



# *SPIRIT* of *The Lakes*

vol. 6 no. 10

JULY/AUGUST 2023

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# Donations will generate triple impact to restore Heron Creek Forest Preserve

Funds from a recent grant will be used to restore 100 acres at Heron Creek Forest Preserve in Lake Zurich.

The Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation awarded the Lake County Forest Preserves a Community Stewardship Challenge Grant. The funding will be awarded to the Preservation Foundation, the charitable partner of the Forest Preserves.

"We are thankful to receive this funding for a high-priority project," said Erika Stergos, executive director of the Preservation Foundation. "This grant is unique in that it will triple the impact of every gift made to the Preservation Foundation to help restore Heron Creek."

ICECF will contribute \$3 for every \$1 the Preservation Foundation receives, up to \$7,000. "This turns a \$25 donation into a \$100 impact," Stergos said. Volunteering during monthly workdays at Heron Creek can also bring in additional dollars. "When

we reach 400 volunteer hours, ICECF will provide us an additional \$4,000."

Donations will support removing invasive species at Heron Creek, a 242-acre preserve that features a playground and 2.5 miles of trails for hiking, biking and cross-country skiing. The grant will also aid collecting and replanting native seed and providing volunteers with tools and training.

Heron Creek offers rolling landscape of scenic woodlands, wetland and wide-open fields, creating exceptional wildlife habitat. "Considered a birdwatcher's paradise, more than 116 species of birds have been observed here, including a resident population of waterfowl and herons—the site's namesake," Stergos said. The Indian Creek basin, which flows through Heron Creek, is an Advanced Identification Wetland, the highest wetland classification in Lake County. To donate and learn more, visit [LCFPD.org/3to1](http://LCFPD.org/3to1).

The Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation will contribute \$3 for every \$1 donated to the Preservation Foundation, the charitable partner of the Forest Preserves. Funds will be used to restore 100 acres at Heron Creek Forest Preserve in Lake Zurich.

BRIAN PLUNKETT PHOTO *Spirit of the Lakes*

## THE SPIRIT

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# TAKE A TRIP BACK IN TIME



## VISIT THE **Renaissance Faire** THIS SUMMER

by **Sandra Landen Machaj**

CORRESPONDENT

**S**ummertime is when most people head outdoors to enjoy a variety of activities with family, friends and neighbors. At the top of the list might be a trip to the fair – that is the Renaissance Faire – where visitors can set the activities and stresses of everyday life aside and take a step back in time.

The Renaissance Faire can be found along Interstate 94, just north of the Illinois/Wisconsin border.

When visitors arrive they are immersed into a world where life in the 16th century was filled with music, dancing, food, along with a variety of period appropriate activities.

Step back in time to 1574 and enter the fictional town of Bristol, in Elizabethan England, where the town is astir waiting for

the Queen to arrive. Residents of the town are dressed in their best attire of the day, in outfits that best depict their station in life.

Julie McMillin, social media director for Bristol Renaissance Faire, said the dress of the time had definite rules to abide by when people were choosing their clothing to wear in public. Women were required to have head coverings and their dresses had to cover their ankles, although exposing some cleavage was not forbidden.

The upper-class men were very flamboyant, dressing in leggings and vibrant tunic-styled tops. They carried their swords for their own protection and the protection of their family members. Decorative hats were also frequently worn by the men.

As visitors approach the entrance to this fictional town, they begin to be pulled into the spirit of the Faire. From the time they pass through the main gates of the city and hear the music and laughter permeating the

air, they become immersed into the 16th century. Soon the stress of modern day life is forgotten and an old way of life becomes the reality, at least for a day.

Many of the visitors also wear the period dress to be fully immersed in the atmosphere. Those that don't have an Elizabethan outfit may choose to purchase one at one of the clothing stores onsite. However, unlike the dressmakers of the 16th century, these gowns are ready to wear and not made to order for the customer.

The shops are easy to find as the gowns are suspended in front of the business. Remember in the 16th century, the majority of people had not gone to school and learned to read, so shops often displayed pictures of the merchandise they carried in place of written signs.

In addition to purchasing a dress or leggings there are other items needed to complete a 16th-century outfit. Shops selling hats, jewelry, swords and other

Two women dressed to the nines enjoy an afternoon in the square at the Renaissance Faire taking in the music and dancing and perhaps some shopping.

SANDRA LANDEN MACHAJ *Spirit of the Lakes*

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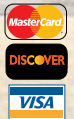
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**Saturday, July 22 | 7:30 p.m.**

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**Saturday, July 29 | 7:30 p.m.**

**BritBeat**

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accoutrements to complete the transition into a citizen of Bristol and a subject of the Queen in 1574 can be found throughout the streets of Bristol. Jewelry was as important to the women of the day as it is to many women today.

The Renaissance Faire is situated on 30 wooded acres so be prepared to meander down the streets and enjoying the music and dancing as well as an opportunity to join in.

## MEET THE QUEEN

Visitors should keep their eyes open for the parades that work their way through the grounds because the Queen's parade might be one of those coming through.

The Queen is sometimes very sneaky, popping in – and then quickly disappearing – in the crowd. Other times she may be headed to one of the many stages to watch performances, from musical presentations, dancing, singing, acrobatics, or even juggling acts.

And remember it's not uncommon for members of the audience to be pulled on stage and become part of the performance.

The best place to spot the Queen is at the Jousting Ring where the knights arrive seated on their favorite steed, well groomed, and wearing their colors, ready to demonstrate the ability to perform a number of difficult skills and to joust with one another hoping to be rewarded by the Queen.

Encouraged by the cheers of their visitors, the knights put on their best performance in a fight to be the last knight mounted on his steed, which will allow him to become the top knight of the Queen's Brigade.

Shows are held at various times throughout the day. Check the schedule for the day on arrival and try to arrive early for the performances as the grand stand seats fill up quickly. Note that there are a variety of performances that will be available throughout the day.

## FAIRE FOOD

As visitors meander through the streets of Bristol, they will find many food stands where they can purchase old-time cuisine. No one will go hungry even though there are no modern day fast food items here, only things like mushroom bangers (sausages), Shepherd's Pie and the traditional English fish and chips.

For those who've never had a Cornish pastie, this is the time to try one. They are meat-filled pies enjoyed as a meal originally by workers in Cornwall and are said to be the forerunner of the Polish pierogi and the Italian ravioli.

The most significant food item, or rather the one that is best known, is perhaps the giant turkey legs. Throughout the faire children especially will be seen holding their turkey leg as they wander around. It is often a question whether there are more children with turkey legs or

# Special weekends at the Faire

In addition to the traditional weekends of the Renaissance Faire, there are some special themed weekends that add a special twist to the events. They include:

## STEAMPUNK WEEKEND

JULY 15 AND 16

Steampunk is the time travel weekend. Dress in your hand made time travel attire of the century you prefer and join in on the Steampunk costume contest. Sign up at Guest Services by 2 p.m. Then just report to the Castle Keep Stage at the time on the schedule to strut your stuff and be eligible to win return tickets to the Faire.

Also, this weekend visit the Pop Up Absinthe Bars located at the Lord Mayor's Tavern and at the Queen's Indulgence Pub to experience this unique and famous Liquor.

## MARKET PLACE WEEKEND

JULY 22 AND 23

The weekend for shoppers. Just spend \$250 at the Faire's Village Marketplace and receive two tickets to return before Aug. 27. Purchases must be made on the same day this weekend and turned in at Guest Services before 7 p.m. Admission, food, beverages, rides, and games, and the Renaissance Collection Souvenir Shop excluded. Only two tickets per person allowed.

## PIRATE WEEKEND

AUG. 5 AND 6

Ahoy Mates! Dress in your best handmade Pirate or Sea Creature on the Castle Keep Stage at the designated time is weekend and sign in by 2 p.m. to be part of the Pirate's Contest.

Report to the Castle Keep Stage at the designated time to demonstrate your swagger for a chance to win free tickets.

## RENNCON

AUG. 12 AND 13

Join the biggest costume party of the year. Choose your costume from wherever you get your inspiration, comics fairy tales, sci fi, or any other genre. Then join up at the Maypole at 10:30 for the dance around the Maypole.

To enter the costume contest register by 2pm. All must be handmade not purchased. Then report to the Castle Keep at the time designated to be judged for a chance to win return tickets to the Faire.

## THE PUB CRAWL

The Pub Crawl is not on a special weekend but tickets to this event can be purchased for any weekend. The Pub Crawl includes four alcoholic drinks as you travel from Pub to Pub accompanied by your own bartender which allows you to skip the lines.

Along the way share in bodacious songs, jests, folk stories and riddles. There are more than 14 beers on tap from which to choose. No one under 21 years of age is permitted on the Pub Crawl.

Tickets are \$65. Half the tickets for the Pub Crawl are sold in advance on line, the other half are sold the day of the Pub Crawl at the Faire.

An admission ticket to the Faire must also be purchased.

Visitors are welcomed to the Renaissance Faire. Once through the main entrance to the fictional city of Bristol, they are immersed into the culture of that time.

SANDRA LANDEN MACHAJ *Spirit of the Lakes*

with ice cream. Both seem to be enjoyed.

There is generally a long line at the food stand offering cheese-filled fritters that have warm creamy cheesy centers. Obviously filled with cheese, they are a favorite here in Wisconsin.

A glass of Sarsaparilla, a favorite non-alcoholic beverage, also should be enjoyed, especially by those who haven't ever tasted it. This early beverage is said to have been the precursor of what today is known as root beer. Sarsaparilla has a hint of licorice flavor.

Guests at the fair often split orders of foods with members of their group so that more items can be sampled and enjoyed.

## HISTORY OF THE FAIRE

While the Renaissance Faire has been in existence at this site since 1989, the history of its beginning goes back to 1972 when Richard and Bonnie Shapiro founded an event which they named King Richard's Faire. It was held for four weekends each summer in northern Illinois, just south of the Illinois/Wisconsin border and was based on a fictitious King Richard.

King Richard's Faire was enjoyed by many and through the 1970s and 1980s continued to attract more visitors. They also added fantasy events including trolls, elves and wizard battles.

Renaissance Entertainment Corp. purchased the Faire in 1989 and moved it across the border to its present location where they renamed it Bristol Renaissance Faire.

The company replaced the mythical King Richard with the real monarch of 1574, Queen Elizabeth I of England. And here at this permanent site of the Renaissance Faire, time remains locked in the year 1574 to offer guests a glimpse of life as it was then.

The Faire is designed as a family activity and there are a variety of events geared especially for children. The children's section includes games, rides and activities that they will enjoy while also teaching them some of the skills they would have needed in the Renaissance days.

There likely will not be a moment when visitors aren't entertained during their time at the Faire. From the performances on the 16 stages spaced around the grounds to the activities in the streets, there's a lot of activity. Dancing, and singing, where performers get spectators to join in are something many guests seem to enjoy.

Bristol Renaissance Faire is off Interstate 94 at the Illinois/Wisconsin state line. Exit at Russell Road if traveling north from Illinois.

The 2023 Faire is open Saturdays and Sundays, July 8 through Labor Day, Sept. 4, from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Ticket are \$40 for adults and \$35 for seniors (older than 62) and military members with ID. Tickets for children 5 to 12 years of age are \$15. Children younger than 5 are admitted free.

Leave pets at home as they are not allowed on the grounds. Parking is available on site.

For more information, visit [www.renfair.com](http://www.renfair.com), call 847-395-7773, or find the faire on Facebook.



**top:** Visitors to the Renaissance Faire meander through the streets, some dressed in attire from that time.

**middle:** Members of the cast gather to have lunch together at the faire. **at right:** One of the Renaissance Faire knights takes a practice ride around the ring prior to a jousting tournament.

SANDRA LANDEN MACHAJ *Spirit of the Lakes*

# ENJOY THE *great outdoors*

## SUMMER FUN IN THE LAKE COUNTY FOREST PRESERVES

by **Sandra Landen Machaj**

CORRESPONDENT

Summer is a time to embrace all of the outdoor activities that can only be enjoyed in the warmer weather. With a variety of such activities available in the area, people are out and about taking in nature and having fun in the sun.

In the Chain O'Lakes region, the Lake County Forest Preserve District provides the opportunity for all to participate in a large variety of the many outdoor activities of their choosing.

### HIKING

A favorite activity and one that's associated with forest preserves is hiking. Traveling along the trails in the Lake County Forest Preserves can be a long or a short trip depending on which trail is chosen. With over 209 miles of trails, the choices up to the hikers.

The Des Plaines River Trail, the largest in the region, is a 31.4-mile gravel trail that spans almost the entire length of Lake County as it winds its way through 12 different forest preserves.

The crushed-gravel trails are considered to be accessible but may require help pushing wheelchairs if they are not

motorized. Other trails not considered to be accessible are those of short mowed grass or covered with wood chips.

Shorter trails are usually chosen for family walks, by those not in top shape or by people not ready to conquer large distances. The shorter trails give a variety of different options. Some of the area trails allow dogs, but they must be leashed and picked up after.

Visit the website [www.lcfpd.org](http://www.lcfpd.org) for maps and information on the trails including which are currently open.

### CYCLING

Bicycle riding is another healthy activity for summer and a great way to share outdoor time with family members or friends. Pack a lunch to enjoy and as with all forest preserve activities bring plenty of water to stay hydrated.

Bring bikes or go to the marina at Independence Grove Forest Preserve in Libertyville where bicycles may be rented. At this location there's a paved path that loops around the preserve and its 129-acre lake. The trail has mild inclines and is considered not too difficult to ride.

Again, visit the website for a list of trails where biking is allowed and to print a map

of the areas' trails open to biking.

### HORSEBACK RIDING

Horseback riding is allowed on 82 miles of trails but riders must bring their own horses. There are no horse rental areas in the forest preserves.

However there are several horse trailer parking areas available in the forest preserves.

Horseback riding comes with a cost in the preserves. A yearly permit may be purchased for \$50 a horse (up to three) for residents of the county and \$100 a horse (up to three) for nonresidents.

For those who are not ready to commit to a year's pass but want to come to the forest preserves and ride for a day or two, a daily pass for \$5 a day for residents and \$10 for nonresidents can be purchased. Passes need to be purchased in advance.

The forest preserves have rules for horseback riding on the trails which are shared with hikers and bikers. Most of the trails are shared although there are a few open to horses only.

Horses must stay to the right side of the trail, allow hikers and walkers the right of way, and notify others when passing from behind. For a complete list of rules for

Enjoying a day of fishing on Hastings Lake is a relaxing and peaceful way to enjoy the day and test your fishing skills.

PHOTO COURTESY OF TIM ELLIOTT *Spirit of the Lakes*



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PHOTO COURTESY OF KIM KARPELES *Spirit of the Lakes*

riders visit the horseback riding section on the website.

## FISHING

Who doesn't love to fish? Everyone from youngsters to adults seem to enjoy the thrill of catching fish. Fathers and father figures are especially known to enjoy teaching their children to fish and spending time with a fishing pole in hand.

The first thing needed to fish in the forest preserves is a valid Illinois Fishing License for those older than 16 years of age. These may be purchased at the marina at Independence Grove, from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, or at various sporting goods and bait shops.

Catch-and-release fishing is encouraged as it helps maintain a healthy fish population. Independence Grove and Nippersink only allow catch-and-release while other fishing areas allow anglers to keep their catch.

Information about fishing in the forest preserves is available on the website.

**above:** The savannah is a great place for a walk on a beautiful summer day. **at right:** Spend the day on the trails riding a horse – or as this gentleman is doing, ride a horse and walk a pony at the same time.

PHOTO COURTESY OF TIM ELLIOTT *Spirit of the Lakes*



Download and print the definitive guide for fishing in the Lake County Forest Preserves. The guide includes maps of 17 major fishing locations and includes the fish typically found there. Also included are tips from the forest preserve staff that will help make the fishing experience more enjoyable.

## GOLF

Golf is another favorite warm weather sport and there are three distinct courses available. Heading to the forest preserves is often a first choice for area golfers as it offers a variety of different types of courses that will fit with most golfing styles and ability.

Riding the River Trail on a bicycle is a favorite summer activity for many. The trail offers a smooth, gravel path that's bike friendly.

PHOTO COURTESY OF JASON CRISTINO *Spirit of the Lakes*



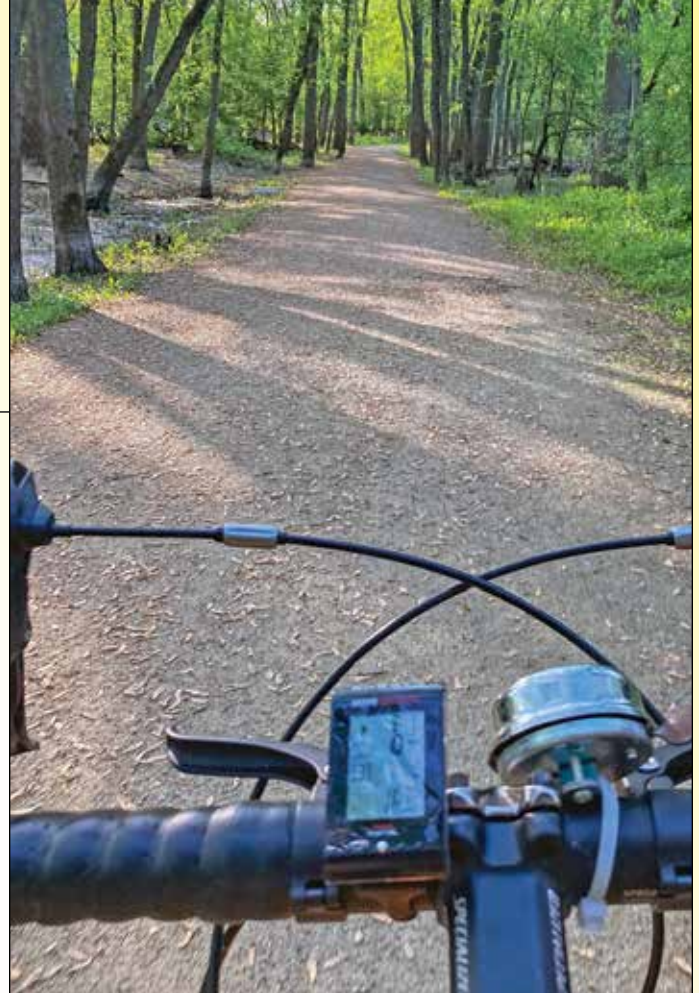
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The courses are also reasonably priced.

Brae Loch is an 18-hole, par-70 course lined with mature trees and sweeping vistas.

Countryside features two separate 18-hole courses – the Prairie Course and the Traditional Course. The Prairie Course has many areas of tall undulating prairie grass which protects a variety of protected plant and small animals according to the website.

The traditional course features smaller greens that require a precise approach, according to the website, in part because the greens are smaller and there is an opportunity for more birdies.

The third course is Thunderhawk, which is ranked as one of the best par-5 courses in the Midwest. The course was designed by legendary golf course architect Robert Trent Jones II.

All three courses are certified by the Audubon International Society for their environmental stewardship. Bookings can be made online.

## CLASSES

While there are numerous activities to enjoy in the forest preserves on their own, there are also a variety of classes and camp activities offered to teach participants more about nature and life in the forest preserves.

These classes vary in content and are designed for specific age groups. No exceptions can be made to the ages allowed in each of the programs, according to the Lake County Forest Preserves website. Each program is created to address the cognitive, emotional and physical abilities of the participants.

Fishing appears to be among the most popular of the summer programs. Each program consists of three hours a day of time spent fishing for three to five days. Even though they have five different fishing programs listed, all of them are full for this summer.

However, there are several other programs offered that could be of interest to children.

Boots of a Biologist is offered for children 9 to 11 years old who enjoy learning about animal and plant species found in the area. They do this as a hands-on investigation and group science activity.

To enjoy the Boots of a Biologist program, children need to like getting dirty as they dig into nature to discover how to find and evaluate different plants and animal species that make their home in the forest preserves. Registration is required and a participation fee is charged.

For younger children, the Nature Curiosity program is touted as a good introduction to nature. This program for children 4 to 5 years of age and introduces them to the wonders of nature while allowing them to use their imagination and creativity. The program requires an adult to be registered with them.

The next Nature Curiosity program will be held July 18 to July 20 from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. on those days. It takes place in Grant Woods and registration and fee payment are required.

Other classes are available through August. Check the website and find a fitting experience for your children.

An option for a fun evening is the Concerts In the Plaza events held on Tuesdays at 7:30 p.m. through Aug. 15. Bring chairs, relax and enjoy music while overlooking the lake. Those who wish to bring a picnic dinner are welcome to do so. Food is also available for purchase onsite. The music varies each week so check the website for who will be appearing that week. There is a \$10 charge for parking.

For more information, visit [www.lcfpd.org](http://www.lcfpd.org) or call 847-367-6640. The preserves can also be found on Facebook and Twitter.



As the sun sets, this fisherman casts his line from shore. It's often said that fish bite more at daybreak and sunset.

PHOTO COURTESY OF LAKE COUNTY FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT *Spirit of the Lakes*

# LIKE A **DUCK** TO **WATER**



## Waterskiing provides plenty of joy for area team

by **Sandra Landen Machaj**

CORRESPONDENT

Last year was a special year for the Aquanuts.

The award-winning waterski team that calls Lance Park in Twin Lakes home not only won the Wisconsin State Championship, but followed it up with a national title as well.

“After 50 years, it was a great time for the team to come together and the right time to skate out to victory,” said Mark Gurda, the announcer for the Aquanuts for the last 10 years. Six of the team members also went on to participate as members of Team USA internationally.

The members of the team who continued on to International Competition were Lake Geneva’s Kailey Koehler – a seven-time member of the USA Team – and her father,

Bob, one of the team’s boat drivers. The Koehlers were joined by team members Ethan Shuda (Twin Lakes), Craig Planton (Waterford), and siblings Cody and Kaila Coffey (Silver Lake).

Those team members did not get to celebrate the nationals’ win with their teammates. By the time the win was announced, they were already en route to the fifth International Waterski and Wakeboard Federation event on Lake Silver in Winter Haven, Florida.

The state title was the second consecutive win for the Aquanuts after not winning at the state level for 35 years. The team often placed well in competition and received awards for various individual and line activities, however.

Individual state titles last year were also earned by Karley Koehler and Ethan Shuda as most valuable female and male at the

state competition, respectively, while the team received the “Best in Jump” award.

“The team won handily in competition at the national competition,” added Gurda. “Making the perfect ending to a wonderful year for the team.”

The Aquanuts have come a long way since the team’s inception in the early 1970s, when it began as a small volunteer group with no home and no major sponsors. A small \$5 fee was charged to join, according to the team’s history on their website.

In order to be successful, a waterski team requires a strong support team, many boats with powerful motors and equally important competent drivers. The team also requires coaches, artistic directors, a sound system and announcers, costumes, gas for the boats and repairs when needed, and most important, a place to perform.

Members of the Aquanuts form a pyramid on Lake Mary in the 2023 season-opener at Lance Park Beach in the Village of Twin Lakes.

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The Aquanuts were fortunate to find a permanent home in their second year, when a swampy area at Lance Park was awarded for the team's use.

Over the years the area has been upgraded and now includes a five-row, terraced area for visitors to enjoy the show, refreshments, as well as indoor rest rooms. Big-name sponsors such like Dr. Pepper and many local marine vendors soon joined the Aquanuts, helping the team grow into the award-winning team that they are today. Local vendors have donated motors, boats and even skis to the team.

The Aquanuts put on a variety of inventive shows, introducing show themes that included the popular clowns, along with dance and ski routines.

In 1979, the ballet line was chosen best in competition in state, while the team took first place in that competition. They followed this win with a third-place finish in the national competition that same year.

The four-tier pyramid was introduced into their competition routines in the early 1980s.

As the team began this year's show season, there were some additional challenges. Each year, it becomes a different team as members move away, go off to college, or in some cases, turn professional. According to Gurda, this year's team is smaller. They often base a show on musicals and this year is no different, as it is loosely based on "Peter Pan."

Team members come from a large area. Even though the team is based in Twin Lakes, not all members live there. Some are from Wisconsin communities while others are from northern Illinois. Some of these water skiers may have family summer homes in the area, while others make the trip in regularly for team meetings, practices and performances.

Since team members begin to work on their routines long before they hit the water, they are coming to practice workouts often when there is still snow on the ground. The early practices are somewhat like a ballet rehearsal, perfecting a routine and learning to perform together in a ballet line or a pyramid on land before they are ready to take to the water.

Even when they are ready to hit the



**top:** The Aquanut's ballet line delivers a routine during the season-opener at Lance Park Beach in the Village of Twin Lakes. **above:** Maggie Kelly, of the Aquanuts, swivel skis along Lake Mary in front of a crowd of spectators in late May. **at left:** Will and Danielle Baezley perform a duet on Lake Mary during an early season performance at Lance Park Beach.

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water, it is not always fun. This spring was a good example of how the season in the Midwest can vary, as temperatures varied from unseasonably warm to unseasonably cold. The lake water in May is often not warm, nor are skiers looking at the water as a respite from the hot sun.

Even with sponsors, the team requires additional fundraisers, as they do not charge to see their summer performances. Tips are appreciated and the weekly donations go to help with the team's expenses. An addition – a yearly ad book – is published that highlights the team and is sold to raise money, both through ad sponsorships and

sales.

The Aquanuts began their performance schedule this year in late May and will continue to present shows open to the public at Lance Park, 55 Lance Dr., Twin Lakes, every Wednesday and Saturday at 6 p.m. No entry fee is charged to watch the show and free parking is available.

Working with Graceful Wakes, the Aquanuts assist in a day that provides an adaptive water ski event for both adults and children over the age of 6 years with disabilities. This year it was on July 11.

For more information about the team, visit [aquanutwatershows.com](http://aquanutwatershows.com).

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