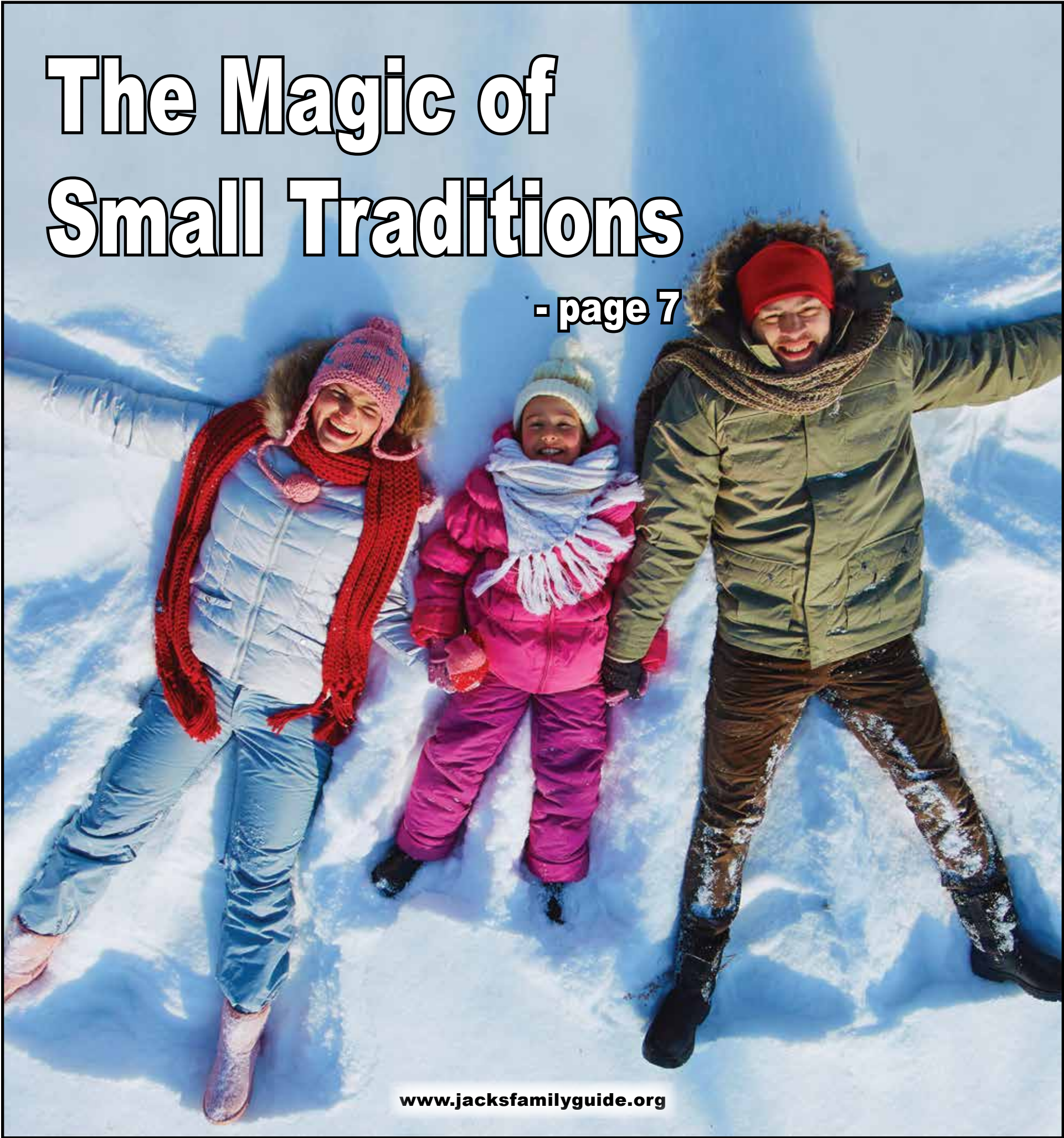


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JACKSON AREA COLLABORATIVE KNOWLEDGE SOURCE



The Magic of Small Traditions

- page 7

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Do This, Not That: Plan Your 2026 Finances with Ease

Contributed by TRUE Community Credit Union

According to a recent WalletHub survey, nearly 3 in 4 people say their financial situation impacts their mental well-being, and 69% of Americans feel insecure about their finances. It is no wonder so many of us are tired of traditional “new year, new budget” advice. Financial wellness does not have to mean strict spreadsheets. It is about taking small, actionable steps to feel more in control.

Do This: Review your spending patterns
Not That: Start with a strict budget

Take a week to observe how you actually spend. Look at your bank statements and credit card bills to spot patterns. Are subscriptions you no longer use still draining your account? Are grocery runs adding up to more than you realize?

When you understand where your money is really going, you can make small, realistic adjustments – like shopping for generic brands or switching streaming services seasonally. Real progress beats rigid plans every time.

Do This: Automate what you can
Not That: Rely on willpower to save

If you have ever meant to transfer money into savings but forgot (again), automation can save you from yourself. Schedule automatic transfers to savings on payday, set up direct deposit to savings, or set up autopay for bills to avoid late fees.

This trick works because it removes temptation and decision fatigue – two major barriers to saving consistently. Even a small automatic transfer adds up over time. Think of it as paying your future self-first.

Do This: Build an emergency cushion
Not That: Wait until you can save “enough”

A full emergency fund (three to six months of expenses) sounds great on paper and can feel impossible when money is tight. Start smaller. Even \$20 a week builds momentum. Keep it in an easy-access account, separate from other money, so it does not get mixed with daily spending.

This cushion helps protect you from unexpected costs – a car repair, a surprise bill, or even a missed paycheck – and gives you confidence that you can handle what comes your way.

Do This: Plan for joy – not just bills
Not That: Treat fun as “extra” or “unnecessary”

Your budget should not just be about survival. Planning ahead for things that bring you joy, like a family outing, a weekend getaway, or even a nice meal out, keeps your financial plan sustainable. When you budget for joy and happiness, you are less likely to fall into guilt spending or burnout later.

Do This: Check your credit and debt picture
Not That: Avoid it because it feels stressful

It is tempting to look away from debt; however, facing it head-on is the first step to taking control. Pull your free credit report at AnnualCreditReport.com or with SavvyMoney in TRUE Digital Banking, and review all your balances, interest rates, and due dates.

Focus on paying off the smallest balance first (the “snowball” method) to build momentum or tackle the highest-interest debt first (the “avalanche” method) to save money over time.

Do This: Seek trusted support
Not That: Navigate your finances alone

You do not have to have every answer to feel financially confident. TRUE Community Credit Union offers budgeting tools, workshops, or savings programs to help you get started. You can learn more at TRUECCU.com.

If you are dealing with debt, our partners at GreenPath offer free financial counseling and a proven Debt Management Program designed to lower interest rates, reduce payments, and reduce your stress in the coming year.



Photo contributed by TRUE Community Credit Union

Hometown Eats

January 2026: Poppa's Place

By Val Herr



If you are looking for good, straight forward diner food look no further than Poppa's Place in Brooklyn. This family friendly restaurant is located at 208 S Main St, Brooklyn, MI 49230. Poppa's offers breakfast, lunch, dinner, and daily specials. You can't beat the value for the price. They are known for friendly wait staff that never let your coffee cup get empty.

On our recent trip we enjoyed chocolate chip waffles and eggs benedict. Both met our expectations. Eggs benedict can be difficult, but every bite was delicious.

Rating: 2.5 stars

A note from the editor
The service was truly top notch! Try the Poppa's Combo if you want a bit of it all for breakfast.









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Jackson County Animal Shelter's Adoptable Pets: Maggie & Freckles

Contributed by the Jackson County Animal Shelter

Maggie & Freckles

This adorable smush pile of kitty love is Maggie and Freckles, two tabby girls who have become besties at the shelter. Not only are they wonderful companions to one another, they also look strikingly similar, with classic tabby markings and beautiful green eyes.

Freckles, on the right, is six years old and weighs about eleven pounds. Maggie, on the left, is just one year old and a petite seven pounds, with a distinctive gold stripe down her nose. While both girls get along well with the other cats in their housing area, they consistently choose each other's company.

Maggie and Freckles are quiet, timid, and tend to stay out of the way until they feel safe. Once com-

fortable, they enjoy naps and peaceful, low-key time together, making them a lovely fit for a calm, patient home. They can be adopted separately or together. Shy cats are often gentle souls who form deep, loyal bonds and, with time and trust, become affectionate and loving companions.



Jackson County Animal Shelter

Come meet these beautiful tabby girls today at the Jackson County Animal Shelter, located at 3370 Spring Arbor Road in Jackson, Michigan. Cat adoption fees are \$60 for one cat or \$80 for two, which include applicable tests, vaccines, and spay or neuter surgery. Some medical needs may slightly delay adoption.

Visiting the shelter is always encouraged, but additional resources include:

• Online cat application: https://www.jacksoncounty-animalshelter.org/_files/ugd/6b881a_29d64a1b73564f2e8feed670d8a87d41.pdf
• Fax: 517-780-4750
• Email: animalshelter@mijackson.org

For more information, visit mijackson.org/579/Animal-Shelter, find us on Facebook, or view all available pets on Petango.

About the Jackson County Animal Shelter

The Jackson County Animal Shelter is a municipal shelter serving Jackson County, Michigan. Our dedicated and compassionate team provides care for pets awaiting new homes. JCAS does not euthanize animals for lack of time or space, and accepts animals for adoption as kennel space allows. JCAS operates on a tax millage and public and private donations to care for the animals of Jackson County.



Cascades Humane Society's Pet of the Month

Contributed by Cascades Humane Society

Sabrina is a beautiful six-year-old Chinese Shar Pei with a sleek black coat and a charming white chest. She carries herself with quiet confidence and a gentle spirit, making her a wonderful companion for someone looking for a loyal, low-key friend. Her soft expressions and calm presence make her easy to fall in love with.

Sabrina enjoys taking her time to get to know new people, but once she feels comfortable, she warms up with genuine affection. Her mature personality means she's past the puppy chaos

and ready to settle into a relaxed and loving home. Whether you're looking for a cozy couch buddy or a steady walking partner, Sabrina fits right in.

Sabrina is vaccinated,



CHS

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spayed, and microchipped, and her adoption fee is \$310. She is ready to find a family who appreciates her sweet nature and is excited to give her the forever home she deserves. Come

meet Sabrina-you might just find your new best friend!

About the Cascades Humane Society

Organized and incorporated in 1952, Cascades Humane Society is dedicated to improving the lives of animals, promoting responsible pet ownership, and creating lasting connections between pets and families. If you are interested in donating, volunteering, or learning about other ways to support CHS, please call 517-787-7387 or email hgolightly@chs-pets.org to learn more.



2024

IMPACT

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Cascades Humane Society



1,187 TOTAL ADOPTIONS



11,247 POUNDS OF PET FOOD GIVEN TO PETS IN NEED



990 OWNED CATS & DOGS SPAYED OR NEUTERED



4,103 VOLUNTEER HOURS

Dalmatian Syndrome

By Jean McKim,
Imagine Planet

Here at Imagine Planet, a major part of our educational programming has been showing people what it really takes to have an exotic animal as a pet. We also work to help visitors consider their family, lifestyle, available time, and costs before deciding to bring an exotic animal home.

The phenomenon known as Dalmatian Syndrome occurs when an animal is featured in a movie or TV show and suddenly everyone wants one. It is named after the rush to buy Dalmatian puppies following Disney's release of 101 Dalmatians. Dalmatians are a fantastic but intense breed with very specific needs, and many ended up in shelters when families were unprepared. This also happened with collies after Lassie and German Shepherds after Rin Tin Tin. Both are wonderful breeds for the right people and situations, but not all.

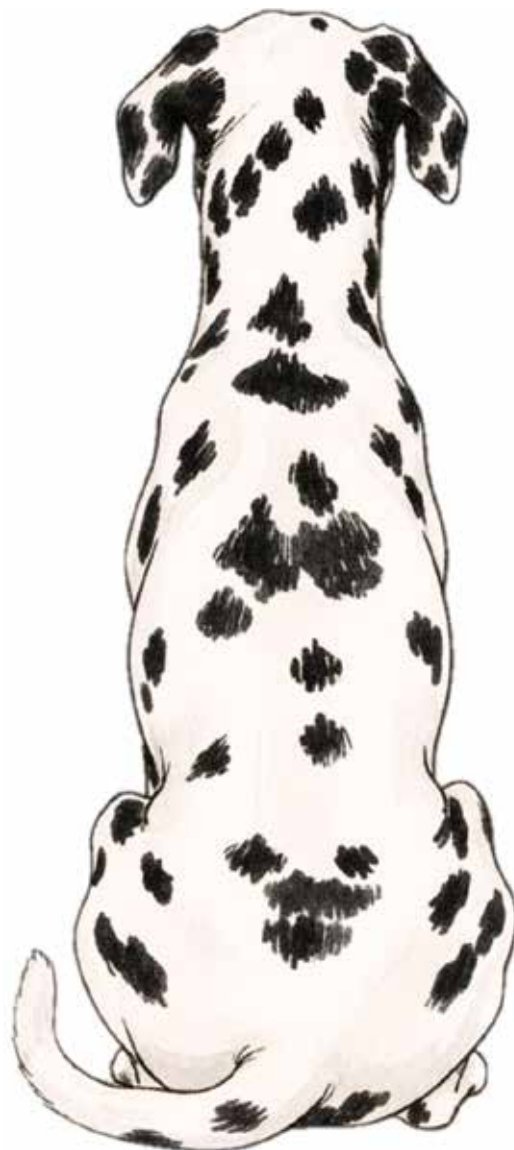
After Finding Nemo, clownfish were heavily overfished. Not all clownfish are wild-caught, but many are. We never acquired a Dory fish, also known as a Pacific Blue Tang, partly because of

their cost, but also because they can grow to require a 180 gallon tank. Saltwater tanks come with their own very specific needs as well. We love our saltwater tank denizens, which are mostly invertebrates, but we knew what we were getting into. They also serve our educational mission of teaching what life in Michigan was like long ago, when it was covered by ocean waters.

This syndrome is happening frequently now with TikTok and YouTube videos. Who wouldn't want a sugar glider after watching one soar to its owner? Much as I love our sugar gliders, we made sure people understood that they are nocturnal, omnivorous marsupials requiring a very specific diet. We fed ours chicken, fruits, vegetables, pellets, and Bolthouse smoothies daily, along with treats like eucalyptus and honey sticks.

They also enjoyed eggs and almonds. However, the trait most people struggle with is

that they mark their territory, their colony, and their people with urine, and it smells. Fruit flies, while harmless, can also become very an-



noying. Sugar gliders can be aggressive toward gliders outside their colony, and

sometimes even toward members within it, depending on gender. We used ours to demonstrate convergent evolution by comparing them to flying squirrels.

Hedgehogs! I love our African pygmy hedgehogs, not to be confused with European hedgehogs, but they are very time-consuming. They are nocturnal, can run up to seven miles a night on a wheel while pooping, do not use litter boxes, although someone may have figured that out, and are covered in spines. They can nip with sharp, insect-eating teeth, especially if your fingers smell like food. They live only three to five years, each with a distinct personality. They require temperatures around 80 degrees Fahrenheit, and if chilled, they can enter hibernation, which is not natural for them and one they often do not wake up from.

Finally, the newest animal to gain fame comes from Zootopia 2, the venomous Indonesian pit viper. The bright blue snakes

are the same species as the animated character Gary De'Snake. In China, there has been a surge in people keeping them as pets, which is not illegal there. However, owning a venomous snake is illegal in most of the United States, including Michigan, without special permits. This species is extremely dangerous and capable of killing humans. The antivenom is also not readily available in the United States, which further increases the risk. If you must see one, visit a zoo.

As with any animal, there are costs, including food, veterinary care, housing, enrichment, and more. Please resist getting an animal simply because you saw one in a video without doing thorough research first. Make sure you have access to an exotic veterinarian. Understand its habits and dietary needs before acquiring the animal. And continue to enjoy watching cute animal videos.

Happy 2026 from all of us at Imagine Planet!!

Check our Facebook page for events and classes. Open Monday, Friday, and Saturday from 12 to 5 pm. As always, free admission.



JACKSON SYMPHONY GUILD NEEDS YOU!

This organization works exclusively for the benefit of Jackson Symphony Orchestra, giving time and talents toward promoting music in the Jackson community. Our volunteers include people with a wide range of abilities who strive to raise funds through dues and proceeds from the Annual Holiday Ball.

For membership and volunteer information visit jacksonsymphony.org/jackson-symphony-guild/.



Understanding the Intake Process at Cascades Humane Society

Contributed by
Cascades Humane Society

Every day, for nearly seventy-four years, Cascades Humane Society has been entrusted with the care of animals in need of safety, medical attention, and a second chance. Our intake process is carefully designed to ensure we provide the highest standard of care for every animal who enters our shelter—while also being responsible stewards of our limited resources.

Why an Intake Process Matters

Unlike municipal shelters, Cascades Humane Society does not receive tax dollars or funding from national humane organizations. We rely entirely on donations, grants, and community support. This requires us to balance compassion with capacity, ensuring the animals already in our care receive proper medical treatment, enrichment, and individualized attention.

An organized intake process allows us to:

- Protect the health and safety of animals currently in our care
- Protect staff, volunteers, and guests on-site
- Ensure incoming animals receive appropriate medical and behavioral evaluations
- Avoid overcrowding, which can increase stress, illness, and length of stay
- Use donor dollars responsibly and effectively

How Animals Enter Our Care

Animals come to Cascades Humane Society through several pathways, including owner surrenders, stray intakes (in partnership with local municipalities), and transfers from other shelters or rescue organi-

zations. Each type of intake follows specific guidelines to ensure fairness, transparency, and animal welfare.

For owner surrenders, we require appointments and detailed information about the animal's history, health, and behavior. This helps our team prepare for the animal's needs and place them in the most appropriate housing and care plan. For safety and health reasons, surrenders have a separate entrance and area from the main adoption entrance, and visitors are asked to follow posted signage.

Stray animals are handled according to local and state regulations, including mandatory holding periods that allow owners time to reclaim their pets.

Medical and Behavioral Assessments

Every animal entering our shelter receives an intake assessment that includes a physical exam, vaccinations as appropriate, and treatment for immediate medical concerns. Behavioral observations help us understand each animal's temperament, stress levels, and any special needs.

Honesty during intake is essential. If an animal has a history of aggression or has bitten someone, this information must be shared truthfully. Withholding or altering information can place adopters, visitors, volunteers, and staff at risk and prevents us from making informed, humane decisions. Transparency allows us to protect both people and animals.

These assessments help determine appropriate housing, care plans, and whether an animal can be safely adopted, always with safety and welfare as the guiding priorities.

Capacity for Care

One of the most important factors in our intake decisions is capacity for care—evaluating whether we have the space, staffing, medical resources, and funding to provide humane care without compromising the wellbeing of animals already here.

This also means considering an animal's ability to be safely and successfully adopted. Cascades Humane Society focuses on animals who are appropriate for placement into homes. This is not a judgment, but a matter of fairness and welfare. Keeping animals who are not adoptable in a kennel environment for extended periods can be stressful and inhumane, and it limits our ability to help other pets in need.

When our shelter is full or resources are stretched, we may need to delay intake or work with owners to explore alternative options. While difficult, these decisions are made with long-term animal welfare in mind.

A Commitment to Compassion and Responsibility

Our intake policies are not about turning animals away—they are about ensuring that when an animal enters Cascades Humane Society, we can truly help them. By maintaining thoughtful, structured intake procedures, we give every animal the best possible chance for healing, adoption, and a brighter future.

We are deeply grateful to our community for understanding and supporting these processes. Together, we can continue to provide lifesaving care while advocating for responsible pet ownership and humane solutions for animals in need.



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The Magic of Small Traditions

By Victoria Beaman

Why Tiny Rituals Matter More Than Big Celebrations



The holidays often arrive carrying noise — full calendars, crowded rooms, expectations wrapped in glitter. We’re taught to measure joy in scale: bigger trees, fuller tables, louder laughter.

But the moments that linger rarely announce themselves. They slip in quietly.

A familiar mug warmed between your hands.

A story read every year, even when the pages are worn.

Lights switched on before sunrise, just to soften the dark.

These are small traditions. And they matter more than we realize.

Why Tiny Rituals Stay With Us

Big celebrations are memorable, but tiny rituals are repeatable. They don’t depend on perfect timing, extra money, or ideal circumstances. They ask only for presence.

Psychologists tell us that repetition anchors memory. When we return to the same small act — lighting a candle, baking one simple recipe, taking a quiet walk — our minds attach safety and meaning to it. Over time, the ritual becomes a signal: you’re home, you’re held, you’re okay.

That’s powerful magic for something so simple.

After the Decorations Come Down

Once the holidays pass, there’s often a hush. The ornaments return to boxes, the calendar clears, and the pressure lifts. It’s in this quieter season that small traditions shine brightest.

They remind us that joy doesn’t end when the celebration does.

A cup of tea at the same hour each evening.

A weekly handwritten note.

A few minutes of stillness before bed.

These moments don’t demand perfection — they invite connection.



How to Create a Tiny Tradition

Start small. Smaller than you think.

Choose something:

- Easy to repeat
- Gentle, not performative
- Rooted in comfort or meaning

Do it often enough that it becomes familiar. Let it evolve naturally. And release any need for it to be Instagram-worthy.

The best traditions don’t look impressive. They feel reassuring.



The Kind of Magic That Lasts

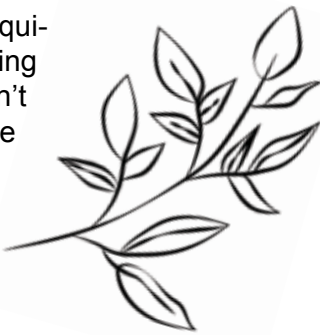
Long after the holidays are over, small rituals continue quietly shaping our days. They soften edges. They offer grounding when life feels unsteady. They remind us that meaning isn’t found only in milestones — it lives in the ordinary moments we choose to return to.

Sometimes the most lasting magic doesn’t sparkle.

It glows.

XXOO

Victoria Beaman



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College & Career Access Center, January Scholarships

American Legion Department of Michigan - Guy M. Wilson Scholarship

Description: In 1898, Guy M. Wilson enlisted for service in the Spanish American War. At the close of the conflict, he joined the Michigan National Guard where he quickly ascended to the rank of General. The Guy M. Wilson Scholarship was created in 1938 to honor and preserve the memory of a great soldier and gentleman who served as the Michigan American Legion's second State Commander in 1920-21.

Eligibility: Available to only Michigan residents who are high school seniors and are a son, daughter, grandchild or great-grandchild of a war-time veteran planning to or are attending any Michigan accredited college or university or trade school. Selection is based on a student's G.P.A. of 2.5 or higher, financial need, parent's or grandparent's honorable active war-time military service, goals, and intentions.

Award Amount: \$1,000

Deadline: The completed application and accompanying documents must be received at Department Headquarters by 5:00 p.m. on January 5, 2026 (not post marked by).

American Legion Department of Michigan - William D. & Jewell Brewer Scholarship

Description: In 1984 Jewell Brewer established a trust fund and scholarship for Michigan's most deserving students in memory of William D. Brewer, a member of the Harold Todd American Legion Post located in Detroit, Michigan. Each year the Michigan American Legion awards five students with the William D. and Jewell Scholarship to help continue their education and reach their professional goals.

Eligibility: Available to only Michigan residents who are high school seniors or college students – without a bachelor's degree, who are a son, daughter, grandchild or great-grandchild of a war-time veteran planning to or are attending any nationally accredited college or university or trade school.

Selection is based on a student's G.P.A. of 2.5 or higher, financial need, parent's or grandparent's

honorable active war-time military service, goals, and intentions.

Award Amount: Scholarships are \$500 and non-renewable.

Deadline: The completed application and accompanying documents must be received at Department Headquarters by 5:00 p.m. on January 5, 2026 (not post marked by).

Diller Teen Tikkun Olam Awards

Description: The Diller Teen Tikkun Olam Awards recognize up to fifteen Jewish teens who are extraordinary leaders in community service with \$36,000 each. Awardees are teens who show significant drive and leadership in creating and leading a new initiative – or who have considerably deepened or expanded an existing project. They embody the values of tikkun olam, repairing the world.

This is an award that can be used to help fund your education but is not specifically a scholarship. Some recipients choose to direct some of the funds toward their project/initiative and some toward their college education. Awardees can choose how to allocate the award.

Project criteria: Projects can have a local, national, or global focus benefiting the Jewish or general community. Applicants can create a new project or contribute to an established initiative if they demonstrate a current, significant leadership role in an existing organization or project. We recommend you view past Award recipients to get an understanding of the types of projects that have been recognized.

Eligibility:

- 13-19 years old
- Identify as Jewish
- A resident of the United States
- Volunteering without any compensation
- Currently serving in a leadership role on one project or initiative that embodies the values of tikkun olam — repairing the world

Evaluation criteria:

- Focus on a single project or initiative led by the applicant
- Demonstrate that the applicant has made a significant and impactful contribution in a leadership role, either in initial project creation or over time
- Show the project's mea-

surable impact

- Provide a clear articulation of the issue area(s) the project is serving, which can be local or global, serving the community at large or the Jewish community directly

Award: The awards recognize up to fifteen Jewish teens who are extraordinary leaders in community service with \$36,000 each.

Deadline: January 8, 2026

Automotive Women's Association Scholarship

Description: AWA's mission and vision empowers women in automotive, mobility and related industries through mentorship, professional and educational opportunities. This supports our goal of having a diverse talent pipeline that is more representative of the world around us. Our hope is that these education tuition scholarships eases financial burdens, allow more study time, enable the discovery of new technologies and application methods,

and affect tangible opportunities and experiences.

Eligibility and guidelines:

- Applicants for consideration of this scholarship must be accepted to a college or university.
- Applicants must have and maintain a minimum of a 3.0 GPA during a scholarship-funded semester.
- If an applicant cannot accept the scholarship or if education is interrupted, the status of funds will be reviewed by AWA's Scholarship Committee.
- The scholarship funds awarded will be valid at the college or university to be used toward tuition and fees.
- The scholarship check will be awarded in the name of the applicant, student ID# and the educational institution.
- Scholarship awards will be chosen by application.
- AWA's Scholarship Committee may conduct interviews.
- Applicant must give written or electronic notification of acceptance within five (5)

days of award notification.

- This scholarship is open to North American citizens.

Required Documents:

- Cover letter explaining your automotive or related career aspirations. (maximum 1 page)
- Resume: include education, work experience, extracurricular & volunteer activities. (max 2 pages)
- High School Senior: provide high school transcript and proof of acceptance to the college/university or class enrollment schedule.
- College Level: transcript from your current educational institution or last transcript if you are returning or transferred.
- Optional documents: recommendation letter(s) from school, work, sports activities or church.

Award: Varies

Deadline: January 16, 2026

For the full list of monthly scholarships, please visit the College and Career Access Center's website at jacksoncac.org.

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