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LOCAL CHARITY RECEIVES CHECK FROM GUN LAKE WINTERFEST
PAGE 3



NO. 60 SATURDAY, JUNE 14, 2025 www.sunandnews.com

Belson hangs up hat as Middleville DPW director

Karen Turko-Ebright
Staff Writer

After serving the Village of Middleville as the Department of Public Works director for 10 years, he's hanging up his hat — but not before giving his last report at Tuesday's Village of Middleville meeting. Middleville DPW Director Alec Belson addressed the board and visitors for the last time this week. He used the time to let everyone know of the latest town road construction closure.

"Irving Road is officially closed to all through traffic. They have milled off the asphalt. Anyone who lives there, a visitor going to a residence,

See **BELSON** on 2



Village of Middleville Department of Public Works Director Alec Belson announced his resignation this week. He is leaving the village to start a new job as superintendent with the Barry County Road Commission. **Courtesy photo**

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An 18-year-old man from Byron Center lost his life last weekend while swimming in Campbell Lake, located in Bowne Township. **Photo by Jayson Bussa**

Man drowns while swimming in Campbell Lake

Jayson Bussa
Contributing Writer

An 18-year-old man lost his life last weekend while swimming in a Caledonia-area lake.

The Kent County Sheriff's Office released a statement detailing the drowning of Francisco Santana-Meza, which occurred around 2 p.m. on Sunday, June 8.

Santana-Meza, a resident of Byron Center, was swimming in Campbell Lake—located along 84th Street in Bowne Township—when he went underwater and did not resurface.

Emergency crews were dispatched to the scene to search for Santana-Meza. The Kent County Sheriff's Office's Marine Patrol was assisted by the Bowne Township and Caledonia Fire Departments.

Utilizing multiple boats, including one provided by a local resident, the crews were eventually able to locate and recover Santana-Meza's body.

The sheriff's office noted that there were no specific safety concerns regarding Campbell Lake, but emphasized the importance of exercising caution whenever someone is in or near a body of water.

Campbell Lake, situated on the eastern edge of Bowne Township, spans approximately 46 acres and is a popular destination for local fishing.

"We extend our condolences to the family and friends of the young man who died this afternoon at Campbell Lake," the sheriff's office said in a statement. "Losing a loved one is very difficult, and we recognize the impact this has on those who knew him."

Caledonia Twp. honors Lisa Segard with Hometown Hero Award

Caledonia Township has named Lisa Segard as the recipient of the 2025 Hometown Hero Award. Segard served as the Village of Caledonia's administrator from 1998 to 2024, cementing her legacy as a trusted source of information and calmness in Caledonia.

Caledonia Township Supervisor Bryan Harrison wrote a letter in support of Segard's nomination, highlighting some of the impact she has left on the community.

"It is with heartfelt admiration and unwavering respect that I nominate Lisa Segard for the 2025 Caledonia Township Hometown Hero Award," Harrison wrote. "Lisa's decades of tireless service, boundless knowledge, and steadfast integrity make her not only a deserving candidate but also a shining example of what this honor represents."



Caledonia Township selected Lisa Segard as the recipient of the 2025 Hometown Hero Award. **Courtesy photo**

Harrison said Segard has been an "invisible guiding hand" behind countless initiatives in Caledonia. Her intimate knowledge of the village made her a critical resource in the village offices.

"Lisa's fingerprints are everywhere in Caledonia's growth and spirit," Harrison wrote.

Some of Segard's accomplishments include securing grands for the Emmons Lake Wildlife Corridor and championing Arbor Day projects.

"Her signature Japanese tree lilacs still bloom in neighborhoods thanks to her leadership and foresight," Harrison wrote.

Segard also played a vital role in planning the Community Green, enhancing parks and pathways, and even helped install four early warning sirens to keep residents safe.

In her free time, Segard has served as a merit badge counselor for Boy Scout Troop 202, contributed to the Emmons Lake Elementary and Kraft Meadows PTOs, and helped connect paths between schools and neighborhoods, building both physical and community bridges, Harrison wrote.

"Whether she was helping on the pool committee, working the 'Book Cave' for the Friends of the Library or serving as secretary of the Glen Valley Property Owners Association for 25 years, Lisa made herself available to serve quietly, humbly and consistently," Harrison wrote.

Some may recognize Segard as the Easter Bunny, whose costume she adorns each year.

"She has built a legacy by lifting others, by doing the work that needed to be done, and by inspiring everyone around her to give a little more," Harrison wrote. — *KTE*

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Gaines receives positive auditor's report on its financial accounting

James Gemmell
Contributing Writer

A certified accounting firm identified no major issues when it conducted the annual audit for Gaines Charter Township's 2024 fiscal year.

The Portage-based firm Siegfried Crandall reviewed the township's financial statements, as well as its business activities, each major fund and the aggregate fund information.

Siegfried Crandall representative Dan Veldhuizen gave a brief presenta-

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BELSON

Continued from Page 1

you're fine," explained Belson. "But, if you're going through from Main Street to get past the construction zone, that's the issue."

Police are monitoring the area.

Belson said contractors estimate the road construction should be wrapped up by late summer.

After his report, he addressed the board and those in the audience.

"Next Friday will be my last official working day with the village. I still will be working with the village for several months until someone finds a licensed replacement for me," Belson said. "It's been a pleasure the last 10 to 13 years serving the village. I had an opportunity that's very hard to pass up. I'm going to work for the Barry County Road Commission as superintendent of operations. Thanks for everything that everybody has done and helped me with over the years."

Village Manager Craig Stolsonburg told everyone that while he is actively looking for a new DPW Director the village council has to approve someone as street administrator.

"Previously, it has been Alec Belson, as you are aware he is leaving the organization. We need to appoint somebody. Previously to Alec being the street administrator, it was the village manager prior to that. So, it makes sense for me to be appointed to that."

A unanimous roll call vote among board members approved Stolsonburg to step in as street administrator until the position is filled.

The job position is posted on the Village of Middleville website. Anyone with questions can call the office at 269-795-3385.

"We will pay for certification training if the right person meets all other qualifications," Stolsonburg said.

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Local charity receives check from Gun Lake Winterfest

Karen Turko-Ebright
Staff Writer

Each year, one organization is recognized for its local contributions by the Gun Lake Winterfest Committee. This year was no exception. Gun Lake Winterfest Co-Chair Brad Landman told *The Sun and News* at Winterfest 2025 that the General Federation of Women's Club (GFWC)-Gun Lake Area Chapter was the chosen charity.

"These ladies are often in the background taking care of the area. They help residents who need a little boost, they raise funds and awareness for many projects out here, but seldom get recognized for their work," said Brad Landman. "We wanted to make sure they are recognized and give them a nice donation so they can keep up their great work."

Co-Chair Stacey Landman recently presented the president of the GFWC-Gun Lake Area Chapter, Raeanne Renner, with a check in the amount of $3,175.

"I was proud to learn that GFWC-Gun Lake Area had been selected as the recipient of the Gun Lake Winterfest donation," Renner said. "It means a lot that the festival recognizes and supports our club's dedication to community service."

Renner became president of the GWFC-Gun Lake Chapter in June, 2024, for a two-year term. The GFWC-Gun Lake Area Chapter has 89 members.

"We usually have over six projects going on at a time," she said.

The GFWC-Gun Lake Area Chapter celebrated Arbor Day and Earth Day by planting three large eastern white pines, Michigan's state tree, at Yankee Springs Township Park.



Raeanne Renner (left), president of the GFWC Gun Lake Area Chapter, receives a check for $3,175 from Gun Lake Winterfest Co-Chair Stacey Landman. **Photo by Onawa Terburg**

"Our commitment to nature extended to our Earth Day celebration, "Walk for the Birds," where members raised $395 for the Kellogg Bird Sanctuary's 100-year fundraising drive," Renner explained. "Thanks to a matching donor, our contribution doubled its impact, helping update facilities and support environmental research vital to our region."

In recognition of National Child Abuse Prevention Month, the GFWC Gun Lake Chapter planted pinwheels throughout the community, symbolizing the joyful childhood every child deserves.

During National Library Week, April 6–12, members showcased their creativity by crafting and distributing handmade bookmarks at our local lending library to encourage reading and literacy.

In May, $13,500 in scholarships were awarded to students from four local high schools, helping invest in their futures.

The largest fundraising effort to support those scholarships will be the golf outing on August 9.

In addition, the club distributed sweatpants to the four school districts in the Gun Lake area and throughout the season.

The Gun Lake Women's Club also maintains eight berms at Yankee Springs Township Park.

On May 25, the Gun Lake Women's Club participated in the Memorial Day Service at the Fire Station, honoring those who have served.

Every month, the Gun Lake Women's Club supports our free lending library, making books accessible to the community.

"At the Annual GFWC Convention in April, we were honored to receive the prestigious Club of the Year award for category three, based on club size," Renner said.

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Watershed council hosting paddle trip June 21

The Thornapple River Watershed Council is hosting several upcoming events for local residents to learn more about the council.

The TRWC will host a pair of events on Saturday, June 21, to help local residents learn more about the watershed, the council and take part in additional discussions on a variety of topics.

At 10 a.m. on June 21, watershed council officials will host a morning paddle trip on a stretch of the river from the Middleville Dam down to 108th Street and the Indian Valley Campground. According to organizers, it will be about a three-hour trip.

And, from 1-3 p.m. that day, participants may attend a "TRWC Meet and Greet, to learn about the watershed, areas of concern, creative environmental projects underway and how to get involved.

For more information on the trio of upcoming events, persons may visit the TRWC website, thornappleriverwatershed.org, or on Facebook by searching for "Thornapple River Watershed Council." — *DM*

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MIDDLEVILLE TOPS 546

The June 9 meeting opened with roll call and the secretary's report. There is one fish in the fishbowl.

Sue's program came from the May/June AARP magazine titled "The Aging Power of Sugar." Sugar is the primary driver of aging reaction. Each gram of added sugar a day ages one's biological age seven times faster. Added sugars in our food are harmful, especially any ingredient ending in "-ose."

Fructose converts to fat in the liver. When sugar molecules bind to proteins and lipids, a compound called AGE accumulates, causing disease in tissues. Every tissue in the body can be affected. Sugar increases burdens on an already aging body. It increases the risk of dementia, makes one's belly bigger, wreaks havoc without nutritional status, damages the liver, increases risk for heart disease and stroke, increases the risk of diabetes, worsens menopause symptoms and promotes tooth loss.

Maryellen lost the Ha-Ha Box.

TOPS, a weight-loss support group, meets every Monday at Lincoln Meadows in Middleville. Weigh-in is from 3:30 p.m. to 3:45 p.m., followed immediately by the meeting. Press the white buzzer for entry.

The chapter is looking for anyone interested in a group that supports weight-loss journeys without shame.

Anyone with questions may call Virginia, 269-908-8036, or Maryellen, 616-318-3545. The first meeting is free.

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THE SUN AND NEWS
VIEW Group

CHS recognizes student achievement with second semester honor roll

Caledonia High School released its honor roll for the second semester of the 2024-25 academic year.

Students earning a grade point average of 4.0 or above are recognized with summa cum laude honors.

Those with a GPA of 3.5-3.9 received magna cum laude recognition, with students posting a GPA between 3.3-3.49 as cum laude.

Students qualifying for the second semester honor roll include:

NINTH GRADE:

Summa Cum Laude – Holden Ahee, Marco Amato, Madison Ambrose, Nick Amorose, Annika Bergs, Owen Bloemers, Maddox Bockover, Eve Boersma, Charlie Bont, Ethan Boucher, Hayes Boucher, Emma Bowman, Alex Brady, Aerianah Bute, Lydia Casey, Stella Chinthluai, Tristan Chu, Kendyl Clapper, Elise Clarin, Reagan Cobbs, Quinn Cook, Daniel Diffenderfer, Miles Dood, Keely Drier, Henry Dupuis, Sophie Edmondson, Adelyn Feenstra, Naomi Fennell, Olivia Foster, Ainsley Fron, Mohamed Gamareldawla, Gavin Grysen, Mason Harrison, Nevaeh Hirkaway, Scarlett Hoffa, Hannah Holmes, Landon Horan, Rachael Hornacek, Isabelle Horning, Emery James, Ella Johnson, Erik Kalkofen, Lilliana Klein, Lily Klein, Summer Klein, Luke Kozak, Emma Lerg, Zachary Little, Nina Lusaya, Brinley Lyzenga, Owen Marshall, Haileigh McInally, Cole McKenna, Brooklyn McLeod, Lilian Meurlin, David Montross, Carly Moore, Brianna Muma, Berkley Nelson, Gavin Nelson, Kendyl Nonhof, Ryleigh Owens, Michael Paarlberg, Isabella Palmitier, Steven Pekrul, Lia-Rose Perry, Emma Petz, Aimee Poe, MacKenzi Price, Riley Reimbold, Samantha Richardson, Corbin Ryder, Tiona Sakala, Daisy Schmidt, Amelia Sharp, Bennett Snapper, Kendall Somerville, Cooper Sowerby, Lydia Spees, Emily Stauffer, Arrow Stephen, Ruby Stoepker, Logan TenHopen, Calieb Tewoldemedhin, Shrimathi Thinniyam Sakthi Kumar, Adelynn VanderZand, Samuel Westemeyer, Lilli Wonnacott, Katerina Yard, Quinn Ziegler and Zack Zupin.

Magna Cum Laude – Stella Barnwell, Lydia Bell, Isaac Bennett, Connor Bloemers, Rylee Bos, Chloe Caldwell, Nora Case, Elijah Clark, Anderson Collins, Nora Collins, Analiese Crothers, Maci Davis, Sarah Denick, Naiya Dilley, Abigail Douglass, Jaycie Duffy, Jordyn Duffy, Emma Elzinga, Sophie Ferris, Bryce Freese, Grace Geelhoed, Melanie Genao Grullon, Chace Gorby, Myla Gortmaker, Ava Graham, Sophie Grajewski, Russell Grandon, Aiden Hager, Eli Hanna, Brooke Haynes, Jackson Heffner, Riley Hess, Avery Hitsman, Amelia Hodges, May Huckleberry, Katelyn Johnson, Shane Johnson, Shane Johnston, Max Judd, Aden Kalkofen, Maisie Klingensmith, Cooper Kosecki, Devin Kurtz, Oslo Langeweg, Mason Lapekes, Ruby Larson, Katelyn Light, August Maichele, Aditya Malvankar, Sedad Maric, Louis Mauriello, Bryson McCulloch, Kayla McKenzie, Mayar Mohameed, Zahara Muriithi, Samuel Myers, Nicholai Nonhof, Oliver Olmstead, Gage Openshaw, Sydney Palmer, Corbin Peterson, Haven Powers, Griffin Rapa, Escher Reeder, Valeria Roque-Segura, Isabella Rozanski, Aliya Schultetus, Conlan Schultz, Caleb Sheldon, Grady Smith, Sutton Smith, Kylen Spencer, Reagan Stevens, Jakob Swartzlander, Abigail Tava, Lucas Temple, Jared TenBrink, Sean Thompson, David Tiers, Marco Torrense Gallipoli, Emma Unger, Logan Uyl, Levi VanderLaan, Raylee VanDeWeert, Kane VanLente, Mohamed Wali, Brynn Ward, Lilli Ward, Brianne Weih, Noah Wert, Vivian Williams, Logan Workman and Lauren Ziegler.

Cum Laude – MaiLynn Bates, Audree Brown, Maie Brown-Nguyen, Evan Crater, Aslyn Crocker, Evan Debrie, Elliot DeVries, Parker Diemer, Kerim Duric, Jaden Emerson, Zach Fisher, Emma Garza, Madysen Gizzi, Mallory Graham, Arianna Gue, Khloe Lowande, Molly Muller, Egan Otto, Cade Paalman, Emma Palmer, Zachary Pirkola, Alex Postma, Logan Pratt, Hestia Reed, Max Schnurstein, Nicolas Scholl, Cruz Sierra,

See **HONOR** on 9

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A house fire on Jonagold Drive in Cutlerville reportedly may have started upstairs, possibly near an elevated deck. One person was reported to be injured as a result of the blaze. **Photos by James Gemmell**

House fire in Gaines Twp. causes injury, structural damage

James Gemmell
Contributing Writer

A house fire during the early morning hours of Sunday, June 8, left one person injured and did some damage on the upper floor of the bi-level home in Cutlerville.

Kent County Central Dispatch officials reported the blaze broke out just before 6 a.m. at the home located on the 7800 block of Jonagold Drive at

See **FIRE** on 8



Dan Veldhuizen of the Portage-based firm of Siegfried Crandall gives a presentation to the Gaines Township Board of Trustees on Monday, June 9, regarding the findings from its 2024 fiscal year audit. **Photo by James Gemmell**

GAINES

Continued from Page 2

tion on the auditor's report to the township board at its regular meeting Monday, June 9. He said the township received an "unmodified, clean opinion," meaning there were no major errors in its financial operations.

"We've made relatively few adjustments here," Veldhuizen said.

Even though the accounting firm prepares the document each year, the township management is ultimately responsible for the financial statements and internal controls, or checks and balances, over the transactions.

"A lot of new board members that I have been talking to this year don't realize that," Veldhuizen said. "They often report this as 'our' report. And, it's important to let you know that this is your report, ultimately."

Auditors reportedly made some corrections to the township's internal control procedures, such as showing depreciation on capital assets and reporting developer contributions. The accounting firm also made adjustments to township ledger on taxes receivable at the end of the year.

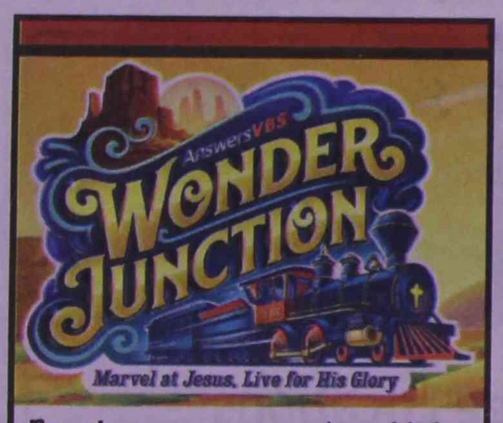
"That's relatively few compared to a lot of townships your size," Veldhuizen said.

As for the township's financial position, he added that the township's fund balance is about $6.5 million.

"I always look at that relative to expenditures," Veldhuizen said. "If you do the math, it's 212 percent of expenditures. That's a higher fund balance than I've seen here before.

"Some of that's due to the additional interest that's been earned," he added. "But I also think it's important to know that's a healthy fund balance and not excessive."

Healthy financial numbers also were noted in some of the township's fund balances, including $17 million in sewer, $12 million in water and $2.9 million in inspections.



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TKMS junior equestrian team earns honors

The Thornapple Kellogg Middle School Jr. Equestrian team earned Reserve Champion honors last weekend at the Michigan Interscholastic Horsemanship Association District 19 meet at the Barry County Expo Center.

Team members competed against 10 teams in 16 different classes to bring home the honors. This event is open to riders in grades fifth through eighth grades. The team is coached by Ally Quist and Leah Mokma. — *KTE*



The Thornapple Middle School Equestrian team members are (from left) Kayleigh Brown, Anna Kenyon, Emily Coe, Emy Snow, Riley McKeown, Taylor Buehler, Savanah Scott, Charlotte Cowell, Brystal Vos and Morgan Ryan. **Courtesy photo**

Caledonia bus drivers win Regional Bus Road-e-o Competition

Karen Turko-Ebright
Staff Writer

A team of bus drivers—not bull riders—from Caledonia schools has reclaimed first place at the annual Region 8 School Bus Road-e-o, held on May 10 at Hudsonville Public Schools. Caledonia brought both the regional and county titles back home.

Caledonia Transportation Director Michaellita Fortier said, "Grandville won it (title) last year for county in the region."

The group competed against almost 60 other drivers from other districts last month including Grandville, Forest Hills, West Ottawa and more from across the region.

Bus drivers were challenged with emergency simulations along with a series of other real-world scenarios conducted at the 2025 School Bus Road-e-o, including precision maneuvers with tight turns, parking challenges and backing exercises.

To highlight their expertise and reinforce safe driving standards, participants had to complete a rigorous written test and demonstrate safe student loading and unloading practices.

Overall third place winner, Dan Ottenwess, earned the opportunity to represent Caledonia at the State Bus Road-e-o on June 14 at Mason Middle School.

The award-winning Caledonia team included Dan Ottenwess, Tim Nurenberg, Heather Vantil, Deanna Hall, Ethan Fitzgerald, Janice Steensma, Tari Johnson, Sue Mullan, and Beth Pritchard.

"The School Bus Road-e-o is more than a competition. It's a celebration of the critical role school bus drivers play in student safety," said Fortier, "We are so proud of our team for demonstrating exceptional skill, professionalism, and a deep commitment to excellence. They truly are the best of the best!"



On May 10, Caledonia Community Schools' team of bus drivers won first place at the annual Region 8 School Bus Road-e-o held at Hudsonville Public Schools. In the front row, from left are Tim Nurenberg, Dan Ottenwess and Sue Mullan. Next, in the middle row, from left stands Heather Vantil and Tari Johnson. At the top back row from left are Deanna Hall, Ethan Fitzgerald and Janice Steensma. **Courtesy photo**

SEE THE GOOD SHE GIVES



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In July, Dr. Kim Norris completes her final term on the Barry Community Foundation Board of Directors. Serving her 2nd nine-year term, she becomes one of the first "double emeritus" board members to reach her term limit. Inspired to give back to her community, she is especially excited about the work done to establish several programs providing workforce housing in Barry County. As an ophthalmologist and owner of Creekside Vision, she is able to give back in many ways.

If you want to learn more on leaving a legacy, call Bonnie Gettys or Annie Halle at 269-945-0526, to ensure your gifts support your hopes and dreams.

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A house fire broke out just before 6 a.m. Sunday in Cutlerville, with emergency and firefighting crews remaining on the scene for a couple hours.

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VIEW Group

Your Community Connection



Firefighters from Gaines Township and the City of Kentwood respond to a house fire on Jonagold Drive in Gaines Township.

FIRE

Continued from Page 6

Empire Drive, west of Eastern Avenue.

Firefighters reportedly knocked the fire down fairly quickly, with crews then remaining on scene to mop up and check for potential hotspots for a couple hours.

Witnesses said the fire may have begun near an elevated deck, though that remained unconfirmed as of press time.

Gaines Charter Township Fire Chief Ken Van Hall also said the cause of the fire was undetermined and, according to reports, an investigation into the blaze was ongoing.

"One civilian injury occurred while escaping the fire," Van Hall added later. "One dog and two turtles were rescued by firefighters."

There was no word from public safety officials on the extent of the person's injury, nor was the individual identified.

Gaines Township firefighters were assisted by units from City of Kentwood and AMR paramedics.

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HONOR

Continued from Page 5

Raelynn TenElshof, Myiah Thayer, Iris VanOosterhout, Lilian VanStrien, Cooper Wiltse and Ethan Yarger.

TENTH GRADE:

Summa Cum Laude – Aibree Akers, Jackson Almy, Addison Athearn, Bryce Backus, Layla Bouwens, Kiara Cogswell, Katherine Cousineau, Elliott Davis, Emery DeRosia, Trevor Dorman, Liam Dykhouse, Josie Endres, Grant Feldpausch, Benjamin Geerdes, Chase Geister, Ayla Gerken, Aseel Ghannam, Grace Groendyke, Sean Harney, Gabriella Henney, Dylan Hilaski, Leah Hileman, Thomas Hodgson, Braden Hofstee, Claire James, Zack Keson, Ty Kimbrell, Luke Kowatch, Mackenzie Krentz, Jack LeBoeuf, Vanness Lin, Madison Lockwood, Ellie Melano, Kayleigh Miersen, Noah Miller, Taven Openshaw, Abby Poe, Sophia Price, Katie Reoch, Benji Rewa, Madison Reynolds, Vanessa Schram, Avery Seif, Lincoln Senti, Evelyn Smith, Tyler Smith, Emma Sokolovic, William Szyperski, Sui Tial, Katie Tran, Kate Trusevich, Anna VanderWal, Meghan Venhuizen, James Visser and Emily Walbeck.

Magna Cum Laude – Morgan Barthel, Cameron Beach, Sarah Berger, Kayla Briseno, Bria Brower, Justin Brown, Kobe Buchan, Jagger Burnes, Elizabeth Crankson, Hunter Creguer, Trey Curnow, Akaela Daman, Addison Dana, Brecken Daniero, Cole DeBlecourt, Ada Decker, Natalie DeTurk, Levi Dorband, Cora Draft, Allison Dryburgh, Estella Finkbeiner, Walker Freese, Justin Golembeske, Emmett Haan, Lauryn Hager, Olivia Hawkins, Caedyn Heys, Maria Homrich, Evelyn Huttenga, Jack Johnson, Isaac Judd, Ava Kennedy, Rosalyn Langworthy, Sonja Lazarevic, Nick Long, Benjamin Lusaya, Made Mai, Owen McCormick, Jackson McNew, Gavin Montanino, Landen Moore, Grant Morrell, Madelyn Mulder, Connor Myers, Kyle Nguyen, Renno Nichols, Corinne Nordlund, Keira Paalman, Jake Paoletti, Connor Parlin, Logan Paulen, Nola Pearson, Mackenzie Popma, James Prichard, Jackson Pugh, Abi Putnam, Quentin Raffler, Adelaide Reavis, Koleson Reeder, Ella Rigley, Gabriela Rissley, Willa Rose, Kelsey Roszkowski, Alexis Saidoo, Lauren Scheid, Kenan Sehic, Laife Shuman, Lily Smith, Lincoln Snow, Harrison Solum, Taylor Sowles, Lucas Swartz, Addison Swim, Natalia Teneyuque, Madelyn Terryn, Jazmyn Thompson, Margaret Thunder Hawk, Presley Tidey, Madison Trompen, Hannah Twork, Niklas VanderArk, Jayden VanderSyde, Addison Veldt, Abigail Wilkes, Julia Zenn and Kylee Zimmerer.

Cum Laude – Sophia Baldizon, Ryder Born, Ainsley Bridges, Aidan Brown, Aaron Collins, Caelyn Crocker, Will Dickey, Luke Grasman, Miles Grengs, Kobe Griffioen, Rhyan Guzman, Connor Hager, Arbor Hannink, Anna Homrich, Riley Kalacanic, Emilia Kaszynska, Ava LaBine, Hailey Nichols, Hayden Paggeot, Milana Rico, Jennifer Schiefla, Tyden Schuch, Sean Sorrell, Ethan Sova, Sophia Teelander, Brock Tidey, Gretchen VanderEide, Mya VanderZwaag and Olivia VanLaan.

ELEVENTH GRADE:

Summa Cum Laude – Joelyn Abraham, Mackenzi Anes, Madelyn Anes, Erica Angell, Valin Barrett, Brooke Bender, Brecken Byrd, Wade Cawson, Kyla Charles, Addison Cook, Gavin DeFields, Kayla DeGraaf, Baylee DeVries, Sebastian DeZeeuw, Charlie Doan, Maxwell Doll, Brennan Donnelly, Sophia Douglass, Larissa Dudicz, Garrett Fales, Sophia Fata, Katelyn Ferris, Anders Foerch, Yasmeen Ghannam, Landry Hammond, Caleb Harrison, Adam Haynes, Jonas Howell, Kay Hurst, Noah Kaplan, Ian Kimbrell, Jolie King, Parker Knoop, Circe Langeweg, Gabrielle Linker, Avarey Lippert, Parker Lipsman, Marian Listen, Allison Malone, Keira Marshall, Jayden McCoy, Liam Moore, Christian Moorlag, Cole Nyman, Angel Par, Caleb Parlin, Rebecca Pezzato, Derick Prichard, Ashia Robinson, David Robinson, Isaac Robotham, Abigail Schnurstein, Abby Skibinski, Evelynn Slomp, Ethan Snapper, Bradyn Snow, Nina Stiver, Hailey Thayer, Chelsea Tran, Brooklynn VanArtsen, Kaden VanRyn, Rosalyn VanStrien, Maya White, Elliot Winger, Morgan Wnuk, Rydik Wrubel and Elliott Ziegler.

Magna Cum Laude – Parker Anderson, Alivia Baareman, Andrew Barnum, Skye Bradley, Elliot Clark, Libby Coles, Julia Cooley, Aydin DeBoer, Peyton DeHorn, Hudsen Derengowski, Elysa DeVries, Brent DeYoung, Audrey Duong, Katelyn Farstvedt, Eliana Grinstead, Kaedence Herr, Sam Hoag, Ayden Hoisington, Hazel Horning, Zoey Hunter, Raymond Huynh, Alyssa Jernigan, Paityn John, Nathan Johnston, Noah Johnston, Avery Jurmu, Lyla Keller, Jonathan Kellogg, Hellen Komera, Molly Larson, Ty Lewandowski, Molly Liggett, Adelae Lucas, Addison Luxford, Owen Mancuso, Jocelyn Martinez, Easton Miller, Ella Miller, Zoe Miller, Noah Moberly, Mitchell Moelker, Ben Moss, Kortney Muller, Sergio Munoz, Codie Okrangley, Jameson Palmer, Kady Palmer, Stuart Parker, Aaron Pyper, Camden Quigley, Niomi Scavo, Ella Schultetus, Mila Schultz, Ethan Schwartzfisher, Gavin Senneker, Colton Sheely, Luke Smith, Sofia Smith, Ryan Snider, Austin Soper, Alexander Spinney, Evan Standley, Halle Stout, Sydney Streit, Summer Tague, Ellie Tennant, Claire Timmerman, Landon Tiripan, Tyler Triebel, Helena Truong, Eli Velting, Abby VerBurg, Payton Walker, Braylon Walma, Haydn Weidner, Ella Wickens, Yelena Wilks, Drake Young and Brianna Zeller.

Cum Laude – Juliana Apo, Hannah Backhus, Ava Bedingham, Lillian Bender, Ella Burns, Sydney Clarke, Tana Coates, Leila DeOliveira-Terzic, Brady Fanco, Gillian Guzman, Andrew Hanna, Malachi Hanson, Haley Hartnett, Katie Honhart, Benjamin James, Alden Jones, Av Jordan, Neelani Jourden, Kohen Lapekes, Torie Main, Madelynn Pittman, Savannah Robinson, Hadeel Shukur, Mya-Rose Slosser, Madelyn Stauffer, Andrew VanderKolk, Samuel Walma, Anna Windsor, Dakota Winters and Luke Witvoet.

TWELFTH GRADE:

Summa Cum Laude – Ashleigh Adams, Sophia Anderson, Luke Athearn, Michael Berger, Greta Betz, Brecken Bloemers, Keegan Broomfield, Ethan Buer, Malia Burke, Parker Chapp, Rory Cobb, Makenna Cole, Madison Coles, Carson Conroy, Liam Cook, Remy Cortez, Nathen Cox, Adysen Daman, Kaylee Dekkinga-Weller, Mary Depetro, Noah DeRosia, Ella DeRuyter, Christian DeYoung, Evan DeYoung, Drew Diebolt, Hannah Dupuis, Aidan Edgar, Easton Ellens, Alexa Elliot, Amber Fairchild, Chessie Fanco, Jenny George, Presley Gyorki, Silas Haan, Neal Hargrave, Ally Heaton, Aliya Hernden, Liz Hilton, Ellie Hudson, Kathleen Johnson, Bridget Kayser, Lukas Keson, Kylee Kirkbride, Gretel Knipping, Colin Kowatch, Nirdhvaitha Kumar, Elena LaFranca, Myah Lapekes, West Larson, Danielle Le-Tran, Austin Licari, Ellery Lienesch, Siyani Mahadevan, Jessica Maier, Tyler McAllister, Samantha McCormick, Brennan McVey, Sawyer Mertz, Samuel Miersen, Elise Miller, Nathan Montross, Andrew Moore, Claire Musk, Cameron Myers, Alivia Neubauer-Keyes, Copelin Okrangley, Peter Paarlberg, Emerson Pattock, Erin Peckham, Eliza Pehrson, Owen Petersen, TJ Platschorre, Allie Poe, Kayli Price, Finn Radtke, Caydence Reed, Logan Reimbold, Rian Restau, Sebastian Rissley, Addison Russell, Meghan Ruthven, Juliana Ryder, William Sheely, Henry Simon, Ranveer Singh, Cerys Smith, Taylor Sorsen, Olivia Stauffer, Owen Straight, Christopher Streit, River Swanlund, Andrew Tava, Justin Trees, Isabella Treib, Adela Turpin, Kenna VanLente, Susanna Vire, Emily Vu and Cameron Weibel.

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Cum Laude – Brody Benjamin, Joseph Briseno, Mya Burgess, William Chrisman, Kaden Colegrove, Anthony Daley, Tristan Devrou, Taylor Doss, Laney Elles, Isabella Ellis, Zoe Fleming, Owen Fynewever, Katie Guernsey, Emma Hansen, Carter Johnson, Lily Keech, Eden Korb, Jenna Labun, Hailey Markwat, Vincent Mauriello, Cole Morgan, Zachary Mulder, Sam Ouwinga, Alaina Palmer, Alana Pettenger, Ragaz Piromari, Isaac Pitchford, Samuel Pugh, Brody Siler, Bradyn Sorensen, Sam Temple, Caleb Thome, Levi VerBurg, Talen Verburg and Christina Waldmiller. — *DM*

Gaines trustees discuss voting equipment options

James Gemmell
Contributing Writer

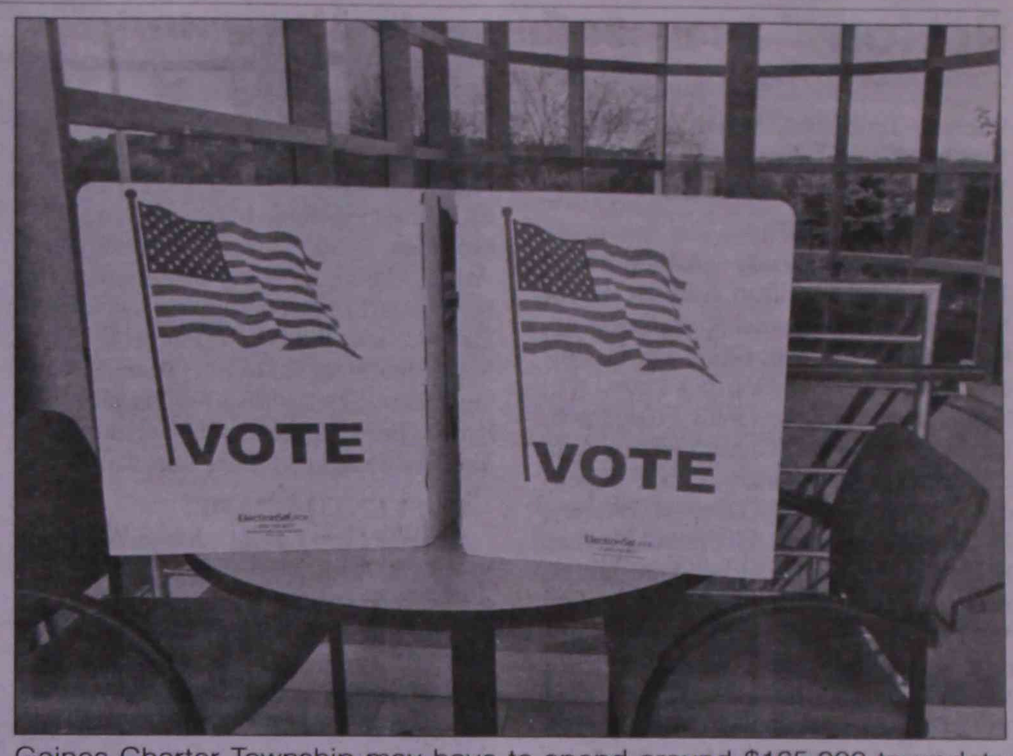
Gaines Charter Township may have to spend around $165,000 to update some voting equipment in less than two years.

The expiration date on it is Feb. 28, 2027, and the State of Michigan has said it is not anticipating having funds available for municipalities to purchase new equipment.

Gaines Township has nine voting precincts on election days, but essentially 11, factoring in early voting and absentee voting. The current estimated per-precinct cost to replace the equipment is about $15,000.

"Unless I can find proper ways of consolidating precincts, the cost to Gaines Charter Township would be in the neighborhood of $165,000 if I have done my math correctly," Clerk Michael Brew wrote in an email to *The Sun and News*.

And that would be just for the new equipment, not including the additional costs associated with the purchase of supplies and training staff on how to use the new equipment.



Gaines Charter Township may have to spend around $165,000 to update some voting equipment in less than two years. **Photo by James Gemmell**

Brew discussed the situation with the township board at its June 9 meeting at the township hall.

"So, I guess I'm asking that we budget money for election equipment (as) capital expenses," he said.

"I do have a note in my information for next year's budget that we need to create a provision for that," Township Manager Rod Weersing said.

Township Supervisor Bob Terpstra suggested that the township board take that discussion up at its July budget meeting.

Brew said that he may be able to reduce the number of voting precincts in the township through consolidation. The state constitution allows only 4,999 active registered voters per precinct. The maximum number used to be 2,999 voters, but the Michigan Legislature changed that in November 2023. Local election commissions can consolidate precincts with fewer than 4,999 active registered electors.

"With the amount of development that's going on in Gaines Township … I don't know how much I'm going to be able to reduce our 11 precincts," Brew said.

Michigan law requires that separate early voting sites be set up for voters to cast ballots in person before election day. After the early voting period ends, all equipment used at the early voting site must be returned to the clerk. That includes electronic voting equipment, ballot containers and election materials.

The Michigan Association of Municipal Clerks (MAMC) held its summer conference June 2 through June 6 at the Muskegon Convention Center. Dominion Voting Systems, Hart and Election Systems & Software (ES&S) demonstrated some of the latest election equipment they supply in Michigan.

Brew said the three manufacturers and some new companies are going through a rigorous testing process for electronic tabulating equipment to make sure it is performing properly.

"Our standards and laws have changed recently with Michigan voters adding new election laws to the Michigan constitution," Brew said.

Some of those changes include early voting, same-day registration, absentee ballots being processed in precincts, and electronic voting for military and overseas voters.

"The older voting equipment is too slow to handle the new demands; thus, the need to get new equipment," Brew said. "Accessibility standards have also changed, which were not necessarily built into the technology of the over 10-year-old equipment."

Village of Middleville
COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

The minutes of the May 27, 2025 Regular Council Meeting, that were approved on May June 10, 2025, are posted at the Village Hall at 100 E Main Street and on the website at www.villageofmiddleville.org.

CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF CALEDONIA BOARD OF TRUSTEES
Meeting Minutes

The minutes for the May 21, 2025 Township Board of Trustees Meeting that were approved on June 4, 2025, are posted at the Township Offices at 8196 Broadmoor Ave., and on the website at www.caledoniatownship.org.

Yankee Springs Township
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YANKEE SPRINGS TOWNSHIP
SPECIAL MEETING NOTICE June 25, 2025 at 6 PM
PROPOSED 2025-2026 BUDGET PUBLIC HEARING

The Yankee Springs Township Board will hold a Special Meeting to conduct a Public Hearing on the proposed Township Budget Fiscal Year 2025-2026 at the Township Hall, 284 N. Briggs Road, Middleville, Michigan 49333 on Wednesday June 25 at 6 PM.

The property tax millage rate proposed to be levied to support the proposed Budget will be a subject of this hearing.

A copy of the proposed budget is available for public Inspection at the Township Office on June 19, 2025 during regular office hours.

Americans with Disabilities Notice: "The Yankee Springs Township Board will provide necessary and reasonable auxiliary aids and services, such as signers for the hearing impaired and audio tapes of printed materials being considered at the meeting to individuals at the meeting upon 5 days notice to the Township Clerk, 284 N. Briggs Road, Middleville, MI 49333. Phone 269-795-9091. Fax 269-795-2388.

Tom Hopkins
Yankee Springs Township Clerk

Wildwood Summer Series in Alto entertains crowds with music, food and drink

James Gemmell
Contributing Writer

For the past six summers, a 55-acre farm in a remote area of southeastern Kent County has been the scene of a monthly event featuring live outdoor concerts, food trucks and a beer garden.

Wildwood Family Farms is at 7970 Snow Avenue in the Alto area of Bowne Township. That is about 21 miles from Grand Rapids, nine miles from Middleville, about 19 miles from Hastings and about 17 miles from Lake Odessa.

On June 6, an estimated crowd of about 450 people attended a two-set concert of blues and funk played by the West Michigan band Soul Syndicate. Many of the people in the crowd sat in lawn chairs or danced to the music, while others visited the food truck and full-service bars. Children and dogs played in a large grassy field nearby.

"So, there's family with kids. They're being spread out all across the farm. And some people will sit up in the Beer Garden and just use the band as background music and hang out with their friends. And some people will be front-row seat and watch the band," Justin Heyboer said in a phone interview.

He and his wife, Kelly Heyboer, have owned Wildwood Family Farms for 24 years.

"We wanted to create this space out in the country where it's pet-friendly, it's kid-friendly. Parents can bring their kids out, let them run around and not have to worry about cars or traffic," Heyboer said. "It really means a lot to Kelly and I having parents of young kids, especially, still being able to enjoy a night out with their friends but know that their kids are safe playing out in the field with a bunch of other kids."

Justin said he and his wife have always enjoyed live music, so they got the idea about six years ago to begin the monthly concert series.

"A buddy wanted his band to play out there, because it's pretty quiet, it's a country setting," Heyboer said. "A few friends showed up and said, 'Hey, you should have more live music out here.' So, we started a series called 'Between the Silos.' Our farm was built in 1893 and there's two big silos out there."

The idea was to bring people back to the farm to enjoy live music outdoors on a summer night.

"I think we've lost a little bit of the sense of what it is to get out into the country and really be able to enjoy what the country and, especially, what the summer in Michigan is. Because it's such a short time frame," Heyboer said.

The series runs from May through October and there usually are six or seven concerts during that time. Each concert begins at 7 p.m. on a Friday or Saturday evening and runs until dusk.

"Most of those are regional touring artists, but we've had national touring artists out there too," Heyboer said.

For example, the Traverse City-based indie folk and roots music group The Accidentals has performed at Wildwood before. And Michigan-based band Full Cord Bluegrass won the International Bluegrass Music Association's "Momentum Band of the Year" award and the Telluride Bluegrass Band Competition in 2022.

The next show will be July 11 at 7 p.m., featuring the Simply in Time Band. Per usual, the gates will open at 5 p.m. and the cover charge at the door will be $10, with kids under age 16 getting in free of charge.

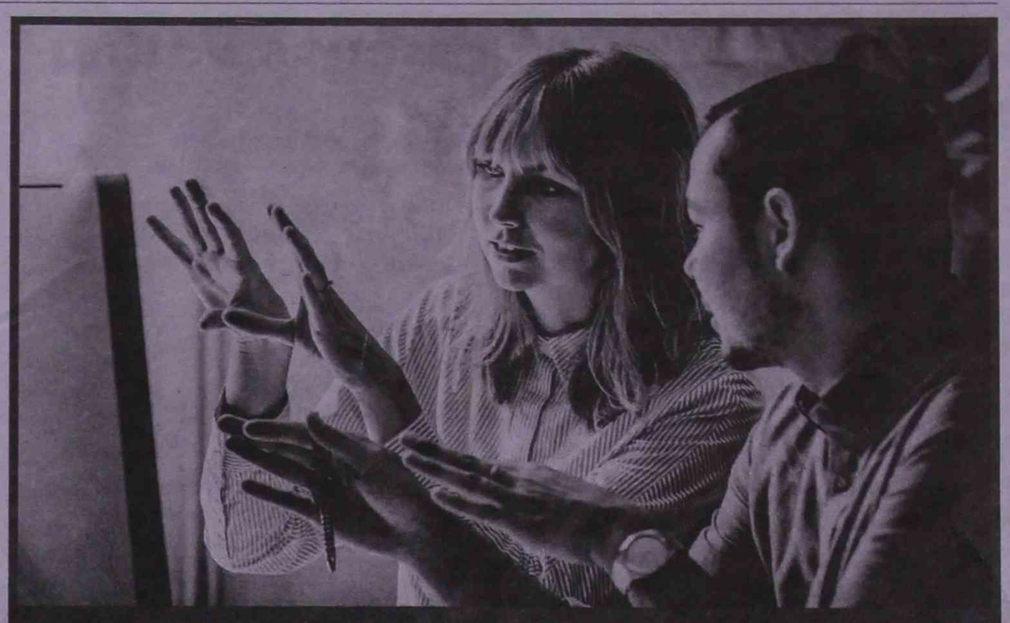
Heyboer said that, under a land-use stipulation in its zoning ordinance, the township only allows Wildwood to hold a maximum of six concerts per year.

"Which is fine because we're basi-

See **SERIES** on 12

CORRECTION:

Kylee Hoebeke, the Thornapple Kellogg varsity softball team's senior shortstop, was incorrectly identified by her sister's name in the story on the TK softball team's district semifinal contest with Wayland on page 13 of the June 7 edition of *The Sun and News.*



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- Buyer's Guide & News
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- Battle Creek Shopper News
- The Sun and News
- The Reminder



Soul Syndicate played a couple of sets of blues and funk music at the Wildwood Family Farms on June 6 in Alto. **Photos by James Gemmell**



An estimated crowd of about 450 people turned out for the most recent concert in the annual summer series at Wildwood, which includes food trucks, a beer garden and play areas for children and pets.

SERIES

Continued from Page 11

cally a private-event venue. So, we do weddings, corporate events," Heyboer said. "I think if you do it more than once a month it loses some of its anticipation of coming out to the farm … We have a lot of our regulars that show up every time, that put it on their calendar every summer. We have some who have never missed a concert."

The Heyboers don't want the event to grow too large.

"Our biggest thing is we try to keep it smaller and more of an intimate-type setting," Justin said. "Try to keep it in the range of 400 to 450 people … otherwise, it gets too big."

"When people show up, they're either there for the party or they're there for the live music. And it's a great mix of both," Heyboer said.

Corporate events plus birthday parties, weddings and other life milestones are celebrated at Wildwood Family Farms, which has barns filled with animals and land that is used for planting flowers and vegetables. Wildwood says on its website that guests can experience a farm-to-table experience by booking event space for 10 to 40 guests. And people also can schedule an appointment to get fresh-cut flowers.