

News from Small Town (Tawas)

Middle America

Issue #17

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by Michael Gilfix

Iosco County News Herald – November 16, 2022

More About Veteran's Day – High Schools and Community Ethos

In the last issue, #16, I made the point that small communities elevate and honor Veteran's Day more than urban areas. Very interesting was the special celebration and gathering that the Tawas Area Middle School had to honor Veteran's Day. The front page of the newspaper shows bleachers full of kids with hand held signs saying "Thank You" to veterans.

At the assembly in the high school gymnasium, a high school senior gave a welcoming introduction to the gathering. They then had the Tawas Area Honor Guard play the Star Spangled Banner. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by that same high school senior.

Another high school senior presented a history of Veteran's Day and the choir performed patriotic songs. Still another high school senior presented Veteran's Day quotations.

In Hale, a small town nearby, students were given an opportunity "to display their patriotism" at a number of events.

I mention this because all of these actions reflect visible, palpable acknowledgment of the role veterans have played. This role is viewed honorably. It is no wonder that, as mentioned in issues #16, smaller communities contribute more than their fair share of volunteers to the military. Indeed, high school assemblies like the one in Tawas would not happen in my sophisticated, extremely well-educated California community. Students are not getting these patriotic messages. Regardless of your political persuasion, these messages are important.

Extra Property Taxes (Millage) Rejected by Voters

This was an effort to raise additional funds to support the Sheriff's Office and the Prosecutor's Office. While by no means a "defund the police" effort, small communities are at least as resistant to increasing taxes as are any other areas. Parenthetically, many of the funds now set aside to support local government comes from foreclosures, which are not uncommon in this community.

Student Advisers Join the Board of Education

Five "outstanding" students applied for these roles. Two were appointed while the other three sit in on board meetings as alternates. Very cool.

"Reporter Needed"

The newspaper is seeking a full-time reporter to focus on government meetings and government events. Here is your opportunity to move to Tawas and have a very livable salary.

Trouble at the Waste Water Treatment Facility

The need to add another staff member is “imperative.” A number of violations were cited. Unfortunately, bids to make some repairs came in about \$3 million over the estimated cost. In Iosco County, \$3 million is real money.

Puff Cannabis Announces a Turkey Giveaway

Sale of cannabis products is legal in Michigan. Puff Cannabis has a number of outlets in Michigan, including Oscoda. They are giving away more than 1,700 turkeys this year.

Police Blotter

A man accused of stabbing another man did not know how his victim was stabbed so many times. “He alleged that the man’s mother must have intentionally stabbed her own son.” This could be a hard sell.

Job Openings Persist: All Comers!

A Local company has this heading for its announcement of no fewer than 5 openings: “No background check; No drug testing; No vaccination required.”

The nursing home that was offering \$18 per hour and more for full time workers “recently increased” their wages since they apparently had no takers.

Share this information with your friends who used to work at Twitter.

Tawas Wellness Warriors

A married couple, the husband from Iosco county, created the Wellness Warriors in 2020. They have created 5k race routes, walking routes, bicycle routes, and much more. All of this is done at no cost. They include a free yoga class.

Their usual meeting spot is at the Robert W. Elliott Jr. Memorial Park in East Tawas. This is incredibly appropriate since Bob Elliott was the ultimate small town community developer. He helped start the little league and many events that are now annual festivities. While it took me about 20 years to figure it out, Bob’s example of giving to the community profoundly affected me. Who knew, for example, that I would hold the record for the number of consecutive years coaching girl’s basketball at the local YMCA? That was 13 years running!

Pros and Cons of Living in a Small Town

Many feel a strong sense of physical and economic security living in their homes in small towns, even if their incomes and assets are limited. Unlocked doors, for example, are common. Sometimes, but not often, groceries are cheaper. You can buy a house for less than it would cost to buy a studio apartment in countless large cities across the nation. Property tax rates are lower and property values are lower. Small town residents also make it a point to know their neighbors. Growing up, I knew that I was in trouble if another one of the “neighborhood mothers” saw me do something wrong. First she would scold me. Then she would tell my parents.

On the other hand, well-paying jobs can be hard to find. Entertainment and cultural activities can be less substantial, although the live theater group in Tawas constantly amazes with vivacious, fun-filled productions year ‘round.

Some people find very friendly neighbors to be intrusive. This, of course, is a matter of personal taste.

Small towns are not for everybody. They are, however, more livable and comfortable than millions of city dwellers will ever understand.

Selected highlights from the Iosco County News Herald – November 23, 2022

Marijuana Ordinance Generates Fees for Cities, Counties

It was close, but the Tawas City Council voted 4-3 to allow marijuana distribution sites. Under Michigan law, every community gets over \$56,000 for every licensed marijuana dispensary in its jurisdiction. In 2022, Iosco County got almost \$170,000. If there are more outlets, the county will get more money. A council member who voted against it said, "I don't know if it's money we want." He said "marijuana is a drug." Supporters said that it was a vote for money, not for drugs and that the money is needed.

Time will tell.

Big Buck Bonanza Update

A hunter from Oscoda is currently leading the Big Buck Bonanza, having shot a "massive 16-point buck, weighing 177 lbs with a 19 ¾ inch antler spread." Also bagging notable deer were Renai H. age 59, who shot a 10-point buck, and Hannah R. of Tawas City, who shot a 16-point buck. Joe W., age 15, shot an 11-point buck.

Hunting season always brings to mind the issue of gun control. All of these hunters used rifles. None of them used AR57 automatic rifles.

Here is the front page photo of the current leader and the 16 inch buck:



"Ridiculous" Perch Fill Hats Knitted and Sold

The knitting group at Grace Lutheran Church in East Tawas has produced a prodigious pile of hats that are designed to look like perch. Selling for at least \$20 each, this

industrious group has raised over \$24,000 with the money being used to buy warm winter coats for kids in Iosco County.

Bird Watchers Delight: Southern Lapwing Spotted in Oscota

Here is a photo of this bird, which has a home range in Uruguay. This is about 5,600 miles from its home turf, so it is a remarkable, rare sighting:



Carlo Couldn't Pull It Off

In the district court, Carlo C pleaded guilty to “*attempted* operating with a suspended license”

Five others were more successful. They all pleaded guilty to either operating with a suspended license, permitting an unlicensed person to drive, or related offenses.

Notes from the Author

The Goal of my Tawas News is to educate and amuse you about my home town, East Tawas, Michigan. It is to remind you that small towns still thrive in America, that they are sometimes struggling, often vibrant. It is based on my hometown weekly newspaper, personal memories, and occasional, very personal observations.

The Inspiration: The inspiration was Garrison Keillor’s “News from Lake Wobegon” on his NPR show, Prairie Home Companion. Lake Wobegon was fictional, quietly poignant and lol enjoyable.

Tawas is not fictional; it is very real. It is similar to Lake Wobegon in many ways – the farmers, the pastors, the community where everybody knows everybody’s business.

The town of East Tawas is located on Lake Huron on the lower peninsula about 110 miles north of Flint, Michigan. The population is around 2,723. It hasn’t grown much from my childhood in the 50’s and 60’s. The adjacent town of Tawas City has a population of about 1,726. Why 2 separate towns? Don’t ask.

So, enjoy, and let me know what you think. Share it with friends and family. I am happy to add anyone to the mailing list, so send me names.

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