

Special Education Parenting Group To Host Craft Show, Christmas Party

Seeks Parent Volunteers To Serve on Board

Parents with special needs children are sought to serve on a committee that acts as a communication link among parents, teachers, and school administrators. The group, called the Eastern Upper Peninsula Parent Advisory Committee (PAC), will host two events this month to benefit special needs children.

An annual craft show at Soo Township Elementary School will be Saturday, December 6, from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Raffles and concessions will be available. Admission costs \$1. Vendors may register for the show by calling Dorie France at (906) 293-8691.

The group is also planning its

annual Christmas party for all families with special needs children at Washington Elementary School in Sault Ste. Marie Wednesday, December 17, from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Donations of gifts are being accepted to be distributed by Santa Claus at the party. Families attending are asked to bring a dish to pass.

Volunteers who serve on the committee help direct families in need of school services, set up training sessions for parents and teachers on special education issues, and promote networking among parents of students with disabilities.

The committee meets the third

Wednesday of the month at 6:30 p.m. at the Eastern Upper Peninsula Intermediate School District office in Sault Ste. Marie. Volunteers are paid mileage to attend meetings.

Parents are sought from the following school districts: Mackinac Island, Les Cheneaux, DeTour, Brimley, Bay Mills Charter, and Whitefish Township.

In 2008, St. Ignace, Engadine, Sault Ste. Marie, and Newberry

districts filled seven open seats on the committee.

Each intermediate school district is required by law to have such a committee. The size of each school district determines the number of representatives it must have on the board.

For more information about the committee or to donate toward the children's party, call Ms. France at the telephone number listed above.

Moran Christmas Decorating Will Take Place Thursday Afternoon

Families in the Moran play group will decorate a community Christmas tree at Bradford's Grocery in Moran Thursday, December 4, at 4 p.m.

For more information, contact Heather Bird at 643-0096.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Cedarville School Meeting Affirms Strength of Community

To the Editor:

I was scared to death when I saw the packed parking lot at school [November 19]. I had been hearing so much fear, anger, and frustration pouring out of people about the pink slips that went out last week, that I was afraid the school board special meeting that was being held was going to be a bloodletting. I was so wrong. What that meeting turned out to be was an affirmation of the strength and creativity of our community.

Rod Goehmann, Amy Scott, Kate Ter Haar, and Dave Murray set the stage by explaining very clearly that the monster the board has been trying to keep at bay has been our staggering loss of 100 students in just four short years. We learned that the board has made every cut possible short of bussing and staff. We learned how the self-funded insurance is a catch-22 that depends on keeping our staff at no less than 50. We learned that Lansing, far from offering hope, is now hinting at further cuts. Lastly, and most importantly, we learned that the pink slips were issued only as a heads up to teachers and staff, which will only take effect if every other possible answer to our budget crisis has failed.

The audience was then given the opportunity to ask questions, in written form, which were collected and answered by Mr. Goehmann in a calm, orderly fashion. Oh boy, I thought, here it comes. But again, I was wrong. With very few exceptions, the questions reflected serious, honest concerns and a desire for understanding rather than the venting of anger that I had feared.

Mrs. Scott then told the audience that we must band together and look to ourselves to get out of this mess. There will be no Lansing bailout for us.

And then, the miracle happened. Four hundred people put their heads together and came up with some of the most creative, practical fundraising ideas I have ever heard. There was a spirit of companionship in the room that made me feel that our town is truly a family who cares about their neighbors as much as themselves. It was pointed out that fundraising is a short term answer. The budget must be balanced for long term sustainability. However, it seemed to me that the consensus was that fundraising in the short term would buy us time to figure out the long term changes that need to be made.

I walked out of that meeting hopeful, and grateful to the school board, the administration, and staff. Most of all, I was grateful to the 400 or so parents who cared enough to be there, and who chose not to dwell on the whys and wherefores of the problem, but instead want to move on to the solution.

Lisa Dunn
Hessel

Supporting Outdoor Recreation Opportunities Is Vital

To the Editor:

In economically challenging times our thoughts turn, among other things, to the needs of people in our communities and the needs of local charities. Some people have acute needs for food, shelter, and other basics. Then there are larger community needs for stability and promoting the kind of local economy that will provide opportunities, maintain a healthy economy, and provide jobs.

When it comes to ensuring that we maintain a healthy community that provides opportunities, jobs, and a good quality of life, I would like to suggest that people continue to support the Little Traverse Conservancy.

In a resort and tourism-oriented economy, along with strong communities and quality health care, the Conservancy's work is vital. Our businesses, jobs, and prosperity depend upon maintaining a high quality of life with beautiful scenery, abundant wildlife, and plenty of opportunities for outdoor recreation. Not only do our area's visitors benefit from these resources, so do those of us who live here full time.

I have been coming to the Les Cheneaux region for more than 30 years, captured by its natural beauty. It is one of my most favorite places on earth. Yet without mindful watch over them, even lands "north of the bridge" are at risk of overdevelopment. Many of you have already seen the changes, and this region simply isn't exempt. Conservancy-protected land is more secure and more enduring than any other form of land protection currently available to us. Even state-protected land is not guaranteed.

It's the classic story of protecting the goose that lays the golden eggs. Natural land, scenic beauty, wildlife, and recreational opportunities are the essential attributes that make our area attractive for the resort and tourist trades. Without these, our economy and environment would suffer and our employment base would wither away. However, by maintaining a healthy balance between land development and land conservation, we can have the best of both worlds: resorts and vacation homes, a lively tourism industry, healthy businesses, and a flourishing economy.

Think about the impact if your favorite scenic view were to be blocked, your favorite trail suddenly not available, or natural areas closed to our children for learning about nature in the great outdoors. These are important elements in our quality of life. More than 100,000 children have participated in a Conservancy environmental education program offered at no charge. Individuals have even contributed to a bus fund that helps reimburse schools that are struggling to offer field trips to their students.

All nonprofits need some extra help in times of an economic downturn. I know from my work in the investment business that times are tight right now. But I also know that the long term health of our part of Michigan and the continuing vitality of our economy depend on ensuring that future generations will be able to enjoy the same quality resort life in northern Michigan that we have to offer today.

We will do ourselves and our children a great favor by remembering to help protect the natural assets of our area even as we work to build a larger and healthier business climate.

So, I urge everyone to consider an investment in the long term future of our community, our economy, and our quality of life through a gift to the Little Traverse Conservancy.

George Covington
Cedarville

The St. Ignace News

and Les Cheneaux Islands Weekly Wave

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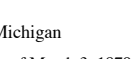
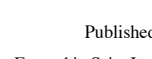
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The quotation under the flag of *The St. Ignace News* on Page 1 is from the 10 triads written by Dr. Fred Newton Scott, creator and teacher of the first continuous course in journalism in the United States at the University of Michigan in 1890. The 10 triads are chiseled on the parapet of the Detroit News Building at 615 Lafayette Boulevard, Detroit. They were headed "Ideals of the Press" or "The Newspaper in a Free Society," and serve as a reminder of what a free press means to us.

St. Ignace News Policies

Letters:

All responsible letters will be considered for publication and may be edited. They must be signed and a telephone number must be included for verification. Personal thank-you notes, personal attacks against other people, form letters, and letters promoting political candidates are not accepted, although letters for or against ballot proposals are welcome.

Obituaries:

The St. Ignace News maintains a policy of not charging for obituaries and we do often add information or rewrite them for clarity and reader interest. Obituaries that the family wants published exactly as submitted can be placed in the newspaper for \$75. Photographs are welcome at no charge.

Weddings:

Weddings with photographs are published without charge within 45 days of the ceremony. After 45 days, a photograph can be included for \$35.00.

Internet:

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Michigan Politics

By
George Weeks



Dem Gains on Local Boards in November 4 Election

Post-election headlines were on resounding Democratic victories on the presidential, congressional, and Michigan House ballots, as well as surprise ouster of Republican Michigan Supreme Court Chief Justice Cliff Taylor and a sweep of state education board contests.

Overlooked – in fact only recently compiled – was Democratic success in gaining strength on county boards, including three in the Upper Peninsula and six in the Northern Lower.

In a November 24 report on "Battle of the Boards," *Inside Michigan Politics* (IMP) newsletter said: "For the first time ever, Michigan Democrats have net-gained seats on the state's 83 County Boards of Commissioners in three straight general elections."

Among the single-seat Democratic county gains Up North: Benzie, Chippewa, Grand Traverse, Leelanau, Menominee, Missaukee (plus one independent), Ontonagon, Presque Isle, and Roscommon.

According to Eric Scorsone of Michigan State University's State and Local Government Program, Democrats gained at least one seat in 24 different counties, while Republicans made pick-ups in only four.

IMP said: "Democrats gained majority status in two counties they didn't have before the election: Menominee and Presque Isle. Republicans failed to pick up any they didn't already hold. Before the elections, Republicans boasted a 49-34 edge among the 83 panels (down from 59-24 just four years earlier). Now the line-up is 46 panels for the GOP, 36 for the Democrats, and the tie in Keweenaw County."

There has been dramatic change in downstate counties that are pivotal in statewide elections. The 16-3 edge that Republicans had on the Kent County board in 2004 is now 11-8. In Oakland County, once a GOP stronghold where Republicans had a 19-6 majority in 2003-04, it's now 13-12.

In Macomb County, the bellwether land that gets national media focus for its "Reagan Democrats" and where Republicans were down on the county board 18-8 before November 4, it's now 20-6.

Inside Michigan Politics concludes: "Republicans now constitute 54.5% of all board membership statewide, Democrats 44.9%, but that's a big change from the 64.5% - 34.9% edge the Republicans enjoyed as recently as 2005-06."

Another Millard Fillmore Elected

Whig Millard Fillmore of New York's Finger Lakes region and Republican Millard Fillmore of Michigan's Upper Peninsula have something in common besides the name.

New York's Fillmore became our 13th president in 1850, when he was the second vice president to ascend to the Oval Office upon the death of Zachary Taylor.

A vacancy also opened the way for the U.P. Fillmore when, on November 4, he was elected AuTrain Township supervisor in Alger County to replace a woman who was recalled.

Fillmore, who is retired from General Motors, told me he gets "raised eyebrows from most people" because of his last name. But he said he's "not much of a student of history [and] I'm not much of a politician."

Nor are most township officers in Michigan. Political affiliation is secondary to local service, although they deal with hot political issues such as land use, including location of big box stores. (Item: Meijer's secret attempt in 2006-07 to recall the entire Acme Township board over a Grand Traverse County zoning dispute that ended up with Meijer getting a state fine.)

President Fillmore, at the outset of his less than four years in office, dealt with a defining issue in U.S. history: He opposed slavery and supported the Compromise of 1850.

Supervisor Fillmore faces a major local issue upon taking office: options on the future of the AuTrain Basin Dam at Forest Lake west of Munising. As quoted in the *Marquette Mining Journal*, he said, "It's like a great big jigsaw puzzle."

The presidency is the most powerful office in the land. But also the most remote. Not so with mayors, township trustees, and county commissioners. They are as close as the governing get to the governed.

George Weeks retired in 2006 after 22 years as political columnist for The Detroit News. His weekly Michigan Politics column is syndicated by Superior Features.

County Budget Hearing To Be Dec. 11

Mackinac County commissioners have prepared a \$6.3 million budget for 2009, and it can be reviewed at the clerk's office. A public hearing will be Thursday, December 11, after which commissioners are expected to adopt the budget.

The county spent \$6.2 million last year.

"We held the line everywhere

City Budget Hearing Will Be Dec. 15

The St. Ignace city budget is available for review at City Hall, and a public hearing on it will be Monday, December 15. The city council is expected to adopt it following the hearing.

St. Ignace is projecting a \$7,358,769 budget for 2009, down 7.9% from last year, mostly because the city will not have state funds for improvements at the wastewater treatment facility that it had last year.

The city is projecting a 3%

we could" on the new budget, said Commission Chair Dawn Nelson.

Commissioners say they are not planning to hire any new employees, except to replace three full-time workers who are retiring. One full-time maintenance position being vacated from a retirement will be filled with a part-time employee.

increase in salaries and is not planning to fill a full-time vacancy in the Department of Public Works (DPW).

The city will collect \$1,423,520 in property taxes, with a 16.26 mill levy on \$87,821,121 in taxable value. The Downtown Development Authority will receive \$233,000 and the Recreation Department will receive \$78,015.

The water fund could have a \$50,000 deficit by January 1, when a \$178,000 bond payment is due.

Rep. McDowell To Host Office Hours

Representative Gary McDowell will have office hours Monday, December 8, in St. Ignace, Sault Ste. Marie, and Petoskey.

The schedule follows: 9 a.m. to 10 a.m. in the Chippewa County Courthouse Annex Meeting Room, third floor, 300 Court Street, Sault Ste. Marie; noon to 1 p.m. at the Mackinac County Annex, 100

South Marley Street, St. Ignace; 2:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. at Petoskey City Hall Community Room, 101 E Lake Street, Petoskey.

For more information, or to reach Representative McDowell's office in Lansing, call toll-free (888) 737-4279. E-mail messages can be sent to garymcdowell@house.mi.gov.