

News from Small Town (Tawas)

Middle America

Issue #27

January 31, 2023

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.

Last summer I visited my old high school. Note that it is still the “Braves.” There has been little or no effort to change this.

The high school has grown with a new gym, a computer lab, and more. Nevertheless, it still very much feels like a small town high school. Very intimate.



Selected Reader Comments

Judy B enjoyed my description of fishing for perch from the dock in East Tawas. She said “I fished a lot. My mother’s rule was that if you catch them, you clean them. Which I did (still have the scaler!). She pan fried them immediately. Between catch and eat was only a few hours. Delish!” As a result, she never eats fish that has been previously frozen.

From Don M: “(The Tawas News) provides interesting reading about our friends and their roots but also helps us remember the importance of ‘leaving no one behind’ as we proceed in our lives and careers.”

Iosco County News Herald – February 1, 2023

The Wonders of Local Festivals: Perchville Turns 73 Years Old

The first weekend of February witnesses Perchville USA festivities that include the coronation of royalty at the Coronation Breakfast, and ice fishing!

To fish, they venture onto the ice on Tawas Bay, cut a hole in the ice, and construct a small shelter. In distant, past days, it was a shanty primarily constructed of wood. Here is a photo of current shanties used this year by a number of anglers.



The fact is that the ice seems thinner than it was 70 years ago. Folks have to be careful. A hole in the ice is cut, typically using a spud, which has a shank and a chisel-like end used to chip a hole in the ice. An auger is used to actually drill the hole in the ice. “The hole must be big enough that you can get a fish out, but not too large of a hole that it might endanger someone’s life.” There have been stories, in years gone by, of individuals – or their equipment – breaking through the ice and having to be rescued.

The weekend also featured a Polar Bear Plunge into the lake. Not many participants!

The first Perchville, in 1950, featured almost 30 shanties. Perchville captured national attention at the time, including coverage from NBC.

Oscoda Takes Care of Rattlesnakes and Bats

The town engineer reported that work has begun to extend the Iosco Exploration Trail. Trees need to be cut down by April 15 “for the bats” and other work must be done “for the rattlesnakes.”

Hospital Gala

The local hospital has another event – the Winter Gala to be held on February 18, this event features music, raffles, gourmet meals, and drinking. It celebrates the Tawas City Hospital Foundation.

Not all small communities are fortunate enough to have a hospital. It survives, no doubt suffering from staff shortages. My guess, however, is that many doctors, nurses, and other staff members actually want to live in this small community. Good for them.

Saluting Local Library Activities

Computer screens and iPhones seem to have captured a couple of generations. Too many individuals have only a rough understanding of what a library is, but they never venture into one.

At a very young age, I began frequenting the small library in East Tawas. Books expanded my world. I think I did it on my own, but a teacher may have made the initial suggestion. The fact is that there is still a place for books. Immersion in a good story, at any age,

takes focused attention, getting away from the minimal attention spans suffered by younger generations.

This local event features Blind Date With a Book – to help kids find books “to fall in love with.” It includes a presentation on Teen Dating Violence and art classes.

Romance novels will be sold for 25 cents each throughout the month of February in honor of Valentine’s Day. I wonder if they will accept mail orders?

Alzheimer’s Caregiver Support Group

Meeting at a Presbyterian Church, the February meeting features a visit from a local attorney who will answer questions about the implications of Alzheimer’s disease. This is close to my heart because I have been the lawyer participating in countless such support groups in California. Indeed, in the mid-80’s, I participated in the creation of the Alzheimer’s Association in California. In 1973 I created and for 10 years thereafter ran the first free legal services program for elders in the nation. It is good to see that such information is flowing in my home town.

It is also personal, as my mother suffered from dementia in her final years.

Kudos to the Tawas Basketball Team

They are enjoying a 6 game winning streak with Vinnie F scoring 31 points and grabbing 16 rebounds. By any measure, this is extraordinary. I hope it is capturing attention from Michigan’s colleges and universities.

Criminal Charges Dismissed

Michael E was almost nailed for a charge of “unlawful use of a license plate.” Fortunately for him, charges were dismissed.

“No Background Check; No Drug Testing; No Vaccination Required”

A small manufacturing company is still looking for employees and apparently having a hard time finding applicants. Since many of the positions involve metal fabrication and major machinist responsibilities, they better be careful.

If they have no luck with this ad, perhaps they should set up a recruitment table outside the doors of the local Puff Cannabis outlet.

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.

©2023 by Michael Gilfix, All Rights Reserved
©News From Small Town (Tawas) Middle America