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SUMMER IS COMING FOR

Chain O'Lakes

The beauty of sunset
across the water
cannot is a favorite
sight for many.

SANDRA LANDEN MACHAJ
Catch the Action

Recent work on Grass Lake could help with fishing

by **Sandra Landen Machaj**

CORRESPONDENT

It's the time of year where everyone begins looking forward to returning to the water.

For the majority of the community and those who come to the Chain O'Lakes from other areas, it's the weather that brings joy to many as life on the water resumes.

The Chain O'Lakes encompasses more than 65,000 acres of water, 488 miles of shoreline, and 45 miles of river and is considered to be the busiest inland recreation waterway per acre in the U.S., according to Wikipedia.

Because of the chain's large size and the need to protect this waterway, the Fox Waterway Agency was given the task of overseeing both the Chain and the Fox River and caring for its health and well-being.

"We work on the lakes throughout the

year, including the winter,” said Joseph Keller, executive director of the Fox Waterway Agency.

Recent projects

“This winter we have been working on a project around Grass Lake to remove the sediment that has settled there. Grass Lake is one of the shallowest lakes, once known primarily for its lotus beds,” Keller explained.

“Now, due to its shallow depth, it is a place great for fishing but the sediment must be removed to keep some depth to the lake to allow boats to travel through,” he added.

He said the organization removed the sediment from the lake. Through arrangements with shore owners, the sediment can then be piled on the shore, then removed from the area while the ground is still frozen.

“By removing the sediment while the ground is still frozen, there is no damage to the landscape,” said Keller. “Our job is to get it off the shore before the ground thaws.”

Grass Lake is a favorite fishing area because of its shallow depth. The larger boats must stick to the center of the water to avoid running aground, leaving the sides closer to shore undisturbed for the fish to grow and anglers to catch them.

There are two types of fishing enthusiasts often seen on the lake – those who fish to catch and prepare the lot for dinner, and those who fish for the pleasure of fishing, catch them as a sport and then release them back into the water.

Both types are important to maintaining the balance of fish in the chain.

Grass Lake has a large variety of fish, including catfish, carp, muskie, large- and small-mouthed bass, and even some blue gill and walleye.

The Native Americans who lived in this area before the arrival of the European immigrants used this area as a place to hunt and fish because of the large numbers and variety of waterfowl, fish and other wildlife.

They never overfished or over hunted in one area and would always move on before they did any damage. This now is the job of the Waterway Commission – to protect the waterway, maintain the clarity of the water and protect the fish who live in it.

Welcome signs

Now that spring is here and summer is not far behind, changes are beginning to be seen on the chain.

Piers are reappearing on the shore and boats are coming out of storage and returning to their home base.

According to Keller, boat owners are ready to be on the water once the



from top: With wings extended, this pelican gets ready to fly, possibly to hunt for food; Sandhill cranes can be seen in many areas of open water along the Chain O'Lakes as warmer weather returns.

PHOTOS COURTESY PATRICK WIRTZ *Catch the Action*

temperature hits 74 degrees.

“While seeing the boats return to the water is a sure sign that spring has arrived, there are others,” Keller said.

“One such sign is the return of wildlife to the area – both those animals that will remain here through the warm weather and those just migrating north. Right now, we are seeing a large number of bald eagles in the Grass Lake area. Twenty-eight have been noted here, more than usually observed,” he said.

As the weather warms, pelicans also make their way through the Chain O'Lakes. They do not come to stay but travel through on their way north for the summer.

Pistakee Lake and Fox Lake – being the largest of the lakes on the chain – make a wonderful, even if only temporary, home for the pelicans. They bed down

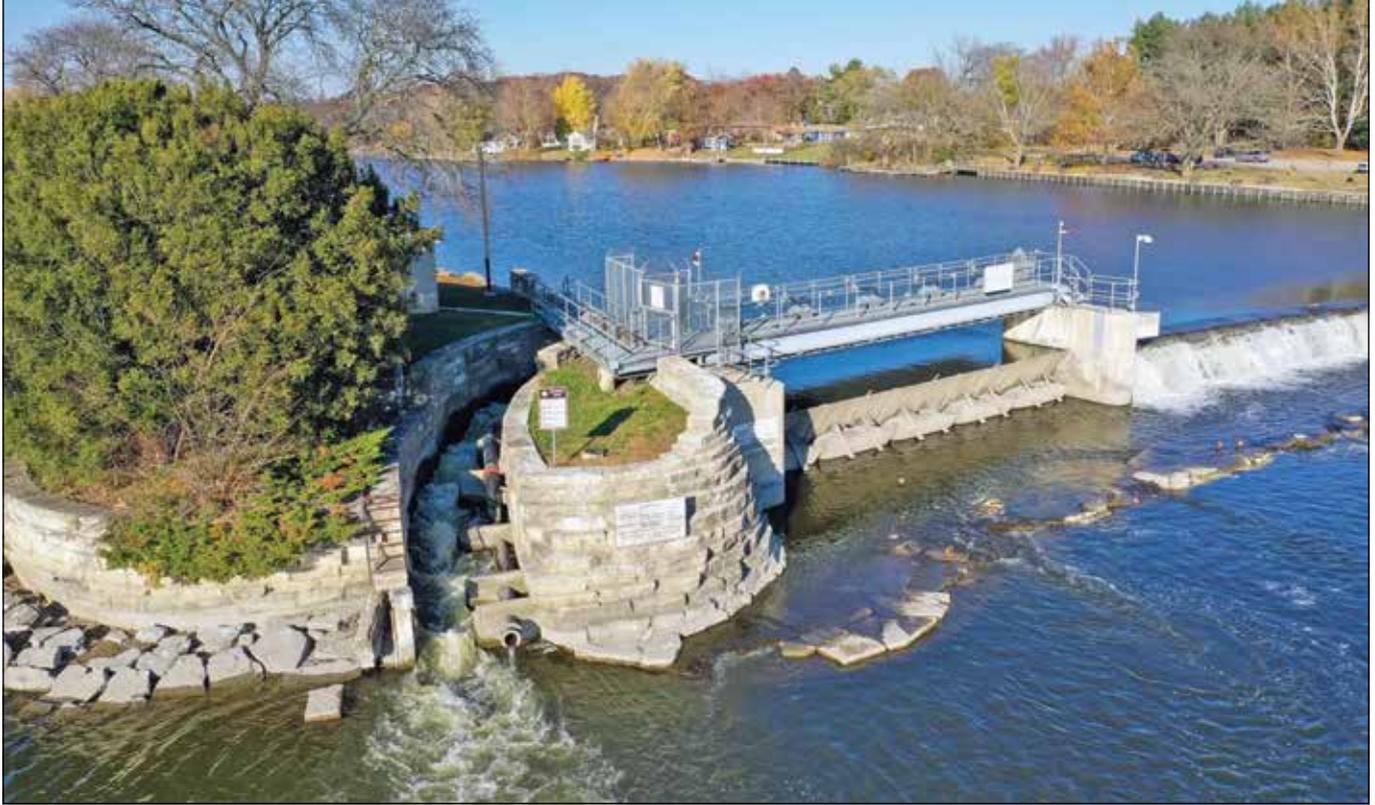
along Half Moon Island near the junction of Pistakee Lake and the Fox River.

With the raising of the water depth in the chain from the construction of the Stratton Dam in McHenry, Half Moon Island mostly disappeared below the water.

Once the location of several homes, today it is just a small encampment of trees with sandbars around it, making it a perfect place for the pelicans to gather and sleep on the sandbars.

Historically, the pelicans used to travel up the Mississippi River but several years ago, according to local residents, they changed their path and now yearly are seen in the Chain O'Lakes area.

With the large number of freshwater lakes that are full of fish, there is plenty of food for them to enjoy as they travel north.



Once the pelicans leave the Chain itself, there are many lakes in Wisconsin that will continue to feed and shelter them as they travel along their journey north.

Important work of dams

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers along with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources have been conducting a study on the dams along the Fox River in Illinois.

There are 13 dams along the river, many built during the years 1830-1850 to provide power for sawmills and flour mills and ice cutting during the winter.

Over the years, these dams have been improved and replaced and now they are being considered as to what their future may be.

The Corps of Engineers are working on recommendations to remove, modify or

simply leave the dams as they are.

The two dams that are most important to the Chain O'Lakes are the Stratton Dam in McHenry and the Algonquin Dam in Algonquin. These dams, especially the Stratton Dam, are responsible for controlling the water level in the Chain and on the Fox River. Neither of these dams are being considered for removal by the DNR, according to Keller.

"The dams help control the level of the Chain at the appropriate level for recreational activities throughout the season," Keller said.

He said they can be opened when there is a large melt into the lake from nearby lands.

"They can also be closed during times of low water to keep the water in the lakes and keep the chain open for recreational boating," Keller added.

The goals of the Stratton Dam include maintaining a recreational pool of water, to utilize available storage in the Chain O'Lakes to minimize regional flooding, and to maintain flows for water supply and aquatic habitat. It also helps to limit water flows during periods of ice jams.

"We are pleased that they are not being considered for removal," Keller said. "They are important in maintaining the recreational aspect of the Chain O'Lakes and continue to keep the Chain open to boating."

He said their work in keeping the Chain O'Lakes clean and clear has been successful.

"It is paying off with not only keeping the waterway a clean and pleasant place to enjoy water activities, but also seeing an increase of wildlife," Keller said.

Keller also issued a reminder that all watercraft on the waterway are required to have a yearly sticker for their boats. The cost is dependent on size of the craft and horsepower of the boat.

The stickers may be purchased at the Waterway Office, 45 Pistakee Lake Rd., Fox Lake, or online at www.foxwaterway.com.

For more information, call the Waterway office at 847-587-8540.



above: Now that spring is here and summer is nearing, water is flowing again, including near the Stratton Dam on the Fox River.

HANSEN PROFESSIONAL SERVICES PHOTO *Catch the Action*

at left: A sure sign of spring is seeing that the pontoon boats are once again sailing on the chain.

SANDRA LANDEN MACHAJ *Catch the Action*

What's on stage at **PM&L Theatre**

Here is a rundown of what will take the stage at PM&L Theatre in Antioch in the coming months.

Hairspray

Production dates, May 30-June 22

Join Tracy Turnblad on her quest for fame on a 1960s TV dance show, championing diversity and inclusion along the way. Bursting with catchy tunes and vibrant dance numbers, this energetic musical is a feel-good hit for all ages. Get ready to shake and shimmy with the irresistible energy of "Hairspray"! Bursting with infectious music and unstoppable dance numbers, this big-hearted musical celebrates diversity, friendship, and the power of change.

Stage Struck Youth Theatre

This program allows youth of all ages to participate in a real theatrical production with the goal of enriching their lives with unique experiences. The program culminates with live performances in July 2025.

Backstage positions are available as

well for working on stage crew, assisting with creation of props or working in tech booth on sound, lights and projections.

The Addams Family

young@part • Ages 12-18

Production dates, July 10-13

A musical comedy! Wednesday Addams, known for her love of darkness, has fallen in love with a sweet man from a seemingly respectable and ordinary family. As Wednesday falls in love, family members begin to find out, forcing Gomez, her father, to keep a secret from his love, Morticia. Meanwhile, Pugsley and Grandma scheme and Uncle Fester relates by finding a love of his own. Everything will change on the dreadful night the Addams host a dinner for Wednesday's boyfriend and his 'normal' family. What could go wrong?

The Wizard of Oz

Youth Edition • Ages 7-18

Production dates, July 24-27

L. Frank Baum's beloved story of a young girl's adventure in a magical land

has been entertaining audiences for over a century. MGM's blockbuster 1939 film adaptation, featuring the timeless songs of Harold Arlen and E.Y. Harburg, along with the brilliant instrumental music of Herbert Stothart, elevated the popular novel to even greater heights. This stage adaptation, featuring the characters and celebrated songs from the film, brings the wondrous Land of Oz to life in a jubilant theatrical experience.

Join Dorothy and her loyal companion Toto as they "Follow the Yellow Brick Road" through the Land of Oz, determined to reach the Emerald City, where the great and powerful Wizard of Oz will help them get home. Of course, along the way, Dorothy encounters witches (both good and bad), Munchkins, talking trees and winged monkeys.

But most importantly, she befriends three unique characters: a Scarecrow with no brain, a Tin Man with no heart, and a Lion with no "nerve." Their journey to happiness – and self-awareness – is a glowing testament to friendship, understanding and hope in a world filled with both beauty and ugliness.

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Rapunzel

Ages 7-18

Production dates, July 24-27

Rene Shwartzbuckle is cuckoo for a turnip-like vegetable called rapunzel. When she spots a mouth-watering patch of the plant in Witch Izwitch's garden, she sends her husband Walt out to 'borrow' some. Witch Izwitch is certainly not amused! With her diabolical henchmen, the Glumpwarts, she terrorizes Walt into promising her his firstborn child in exchange for his freedom.

We then jump ahead many years to Rapunzel (now you know where the name comes from!) Shwartzbuckle's 18th birthday. The witch and the Glumpwarts show up as promised and whisk poor, innocent Rapunzel away to a tower in the forest. From here, a boisterously entertaining rescue attempt begins! (The technical aspects of 'hair climbing' are handled quite simply.) Can Prince Llewellyn persevere over the powers of evil?

Filled with plenty of action and fresh, hysterical characters (such as the sages Parsley, Rosemary and Thyme!), this show gives a new twist to an old story and a gentle message about the nature of beauty.

Mean Girls

High School Edition • Ages 14-18

Production dates, Sept. 5-28

The show includes mature themes, strong language, and discussions of bullying, social dynamics, and relationships, all of which align with the original Broadway version. We strongly encourage parents to familiarize themselves with the material before registering.

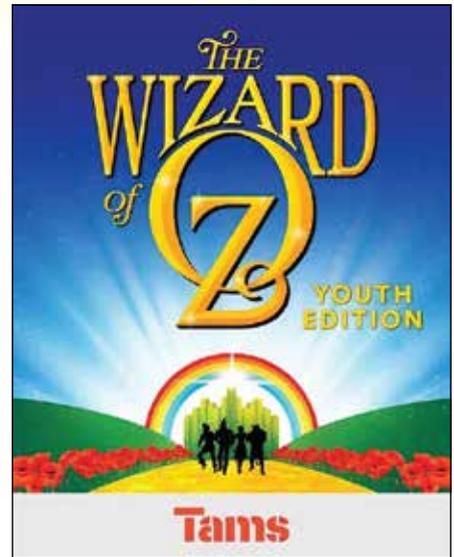
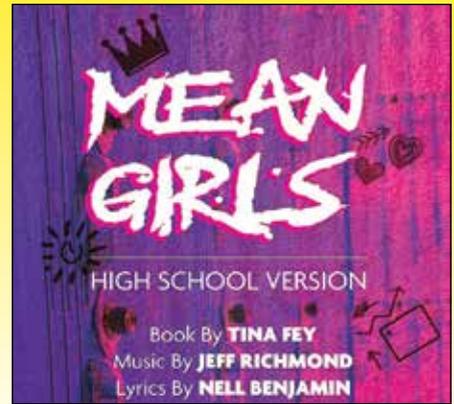
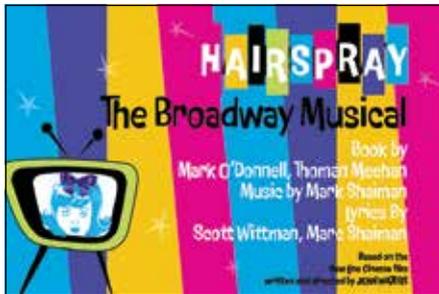
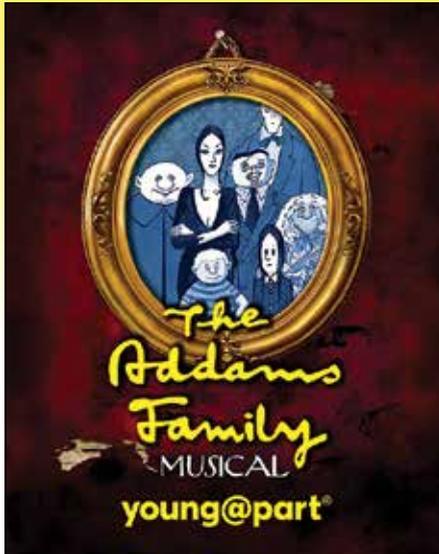
Cady Heron may have grown up on an African savanna, but nothing prepared her for the wild and vicious ways of her strange new home: suburban Illinois. How will this naïve newbie rise to the top of the popularity pecking order? By taking on The Plastics, a trio of lionized frenemies led by the charming but ruthless Regina George. But when Cady and her friends devise a "Revenge Party" to end Regina's reign, she learns the hard way that you can't cross a Queen Bee without getting stung.

About the theatre

A theatre community since 1960: Palette – symbol of the artist; Masque – symbol of the actor; Lyre – symbol of the musician.

These three symbols were put together to form the name of the group of people who were interested at that time primarily in producing (overseeing the executive and financial aspects) of plays, art works, and

Rapunzel



concerts, according to history shared on the website.

A dozen individuals (actors, business people, artists and musicians) banded together and donated \$10 each. With \$120 burning a hole in their pockets, the group set out to bring culture to Antioch. Shows and art exhibits were given for the benefit of the Antioch Women's Club, Lake County Mental Health Group and various P.T.A.s.

In 1963, the group was offered the opportunity to rent the Lakes Theatre (originally named the Crystal Theatre, constructed circa 1914) on Main Street. With the added responsibility of maintaining a theatre and putting something on the stage with some regularity, it was decided membership should be broadened to include general members.

Palette, Masque, and Lyre, Inc. moved into what is now the PM&L Theatre, and with few exceptions has not looked back since.

"In fact, in 1982, the group (with some trepidation) purchased the building. Over 60 years later, we continue to work to provide quality theatre, while maintaining

and striving to make additional improvements to our space," the website states. "Support from our patrons and the community is always appreciated as we continue to open doors to the arts for so many for now and into the future."

Get involved

PM&L has been run and operated by its volunteer membership for over 50 years. From the sets they build, the props they make, the refreshments they serve, and the spectacles they create they are entirely volunteer driven.

Many may call it "community theatre" but to them it's really a theatre community – a group of dedicated volunteers with the mission of bringing the arts to the communities they serve through a community they create.

"No matter your experience, no matter your level of talent, there's a way for you to help us. Drop us a note and start your journey to becoming a part of the PM&L community," the website states.

PM&L Theatre is at 877 Main St., Antioch, Illinois. For more information, visit pmltheatre.com, call 847-395-3055 or email tickets@pmltheatre.com.



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A friendly addition

Antioch Police Department welcomes comfort dog Flo

by **Sandra Landen Machaj**

CORRESPONDENT

Last fall, the Antioch Police Department welcomed a very special recruit.

Flo is her name and she's different from the other members. You see, she's a 3-year-old black lab who came into the department with a specific job already assigned to her.

While many police departments throughout the country have police dogs on their force – K-9 units who respond to emergency calls, sniff out drugs and help apprehend criminals – Flo has an untraditional job.

“Flo will provide emotional

support wherever needed,” said Kelley Crimmins, communications specialist for the Village of Antioch.

“While traditional police dogs focus on law enforcement, Flo is a comfort dog, where the focus is on well-being and providing emotional support wherever needed,” Crimmins explained.

Flo has been in training since she was a puppy, so she was ready to begin her work immediately after her swearing in, which took place at an October 2024 Village Board Meeting.

Like all other members of the force, Flo has a badge. Hers, though, is embroidered on her jacket, which



from top: Flo was introduced to the community with this photo on an announcement; She is never without someone to take her outside to enjoy fresh air or to take care of her needs. **left:** Flo heads for her kennel when she needs a break from comforting or entertaining staff and visitors.

COURTESY KELLEY CRIMMINS/VILLAGE OF ANTIOCH *Catch the Action*

SANDRA LANDEN MACHAJ *Catch the Action*

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identifies her as a support dog and a member of the Antioch Police force.

Her fellow members of the police department, however, had to learn how she would assist them in enhancing public safety – as well as how to partner with a dog, share the work load among officers and function with the department.

Crimmins said that the transition was fast and easy, as both Flo and her teammates fell in love with each other.

A tour of the station

In a recent visit to the station, Flo greeted her visitors with tail wagging, along with Nicholas Garcia, Commander of Administration.

Flo took the lead in going through the station, as if showing off her home – though

Commander Garcia was allowed to tag along (perhaps because he brought a cup of Cheerios along – her favorite treat).

There’s no question the station is her home. She is in and out of the offices of all the officers and other employees on site, with each person stopping to say hello and give her a pet.

“Flo has definitely taken over,” Garcia said. “Before she arrived, we emptied a storage room, painted it pink for her and turned it into her room.

“While her cage is kept in this space, the cage is never locked,” he added. “She is free to go in, especially if she needs some time and space away from people, or a nap, but she is never locked in it.”

Another change to the station is in the Sergeants’ room, where a dog bed is located

Official oath

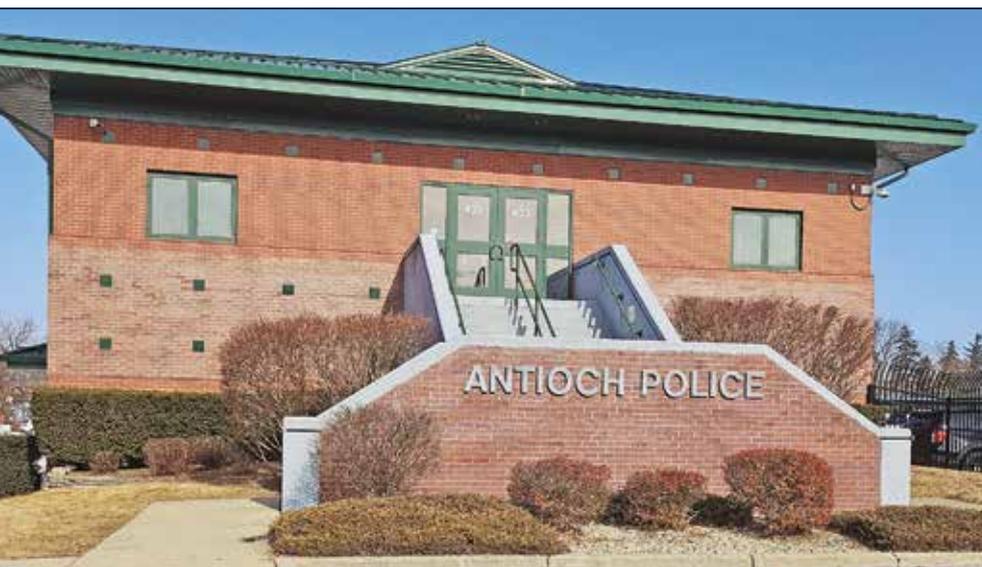
Flo, as a member of the Antioch Police Department, took an official oath that is now on display at the station. It reads:

I, Flo, as the official comfort dog for the Village of Antioch Police Department, do solemnly pledge to serve with a warm heart and gentle spirit.

I promise to bring peace, support, and companionship to all in need, easing distress with every wag of my tail.

To the best of my abilities, I will be a source of joy, comfort, and calm in our community.

It was signed and sworn Nov. 13, 2024, and has the village’s official stamp.



This photo captured Flo with her new family, the entire Antioch Police Department force.

COURTESY KELLEY CRIMMINS/VILLAGE OF ANTIOCH
Catch the Action

The Antioch Police Station is now also known as the home of Flo.

SANDRA LANDEN MACHAJ *Catch the Action*



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under each sergeant's desk.

When she is the one who needs comfort – or just a break – Flo is the one who chooses where to settle in.

According to Garcia, she does sometimes play the officers against one another as she chooses her spot.

"Flo lives at the police headquarters full time and is there 24 hours a day unless she is out in the community working," shared Garcia. "Since we are open 24 hours and the station is manned at night, we do have to encourage her to sleep during the night.

"(It's) often difficult for her because there are people there (at the station) who may

need some attention or are ready to give Flo some attention," he added.

Trained for a specific job

Flo is a service dog who was trained by Supporting Independence through Teamwork Service Dogs, which is in southern Illinois.

The organization specializes in canine therapy and offers a variety of different canine services.

Antioch Police Chief Geoff Guttschow became interested in obtaining a comfort dog for the village after seeing the positive impact the dogs are having in police

departments across the country.

It's been shown that these dogs benefit not only the community, but also members of the police force.

As the department often does when they have a need for something that is not covered by their budget, Guttschow approached the Lions Club of Antioch for assistance to help cover the cost of a comfort dog. It was his hope that the Lions Club would be able to provide at least part of the funds to allow Antioch to bring a support dog (also referred to as a comfort dog) to the community.

"And once again the Lions Club, as it so often does, came through for us," shared Commander Garcia. "The Lions Club has always been there to help the police department and other community organizations, for which we are very grateful."

Flo has a variety of jobs, including going out in the community with an officer to visit schools, childcare facilities, independent living facilities, support groups, community events or just to walk the streets, meeting residents.

Officers find they are more approachable while out and about if accompanied by Flo, who loves responding to the attention she receives from those they cross paths with.

She serves as a bridge between the community and the department, but that is



upper photos: After joining the Antioch police force, Flo, a comfort dog, is introduced to the board by Commander Nicholas Garcia. The two then spent a little time showing off some of her tricks to the board members.
at left: Officer Johnson spends some quality time with Flo at the police station.

COURTESY KELLEY CRIMMINS/VILLAGE OF ANTIOCH
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SANDRA LANDEN MACHAJ *Catch the Action*

not her only job.

Flo is often made available to victims and witnesses who have been exposed to excessive trauma. Having Flo there to console the person lowers stress levels and helps the person affected deal with the event more easily.

One big family

“Police work is a highly stressful profession,” Garcia said. “We gain so much personally from having Flo here in the station.

“When our stress levels are up, coming into the station and being given a friendly greeting by Flo helps to lower them,” Garcia explained.

Flo lives at the station full time and there is not any one person in charge of her. All of the police department officers and staff pitch in feeding her, as well as taking her outside for walks and needed breaks.

“Even dogs need a day off from their jobs now and then,” Garcia said. “So occasionally one of the members of the staff will take her home for a long weekend. It seems that Flo enjoys her short weekend vacations, and we always get good reports that she has behaved well.”

While she enjoys getting away, Garcia said she’s also happy to back in her space.

“She always seems happy to return to her real home, The Antioch Police Station... where her entire family lives.”

The Antioch Police Station (and Flo’s home) is at 433 Orchard St. in Antioch. For more information on where to see and meet Flo in the community, call 847-395-8585.



above: Commander Garcia and Flo take a break in Flo’s room, which was painted pink in recognition of her being a female. **top right:** Students at a local school are happy to get a special visit from Flo. **at right:** Flo enjoys giving love to staff and students at school. Visits throughout the community are the highlights of her day at work.

COURTESY KELLEY CRIMMINS/VILLAGE OF ANTIOCH
Catch the Action

Chain-O-Lakes and Fox Lake Areas



Get outdoors at Chain O'Lakes State Park



Area offers numerous recreational opportunities

Chain O'Lakes State Park is located in both McHenry and Lake counties in northeast Illinois. It borders three natural lakes – Grass, Marie and Nippersink – and the Fox River, which connects the other seven lakes.

Here is a list of just some of the many activities offered at the park.

Archery range – An archery range for target practice is located on Rt. 173 West of the Fox River for target practice.

Bike trails – There are four surfaced bike trail in the park totaling 6 miles.

Boating – A user fee issued by the Fox Waterway Agency is required for all boats using the Chain O'Lakes. Call 847-587-8540 for agency regulations.

There is no charge to launch boats at the park, nor is there any horsepower limitation on boats using any of the Chain O'Lakes. Only electric trolling motors only are allowed on Turner Lake, a 44-acre lake inside the park.

Note that all watercraft must comply

with State of Illinois watercraft rules and regulations.

Concession/Boat Rental – The park's concession stand is open January to October. Hours vary so it's advised to check the website. Offers food, ice, firewood, soft drinks, ice cream, fishing equipment and baits, and camper supplies.

Boat and canoe rentals are available. The required safety equipment must be provided by the user or rented from the concessionaire.

For additional information call 847-587-7165 or visit Gillsonthethechain.com.

Fishing – Among the popular fish available to anglers in the Chain O'Lakes are bluegill, largemouth bass, walleye,

Chain O'Lakes State Park offers many activities from camping and numerous trails to fishing, hunting and picnic areas. The park spans portions of both Lake and McHenry counties.

ILLINOIS STATE PARKS PHOTO *Catch the Action*

crappie, muskie, northern pike, bullhead, catfish and yellow and white bass.

Hunting – Dove, waterfowl, archery deer and permit pheasant hunting are available at the park. Details available at the park office and online. All hunting is by registration only.

Picnicking – Chain O’Lakes State Park features seven picnic areas, Oak Point, Deer Path, Hickory Grove, Pike Marsh, Oak Grove, Catfish Cove and Maple Grove, with tables, water, grills and toilets.

Facilities for visitors with disabilities – The Pike Marsh North Picnic Area has been developed to provide accessibility for disabled and/or elderly visitors, including a 1/4-mile hiking trail. There are six class A accessible sites.

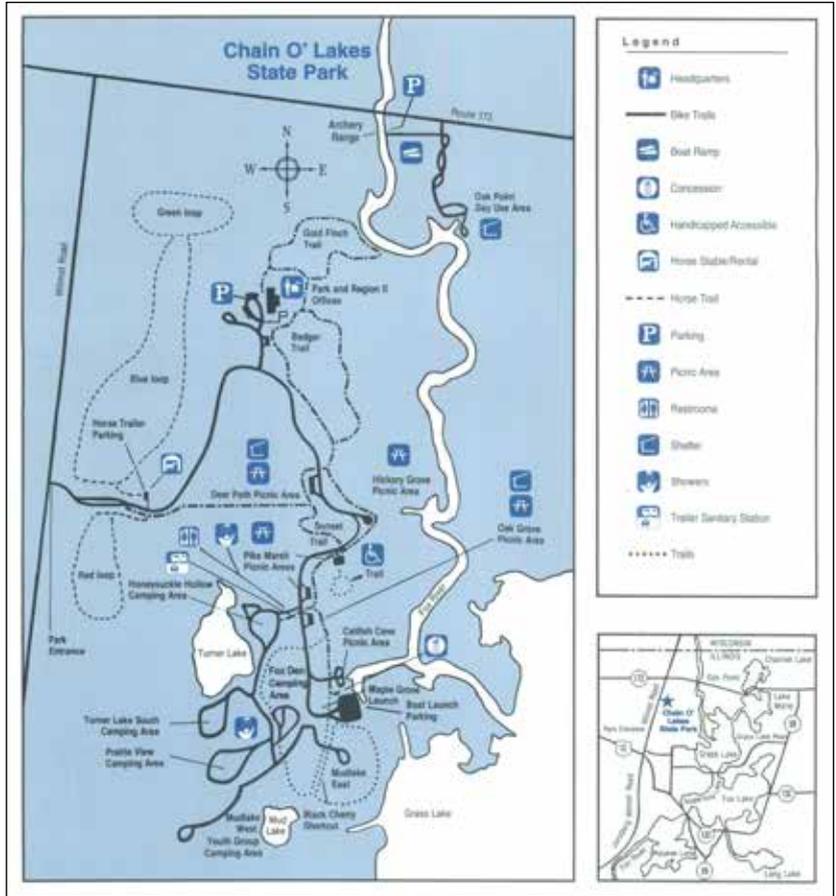
Trails – Chain O’Lakes has four trail systems. The Nature’s Way hiking trail starts at Oak Grove Picnic Area and is 2 1/4 miles in length.

The Pike Marsh North Picnic Area has an accessible trail that is 1/4 mile long.

The park also contains an equestrian trail with three loops and a total length of eight miles. Visitors can bring in their own horses for the trail. A parking lot for horse trailers with access to the equestrian trails is located near the park entrance.

A biking/hiking trail, 6 miles in length, can be accessed at any picnic area between the concession stand and the park office.

For more information about the park, visit dnr.illinois.gov and scroll down to “State Parks and Recreation.”



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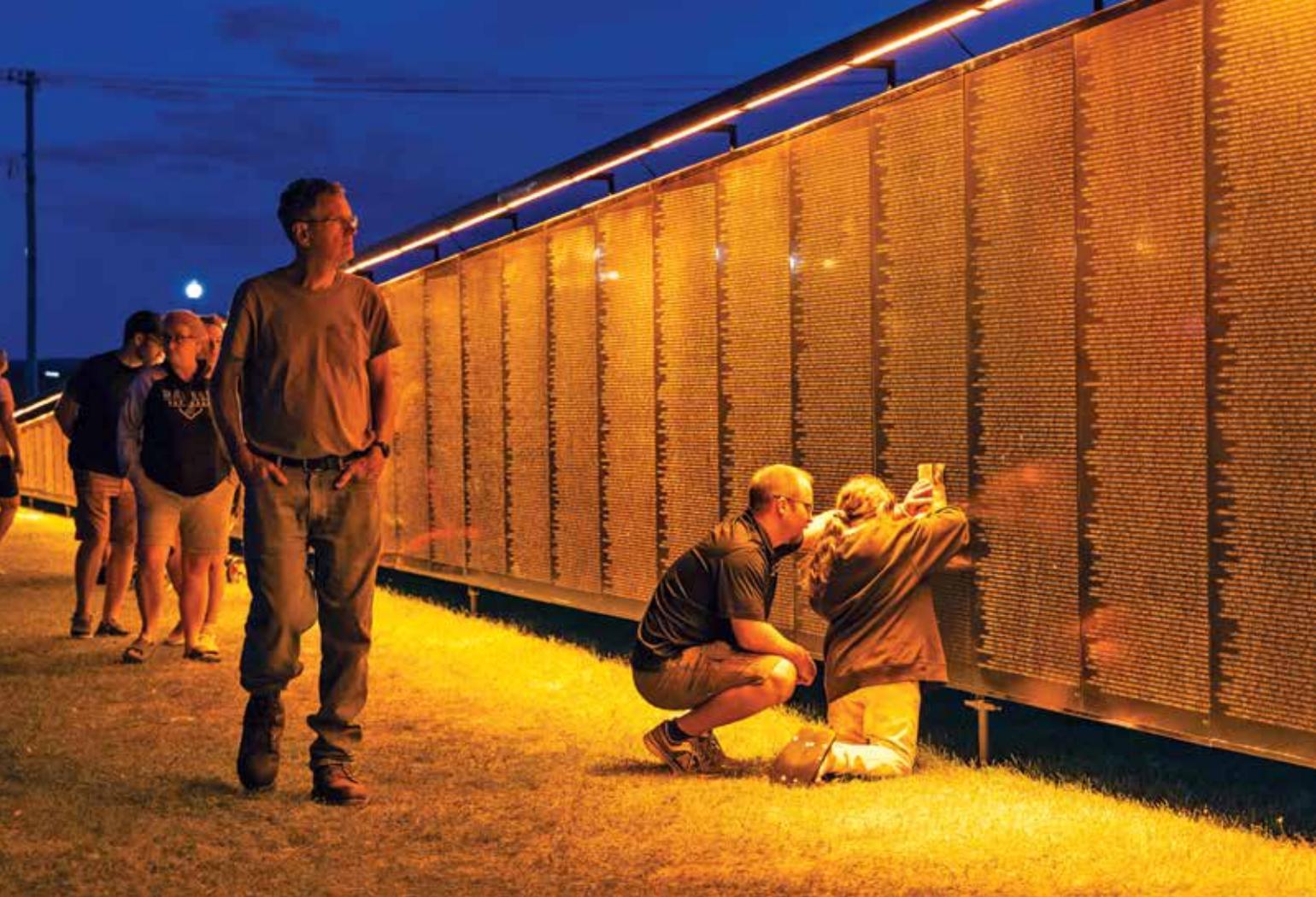
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Honoring those who died for our freedom

by **Sandra Landen Machaj**
CORRESPONDENT

In 1982, a Memorial Wall was erected in Washington D.C., honoring those men and women who gave their lives for our country during the Vietnam War. It soon became the most visited memorial on the National Mall, attracting more than 5 million visitors each year.

It contains the names of more than 58,000 service men and women, who lost their lives during that war. While many family members and friends have made their way to Washington over the years to see the Memorial on the National Mall, and some have taken rubbings of their loved one's name on the wall, there are many others who have not been able to make the journey.

Eventually, portable traveling replicas were created to serve as a way to bring the memorial to people in their own



communities.

One is the Wall That Heals. It is a 3/4-scale replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, 375 feet in length, and has a mobile education center. It will make its way to Antioch this summer where residents and other area community members will have the opportunity to view the wall and visit the education center.

"We applied to have the wall here in Antioch. We were one of 163 applicants, and we were one of the only 31 communities accepted by the Wall That

Heals," shared Barbara Porch, Executive Director of the Antioch Chamber of Commerce.

The wall will be on display in Antioch at the Tim Osmond Sports Complex July 17-20. During the time of the display, there will not be any sports activities taking place at the Osmond Center out of respect for the wall and to assure that there is ample space for those who visit.

Many hands helping out

Before the wall is in place and ready to be viewed, there will be a lot of work by local sponsors and volunteers to construct it.

Like the Memorial in Washington D. C., The Wall That Heals is erected in a chevron shape. Visitors will experience it rising above them as they advance toward the apex. Here, visitors can also choose to do rubbings of individual service

People visit the traveling wall day and night with some doing a name rubbing in remembrance of their loved one.

SUBMITTED PHOTO *Catch the Action*



ADVENTURE AWAITS



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www.TheCivilWarMuseum.org



5608 Tenth Avenue | Kenosha, WI
Tuesday-Sunday 12-5pm | Closed Monday
www.DinosaurDiscoveryMuseum.org



member's names. The wall is readable day or night as modern LED lighting is installed to provide illumination.

"The lights will be installed by High Caliber Electric, a local business owned by Marine Veteran Rob Bednarz," shared Porch.

According to Matt Adams, of High Caliber Electric, Bednarz plans to take all of his employees to the site for the installation and take-down of the lights.

The official hosts bringing the wall to Antioch are the Antioch Chamber of Commerce and Post 748 American Legion. But of course, this type of project requires many sponsors and volunteers.

"The Rotary Club of Antioch will be involved in the event also," shared Rebecca Dunleavy, head of public relations for the club. "We will be donating funds and providing volunteers to work at the wall."

In addition to constructing the wall and taking it apart afterwards, many volunteers will also help out on-site during the time it's on display.

Raymond Chevrolet is often the first to step up and offer support for local events and have done so again. They became the first sponsor and though others have also stepped up, there is still ample need for additional sponsors.

"While there are several traveling walls, we have chosen the Wall That Heals to be the wall that will be on display in Antioch, as they are the only non-profit wall and they support the D.C. Wall," shared Porch. "There is no charge to visit the Wall. If we have any donated money – or sponsorship money left after the event – it will be donated to The Wall That Heals."

Visiting the wall day or night is encouraged as is a stop at the Mobile Education Exhibit. Here, visitors can observe digital photo displays of Hometown Heroes – members listed on the wall that are from the area where the wall is displayed. In this case it will include veterans from McHenry and Lake counties and from Kenosha County in Wisconsin.

As of this writing, they were still in need of volunteers for setting up the wall as well as ambassadors who will be present at the wall to speak with and offer support to members of the public visiting. For some, it's a very emotional visit and they welcome emotional support while again facing grief if it resurfaces.

Group tour options

If interested in a group tour of the wall – whether in honor of a family member or friend, to bring a group of veterans to the site, or another group – times can be arranged through the chamber.

The wall is expected to arrive in a 53-foot truck on July 15 and an honor guard wearing white gloves will accompany the



The Wall That Heals – a 3/4-scale replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial – will be on site for visitors at the Tim Osmond Sports Complex, 38 Depot St., Antioch, from July 17-20.

NATIONAL VETERANS MEMORIAL & MUSEUM PHOTO *Catch the Action*

panels on site.

All are invited to attend the opening ceremony at 10 a.m., July 17, which will be coordinated by Paul J. Hettish, a retired Colonel from the U. S. Army, and Senior Vice Commander of the Antioch VFW.

The Wall That Heals will be on site and open for visitation at the Tim Osmond Sports Complex, 38 Depot St., Antioch, July 17-20.

A closing ceremony will be held at 2 p.m., July 20, and is also open to anyone

interested in attending.

Recognizing Vietnam War service members who made the ultimate sacrifice is essential to honor their bravery and ensure their legacy is remembered. Seeing the Wall That Heals is an opportunity to honor those who gave their lives for our country during the Vietnam War.

Contact Barbara Porch at the Antioch Chamber for information on volunteering or to set up a group tour by calling 847-395-2233 or visiting AntiochChamber.org.

An American Flag is placed predominantly in the foreground near The Wall That Heals. In July, the replica wall will be in Antioch.

SUBMITTED PHOTO *Catch the Action*



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A worthy mission

by **Sandra Landen Machaj**

CORRESPONDENT

On Sept. 11, 2011, Bill Kraus and Steve “Newt” Newton opened the first of what would become a large chain of unique BBQ restaurants. This first was in Glen Burnie, Maryland.

It was 10 years after the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the date was chosen for the opening to honor the military, police, firefighters, and first responders who were quickly on the scene to offer their assistance, many who lost their lives trying to help others.

The decision to open a BBQ restaurant was made after a study that revealed the popularity of BBQ. They then traveled around the country and created the menu for Mission BBQ. It includes quality smoked meats, special BBQ sauces created for the restaurant, and a variety of side dishes.

Aside from the quality foods that appeal to visitors, the décor of the restaurants keep many returning for it reveals the love the company has for veterans and first responders.

Inside, the walls are lined with photos of area residents who served in the military or as first responders. They are brought into the restaurant by residents and are then added to the collection.

At various times throughout the week, free food is offered to active or retired servicemen and women, police, firefighters and first responders as a thank you for their service. The company also supports many service organizations such as contributing to



from top: The walls at Mission BBQ restaurants feature photos and memorabilia of those who have served, donated so they can be displayed; Mission BBQ, which started as one restaurant 10 years after the 9/11/01 terrorist attacks, now has 150 locations throughout the U.S. Each serves BBQ and other items, and honors members of the military and first responders – overall and from local communities; Each day at noon, customers and employees of Mission BBQ stand and face one of the American Flags while the National Anthem is played. **below:** This portion of a wall honors the first responders at the Twin Towers in New York on Sept. 11, 2001.

SANDRA LANDEN MACHAJ *Catch the Action*

an Honor Flight or a Veteran’s group in need.

The feeling of patriotism is palpable in the restaurants, especially at noon each day when the National Anthem is played at every Mission BBQ. Customers and workers alike stand and face the American Flag hanging from the ceiling. Current and past military are often seen saluting the flag, some people have tears in their eyes.

“Every day we strive to serve BBQ made from the finest ingredients and serve it to you in a patriotic dining room filled with tributes to those who made our country great, given to us by those who earned them,” the founders Kraus and Newton are quoted on the website.

Joe Liss, manager of Mission BBQ in Gurnee talked about the company’s growth and its consistent priorities.

“While the founders began with a single restaurant in Glen Burnie, Maryland, now there are about 150 restaurants spread across the country,” Liss said. “We are closed on major holidays to allow workers to have time

with their families.”

Another thing that’s worth noting at Mission BBQ is the friendliness and kindness of the servers. They are pleasant and helpful, even when busy.

The owners encourage everyone to join them in proudly serving those who serve or have served.

“Come help us complete our mission.” Mission BBQ has the following area locations:

6430 Grand Avenue • Unit 101
Gurnee, IL • 847-278-4577

6930 75th St. • Kenosha, WI
262-649-9773

2927 S. 108th St. • West Allis, WI
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For information, visit mission-bbq.com

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Upcoming events

Food Truck Festival

Friday, May 23, from noon to 9 p.m. at Lake County Fairgrounds and Event Center, 1060 E. Peterson Rd., Grayslake, Ill.

The Lake County Food Truck Festival is coming back for the third year. It will feature a wide variety of food trucks serving up everything from savory meals to sweet treats. Bring your appetite and a few friends.

\$10 parking per vehicle (save \$2 when purchased online.) Admission allows access to food trucks, live music, a beer garden and entertainment for all ages.

To learn more, visit lcfairgrounds.com.

Beach Party/Bike Rodeo

Saturday, May 31, from noon to 6 p.m. at Lakefront Park, 71 Nippersink Blvd., Fox Lake, Ill.

Lakefront Park beach party and Bike Rodeo will celebrate the grand opening of the brand-new beach! Bring your family to have an evening of fun under the sun, with activities for all ages. Enjoy music, food vendors, activities and the annual Bike Rodeo where kids can come and get their bike inspected by police officers!

Taste of Summer

May 29 to June 1 – Families, get ready for the Taste of Summer Festival in Antioch, Ill., with new dates and a new carnival.

Four amazing days filled with live music, delicious food, thrilling carnival rides, unique exhibitors and shopping galore. Free admission.

For more information, call 847-395-2233 or visit antiochchamber.org.

Outdoor Vintage Market

Saturday, June 7, from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., the Reclaimed Artisans will host the 14th Annual Spring Outdoor Vintage Market at 302 Peterson Rd., Libertyville, Ill.

Featured live music, a variety of food and drink and 40-plus vendors. Free admission – no tickets needed.

For more information, visit Reclaimed Artisans Inc. on Facebook.

Libertyville Days Festival

Thursday, June 12, to Sunday, June 15, in downtown Libertyville, Ill.

Get ready for the ultimate summer experience at Libertyville's must-attend marquee festival where we are bringing the tropical vibes with the theme: "Aloha

Summer '25!"

Gather the whole family and dive into a world of fun with a dazzling parade, thrilling carnival rides, mouth-watering eats, an unbeatable beer tent, and a sizzling rib cook-off. But that's just the start! Enjoy live demonstrations, a fun Baggo tournament, a kids' party packed with excitement, and a one-of-a-kind arts & crafts fair.

With live entertainment, surprises at every turn, and so much more, this festival promises to be the highlight of your summer. Don't miss out on the unforgettable memories waiting to be made.

Zion Nostalgia Days

Friday, June 13 to Saturday, June 14 from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., 2828 Sheridan Rd., Zion, Ill.

Enjoy the antique and custom car show and cruise, food vendors, kid's activities, DJ's, radio stations and fun for everyone. After the car show, stick around for the Midwest's largest Cruize.

Wizards Weekend Day

Saturday, June 14, throughout downtown Antioch, Ill.

Wizards, Witches and Muggles (adults, teens, kids) magically appear in Antioch to experience a Wizards Village filled with Magical Moments, Magical Bands, new Diagon Alley, Kids School of Magic, new Marauders Experience for all ages, Magical Meet Ups, Scavenger Hunts, Crafts and New Magic for all.

For more information, visit antiochchamber.org.

Antioch Farmers Market

Thursdays, June 19 to Aug. 21 from 4 to 7 p.m. at Sequoit Creek Park in the Village of Antioch, Ill. For more information, visit antioch.il.gov.

Cardboard Boat Race

On Saturday, June 21, at noon, Lakefront Park, 71 Nippersink Blvd., Fox Lake, Ill. come join Fox Lake for Cardboard Boat Races and the Youth Fishing Derby at Lakefront Park.

Bring out your kids for a fun day of catching fish. There will be giveaways, music, and prizes for top catches.

Test out your craftsmanship and build a cardboard boat to race against others. This will be a fun event for people of all ages whether they are sailing their vessel or cheering on from the shoreline.

Juneteenth Parade

Saturday, June 21, Juneteenth Lake County Parade & Festival in Waukegan, Ill.

The African American Museum at England Manor is coordinating this year's Juneteenth Lake County Parade and Festival.

Juneteenth is more than a holiday – it celebrates resilience, freedom, and Black excellence. And this year, we're bringing the culture outside in a big way!

The parade will start at 1 p.m. and include the Elite Striders Drill Team & Drum Corps], South Shore Drill Team, local school marching bands, low riders, motorcycles, Mr. & Ms. Juneteenth, and more.

The Queen's Museum

July 17 and 18 (6 p.m.) and July 19 and 20 (3 p.m. and 6 p.m.) at Lake Forest Open Lands, 350 N. Waukegan Rd., Lake Forest, Ill.

Bring a picnic and a blanket for The Queen's Museum – a music and play for young audiences.

The monarch of the realm commissions the housing of her personal collection of artifacts, for the inspiration and edification of the populace. What a noble idea! What a wonderful plan!

What could possibly go wrong? Well, there's this band of down-on-their-luck pirates, see, drawn to the scent of plunder and rousing dance numbers.... another Citadel outdoor summer extravaganza full of music and fun that your whole family will enjoy together!

General admission tickets are \$20. For more information visit citadeltheatre.org.

Lake County Fair

Wednesday, July 23, to Sunday, July 27, at the Lake County Fairgrounds, 1060 E. Peterson Rd., Grayslake, Ill.

Get ready to save the day – or at least save room for another funnel cake! The Lake County Fair is swooping in with superhero-sized excitement for its 96th year of legendary entertainment.

From high-flying motocross to earth-shattering monster trucks, a demolition derby that'll knock your socks off, and pulse-pounding bull riding, this fair is your ultimate action adventure – all grandstand and arena events are free with admission!

So, suit up, grab your sidekick, and visit the fair, where ordinary becomes extraordinary and every fairgoer gets to be a hero!

Waterfront Market

On Friday, July 25, from 5 to 8 p.m. the Waterfront Market will be at Siver Park, 175 S. Harbor Place in Waukegan, Ill.

The market is where local flavor, music and community come together by the lake! Shop local artisans and makers, enjoy tasty eats, stop by the family game station, and discover community businesses, good vibes and handcrafted goods.

It takes place on the fourth Friday of each month, May to September.

Other dates this summer are Aug. 22 and Sept. 26.

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Artist crafts fanciful hats in honor of late mom

Art for Adrienne owner donating percent of sales to mental health

by **Cynthia Wolf**
CONTRIBUTOR

Editor's note: The content of this article references suicide. It is intended to be informative, but please be aware that it may be emotionally difficult to read.

Mere minutes after Lauren Sharp placed several of the wide-brimmed fedoras she hand-etches on a back table at a McHenry coffee shop, curious onlookers couldn't help themselves.

"I love these!" exclaimed McHenry resident Dana Ferguson, who had stopped by Toast & Roast with her friend David Arroyo of Grayslake.

"I could tell when I saw her face she's an artist," added Arroyo. "I had to come ask about these hats."

Over the next hour, between visits with others drawn to gaining a more up-close glimpse of her intricately crafted headgear, Sharp, of Johnsburg, explained the motivation behind the name of her home-based business, Art for Adrienne.

It is an homage to Sharp's mother, a talented artist herself, who committed suicide in 2009 at age 47. Sharp was just 19. The death followed years of tumult, as Adrienne Paradise battled mental health and substance abuse struggles, said Sharp.

This May, during National Mental Health Awareness Month, Sharp will dedicate 10 percent of her sales to the National Alliance on Mental Illness of McHenry County. She also is donating one of her fanciful chapeau to NAMI for its May gala.

"Lauren's hats are gorgeous and her talent and passion for her craft is evident in every single piece," said Abbey Nicholas, executive director of NAMI McHenry County. "NAMI is so honored to feature a one-of-a-kind donated hat in our Sunset Gala auction ... Lauren's personal story reminds us



CYNTHIA WOLF Catch the Action

above: Lauren Sharp founded Art for Adrienne in honor of her late mother, Adrienne Paradise. During the month of May, National Mental Health Awareness Month, she will dedicate 10 percent of sales of her hand-etched hats to the National Alliance on Mental Illness of McHenry County, Illinois. **right:** Sharp and her mother are shown during happier times in this photo. Adrienne Paradise committed suicide in 2009, when Sharp was 19. Sharp, who just turned 36, is dedicating 10 percent of all of her sales throughout May to a mental health agency.



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LAUREN SHARP
Catch the Action

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that we are all touched by mental health, and her generosity will help ensure that everyone in our community has access to free mental health services.”

Sharp said she is grateful to have formed a connection with Nicholas and NAMI.

“This is an opportunity to spread some positivity, turn some bad things that have happened in my life into good,” Sharp said. “I love seeing people wear my art, and I love helping women feel beautiful. I’m hoping that, in working with Abbey, it will also help to bring healing to others.”

Sharp, who turns 36 on May 7, takes blank, wide-brimmed, “vegan” fedoras of various hues and, using a wood-burning technique known as pyrography, engraves them with a range of free-handed, imaginative, feminine or fierce designs. A gallery may be viewed and orders placed at artforadrienne.com.

Ranging in price from about \$75 to \$110, some of her designs are subtle, featuring rose petals and vines, while on others, alligators lurk or a moon casts its shadow across a desolate landscape. Acrylic paints provide an extra pop of color to some. Others bear beading and lacy ribbon, while still others show off feathers, leather braids or ropes of rough-cut stone. Even the undersides of Sharp’s brims delight.

Between the visits from curious passers-by, Sharp spoke openly about both her own mental health challenges and the one that ultimately took her mother’s life.

As Sharp and her three siblings were growing up in McHenry and Wonder Lake, she said, their mother struggled off and on with alcohol abuse.

“At times, I was mad at her,” Sharp said. “But when she was well, she had such a shining personality. She truly lit up a room. She was amazingly talented artistically. She’d take an old, dilapidated antique and give it a new life. Whether it was a rock or a piece of wood, she could paint it and make something truly beautiful out of it.”

Sharp said her mom was also a muralist. She served in the U.S. Army from 1984 to 1986, meeting her husband, John Paradise, while both were stationed in Germany.

“She painted my whole bedroom wall this beautiful ocean theme with dolphins and fish and coral. My friends would come over and they were so jealous,” Sharp said.

About a year before Adrienne Paradise died, she was diagnosed with bipolar disorder. She began treatment, and for the next 12 months, doctors tried to dial in an effective regimen, her daughter said.

However, one early morning in March 2009, John Paradise ran screaming into Lauren’s room. Adrienne Paradise had swallowed a bottle of Tylenol after a day-long bender. She was alive, but unconscious. A day later, her organs failing, she was removed from life support and died.

The experience left Lauren Sharp — who fought mental health demons of her own —



from left: Shown is the detail of one of the intricately crafted fedoras Sharp created. A gallery of designs can be viewed at artforadrienne.com, where orders may be placed including custom orders; During a recent interview at a McHenry coffee shop to talk about her hats and her dedication to mental health awareness, Sharp and her fanciful hats repeatedly drew the attention of intrigued shop customers such as Dana Ferguson and David Arroyo.

CYNTHIA WOLF PHOTOS
Catch the Action



fearful.

“I always struggled so bad,” said Sharp, “but I was scared to get help.”

Years later, after the birth of her second child, in 2022, Lauren Sharp suffered severe postpartum depression. Her husband, Landon Sharp, and his mother persuaded Lauren to see a mental health professional. And she is so grateful they did.

“For the past year, I have felt like a whole new person” she said. “I’m mad that I waited this long.”

Sharp said the grief that follows the suicide of a close family member is pitted with guilt. At the time of her mother’s death, Sharp and her sister were “just getting into trouble,” she said, tearing up as she wondered aloud whether she’d done anything by then to make her mother proud. Sharp also often wonders how her mother’s life might have progressed had the artist survived.

“She died before social media took off

and before Etsy was a thing,” Sharp said. “I can just imagine what she could be doing today in a world where it is so much easier to have your art seen.”

Of at least one thing, Sharp has grown supremely assured.

“Getting help is the best thing I’ve ever done,” she said. “I don’t know if this feeling will ever go away that there’s a big piece of my heart missing. But now that I’m doing things to benefit my mental health, and making art that I know would make my mom proud, I feel like that hole is filling.”

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 49,000 Americans committed suicide and 1.5 million attempted it in 2023, the last year for which statistics are noted on the website.

If you or someone you know is in crisis, call the National Suicide & Crisis Lifeline at 988. The lifeline offers judgment-free support for mental health crises, substance use and more. Text, call or chat 988.

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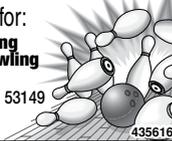
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