

The St. Ignace News

and Les Cheneaux Islands Weekly Wave



Section Two

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Don't Sell Tobacco to Teens: Businesses Can Expect To Be Checked Soon for Compliance

Local businesses will be tested this month to see whether they are checking identification, as required, when teens attempt to buy tobacco products. Throughout July, teenagers assisting the health department will attempt to buy tobacco products from stores, and those store employees who remember to check identification will be commended for compliance, typically through a letter from Luce-Mackinac-Alger-Schoolcraft (LMAS) District Health Department.

Those who attempt to sell tobacco products to minors without first checking their identification will be told of the error and educated on how to prevent illegal sales.

"We're not out there doing this to say, 'Hey, we caught you,'" said Melanie MacDowell of the health department. "We are out there to educate the businesses."

The month-long compliance check and accompanying education sessions are part of the national Youth Tobacco Act and state-wide Tobacco Retailer Education Initiative.

The checks involve a teenager entering a store and attempting to buy tobacco products without presenting identification. Teenagers will be paid a small stipend for their role, and businesses will be selected randomly by the State of Michigan. The Michigan Department of Community Health and Pathways/NorthCare Network Substance Abuse Coordinating Agency are partnering with LMAS to present educational sessions and check compliance.

Federal and Michigan law makes it illegal for anyone younger than 18 to purchase tobacco. As of July 1, 2003, Michigan began issuing a vertical driver's license to people younger than age 21, and the distinctive shape

instantly alerts retailers that the cardholder is too young to buy alcohol. Cashiers must go the extra step to check the license, however, to read if the purchaser is too young for tobacco products, too.

Mrs. MacDowell said Tobacco Reduction and Prevention coordinators spent the month of June

talking with roughly 20% of the county's businesses. She keeps a list of businesses that she met with the previous year, and avoids those while trying to cover the rest of the county. Retailers learn the potential costs of selling tobacco to minors, tips for employee training, how to place tobacco products

away from teenage hands, and where to display Youth Tobacco Act signs.

The health department reports that tobacco use is the number one cause of preventable death in Michigan, and that most people who use tobacco started using it before age 18. It is also known that

the earlier a person starts using tobacco, the more difficult it is to quit, Mrs. MacDowell added, which is the reason for the Youth Tobacco Act.

Each year, thousands of teens become addicted to tobacco, and the immediate goal of these efforts is to find out how many retailers are illegally selling tobacco to minors. The long-term goal is to raise awareness of youth tobacco use, and to reduce the sales of

tobacco to minors.

A state survey revealed that one in four high school aged children in Michigan has used tobacco products in the past 30 days. While that rate is high, Mrs. MacDowell said, it has dropped every year in the past decade.

"One reason for this decline is that cigarettes are getting more difficult for youth to obtain," said Merrilee Keller, NorthCare Network prevention coordinator.

Volunteers Enjoy Walks With Shelter Dogs



Anna Krause (left), 16, with Teddy, and Arielle Kammers, 16, with Max, enjoy a summer afternoon walk Monday, June 30. The two St. Ignace girls are among several volunteers at the Mackinac County Animal Shelter, allowing the dogs to exercise and spend some time away from their pens. The shelter currently has 12 dogs and 12 cats. Those who would like to volunteer can stop by the shelter on Cheeseman Road between 9 a.m. and 1 p.m., Monday through Saturday, and from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. Sunday. To walk dogs, volunteers must show up no later than noon. At least one adult should accompany younger volunteers.

Clark Twp. Neighborhood Watch Group Makes Signs Available

Concerns Include Car Theft, Petty Crime

By Amy Polk

Clark Township Neighborhood Watch members swapped stories at their June 10 meeting about recent car thefts and petty crime, and their continued efforts to stop criminal activity. They talked about the importance of curbing crime in a community that is dependent on tourism, and explained their concerns that crime might drive tourists and families away.

The township's crime rate isn't any different from other similar communities, police say, but the Neighborhood Watch organizers here say it is too much for them.

The consensus from the meeting is that more volunteers are needed to keep an eye out for trouble and suspicious activity, and the group is seeking block captains to coordinate reports and watch designated areas. Being a block captain does not take a lot of work, members said, and involves activities as simple as being more aware of unusual sights and sounds, and keeping neighbors apprised of criminal activity in the area. Neighborhood Watch logs are sheets of paper on which the date and time of unusual, suspicious, or illegal activity, and the type of activity, can be recorded.

Neighborhood Watch members are also working on increasing awareness of the organization in the community. The organization recently received Neighborhood Watch signs to post around town to make potential criminals aware that people are watching out for suspicious activity, and that activity will be reported. Haske Cedar Post of Cedarville donated posts

and Hessel, and has already placed several along M-134. The rest will be placed with the help of other Boy Scouts later this month. Anyone who wants a sign in their neighborhood can purchase one for \$30.

Eagle Scout candidate Taylor Smith of Cedarville is putting 15 of the signs up around Cedarville



Taylor Smith of Cedarville attaches a Neighborhood Watch sign to a post on the eastbound lane side of M-134 in Cedarville, near Les Cheneaux Community Schools. A senior at Cedarville High School, he is placing Neighborhood Watch signs around the community to earn Eagle Scout rank. His father, Roy, helped him Saturday, June 14, when he placed a few of the signs, and other Boy Scouts will assist him later this month.

Mackinac County Sheriff Scott Strait, who has been working with the fledgling group, the first Neighborhood Watch in the county, advocates reporting suspicious and criminal activity as soon as it happens.

"It's nearly impossible to investigate a crime three weeks later," Sheriff Strait said. "When you see something or hear of something that happened, you need to report it right away by calling 9-1-1."

Addressing some of the frustration expressed by citizens that crime isn't stopping fast enough, Sheriff Strait said incidents, like some of the gasoline thefts from boats in Clark Township, have not even been reported to law enforcement because victims or witnesses either shrug off the incident because they feel sorry for the suspect or plan to resolve the matter on their own, without the help of police.

"What happens when people take matters into their own hands is that there's no way we can handle the situation or prosecute the criminals," Sheriff Strait said. "You're also depriving the victim of that crime of some sort of justice. Vigilante justice, or threatening to harm people who may or may not be involved in criminal activity, is a crime in itself."

He said Clark Township is no more or less susceptible to crime than other community, and considering its population, has seen about as many criminal acts as the other Mackinac County municipalities. From January through May, Clark Township has had two break-ins, three larcenies, and three frauds reported to and investigated by the Mackinac County Sheriff's office.

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Mackinaw City

No Decision on Unzoned Land; Commission Wants Seat Filled

By Karen Gould

The eight-person Mackinaw City Planning Commission will ask the village president and council to fill an empty seat on their board, after a tie vote at their June 12 meeting stalled a recommendation on four unzoned waterfront parcels in the village. At their Thursday, June 26, meeting, they said they would like the seat filled before the issue comes to a vote again.

The zoning will impact the land's value and future development. Two of the unzoned parcels are owned by Shepler's Mackinac Island Ferry and two are owned by the village. A motion to zone the land marina commercial, which would prevent construction of more motels on the waterfront, failed in the tie vote.

The planning commission provides the Village Council with recommendations on land use and zoning. The open seat was vacated by Jerry Prior in October 2007, and the term will expire in September. Appointments are made by the village president and approved by the village council.

"Obviously, if there was a full board sitting here, we would not have had a split vote," said Jeff Hingston, who represents the Village Council on the commission. "It's now been nine months," he said referring to council's failure to approve filling the open seat. "We need a full board on this commission."

Commission Chair Robert Most said he had asked Village President Ron Wallin to take his time before making another appointment.

Commissioners decided at their June 26 meeting to consider all possible zoning designations before making a recommendation on the unzoned land. This is a deviation from their previous meeting, when they limited their considerations to

zoning the property either marina commercial or making it part of the business district. The new plan is based on the recommendation of village attorney Tom Evashevski, who was unable to attend Thursday's meeting, although he provided planners with a confidential letter on the matter.

Fundamentally, the zoning decision will come down to what uses the commission sees for the land and what building dimensions fit best, based on zoning options, said Village Manager Jeff Lawson.

A zoning map approved in 1988 and again in 1994 failed to designate a land use for the four parcels.

When zoning property, a municipality is required to be consistent with the long-term needs of the community as they are determined in the master plan. Former commission member Peg Smith questioned whether the village has a current master plan, as state law requires it be revised and adopted every five years. The last plan was adopted in 1997, said Mr. Lawson, and a committee is in the process of updating the document.

Property owner Chris Shepler, who attended the meeting, said while his family owns the waterfront land, they have no intention of building a hotel on the property. He objected to a headline in *The St. Ignace News* that suggested his family's company wanted to have the site designated as a business district to allow them to build hotels. In fact, he had told the village that zoning the property marine commercial would decrease its value and, thus, his equity in it.

"We're ferry boat people," said Mr. Shepler. "We, as a family and as a business, have absolutely no desire to put a hotel on that property."

The commission's next regular meeting is Thursday, July 24, at Village Hall.

Car Hits St. Ignace Salon



A car hit the north side of Rosemary's Hair Gallery on North State Street in St. Ignace early Tuesday, June 24. No one was hurt when Lois Lenaghan of Jackson drove her 2007 minivan into the side of the building. She was not sure, reported Police Chief Tim Matelski, how the accident happened or if she had put her foot on the gas pedal, rather than the brake. The building sustained "relatively major damage," he said, while the vehicle was able to be driven away, although it had front-end damage, including two broken headlights.