



Official Newspaper of Record for the City of Belleville
& the Charter Township of Van Buren

152 Main Street • Suite 9 • Belleville, MI 48111 • 734.699.9020
bellevilleindependent.com • editor@bellevilleareanews.org



BELLEVILLE - AREA INDEPENDENT

VOL. 32.36

Serving the communities of Belleville, Sumpter & Van Buren

FREE

Thursday, September 3, 2026

Tigers fall to Grand Blanc in Season Opener, 24-23

Belleville came within inches of pulling off a dramatic come-back Thursday night, but Grand Blanc held on for a 24-23 victory in a battle between two of Michigan's top Division 1 football teams.

The Tigers trailed 24-17 late in the fourth quarter before quarterback Kendall Franklin powered

into the end zone on a quarterback sneak with 48 seconds remaining.

Belleville elected to go for the two-point conversion and the win, but the attempt was unsuccessful.

The Tigers (0-1) will look to rebound when they return home Sept. 3 to host Howell.



PHOTO COURTESY | KEVIN GIBSON

Local Voting Guide: Community Resource Day Sept. 4 and More



Emily Flesch
Independent Reporter

With the general election approaching, the Belleville-Area District library is helping residents in the community get election-ready.

On Sept. 4, the BADL will be partnering with the Secretary of State and League of Women Voters to hold Community Resource Day from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Voter registration assistance and information will be provided by the representatives from the League of Women Voters. Mobile secretary of state services will also be on-site for State IDs, driver's licens-

es, disability placards, title transfers and more.

Additionally, the BADL will be providing assistance requesting vital documents, such as birth and death certificates, from appropriate government agencies.

Below we've provided answers to some commonly asked voter questions and additional resources to help ensure everyone can vote with confidence in November.

AM I REGISTERED TO VOTE?

You can check if you are registered to vote (as well as confirm polling locations and track absentee ballots) on the Michigan Voter Information Center Voter Portal at <https://mVIC.sos.state.mi.us/Voter/Index>

HOW DO I REGISTER AND WHEN ARE THE DEADLINES?

Online: Monday, Oct. 19, 2026

■ Submitting your application online:

• Visit and follow the instructions at mi.gov/voterregistration

SEE RESOURCE ON PAGE 6

Sumpter Trustees Approve Purchases for Martinsville Pump Station Rehab

Emily Flesch
Independent Reporter

Department of Public Works Director Ron Tabor reported on current and future projects to the Sumpter Township Board of Trustees at their regular meeting on Aug. 25.

Tabor reported that the rehabilitation of the Martinsville Road pump station is 95 percent complete. This project, which provides updates to infrastructure to support future capacity needs and prevent wastewater backups, was approved by the board on Nov. 12, 2025.

The original scope of the project involved refurbishing two existing pumps for use, but upon inspection, a pipe installed 22 years ago was no longer functional and could not be repaired.

At the Aug. 25 meeting, the board authorized the purchase and installation of one new submersible pump at a cost not to exceed \$22,520. Tabor stated, "once we get the pump dropped in, she's going to be running 100 percent, hopefully for

another 22 years."

Tabor also reported that crews are finishing the installation of trash cans at Graham Park and have planted flowers at Banotai (Sherwood) Park. Additionally, lead and copper testing of the water is complete and will be sent to Lansing this week.

In other business at the meeting, the board:

- Appointed Scott Holtz and Karen Armatas as Martinsville Cemetery sextons, an unpaid volunteer role that they have both previously fulfilled;

- Approved a Parks & Recreation amended budget for the Oct. 3 Parks and Rec Jam not to exceed \$10,000, fully funded through existing community donations and sponsorships.

- Continued safety and entrance upgrades by approving installation of new push/panic bars on township hall back doors at a cost of \$2,600;

- Directed CWA to draft a letter

SEE PURCHASES ON PAGE 5

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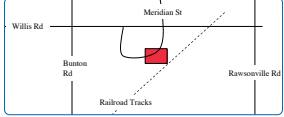
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PAGE THREE

Touche': Belleville Takes Center Strip for Fencing Tournament

Belleville High School had the honor of hosting the Duelist Open 25, an annual multi-day local fencing tournament, on Aug. 29-30.

Bringing together fencers from across the United States, the Duelist Open was founded in 1998 by the Ann Arbor Dueling Society (AADS) and has since grown to be one of the largest tournaments in the region, with this year's competition drawing 170 pre-registered participants.



Emily Flesch
Independent
Reporter

Tournament Director Bill Emerson attributed the popularity of the tournament to the distinct experience the club creates. "We try to do something special," Emerson said. "That's why we get people coming from all over the place and why referees will come, even though they know they're going to work a couple of long days." He noted that some competitors were traveling from as far away as West Virginia and Toronto.

Last year, the club added a second day to the schedule, allowing for more events. This year's schedule included mixed saber, foil and épée; veteran combined épée (ages 40 and up); and, for the first time, a youth foil event exclusively for those ages 14 and under.

Referee Director Alex Gioiella shared that this tournament is beneficial to both fencers and officials, providing an opportunity for fencers to compete in high-level



bouts without the stakes of a regional or national competition and providing an excellent training ground for new referees to gain experience and advice from veteran refs.

USA Fencing official Patrick Webster stated that it is "one of the most academically successful events in the Michigan region." He also noted that many of the competing fencers were also referees, which allowed for effective communication between fencers and referees in case of a dispute. "They can actually use the vocabulary of a referee and explain," Webster said. "Then they all just move on as friendly as can be."

This sense of camaraderie was evident



throughout the gymnasium, as fencers on the sidelines practiced together, sharing advice and laughter. The spirit of sportsmanship, as well as the energy of the room, was best summed up by one

Belleville High School hosted the Duelist Open 25, an annual multi-day local fencing tournament, on Aug. 29-30. Bringing together fencers from across the United States, the Duelist Open was founded in 1998 by the Ann Arbor Dueling Society (AADS) and has since grown to be one of the largest tournaments in the region, with this year's competition drawing 170 pre-registered participants.

PHOTOS | EMILY FLESCH

competitor: "Watch for the one who steps off the strip and looks happy."

The Ann Arbor Dueling Society trains every Thursday at the Ann Arbor YMCA from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. Beginners are always welcome and loaner gear is provided.



Market Finds Shelter From Rain

Locals packed the halls of Sumpter Police Station to sell handmade art and yard sale items during the Sumpter Township's Vendor Market & Community Yard Sale Aug. 21-23. Due to the heavy rain over that weekend, the outside tables were sparse, but indoors, the halls were packed with vendors.

PHOTO COURTESY | LUCIAN VAN FLEET

OPINION

From the Editor

What Does it Mean for a Newspaper to Become a Nonprofit?

Editor Emeritus Rosemary Oztman mentioned at least twice in columns that the paper has transitioned from a for-profit model to a nonprofit foundation, The Belleville Area News Foundation. However, I don't think we at the Independent have explained



Sarah Rigg
Managing Editor

in any detail what that means for us and for the community.

In many ways, nothing much will change for most of our readers. If you've tried to take out a classified or display ad since the change, you might have run into a few changes with the way we process payments since some of our banking and money-related processes and vendors have changed. Most of the differences, though, are behind the scenes. Here are the basics!

Who: The original board of directors of the for-profit paper has now changed to a nonprofit board. Current members are board President Harry Van Gelder, along with board members Barbara Miller, Janet Millard, Sharon Peters, Kathleen Springer, Elena Manalp, and Sharon Claxton. We're seeking new board members, so please check out our ad on page 7.

What: The Belleville Area Independent is now a publication of the nonprofit Belleville Area News Foundation (BANF).

When: The BANF was established earlier this year, but it had been in the works for nearly a year before that.

Where: We're going to continue to operate out of our office downtown indefinitely.

I'm always sad when a paper pulls an office out of a community and goes to a remote/online model only, so I'm glad we have offices where we can interact with readers in person.

Why: According to Doug Peters, a retired local attorney who consults with the BANF board, he provided an analysis of the paper while it was a for-profit enterprise. He found that Rosemary was basically getting paid for one salary while doing two and a half jobs, and that was one of a handful of reasons the paper looked like it was breaking even or making a small profit.

"It was clear we couldn't ad revenue our way out of the problem," Peters told me in phone conversation.

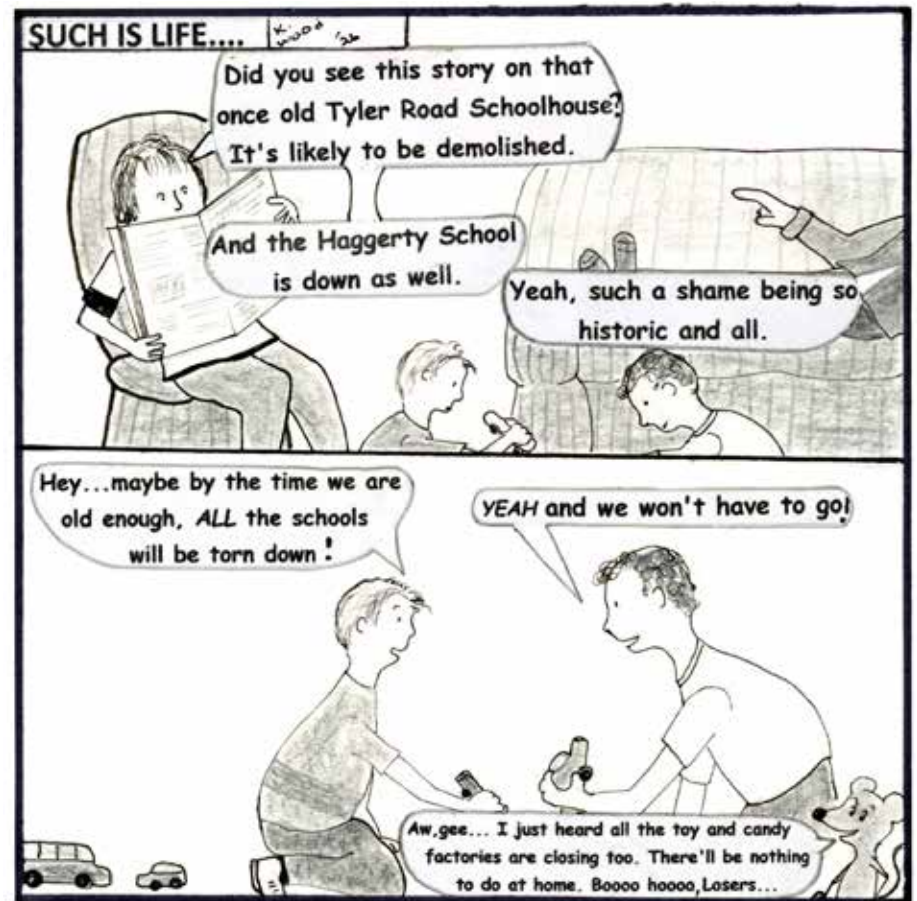
Peters said he knew another nonprofit newspaper, the Grosse Pointe News, used "angel donations" as a model, but that can be a dangerous model, because "angel investors" can pass on, lose a fortune, or otherwise fail to fund the paper at any time.

As a foundation, BANF will be exploring multiple strategies to keep us solvent and publishing papers well into the future.

How: The nonprofit can continue to solicit traditional ad revenue, but we can also accept "angel" donations and seek grants to support community journalism. We've been working on some exciting grant opportunities that will help us with the technology necessary to get the news out, for instance.

I think it's important that the public get transparency from the newspaper about how we operate just as much as it's important for governments and school districts to run transparently. After all, now that we're a nonprofit, we are the community's paper.

If you were curious, I hope that helped explain how and why we transitioned to the new nonprofit model. If anyone has questions that I haven't addressed, I'll answer them in a follow up column.



BELLEVILLE - AREA INDEPENDENT

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- Educate the public and improve sharing local information in the Belleville, MI area community through a free newspaper;
- Promote civic engagement and knowledge among the citizens of the Belleville, MI area;
- Support local schools, churches, and non-profit institutions by raising awareness of their activities in the local community; and
- Provide a newspaper of record for local municipal bodies.

This paper is available free at sites throughout the community. To get the Independent delivered by mail, cost is \$55 per year for postage, Outside of Michigan - \$60 per year, outside of the USA - call. Also available free to download on our website.

Deadline for news & ads (see below) is Noon of every Monday. Deadline for ads smaller than 1/2 page is Noon Monday, and all advertising 1/2 page or larger is Noon Friday, with the exception of certain holiday weeks. Classified. ad deadline is Noon of every Tuesday.

Established December 3, 1994 • First Edition January 5, 1995

CORRECTION:

A reader pointed out that we printed the wrong name for the association that maintains rules and records for Land Speed Racing events in an article we ran on p. 11 in our Aug. 27 issue. SCTA stands for the Southern California Timing Association. We regret the error.

We aim for accuracy at the Belleville Area Independent, but if you spot an error, please call or email us with the correct information, and we will publish it in the next issue.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

At the **Belleville Area Independent**, we welcome letters to the editor on almost any topic, but especially anything local. Feel free to email **editor@bellevilleareanews.org**. We also accept written letters by postal mail at **152 Main St. Suite 9**.

Please try to keep letters short and to the point, preferably no more than 600-700 words. The editor reserves the right to trim longer letters in such a way that the edit doesn't distort the sender's original meaning. We do not publish anonymous letters.

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Letters to the Editor

MORE LETTERS ON PAGE 17

Reader Takes

Exception to Pro-

Data Center Letter

I would take exception to the letter printed in the Aug. 27 edition of the Independent, in that the resident who submitted the letter wasn't representing any particular person or group of local residents and businesses.

It's my opinion that he simply cut and pasted an industry-supported thesis that was actually taken directly from the internet site which he provided as his source of intellect.

In truth, large corporations generally have little interest in how their facilities affect local communities. That is, until the citizens speak out and challenge the zoning requirements and associated site plans. And, like so many other communities in Michigan, Van Buren Township was selected because of the ready electrical grid and the close vicinity of the lake for water discharge (stopped by the Michigan DNR).

So, let's understand that these AI data centers are profit-driven and nobody wants one in close proximity to their home because they have inherent problems that are far too costly to mitigate voluntarily.

Since the VBT building and development commission had very little understanding of AI technology and the rapid expansion of the complexities of this development and the justified concerns of our citizenry.

"Just so that they aren't located in my vicinity" could well apply, also, to the corporate executives these AI giants and their neighbors. Perhaps all of us should welcome the opportunities afforded by

technology companies, but not before a thorough meeting to protest this rushed and suspicious re-permitting of the property where the AI complex is being built should be congratulated for bringing this debacle to the forefront of our local authorities.

In the future, please restrict correspondence in the newspaper to letters from individuals and not essays copied from the internet.

CeJay Marshall

Van Buren Township

Editor's note: Marshall is referring to a letter to the editor titled "Data Centers Aren't the Crisis They're Made Out to Be" published in our Aug. 27 issue. The author is a Van Buren Township resident who called to ask if he could edit an opinion piece he'd published on Substack and submit it as a letter to the editor. I welcome letters or opinion pieces on the data center, no matter which side of the issue you are on!

Democratic Party's

Big Tent Strategy

Can Only End Badly

To the editor:

I've refrained from ink until now, but Hasan Piker just might change my mind.

The Big Tent Democrat party is the scourge of society. The CAIR communist Muslim liberal party, the Brotherhood is prominent in the Big Tent Democratic party.

There is no Democrat party left as we once knew it. Now it's an internal struggle, which can only end badly.

Charles Tackett

Belleville

PURCHASES

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

supporting Belinda and Rocky Frazier's Wayne County Land Bank purchase at 12895 Rawsonville to expand their orchard, contingent on resolving a discrepancy in the property description with Wayne County and the township assessors;

• Approved the removal by J & T Crova

of an obsolete tower located behind the DPW building at no cost to the township;

• Approved use of the Fire Department property for the Sumpter Fire Department and MAFF 343's Annual Chicken Broil on Sept. 13. The event takes place from noon to 5 p.m. and the menu includes a ½ chicken, corn on the cob, coleslaw, dinner roll and beverage for \$15 per dinner.

• All board members were present at the meeting. Trustee James Frazier clarified for transparency that he has no relation to Rocky and Belinda Frazier

Birthdays

Sept. 5 – Joyce Rochowiak

Sept. 6 – Gene Taylor

Sept. 7 –Richard Labo

Sept. 9 – Bill Lawson

Sept. 9 – Gail Curaba

Sept. 10 – Susan Featheringill

Do you or does someone you know have a birthday soon? Call the Independent and we will publish it as soon as possible.

RESOURCE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

By Mail: Monday, Oct. 19, 2026

- Submitting your application via mail:
 - Mail your application to your city/township clerk.

If you have never registered to vote in Michigan and choose to mail in your application, you will need to verify your identity by including the following:

- Your Michigan driver's license or state ID number where requested on the form.
- OR
- The last 4 digits of your Social Security number where requested on the form.
- OR
- Send a copy (not an original document) of ONE of the following forms of identification with your application:
 - A photocopy of your Michigan driver's license or state ID, or
 - A photocopy of a paycheck stub, utility bill, bank document or government document that lists both your name and your address.

In Person

Tuesday, Nov. 3, 2026 (You can register at any time up to 8 p.m. on Election Day at your city or township clerk's office.)

- Submitting your application in person:
 - If you hand-deliver your application to the city/township clerk, the staff member helping you will take your form and you don't need to do anything else.

If you register within the 14-day period immediately prior to an election, you must appear in person in the City Clerk's office and provide proof of residency.

HOW DO I VOTE?

- In Person Early Voting: Michigan Voters have the option to vote early at their polling location. Early voting typically begins nine days prior to the election from Saturday until the next Sunday.

(For the November election, these dates

will be Saturday, Oct. 24th through Sunday, Nov. 1, but confirm with your city/township clerk as election information can change quickly)

- In Person on Election Day: You will be issued and submit a ballot at your polling location.

By Mail/Absentee

All registered voters in Michigan have the right to vote by mail using an absentee ballot delivered to their home.

- Requesting absentee ballot: You can request an absentee ballot online at <https://mvlc.sos.state.mi.us/>.
- Deadline to request: Applications must be received by your city/township clerk by 5 p.m. on the Friday prior to the election.
- Deadline to submit: Your ballot must be received by your city/township clerk by 8 p.m. on Election Day.

- You can submit your ballot by mail or in person at an authorized drop box.

- Belleville Drop Box Location
- City Hall, 330 Charles St. (in vestibule)

- Van Buren Township Drop Box Locations

- Township Hall, 46425 Tyler Rd. (outside main entrance and inside building)

- Van Buren Twp Fire Station 1, 45400 Hull Rd.

- Sumpter Drop Box Locations
- Sumpter Township Hall, 23480

- Sumpter Road (outside main entrance and in rear parking lot)

- BADL Sumpter Media Center, 23465 Sumpter Rd. (in parking lot next to USPS box)

DO I NEED TO PRESENT IDENTIFICATION TO VOTE?

You will be asked to show ID to vote, but you can still vote without ID by signing a form explaining that you did not have ID.

Acceptable forms of ID:

- Michigan driver's license or state ID (may be expired)
- Driver's license or state ID issued by

another state

- Federal, state or local government-issued photo ID
- U.S. passport
- Military photo ID
- Photo ID from an educational institution
- Tribal photo ID

WHAT ACCESSIBILITY ACCOMMODATIONS ARE AVAILABLE?

- Accessible Absentee Ballot: Electronic absentee options allow voters with print disabilities to complete their ballot using personal assistive devices.

- In-Person Devices: Every polling station and early voting location must provide a Voter Assist Terminal (VAT) to help mark ballots.

- Physical Facilities: Locations are required to provide ramps, wide doorways, and accessible seating. You can also arrange for curbside voting if entering the facility presents a barrier.

- Personal Interpreters: Voters may bring an interpreter or assistant of their choice to help them read and fill out a ballot, provided the person is not an employer or union representative.

WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO CONTACT THE CITY/TOWNSHIP CLERK?

- Belleville – Michelle Bellingham, Interim Clerk/Treasurer
 - o Contact the clerk/treasurer's office at 734-697-9323, ext. 7038
- Van Buren Township – Leon Wright, Township Clerk
 - o Contact the Township Clerk's office at 734-699-8909
- Sumpter Township – Donald LaPorte, Clerk and Samantha Herman, Deputy Clerk
 - Contact the Clerk's Office at 734-461-6201 Ext. 2224 and 2222
 - Visit https://sumptertwp.org/government/election_information.php

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- VOTE411 by the League of Women Voters: vote411.org
- MichiganVoting.org: michiganvoting.org
- Ballotpedia: ballotpedia.org/Michigan
- Bureau of Elections Ombudsperson for Accessible Elections: 517-335-2730
 - MDOS-ADAVoting@michigan.gov
- National Election Protection Hotline: 866-OUR-VOTE (866-687-8683)



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Please email your letter of interest to harryvangelder673@gmail.com

Obituaries

MORE OBITUARIES ON PAGE 13



Mildred E. Baker

MILDRED E. BAKER
(April 2, 1926 - August 25, 2026)

Mildred Elizabeth Baker (Mida) passed away on Tuesday, August 25, 2026, under hospice care. She was born in Belleville, MI, on April 2, 1926, to Lambert and Elizabeth (Sears) Mida. Mildred was preceded in death by her parents; her husband, Robert "Bob" G. Baker; and her sons, Robert Baker Jr. and James "Jim" Baker.

A lifelong member of St. Paul's Lutheran Church of Belleville, she attended Belleville Schools, graduating in 1944. Shortly after graduation, she married Robert Baker in July 1944, and together they shared 60 wonderful years of marriage.

They had three children; Robert, Jim, and Joan, who all attended Belleville Schools. As a stay-at-home mother, Mildred devoted her time to her family and many community activities. She was a "room mother," a member of the PTO (serving as treasurer for several years), and a 4-H Leader for 20 years alongside her husband, Bob. Mildred was also an active member of the Church Ladies Aid, helping with dinners and other functions.

During this time, she became an excellent seamstress and took in dressmaking. As her children grew and attended Belleville High School, she and Bob led the Refreshment Committee for the High School Band. Once her children graduated, Mildred went to work for the Van Buren Schools, first as an elementary school secretary and later as an executive secretary in the School Board Office.

After 22 years of service, she retired and joined her husband in the hardware business in Willis, MI. Upon selling the hardware store, she and Bob formed the Belleville High School Alumni Association, staying active until 2004. She was a dedicated member of the Belleville Association Women's Club (formerly BPW) for 33 years, where she was honored with the "Woman of the Year" and "Woman of Achievement" awards.

Mildred is survived by her daughter, Joan (Thomas) Vicary of Oak Ridge, TN; her daughters-in-law, Linda (the late James) Baker and Sharon (the late Robert) Baker; and her eight grandchildren: Natasha (Sean) Brunstetter, Robert Baker III, Christopher Baker, Stephanie (Scott) Jacobson, Marcus (Mindy) Baker, Tara (Mike) Genstil, Elizabeth (Michael) Beard, and Glenn (Heidi) Vicary. She is also survived by fourteen great-grandchildren who meant the world to her: Ali (Cade) Henjum, Nick Brunstetter, Tyler Brunstetter, Josh Brunstetter, Jack Brunstetter, Nina Jacobson, Eddy Jacobson, Joey Jacobson, Eve Genstil, Gabriel Genstil, Maxim Baker, Caroline Beard, Emma Beard, and Charlotte Snowden; and one great-great-grandchild, Henry Henjum.

Her long life was well-lived, filled with the love of a devoted family and a steadfast commitment to the Lord.

The Baker family would like to thank the community for their outpouring of love, support, and friendship during this time.

A special thank you to Jenna from Beacon Hospice and the staff at Crystal Creek Manor as well.

A visitation for family and friends will be held from 4-8 p.m. on Thursday, Sept. 10, 2026, at David C. Brown Funeral Home, 460 Huron River Drive, Belleville, (734) 697-4500. Visitation will be 10-11 a.m. Friday, Sept. 11, 2026, at St. Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, 47445 W. Huron River Dr., Belleville, with an 11 a.m. Funeral Service. Rev. James A. Frey will officiate. She will be interred at Glen Eden Lutheran Memorial Park, Livonia, Mich.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to St. Paul's Lutheran Church or a charity of the donor's choice.



Marilyn Jean Stull

MARILYN JEAN STULL

(January 27, 1939 - August 25, 2026)

Marilyn Jean Stull, age 87, of Tecumseh, MI, formerly of Belleville, MI, passed away Tuesday, August 25, 2026, under hospice care. She was born January 27, 1939, in Detroit, MI, daughter of Stephen & Eve "Eva" (Zwalchak) Checkosky. She graduated from Romulus High School, class of 1960. She married the love of her life, Richard Henry Stull on October 1, 1960. Together they were blessed with four children. She loved being a wife and mother. They were members of St. Anthony Catholic Church in Belleville, MI, for over 50 years, before they retired to Florida, where they became members of St. Anthony Catholic Church in Lakeland, FL. She enjoyed crocheting afghans, tending her flowers, and more recently completing word search puzzles.

Marilyn is survived by her loving husband Richard Henry Stull, Sr., 4 children: Michelle Stull of Tecumseh, Richard Stull, Jr. of Ypsilanti, MI, Debra (Tony) DeMars of Brooklyn, MI, and Cathi (Andy) Popp of Clinton, MI, 6 grandchildren: Shannon (Eric Moist) DeMars, Ricky (Rachel) DeMars, Thomas (Jessica) Demars, Tiffany DeMars, Travis DeMars, and Austin (Rachel McCombs) Popp; 11 great-grandchildren, also a great-great-grandson Marco.

She was preceded in death by her parents, her sister Roberta DeWitt, also six brothers-in-law & sisters-in-law.

Visitation will be 4-8 PM Sunday at David C. Brown Funeral Home, 460 E. Huron River Dr., Belleville, MI 48111-2764 (734)697-4500. Her Funeral Mass will be Monday, August 31, 2026, at 11:00 AM at St. Anthony Catholic Church, 409 W. Columbia Ave., Belleville, MI. The family will welcome guests an hour prior to mass at church. Father Bryan Shackett will serve as Celebrant. Interment will be in Michigan Memorial Park, Flat Rock, MI.

Memorial contributions may be made to the family and would be appreciated.

Thank you for keeping Marilyn and her family in your thoughts and prayers at this time.

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State Survey Shows Public Wants Public Notices in Local Newspapers

A recent statewide poll shows Michigan voters trust local newspapers and their digital platforms to provide accurate information about the actions of elected officials. That's according to a news release from the Michigan Press Association (MPA).

The poll of likely November 2026 voters commissioned by EPIC-MRA showed that Michigan voters continue to view local newspapers and their digital platforms as the most trusted and effective source for public notices and information about government actions.

Nearly 60% of survey respondents said they trust a local newspaper or a local newspaper and its website over a government website when it comes to publishing public notices and information on local government budgets, information on spending by elected officials and details about zoning and taxation issues and more.

"The findings underscore the important role newspapers play in promoting transparency, informing Michiganders and ensuring public notices are broadly accessi-

ble to the communities they serve," said Lisa McGraw, public policy manager for the Michigan Press Association in the news release.

The MPA continues to call on Michigan's House leadership to halt ongoing efforts that could remove requirements for governments and other public institutions to publish important information about decision making in newspapers through public notices.

Along with the Freedom of Information Act and the Open Meetings Act, requirements in Michigan for public notices to be published in newspapers help hold government officials accountable to the people they are elected to serve. They play a critical role in helping Michigan citizens learn about and weigh in on important tax proposals, zoning changes, new ordinances and proposed property developments that may impact them and their families.

Public notices are available in local newspapers and on their websites, as well as on a statewide database, mipub-

licnotices.com, which is managed by the MPA.

The results of the 2026 survey are consistent with a 2019 EPIC-MRA survey, in which the majority of respondents said they trust their local newspaper and newspaper's website the most to find public notices of government activities, and that their local newspaper would be most effective in making government activities known to the public.

Shifting notices solely to government-controlled websites would make it harder for Michigan residents to access critical information and monitor, evaluate and weigh in on the decisions, policies and actions of elected officials.

"Publishing notices in local newspapers and their digital platforms provides a permanent, third-party record of government activity that can't be removed, edited or lost on a government website," said Jim Tarrant, executive director of the Public Notice Resource Center.

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LOCAL SPORTS

Tigers Return With Experience, Championship Expectations

Dave Merchant

Special to the Independent

Ranked No. 6 in the state by State Champs, the Belleville Tigers entered the 2026 season with high expectations. They got an early test last week on the road against Grand Blanc, falling just short in a 24-23 battle.

~~~~~

Veteran head coach Calvin Norman is excited for this season and the players he has.

The team is loaded with seniors and key play makers. Here are several of them:

**#0 Derrick Taylor (SR)** | DT / DB / RB | 5'10", 160 lbs — Dynamic elite athlete; plays safety and running back.

**#1 Deontae Morris (SR)** | WR / S | 5'9", 160 lbs — High-impact, two-way starter at wide receiver and safety.

**#2 Jamarion Jenkins (SR)** | DB / WR | 5'9", 160 lbs — Premier defensive back anchor.

**#6 Charles "Trey" Britton III (SR)** | WR | 6'1", 175 lbs — Top-tier target; committed to the University of Missouri.

**#7 Kendall Franklin (SR)** | QB | 6'1", 205 lbs — Entering his second year as our starting quarterback and team leader.

**#8 Trenton Foley (SR)** | RB / LB | 5'11", 205 lbs — Standout two-way athlete with multiple college offers on the table.

**#21 Masiah Felder (SR)** | DB / WR | 6'0", 165 lbs — Key defensive back playmaker.

Veteran Offensive Line (Returning Starting Unit)

**#50 Cameron Vanhooose (SR)** | OL / DL | 5'11", 255 lbs — Returning starting front-line contributor.

**#53 Amir Cole (SR)** | OT | 6'3", 270 lbs — Key offensive tackle anchor.

**#55 Rokko Jackson (SR)** | OG / DT |

6'3", 275 lbs — Dominant physical presence upfront on both offense and defense.

**#57 Kalen Turner (SR)** | OT | 6'3", 265 lbs — Returning starting tackle with elite length and power.

**#58 Ayiden Staton (SR)** | C | 6'3", 275 lbs — Veteran center and physical anchor of our offensive line.

Belleville has a tough schedule for the season.

"We prepare for every single week with total focus, but we have several premier

and learning," he said. "We varsity-tested a very young roster that was replacing almost all previous starting experience. While that led to a 7-3 finish and an early playoff exit against Woodhaven, that growing pain was invaluable."

This fall, those same players are now battle-tested upperclassmen, he added. We are a heavy, veteran-led senior group that understands what it takes to compete at the highest level. The depth and game-day experience we return across the entire ros-

appearances."

Norman said he is supported by an incredible coaching staff, his focus is bringing elite preparation, discipline, and collegiate-level development to our student-athletes every day.

In 2025, their theme was "Trust the Process" as a young group was learning the ropes. For 2026, their theme is "ELEVATE." It is time to rise to the occasion.

"Our expectation is to establish a championship standard in every area," he said. "We practice with extreme intensity so that game days feel earned and seamless. That standard carries into the classroom as well, where our team roster has consistently maintained a 3.2 cumulative GPA."

Norman said the team's ultimate goal never changes: execute in the classroom, dominate in the weight room, and bring a Division 1 State Championship back home to Belleville.

The Tigers and Coach Norman are looking for another strong season.

"I love Belleville—I bleed orange and black. We have a high-energy group of young men who have put in endless hours in the weight room and on the field. We are ready for every challenge ahead, and we can't wait to see the community out supporting these kids as we chase a state title."



PHOTO COURTESY | KEVIN GIBSON

Belleville Head Coach Calvin Norman addresses the team after a tough opening day loss to Grand Blanc, 24-23. The Tigers next play at home on Thurs., Sept 3 against Howell at 7p.m.

matchups that will define our regular season," he said.

**Thursday, Sept. 3 vs. Howell (Home)** — A crucial home matchup against the back-to-back KLAA champion.

**Friday, Sept. 11 vs. Dearborn Fordson (Home)** — A heated, historic rivalry game under the Friday night lights.

**Friday, Oct. 9 vs. Northville (Home)** — Anticipated as one of the premier "Games of the Week" in the state.

The Tigers are more experienced this season, though, too.

"Last year was a season defined by youth

ter make us a vastly different and far more polished football team."

Norman is very experienced and he has a love for the game. He has a passion for coaching and teaching his team.

"This season marks my 35th year of coaching high school football," he said. "I joined Belleville in 2019 as running backs coach before taking over as Head Coach in 2023. Prior to Belleville, I spent over a decade building Cody High School into a consistent contender—reaching 10 PSL semifinals, 3 PSL championship games, and making 10 Division 1 state playoff

### IN LOCAL SPORTS NEWS

Belleville cross country competed Friday, Aug. 21. Out of the 29 runners who participated in the 2026 Lamplighter Invite in Livonia, 15 set new personal bests.

The boy's team was led by Colt Gilbee, who finished with a 18:55, and Braelen Russell, who ran a 20:37 (PR). The girl's team was led by Megan Mulvenna, who ran a 27:04 and Malia Clark, who ran a 28:34 (PR).

## Belleville Lacrosse Sees Resurgence as Youth and Varsity Programs Grow

**Dave Merchant**

*Special to the Independent*

The sport of lacrosse is making a resurgence at the varsity and youth level in Belleville. Currently, Belleville has a co-op at the varsity level with New Boston Huron High School.

Brandon Forga is in his third season as head coach of the team. He said the sport could be popular for several reasons.

"I would say at first glance it's fast-paced and physical," Forga said. "But I also think the appearance plays a part, the stick, gloves and helmet draw attention. Once you start playing there are also challenging technical aspects like developing stick skills (throwing, catching, shooting on goal), field awareness and intensity



Jackson Green keeps the ball away from the Brighton defender.

of play. It's great and rewarding to see a newer player catch a fever for the sport.

"They'll start showing up early, getting together with other players on their own to play catch and work on their skills and really start to excel during practice. If you have enough of those players, you're almost guaranteeing future success on the field."

Currently, there are 21 middle school players and 25 high school players.

The first MHSAA state lacrosse tournament was held in 2005. There are two high school divisions, with good teams spread mostly around the southern half of the state.

"The teams are united programs between Huron and Belleville. Most of our juniors and seniors started

SEE LACROSSE ON PAGE 10

# LACROSSE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

playing youth lacrosse together,” Forga said. “Huron High School did not have a lacrosse team so by creating a united team we were able to allow the Huron kids to keep playing and bring valuable knowledge and skill to the BHS program.

“A competent youth program is really the backbone of a successful high school team. Incoming freshmen that have even basic skills are a foundational building block. You can take that knowledge and skill they’ve acquired, build on it and add it to the high school arsenal.”

Forga said he would like to start a girls’ team in the future.

“Our current teams are co-ed but the physicality of the sport can make it difficult at the varsity level,” he said. “We’ve had some interest in the past for a girls’ team, but we’ve never been quite able to put all the pieces together regarding coaching and players. It’s still on my list of ‘to-do’s.’”

He said the ultimate goal is to build a tradition of excellence for the players and the team, both on and off the field.

“I want to provide the best, positive experience that I can for the team.”

Forga said a resurgence seems logical.

“Covid really did a number on the sport,” he said. “We had several youth teams in 2019. The 2020 season was canceled due to Covid. In 2021 we were only able to put together a single youth team. I think we’re still rebuilding from that event.”

The Belleville Lacrosse Boosters will host a free lacrosse clinic Saturday, Sept. 26 and Sunday, Sept. 27 from 1-3 p.m. Anyone interested in lacrosse is encouraged to attend. Additional clinics will be held in the BHS gym during the winter, with the schedule forthcoming.

“For my current players, I highly encourage off-season play. It’s during this time, when the pressure is off, that a player can grow their knowledge and skill,” Forga said.



LEFT: Kyle Morin makes a save. RIGHT: Ayden Forga takes a shot at a college prospect camp.

Forga’s son, Ayden, plays for the Belleville Lacrosse team and attends BHS.

“I’ve been playing lacrosse as long as I can remember,” Ayden said. “I love playing a sport that’s co-op between two schools, it helps create friendships and brotherhood that wouldn’t work if we weren’t co-op.”

He said his favorite part of the sport is scoring.

“There is nothing like the feeling of scoring in a lacrosse game,” he said. “The game of lacrosse is absolutely growing especially with the youth. More and more kids are starting to play and compete.”

Noah Herron, who attends Huron High School, also plays for the co-op team.

“I love playing on this co-op team,”



Herron said. “I have got to meet a lot of new people I never would have if we didn’t combine schools. This also allows our team to play better competitions since Belleville is D1 and my home school Huron would be D2.”

Herron will play lacrosse at Lawrence Tech University next year.

“I am very happy seeing the youth start liking this sport,” he said. “I played this sport when I was a kid and I wish it had the amount of kids it has now.”

For additional information about the September clinic, winter clinics or the program, email [bellevillelaxboosters@gmail.com](mailto:bellevillelaxboosters@gmail.com) or visit [bellevillelacrosse.com](http://bellevillelacrosse.com).

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# Belleville Business Beat by Isis: Visiting Taste of Belleville and This & That Market

**Editor’s note:** Isis is a Belleville-area resident who will be writing a column for *The Independent* once or twice a month with thoughts about new businesses coming to town or new happenings at established businesses. Her first column reviews both *Taste of Belleville* and the *This & That Market*.

**Isis Velazquez**  
Special to the Independent

I experienced some of the best of the Belleville area in late August when I attended the Taste of Belleville and the This & That Market.

It all started at the Taste of Belleville, when I purchased food tickets to sample dishes from local businesses while enjoying live lakeside music from the D’Tour Band, playing 70s and 80s classic hits.

There were plenty of food vendors at the event, but one that seemed to attract a particularly large crowd was Rachael Lynn’s Catering. Their specialties included Smoked Brisket Tacos, Roasted Beef over Garlic Mashed Potatoes, 5 Cheese Mac & Cheese, and a delicious Chocolate Lasagna Dessert.

The brisket tacos were, without a doubt, the best! Tender, flavorful brisket tucked

into a taco made for a meal worth coming back for.

Other popular food vendors in attendance included Beth’s Custom Cakes, Hungry Howie’s Pizza, Jets Pizza, Angelfood Catering, Applebee’s, Baan Phad Thai, Benito’s Pizza, Johnny’s on the Lake, Rusted Crow on the Lake, and The Butcher Shop, giving visitors plenty of choices to satisfy their appetites.

The Belleville 7th Day Adventist Church was also there, serving vegetarian meatballs. They were kind enough to offer their recipe as well, allowing visitors to try making them at home.

shawarma to other savory options. Coffee and lemonade stands provided refreshing beverages, including one of my personal favorites — the lavender lemonade.

Families with children had plenty of options to choose from as well. Vendors offered toys, figurines, books, and other kid-friendly items, making the market an appealing destination for families shopping together.

Entertainment was also part of the experience. A live band performed country music throughout the festival, adding a festive atmosphere and giving visitors another reason to stay and enjoy the event beyond shopping. For those who enjoy personalized and practical items, the market featured an extensive selection of tumblers in a variety of colors, styles and designs. The wide range of choices made them one of the more eye-catching finds at the festival.

Kitchen enthusiasts were not left out. Vendors offered a selection of seasonings, cooking utensils, baked goods and other products designed to add a special touch to the kitchen. The home décor section was equally impressive, with vendors showcasing fall-themed decorations, wall art, floral arrangements and other seasonal items.

Fashion was another prominent feature of the market. Several clothing boutiques displayed a broad selection of styles for both adults and children, including clothing and graphic T-shirts.

Overall, the This & That Market provided a family-friendly atmosphere that combines shopping, food, music and entertainment. With its variety of vendors and products, visitors are likely to discover something unexpected—or leave with a few items they had not planned to purchase.

For families, shoppers and anyone who enjoys discovering local vendors and unique products, the This & That Market is worth adding to the calendar.

The market is scheduled to return to the Wayne County Fairgrounds on Oct. 18, 2026.

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# Community Workshops Aim to Change the Conversation on Mental Health

**Emily Flesch**  
Independent Reporter

Since retiring from the Van Buren School District in 2022, clinical therapist Jerome Roberson has been breaking the stigma surrounding mental health across the tri-community area through a series of interactive mental health workshops.

Roberson runs a practice in Belleville staffed with five therapists and a mentorship program leader. While they offer counseling



sessions both in-person and virtually, Roberson emphasized that therapy is only one component of their work,

a desire to hold a TED Talk about an issue she had been facing. Roberson admitted that organizing a TED Talk involved a lot of logistics, especially for a small business, but he soon realized that they could hold their own style of TED Talk for local residents.

The first Community Exchange workshop took place this past spring at the Belleville-Area District Library (BADL) and focused on “the cost of chronic strength,” specifically the negative effects that come with assuming a role where someone is expected to be “the strong one,” such as a parent or provider.

For the second workshop in August, the focus shifted to the human brain and its reaction to stress, with special guest Marv Fox Jr., a motivational speaker who also serves as the director of player development at the Legacy Center Sports Complex in Brighton.

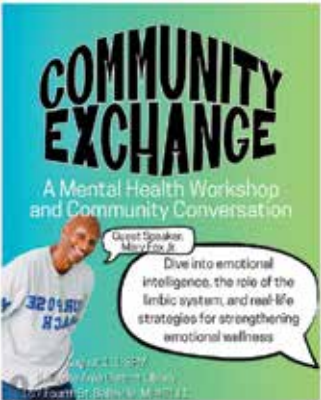


stimuli, especially in today’s tech-heavy world where algorithms determine so much of what we see and leave little room for rich

conversation. “We become very narrow in our thinking and perspectives, and that can affect how we deal with humanity and how we impact the human experience,” said Fox Jr.

He detailed his four-point “A-Game” approach for identifying and processing emotions: Acknowledge, Accept, Appreciate and Celebrate. Participants were shown videos and given hands-on tools, like an emotion wheel diagram, allowing them to visualize their feelings and analyze their

SEE WORKSHOPS ON PAGE 13

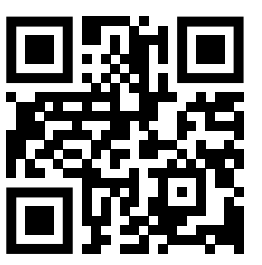


which operates on three levels: clinical mental health, education and workshops, and mentoring.

The idea for community workshops, which he’s hosting under the name “Promoting Positive Images,” came during a conversation with a client, when she voiced

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## Obituaries



Sophie Zoller

**(JULY 9, 1925 - AUG. 26, 2026)**  
**(April 2, 1926 - August 25, 2026)**  
Sophie Zoller, 101, passed away peacefully after a remarkable life defined by family, service, determination, and an unwavering commitment to staying active and involved.

Born and raised on a potato farm in Posen, Michigan, Sophie moved to Detroit on her own in 1947 to work. She didn't know how to drive when she arrived, but she quickly figured it out—a reflection of the independent and adventurous spirit she carried throughout her life.

Sophie and her husband, Harry Zoller, settled in Belleville, where they raised their family and built a life surrounded by friends and community.

Sophie dedicated decades to volunteering and leadership. She was a longtime member of the Business and Professional Women's Club, Belleville Area Women's Club, and Ladies of the Lake. She was deeply involved with St. Anthony's Parish, serving as a room mother, Mother's Club member, Parish Council member, and committee volunteer.

Always active, Sophie enjoyed bowling, golf, walking, quilting, and community events.

She walked the Mackinac Bridge an impressive 19 times and remained involved in activities well into her later years.

Sophie's greatest joy was her family. She was preceded in death by her husband Harry Zoller and her siblings. She leaves behind her daughter Pamela (Todd) O'Neill four grandchildren: Harry(Nicole) O'Neill, Ryan (Tiffani) O'Neill, Austin O'Neill and Stephanie O'Neill as well as three great-grandchildren, and loving nieces and nephews who will carry forward her legacy of strength, service, and perseverance.

Sophie lived 101 years with purpose. She never stopped learning, participating, volunteering, or finding reasons to smile. Her legacy is one of a woman who showed that age was never a reason to stop living fully.

She will be deeply missed and lovingly remembered.

If desired in lieu of flowers donations to some of the places Sophie supported are appreciated and envelopes will be available at the funeral home and church. These are The Huron Valley Humane Society or the Van Buren Senior Center. Sophie supported the nonprofit Michigan Rosies.

A visitation is planned for Tuesday, September 1, 2026 from 4 to 8 p.m. at the David C. Brown Funeral Home, 460 E. Huron River Drive, Belleville. A Funeral Mass will take place on Wednesday, September 2, 2026, at St. Anthony Catholic Church 409 W. Columbia Ave, Belleville, at 11 a.m. with visitation an hour before Mass. Father Bryan Shackett will serve as celebrant. Burial will take place immediately following at Michigan Memorial Park in Flat Rock, Michigan. Please join the family for a luncheon to celebrate Sophie's amazing life.

## WORKSHOPS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

reactions practically.

Participant Lucille Evans said she found the workshop very thought-provoking, sharing that attendees were "provided with techniques to assist us in controlling our negative thought processes before we lose control." She added that the workshop has

helped her feel "grounded in emotional control" and that she will attend future Community Exchange workshops.

Roberson's next Community Exchange workshop will focus on Medicaid and making sure participants are aware of all services available to them. Though the date is not confirmed, he said to expect the next workshop on one of the later Saturdays in September at the BADL. Capacity is limited to 40 attendees, so early registration is encouraged. Check Eventbrite or Instagram for updates from Promoting Positive Images.

Additional resources from Marv Fox Jr. and Speak on Purpose can be found at [marvfoxjr.com](http://marvfoxjr.com).

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## Musings



**Janet Millard**  
Advertising Director

Well, temps are back in the 90's for the first week of school. I figure it was a little Karma since Van Buren Schools started prior to Labor Day. Let's not do that again. The kids need a full three months from the grind, and so do the teachers!!

~~~~~

Construction has finally started on the East side of the Denton/Liberty intersection and traffic sure does flow nicely with the blinking light. I noticed some have commented on Facebook that the light isn't

necessary at all. It might be a little difficult to turn North off Library though. Now that the West side is open, we have found, unfortunately, that the road prior to the bridge has really deteriorated. My little car is not happy with some of those big holes. Not sure how that is going to get fixed without keeping Denton closed for a longer time, but am hoping better minds prevail and they get it done quickly.

~~~~~

You do realize that the battle with keeping toxic waste out of Van Buren Township is not over yet, I hope. The Michigan Against Atomic Waste is having a bowling fundraiser at Lodge Lanes on Sept. 18 that is not only family friendly but a great

way to help in their battle to keep us safe. See their ad in today's paper.

~~~~~

The end has come for Music Lakeside. Fortunately summer weather is still holding but since school has already started, it is now time to get down to business. The last, but hardly the least performance, will be the Runnin' on the Blues Band. I am so glad BACA was able to reschedule the two bands that were rained out earlier in the season. Serving dinner will be Norman's Catering & Events. This will also be your last chance to play the 50/50, so bring all you have to make it the biggest pot of the summer.

Van Buren Twp DDA Preps for Holiday Events

Sarah Rigg
Managing Editor

The late summer weather may still be warm, but the Van Buren Downtown Development Authority (DDA) was thinking ahead to colder days at its Aug. 25 meeting.

During that meeting, the DDA board unanimously approved a sponsorship request from the Van Buren Community Center to advertise the Van Buren DDA logo on the 2026 Candy Loop Bags in the amount of \$2,500 to be paid from the DDA's public relations budget. The Candy Loop is the township's annual safe Trick or Treat event.

Looking into December, the Van Buren DDA also approved the purchase of an 18-foot Norway spruce from Matthews Tree Farm in Ida, Mich., to be cut and delivered and installed, for \$1,000, also from the

public relations budget. The company Money Green Lawn will receive \$5,100 for installation, maintenance, removal, and associated materials for the 2026 holiday lighting at Harris Park.

In other news from the Van Buren Township DDA, the directors:

Heard an update from DDA Executive Director Merrie Coburn that included information about the DDA's website, which is being migrated to a new host.

Approved a request from the Van Buren Township Fire Department for \$2,000 in support for their Firehouse Pancake Breakfast Event.

Approved meeting dates for 2027. All Van Buren DDA meetings are at 3 p.m. on the fourth Tuesday of each month.

Went into a closed session to discuss the potential purchase of property.

Things to do in the Belleville Area

■ **Thursday, Sept. 3** – Music Lakeside in Horizon Park, downtown Belleville, 7 p.m. Free concert on the lake. If it rains, it's in the Methodist Church. Rescheduled from earlier in the summer due to weather.

■ **Friday, Sept. 4** – Community Resource Day at the Belleville Area Library, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Register to vote, process documents, and get research help.

■ **Friday, Sept. 11** – 110 Stories with the Van Buren Community Players, 7:30 p.m., at the VBT Black Box Theater. Free. vbcinfo@vbtmi.gov

■ **Friday, Sept. 11 & Saturday, Sept. 12** – Rummage sale, 9 a.m.-6 p.m., VFW Post 78 in Romulus, 39270 W. Huron Dr. Proceeds support parking lot replacement for

the post. (Donations of gently-used items for the sale accepted Sept. 8 & 9 from 3-8 p.m.)

■ **Saturday, Sept. 12** – Willow Church in New Boston hosts a free gently used & clean clothing event to benefit anyone in the communities struggling to afford these items, 10 a.m.-2p.m. All are invited, no questions asked. Includes a free snack bar at the Willow Church Fellowship Hall. Clothing collection dates are 10 a.m. to noon each Sunday through Sept. 6. Anyone with questions may call 734-654-9020 or email farmerwilson@gmail.com.

■ **Saturday, Sept. 12, Sunday, Sept. 13, Friday, Sept. 18, Saturday, Sept. 19, and Sunday, Sept. 20** – The Sweet Delilah Swim Club with the Van Buren

Community Players, 7:30 p.m. evening performance, 2 p.m. matinee, at the VBT Black Box Theater.

■ **Monday, Sept. 14** – The Belleville Lakeside Singers start their Monday night practices for their concert on Sunday, Dec. 6. Weekly Sept. 14-Nov. 30, 7-9 p.m. at Faith Community Church, 894 E. Huron River Drive, Belleville.

■ **Monday, Sept. 14** – Farmers Market, 4-7:30 p.m., and Main Street Auto Show, 5-8 p.m. in downtown Belleville.

■ **Thursday, Sept. 17** – Zion Well instructors host sunset yoga at the Michigan Flight Museum's Roush Aeronautics Center, 7-8 p.m., \$35 per person. Repeats Oct. 15 and Nov. 19.

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New Butterfly Garden Debuts at Van Buren Park

Sarah Rigg
Managing Editor

An overgrown memorial at Van Buren Park has now been transformed into a butterfly garden thanks to the Van Buren Parks & Rec team and a youth program called R.E.A.L..

Van Buren Township's Interim Parks Superintendent Ryan Drotar is new to the role and working with the youth program, but felt the youth learned a lot from it.

"They felt like kids don't get to do service for the community very often," he said.

Drotar says youth in REAL typically do projects like maintaining lawns for someone elderly or who has been in the hospital, but he was looking for another type of project to do with them when he noticed how neglected the circular "Garden of Honor" memorial at Van Buren Park was.

He and park staff tore out the entire old garden, prepared a simple waterfall and a dirt patch, and let the young people create.

"They were so nervous because there was no blueprint," Drotar says. "But I kept telling them that nature doesn't have a blueprint. We'll give them dirt as the canvas and they can create."

The garden contains cone flowers, bee balm, and other plants attractive to native pollinators, along with small stones the kids painted. A solar panel powers the small waterfall.

Van Buren Township Parks and Rec-

reation posted to their social media when the project was complete saying, "Our R.E.A.L. youth rolled up their sleeves, got their hands dirty, and created something special for the entire community to enjoy — all while learning new skills, working as a team, and gaining real-world experience. Find the garden near the Veterans Garden of Honor and stop by to see their hard work in bloom."

Cooper Mears is one of the young people who worked on the garden project, during his third summer as part of R.E.A.L. It's a family affair, since both of his brothers have also been in R.E.A.L.

"Most of the time, we are visiting elderly people's homes," Mears says. "Helping them is a way to keep them in their homes, so they don't get evicted."

Mears says that planting the garden was a nice change.

"I wasn't clear on the whole concept of what we were doing, but it was very fun building the waterfall and planting the plants."

Mears is starting his freshman year at the University of Michigan but says he enjoyed the R.E.A.L. program so much, he might come back for another summer with the program, or he might try out for a paid seasonal job with the parks.

"I've already recommended the R.E.A.L. program to a couple of my friends, too," Mears said.



PHOTO | SARAH RIGG

Letters to the Editor

Support Janine Houle for Empty Van Buren Twp Trustee Seat

To the editor and Members of the Board of Trustees of Van Buren Township:

The Van Buren Board of Trustees is going to appoint someone to fill the seat vacated by the death of Trustee Frazier. I urge the Board to appoint Janine Houle. She has the right combination of education (Lawrence Institute), experience (newsletter editor for engineering group and as a grant writer), and common sense to make a valuable contribution.

When we moved to VBT in 2012 Janine welcomed us. As a dedicated member and officer of the Belleville Area Garden Club she convinced me to help with the Butterfly Garden at the VBT township location.

And then we noticed her everywhere. Even though she no longer had children in school she supported the dramatic and musical events in the middle schools and the high school. She also attended many local programs, including the plays and other activities in the Black Box Theatre.

She was at the Museum listening to lectures about the history of the lake and other subjects.

She was at meetings when the Board asked for input about various changes being considered.

She went to the library to hear from the Huron River Watershed Council. She learned about the various threats to the lake and urged changes to the fertilizing, herbicide, and pesticide treatments along the lake. Her posts on Facebook, where

she has over 200 followers, are often supportive of actions to help preserve nature. She has kayaked from the West DNR launch most of the way to the dam. And rented a kayak at the French Landing Park to view the dam up close.

Janine spends hours on the lake with her friends. She cares about the future of the lake. Now that the State of Michigan is making threatening overtures about the dam Janine would be a valuable resource.

Anyone who attends the music performances at Harris Park has seen Janine. She is often with people who came because she invited them to meet her there. She makes use of the Township Parks and is in a walking group. This gives her an opportunity to hear what people think.

She urges others to take advantage of all that the Township has to offer. Her Facebook serves as an unofficial listing of positive things about VBT and Belleville.

She listens to feedback from people in the community. If she agrees with the negative comments, she will contact the appropriate official and bring the matter to his/her attention. And appear at public hearings to give support to those with whom she agrees.

Janine is not originally from VBT but chose it. She is dedicated to keeping what is good and in ensuring the changes are not driven by short term gain but by a commitment to grow responsibly.

In the last election, as a write-in candidate, she received significant support, garnering over 1,100 votes.

I hope that you will appoint Janine Houle as a Trustee so that we may all benefit from her input.

Kathleen Walsh and Jack Ridenour
Van Buren Township

Upcoming Meetings

■ **Tuesday, Sept. 8** – Sumpter Township Board of Trustees, 6 p.m. Also, Belleville City Council, 6:30 p.m.

■ **Wednesday, Sept. 9** – Van Buren Township Planning Commission, 5:30 p.m.

■ **Thursday, Sept. 10** – Keystone Academy school board, 5 p.m. Also, Sumpter Township Planning Commission, 6 p.m. Also, Belleville Planning Commission, 6:30 p.m.

■ **Monday, Sept. 14** – Van Buren Public Schools Board of Education, 7 p.m., BHS Commons

■ **Tuesday, Sept. 15** – Van Buren Township Board of Trustees, 6 p.m., with 5 p.m. work/study as needed.

■ **Wednesday, Sept. 16** – Belleville DDA board meeting, 6 p.m.

■ **Monday, Sept. 21** – Belleville City Council, 6:30 p.m.; also, the Sumpter Township regular Parks & Recreation

meeting, 6 p.m.

■ **Tuesday, Sept. 22** – Sumpter Township Board of Trustees, 6 p.m. Also, Van Buren DDA board meeting, 3 p.m.

■ **Wednesday, Sept. 23** – Van Buren Township Planning Commission, 5:30 p.m.

■ **Monday, Sept. 28** – Van Buren Public Schools Board of Education, 7 p.m., BHS Commons

■ **Monday, Oct. 5** – Belleville City Council, 6:30 p.m.

■ **Tuesday, Oct. 6** – Van Buren Township Board of Trustees, 6 p.m., with 5 p.m. work/study as needed

■ **Thursday, Oct. 8** – Keystone Academy school board, 5 p.m. Also, Sumpter Township Planning Commission, 6 p.m. Also, Belleville Planning Commission, 6:30 p.m.



PHOTO COURTESY | YVETTE GORTECKI

Visitors to downtown Belleville may see teal ribbons wrapped around light poles along Main Street. Belleville resident Joe DeVera and a group of volunteers were hanging teal ribbons on Main Street for ovarian cancer awareness on Sunday, August 30. DeVera says his wife, Michelle was diagnosed in December of 2024 and finding ways to raise awareness has become a passion. "It's shocking to me that there is no good screening for this disease and by the time it's detected most women are in stage 3 or 4," DeVera says. Pictured L to R are Tracy Bach, Sue Jackson, Jennifer Amaya, Judy White, and Joe DeVera.

Sumpter Police Nab 4 in Home Invasion Incident Caught on FaceTime Call

On Thursday, Aug. 27, 2026, at 10:24 p.m., the Sumpter Township Police Department received a call reporting a home invasion in the 44000 block of Wear Rd. The caller, who was on a FaceTime call with the victims, reported witnessing her friends being ambushed and assaulted at their residence before the call was disconnected.

The investigation determined the assailants staked out the residence prior to the assault. Four males armed with rifles and handguns approached the residence under cover and concealment before ambushing the residents. One resident was pistol-whipped and handcuffed, as the assailants demanded the residents turn over any money, firearms, or valuables that they may have. The assault, however, was interrupted by officers’ arrival on scene, and the suspects fled from the house into the heavily wooded area.

With the assistance of numerous agencies, utilizing drones, K9 teams, and MSP Aviation, three suspects were initially taken into custody.

Responding to a call from a vigilant resident who observed a male exiting a wooded area on Wear and entering a waiting vehicle, Sumpter officers took the fourth and final suspect into custody at approximately 9:30 a.m. the next day.

Charges against the assailants will be sought through the Wayne County Prosecutor’s Office.

In addition to the Sumpter Police, assisting agencies included: Huron Township Police Department, Van Buren Police Department, Pittsfield Township Police Department, Milan Police Department, Monroe Police Department, Huron-Clinton Metropark Police, Washtenaw County Sheriff’s Office, and the Michigan State Police Canine Team, Emergency Services Team, and Aviation Unit.

Sumpter police are still accepting information related to the case. Anyone with information about the incident is encouraged to contact the Sumpter Township Police Department’s Detective Bureau at 734-461-4833 ext. 4.

Belleville Police Dispatch Log

Sunday, August 23:
0040 Suspicious person/veh/circumstance, Loza Ln
0809 Alarm intrusion, South St
1855 Suspicious person/veh/circumstance, Carmell St
2025 Assist fire dept, W Columbia Ave
2033 Suicidal person, Carmell St
2300 Suspicious person/veh/circumstance, Harbour Pointe Dr

Monday, August 24:
1632 Mental subj, Carmell St

Tuesday, August 25:
1424 Private property damage accident, Church St
1624 Parking complaint, Edison Ave
1704 Found property/child, W Huron River Dr/
Harbour Pointe Dr

Wednesday, August 26:
0320 Assist fire dept, W Columbia Ave
1230 Leaving the scene property damage accident, Sumpter Rd/Belle Villa Blvd
1720 Assist fire dept, Main St
1914 Assist other dept, Estrada

Thursday, August 27:
0953 Suspicious person/veh/circumstance, High St
1424 Assist fire dept, Menlo Park Dr
1508 Assist fire dept, Main St
1720 Assist fire dept, Menlo Park Dr
1757 Property damage accident, Main St/E Huron River Dr
1826 Parking complaint, Victorian Ln
1852 Assist fire dept, Main St

Friday, August 28:
0307 Suspicious person/veh/circumstance, High St
1540 Civil matter, Charles St
1637 Welfare check, South St
1931 Malicious destruction, Belle Villa Blvd
2136 Assist fire dept, N Aberdeen Ct
Saturday, August 29 (partial):
0220 Traffic offense, Sumpter Rd
1546 Welfare check, Henry St
2057 Welfare check, Wexford Ave

These logs also contained 56 traffic stops, 2 property checks, and no misc. complaints.

Van Buren Twp. Police Dispatch Log

Sunday, August 23:
0019 Property damage accident, Haggerty Rd/Riggs Rd
0130 Alarm intrusion, S I-94 Service Dr
0155 Suspicious person/veh/circumstance, Rawsonville Rd/Martz Rd
0206 911 welfare check, S I-94 Service Dr
0243 Shooting, Parkwood
0443 Suspicious person/veh/circumstance, Haggerty Rd

0748 Disorderly, N I-94 Service Dr
0902 Assist fire dept, Denton Rd
1146 Assist fire dept, Belleville Rd
1209 Property damage accident, Endicott St/McBride Ave
1228 Juvenile compl, Stonebridge Ct
1257 Juvenile compl, Quirk Rd
1353 Welfare check, Lake Point Blvd
1357 Trespassing, Van Buren St
1708 Disorderly, Belleville Rd
1715 Juvenile compl, Parkwood Dr
1921 Juvenile compl, Parkwood Dr
2003 Suspicious person/veh/circumstance, N I-94 Service Dr
2029 Family trouble, Endicott Ave
2040 Welfare check, E Archwood Dr
2114 Civil matter, Redwood Dr
2236 Noise complaint, E Archwood Dr
2304 Assist citizen, Belleville Rd
2341 Warrant arrest, Main Street

Monday, August 24:
0004 Assist other dept, Maple Dr
0031 Background investigation, Tyler Rd (missing time stamp) Repossession, Wheeler St
0319 Suspicious person/veh/circumstance, Denton Rd
0408 Assist other dept, S I-94 Service Dr (missing time stamp) Repossession, Spruce Ln
0749 Vehicle lockout, W Huron River Dr
0815 Unauthorized driving away of automobile, S I-94 Service Dr
0852 Ppo violation, Redwood Dr
0944 Property damage accident, Beck/Ecorse
0950 Unauthorized driving away of automobile, Peachtree Ln (missing time stamp) Abandoned auto, Ecorse Rd
1509 Bank detail-VB only, Belleville Bank
1437 Animal complaint, Martz Rd (missing time stamp) Private property impound, Belleville
1553 Welfare check, N I-94 Service Dr
1559 Missing person, Quirk Rd
1816 Property damage accident, Denton Rd/Michigan Ave (missing time stamp) Assist other dept, Rawsonville Rd/S I-94 Service Dr
1815 Domestic, E Archwood Dr
1907 Road hazard, Haggerty Rd/Ecorse Rd
1904 Civil matter, Edison Lk
2036 Animal complaint, E Archwood Dr
2058 Mental subj, Hannan Rd
2136 Civil matter, S I-94 Service Dr
2147 Suicidal person, Locust Dr
2201 Assist other dept, S I-275/Huron River Dr

Tuesday, August 25:
0007 Family trouble, S Ponderosa Trl
0100 Domestic, Sumpter Rd
0139 Family trouble, Locust Dr
0153 911 welfare check, Edison Lk
0158 Welfare check, Belleville Rd
0328 Warrant arrest, Rawsonville Rd (missing time stamp) Warrant arrest, Rawsonville Rd (missing time stamp) Bank detail-VB only, Belleville Bank
0859 Welfare check, N Bellridge Dr (missing time stamp) Fraud, Spruce Ln
0906 Assist fire dept, Belleville Rd
0908 Ordinance violation, Ecorse Rd

1006 Suicidal person, Quirk Rd
1041 Domestic, Beckley Rd
1049 Trespassing, Belleville
1056 Ordinance violation, Andover Dr/Fairfield Dr
1108 Civil matter, Cross St (missing time stamp) Private property impound, S Ponderosa Trl
1201 Civil matter, W Huron River Dr
1243 Road hazard, Belleville Rd/S I-94 Service Dr
1310 Welfare check, Belleville
1341 Road hazard, Haggerty Rd/E Huron River Dr
1524 Sexual assault, Belleville Rd
1533 Assist other dept, Sumpter Dr
1544 Welfare check, Fret Rd
1831 Larceny from auto, Belleville Rd
1837 Welfare check, Rolan Meadows Dr
1909 Alarm intrusion, Laguna Dr
1948 911 welfare check, Denton Rd
1952 Harassment call, Richard Run Dr
2226 Alarm intrusion, S I-94 Service Dr
2333 Welfare check, Belleville Rd

Wednesday, August 26:
0104 Civil matter, Park Estates Dr

0339 Assist other dept, Maple Dr
0810 Alarm intrusion, Michigan Ave
0830 Ordinance violation, Clayton Rd
0833 Ordinance violation, Quirk Rd
0910 Bank detail-VB only, Belleville Bank
0915 Assist citizen, Sheldon Rd/Van Born Rd
1032 Ordinance violation, Van Buren St
1121 Lost property/child, Belleville
1124 Ordinance violation, Van Buren St
1128 Domestic, S I-94 Service Dr
1142 Assist fire dept, Tyler Rd
1359 Ordinance violation, Belleville Rd (missing time stamp) Private property impound, Belleville Rd
1440 Welfare check, S Bellridge Dr
1539 Parking complaint, Belleville Rd
1546 Property damage accident, W Huron River Dr
1606 Neighbor troub, Bemis Rd
1709 Larceny from auto, Bellridge Apartments
1710 Suspicious person/veh/circumstance, Lauren Ct
1747 Road hazard, Tyler Rd/Haggerty Rd
2010 Disorderly, Haggerty Rd
2022 Suspicious person/veh/circumstance, Castell Blvd

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2032 Alarm intrusion, Belleville Rd

Thursday, August 27:

0032 Animal complaint, Brandi Dr
0237 Larceny from auto, N I-94 Service Dr
0246 Malicious destruction, N I-94 Service Dr
0352 Domestic, Maple Dr
0741 Alarm intrusion, Savage Rd
0848 911 welfare check, Samuel Barton Dr
0932 Ordinance violation, Ecorse Service B Dr
0958 Ordinance violation, Ecorse Rd
0958 Ordinance violation, Ecorse Rd
1126 Assist fire dept, Shagbark Ln
(missing time stamp) Warrant arrest, Livonia PD
1215 Suspicious person/veh/circumstance, Edison Lake Rd
1243 Welfare check, Michigan Ave/Denton Rd
1326 Bank detail-VB only, Belleville Bank
1339 Motorist assist, Belleville Rd/S I-94 Service Dr
1405 Alarm intrusion, Oak Ln
1433 Property damage accident, Michigan Service Dr/
Gilmore St
1444 Fraud, Belleville
1628 Civil matter, Mott
1656 Larceny, W Archwood Dr
(missing time stamp) Retail fraud, Belleville Rd
1712 Property damage accident, Morton Taylor Rd/
Ecorse Rd
1942 Suspicious person/veh/circumstance, Belleville Manor
2038 Suspicious person/veh/circumstance, McBride
2055 Suspicious person/veh/circumstance, E Adams
2159 Trespassing, Bemis Rd
2201 Suspicious person/veh/circumstance, Lancaster Dr
2234 Assist other dept, Wear
2320 Welfare check, S Ponderosa Trl
2341 911 welfare check, Jeannette Ave
(missing time stamp) Background investigation, Tyler Rd

Friday, August 28:

0258 Animal complaint, S I-94 Service Dr/Hannan Rd
(missing time stamp) Repossession, Lincoln St
1059 Trespassing, Village Center Dr
1115 Suspicious person/veh/circumstance, Pebble-

brook Dr
(missing time stamp) Retail fraud, Belleville Rd
1227 Property damage accident, N I-94 Service Dr/
Oak Ln
1230 Pp pda, Rawsonville
(missing time stamp) Private property impound,
Vernon St
1259 Civil matter, Parkwood Dr
1334 Civil matter, Parkwood Dr
1441 Suspicious person/veh/circumstance, Denton Rd
1450 Domestic, N I-94 Service Dr
(missing time stamp) Private property impound,
Belleville Rd
(missing time stamp) Harassment call, Village Green Ln
1654 Harassment call, Mott
1802 Property damage accident, Daisy Blvd/Sumpter Rd
1851 Property damage accident, Rawsonville Rd/W
Huron River Dr
1904 Suspicious person/veh/circumstance, Arthur St/
Van Buren St
1947 Welfare check, Oak Ln/N I-94 Service Dr
1948 Extreme risk protection order, E Archwood Dr
2009 Welfare check, Belleville Rd
2037 Road hazard, E I-94/Belleville
2128 Assist citizen, Ecorse/I-275
2206 Alarm intrusion, Belleville Rd
2339 Neighbor troub, N I-94 Service Dr
2359 Welfare check, Quirk Rd

Saturday, August 29 (partial):

0003 Domestic, Denton Rd
(missing time stamp) Repossession, S I-94 Service Dr
0102 Assist fire dept, Ecorse Rd
0117 911 welfare check, Buchanan St
0150 Juvenile compl, Parkwood Dr
(missing time stamp) Repossession, Waters Edge Ln
0355 Assist other dept, Maurice Dr
0425 Suspicious person/veh/circumstance, Belleville Rd
0730 Civil matter, S I-94 Service Dr
0856 Welfare check, S I-94 Service Dr
1023 Juvenile compl, Quirk Rd
1032 Larceny from auto, Hannan Rd
1121 Traffic offense, Belleville Lake

1135 Assist other dept, E Archwood Dr
(missing time stamp) Retail fraud, Belleville Rd
1254 Civil matter, Oak Blvd
1307 Animal complaint, Old Rawsonville Rd
1325 Suspicious person/veh/circumstance, Lohr Rd/
Bemis Rd
1326 Suspicious person/veh/circumstance, Tyler Rd
1351 Larceny, Roosevelt/Jefferson
1510 Welfare check, Republic Dr
1700 Assist other dept, Red Oak Dr
1717 911 welfare check, E I-94 Belleville Ramp/
Belleville Rd
1822 Retail fraud, Belleville Rd
1822 Found property/child, Old Michigan Rd
1832 Family trouble, Parkwood Dr
1906 Vehicle lockout, Belleville Rd
1907 Civil matter, Lighthouse Dr
2234 Suspicious person/veh/circumstance, S I-94
Service Dr/Harmony Ln
2252 Private property impound, Belleville Rd
2333 911 welfare check, S I-94 Service Dr
(missing time stamp) Civil matter, Locust Dr

These logs also contained 111 traffic stops and 1 property check.

Sumpter Police Dispatch Log

Sunday, August 23:

0028 Noise complaint, Greenmeadow Dr
0202 Citizen assist, Rawsonville Rd/Willis Rd
0355 MDOP, Oregon St
0600 Assist fire dept, Willow Rd
0915 Family trouble, Haggerty Rd
1028 Welfare check, Judd Rd
1115 Welfare check, Mulberry Dr
1115 Family trouble, Mulberry Dr
1247 Civil matter, Oregon St
1331 Civil matter, Wyoming St
1344 Suspicious person, Willow Rd
1718 Suspicious circumstance, Willow Rd
1845 Welfare check, Hawaii St
2043 Follow-up investigation, Oregon St

Monday, August 24:

0053 Family trouble, Willow Rd
0949 Assist fire dept, Willis Rd
1155 Assist fire dept, Clay Rd
1333 Civil matter, Washington St
1530 Suspicious circumstance, Kansas St
1557 Assist fire dept, Elwell Rd
1824 Harassment complaint, Greenmeadow Dr
1853 Fraud complaint, Willow Rd
1951 Assist fire dept, Hampshire Dr
2051 Suspicious circumstance, Haggerty Rd
2301 Found property, Rawsonville Rd/Bemis Rd
2332 911 hangup, Mulberry Dr

Tuesday, August 25:

0015 Civil matter, Mulberry Dr
0034 Assist fire dept, Mulberry Dr
0230 Suspicious person, Sherwood Rd
0901 Animal complaint, Willis Rd
1019 Mental health call, Carleton West Rd
1022 Civil matter, Washington St
1200 Traffic complaint/hazard, Delaware St
1333 Civil matter, Hawaii St
1347 Mental health call, Karr Rd
1505 Juvenile matter, Clark Rd
1509 Civil matter, Hawaii St
1553 Assist fire dept, Willis Rd
1824 Juvenile matter, Clark Rd
1841 Mental health call, Kansas
2010 Welfare check, Rawsonville Rd/Willis Rd
2022 Animal complaint, Willis Rd
2122 Citizen assist, Judd Rd
2128 Suspicious circumstance, Wear Rd

2141 Suspicious person, Karr Rd/Willis Rd
2154 Family trouble, Kansas
2210 Suspicious circumstance, Arizona St

Wednesday, August 26:

0018 Suspicious person, Sumpter Rd
0253 B&E report, Washington
0430 Alarm, Sherwood Rd
0539 Civil matter, Texas St
0830 Follow-up investigation, Sumpter Rd
0919 Assist fire dept, Sumpter Rd
0926 Suspicious circumstance, Hawaii St
1214 Civil matter, Delaware St
1338 Suspicious circumstance, Washington St
1424 Citizen assist, Redwood St
1525 Follow-up investigation, Willis Rd
1740 Subpoena service, Arizona St
1752 Follow-up investigation, Oregon St
1802 Juvenile matter, Brookview Dr
1846 Orv complaint, Willis Rd
1916 Follow-up investigation, Out of township
1955 Follow-up investigation, Sumpter Rd
2307 Mental health call, Judd Rd/Clark Rd
2322 Assist fire dept, Clark Rd/Judd Rd

Thursday, August 27:

0043 CSC investigation, Judd Rd
1141 Follow-up investigation, Willis Rd
1227 Follow-up investigation, Out of township
1250 Animal complaint, Arkona Rd
1424 Suspicious circumstance, Washington
1602 Property damage accident, Rawsonville Rd/
Willis Rd
1636 Property damage report, Harris Rd
1821 Alarm, Sumpter Rd
1958 Follow-up investigation, Out of township
2017 Suspicious circumstance, Rawsonville Rd
2152 911 hangup, Arizona St
2226 Home invasion, Wear Rd

Friday, August 28:

0727 Property damage accident, Bemis Rd
0814 Suspicious circumstance, Martinsville Rd
0826 Suspicious vehicle, Wear Rd
0925 Follow-up investigation, Wear Rd
0943 Citizen assist, Wear Rd
1002 Follow-up investigation, Sumpter Rd
1003 Family trouble, Martinsville Rd
1208 Harassment complaint, Rustic Ln
1336 Suspicious circumstance, Judd Rd
1341 911 hangup, Arizona St
1431 Suspicious circumstance, Sumpter Rd
1457 Follow-up investigation, Wear Rd
1513 Open burning, Karr Rd
1704 Follow-up investigation, Maple Dr
1726 Suspicious circumstance, Martinsville Rd
1752 Family trouble, Colorado
1820 Suspicious vehicle, Sumpter Rd
1850 Orv complaint, Willis Rd/Sherwood Rd
1856 Harassment complaint, Oregon St
1921 Family trouble, Creekside Dr
1955 911 hangup, Rustic Ln and Timberlane Dr
2359 Assist fire dept, Carleton West Rd

Saturday, August 29:

0045 Welfare check, Knollwood Dr
0209 911 hangup, Elwell Rd
0410 Noise complaint, Elwell Rd
1146 Welfare check, Rawsonville Rd
1305 Property damage accident, Sumpter Rd/Willis Rd
1435 Civil matter, Sumpter Rd
1552 Animal complaint, Greenmeadow Dr
1906 Assist fire dept, Huron Twp Jail
2125 911 hangup, Bemis Rd
2202 Neighbor dispute, Oregon

These logs also contained 34 traffic stops, 6 misc. details, and 97 property checks.

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