

News from Small Town (Tawas)

Middle America

Issue #22

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by Michael Gilfix

Enjoy this Newsletter and let me know what you think!

For an explanation of my goal and the inspiration, look to the end of this newsletter. You will see information about where Tawas is located and how big it isn't.

Rodney Dangerfield once said, "The population of this small town never changes. Whenever a baby is born, a guy leaves town."

Recently, a friend learned that her father had a child of whom our friend was never aware. She only learned of it when her 96 year old father died. Not only was this stunning, but it created huge family discord – and not just a few jokes.

Iosco County News Herald – December 28, 2022

First Baby of 2023 Gets a Free Lube Job

Like many communities, a front page article indicates that the first baby born in Iosco County in 2023 will be welcomed with a variety of prizes. How many newborns win a "free lube, oil, and filter change" for the family car? This is among the 12 gifts that await the lucky babe. The family also gets a one year subscription to the newspaper. I wonder if they would like to have a subscription to my Tawas News – since it's free to everyone?

Letters to the Editor – More Clarification

The News Herald no longer allows any "personal attacks" that name individuals in letters. Interestingly, they are limiting "exchanges among letter writers" to only two letters. They then encourage the readers to "carry on their conversation privately." What an interesting concept – urging individuals who are in disagreement to talk.

VFW Hosts Cookie Decorating

First, how many of you know that "VFW" stands for "Veterans of Foreign Wars?" The first VFW Post was founded in 1899 by members of the First Colorado Volunteers who returned from the Spanish American War. And here they are, in Oscoda, Michigan, having about 77 kids come by for cookie decorating for Christmas.

Christmas Cards Galore!

Lynne H. is locally famous for handwriting 700 Christmas cards that are addressed "TO: YOU" "FROM: ME." She hands them out all over town with this effort, which began in the Tawas hospital when she worked in the cleaning department. One happy recipient said, "You don't see that anymore. There are still people like this in the world!"

She has handed out almost 8,000 such cards over the years.

My Favorite New Years Resolution

Brandon F, a server at an Oscoda restaurant, identifies eight books that he wants to read in 2023. Good for Brandon! Reading books is becoming a lost art, to the detriment of a literate society.

“Exposure Assessment” By the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services

Largely because of contamination at and around the former US Air Force Base in Oscoda, a number of environmental investigations have taken place. Kids as young as 12 years old can enroll. The assessment will measure 197 chemicals in adults and 45 contaminations in the young kids.

Troubling Labor Shortage at the Iosco County Commission On Aging (My Shared History)

The commission is not able to hire enough home delivery drivers for meals on wheels. For the most part, such meals were delivered by volunteers.

This meals program was created and is sustained by the Older Americans Act of 1965. In the 1970's, I testified before Congress and advocated allocations under the Older Americans Act for free legal services for elders. That effort was successful. Some readers know that I created the first free legal services program for elders in the nation, Senior Adults Legal Assistance (SALA) of Santa Clara County.

Whether the area is rural or urban, finding adequate funding and resources for older Americans will be a growing problem as time moves along. “Boomers” represent a dramatic increase in the older population. At the same time, there are fewer younger people and insufficient funding to maintain levels of needed health care and related services.

Small Town Festivals

Tawas hasn't gotten creative yet in this regard, but I am aware of a few small town festivals that capture attention. There is the Frozen Dead Guy Days in Nederland, CO. There is the Baby-Jumping Festival in a small town in Spain. And there is nothing like the National Hollerin' Contest that takes place in Spivey's Corner, NC. Spivey's Corner makes Tawas look large since it's population is only 335. Thousands attend the Hollerin' Contest, just like the tens of thousands who visit the Tawas area in the summer.

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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