



Stuart Spencer (right) distributes life vests he donated to Cedarville Middle School sixth grade students in May, following the students' completion of a boating safety course at the school. (Photograph courtesy of Les Cheneaux Community Schools)

## Spencers Donate Life Jackets to Students

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of our safety campaign," Mr. Crockett said. "I think the Spencers' PFD donation is the greatest thing that was ever done for the boating safety program here. These kids have no excuse now not to use them."

Each year as the Spencers present the life vests, Mr. Spencer tells the students of his experiences, and asks them to always wear their life vests on the water.

"We never want a child to drown because he or she didn't have a PFD," Mr. Spencer said.

### Using Life Vests, Flotation Devices Is the Law

As local residents take to the water this spring, summer, and fall,

the Department of Natural Resources and Coast Guard offer the following laws for using personal flotation devices. When preparing to go out on a vessel, the operator must check that the legally required equipment is on board. All US Coast Guard requirements must be met on the Great Lakes.

- All vessels must be equipped with a personal flotation device for each person on board.

- The U.S. Coast Guard requires that all vessels have at least one Coast Guard-approved wearable flotation device for each person, such as a vest or full-sleeved flotation jacket. They must be the proper size for each person on board. Sizing for flotation devices is based on body weight and chest size.

- Michigan law permits a vessel that is less than 16 feet long, or is a canoe or kayak, to have either a wearable or a throwable flotation device for each person on board. Throwable devices include life rings and buoyant, marine seat cushions.

- Michigan law requires all children under six years of age to wear a Coast Guard approved Type I or II PFD when riding on the open deck of any vessel.

- Each person riding on or towed behind a personal watercraft must wear a Coast Guard approved Type I, II, or III personal flotation device. Inflatable devices are not allowed on personal watercraft.

- All flotation devices must be in good, serviceable condition and must be readily accessible.

## \$2,500 Paid to Council Members for May

Total pay to members of the St. Ignace City Council for attending meetings and events during May was \$2,500.

Council members are paid \$70 for regular meetings and \$60 for committee meetings or gatherings at which the person is representing the city.

The mayor receives \$80 per council meeting and \$70 for any other event at which the mayor is representing the city.

Council held two regular meetings during May, Monday, May 7, and Monday, May 21.

There are no rules to govern what events are eligible for payment. Council meetings are held twice monthly. Members attended the following events and received the following pay:

**Mayor Paul Grondin**  
\$580 - Council, May 7 and May 21; Fort de Buade committee, May 3; library committee, May 8; Downtown Development Authority, May 11; negotiating committee, May 14 and May 21; Planning Commission, May 23.

Meetings attended but received no pay: Fort de Buade committee, May 7; Chamber of Commerce, May 9; Chamber of Commerce dinner, May 17; presenting key to the city to Mike Rowe of the Discovery Channel, May 23; Memorial Day ceremony, May 28.

**Don Gustafson**  
\$500 - Council, May 7 and May 21; audit committee, May 2; Fort de Buade committee, May 7; Recreation Advisory Board, May 9; ambulance committee, May 10; negotiating committee, May 14

and May 21.

**Willie LaLonde**  
\$440 - Council, May 7 and May 21; Fort de Buade committee, May 7; ambulance committee, May 10; negotiating committee, May 14; real estate committee, May 16; negotiating committee, May 21.

Meetings attended but received no pay: Fort de Buade committee, May 3.

**Susan Tamlyn-Massaway**  
\$320 - Council, May 7 and May 21; audit committee, May 2; H.O.M.E., May 16; Planning Commission, May 23.

**Paul Fullerton**  
\$260 - Council, May 7 and May 21; audit committee, May 2; Fort de Buade committee, May 7.

**Merv Wyse**  
\$200 - Council, May 7 and May 21; real estate committee, May 16.

**Tom Della-Moretta**  
\$200 - Council, May 7 and May 21; real estate committee, May 16.

## RAEF Sponsors Writing Contest

A creative writing competition for Rudyard Middle School students included participants Amanda Baldwin, Ashlee Bonnee, Katie Carr, Kayla Coffey, Rita DeVoy, Hannah Gravelle, Brandon Mason, Caroline Neal, Ilsa Salo, Cris Tolliver, and Alex Traynor. The competition was sponsored by the Rudyard Area Education Fund.

First, second, and third places for fiction went to Ilsa Salo, Alex Traynor, and Katie Carr, respectively. Amanda Baldwin was recognized for her poetry.

Each writer received a complimentary copy of "Alive and Free in the EUP," a book by Larry Flanders, an Education Fund board member. There were also cash awards for the winners in prose and poetry categories.

Funding for the project was provided by the sale of Mr. Flanders' book.

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## West Nile Virus Threatens Bird Populations

By Patricia Martin  
Mackinac Island Town Crier

Every morning during the spring, summer, and fall, I get up not long after the sun rises (sometimes before), and walk up the stairs behind my house up to the East Bluff on Mackinac Island to feed my horse. One of the wonderful things about this practice is the chance to hear the birds singing. From cardinals to pileated woodpeckers, from black-throated green warblers to American crows, from blue jays to wrens, they all have a song, or at least make some kind of noise.

The songs haven't always been so prevalent. In the 1960s, people began to notice a reduction in the number of song birds, as documented in Rachel Carson's classic book, "Silent Spring," published in 1962. It brought awareness to the problems created by the misuse of DDT and other pesticides.

DDT and other pesticides were sprayed on Mackinac Island beginning after World War II, and continuing into the 1960s, as a way to control the fly and mosquito populations and, of course, it did more than that. In Michigan it was also used extensively in the 1950s to control the beetles that carry Dutch elm disease. The result was a slaughter of American robins through the contamination of the earthworms that they eat, and particularly in predatory birds, a thinning of the eggshells, which caused a decline in populations. Amphibians were also greatly affected by DDT. The use of DDT was discontinued on Mackinac Island in the 1960s, and in 1972, DDT was almost totally banned in the United States. It is still being used in Africa and many Central and South American countries, among other places.

Since the DDT ban, bird populations have recovered to a large extent in our area, and it's wonderful to hear them singing again.

Pesticides are not the only threat to bird populations.

Recently a new threat has raised its ugly head. It's West Nile virus. In 1999 West Nile, a mosquito-borne virus, first appeared in North America in New York, quickly spread across the country over the next five years, and is now considered permanently established. Many of us became aware of this disease in relationship to our horses. Over the last few years, many horse owners have routinely vaccinated their horses against this deadly disease. Besides affecting horses, it also can infect birds, other animals, and people (there is no vaccine for humans). It's usually transmitted by the bite of a mosquito.

Several years ago, people in our area were asked to keep a lookout for dead crows, a bird that seems to be infected fairly commonly. Dead birds were collected and checked to see if they were killed by the West Nile virus, to determine how far the disease had spread. In 2003, which was the worst year so far for West Nile, the Centers for Disease Control reported that more than 9,862 people had become infected, and 264 of them had died. Last year, there were 4,268 reported cases, and 177 people were killed by the disease.

Recently several studies have come out on the effect of West Nile on bird populations. According to a paper published in the journal *Nature*, West Nile virus has dra-

matically reduced populations of several common bird species, including robins and chickadees. In some regions, there has been a population decline of almost 50% in crows. Researchers from the Consortium for Conservation Medicine at the Wildlife Trust, a New York-based research group, examined the populations of 20 different species of birds. There are between 300 to 400 other species of birds on our continent that were not included in the study, and it's not unreasonable to assume they also have been affected.

Researchers used 26 years of data from North American Breeding Bird Survey sites across 10 states to predict the size of populations of common bird species. They compared the predictions with what was seen in the bird survey in the years after the arrival of West Nile. Once the disease had arrived in a region, they discovered that there was a steep and sometimes progressive decline in populations of crows, robins, chickadees, and Eastern bluebirds (before the arrival of West Nile, their populations had been increasing). Population declines were also seen in tufted titmice, house wrens, and blue jays.

After the worst year for West Nile virus so far, which was 2003, 13 of the 20 species studied hit a

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