

# Lighthouse Caretaker Mary Ann Moore Receives National Teaching Award

By Michael Ayala

A teacher for 35 years, Mary Ann Moore has dedicated most of her life to the education of others, and her skills as a teaching volunteer at a Lake Michigan lighthouse have now earned her national recognition. Covering subjects such as home economics and science as a school teacher, she later became a caretaker of the St. Helena Lighthouse in 1992. In addition to maintaining the land surrounding it, Ms. Moore volunteers her time teaching the history of the Great Lakes in the Great Lakes Maritime Education Workshop.

It is for this volunteer work that Ms. Moore, a Mackinaw City resident, received the National Retired Teachers Association "With Our Youth!" award Tuesday, September 15. She is the recipient of one of only three such awards in the nation. The recognition came as a surprise to Ms. Moore. Her friend, Michele VanderVelde of Belmont, who also works on the island, nominated her without her knowledge. The award is granted for superior volunteer education of youth.

"It's a rare bird to be able to do what she does," said Dick Moehl, president of the Great Lakes Lighthouse Keepers Association. "I'm not too sure I could do what she does. We're very pleased to have someone with her talents."

Ms. Moore's charisma has been paramount in teaching her lessons and the work she performs on the island, Mr. Moehl said. A tiny island, St. Helena houses the 1873 lighthouse marking the western approach to the Straits of Mackinac.



State and Cheboygan officers of the Michigan Association of Retired School Personnel present a certificate celebrating Mary Ann Moore's national award from the National Retired Teachers Association Tuesday, September 15, at Audie's restaurant in Mackinaw City. Pictured are (from left) State Vice President Les Nixon, State President Marie Wilkerson, past State President Don Miller, Ms. Moore, Cheboygan Chapter President Jeanne Pritchard, and State Executive Director Bonnie Carpenter.

"The key is you have to have the personality to make it work. There isn't one individual that knows how to do everything, but somehow she's able to attract the people to fill those voids," Mr. Moehl said.

Sandy Planisek of the association has known Ms. Moore for 12 years and agrees with Mr. Moehl.

Ms. Moore has a knack, she said, for representing the way of life that lighthouse keepers would have experienced here in the 1880s.

"Strangers come into her life and in a few days she has them used to life in the 1880s and loving it. It's a high energy demand," she said. "She deserves the award. She's the right person for the award."

Ms. Moore's years as a teacher began in 1972 and she spent nine years in Ontario teaching life skills, formerly known as home economics, and science to her students. She continued to teach in the Detroit area in 1979, continuing her career for 12 more years. Ms. Moore became a Girl Scout troop leader during that time, a decision that ultimately led her to St. Helena Island.

Visiting the island along with her troop in 1992, she fell in love

with it and the lighthouse. She joined the lighthouse keepers association and became an instructor of the island's workshop in 1993.

Ms. Moore instructs educators and youth group leaders about the history of the Great Lakes in a five-day course. The curriculum extends to the time the St. Helena Lighthouse was constructed. People lived on the island during the late 1880s to take care of the lighthouse until 1922, when it became automated, she said.

During the workshop, which is offered through Central Michigan University, people live on the island to get a better feel of what life was like while people lived there. With her master's degree in textiles and clothing, Ms. Moore teaches the 12-person class about the kinds of clothing lighthouse keepers on St. Helena wore and

what they ate. She also prepares a "history trunk" filled with old items such as quill pens, dishes, and school supplies used during the late 1800s to aid her instructions. She shows teachers how they can build their own history trunk to integrate into their classrooms.

"We're immersing them in a new environment," she said. "How many people have lived on a Great Lake?"

Old newspaper articles, periodicals, and census data about the island from 1850 are used to explain the history of the island. Like the history chest, the old articles teach people how they can discover the history of their own communities, Ms. Moore said. The program follows lighthouse history into the 1900s, when the Joseph Fountain family lived on the island and were caretakers of the lighthouse.

The impact of the Great Lakes on Michigan's economy is explored. The Erie Canal enabled freighters to transport goods further inland and offered faster shipping than using the railroad, Ms. Moore said. The lessons extend to the present day, and include studies of how the lakes affect weather patterns.

The goal of the program is to have teachers integrate what they've learned into the student curriculum.

Ms. Moore watches the lighthouse for eight consecutive weeks each year. With no utilities on the island, 80 gallons of water a day are pumped and towed back and forth. Water for cooking must be heated outside. A Boy Scout troop has installed a propane-powered water heater, a big improvement over the solar-heated shower that used to limit washing with warm water to mid-afternoon.

"You do all the dirty work in the morning," Ms. Moore said. "It's just like camping. It's a long camping trip."

Living on a remote island requires safety precautions. Perishable food is eaten as soon as possible, resulting in progressively canned and precooked meals as the weeks move on. Fire safety is a major concern, as a rogue fire can scorch the entire island. Extinguishers are available, but would be incapable of stopping a large fire, Ms. Moore said.

A fire scare occurred on the island in 2007. Ms. Moore was in bed around 9 p.m. when she caught the scent of smoke. She banged on the walls of her bedroom, waking up her coworkers and they rushed outside of the lighthouse to search for the fire. They discovered a bonfire was lit three miles away on the mainland at Gros Cap, and the winds were blowing just right to carry the smoke over the lake to the island.

Ms. Moore volunteers her time with various organizations. She develops the curriculum for the association and Mackinaw City Historic Village in the fall, and gives presentations for elementary schools about what it is like to live for weeks at a lighthouse.

## DeTour

By Judy Jones

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The best way to start this column is with Happy Apple Scarecrow Festival corrections. The photographs last week indicated that the caramel apple-eating brothers were Luke and Jake Dudeck. Everyone knows that Luke was a Skywalker from "Star Wars" and Leo is a Dudeck from DeTour Village. Sorry, Leo, for the misprint of your name. Leo was also high bidder at the auction, taking home a bicycle, which his father, Gary, is customizing for him. Perhaps Leo will soon be riding competitively, just like his dad. The second correction is really an addition: When Darlene Jarmusch submitted the photograph of Charlie in the Cutest Cat Photo contest, she gave the organizers her name, but Charlie is actually owned by Darlene's sister, Ann Landreville. Congratulations to Ann, for owning the current "Cutest Cat" in DeTour Village.

Ladies at St. Stanislaus Church in Goetzville are preparing for the annual birthday party Saturday, October 10, at the Raber Township Hall. There will be a social hour beginning at 5 p.m., with dinner served at 6 p.m. There will even be birthday presents. For tickets or additional information, call (906) 297-5211.

The Sacred Heart Church in DeTour Village will have its monthly bake sale Friday, October 2, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Central Savings Bank. These bake sales are offered the first Friday of each month from about April through November.

If you've not yet purchased your tickets for the Saturday, October 3, EUP Fine Arts Council fashion show with salad and dessert buffet luncheon, it's not too late. A limited number of tickets are still available at the Timberdoodle, which will be open and have tickets available Thursday, October 1, and Friday, October 2, or get them by calling (906) 297-2787. Just leave a message and someone will get back to you. If tickets are remaining, they will be available when

the doors open at the Cultural Center at 12:30 p.m. Proceeds from the event will support the restoration of the Cultural Center, formerly the Sacred Heart Hall.

The Fine Arts Council Board of Directors met last week to discuss renovation at the center and make decisions regarding activities for the remainder of the year. The good news is that renovations are moving along well. The electrical work has been completed, including the hard wiring of the theatre lighting system. The next step is the new insulation and windows. Bids for this project have been taken and the work will begin soon. The restoration project thus far is owing to the generosity of many residents and a grant from the Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs. Future work will depend even more on local fundraisers and donations, since Michigan's current economic conditions do not allow for grants at this time. A decision was made to close the hall for the winter beginning December 1 owing to the current antiquated and inadequate heating system. This means the Council will not present a holiday theatre production at the hall. Village Christmas will take place as usual the first weekend in December with some changes in venue for this year. It is hoped that these changes will be for this year only, and new heating will be in place by next winter.

The DeTour Village Friends of the Library Scholastic Book Fair will begin at the DeTour School Library Wednesday, October 7. This event offers books and other items for sale to students and adults. While some of our students don't have the extra funds to take advantage of this sale, a scholarship program was established several years ago so all of the youngsters could enjoy the book fair and none would feel left out. If you would like to donate to the scholarship fund, call Debbie Fountain, Book Fair chairperson, at (906) 297-5024.

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