

# Friends Gather To See 13 Earn Diplomas in Mackinaw City High Class of '09

By Jonathan Eppley

Mackinaw City High School graduated 13 seniors during its 88th annual graduation ceremony Saturday, May 30, in the school gymnasium. Family and friends filled the gymnasium to cheer on the 2009 graduates as they received their diplomas from Superintendent Jeffery Curth and Board of Education President Marilyn McFarland.

Nine of the 13 graduates received \$34,000 in scholarships from 25 local scholarship funds and organizations Saturday night.

The following students were awarded scholarships: Valedictorian Cheyenne Withey received seven scholarships worth \$9,200; Chris Laninga received nine scholarships worth \$8,050; Zachary Dow received five scholarships worth \$6,700; salutatorian Steven Celez received eight scholarships worth \$3,600; Brandyn Clemens received six scholarships worth \$2,450; Dylan Darrow received four scholarships worth \$1,550; Luke Alexander received four scholarships worth \$1,450; Haley Milne received scholarships worth \$900, and Justin Campbell was awarded a \$100 scholarship.

Eric Hinsman, Victoria McArthur, William Vieau, and Kyle Weatherwax were also graduated from the high school Saturday night. Of the 13 graduates, 10 plan to attend college, two plan to enter the armed services, and one plans to enter the workforce.

In her address, valedictorian Miss Withey gave some advice to underclassmen returning to Mackinaw City Schools next year.

"I know school can feel like a jail cell," she said. "Trust me, I used to be one of those students that said, 'Man, I can't wait for graduation.' But now I stand here sad and disappointed, because it's finally come to an end... Have fun with all your friends; you'll never know if they'll be there when you're in college, so cherish every moment."

She also told the returning students to always try their hardest in every aspect of their lives and school career. Any obstacle can be overcome, she encouraged them.

To close her speech, she likened life to a wall. To be happy and successful in life, a person's wall must



Principal William Alexander addresses the audience during the Mackinaw City High School graduation Saturday, May 30, as graduating seniors (from left) Eric Hinsman, Victoria McArthur, Justin Campbell, and Haley Milne look on.



The 2009 graduating class of Mackinaw City High School poses for a picture at the base of the Mackinac Bridge this winter. Pictured are (front, from left) Victoria McArthur, Haley Milne, Cheyenne Withey; (middle) Eric Hinsman, Steven Celez; (back) Brandyn Clemens, Luke Alexander, Christopher Laninga, Dylan Darrow, William Vieau, Justin Campbell, and Zachary Dow. Kyle Weatherwax is not pictured. (Photograph courtesy of Mackinaw City High School)

have a strong base, she said. A good education is the most important building block to make the base of that metaphoric wall as

strong as possible.

"I can say from personal experiences that my schooling has made my wall unbreakable," she said.

Salutatorian Steven Celez also spoke to the graduates about the importance of a strong education.

Turn to page 11: **Grads**



Graduates (from left) Steven Celez, Brandyn Clemens, and Dylan Darrow perform the 1970s rock song "Joy to the World," as made popular by rock band Three Dog Night, at commencement exercises.



Salutatorian Steven Celez addresses the audience during Mackinaw City High School graduation exercises.



Valedictorian Cheyenne Withey speaks to those gathered at commencement. She is also the class secretary and treasurer of the National Honor Society.

## Underwater Explorers Will Return to Straits This Summer

By Karen Gould

Underwater researchers will return to St. Ignace July 11 to explore a submerged waterfall and nearby cave, seeking evidence of the region's early human inhabitants. Their 80-foot training and research ship, *The Pride of Michigan*, will be moored at the St. Ignace marina through the summer.

Captain Luke Clyburn and Lieutenant Kathy Trax discussed their research Saturday, May 30, at the Village Inn conference room in St. Ignace. During the presentation, which was hosted by the Michilimackinac Historical Society, Capt. Clyburn showed off a documentary on last summer's work in the waters around St. Ignace. This summer's work also will be filmed and will be used in the production of a second documentary of the exploration.

The history of this area is not known yet, he said. Records may go back about 500 years, although he is studying spruce stumps at the bottom of Lake Huron that are 7,000 years old.

"You are living in a heartland of an area that likely is very, very unique to anywhere else in the world," he said. "I think there were civilizations and cultures we don't

know anything about."

While in the Straits, the crew also will be exploring a sunken canoe. Little is known about the vessel other than its location. It could be new or old, said Capt. Clyburn, and diving to the site may shed light on the boat. The vessel was discovered by the Michigan State Police Underwater Recovery Unit when it was using sonar technology during a dive last summer. It is submerged in sand and covered with zebra mussels.

An unmanned remote operating vehicle (ROV) will aid in planning this summer's dives to the site, said Capt. Clyburn. The ROV, which has its own light source, will be lowered 200 feet and more into Lake Huron off the eastern shore of Mackinac Island.

The waterfall, discovered with sounding equipment, begins about 110 feet below the surface and is a geographical formation along an 80-mile-long ancient river. Called the Mackinac Channel, it once flowed through the Straits area. Capt. Clyburn estimates the waterfall could be 200 feet high, and the ROV could reveal that it actually is a series of rapids.

"Every dive we make gives us a

Turn to page 11: **Research**

## EUP Youth Plan 47-mile Bike Ride To Raise Obesity Awareness

By Mark Tower

Youth from across a seven-county area will hop aboard their bicycles Monday, June 8, to fight the growing problem of childhood obesity. The "Bike the Sites Project" includes youth and supporters from St. Ignace, Hessel, Sault Ste. Marie, Munising, Escanaba, and Manistique, who will bike along Mackinac Trail from Don Dee Lanes in Sault Ste. Marie to the Mid-Jim store near St. Ignace.

The idea came about at a Maamwi Nigaanziwig Grand Tribal Youth Council meeting, during which tribal youth councils from around the Upper Peninsula join together to meet and discuss ideas and projects.

With a growing number of children facing obesity and the occurrence of type II diabetes on the rise, the youth and their advisors decided to do something to try to help, and to bring awareness of the health benefits of exercise.

"Bike the Sites" is the culmination of the Celebrate Native Health grant, now in its final year, which was given to promote good health for tribe members. The motto of the project promotes being active: "Get out and play an hour a day."

Some participants plan to cycle the entire 47 miles Monday, while others plan to do it relay-style, changing riders at some of the six rest stops along the route.

Some tribal councils, including the one in St. Ignace, have taken the project a step further and put together a sponsoring program for their riders to raise money to fight type II diabetes and childhood obesity.

Zach Majors, an eighth-grade student from St. Ignace and member of the local tribal youth council, said he sees this project as a great opportunity for young people to be active.

"It shows people it can be fun to do stuff like this with your friends," Mr. Majors said. "Beats sitting on the couch and playing video games."

He said he plans to bicycle the entire route from Sault Ste. Marie to



Pictured are members of the St. Ignace area Maamwi Miigaanziwig tribal youth council, (back row from left) Director Sue Onge, Kelsey Putnam, Zack Majors, Catelyn McLean; (front row) Helena St. Onge, Richard Kissinger, Richard Bentley, Gavin St. Onge, and Hailey St. Andrew. Not pictured is group member Alex Van Huevelan.

St. Ignace and is a little nervous about such a long trip.

The event is open to anyone who is interested in raising awareness about the problem of childhood obesity, not just tribal youth. To participate, youth must be 13 or older.

Anyone with questions about the trip can contact Sue St. Onge, Sault Tribe Youth Services coordinator in St. Ignace, at (906) 440-7667.

## New Hospital To Include Long Term Care Unit, Nelson Reports

By Mark Tower

The new hospital facility being constructed on North State Street is likely to include a long term care facility and possibly an outpatient surgery center, said hospital CEO Rod Nelson during an update he gave to the St. Ignace Planning Commission Tuesday, May 26.

Although the official meeting was cancelled owing to the lack of a quorum, the two board members present were given a presentation of the rough site plans to include a structure for long term care behind the main facility south of North Airport Road.

A developer still needs to be chosen and approval will be required from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Mr. Nelson said, but

the hospital is moving forward with plans to have the long term care construction begin by late summer.

"We're being as aggressive as possible," he said of the hospital board's approach to the process. "We'd like to have long term care open around June 2010."

The board has also discussed the addition of an outpatient surgery center in the same area southwest of the new hospital building. Mr. Nelson said this project is a joint venture with physicians groups and, pending approval from the state and investors, could begin construction at the same time as the long term care unit.

The two units, if constructed, are proposed to be connected to the

Turn to page 11: **Hospital**

## Two Deaths Reported on Island

Foul play or suicide are not suspected in the deaths of two seasonal workers on Mackinac Island last week, and police are awaiting autopsy results to help determine the cause.

Blake Slentz, 26, and Bridgette Powers, 25, were found dead by a roommate in a downtown apartment on Mackinac Island at 9:30 p.m. Thursday, May 28, Chief of Police Jim Marks said.

Both Mr. Slentz and Miss Powers are from the Grand Rapids area, Mr. Slentz from Greenville and Miss Powers from Comstock Park.

An autopsy and a toxicology screen will be performed in Grand

Rapids by Dr. Steve Cohl, a pathologist at Spectrum Health Butterworth Hospital, said Detective Sergeant Robin Sexton of the Michigan State Police St. Ignace post. Michigan State Police are assisting Island city police with the investigation.

The tests, which will take two to four weeks to complete, will tell the police how Mr. Slentz and Miss Powers died.

Both Mr. Slentz and Miss Powers worked at restaurants on Mackinac Island, he at Turtle Soups and Salads and at Fred's Deli and Cafe, and she at Pancake House.

Obituaries are printed in this issue.

## St. Ignace Man Dies After Fall

A fall from a porch caused the death of Tom Huskey of St. Ignace.

Mr. Huskey was found unconscious outside his home on Young Street in Evergreen Shores at 5:31 a.m. Saturday, May 30, by a newspaper carrier. He was transported by ambulance to Northern Michigan Regional Hospital in Petoskey. He was pronounced dead Sunday, May 31, of a subdural hematoma, or bleeding on the brain.

Mr. Huskey's death appears to be accidental, and foul play does not appear to be a factor at this time, said Sergeant Robin Sexton of the Michigan State Police post in St. Ignace Monday, June 1. A Michigan State Police investigation is ongoing.

Mr. Huskey, 53, was a longtime businessman who owned a construction company in St. Ignace. A full obituary will be published in an upcoming issue of *The St. Ignace News*.