



Easter Issue

# FRUITPORT Area News

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The purpose of this paper is to be beneficial to the community it serves in every way possible.



## Fruitport Village celebrates 140 years

by Jerry Alger

It was some time last December when I started thinking about the village being 140 years old. It was the fall of 1968 when, as a 23 year old, I realized our village centennial was fast approaching. I went to a village council meeting and informed the council members of this notable year in our history.

Of course, they were surprised and immediately made me chairman of the centennial celebration. I approached a handful of long time Fruitport Village residents for help. We formed a committee and held a few meetings. Chairing an event like this was overwhelming to me at my age. I had imagined a celebration that would get all involved.

I contacted some communities that had held centennials to gain ideas. Eventually, I asked Lew Hendershot (a pillar in our community) to take over as chairman with a promise that I would do all I could to help out. Montague held their centennial in 1967 and a lot of information was gained by talking to the people who headed up their centennial.

After a few more meetings, it was determined that we should hire a company which specialized in promoting events such as community centennials. This proved to be the right thing to do. Dudley Remus was sent here to oversee the event. He helped set up a corporation. We ordered buttons, coins, stock certificates, shaving permits, and many other mementos. At this point, there was no looking back. We set up a "Centennial Headquarters" where the consignment shop is now.

The headquarters was a buzz of activity. Dudley was our leader. He instructed us how to contact and gather information from long time residents. It was amazing the history we gathered. All the local service organizations got involved.

The local paper teamed up, too. Gale McElrath was especially helpful. Gale (the editor) published the centennial edition of the *Fruitport Clipper*. If you ever have a chance to look at one of those papers, you will see the time and effort that went into publishing that paper.

It seemed every night there was something going on during the celebration. Business people grew beards, dressed in old fashioned clothes, and really supported the centennial. Other people were involved in a play. We had a community picnic. "Keystone Cops" were on the lookout for men who shaved and didn't have a "shaving permit." If they caught you without a permit, they locked you up until you raised bail to get out.

I was put in charge of building and burying the time capsule. It is buried in the lawn of the library. It is to be opened on the village's 150th birthday, examined, and re-buried. We placed mementos of the centennial along with newspapers, pictures, a Fruitport High School yearbook, etc.

As I think back of all the people who worked hard to make the centennial celebration a huge success, I realize many of them have passed away. But the one thing I remember is that everyone got involved. It amazed me how everyone worked together and the fun everyone had.

Through other projects that I have been involved in with the village, I still am amazed how people will help.

Looking ahead, I hope we can have another celebration on our 150th birthday that will equal the centennial celebration. Ten years will go by fast. •

## It takes a community...

by Mary Weimer

The often-used expression, "It takes a village..." played out recently in a Fruitport Township tragedy. The loss of Dustin and MacKenzie Captain was felt by our entire community and beyond. And because it was such a sad tragedy, the community came together.

The Red Cross donors provided some of the expenses for the funeral while staff at the Sytsema Funeral Home provided their services at the lowest possible cost.

Fruitport Township government and several anonymous individuals provided for the opening and closing costs for the graves (\$250 each) in Fruitport's Pine Hill Cemetery.

And a combination of donations from the Fruitport Fire Department personnel, the Fruitport Lions Club, and the State of Michigan paid for the graves for the children.

The remaining members of the family are receiving help to rebuild their lives and their home. Volunteers have offered financial support as well as donations of time and household items.

It was such a tragic event, but it is good to know that the community rallied to the special needs of these residents.

## Meeting the food needs of area families

by Mary Weimer

Additional community needs are also being met. With the cooperation of Hope's Outlet in Muskegon, eight churches in our area supported the Gleaners Second Harvest mobile food pantry on Friday, February 27. Each paid a portion of the cost to distribute 10,000 pounds of food.

Sponsoring churches also provided volunteers to sort and deliver food to those who are homebound. Area churches participating included Bethel Baptist Church of Fruitport, Calvary Church, Calvary Temple, Edgewood Lutheran, First Congregational Church of Fruitport, Fruitport Christian Reformed Church, Fruitport Congregational UCC and Word of Hope.

The Fruitport Lions Club will be hosting another Gleaners food distribution on Monday, March 30, 2009 at 4 p.m. The truck will be at Orchard Market in Cloverville. Fruitport Orchard Market is providing bags and other supplies.



## Volunteers making a difference in Fruitport Village

by Jerry Alger

Those of us who grew up in the village during the 50s and 60s remember Marshall Tufts and his wife. The Tufts gave countless hours volunteering their time. Following in their footsteps is their granddaughter Yvonna and her family. Recently, on a sunny March day, Yvonna and her husband Ed, along with daughter Anastacia and son Sabastian volunteered to rake, pick up sticks, and straighten the rocks at Eighth Avenue Park. In fact, the Bayne family has volunteered to adopt the park for the entire year.

The Eighth Avenue Park has seen many volunteers in its makeover. Neighbors Ray Sadowski and Jerry and Shirley Baker have volunteered to water the lawn. Roger Bagnieschi was there to oversee the pouring and finishing of the cement sidewalk. Others stepped forward to purchase the beautiful iron park bench. Carr's Landscaping was helpful with the sod. And our own Randy Mergener and Jimmy Remwolt labored to make this beautiful park happen.

If you haven't visited Eighth Avenue Park, you don't know what you are missing. Take a seat on the park bench and enjoy the view looking down Spring Lake. The view is breathtaking.

Once again, we thank the Ed Bayne family for their willingness to adopt Eighth Avenue Park. Ed expressed that he hopes others will see the effort his family will put into keeping the park nice for all to enjoy and hopes others will step forward and volunteer with other projects.

The village is blessed with several nice park areas. If you feel you would like to lend a hand as a volunteer, phone 865-3952 to discuss possibilities. •



## Former Fruitport resident receives national award

by Mary Weimer

Eugene L. "Les" Torrans was a member of the first graduating class from Fruitport High School in 1965.

Since his graduation, he has been very busy. He graduated from Michigan State University and joined the Peace Corps in 1969. During that experience, he worked with farmers in Cameroon (West Africa), teaching them how to raise fish for the table in small ponds. He lived there for four years in a mud brick house with no electricity or running water. He decided that winters with no snow are a "pretty good deal."

So, when he returned to the United States, he moved south. He earned his Ph.D. at the University of Oklahoma, then moved first to Arkansas, Alabama, and most recently to Mississippi. And despite all his moves, he continued to work with catfish farmers, largely doing research on problems with fish production.

He says, "I still consider Fruitport my home. My family moved there in the 1830s and we've lived on the same piece of land on Norris Creek ever since."

For his efforts in improving catfish hatchery efficiency, Les received a 2008 Technology Transfer Award for Superior Efforts from the Agricultural Research Service (ARS). ARS is the principal intramural scientific research agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

The annual award recognizes ARS researchers who successfully develop and deliver new technology for public use. Torrans works at the ARS Catfish Genetics Research Unit in Stoneville, Mississippi.

He conducted research to determine the oxygen requirements of channel catfish eggs and "fry" or baby fish. He showed that fry survival is improved when catfish eggs receive highly oxygenated water during the last day of incubation. Insufficient oxygen could reduce hatch and survival rates by as much as 20 percent.

Torrans collaborated with Jim Steeby, an extension aquaculture specialist at Mississippi State University. They worked together to identify solutions to lower-than-optimal oxygen rates at Mississippi and Arkansas hatcheries. They also educated hatchery owners about the need for increased egg oxygenation and worked directly with 12 fish farms in the two states to help them adopt improved management techniques. Their efforts have led to an estimated \$1 million increase in annual revenue for the catfish industry.

Les commented, "If you go to the seafood section of a larger grocery and find catfish labeled 'farm raised, product of United States,' I most likely am working or have worked with the farmer who grew it."

Les returns home to Fruitport several times a year to "keep up with things." He said, "I have always appreciated my good fortune at having been born in Fruitport, and having benefited from the community, culture and education it provided." •

## Tentative Newspaper Delivery Schedule

May 9, 2009

OFD / Memorial Day / Graduation issue  
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