

# Retailers Offer 50th Bridge Anniversary Souvenirs

By Karen Gould

With the official celebration weekend marking the 50th anniversary of the Mackinac Bridge just one month away, souvenirs that chronicle bridge construction, history, and the Straits can be found at many area retail shops.

With commemorative items ranging from 99¢ to more than \$80, residents and visitors can memorialize the bridge's past through photographs and movies, wear earrings that depict the bridge, mark the page of their favorite novel with a bridge bookmark, and take on the challenge of a 500-piece jigsaw puzzle featuring the five-mile span.

For years, tourist visits to Northern Michigan have meant taking home souvenirs that captured their memories, added to their collections, or included a T-shirt naming the location of their summer trip.

This year, retailers hope those shopping bags will include bridge memorabilia.

Interest in the bridge already has taken hold on Mackinac Island, said Jill Sawatzki, Island resident and Island Bookstore assistant. "People come in and want to know everything about the building of the bridge," she said. "They are thrilled when they see we have the Public Broadcasting Service DVD movie, "50th Anniversary Edition, Building the Mighty Mac."

Ms. Sawatzki said she tries to keep informed on area history and summer events, including activities planned for the bridge celebration in July.

"People come to the bookstore for information like they come to the tourism bureau," she said. "I try to find out as much as I can about everything going on. When the tourism bureau closes, the next stop they go to for information is the book store."

In addition to books, bridge related items being sold at the Main Street shop include bookmarks, movies, playing cards, stationery, an appointment calendar, and a puzzle.

In St. Ignace, jewelry items featuring the bridge started arriving approximately six months ago, said Joe Della-Moretta of the Gold Mine. The store has offered silver and gold charms of the bridge for several years. The charms depict the bridge and have the word "Mackinac" engraved on them to distinguish

the charm from other suspension bridges, said Mr. Della-Moretta.

Added to the Gold Mine's collection are American-made earrings from Jo Addie of the "Somewhere in Time Gallery" of La Grange Park, Illinois. Gold or silver necklaces depicting the bridge are available, he said.

"We've had interest in this memorabilia since we got it," said Mr. Della-Moretta.

Three canvas signs on the outside of the store mirror the official bridge celebration poster and draw attention to the bridge souvenirs inside. The signs were painted by Yvonne Della-Moretta.

Just up the street at the Indian Village souvenir store, visitors are greeted by a display of bridge commemorative items. Included with the traditional T-shirts, sweatshirts, and postcards are snow globes, key chains, books, hats, coffee mugs, iron-on patches, coolers, and spoons.

"Coffee mugs and snow globes are very popular," said Susan Ryan, night manager at the store. "And the coolers are going very fast."

While making purchases, visitors ask many questions about the bridge, she said. Most often she is asked when the bridge opened to traffic. The question leads to explaining that the celebration is being held in the summer, she said, when Upper Peninsula weather is more cooperative and to accommodate summer vacations, rather than at the official bridge opening date of November 1.

A commemoration ceremony also is scheduled for November 1 at Bridge View Park recognizing the historic opening of the bridge.

In February, four posters marking the 50th anniversary of the bridge were made available by the Michigan Department of Transportation. The posters sell for \$4 each and are available by mail or by phone at (517) 322-1676.

**At right: Gina Della-Moretta of the Gold Mine jewelry store on State Street shows some of the gold and silver Mackinac Bridge jewelry available Saturday, June 23. Three hand-painted canvas signs replicating the official Mackinac Bridge celebration poster hang on the outside of the St. Ignace business. They were painted by her mother, Yvonne Della-Moretta.**



**In addition to books, the Island Bookstore offers an array of Mackinac Bridge memorabilia ranging from playing cards to DVDs. On Saturday, June 23, Jill Sawatzki, assistant at the shop, said a special display is planned at the store for July. Tourists are already asking questions about the bridge's history, she said, and activities planned during the celebration that begins Thursday, July 26, with the introduction of a new bridge token.**



## Hessel's Beach Clean-up Will Start June 29

A Hessel Beach clean-up will start at 6:30 p.m. Friday, June 29, at the municipal beach parking area on Lake Street in Hessel.

The clean up is the first of more work bees hoped to improve the beach area, said Bud Mathews, a Hessel excavator who is organizing the clean up.

"It's an increasingly popular place," Mr. Mathews said, noting that it is the only public beach in Hessel, and the only public swimming and recreation beach offered by Clark Township.

Mr. Mathews and other volunteers want to improve the beach by removing stones, re-seeding the lawn, and building flower beds, among other improvements.

Hessel Marina Harbormaster Gail Dreisbach is helping Mr. Mathews coordinate work at the beach.

Volunteers or people who want to donate to the project should call Mr. Mathews at (906) 484-3720 or the Hessel Marina at (906) 484-3917.

## Hospital Employees Express Concern to Board

*Outsourcing Services, Budget Cuts Have Some Employees Concerned*

By Ryan Schlehuder

Ongoing changes and budget cuts at Mackinac Straits Hospital and Health Center have some employees concerned, and they attended the hospital board's meeting Monday, June 18, to complain that laundry services have been farmed out to an area prison. Some staff said they felt uninformed and questioned board actions to outsource hospital services and even the reasoning behind the need for a new facility.

"The stress level at Mackinac Straits has been terrible," hospital housekeeper Marla Bentley said, addressing the board. "Morale is terrible. We're disgusted because we're told, 'Like it or not, we're going to make these changes.'"

She contended that staff has never been involved in any discussion of the changes taking place at the hospital to cut costs and meet changing state and federal funding priorities.

"We're getting information in bits and pieces," she said.

Outsourcing the hospital's laundry service to Michigan State Industries, Straits Correctional Facility Laundry, a move that could save the cash-strapped hospital about \$50,000, was the center of concern for the more than 15 employees who showed up at the meeting. The unexpected large audience forced the meeting to be moved from the Mackinac County Airport to the Quality Inn conference room.

Patricia Gustafson, a former nurse assistant and human resource risk management assistant, along with other employees, questioned the board's decision to allow prisoners to clean hospital laundry, which would include personal items from residents of the Long Term Care Facility.

Mrs. Gustafson, who said she has become active in learning about the board's moves to save money and to build a new facility, questioned the ability of prisoners to handle the laundry with care, as the hospital employees did.

"Our laundry department takes the extra effort," she said. "Do you think that's going to happen at the prison? These residents, those personal clothing items – quilts, Afghans, teeth, hearing aids – this all goes through the laundry. Don't they deserve a little bit more than sending it up to the prison to be bulk washed?"

Ms. Bentley, one of the hospital's three laundry department employees, said having prisoners cleaning the laundry is a bad idea for many reasons.

"Many times we find wallets, earrings, Grandma's rosary she had all her life," she said. "I don't think you'll get those back if it goes to the prison."

Mrs. Gustafson also questioned

whether the dirty linens would be taken and brought back at an efficient time, and criticized maintenance of the hospital building.

Ms. Bentley agreed.

"What happens when there is a lock-down or bad weather or epidemics?" she asked, suggesting that some long term care residents would not have proper clothing and would be forced to wear hospital gowns if the laundry was delayed.

The hospital, which employs 250 people, has been preparing for possible cuts in state funding and Medicaid next year, as well as making preparations to move into a new facility on North State Street, near the Mackinac County Airport.

Last fiscal year, Mackinac Straits Hospital lost \$400,000 in net income in the first three months and ended the year with a \$482,000 loss. It had \$1.34 million less net revenue in fiscal year 2007 and expenses had to be reduced by \$900,000, with outsourcing many of its services as a way to cut expenses, such as lawn care, snow removal, and biochemical laboratory operations.

So far, only four positions have been eliminated in the past couple of years, said hospital CEO Rod Nelson. While the three positions in the laundry department are now eliminated, the employees will be retrained to work in other positions in the hospital, such as nurse and dietitian assistants, said Karen Cheeseman, the hospital's human resources director.

Outsourcing the laundry is one of the many initiatives the hospital is taking to prepare for more cuts from Medicaid this fall, said Mr. Nelson, in an attempt by the state

\* Please turn to page 5

## Annual Township Meetings

### Clark Township

## State Law of Advanced Notice Denies Officials' Salary Raises

By Amy Polk

Clark Township electors will not be able to vote on trustee salaries at the Saturday, June 30, annual meeting, and officials will not get raises this year.

Trustees overlooked a deadline and did not adopt salary resolutions in time for the annual meeting. Michigan law requires the board to adopt salary resolutions 30 days before an annual meeting is scheduled, and the board adopted its raises June 21, only nine days before the meeting. Supervisor Linda Hudson said Michigan Townships Association told her the salary resolutions adopted June 21 will be "null and void" because of the error.

"Owing to a procedural error, the electors will not get a vote on it, and there will be no raises," Mrs. Hudson told *The St. Ignace News* Friday, June 22, shortly after learning they missed the deadline. "The raises were adopted as part of the annual meeting procedure, and because of the procedural error, salaries will now continue as they were previously."

Trustees at the June 21 meeting proposed for each of the township's top three officials – supervisor, clerk, and treasurer – \$5,000 raises, and the other two trustees \$72.08 raises. Raises for supervisor, clerk, and treasurer were to equal approximately 25%, increasing each of their annual salaries from \$20,028 to \$25,028. The additional \$5,000 was proposed compensation for "facilities administration and management," and adopted as such for each official. Mrs. Hudson explained at the meeting that each official is responsible for managing township facilities in addition to the statutory duties assigned their positions. In Clark Township, the supervisor's office manages the sewer, public works, and building and zoning departments, for

instance. The clerk's office is responsible for three cemeteries, Clark Township Community Center, sewer billing, and administering the townships' fire and ambulance services. The treasurer's office manages the municipal airport in Hessel, and the docks, launch ramps, and marina in Cedarville and Hessel, and facilities trash collection and transfer station. Each official also serves on various township committees.

Supervisor, clerk, and treasurer have no set hours to work at Clark Township Hall and are not required to work any number of hours as part of their statutory duties. Deputies work regular hours from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Monday through Friday, and officials are usually available during those hours as well. The hall is open extended hours on Mondays from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m., when Mrs. Hudson and Treasurer Katie Carpenter staff the office. Clerk Cathy Nordquist and the other officials said they are available by appointment anytime they are not at the office.

The trustees' salary was to increase by 3.24%, from \$2,225.28 to \$2,297.36 a year, plus \$75 per meeting. The board budgeted for about two meetings a month for each trustee, or an additional \$1,800 each. The two trustees also have additional duties. The board voted 4-1 in favor of the supervisor, clerk, and treasurer raises, with trustee Dana Leach voting against them. Questioning whether the trustees' salaries would increase, Mr. Leach was told there was no increase for trustees this year, so he voted unanimously with the others in favor of adopting the proposed salaries. The board learned after the meeting adjourned, however, that the proposed adopted salaries are higher

\* Please turn to page 9

### Newton Township

## Proposed Salary Raise To Be Decided by Township Voters

By Ryan Schlehuder

Newton Township's annual meeting to set salaries, meeting times, and town hall policies will be at 9 a.m. at the township hall Saturday, June 30. A budget hearing will be held and a proposal for a 3% salary raise for township officials will be discussed and voted on by residents attending.

All residents of Newton Township are eligible to vote at annual meetings, according to the Michigan Townships Association, however, residents can only vote on two issues – altering salaries as established in a prior township board resolution, and increasing the number of trustees to be elected.

The board proposed raises for its supervisor, clerk, treasurer, and two trustees at its May 9 meeting, meeting the required 30-day notice period before the annual meeting. If approved by voters Saturday, Supervisor Bob Brotherton's pay will be increased from \$6,719 to \$6,923, Clerk Alice Zdebski's salary will go from \$8,254 to \$8,769, Treasurer Marilyn Strickland's salary will be increased from \$6,399 to \$6,810, and Trustees Rick Frisch and Frank Kuehn will receive raises, from \$96 per meeting to \$100 per meeting. In addition, the board is recommending that Mrs. Strickland's Summer Education Tax wage be increased from \$1,841 to \$1,902.

The treasurer receives an additional wage for collecting a summer education tax for the months of July, August, and September. With this wage, the treasurer now receives a combined \$8,240. With the raise, Mrs. Strickland would receive \$8,712.

Part of the raise for Clerk Zdebski includes a wage for operating the school election, which she has done voluntarily for the past three years, owing to the township's tight budget.

If the proposed raises are approved, Mrs. Zdebski would receive an hourly wage of \$6.95 while operating the school election.

She told the board May 9 that it usually takes 35 hours to operate the election, which would amount to \$243 in wages to Mrs. Zdebski.

Election inspector wages are proposed to increase along with the state's minimum wage. Inspectors have received a minimum wage of \$6.95 since the state's minimum wage was raised last October. It is expected to be raised to \$7.15 in July and \$7.40 later this year.

Newton Township's proposed budget for next year includes revenues of \$371,159.05 and expenses of \$371,104. This year, the township collected \$303,099.58 and spent \$146,388.45.

Clerk Zdebski said she constructed next year's budget to plan for worst-case scenarios, owing to the township's tight budgeting the past few years, which is why next year's expected expenses are higher than this year's.

"I don't expect us to spend all that money," she said, "but if it's not in the budget, we can't use it."

Next year's proposed budget includes \$71,981 in the contingency fund, or "extra money," as Mrs. Zdebski refers to it, and \$154,000 in capital outlay, which includes two road millages.

Expenses next year for the township may include purchasing a new fire truck for the fire department, paving South Gould City Road and Hiawatha Trail, both state roads for which the township could receive a match grant, and reroofing the township hall, which is leaking.

The fire department is hoping to secure a grant that would fund at least half the cost for a new or used truck.

Last year, Newton Township passed a four-year, one-mill tax levy for road maintenance and improvements and a four-year, one-mill tax levy for fire and ambulance operations. Each is expected to generate \$38,209.

Mrs. Zdebski said some projects may be put on hold until more funding is raised, such as road paving.

## Free Concerts at St. Ignace Marina To Begin July 4

Free weekly outdoor concerts will be offered at the St. Ignace Marina on Wednesdays and Thursdays, beginning July 5. Locals on the Bay will take place Wednesdays at 7 p.m., and Bayside Live! concerts will be Thursdays at 7 p.m.

Nick Roberts of St. Ignace will perform acoustic rock music Wednesday July 4, for Locals on the Bay.

Bayside Live! will feature the Petoskey Steel Drum Band Thursday, July 5.

Audience members may bring blankets or lawn chairs; bleacher seating is also available.