

**** News Briefs ******Snow Shoe Outing**

Be sure to join us at the Schoolhouse February 4 at 10:00 a.m. for some winter snowshoeing, or hiking if there isn't any snow. Bring your own beverage and dish to share at the potluck lunch. Spend time socializing with other members and, later, join in on a half-moonlight hike.

Election Results

Elections at the Fall Fun Day on Saturday, October 15, 2005 presented no surprises as the slate chosen by the nominating committee was elected without opposition. The list of board members can be found on page two.

E-mail Updates

If you're not receiving chapter event updates by e-mail but would like to, send your e-mail address to chapter secretary Roger Meyer at rogmey@aol.com. If you recently changed your e-mail address, you will not get updates until you let us know of the change. When Roger sends e-mail to an address and the e-mail is returned, the address is removed from our list. If you were getting e-mails and feel that your address was removed in error let Roger know so he can be sure your address is still on the list. Roger sent a test e-mail prior to this issue of Due North being delivered in the mail. If you didn't receive the test e-mail you might not be on the list.

Volunteer Hours

Trail Manager Paul Haan reports that Western Michigan Chapter members volunteered for 985.5 documented hours at trail work days in 2005 ... two people shy of 1,000 hours.

New Map

In December 2005 Tiffany Stram, NCTA GIS Coordinator, completed a very nice new map of the trail through Kent County and the lower part of Newaygo County. The map name is *76th Street to M-37* (Map MI-03). This new map features shaded relief and full color printing on waterproof and tear-resistant synthetic paper. They can be purchased at the Association's Trail Shop for \$4.50.



Teddy Keizer talks with Elaine and Jack Buege. PHOTOS BY DICK BOLTON

MI Gives Big Welcome

On October 27, 2005, the North Country Trail Association lead by Joan Young provided an enthusiastic welcome to Teddy 'Cave Dog' Keizer who was in the middle of his quest to complete the Duofold Hike 50 Challenge. The challenge was to hike 50 kilometers in all 50 states in less than 100 days. The start was on September 15th in Portland, Oregon, and the finish was on November 29th in Lake Placid, New York. The challenge was completed in a little less than 75 days.

In Michigan, seven people hiked the 50 kilometers with Cave Dog, three of them Western Michigan Chapter members. The seven were Andy Mytys, Paul Haan, Eric Doyle, Mike Dobies, Lynne Durham, Ben Pederson, and Roy Kranz. In all about 40 persons welcomed the Cave Dog and his team. You can find out more about the challenge at www.thecavedog.com.



Keizer spent time with all who joined him including belly rubs for Baily the Wonder Dog.



Joan 'Shark Dog' Young and Teddy 'Cave Dog' Keizer at the trailhead.



Western Michigan Chapter Mission

The major purpose of the Western Michigan Chapter of the North Country Trail Association is to promote the North Country National Scenic Trail and to build and maintain the Trail in the counties of Kent and Newaygo in the State of Michigan.

Board of Directors

- President** Chuck Vannette (616) 456-9725
cvann30643@aol.com
- Vice President** Jack Post (616) 682-1855
rensep@comcast.net
- Past President** Werner Veit (616) 897-5987
ww12@aol.com
- Secretary** Roger Meyer (616) 975-1937
rogmey@aol.com
- Treasurer** JoAnne Baron (616) 677-3598
driftwoodjb@msn.com
- Communications** Aaron Phipps (616) 897-0417
asphipp11@yahoo.com
- Events** Sharon Phipps (616) 897-0417
asphipp11@yahoo.com
- Membership** Stephanie Black (616) 675-7237
stephblk@iserv.net
- School House** Ginny Wunsch (231) 689-6876
wunschee@mail.riverview.net
- Trail Manager** Paul Haan (616) 363-3342
paulhaan@sbcglobal.net

Board Members at Large

- Len Baron (616) 677-3598
driftwoodjb@msn.com
- Max Boyd (616) 456-2756
maxboyd@mac.com
- Sharon Schaafmeyer (616) 636-8587
lkmeyer@iserv.net
- Shirley Schmidt (231) 689-6018
sschmidt4@triton.net
- Sharon Phipps (616) 897-0417
asphipp11@yahoo.com



due north is published quarterly

Materials for April edition due March 10, 2006. Please submit your news and dates in writing, limited to 400 words or less. Photo prints and electronic images are welcome. All material may be edited for content or space constraints.

Newsletter Co-Editors
Aaron and Sharon Phipps
(616) 897-0417
asphipp11@yahoo.com
3350 Pratt Lake Ave.
Lowell MI 49331



Gail Lowe hands some candy sticks to kids during the parade. She has a helping hand in her pack just in case she needs it. PHOTO BY AARON PHIPPS

Handing Out Joy

This was the chapter's third year passing out candy sticks to kids of all ages at the Lowell Santa Parade. While it is expected that kids receive the candy with pleasure, it is surprising how much the adults smile when we hand them a stick also. As we neared one child we overheard the parent say, "here comes the good candy." Seven of us passed out these simple sticks of joy and received a lot more in return. We welcome all who would like to join us at the next parade in December, membership is not a requirement.



A box of blue blaze candy sticks wrapped with info about the trail. PHOTO BY AARON PHIPPS



Bill and Karen Stellema and Maine, each veterans of the Santa parade in Lowell, decorate their truck with holiday wreaths before pulling the Chapter tool trailer. PHOTO BY MAX BOYD

This year, hikers could post a letter to Santa without stepping off the trail. We found Santa's mailbox on the trail along the river-walk near the showboat. PHOTO BY SHARON PHIPPS



Calvin Stram seemed to enjoy his first chapter holiday party. PHOTOS BY AARON PHIPPS



Chapter president Chuck Vannette recaps the year's accomplishments before Max's presentation.

Better Late Than Never

By Aaron Phipps

I guess that sums up the Holiday Party planning. We were late securing a location and subsequently there was little notice to prepare the membership for the wheres and whens. But as it turns out the party was a smashing success and not because we broke dishes.

We met on a snowy night at the Brann's Brass Button Catering Center for what proved to be a very cosy evening with trail friends. The fireplace was immediately very popular and many appetizers were consumed near its warmth. Dinner was very good with tossed salad, Italian pasta salad, quarter chicken, BBQ pork ribs, garlic mashed potatoes with gravy, broccoli with cheese sauce, rolls and butter, coffee and water. Yumm, lets do that again.

The evening wrapped with a sterling video slide presentation of photos of the years accomplishments compiled by Max Boyd. We parted for the holidays warmed by fire, good food, and even better friends.



The room was very nice, functional, and festive.



Stephanie Black once again prepared a holiday treat of homemade fancy breads for each dinner guest.



Sharon Phipps enjoyed the warmest and most popular feature of the room.



A photo of the dessert table to tempt you to join us next year.

Fall Fun Day

This crisp autumn day was perfect for our annual fun day and membership meeting. Twenty-eight individuals gathered at the White Cloud Schoolhouse for hiking, eating, visiting with fellow chapter members. The silent auction raised \$168 for the restoration of the schoolhouse. Passing the hat after dinner brought the total raised to \$380. Thanks to all who donated items to the auction and thanks also to those who purchased the items and donated funds to the schoolhouse.

PHOTOS BY AARON PHIPPS



Eric Piehl and Martha Lore share conversation with Tom Learmont.



We hiked along the trail rerouted



Grillmeister John Lawther got out of the kitchen but still had to endure the heat.



Many different appetizers tempt Byron Panasuk, left, and David Thinger.



Abigail Neitling-Haan, feeling a little can still enjoying a lunch break. This bright fall



Stephanie Black, master chef, out did herself yet again providing a meal that allows us to be thankful we have taste buds.



The Fall Fun Day Annual Photo — 2005



last September around a prairie restoration area.



Chuck Vannette takes care of the chapter business before we settle into the days activities of food, hikes, and fellowship.



nera shy, was eager to hit the trail while the adults were all day was a delight to share with friends.



Out on the trail Tom Learmont talks to Judy Williams and Mary Payne. Matt Hahnfeld and Nancy Olson enjoy fun conversation.



School House News

By Len Baron

We decided to replace the front porch as the last scheduled work event of the year. Our first task was to raise the sagging roof and remove the floor and substructure. Fortunately, this was accomplished quickly with the help of wrecking-bar expert, Dave Sheldon. Ginny Wunsch loaded her pickup with the waste and hauled it away. Then, Gene Schmidt took over with his high-tech equipment. We leveled the roof and poured new footings for the posts. The next day we installed the new roof supports, along with the new deck, using composite material requiring no maintenance. We will complete the railing in the spring. A School House work schedule for 2006 will be published in the April newsletter.



The silent auction to raise funds for the school-house restorations was held again this year and included the items above as well as the cuckoo clock at left.

Events Calendar

The information listed in this calendar is our best assessment of what we hope to accomplish. Some of the details are yet to be determined and things may change as dates get closer. It is always best to check our website for updates or reach the contact person for each event for any last minute changes. E-mail updates will be sent out as each event approaches.

February

4 Snowshoe Outing at the Schoolhouse, 10:00 a.m., continental breakfast provided, 11:00 a.m. snowshoe hike returning to the schoolhouse for a potluck lunch served about 2:00 p.m. Bring your own beverage and dish to share for the potluck. Spend time socializing with other members and join in later on a half-moonlight hike. Contact Sharon Phipps, asphipp11@yahoo.com, (616) 897-0417.

20 *Botanizing on the North Country Trail* slide show by Joan Young of plants encountered on the trail. Joan will also be autographing her new book. This is a free event, open to the public and is sponsored by the Michigan Botanical Club. The event begins at 7:45 pm, Matthaei Botanical Garden Ann Arbor, Michigan. For book and event details: www.booksleavingfootprints.com

March

25 We will have a booth at the Lowell Community Expo held at Lowell High School. 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., Door prizes, free admission, parking, entertainment, and much more. To help staff the booth contact Sharon Phipps, asphipp11@yahoo.com, (616) 897-0417. Additional information can be found at www.lowellexpo.org

April

1 Lowell State Game Area Connector, Day One. Building new trail in the Lowell State Game Area. Training and tools provided. Work morning through mid-afternoon. Bring lunch, gloves, sturdy boots and clothing appropriate to the weather. Contact Paul Haan at paulhaan@sbcglobal.com or (616) 363-3342 or Aaron Phipps at asphipp11@yahoo.com or (616) 897-0417 for meeting location and other details.

8 Lowell State Game Area Connector, Day Two. Continue building new trail in the

Lowell State Game Area. Work morning through mid-afternoon. Bring lunch, gloves, sturdy boots and clothing appropriate to the weather. Contact Paul Haan at paulhaan@sbcglobal.com or (616) 363-3342 or Aaron Phipps at asphipp11@yahoo.com or (616) 897-0417 for meeting location and other details.

22 Trail-Wide Clean-Up Day. Join members of the Western Michigan Chapter on Earth Day as we perform routine spring maintenance, clear out winter blow downs, and possibly build a small bridge from natural materials. Kent and Newaygo County locations. Training and tools provided. Dinner provided by Stephanie Black after trail work. Contact Paul Haan at paulhaan@sbcglobal.com or (616) 363-3342 for meeting location and other details.

May

20 Camp Swampy Connector. Building new trail between the White Cloud School House and Camp Swampy. Training and tools provided. Work morning through mid-afternoon. Bring lunch, gloves, sturdy boots and clothing appropriate to the weather. Contact Larry Meyer at lkmeier@iserv.net or (616) 636-8597 for meeting location and other details.

June

3 National Trails Day will be held at the Schoolhouse again this year with events and hikes. Contact Sharon Phipps, asphipp11@yahoo.com, (616) 897-0417 for more information on events. Those who would rather build trails than hike trails on National Trails Day can come help put the finishing touches on the new side trail through the Nature Conservancy's "Camp Swampy" property in Newaygo County. This work day will be structured especially for those new to trail work. No experience necessary. Training and tools provided. Bring lunch, gloves, sturdy boots and clothing appropriate to the weather. Contact Larry Meyer at lkmeier@iserv.net or (616) 636-8597 for meeting location and other details.

July

8 Lowell Health Fair

8-9 Mowing & More Weekend #1. Camp out with the trail crew from the Western Michigan Chapter in Newaygo County and help perform routine maintenance over two days. Relaxed

pace, fun and fellowship. Time for work and time for play. Contact Paul Haan at paulhaan@sbcglobal.com or (616) 363-3342 for meeting location and other details.

15-16 Mowing & More Weekend #2. Camp out with the trail crew from the Western Michigan Chapter in Newaygo County and help perform routine maintenance over two days. Relaxed pace, fun and fellowship. Time for work and time for play. Contact Larry Meyer at lkmeier@iserv.net or (616) 636-8597 for meeting location and other details.

September

30 Loda Lake Connector, Day One. Building new trail between Camp Swampy and Loda Lake. Training and tools provided. Work morning through mid-afternoon. Bring lunch, gloves, sturdy boots and clothing appropriate to the weather. Contact Larry Meyer at lkmeier@iserv.net or (616) 636-8597 for meeting location and other details.

October

14 Loda Lake Connector, Day Two. Building new trail between Camp Swampy and Loda Lake. Training and tools provided. Work morning through mid-afternoon. Bring lunch, gloves, sturdy boots and clothing appropriate to the weather. Contact Larry Meyer at lkmeier@iserv.net or (616) 636-8597 for meeting location and other details.

21 Fall Fun Day at the Schoolhouse, more details to be announced.

28 Loda Lake Connector, Day Three. Building new trail on the new Loda Lake loop. Training and tools provided. Work morning through mid-afternoon. Bring lunch, gloves, sturdy boots and clothing appropriate to the weather. Contact Larry Meyer at lkmeier@iserv.net or (616) 636-8597 for meeting location and other details.

November

4 Annual membership meeting with election of board members. Chapter board meeting to follow.

December

2 Lowell Santa Parade

5 Annual Holiday Party at Brann's Brass Button Catering Center, 4945 South Division, corner of 50th Street and Division Avenue in Wyoming. Join us again this year as we gather 'round the fire and enjoy a fine meal together. Contact Sharon Phipps, asphipp11@yahoo.com, (616) 897-0417.



PHOTO BY DICK BOLTON

Adopt-a-Trail

The Western Michigan Chapter has two sections of trail that will be open for adoption in 2006, and we've reached the end of our waiting list for adopters. Both sections of trail are in Newaygo County. The first section is 3.5 miles long and is a mix of open fields, pine plantation, hardwoods and hemlocks along a scenic creek. The second section is 5.5 miles long, is in the northern part of the county, and passes numerous scenic lakes. Both sections are foot travel only (no bikes).

Trail adopters are expected to conduct all routine maintenance three times a year (spring, summer, and fall) and to report on their efforts to the Trail Coordinator. Maintenance includes clipping overhanging brush, removing small blow downs, and maintaining blazng. Larger jobs, chain saw work and mowing should be reported to the Trail Coordinator for assistance. A full job description can be viewed online at www.northcountrytrail.org, click on the "Maintenance" icon.

For more information or to apply, contact Paul Haan at paulhaan@sbcglobal.net or (616) 363-3342.

Financial Balances

Western Michigan Chapter NCTA
As of November 30, 2005

General Operations	\$7,799.36
Schoolhouse Operations.....	\$2,024.29
Development Reserve.....	\$5,169.47

Total \$14,993.12



Joan begins her presentation as Ginny douses the lights. PHOTOS BY AARON PHIPPS

Sweaty Socks very enjoyable

Joan Young presented her slide program, *High Hopes Wearing Sweaty Socks*, about her personal hikes on the North Country National Scenic Trail to the chapter last November. If you missed Joan's presentation then you missed a real treat. Some segments of her program were humorous, some beautiful, and at the end contemplative and uplifting. She stirred the hiking bug in all of us.

Afterwards, Joan was selling and signing her recently released book; *North Country Cache: Adventures on a National Scenic Trail*. This is the first book by a hiker of the North Country National Scenic Trail. The price of Joan's book is \$26.45, tax included. To read more about Joan Young and *North Country Cache*, go to: www.booksleavingfootprints.com



Joan Young



Roger Meyer and Len Baron enjoy their conversation more than the mischievous actions of the photographer.



What would a chapter event be these days without Craisins?



Western Michigan Chapter
229 East Main Street
Lowell, MI 49331



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The Camp Swampy connector trail work day held October 8, 2005 brought out some unusual helpers. While it is not unusual to find chapter president Chuck Vannette helping, the tag-along helper shown above is quite unusual. Some of the joys of building trail are the unexpected encounters with nature that at any time can pull the corners of your mouth into a smile. Even the sticks walk along the North Country Trail. PHOTO BY DICK BOLTON



Located just 1.5 miles from the North Country National Scenic Trail, the school house makes an excellent base for groups out to discover this recreational treasure. It makes a great location for family reunions, church outings, or just a weekend get-away for family and friends. We can also offer assistance and advice on planning hikes as a part of your group's activities. For rental rates and facility descriptions, visit our web site:

www.northcountrytrail.org/wmi

To learn more about the historic White Cloud School House or to reserve your event, contact:

Ginny Wunsch
(231) 689-6876
wunschee@mail.riverview.net