

# ★ THE ELBERTA ALERT ★

\*free!

vol. 100 no. 9

A Community News Organ

Thurs., Nov. 10, 2011

## ABANDONED BY THE SYSTEM

By Emily Votruba

KELLY BEATON WORKED as a welder for about 11 years at a shop in Honor, until he was laid off. He never had health care coverage as an adult and didn't care much for going to the doctor. His long-time friend, Janie Rosum, remembers the morning when Kelly mentioned over the breakfast table that he might have a piece of metal in his eye. She took a look and immediately drove him to the ER. The piece of metal had been in his eye for two days.

Kelly wasn't the type to ask for help from anyone. By the time he left the welding shop, he was feeling the damage done to his lungs on the job. When his unemployment ran out this past summer, he was already quite ill, but he kept working, picking up odd jobs here and there, mostly on construction sites.

Kelly was 50 years old and had never been part of the welfare or Medicaid system. He never married, never had children, and had few material things—no assets to speak of. He lived on Bigley Street in Elberta, in a trailer in his friend's yard. One day in early September this year, he woke up with a terrible headache, the kind he couldn't ignore. Janie took him to the ER.

Janie feels that if Kelly had had any kind of health coverage and any regular medical attention, his illness would have been discovered long ago, perhaps in time for it to be successfully treated. As it was, on September 8, Kelly was diagnosed with four types of cancer—lung, liver, brain, and lymph node—at stage IV.

A couple of days later, Janie says, she gathered all of Kelly's financial information and medical reports and headed down to the Benzie Government Office to apply for Medicaid for Kelly. What came next was a month and a half of unreturned phone calls and desperate measures that ultimately found Janie, bereaved of her friend, standing at the post

office holding the first medical bill, for \$23,000.

Janie is retired on disability herself and was Kelly's sole caregiver from the time he got sick. Kelly's parents are both alive but elderly and unwell, still mourning the death of Kelly's younger sister ten months ago, and struggling to deal with that financial burden. Kelly moved into Janie's house in Frankfort and she had his mail forwarded there. Unable to work and with no other income source, Kelly was forced to rely on Janie for everything. She used her own Bridge card to get him the nutritional supplements he needed as his weight plummeted by 60 pounds in just a few weeks. She drove him to doctor's appointments, to the ER when he was struggling to breathe; to radiation treatments and chemo, and she paid for his nebulizer herself.

For weeks, Munson wouldn't admit Kelly because he lacked insurance and had not been approved for Medicaid. He spent a night there once and was sent home the next day; nothing more could be done, they said. That visit alone cost over \$10,000.

All the while, Janie waited to hear back from DHS about Kelly's Medicaid application. Janie says she had to fight to get Kelly the \$12 oxygen tanks his doctor had ordered, several times paying for them herself. She says DHS would only approve one tank at a time, and one tank was not enough to last Kelly the trip to Traverse City and back. "A lot of the time I was making a mad dash to get him either back to the hospital or back to get another oxygen tank." Finally, Janie says, the people at Biederman Cancer Center at Munson called the Prescription Shop after Kelly's first radiation treatment and arranged for his oxygen-tank orders to come through.

Janie held a benefit spaghetti dinner for Kelly at the Mayfair Tavern on October 5, which raised \$1,100. That money,



Janie Rosum and Kelly Beaton in better days. That's Kelly's buck. PHOTO COURTESY OF JANIE ROSUM

so deeply appreciated, alas didn't go very far. "We had to borrow money from everyone we knew. Ten pills was a hundred dollars," Janie says.

At the beginning of October, Janie says, a couple of weeks after she first brought Kelly's materials to Benzie's DHS office, Kelly got a letter from his DHS caseworker, Andrew Lamb, denying him Medicaid. Janie says she'll never forget how angry she felt when she opened that letter. The stated reasons according to Janie were that "he wasn't under 21, he had no children living at home, and they did not find that he was disabled." Weak, breathless, in pain, and with an official stage IV cancer diagnosis, Kelly Beaton was not able-bodied by any reasonable definition. The man who had worked hard his whole life had at last reached the point where he could work no more. But the DHS offices in Benzie and Lansing apparently needed more convincing.

Janie continued to call DHS, demanding that they review Kelly's case. "[The automated message] said if it's an emergency, press this number. I pressed that number every time." But she couldn't get anyone to talk to her. Finally, at the beginning of October, she showed up at the Benzie County Government Office and refused to leave without a meeting.

"I kind of had to make a sneak attack. I casually walked in with the file and asked the first lady in the window if Andy Lamb was in his office. She told me he was and that I should call him from the extension phone on the wall. He didn't answer. I walked back up to the window and told a gentleman there, 'I know he's in the building. This is an urgent situation, and I am not leaving until he comes out of his office and comes toe to toe, face-to-face with me.'"

Janie says the caseworker finally came out and seemed not to know who she was. "And I said, 'You know who I am, and you know the reason I'm here.' And he opens up the file and he looks like it's all new news to him. And I said, 'What happened to his folder? I brought in a complete file weeks ago. Why can't you get this through and make it happen?' Then he opens up the first page and says, 'Oh, this man is very ill.' And I said, Really? No, this man is dying. And then he said, 'Oh this is an emergency, I'll take it right back and do something with it.'"

Days later, Janie received another letter saying Kelly had been denied. Somehow, he met none of the eligibility requirements.

Kelly was finally admitted to Munson at the end of October, for three days. During that time, a hospital social worker got DHS Benzie on the phone to find out why Kelly had been denied Medicaid. According to Janie the DHS rep gave the social worker "every excuse under the sun"—that Kelly's paperwork was incomplete, that it hadn't been

**THE NATURE OF STONE**  
ARCHITECTURAL • LANDSCAPE STONEMASONRY  
TRADITIONAL • DECORATIVE

MICHAEL MURPHY  
231-871-0231  
PO BOX 98  
ELBERTA, MICHIGAN USA  
WWW.NATUREOFSTONE.COM

CERTIFIED BY THE  
DRY STONE WALLING ASSOC.  
OF GREAT BRITAIN  
& THE DRY STONE  
CONSERVANCY  
OF THE UNITED STATES

DRY STONE  
CONSERVANCY

**LANE PLUMBING & HEATING INC.**

633 FRANKFORT AVE.  
ELBERTA, MICHIGAN 49628

(231) 352-4131

**MIX'S BAYSHORE TIRE & AUTO**

• NEW TIRES • USED TIRES •  
• BRAKES • ALL AUTO REPAIRS •

600 Frankfort Ave.  
Elberta, MI 49628  
www.bayshoretireandauto.com

(231) 352-4262  
Fax (231) 352-7209  
bayshoretireandauto@gmail.com

## PLAN B...

By Emily Votruba

MARCIA STOBIE, district 3 county commissioner, said they've hired a county administrator, Chris Olson. "He's from Bear Lake," Marcia said, "so he knows about losing to Benzie Central and Frankfort." The county is negotiating with three unions over changes to municipal worker health care packages mandated by Public Act 54 and State Senate bill no. 7. Employees may have to bear 100% of the increase in health insurance costs. The commission has offered Tom Longenbach his old job as equalization officer, and he'll start November 14. Benzie has a little over a million dollars in EDC money and TC has about \$2 million. Lansing is mandating that those funds be combined to cover one large 10-county EDC, from the Mackinac Bridge to Manistee. "This was federal money but because there were so many strings attached it was hard to lend it out," Marcia said. (The Garden Theater received an EDC loan.) The commission reappointed Marcia LaTour to

the Maples board.

Lee Blahnik of Furnace Ave. spoke on the continuing speeding problem on 168. He said he went to the sheriff's office, the county road commission, and local law enforcement, and has looked into temporary speedbumps and active speed monitors à la the Summer Assembly's. "Rather than the guy who can't or won't do anything, I'm looking for the guy that will." Reg asked Marcia to take the concern to the county commission. Jonathan Drury suggested pedestrian crossing areas with hi-viz cones in the road, à la Frankfort's. Reg said once we take over 168 we'll take steps. Matt Stapleton said he'd be happy to sit down with Lee and Jon and anyone else to look at possible solutions.

Council will reexamine the terms of Two Porta-John services, in the wake of complaints.

The September bills were approved. Receipts were \$33,326.36. Expenditures were: accounting, \$57,070.44; payroll, \$11,089.61; Parks & Rec expenses: \$1,161.39. Total expenditures: \$69,321.44.

The last Lifesaving Station rental this year is Thanksgiving weekend, and DPW

Ken Bonney asked if council wanted the station closed down for the winter. Reg said we need to compare the cost of leaving it open vs. shutting it down and then reopening if there's another Winter Whine in the Park event, for example. Matt Stapleton asked how often people request to rent the Station during the winter, citing potential revenue. Sharyn Bower said we get very few requests. Ken Holmes suggested the Community Building for winter events. Diane Jenks said, "It's not big enough and it doesn't have a kitchen." Ken Bonney said the beach boardwalks are both put away as of mid-November, and the salt and sand are mixed. A general moment of Ken Bonney love ensued. Reg remarked that the back of the Village Office has been totally revamped where there used to be a lot of trash. Ken Holmes said, "I don't think we could ask for a better DPW."

Jinx commended the council for not putting the water board through hell on the water rate increase. Ken Holmes said we still need another licensed operator at the plant. "The flow is down and everybody's complaining." Elberta is now generating 22,000 to 27,000 gallons, down from 100,000. Sharyn said the Village sometimes used to pay \$8,000 a month for water and sewer. Ken Holmes blames the low flow in part on the high grade drainage system installed with the new 168.

Reg clarified that if Ken Bonney does Park and Rec related work he's on the Village clock, and his wage is not paid

by Park and Rec.

Reg is concerned about the huge amount of algae on the beach this year. He asked Ross Thorsen if some agency can be notified. Ross suggested we document it and will ask around.

Ken Bonney surveyed property owners surrounding the proposed dog park and all rejected the proposal. Reg said the Dog Park Committee should start work on the second choice, the field behind the Community Building. Aubrey Ann Parker, one of the Dog Park organizers, said a public forum would have been helpful so that the community could discuss the issue and its pros and cons for the Village.

Linda Manville asked whether the Village is in compliance with the new state health care contributions rules for public employees. According to treasurer Laura Manville the hard cap allows an average payment of \$5,500 per employee for health care; some Village employees get more than this and some less, but we're under the limit with an annual premium for three employees at \$15,901. Linda corresponded with the Michigan Municipal League, who said that because the Village gets revenue sharing (for major and local streets) we need to make sure we remain in compliance, or face penalties. In any event, the law allows us to continue with our current plan until it runs out. Reg said council would examine the issue in August before the plan expires in September. Jinx suggested looking at it during the budget meetings ahead of setting our budget in February. Linda said she would like to see the options and the plan brought before council. Approval of the

**Willow Wood Retreat**  
Vacation Rental  
1106 Valley Street • Elberta, MI 49628  
Ross Thorsen  
231-651-0086  
www.willowwoodretreat.com

**Conundrum Cafe**  
Where the Roads Meet M 22 & Old M 163  
Rob & Michele Cannaert  
Specializing in "Michigan Made"  
603 Frankfort Ave  
Elberta, MI 49628  
231-352-8150

## Remember When ... With Ken

★ Portrait by Art Melendez



Elbertians (and before them, South Frankforters) put their elbow grease to good use. When it comes to community improvement projects, it doesn't hurt to have other kinds of lubrication as well... Ken Holmes shows us the former business end of town.



ED WARD--with pail. JOHN REED at his right.  
CHRIS THOMPSON, Street Commissioner, between bldgs.

ELBERTA'S 1ST CEMENT SIDEWALK  
ED WARD

The caption of this photo, taken some time in the 1880s and sent to us by Jeanne Edwards from the Edwards collection, tells us these fellows are installing Elberta's first cement sidewalk. That would make us pretty up-to-date, considering that Portland cement began arriving in the U.S. for paving at about that time. John Reed and Ed Ward (holding a pail) stand in front of Rust's barbershop, with Fuller's restaurant in the background. In the foreground we see the Midway Saloon, run by barkeep John Rossidor. The Midway stood about where Veterans Hall used to be in the current Veterans Park lot.

current health plans came through adoption of the budget, and there was no general discussion of what was best for the employees and taxpayers, she said.

Council spent the remainder of the two-hour meeting discussing the proposed tall grass and weed ordinance. Reg stated his intention to make a decision that night, since it was now the third time council had discussed the issue. "The first month, somebody complained, the second month we reviewed Frankfort's ordinance and said it was kind of vague, and now we've got another ordinance in front of us tonight. This ordinance has been in the Village office for at least two weeks that I know of, and has been in the Village packet since Monday." [In fact, the completion of the ordinance was not made known to the public as promised, and this reporter was not notified that the ordinance was available, despite two inquiries. I picked up a copy of the ordinance on the Tuesday before the meeting and immediately posted it online. No notice of public hearing was given in the post office, just in the *Record Patriot*, and the wording was not otherwise made available to the public.] Linda Manville said that in similar ordinances she found online, the term "turf" was used instead of "grass," which she suggested was better. "[Turf] is an area of the yard that is predominantly grass but may

# A NEW TEAM AND A NEW PLAYING FIELD

THE ELBERTA PARKS and Recreation Commission held elections at their October meeting. Bill Soper and Connie Manke renewed their membership until 2014, and the commission welcomed new president Art Melendez, vice president Lisa Schroeder-Confer, and secretary Jennifer Wilkins. Laura Manville will continue as treasurer, and Linda Manville will stay on as council liaison.

One initiative is signs for Village parks. Art has submitted some design bids and a few more are coming in. The commission will present its goals and budget for 2012-2013, and is considering some revisions to the bylaws. The playground equipment in Tots park will be replaced with a safer and more modern playscape. Art is working with Jordan Bates and Aubrey Parker and their team to make a dog park happen in the field near the Community Building. If anyone is interested in getting involved



FAR LEFT, TOP: Christine Walkons and her husband, the newly elected president of Park and Rec, Art Melendez. LEFT, BELOW: About 35 people (not all of them pictured) came out for the ribbon cutting on the new Elberta Dunes Park, October 15. LEFT: New Park and Rec secretary Jennifer Wilkins volunteered her time to repaint the two memorial propellers as well as the John R. Hayden memorial anchor. It's amazing what a difference a coat of paint can make. MELENDEZ PHOTO COURTESY ART MELENDEZ; OTHER PHOTOS BY EMILY VOTRUBA

with the dog park, they should contact Art at 616-446-5340.

The Farmers' Market, which Park and Rec helps coordinate, finished the year with a profit of \$1,599.

Despite terrible weather, the turnout for the opening of our new 58-acre tract of parkland, the Elberta Dunes Park, was fabulous. Reg Manville thanked the Thorpe family, who put the property in trust for eventual Village acquisition; the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy, who stewarded the property and secured grants for the Village to take

it over; our village councils past and present; and our village employees, all of whom helped make the Dune Park possible. "As the Village transitions from an industrial economy to one based on tourism and recreation, this park fits nicely into our master plan for the future," Reg said. "Because of this park we truly have 'Pure Michigan' right here in our own backyard." The park needs a management plan, and a committee will be formed with two Village Council members, a planning commission representa-

tive, a Park and Rec rep, and at least two Villagers. Anybody who wants to participate should inform the Village Office.

Park and Rec is eagerly seeking new members. "In keeping with the popular Village subject of lawns and the looks of surrounding houses in town, I would like to invite any Village of Elberta or township of Gilmore resident to go to the Village Office and hand in a written request to be a member of Park and Rec," said Jen Wilkins. "The current team has a lot of ideas to beautify our tiny Village and we welcome more. Park and Rec needs creative, supportive, enthusiastic people to be a part of seasonal fundraising activities that will benefit the continuation of the Village beautification process.

"Wouldn't you like to have a say in what your Village looks like? Come join us now!"

Ψ

**LaRue House**  
Bed & Breakfast

Open May through October  
Jan & Bill Buck  
Your Hosts

809 Frankfort Ave.  
Elberta, MI 49628

(231) 352-7893  
www.laruehousebb.com

A SHEAR CLASS EXPERIENCE  
Salon and Day Spa

Relax Refresh Renew

DIANE "JINX" JENKS ELBERTA, MI 49628  
231-352-7210 www.shearclassexperience.com

Ross Thorsen

LICENSED BUILDER

231-651-0086

ADVERTISE IN THE ALERT!

With a circulation of 750 on paper and infinite numbers on the Web, we provide an exciting showcase for your business. Everybody loves deeply local media! Ask Sue Oseland about our paper and Web rates. (616) 403-4971 / sueoseland@gmail.com

## A Friend like Him

By Pat Moyna

John Barleycorn: With a friend like him, who needs enemies, who needs self-respect, who needs a life?

He stumbled past the window and fell down on the lawn. He filled his mother's flower urn with technicolor yawn. Lurching through the living room he broke her knickknack shelf, smashing two glass angels and one ceramic elf. Tripping on the bathroom rug there, just inside the door, he landed hard and soiled himself while lying on the floor.

Just another night of fun, coming to an end. Like so many others spent, out with his glass-necked friend. "The only one who cares," he thought, "who doesn't look with scorn. The only friend I'll ever have, my friend John Barleycorn." Reeling toward his bedroom door and bouncing off his trunk, he made it past the schifferrobe and landed on his bunk.

He struggled to undress himself to take a little snooze. He couldn't get his belt undone or even shed his shoes. He tried to sit up once or twice but then he went ker-plunk. He'd lost the fight to stay upright and finally passed out drunk. A fitful rest he had at best, with terrifying dreams of dreadful crawling creatures, stifling his screams.

Slowly opening just one eye he felt a searing pain, as if someone had tried to shove an ice pick in his brain. Every time he swore that this hangover was his last. But every time the thirst returned as soon as it had passed. He hated that he was so weak and couldn't answer "No," when the devil voice inside his head said it was time to go.

He'd drink 'til he could drink no more or 'til his cash ran out. He felt a bit more close to death with every drinking bout. He knew his kidneys could give out; his liver soon might fail. Every shot of booze was just another coffin nail. His family didn't understand what drove the man to drink. What drew the poor soul to the edge and dragged him past the brink.

You see when he was off the sauce he acted meek and mild; soft spoken and quite likable, just like a well-raised child. But falling off the wagon brought a different child to light; loud and confrontational and looking for a fight. Not much fun to be around when he was drunk all day, what few friends he might have had began to drift away.

And so he had just one friend left, on whom he could rely. One friend with him through thick and thin, "Until the day I die! Let them turn their backs on me, their loss I will not mourn. I'll always have my glass-necked pal," he said with spiteful scorn. "Who needs their friendship or respect? I have no life you see. With John Barleycorn beside me, I need no enemy."

Rot in Hell, John Barleycorn! Rest In Peace, JRO, & all who could not live without him ... or with him.

Poets, reporters, and musers of the Elberta diaspora! Please send your scribbles by e-mail to [elberta.alert@gmail.com](mailto:elberta.alert@gmail.com), or mail a hard copy to Elberta Alert Submissions, PO Box 357, Elberta, MI 49628. Please send copies, not original works, as all submissions are subject to loss in the Alert office. Submissions will be edited; please include your best contact information.

### MEDICAID EPIC FAIL, cont'd

submitted in a timely manner; that "he didn't have an active case." "I took everything to Andy Lamb weeks ago, the doctors orders and financial information, the chemo and radiation records..." She had watched him look at the file.

On October 27, at 1 pm, Kelly Beaton entered hospice care at Munson. He died at 6 pm. According to Janie he was in hospice for about two hours when the financial representative from Munson appeared, asking her how his bills were going to be paid.

The denial of aid for Kelly, and the difficulty Janie and others in our community have had getting responses from caseworkers at DHS, have fueled rumors of staff and budget cuts at DHS, along with the suspicion that federal Medicaid money is somehow being dammed up at the state level. "It's federal money," Janie said. "[Michigan DHS has] no right to withhold it."

I placed four calls in as many days to Andrew Lamb and supervisor Lois Kiehl, and got a voicemail message from Kiehl saying it was against DHS policy to talk to the press, and referring me to Benzie-Manistee DHS director Kristine Lagios, who returned my call promptly. According to Lagios, the Benzie staff has not only not been cut,

continues on page 6

# FOGHORN • LOCAL ITEMS LOUD AND CLEAR



pushes the county over its contracted limit. "[As of January] you don't have to get your magnifying glass out anymore, because if it's got a recycling logo, which modern packaging all does, and there's a number in the middle, we'll take it," she said. As if that weren't convenient enough, plastic, metal, and paper will all be collected in the same bin, so you only have to sort out your glass. American Waste has kindly agreed to keep the fee at \$3 for the next two years, even if we go over volume. For now, this means fewer \$3 garbage bags every week, and fewer trips to the curb.

Nationally known podcaster and author **Kelli Stapleton** said she is sadly leaving her Elberta headquarters, in the space she began renting in September behind Mix's Barbershop, because of a dispute over water use. One wonders how much water she could have been using to print books and maintain her web empire, Birth Stories on Demand. In any case, Kelli will decamp to an office space in Frankfort. Kelli also runs free and inexpensive dance classes for local children. Look for an On and Off the Apron profile of her soon in these pages.

**Merren Garber** of Crapo Street is the recipient of a **Promise Scholarship** from NMC, entitling her to full-funding for an education there, should she choose to attend.

**Is Elberta vying for Tree City status?** Ken Bonney will install 10 trees, mostly red maples, acquired from Milarch Brothers nursery with the help of a grant procured through Consumers by Sharyn Bower. These will replace dead trees that had to be removed. Ken says he has woodchips available for free to Villagers. Give him a call at 231-651-9626.

Elsewhere in the Village, residents are making their own arboreal additions. **Meagan Klemp** of 735 Washington was recently seen preparing to plant two flowering plums in her front yard, and **Emily Votruba**, also of Washington, has put in a Burr oak, witch hazel, and blue beech along Bigley.

Meanwhile, any Villagers who are concerned about **dying ash trees** should get in touch with Carol Navarro at the Conservation District; she's helping coordinate a tree identification and treatment program.

**Andrea Maio**, of Lower Herring Lake, launched the website for her new TV program, **Back to Your Senses**, on November 9. She's running a fund-raiser through Mobcaster to raise money for the pilot. The show looks at meaningful, pleasurable work and the brave folks who pursue it. If the website and promo video are any indication, it should be a lushly beautiful show, much of it shot locally.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★  
**CALENDAR**

**13 Elberta UMC Harvest Dinner** A benefit dinner for the new windows. Donations gratefully accepted! Chicken and noodles, salad, rolls, veg, dessert, and beverage. Baked goods sale at 2 pm, silent auction from 2 to 6. Deadline for auction donations, Nov. 11. Call 352-7427 or 352-4311 for more info.

**17 Mayfair Harvest Wine Dinner**, 6 pm; **Regular Meeting of the Village Council**, 7 pm—with a public hearing on the revised lawn maintenance ordinance. Coffee will be served!

**22 Regular Meeting of the Gilmore Township Planning Commission**, 7 pm at the Elberta Library.

**26 Live-music fundraiser** at the Cabbage Shed for **Randi Stolz's Run Across Palestine** to promote sustainable olive farming there.

**6 (December) Public hearing on the Elberta Master Plan**, time TBA.

Local business owners will be required to conform to the Village's **Dumpster ordinance** starting in May. The ordinance has been on the books for a while, and is being enforced now because of a load of complaints (of what nature was not specified). Among other things, Dumpsters are required to be enclosed on three sides and covered. Fines begin May 30.

**Redistribution of Turkeys 2011** The Community Spirit Food Source will bring turkey dinners into the homes of our neighbors in need again this Thanksgiving. Last year the program handed out 85 spreads, each including a 10- to 12-pound fully cooked turkey, potatoes, dressing, rolls and beans, and each ready to eat. Donate one of the above-mentioned entire meals for \$35. (Alert readers may notice that Glen's has raised the price by \$5 this year.) Or make a contribution in any amount payable to Community Spirit Food Source, at Jinx Jenks's Shear Class Salon, 703 Frankfort Ave, Elberta 49628. For more information, please call Mel @ 231-352-6833 or Suz @ 231-352-7669.

**Bob and Bernice Beugnot** celebrated their 65th wedding anniversary on November 4. Congratulations on your last- ing Elberta-Frankfort union!

**Bob McQuilken** made a presentation to the Township board on **services provided by the Council on Aging**. The Gathering Place, which moved to Honor from Frankfort about five years ago, is the scene of food, fun, and educational activities for seniors, aged 60 and up. There's something entertaining and involving every day. The council also delivers 70 to 80 meals each day throughout the county. Volunteers (the council has more than 100) do most of the driving. The council can help seniors obtain Guardian monitoring service, dining-out certificates good for \$3 off meals at participating restaurants, and cleaning and yardwork services, including plowing. The Council on Aging may seek a millage extension or even an increase in August to cover home health care costs.

**Coming soon: Don't trash your cash...** At the October 11 Gilmore Township Board meeting, the unstoppable Marlene Wood-Zylstra, Benzie County's recycling and solid waste coordinator, made a revelatory presentation with a bagful of garbage. Beginning in January, plastics of all numbers (1-7) will be recyclable, potentially saving families hundreds of dollars a year in garbage bag fees. At an increased cost to the county (and taxpayers) of just \$3 per family per year, the expanded program still falls below the mandated \$25 per household cap on recycling costs, at \$22 per family per year. Marlene's \$3 garbage bag was full of items that soon won't have to go there: meat trays and egg cartons; McDonald's salad containers; pellet fuel, salt, birdseed, and other plastic bags and wrappings; a plastic orange juice jug; milk cartons and juice boxes; and plastic plant containers. Only items numbered 1, 2, and 5 are accepted in the current program, and if you make a mistake, Marlene is the one who goes and pulls it out of the bin—otherwise the volume

Supporting Benzie County because it's the place we call Home...

231.352.4440  
515 Main St  
Frankfort, MI

Mention this Ad & receive **15% OFF** Any New Order  
Now through Jan 1, 2012

**Steve Hubbard of Bayshore Tire and Auto** was voted best auto mechanic in Benzie County in the *Record Patriot* Best Of poll. As if we didn't know!

Bartender **Tom Stoltmann** provided a stunning description of the aurora borealis visible in the Village sky on October 24, despite being almost completely color-blind. The new plaid carpeting at the Mayfair is also spectacular, but he'll just have to take our word for it.

**Pete the Peacock** is alive and well and soon to wed a peahen downstate. He showed up on Grace Rd. in June and summered in a tree on Johnson Road.

**Joel Joslin**, a barber at Mix's, was to marry **Ivy Bower**, granddaughter of Village Clerk Sharyn Bower and Dave Bower, on November 11 at Trinity Lutheran. We wish them the very best.

Anarchist journalist **Emily Votruba**, of the Traverse City Votrubas, has been seen with a divorcé from Madison who some say has plans to open a bookstore in the Village.

**A SHEAR CLASS EXPERIENCE**  
Salon and Day Spa

Relax Refresh Renew

DIANE "JINX" JENKS ELBERTA, MI 49628  
231-352-7210 www.shearclassexperience.com

**HARBOR HAIR DESIGNS**

Sue Bishop - Owner/Stylist 1286 Frankfort Hwy.  
(231) 352-4607 Frankfort, MI 49635

**Crystal Lake Catering Co.**

Celebrating Fresh, Local & Seasonal Foods on Beautiful Lakeside Settings

Phone 231.352.9460  
Fax 231.352.9460  
www.CrystalLakeCatering.com

**The MART DOCK**  
West Michigan Dock & Market Corp, 560 Mart St., Muskegon MI 49440  
(231)722-6932

**\$4.25 PSF**

**Heated Boat Storage**  
(New Customers Only)

Limited Time Offer

Includes Haul Out, Power Wash & Launch

No Fees for outside contractors working on your boat!

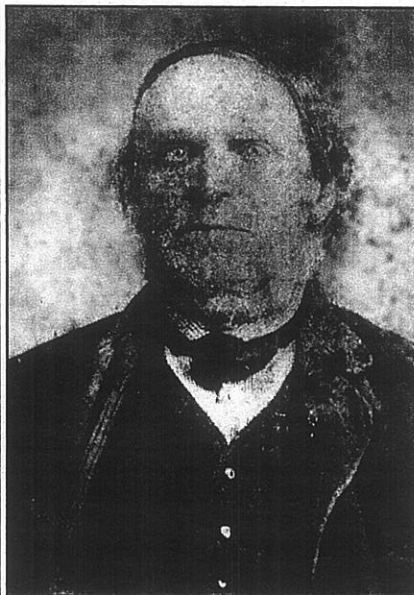
# A BETSIE LEGACY

By Janet La Rue Buck

BENZIE COUNTY HAS LOST one of the last links to its early history with the passing of Mildred Oliver Sleeper Peters, affectionately known as Millie, on October 22, 2011, at the Maples in Frankfort. She was 102.

Millie was born on June 4, 1909, in Benzononia Township. Her grandfather Joseph Oliver II, who became captain of the barge *Rumble*, was the only child of Joseph Oliver I, and the first white child born in Benzie County. Her father, Joseph Oliver III, married Fannie Dragoo of Indiana in 1905. Millie was the eldest of their three daughters. Her sisters, Dorothy Oliver Lamott McManus and Georgia Oliver Seeley, preceded her in death. She also had a brother, Joseph, who died of whooping cough in infancy.

Millie's great-grandfather Joseph Oliver I, born in Pennsylvania in 1820, was Benzie's first white settler. He migrated to the Manitou Islands in the 1840s and took up residence on the shores of the Aux Bec Scies (Betsie Bay) in 1850. He built a crude log cabin near Father Marquette's burial site marker, on a 14-acre plot where Betsie Bay meets Lake Michigan and present-day Frankfort Beach. His first wife, an Indian maiden, died childless. In 1855, he married Margaret Robar



Mildred Oliver Sleeper Peters, feisty till the end (left), and her great-grandfather Joseph Oliver, a true Northern Michigan pioneer and Benzie County's first white settler. PETERS PHOTO COURTESY OF JOYCE KITTLESON; OLIVER PHOTO FROM BLACKLOCK'S HISTORY OF ELBERTA.

and moved to the south side of the Betsie (Frankfort City, later called South Frankfort, and known as Elberta since 1911). Margaret had arrived here that same year with her parents and siblings, and when she and Joseph met, it was said to have been love at first sight. Joseph Oliver met my great-grandfather John La Rue on the Manitou Islands, and they remained fast friends until the end of their lives—both legendary figures in the history of Northwest Michigan. La Rue was the first white settler on the Leelanau Peninsula, and his eldest daughter, Mary, was the first

white child born there (in Northport), in 1854. My grandfather Dr. Frank J. La Rue, who practiced medicine in Elberta for over 43 years, was John La Rue's youngest child, born in 1872. One story tells of a time when Joseph went up to Leelanau to visit the La Rues and is said to have saved John's wife, Sophia, and their young children, whom he found alone and facing attack by hostile Indians while John was away on business.

Millie married Ralph Sleeper in 1925, when she was just sixteen, and had five children: daughters Joyce Sleeper Kittleson and Shirley Sleeper Pierce, who survive, and sons Donald F., Kenneth J., and Larry Oliver Sleeper, who are all now deceased. The family lived for several years here in Elberta. In 1944 she married Walter "Red" Peters, who died in 1988 after 44 years of marriage. They lived in Benzononia, where she continued to reside until she moved to the Maples.

Elberta Village Hideaway  
Family and Pet Friendly Vacation Rental  
989-205-8585 hideaway49628@gmail.com  
www.elbertavillagehideaway.com

Except for a few years in Traverse, she lived all her life in Benzie County. She went to her final resting place in a replica of a vintage hearse, drawn by a magnificent matched pair of steeds, on a beautiful October day. As I followed the funeral procession from Frankfort around Betsie Bay, I thought of her great-grandfather Joseph Oliver, who came to tame the wilderness in the mid-19th century and settled on these shores. As we approached Gilmore Township Cemetery, I thought of him again, for he became sexton there in 1879, and was responsible for planting 105 maple trees that same year, many of which survive today.

Joseph Oliver's gravesite lies only a short distance from Millie's, and the Historical Marker that adorns it recalls that not only was he the first white settler, whose presence here was known as early as 1847, but that he was a "Hunter, Trapper, Friend of the Indian and Guide for the early Government Surveyors." And that he had "a greater knowledge of the Benzie wilderness than any other, and became known, in his later years, as 'the Grand Old Man of Gilmore.'"

Millie was fiercely proud of her heritage and has left that legacy now to her daughters, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren to carry on. Rest in peace, Millie. It was wonderful to have known you, and we thank you for all that you and your family have contributed to Gilmore Township and Benzie County. Ψ

## SUNSET

*We Will Miss...*

**WILLIAM STEVENSON**  
(July 14, 1939–October 19, 2011)

A union newspaper pressman downstate for over 30 years as well as a licensed builder, Bill retired to the Frankfort area with his wife, Ramona Edwards; one of his six children, Mitchell, still resides there. He is survived by 5 other children, 15 grandchildren, and 2 great-grandchildren, among many others whom he nurtured much as he did his beautiful garden.

A tongue-in-beak take on the news

**SMEW.COM**

**SUBSCRIBE TO THE ALERT!**

The *Elberta Alert* is distributed free to Village residents each month and is available for free at Village businesses. To get it mailed to you (\$15 for 12 issues), call (231) 399-0098 or write to

**elberta.alert@gmail.com**

**COUNCIL REPORT, cont'd**

have some weeds growing in it; that to me is offensive. If someone has a natural grass area that is designed and set out as a garden, and it doesn't obstruct views or interfere with anything, I don't have a problem with it." She also pointed out an inaccurate number reference to another law and other wording problems in the ordinance as presented.

Reg said council needed to consider preserving individual freedom as well as the problem of enforcement. "[The way this ordinance is worded], I hope you don't have to have a degree in botany to go by someone's lawn and figure out what's a weed and what's a grass."

Ken Holmes said, "I'd also consider that a lot of people don't give one damn what their yard looks like and instead of enhancing their property, their next-door neighbors are fighting a needless battle." Lengthy, heated public comment ensued, until Matt Stapleton argued successfully that the wording should be revised back to something vaguer, like Frankfort's; that city also has an appeal process, which the proposed ordinance does not provide for. A public hearing on the new wording will be held at 7 before the regular council meeting on November 17. Ψ

**Art Melendez**

Cartooning  
Illustration  
Photo: Illustration  
Restoration  
Retouching

616 446 5340  
am7266@gmail.com

**Affordable Art**

Framing & Matting  
Large Format Color Reproduction  
Digital Photography  
Giclee Art

Greg Jenks  
703 Frankfort Ave. M22 Elberta, MI 49628  
(231) 851-9443 gjenks@bglobal.net



# BLAST From the FUTURE!

Local history, topics, and interviews by Elberta teens

## That Time of the Year

By Merren Garber

IT'S THAT TIME OF YEAR again, to grab your rakes and rake the multicolored leaves hopefully one last time. I know I've had to rake thousands of times because of all this wind we've been having. It's also time to get ready to visit family or have family come for Thanksgiving, which will be here in only a couple of weeks. But we need to prepare for the oncoming winter that's approaching very quickly too. Preparations like digging for those warm fluffy winter jackets, gloves,

hats, boots, and snow pants that we all know we will be needing soon. It won't be long before the weather will get even colder and the first sheet of snow is on the ground.

My favorite part of this time of year, besides the cool colors, is Thanksgiving. It's a time when family has the opportunity to get together and have a great time with one another. I know I'll have a great time with some of my family when we go to my grandma's house for games, laughs, good food and, well, just being around each other. I hope everyone else's family will enjoy it just as much as I know I will.

There is one thing I'm not really looking forward to: the snow, and it's almost here. Of course having snowball fights and building snow

forts will be a blast, but shoveling and trying to get through it will be the tough part. I mean the first little bit won't be bad, but when the piles accumulate people might get stuck, the weather will get colder, and for me, getting to the bus stop will take forever even though it's right down the road. Ψ

Alert editor Merren Garber is a freshman at Frankfort-Elberta High School.

Villagers may dump leaves at the end of First Street, by the Village Community Building. Leaves only, please (no bags).



Leaves fallen from majestic maples, looking south on Crapo Street. PHOTO BY MERREN GARBER

### MEDICAID EPIC FAIL, cont'd

but she has actually increased it during her tenure.

"That's a bad rumor," Lagios said. She explained that in October 2010 there were 6 assistant payments workers, 2 administrative support personnel, and a supervisor on staff at the Benzie office. Now the office is "at capacity," she said, with 7 assistant payments workers, 1 migrant-program worker, 1 adult services worker, 4 children's services workers, 2 administrative support staff, and two supervisors, for a total of 17. Some of these staff were brought from Manistee because Lagios perceived a need for them in our area.

Lagios wouldn't comment on Kelly's case specifically, citing confidentiality rules. "If it's a case that qualifies, you would not be denied Medicaid," Lagios said. "For example if you're pregnant and meet the policy guidelines." Different Medicaid programs have different eligibility rules, she said.

As for cuts to Medicaid, Lagios knew of none currently, but did say there has been an "asset change" in the Food Assistance Program (FAP). She wouldn't tell me what the asset change was, instead referring me to the state DHS website, where I found the following: "Asset Limit: Effective October 1, 2011 there is an asset limit for FAP groups."

There was no elaboration on the limit or any links, so I called the number given under "Food Assistance Program Questions, call 1-855-ASK-MICH (1-855-275-6424)." After 30 minutes a rep answered. I identified myself as a member of the press and asked what the asset limit was for FAP groups. The rep directed me back to the Michigan DHS website, to "the Policies and Procedures page," where she said I could download a booklet of information. I said, "Can't you just tell me what the asset limit is?"

She again referred me to the website. I said, "Is it different for different people or something?" She hung up on me.

A dense, small-font page on the DHS site lists administrative handbooks. I found the Bridges Eligibility Manual and clicked on it. A pdf appeared with a 5-page table of contents. On the website it says if you click on a table of contents item you'll be taken to a page with information. None of the links I clicked on worked. I had no better luck finding the Medicaid eligibility requirements. I'm by no means the sharpest person on the planet, but I did graduate from a decent university. I can imagine a lot of people having trouble navigating this site, which the agency seems to rely on to "get the word out." Sometimes you just really want to talk to a person.

A former executive of a health-related foundation in the state of Michigan, who did not wish to be named, said: "It's really sad, but they almost always deny you Medicaid the first time you apply, no matter what. It's not a policy, but it's just the way the system goes. We always used to advise people, just reapply, reapply. And if necessary, get legal counsel."

But Kelly Beaton did not have the luxury of time.

On the day before he died, Janie says, she opened a letter from DHS notifying Kelly that he would be receiving a Bridge card and \$120 cash assistance per month. She was outraged. "I told Andy Lamb, 'Dead people don't eat much.'"

"Medicaid was the most crucial thing," she said, "because he didn't want to leave us with that burden. But they didn't give him that dignity in death."

Janie has had her own health problems. "I'm a diabetic heart patient. I damn near died. Kelly was there for me when I was sickest. It's like with some of the elderly people I've taken care of—the runaround

you get. It wasn't [DHS's] best friend, so what do they care?"

"Policy is not determined by the workers," Lagios wrote in an e-mail. "Every case is treated the same and policy is followed in making eligibility determinations. Disability determinations for Medicaid are not made locally. A packet is sent to Lansing and the determination is made by the Medical Review Team."

Lagios said that if anyone has difficulty reaching their case-worker, they should contact the worker's supervisor, at 231-882-1330. "We'd like people to know that they can always check their case status online, and starting in January, you can apply for all assistance programs online." Computer kiosks where people can check their benefits will eventually be put out in various areas, she noted.

The DHS website states: "Michigan has many health care programs available to children, families, and adults who meet certain eligibility requirements. The goal of these health care programs is to ensure that essential health care services are made available to those who otherwise would not have the financial resources to purchase them." Michigan is not meeting that goal. If indeed Kelly Beaton's case did not fall within any of the health care programs the state provides, we need a new program—one for mature single people who work their whole lives, pay their taxes, and then fall on very hard times. It can happen to any of us. And more and more often now, it does.

"Kelly was a strong-hearted man," Janie says. "He'd do anything for his friends. He suffered more as he was dying because he was leaving behind these payments. My last promise to Kelly was that I would walk to the ends of this earth

to make sure this verdict of denial was overturned. And I will never quit," Janie said. "I told him, 'It's all right, honey. You've already walked a lot of miles for me. I can do this for you.'" Ψ

**Eric Pyne**  
Contractor

(231) 651-0425  
ericpyne.com  
license no. 2101193724

**THE ELBERTA ALERT**

**JOIN THE EDITORIAL TEAM!**

Wesley Allen, Sharyn Bower, Janet Buck, Michele Cannart, Kathryn denHeeten, Jonathan Drury, Carole Eberly, Gretchen Eichberger-Kudlack, Meryl K. Estes, Merren Garber, Anthony Graves, E. F. Higgins III, Ken Holmes, Jed Jaworski, Diane "Jinx" Jenks, Dan Kelly, Greg Kindig, Susan Koenig, Dan Link, Mary Link, Connie Manke, Laura Manville, Linda Manville, Patrick McConnell, Suz McLaughlin, Arthur Melendez, Carolee Ness, Liz Padalino, Aubrey Ann Parker, Sarah Parlette, Eric Pyne, Lois Schram, Lisa Schroeder-Confer, Kelli Stapleton, Tom Stollmann, Emily Votruba, Thomas Votruba, James Ward, Jennifer Wilkins.

Editorial Consultant: Jordan Bates.

**www.elberta-alert.org**

ADVERTISING SALES Sue Oseland (616) 403-4971 • sueoseland@gmail.com

**ALERT MEDIA, LLC** PO Box 357, Elberta, MI 49628 • 399-0098 • elberta.alert@gmail.com

\*Logo designs by Jennifer Wilkins\*

Printed at BaySide Printing on 100% recycled paper

© COPYRIGHT 2011 ALERT MEDIA, LLC