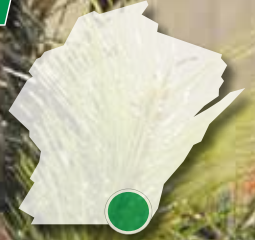




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ON THE COVER

Apple Barn Orchard & Winery, W6384 Sugar Creek Rd., Elkhorn, is hosting Christmas in the Country through Dec. 8. It features a variety of goods and gifts from local artisans as well as wine. Hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Fridays and Saturdays, and 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., Sundays.

HEIDI SCHULZ
Spirit of Geneva Lakes



IT'S COMIN' UP DECEMBER EVENTS

Through Dec. 29 **Santa Cruise**

Begin your magical journey with a walk through the Christmas Festival where you'll enjoy beautiful decorations and photo opportunities at Lake Geneva Cruise Line's Winter Harbor, 1 Leighty Dr., Williams Bay.

Kids can send their wish list to Santa and everyone can grab a festive drink from Santa's Bar to take on the boat. Then, ship off on a Christmas cruise, decked out in holiday lights and decorations, for an enchanting tour of holiday lights on the lake. Sneak a peek at the shoreline for Santa Claus himself and hear your child's name read from his "Nice List!"

Highlights

The Christmas Festival raffle gives you the chance to win amazing raffle prizes and benefits the 531 Fund (formerly Santa Cause), supporting local charities.

Cruises run through Dec. 29, and on Saturdays at 8:30 p.m., Adults-Only Santa Cruises are available.

For more information and tickets, visit cruiselakegeneva.com.

Through Jan. 7 **Winter Show and Artsy Holiday Market**

Inspire your holiday shopping with a visit to the Artsy Holiday Market at Gallery 223 in downtown Lake Geneva.

The Geneva Lake Arts Foundation is hosting its Winter Show and Artsy Holiday Market with a treasure trove of art-inspired, handmade items. The highlight of the show is the annual Holiday Art collection, featuring many affordable holiday gift items to give or to cherish.

This exhibit, featuring the work of talented local and regional artists, will be open through Jan. 7. Visitors will enjoy the wide variety of members' paintings, prints, wood working, photographs, jewelry, sculpture, cards and more. Other gift ideas include a membership in the Geneva Lake Arts Foundation or art classes.

Gallery 223 is at 223 Broad St., Lake Geneva.

6 A Night with Santa The Geneva Lakes YMCA, 203 S. Wells St., Lake Geneva, will host a Night with Santa on Friday, Dec. 6 from 5:30 to 7 p.m.

This free community event will feature holiday crafts, a hot chocolate bar and pictures with Santa. Toy donations will be accepted.

7 49th Annual Lake Geneva Electric Christmas Parade

Join a joyful celebration of the season as this colorful, light-filled parade moves down Broad and Main streets in downtown Lake Geneva. Spectators of all ages will enjoy magical floats and more creative displays.

The parade steps off at 5 p.m., Saturday, Dec. 7. The route is along Broad Street from Williams and Marshal streets to Main Street.

7 Cookie Walk The First Congregational UCC, 715 Wisconsin St., Lake Geneva, will host its annual Cookie Walk on Saturday, Dec. 7 from 9 a.m. until the cookies run out (doors open at 8:30 a.m., sales begin at 9.) They are sold by the pound and cash and credit cards will be accepted. This year's proceeds will be shared with the Lake Geneva Food Pantry.

7, 11 Holiday Card Making Join the Lake Geneva Public Library staff for an informal cardmaking workshop from 10 a.m. to noon, Saturday, Dec. 7, and from 5 to 7 p.m., Wednesday, Dec. 11. The library is at 918 W. Main St., Lake Geneva.

11, 12 The Edge Effect Acapella Christmas Get into the holiday spirit with The Edge Effect at The Belfry Music Theatre, 3601 Highway 67, Delavan.

Join Danny Alan, Troy Dolendo, Sean Gerrity, John Gibson II, and Karl Hudson Dec. 11 or Dec. 12 as they bring their exceptional vocal talents to the stage in a festive performance. Their Christmas show will feature a dynamic mix of holiday classics, reimagined with their unique style and flair.

Perfect for all ages, this holiday event promises to be an unforgettable celebration of music and the season.

The venue opens at 6 p.m., doors open at 6:30 p.m. and the concert begins at 7 p.m. Tickets are \$68 to \$86. Handicapped seating is available. For more information and tickets, visit belfrymusictheatre.com.

13 It's a Wonderful Life: Live Radio

Play On Friday, Dec. 13 at 8 p.m. (doors open at 7 p.m.,) Geneva Stage, 244 Broad St., Lake Geneva will host Silverstage Theatre Company's debut production that will bring guest back to an era of family ideals, classical storytelling, and pure 1940s glamour and charm.

Set in the inner-workings of a 1940s radio station, get ready to be transported back in time and become our special live studio audience for this extraordinary staged radio play, with your favorite characters, George Bailey, Mary Hatch, Clarence the Angel, Mr. Potter, Uncle Billy, Little Zuzu, and many more, all performed by the Silverstage radio ensemble of Derek L Cook, Carly Mulert, Jake Heelein, Zero Snook, and Artistic Director Hunter Johnson.

Tickets are \$35-\$45. For more information and tickets, visit genevastage.com.

The calendar of events is compiled from a variety of sources including area chambers of commerce and visitor bureaus and contains events available as of press time.

Dates and times may change, and events may be canceled. Please verify details and locations prior to making plans.

THE SPIRIT

IS A PUBLICATION OF



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214 Potter Rd, Elkhorn - Rare opportunity First floor condo overlooking beautiful Evergreen Golf Course. This 2 BD, 2 Bath unit overlooks the green on the 3rd hole of the South Course. Move in ready featuring open concept with kitchen with island/bar with granite tops and Black stainless steel appliances with dinette area adjacent to the living room with gas fireplace and 80" flat screen leading into the sun-room bring in ton's of natural light and access to cement patio. Master BD ensuite with double vanity, soaking tub and walk-in shower plus walk-in closet. 2nd bedroom off foyer with shared full bath and large laundry room. Huge 2.5 attached garage with built in shelving with ample room for 2 cars and your golf cart. Minutes to Elkhorn and easy access to I-43, area lakes and Kettle Moraine trail head. **\$399,700**



N8367 Hillburn Mill Rd, East Troy - The ultimate nature enthusiast property on a very private 5.73 acres, amongst majestic oak trees. You'll be impressed by this 5 BD, 3.5 bath, 2 story with finished walk-out. As you enter the foyer off the covered porch you're greeted by the LR with vaulted ceiling gas fireplace adjacent to Kitch with wood floors, large breakfast bar, granite tops and new Bosch appliances WiFi capable. Off the kitch you have a dinette with deck access, formal dining room plus den off dinette. Master BD ensuite with double vanity, soaking tub plus glass shower and walk-in closet. 2nd Bd with Vaulted ceiling. Upstairs offers a loft 3rd BD with sitting area, jack and jill bath & 4th Bd. Family room walk-out to cement patio, 5th Bd and ample storage. Walking trails throughout the woods and natural spring pond. **\$1,075,700**



W5712 North Dr, Elkhorn - Completely remodeled in 2020 with expansive views down Middle Lake on 92' of frontage you'll find this 3 Bd, 2 Bath Ranch with walk-out lower level to huge lakeside patio. As you enter you're greeted by the lake with vaulted ceilings throughout the main level and wall of sliding glass doors leading to wrap around deck. Kitchen boasting of Quartz counter tops and backsplash, Kitchen Aid SS appl, Quartz waterfall island with bar stool seating adjoining LR, and dinette. Bd and full bath with heated floors and clear glass shower complete the main level. As you enter the LL you have a beverage center with Quartz top, beverage refrig and Ice maker. Also, you'll find 2nd & 3rd BD, full bath with glass shower and laundry closet. Two 9x12 sheds one lakeside with lakeside yard leading to the pier. **\$1,099,700**



W5742 North Dr, Elkhorn - Why go through the hassle of building when this 2023 custom built 4 Plus Bedroom, 3.5 bath two story is ready to enjoy. Situated on 75' of Middle lake frontage you'll find this open concept main level with wall of windows lakeside. Inside Kitchen offers everything the discriminating chef would demand and ultimate living and dining space with gas fireplace, custom wet-bar and deck access. Master Bdrm ensuite with breathtaking lake views offering double vanity, large tile shower and ample walk-in closet. Family room walk-out with gas fireplace, full bath, work-out room or Bdrm, 4th bdrm and screened porch. Kitchen also features large island/breakfast bar with Delkton countertops and Zline Autograph appliances. Outside fireplace and level lakefront yard by pier and storage shed. **\$1,659,700**



33706 Fern Dr, Burlington - Located on a corner lot you'll find this 3 BD, 2.5 Bath 1.5 Story Bohner's lake access home. Inside features include open concept with eat-in kitchen with dinette with sliding glass door to private patio with hot tub. Kitch is open to the LR, Master BD suite on 2nd floor with full bath and tile shower, large closet and sliding glass door to balcony. Family room also on 2nd floor with sliding glass door to balcony. Finished 34 x 24 Man cave garage with 10ft ceilings insulated and heated with 1/2 bath, bar and access to 14 x 20 cement patio. On the main level there's 2nd and 3rd bedroom, full bath and laundry room. Large storage shed and cement driveway. Short drive to lakefront park and beach with picnic area. Must See make your appointment today! **\$379,700**



W5357 Lauderdale Dr, Elkhorn - The iconic Lauderdale Lakes home, "The Boathouse" on Deakin Isle is situated on 192' of premier shoreline. Rebuilt in 2015 to its original 1915 Jazz Age glory, this 4 bedroom, 3.5 bath home is bursting with historical details and architectural styles. Ballroom features 1,200 sq ft with original hard rock maple floors, unique hanging Meiji era Japanese lanterns, with the original Opium Den prepped for a future hidden wine cellar. All 3 Lauderdale Lakes are visible from numerous vantage points throughout the four levels. Kitchen features custom marble countertops, farm sink, Wolf & Sub-Zero appliances. Master BR ensuite with luxury freestanding tub, full steam room, and private deck with fireplace. A finished swim basin provides access to the marquee wet boathouse w/ underwater lighting. **\$4,499,700**

463409

Making it shine

World's Tallest Glass Tree a seasonal sight like no other

by **Sandra Landen Machaj**
CORRESPONDENT

In early December, the World's Tallest Glass Tree begins to take form on the grounds of Yerkes Observatory in Williams Bay.

The tree is the creation of glass artist Jason Mack and his longtime friend and producer Rob Elliott.

"The tree itself is 31 feet tall, with a 5-foot star added to the top, making it a total of 36 feet tall," Elliott said. "The first tree we developed was in 2009 and was only 12 feet tall."

Four years ago, they approached Yerkes with the idea of constructing the World's Tallest Glass Tree on the ground during the holiday season but had no idea what kind of a response they would receive.

"They were kind of overwhelmed at the idea, but in the end, they allowed us to build the tree there," Mack explains in a video.

That idea was the beginning of what



Glass artist Jason Mack works on the upper portion of the tree after many visitors have done their part in building the bottom half of it. **below:** The tree is officially complete when the star has been placed on the top.

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is now a favorite holiday event for many. The tree is constructed on site – by melting glass over the frame during a period of two weekends, bringing visitors to see it during its various stages.

A holiday market is part of the event, and a variety of craft activities available, including basic glass blowing, adding glass to the tree and woodworking as well as handmade crafts available for sale. This market will surely be enjoyed by visitors and perhaps some early Christmas shopping will be accomplished. Hand blown glass items created by Mack will also be available for purchase.

The process

The tree begins with a supporting steel frame that consists of three separate 10-foot poles in the center and a stand that raises it another foot. The star was added in 2021 and was 4-feet in diameter. Today, it's 5-feet, meaning this year's tree will be a grand total of 36 feet tall.

Before the tree can be crafted, glass must be collected. The entire tree is made from recycled glass – mostly green and clear – that is collected beginning in November in numerous locations in the Lake Geneva and Williams Bay areas. Bins are set out for members of the community to donate their green and clear glass pieces, which are then used to build the tree.

A variety of glass is used, everything from baby food jars to wine bottles. Each piece has a story of its own, although that story is only known to whoever added that piece of glass to the collection.

Once collected, the process of melting the glass begins.

“The glass is melted together in Jason’s portable furnace here on site” Elliott explained. “Then, when the glass reaches the right temperature and it has melted together, it is applied to the tree by drizzling it on.”

About 1 1/2 pounds of glass are melted at one time and added to the tree. By the time it’s complete, about 3,000 pounds of glass will have been applied. Visitors can purchase tickets to participate in adding glass to the tree or to create small ornaments or other glass items in the gift shops.

Many people visit the tree several times during its construction so they can see the changes as the process continues. It’s on the final day – after the tree has been completely covered with the molten glass – that the star is lifted to the top. Many



top: Under the direction of Santa’s helper, a child does his part to build the glass tree.
middle: Jason Mack and Rob Elliott observe while this young man adds the melted glass.
at right: Mack and Elliot take questions about the glass tree building process from a group of young visitors.

COURTESY WORLDS TALLEST GLASS TREE Spirit of Geneva Lakes



are there to take in that moment of the completed World's Tallest Glass Tree.

Lifelong Friendship

Mack and Elliot are lifelong friends, growing up in Downers Grove, Illinois, and attending college in Bloomington, Illinois.

It was while in college that they began to create glass objects.

"Most of our ideas came from just hanging out and talking," Elliott said. "We took these ideas and began to create and sold some pieces in an area under the bridge in Bloomington. It was here that we created the first glass tree, the 12-foot one."

Collecting glass was easy, as Elliot worked in a bar and was known for taking the empty bottles home to use in their glass projects.

The two have carried on their friendship over the years, and now not only do they remain friends, but their families are friends as well. Though Elliot moved to Wisconsin and Mack remained in Illinois, their friendship as well as their ability to work together has stayed strong.

They created a non-profit group that focused on recycling because they enjoy teaching about glass and its properties while also encouraging recycling. It's possible to recycle the crushed glass, making it into a new object up to a million times, according to Elliot.

"Our grand vision is to create not just a tree but a forest with trees and animals from recycled glass," he said.

The ideal venue

While it is named the World's Tallest Glass Tree, some visitors will likely refer to it as the Tallest Glass Christmas Tree, especially since it has a 5-foot star on the top. It is also known as the Tree of Inspiration.

While many come to see the tree and watch it being created, others visit because it's on the grounds of Yerkes Observatory. The view of the tree with the Yerkes Rotunda in the background is an impressive sight.

"Yerkes Observatory is the perfect place for the World's Tallest Glass Tree," Walt Chadick, Director of Programs at Yerkes said. "With Yerkes as the host, art, the history of glass, and astronomy can all be studied together."

Yerkes opened in 1897 with the largest refracting telescope in the world and was run by the University of Chicago until 2018. With beautiful grounds designed by Frederick Law Olmsted's firm, it remains beautiful inside and out. It was the place where many astronomy scientists studied.

Today, it is owned by Yerkes Future Foundation who are working to restore the Observatory. A portion of the money raised during this festival is used to promote arts and science programming at Yerkes.

After completion of the festival, the tree



top: A market on site offers a variety of refreshments and handmade craft items.

middle: Building the metal frame is a process in and of itself. The frame is what the molten glass is drizzled on to when creating the tree. **above:** Visitors arrive at Yerkes via a trolley that transports them from the parking lot at the high school and back once they're finished. Due to the number of visitors, there is not ample space to park on site.

COURTESY WORLDS TALLEST GLASS TREE *Spirit of Geneva Lakes*

will be taken down. All the glass will be reclaimed and collected. Taking down the tree and being certain to reclaim the glass is also a very time-consuming job.

"The collected glass will be made into other objects by Jason, especially into small glass trees that look like the largest tree but on a much smaller scale," Elliott said. "These small trees will be a reminder of the beauty of the glass tree and are for sale in the marketplace."

See it for yourself

Come for the beauty of the tree, enjoy shopping in the marketplace and take advantage of the food trucks available on site.

The World's Largest Glass Tree attracts many visitors, so many that parking is not available at Yerkes. Instead, visitors park at Williams Bay High School, 500 W. Geneva St., Williams Bay. From there, a free, festive, heated trolley transports visitors to the site of the World's Largest Glass Tree and returns them to the parking lot when they are finished.

"This year, we are hoping to change the color of the tree a bit. It has always been a true green, and we are going to try to make it a bit of a blue-green color," Elliott said.

The tree and craft items can be visited on two separate weekends – Dec. 6-8 and Dec. 13-15. The hours on Fridays are 4 p.m. to 7 p.m., and on Saturdays and Sundays, noon to 7 p.m.

Tickets can be purchased at www.worldstallestglasstree.com. General admission tickets are \$5 for those 9 years of age and above. Children younger than 9 are free.

To try some additional glass activities, consider adding glass to the tree for \$10. Other options include a beginner's glass workshop is \$40, which allows participants to create their own ornament, and a beginner's glass blowing workshop for \$50.

General admission tickets can be also purchased on site at admission, but to avoid waiting in line it is recommended they be purchased in advance. Glass activity tickets are subject to availability.

Yerkes tour tickets can be purchased online at www.yerkesobservatory.org. The Yerkes tour is a 25-minute guided tour that showcases the interior of the architectural masterpiece from the rotunda, where the world's largest refractory telescope is in place. Tickets are \$20 for adults. Children ages 7 years to 17 years old are \$10, and children 1 to 6 are free.

If you haven't been to this holiday festivity, this is the year to attend. It will become one of your favorite holiday activities for you and your family or friends.

A special Christmas tree walk

by Sandra
Linden Machaj
CORRESPONDENT

Those looking to see a display of beautifully decorated Christmas trees are encouraged to take a walk down the indoor Main Street of Times Past at the Geneva Lake Museum.

Uniquely decorated Christmas trees will line the street for the 6th Parade of Trees event, which has grown in the number of trees each year.

"This year, 44 trees will be included in the display, an increase of four trees from last year," said Sonja Akright, the new Co-Director of Administration at the Museum.

Each tree is sponsored by a local business or non-profit organization who also choose the design for the tree. The trees range from somewhat traditional decorations to a variety of designs. Some incorporate Christmas stories or activities while others represent the business sponsoring it.

Each tree is created by members of the sponsoring group as they gather at the museum with their tree and materials to turn it into part of the holiday spirit on display along the Museum's Main Street.

The sponsors work hard with each group trying to create the most beautiful and most unique tree.

Not only are guests impressed by the trees but it's also an ideal way to get into the holiday spirit. And adding to the fun, each visitor is given a ballot to vote for their favorite tree, which will likely take more than one trip through in an effort to narrow the choice to just one tree.

Last year's People's Choice winner was Yerkes Observatory, which created a tree representing the Universe.

The Parade of Trees is open to the public through Jan. 5. Contact the museum for days and hours the display will be open. The Geneva Lakes Museum is at 255 Mill St., Lake Geneva and the phone number is 262-248-6060.



top: The Lake Geneva Fire Department sponsored tree was a remembrance of the 9-11-01 terrorist attacks, which took the lives of hundreds of first responders. **above:** Local radio station WLKG envisioned their tree as a favorite character for many, Mickey Mouse.

below: During the Parade of Trees at the Geneva Lake Museum, a variety of designs and decorations can be viewed.

COURTESY GENEVA LAKE MUSEUM
Spirit of Geneva Lakes





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A love and appreciation for music

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by **Sandra Landen Machaj**
CORRESPONDENT

When George Breber, Sr. opened a music store in downtown Elkhorn in 1945, he was probably not certain it would continue to grow and evolve over the years and furthermore, remain in the family and be owned and run by his grandson, Bart Breber, in 2024. The store, originally located on Walworth Street, included selling long playing records along with musical instruments.

“At one point, they sold television sets, those early black and white models with tiny screens,” shared Bart Breber, third generation owner of Breber Music. “We have come a long way since 1945, when my grandfather opened his business in Elkhorn and much has changed.”

What has not changed is the quality of the merchandise they sell, and the service given to their customers. According to Bart, they only carry name brand quality instruments.

Today, the business has changed a bit.



top: Bart and Amy Breber are the current generation of the family to run Breber Music, which is at 801 E. Geneva, Elkhorn.

at right: Drums require a bit more space in the home than most instruments, as this display in the store shows.

SANDRA LANDEN MACHAJ *Spirit of Geneva Lakes*



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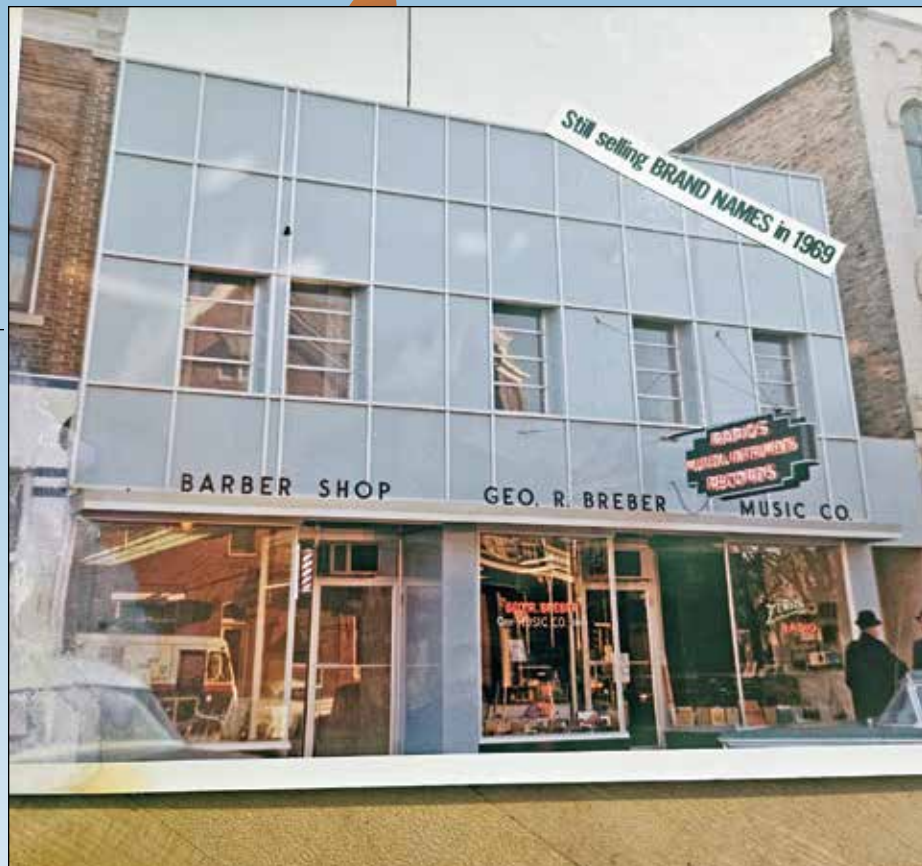
at right: In the early days as a business, Breber Music was then known as George R. Breber Music Co. They sold radios, television sets and records in addition to musical instruments. **below:** Breber Music has a variety of instruments for sale and offers instrument repair as well as music lessons.

SANDRA LANDEN MACHAJ *Spirit of Geneva Lakes*

They no longer sell records, radios or televisions. Instead, the company's focus centers around musical instruments and working with school music programs, including bands, orchestras and choirs.

"We work with a number of schools in both southern Wisconsin and in northern Illinois. We work with their bands, orchestras and choirs, supplying and caring for their instruments and supplying their music and other supplies needed," Bart shared. "I am on the road four days a week, checking in with the schools we service. Each school requires a visit at least once a week," he explained.

Many of the students who do not have their own instruments rent them from Breber. There are many differences in the rental programs at Breber compared to





those offered by others, according to Bart. "We only rent quality instruments, brands that are known for quality," said Breber. "Our rental program is also unique in that the entire rental amount gets applied to the instrument if they choose to purchase it. If they rent it for a time, they end up owning it without paying any additional amount."

Quality matters

One of the mistakes many parents make when their child expresses an interest in learning to play an instrument is to go and purchase a cheaply constructed one. Many of these off-brand instruments that are often sold online do not have good sound, and when they break down, they often cannot be repaired. This can lead to the student quickly losing interest in the program, along with the parent who must provide another instrument. By renting a

good quality instrument, the child is more likely to be successful in their music journey.

Over the years, Breber Music has been at home in three different locations in Elkhorn. In 2000, they moved to the current location, 801 E. Geneva St., which greatly increased their space. The current store features a large showroom, instrument repair area, and private rooms for lessons. They can also accommodate more instruments on display, many of which are hanging from the walls, leaving room on the floor for those that require more floor space. This includes drum sets, keyboards, and pianos, which do require space in the store and in the home and is something parents should keep in mind.

There is not one instrument that is always preferred over others. Sometimes certain instruments become more popular, but then the preferences change and it often depends on what school music program they will become involved in. Those wishing to be part of the marching band choose different

instruments than the student who wants to perform with the orchestra. The choice may also be dependent on what instrument is in need for the group.

"We do our best to keep costs as low as possible so that more kids are able to get involved in music," Bart said. "Interest in music has increased a lot over the years."

To accomplish this, Breber Music carries both new and quality used instruments. Selling used instruments for those who want them is one of the ways they help keep costs down. But they also offer good prices on the new instruments they carry.

Digital pianos are often preferred to a traditional piano because they do not need tuning, saving the expense of that service. Many of today's pianos are more compact than the traditional pianos of the past.

Variety of options

The store has a large selection of guitars and ukeleles displayed, both of which are very popular, according to Bart. Perhaps the guitars are so popular because of a person's

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at right: Guitars are popular instruments with people of all ages including new students and accomplished ones. **below:** Whether shopping for a musician or someone passionate about music, these cute instrument ornaments are a fitting Christmas gift idea.

SANDRA LANDEN MACHAJ *Spirit of Geneva Lakes*

favorite singing group or popular music is in a current trend featuring it. Or perhaps it's just fun to play and sing along with, like the ukelele.

Breber carries a full line of intermediate as well as professional instruments. The professional instruments are a grade more detailed and are known for their hands-on workmanship. When a musician gets to the professional level, they may be ready to look at these higher quality and higher priced instruments. But until then, the quality beginner and intermediate level are in line with a variety of needs.

In addition to instruments, a large selection of sheet music is available. Breber has individual musicians come in to purchase music and they supply it to school programs.

With the additional space in the store, there is plenty of room not only for instruments and music scores but also music stands, microphone stands, and a variety of other supplies musicians may need.

All the instrument repairs needed for the school programs are carried out at the store. A team of quality technicians repair instruments at the store, ensure they are working correctly, and then they're returned to the schools.

Repairs can take up to seven business days but Breber Music provides a free loaner instrument to the students so they can continue to progress in their music studies.

Services are also available for instrument overhauls, guitars and other fretted instruments, orchestral string instruments, drum set combos, and some electronic equipment. Prices vary depending on the work that needs to be done but the staff at Breber will offer an estimate.

The company's ownership is very appreciative of its staff.

"We have been fortunate over the years to have quality people working for us," Bart said.

Many of Breber's employees remain





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with them, so customers coming in recognize the staff and may have dealt with them before. Once customers realize how helpful and knowledgeable they are, they become comfortable working with them and asking for advice as they consider purchases.

For those not in a school music program or for adults who want to learn to play an instrument, classes are offered on site at Breber by qualified music teachers.

The teachers are not employed by the music store but rent studio space to teach classes. Even though the teachers are not employees of Breber Music, they are vetted to be certain they are qualified to teach there.

“The teacher works out with the customer a payment schedule. We are not involved with that. It’s between the teacher and the customer,” Bart explained.

Most of the classes are held after school lets out, but sometimes adult classes are offered earlier in the day, if both the student and the teacher are available.

Today, there is a lot of interest in art and music in schools, but in some districts, these programs are sometimes cut when finances become strained. Breber Music does its best to keep prices affordable so that students interested in music have the opportunity to learn.

Breber Music is at 801 E. Geneva in Elkhorn. For more information, contact them by phone at 262-723-2233 or visit www.brebermusic.com.

The store hours are Monday through Thursday from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m., Friday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. The store is closed on Sundays.



top: George Breber, Sr. was the founder of Breber Music. His son George, Jr. and now his grandson Bart, have continued to help the business grow throughout the years. **at right:** Not only does Breber have instruments and offer music lessons but also sheet music in a variety of genres.

SANDRA LANDEN MACHAJ *Spirit of Geneva Lakes*



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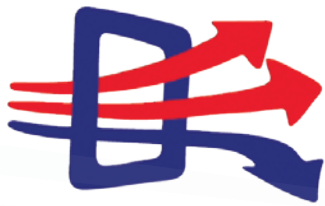
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Get out & enjoy the Snow



Wilmot Mountain offers skiing, snow tubing, lessons and more

by **Sandra Landen Machaj**

CORRESPONDENT

When winter first arrives and the temperature drops, many head indoors and avoid being outside. But it does not take long until some are ready to embrace the cold crisp air of winter after all, we live in an area that embraces all four seasons as a way of life.

It does not take long until we begin to consider winter activities that can be enjoyed because of the cold weather. With the first snowfall of the year, some are inspired to take a walk, as snowflakes land on our faces – and especially our noses – as it falls onto the leafless trees and slowly covers the ground.

The grand Wisconsin snowfalls that were so much a part of winter for years have been very minimal

recently. However, there is still a favorite outdoor winter activity that manages to survive even with little snow, as long as the temperatures cooperate, and that is downhill skiing. Among the area ski hills is Wilmot Mountain.

Since 1938, when Walter Stopa first rented, then purchased, land from a local farmer in Wilmot, which is near the Illinois border, downhill skiing has been a popular winter activity for many in the area. Conveniently located a reasonable distance from Milwaukee, Chicago, and other areas, visitors made their way to the ski resort.

When it opened, this new ski area even had a tow rope powered by a drive from a Model A Ford. Skiers were happy to ride the tow rope up rather than having to climb



above: The sunset from atop the hill at Wilmot Mountain is worth stopping to appreciate before heading down the slopes. **at right:** One of the best ways to become proficient in skiing is to attend classes at Wilmot's ski school, which are offered to children as well as adults.

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The tubing hill at Wilmot is adjacent to the downhill skiing area. Fun for nearly all ages, as each tuber person must pass a height requirement to participate. **below:** Kringles, a pastry enjoyed throughout Wisconsin, are offered at Wilmot during a special event.

COURTESY WILMOT MOUNTAIN
Spirit of Geneva Lakes

to the top of the slope to enjoy skiing down.

Each year, Stopa worked on increasing the amenities at Wilmot as a way to attract more skiers. He did not want skiers to believe they had to go out west as they had the opportunity to do so right here in Wisconsin.

To further the length of time that visitors could ski, he began making snow with a rudimentary snow machine – basically a watering device with a heater attached to keep the water from freezing before it hit the ground.

“Over the years, the snow makers became more advanced and are now used consistently to be certain that we have good snow on the runs for skiing,” Dan Brewer, Senior Manager of Skier Services at Wilmot explained. “We begin making snow when we catch the cold weather. That is when it’s 27 to 28 degrees consistently for three to four days in a row.”

Brewer said the snow is created in piles, where it’s left for a time to allow some of the moisture out before it is spread on the ski runs, giving it a better texture for skiers.

“Often we open for the ski season even before the first snowfall by creating our own snow,” he said.

Growth over the years

In the 1960s, the original tow rope was replaced by chair lifts. Around 1970, Stopa added lights to the runs so skiers could hit the slopes at night. This was considered to be such a unique addition at the time that the event was covered by the then-popular Tonight Show.

Over the ensuing years, Stopa continued to enlarge and improve the ski runs and services until his death in June 1986. Even with his untimely death, Wilmot Mountain continued to grow under the direction of its new owners – Walter’s daughter Diane and her husband, Michael.

It was under their direction that the idea for a snow tubing



hill adjacent to the main entrance to the ski mountain became a reality. Snow tubing opened at Wilmot in 2012.

The tubing area is a favorite of families who can enjoy the activity together, although each member must use their own tube to ride down the hill. The sounds of joy and laughter overcome the area as participants enjoy the speed of the descent. Note that riders must be at least 42 inches tall to snow tube.

After a few trips down when it's time for a break, skiers and tubers can enjoy the free hot chocolate that is served. There is also a full pay bar for adults who prefer an adult beverage.

The tubing runs generally open around Christmas time, according to Brewer, making it an ideal place to spend some of those Christmas vacation days.

But it's the downhill skiing that has attracted visitors for years and continues to do so. Whether one is an advanced skier or a beginner, Wilmot Mountain can help skiers improve their skills and have fun spending a day outdoors.

Many upgrades added

Wilmot Mountain was sold to Vail Resorts in 2016 – of the well-known Colorado Ski



In addition to skiing and tubing, some of the best spent time at Wilmot can be had sitting by the firepits while enjoying s'mores and hot chocolate.

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Other ski hills

In addition to Wilmot, there are two other ski hills in the area you may want to explore.

ALPINE VALLEY RESORT

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Alpine Valley Resort is a year-round resort that is celebrating its 60th year in operation.

During the ski season, it offers 20 ski runs spread over 90 acres. Classes for beginners or advanced students are offered, and full rental equipment is available.

A variety of food is available including casual pizza, a coffee shop, an outdoor bar and the elegant Alpine Bistro Dining Room in the hotel. Hotel rooms are available year-round for travelers.

For more information including special holiday events as well as other activities, visit www.alpinevalleyresort.com.

THE MOUNTAIN TOP

Grand Geneva
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Lake Geneva

The Mountain Top is the ski area located at the Grand Geneva Hotel. It features a variety of winter activities, including 20 downhill ski runs and both day and night skiing are available.

Grand Geneva also offers ice skating, snowshoeing and cross-country skiing. Equipment is available to rent and downhill ski lessons can be booked.

The Leinenkugel Mountain Top Lodge offers a variety of food and drink. Transportation to the Mountain Top is available by trolley for those staying at the resort.

For more information visit www.lakegenevaski.com.



Resort, according to Brewer – the new owner invested \$13 million in upgrading the facilities.

Brewer grew up in the Chicago area and learned to ski at Wilmot.

“My father was a skier, and we came out to Wilmot to ski almost every weekend,” he said. “I played minor league baseball early in my career, and then worked as a ski patroller in Colorado.”

When Brewer was offered the Senior Manager of Skier Services role, which would allow him to return to the Midwest, he was excited to do so and said he is enjoying being back where he began while also working to improve the services offered at Wilmot.

Among the many changes was the building of the Lodge, a place for skiers to warm up between ski runs and grab a quick snack or lunch before returning to the slopes.

The Main Lounge Bar is a popular place to gather as well, offering bar service and snacks. There is also live music on a regular basis, making them a fun place to unwind after a vigorous day on the slopes.

Walt’s Tavern is in honor of founder Walter Stopa, who turned what was farmland into a major ski and tubing site. The tavern is open on weekends and is an upbeat place to relax with a drink and enjoy the BBQ that is served.

Another option is to gather around one of the firepits outside while watching skiers make their way down the hill. And it can be even more fun by purchasing a s’mores kit, allowing guests to enjoy a treat with friends and family.

Lessons for all ages

Brewer said he is especially pleased with the children’s ski school at Wilmot, which allows children to learn to ski at an early age.

“Children’s lessons are great to get the children outside in the winter and away from all the digital gadgets that dominate their lives,” Brewer said. “Lessons begin for 4- to 5-year-olds. During the holidays, there are special classes for 3- to 4-year-olds on Saturdays and Sundays.”

The lessons can be in groups or private and once they’re comfortable on skis on flat ground, they will progress to the beginner’s area using the carpet lift.

Intermediate and advanced children’s lessons work on refining skills and expanding their confidence in making linked turns down the beginner’s slope.

Brewer recommends signing up for children’s classes as early as possible, as they tend to fill up fast.

Adult classes are also available, in group and private settings as well. The website has

Whether you enjoy skiing or not, some time spent at the tubing hill is a fun winter activity.

COURTESY WILMOT MOUNTAIN *Spirit of Geneva Lakes*

details on prices and dates available as well as booking options.

The purchase of Epic passes can be used at Wilmot other Vail Resort facilities. There are a variety available from day to season passes. Rental equipment is also offered at daily and seasonal rates.

Throughout the season, there are a variety of special events at the Wilmot Mountain ski runs and adjacent tubing area. One fun event is the Kringle sample day, when pieces of Wisconsin's official pastry are shared with guests.

The fun doesn't stop when the season ends and those who have skied throughout the winter are encouraged to attend the Spring Fling. Enjoy fine music, food, and for those brave enough, put on your skis and try to skim across the pond on site without falling in.

Wilmot Mountain, a Vail Epic Ski Run, is at 11931 Fox River Rd., Wilmot. For more information, call 262-862-2301 or visit the website at www.wilmotmountain.com.



Dan Brewer, Manager of Skier Services at Wilmot, is looking forward to another season of welcoming skiers and tubers of all ages.

SANDRA LANDEN MACHAJ *Spirit of Geneva Lakes*

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Staying on target

ELKHORN GUN BARREL HAS THOUSANDS OF FIREARMS, KNOWLEDGEABLE STAFF

by **Sandra Landen Machaj**

CORRESPONDENT

Traveling north of Elkhorn on Highway 12, it's hard to miss the large building and tall sign on the north side of the road, which is home to Elkhorn Gun Barrel.

The business opened about three years ago by owner Dominic DeBock, who has been pleased with the quality and size of inventory that they offer, and that they are considered the largest inventory of firearms in the area.

In the fall, Elkhorn Gun Barrel is particularly busy as many hunters look to upgrade their weapons or to purchase ammunition needed for their hunting trips. Whether you are a small game hunter or prefer large game hunting, the knowledgeable staff at will assist in finding what you need to improve the odds of being successful.

In early fall, waterfowl hunting season brings out the hunters looking to harvest fresh ducks and geese for their dinner table. Those who hunt their fresh fowl look

forward to waterfowl season and the taste of wild fowl, rather than the domesticated processed fowl found in grocery stores.

"Nothing is as good as a fresh duck or goose that you hunt. Nothing you purchase at the grocery store will have the great taste of the one you hunt yourself," explained Mark Spesard, manager of Elkhorn Gun Barrel.

While most people think of roasting a goose, according to Spesard, the meat may be used in a number of additional ways. He notes that he has ground it and made goose burgers as an alternative and said goose stew is also a favorite.

Guns and more needed

Each type of hunting requires its own equipment and even its own clothing and accessories. It isn't just any gun that must be obtained, it must one appropriate for the type of hunting and that fits the hunter. Elkhorn Gun Barrel staff will help hunters find the best weapon for them and their hunting experience.

The clothing that is needed for waterfowl

hunting is not cheap and while they do not sell the clothing at the store, it's important to note that the hunter needs camo clothing, boots, and waders, as waterfowl are in the water. Staff also recommend a custom caller and decoys, which will attract the birds and, as a person gets more involved in this type of hunting, they may also want to invest in a boat.

Deer hunting is also an expensive hobby beginning with a correctly sized gun that works for the hunter and is large enough to handle the deer. The gun may be a traditional black or brown rifle, or it may also be a camouflage one.

The hunter also needs camouflage clothing and scent blocking spray to block the hunter's scent. The opposite – attractants – may be used to make the deer think there is a doe in the area, and thus lure a buck into the hunter's range.

Hunters are required to wear a blaze orange vest or coat and hat, covering 50% of their body so that other hunters can see them. "Deer hunting season is a major event in

There is a large parking lot outside the main entrance to Elkhorn Gun Barrel. Manager Mark Spesard and assistant manager Ryan Heller are among the staff ready to help customers.

SANDRA LANDEN MACHAJ *Spirit of Geneva Lakes*

— SPIRIT of GENEVA LAKES —

Wisconsin,” Spesard said.

The gun deer hunting season begins the Saturday before Thanksgiving, and runs for nine days.

There are additional hunting dates for bow hunting, hunters with disabilities, and youth hunters. Check the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources website at dnr.wisconsin.gov for more information and details.

“Deer hunters are so numbered in Wisconsin during the season, that there are actual ‘Widow’s Clubs’ for the wives who are left home while the hunters are out on hunting trips,” Spesard said.

To each his, or her own

Of the three employees at the store on the day of the interview for this story, they are all shooters, but each has a different area of expertise and preference. Spesard enjoys waterfowl shooting the most.

Assistant manager, Ryan Heller, describes himself as a “paper shooter” and as such, enjoys shooting at targets in competition.

“I am fairly new at this and am still at the entry level competition. We compete under the direction of the U.S. Practical Shooting Association on shooting ranges, usually in the summer,” said Heller. “There are usually 20-75 competitors at each event, and we compete about twice a month.”

When not competing in shooting, Heller also enjoys fishing.

Jenny Talbert, the compliance manager at Elkhorn Gun Barrel, is the team’s deer hunter.

She explained that she hunts deer because with one deer, she is able to provide the majority of the meat her family needs for the winter.

Tis the season

As the hunting season begins, the store becomes busier with customers, many who stop in to purchase the necessary ammunition needed for their hunting forays. Elkhorn Gun Barrel carries a complete line of ammunition and are sure to have what a hunter may need. And for those who are not sure what the best option is, the knowledgeable staff are there to offer assistance.

Upon entering the store, some may be surprised to see the large size of the display room and the number of guns on display. Small guns – what are often referred to as handguns – are displayed along the walls with each securely affixed. They can be taken down and held but remain firmly attached. Others are displayed on tables and are also secured.

The long guns are displayed on the other side of the store. These guns, which are generally used for hunting, are in big demand as each of the hunting seasons open. The guns available are both new and used and are priced accordingly.

There are a number of scopes that can



above: A large display of long guns, especially favored for deer hunting, are available at Elkhorn Gun Barrel. **at left:** Small guns are secured but able to be looked at and held. The store has a variety of stuffed wildlife on display including this bison.

SANDRA LANDEN
MACHAJ
Spirit of Geneva Lakes



be added to a firearm for a better view of the target. They are available in many scope depths and sizes. The staff will work with customers to provide the correct magnification and size they desire for their hunting needs.

Other items available include knives, safety glasses, earmuffs and plugs, holsters, gun cleaning kits, carrying cases and bags, targets and more.

During the interview at Elkhorn Gun Barrel, several visitors stopped by the store. A few were there to pick up ammunition, while others were actively shopping for firearms, new or used. Some were local, while others came from surrounding areas.

One visitor brought in a rifle he owned to sell to Elkhorn Gun Barrel. He had already spoken to the staff and a price for the gun had been determined. He did not just turn in his gun and collect his cash but spent time looking for an additional gun or guns for his collection.

Dan and Jan Brown from Beloit were in the area for business and had some free time to browse so stopped by the store. Dan is a former law enforcement officer and described time at the store as “a candy shop for adults.”

Supporting others

According to Spesard, Elkhorn Gun Barrel puts forth an effort to support local charities whenever possible. They currently are involved in raffles – including one to support wounded vets that will get them involved in sports like kayaking and rugby.

The store has donated a raffle item to the Nam Knights, where 100% of the proceeds will be given to help feed veterans lacking adequate food. The gun for that raffle is a Marlin 1894 Trapper .357 Mag/.38spl. Tickets are \$5 each or five for \$20 and the drawing will be held Dec. 23.

To purchase a weapon in Wisconsin, a federal background check must be done. The customer needs to provide a valid state identification card and complete a questionnaire that includes background information. It may be approved instantly, or the purchaser may need to return to pick



above: A gun collector gets a close look at some of the firearms available for purchase. **at left:** A variety of scopes are on display, which improve a hunter's ability to see the prey. **top left:** Travelers along Highway 12/67 north of Elkhorn can easily spot the tall sign for Elkhorn Gun Barrel.

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up their purchase. If the approval is denied they will not be allowed to purchase a weapon.

There is a Wanton Waste Law in Wisconsin which forbids randomly killing animals and leaving them where they have been killed. Hunters must take the animals they have killed with them and use them. If they cannot retrieve the animal, more common in the case of waterfowl, it still must be counted in their report of the number of animals they have bagged and is considered part of their limit.

Customers from out of state may purchase weapons in Wisconsin as long as they pass the federal background check and the items that they are purchasing are legal in their home state.

"We keep our eyes and ears open to be certain that shoppers are not trying to pull off what is known as a 'straw purchase.' This is when someone who is unable to purchase a weapon legally convinces someone who is able to do so to purchase one for them," Spesard explained.

There are thousands of firearms in stock, including new, used and collectibles. According to its website, the store is committed to quality service and expanding inventory – all at the lowest possible price to the customer.

Elkhorn Gun Barrel is at N7019 US Highway 12, Elkhorn. The store is open seven days a week from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. They offer in-store shopping, in-store pickup and online shopping for store pickup as well.

For more information, call 262-724-0407 or visit www.elkhorngunbarrel.com.



Jan and Dan Brown from Beloit check out the offerings at the store, which Dan – a former law enforcement officer – referred to as “a candy shop for adults.”

SANDRA LANDEN MACHAJ *Spirit of Geneva Lakes*



Information is subject to change. Please contact individual restaurant for more information.

Dining Directory

Call for Carry Out & Delivery Options

1903 SALOON • 11230 260th Avenue, Trevor, WI 53179. **262-298-7005**. Comfortable gathering place with friends. Dine in or take out. Excellent food. Specialty drinks. L, D, \$\$ ☹

MICHAEL'S ON THE LAKE • 3101 Eagle Road, Kansasville, WI 53139. **(262) 878-3313**. A Wisconsin supper club on the shore of Eagle Lake. Known for our steaks, prime rib on Saturday night, fish fry on Wednesday and Friday, baby back ribs and our famous carrot cake. Visit www.michaelsonthelakewi.com for our full menu. Open Wed. & Thurs. @ 3; Fri. & Sat. @ 11; Noon on Sunday. L, D, \$\$\$, GF, FF, ☹ SR ☹ ☎

GINO'S EAST OF CHICAGO • 300 Wrigley Dr., Lake Geneva. **262-248-2525**. www.ginoseastlakegeneva.com. Chicago's original deep dish pizza, Italian sandwiches, salads and entrees. L, D, \$-\$☹

THE GREEN GROCER AND DELI • 24 W. Geneva St., Williams Bay. **262-245-9077**. www.greengrocergenevalake.com Organic grocery store with a deli. Serving sandwiches made with Boars Head meat and cheese, homemade soups, salads and pizzas, wine, beer and cocktails. Dine in, Carryout or delivery. Open 7 days a week. L, D, \$-\$☹ ☎ ☹

LOCAL FOLKS RESTAURANT & PUB • 39601 60th St. (Slades Corners), Burlington. **262-539-3200**. Open 6am every morning! B, L, D, \$, FF, ☹ ☹

WATERFRONT PUB & GRILL • 408 State Rd. 50, Delavan, WI. **262-728-4700**. Open Daily 11 a.m. Closed Wed. L, D, FF, ☹

SPORTSMAN'S PUB & GRUB • 25313 W. Loomis Rd., Wind Lake, WI 53185. **262-895-1055**. Join us Friday and Sunday FOR THE BEST PRIME RIB IN TOWN! \$2.00 OFF Any prime rib dinner. L, D, FF, ☹ \$\$\$

PINE STREET CAFE • 141 N. Pine St., Burlington, WI 53105. **262-763-9800**. Homestyle food made from scratch daily using only the finest, freshest ingredients. Breakfast • Lunch • Dinner. Fish Fry Every Friday. Sunday 6am - 3pm. Monday - Saturday 6am - 8pm. \$\$, B, L, D, FF, ☹

B&D'S VILLAGE INN • 34414 Geneva Rd., New Munster, WI. **262-537-4719**. Open daily at 11 A.M. Serving Friday fish fry!

LUISA'S • Just off Hwy. 50, 12 mi. east of Lake Geneva. **262-537-4795**. Superb Italian & American cuisine. Dine in, carry out, delivery, catering avail., call ahead & will have it hot ready to go. D, \$\$ ☹

Key B: Breakfast L: Lunch D: Dinner NC: No credit cards accepted \$: Mostly under \$10 \$\$: Mostly under \$20 GF: Gluten free \$\$\$: Mostly under \$30 FF: Fish Fry ☎: Reservations requested ☹: Alcohol served ☺: Kids menu SR: Senior menu

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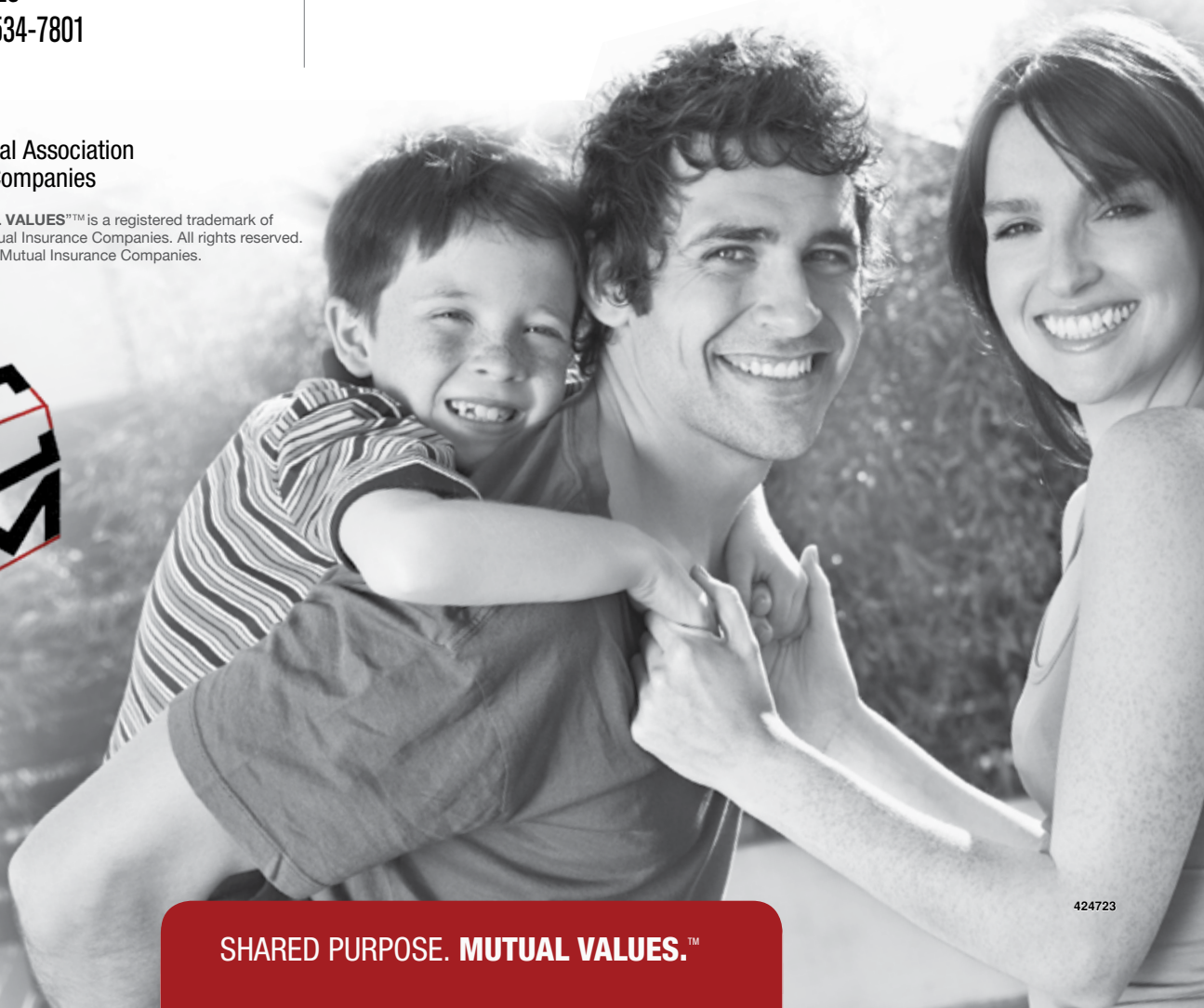
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