was born on Aug. 2,

1929, in Conneaut, Ohio. The family moved to Lansing, Mich., where she spent her childhood until the family relocated to Standish, Mich. Her high school education was at Michigan Lutheran Seminary in Saginaw.

The former Jacqueline Waidelich married Don DeRosia on May 22, 1954, in Standish, where they raised their family. Don predeceased her, passing on May 22, 1975. Jackie worked for 16 years for the Arenac County Extension Service, and then Standish-Sterling Community Schools for 23 years, retiring as administrative secretary to the superintendent.

Jackie married Lyle G. Johnson on May 31, 1986. They lived in Eaton Rapids, Mich., later moving to Lyle's family property south of West Branch in April 2004. Jackie was a skilled artist working in multiple mediums. The couple loved to travel, and did so extensively, including trips to art fairs at which she sold her works.

Jackie is survived by her husband, Lyle; children Dean (Sally) DeRosia, Phoenix, Ariz., Dale (Hao) DeRosia, Glendale, Ariz., Sharon DeRosia Brady, West Branch; step-daughter, Beth (Dave) Ziegler, Dexter, Mich.;

brother-in-law, Carl Soll, Naples, Fla.; eight grandchildren, 10 great-grandchildren, and many nieces and nephews, all of whom she dearly loved.

She was preceded in death by her parents, Eberhardt and Marie Waidelich; siblings Rev. Carl William Waidelich, Barbara Soll, Marena Mikol

and husband Donald; step-son Mark Johnson; son-in-law, Kevin Brady; brothers-in-law Frank Johnson, Charles Johnson and wife Barbara, Lowell Johnson and wife Viola; sisters-in-law Leona DeRosia, Isabel DeRosia Miller and husband Maynard, and Genevieve DeRosia Cossin.

The family would like to extend our sincere gratitude to the wonderful, dedicated staff of The Brook - West Branch and Compassus Hospice of West Branch for their kind and devoted care for our parents.

The funeral service was held at Steuernol & McLaren Funeral Home in West Branch on Monday, April 13, 2026, with visitation preceding. Pastor Carl Petzold officiated and burial was at Pine River Cemetery in Standish.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to Compassus Hospice of West Branch, or St. John Lutheran Church, West Branch.

Online condolences can be shared at www.steuernolmclaren.com



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Ogemaw County
SUPERIOR NEWS

email obituaries to:
deanna@superior-news.com



Raymond John Bedtelyon

April 12, 1940 – April 19, 2026

Raymond John Bedtelyon, age 86, passed away peacefully on Sunday, April 19, 2026, in his beloved hometown of West Branch, Mich. Born on April 12, 1940, Ray's life was a testament to steadfast dedication, faith, and an enduring spirit of service.

Ray's early years saw him embracing the hard work and rhythm of rural life, beginning as a farmhand - a foundation that connected him deeply to the land and to family traditions. His career journey led him to General Motors, where he served with distinction at the Grey Iron Plant in Saginaw and the Nodular Iron Foundry before returning to retire from the Grey Iron Plant.

Beyond his day job, Ray fervently participated in his community. As a proud member of the Pioneer Powers, he took great joy in driving his Farmall C tractor in local parades, a symbol of his lifelong passion for agriculture and preservation of history. His devotion extended to volunteering at the Ogemaw County Fair's Antique Village, a role that allowed him to share and celebrate the stories of the past.

Faith was the cornerstone of Ray's existence. As president of Holiness Campground for 25 years, he nurtured a spiritual haven for countless individuals. His pastoral care flourished on weekends when he faithfully filled in for congregations across small towns including Melita, Standish, West Branch, Prescott, Fraser, Onaway, Black River, and Roscommon. Ray's heart

for mission was boundless; his trips to Russia were marked not only by sharing the gospel but also by tearing pages from his Bible to give to orphans forbidden to possess their own scriptures - a poignant testament to his compassion and courage. Tirelessly, he collected shoes and clothing to fill suitcases for those in dire need. His weekends, his work, and his very being radiated a generous love for humanity.

Outside of his spiritual and community commitments, Ray found joy in simple pleasures. He loved fishing, hunting, and playing cards, always cherishing moments spent with family and friends. These hobbies painted a fuller picture of a man who valued connection, tranquility, and the beauty of the natural world.

Ray leaves behind a loving family who carried his legacy forward. He is survived by his devoted wife, Gloria Jean, and their children: Raymond (Lola) Bedtelyon, Mark (Teresa) Bedtelyon, Pam (Doug) Gesink, and Sherri Brown. His grandchildren—Isaiah, Ricky, Jake, Candi (Brad), Valerie (Adam), Zack (Cassey), Deanna, Michael, Raymond, Samii, Malak, Dunia, Josiah, Jessica K, Joshua, Chandra, and Jessica N., his great grandchildren, Audrey, Emily, Trey, Tessa, Ty, Isaiah, Levi, Titus, Aurora, Oran, Kylor, Corvin, Bella, Lilli, Alicia, Payton, Avery, Mia, Oliver,

Eleanor, Josiah, Micah, Elijah, Ashton, Nora, Andrew, Daniel, Randy, Cameron, and Drake were close to his heart, each a cherished part of his extended family tapestry. Sisters-in-law Rosemary Bedtelyon, Gayle Bedtelyon, and Carole Marsh also remain as part of those who carry fond memories of Ray's warmth and kindness.



Ray was preceded

in death by his loving parents, Era and Lanettie (Coon) Bedtelyon; his first wife, Carol Bedtelyon; his daughter, Myrna Ismail; grandsons, Kareem Ismail and Michael Burge; and brothers, Jay and Dean Bedtelyon. Their memories, though dearly missed, live on in the hearts of all who knew Ray.

Visitation will take place on Saturday, April 25, 2026, from 5 p.m. until 8 p.m. at Steuernol & McLaren Funeral Home in West Branch, Mich. Additional visitation will be held on Sunday, April 26, 2026, at Ogemaw Hills Free Methodist Church in West Branch from noon to 1 p.m., followed by a funeral service at 1 p.m.

Burial will be at Campbell Corners Cemetery in West Branch on Friday, May 1, 2026, at 11 a.m.

Though he has departed this world, his spirit and the light he shared remain everlasting.

Online condolences can be shared at www.steuernolmclaren.com

Larry L. Howard

April 3, 1944 – April 7, 2026

Larry Lynn Howard, a devoted family man and respected community member, passed away peacefully at his home in West Branch, Mich., on Tuesday, April 7, 2026, at the age of 82. He was born on April 3, 1944, in St. Johns, Mich., to Harold and Rose (Devereaux) Howard. Larry lived a full life marked by intelligence, hard work, and a love for his family.

Larry graduated from Kirtland Community College with an associate's degree, a testament to his commitment to learning. His career journey was varied and meaningful. He worked as a bus mechanic for the Durand Area Schools, served as a teacher's aide for the Ogemaw Heights automotive class, and spent many years as a surveyor's assistant. In his later years, he was a medical equipment specialist, contributing his skills and knowledge to help others.

An avid hunter and fisherman, Larry enjoyed spending time outdoors and loved to tinker, always curious and eager to work with his hands. He was known for his sharp mind and warm heart, qualities that endeared him to all who knew him.

Larry was deeply involved in his community, proudly serving the West Branch Optimist Club.

He was a dedicated member of the Ogemaw Hills Free Methodist Church, where he served on the board for many years and lent his technical skills as a sound technician, both at the church and Kirtland Community College. He also sang with the Arenac Carolers.

He is survived by his loving wife of 52 years, Kristeen (Holecek) Howard of West Branch, and their daughters, April Howard (Jason Card) and Amy Howard (Jason Burns), both of Saginaw, Mich. Larry's sister, Georgia Dennis of Owosso, Mich., his half-brother Lee (Carolyn) Howard of Florida, and half-sister Gwen Hoshield of Elsie, Mich., also survive him. He cherished his three grandchildren, Trinity Hickman, Katelyn DeSander, and Ansel DeSander, who brought him great joy. He is also survived by cherished nieces and nephews.

Larry was preceded in death by his parents, Harold and Rose

(Devereaux) Howard; his son, William "Billy" Howard; his sister Karen Weaver, and half-brother, Alton (Claudia) Howard.



Larry passed in the loving arms of his wife, surrounded by his family, a true reflection of the love and connection he nurtured throughout his life.

Family and friends honored Larry's memory at a visitation on April 13, at Steuernol & McLaren Funeral Homes in West Branch. Additional visitation was held on April 14, at Ogemaw Hills Free Methodist Church, followed by the funeral service at the same location. Pastor Harvey Fry officiated and burial took place at Oak Grove Cemetery in South Branch, Mich.

Those wishing to leave a memorial please consider the Ogemaw Hills Free Clinic in West Branch.

Larry will be missed dearly by all who had the privilege to know and love him.

Online condolences can be shared at www.steuernolmclaren.com

Baby Shower

« Continued from page 1



Photo by Laura Bender

services, Head Start programs and contact information to continue connections with knowledgeable community agencies.

Following the fair, during which families received a variety of baby-related items, each of these organizations also raffled off baskets of goodies, including clothing, diapers, baby gates, pack and plays, and other things needed for the proper care of newborns and infants.

The event concluded with a presentation by Ogemaw County Prosecutor LaDonna Schultz, who educated parents about safe sleep practices for infants.

Schultz is a member of the Ogemaw County Child Death Review Council, a multi-disciplinary team which includes the health department, law enforcement, and the Department of Health and Human Services. The purpose of this team is to review the death of every child under the age of 18 who resided in Ogemaw County or whose death occurred in Ogemaw.

"I know it's a morbid and horrible-sounding name for a group," Schultz said, "but the purpose is to give information to the state so that they can pass laws to keep kids safe."

Two recent laws that resulted from the work of the 73 teams that cover 81 Michigan counties include the requirement that children's pajamas be flame retardant and that garage door openers have sensors to prevent them from closing when a child or a stray item is beneath them.

In her presentation, LaDonna taught parents about the ABCs of safe sleep for infants.

"The 'A' means alone," LaDonna said. "Your baby should sleep alone in its own safe area. A safe area is not a couch. A safe area is not an adult bed. A safe area is not a mattress that was not specifically meant for an infant."

The 'B' stands for back. To prevent choking, babies should sleep on their backs.

"Because we tell people to put their babies on their backs to sleep, doesn't mean that the child doesn't need tummy time," LaDonna said. "They do need tummy time to exercise muscles and develop motor skills. But only do it when they are awake, and you are right next to them. Put them on the floor and let them stretch and grab for things. That's great for their development, just don't do it in the bed."

The 'C' stands for crib. "The mattress should be firm, and the only thing on it should be a tight-fitted sheet," Schultz said. "No blankets, no teddy bears, nothing in there that the child

Ogemaw County Prosecutor LaDonna Schultz teaches parents about safe sleeping practices for infants.

could roll over, get their face buried in, and suffocate."

Other good practices include using a pacifier to calm the baby and not placing hats, weighted or thick blankets on the infant to prevent overheating.

"Room sharing is a good idea," Schultz said. "Bringing the crib or a bassinet into your bedroom for the first six months is a great way to keep track of your child. Also, if you vape or smoke, it is important to do that outside or away from your child."

Following Schultz's presentation, Trooper Shane Noble spoke about car seats.

"If you need a new car seat, we'll get one for you," Noble said. "We have several techs certified to install them. Just call to make an appointment. Current law requires children to be in rear-facing car seats until they are at least two years old. Keeping a child harnessed until they're five is recommended and law now, unless they outgrow the seat by height or weight."

Common problems with car seat usage are not placing the chest clip at armpit level, not keeping the harness tight enough, and attaching items like mirrors or cameras not recommended by the manufacturer.

As families left the baby shower, the Michigan State Police presented a new car seat to all who needed one.

The County-Wide Baby Shower occurs twice a year. This was the fourth time Faith Lutheran Church in Prescott has hosted the spring event. Participants included: the Ogemaw County Prosecutor's Office, The O.C. Child Death Review Team, the O.C. Child Protection Council, Options Resource Clinic, Michigan State Police, District Health Department No. 2, the O.C. Department of Health and Human Services, NEMCSA Head Start, Sterling Area Health Center, Safe Haven Doula, Luna Bear Doula, Dawn to Earth Doula, and the Life Choices Resource Center.

The next County-Wide Baby Shower will occur in the fall in West Branch.

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- Caring Pregnancy Center 989-345-3909
- Dept. Health and Human Services 989-345-5135
- Emergency Assistance Program 989-345-8312
- Ogemaw County Clerk 989-345-0215
- Probate/Family Court 989-345-0145
- Emergency Shelter 989-217-0973
- Friend of the Court 989-345-5520
- Healthaccess 989-343-3608
- Ogemaw Commission on Aging 989-345-3010
- Options Resource Clinic 989-345-7398
- Ogemaw Public Transit 989-345-5790
- Children's Assmt. Center 989-275-7145
- Salvation Army 989-345-4690
- Community Food Pantry 989-345-0493
- MSU Extension/4-H 989-345-0692
- Ogemaw County Prosecutor 989-345-5700

- Michigan State Police 989-345-0956
- Ogemaw County Sheriff 989-345-3111
- West Branch Police 989-345-2627
- Rose City Police 989-685-3051

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