



THE SPIRIT *of The Lakes*

vol. 10 no. 2

May/June 2025

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IT'S COMIN' UP

MAY/JUNE EVENTS

Upcoming events

Sesame Street Live

Friday, May 16 at 6 p.m. at Genesee Theatre, 203 N. Genesee St., Waukegan.

Join Elmo, Abby Cadabby, Cookie Monster and their friends in the all-new show, "Sesame Street Live! Say Hello!"

Children will enjoy singing, dancing and playing alongside their favorite furry friends while they follow Elmo's puppy, Tango, in a fun game of hide and seek.

There will be plenty of music, laughter, games and surprises along the way. Enjoy this fun-filled celebration on Sesame Street!

Tickets range from \$35 to \$55 and are available at genesee theatre.com, ticketmaster.com or at The Genesee Theatre Box Office.

Water Lantern Festival

Saturday, May 17 from 5:30 to 9:30 p.m. at Paulus Park, 200 S. Rand Rd., Lake Zurich.

Water Lantern Festival is filled with fun, happiness, hope, and great memories that you'll cherish for a lifetime. This is a family friendly event that can be shared by everyone.

There will be food trucks, music and fun. At 8 p.m., design your lantern. The launch is at 8:30 p.m.

All lanterns will be cleaned up after the event by staff. The lanterns are made from rice paper and wood, so they are as eco-friendly as possible and organizers reuse and recycle the LED candles.

Free admission for kids 8 and younger. Adult tickets are \$47.99 until May 16; \$57.99 the day of the event.

To learn more, visit waterlanternfestival.com.

Spring Bird Walk

Sunday, May 18 from 7 to 8:30 a.m. at Independence Grove Forest Preserve, 16400 W. Buckley Rd., Libertyville.

May is the month for songbird migration. Join a skilled birder on a walk to see the birds. Bring binoculars if you have them. Free, no registration required. Meet at the North Bay Pavilion for the Independence Grove Walk.

For more information, visit lcfpd.org.

Food Truck Festival

Friday, May 23 from noon to 9 p.m. at Lake County Fairgrounds and Event Center, 1060 E. Peterson Rd., Grayslake.

The Lake County Food Truck Festival is coming back for the third year. It will feature a wide variety of food trucks serving up everything from savory meals to sweet treats. Bring your appetite and a few friends.

\$10 parking per vehicle (save \$2 when purchased online.) Admission allows access to food trucks, live music, a beer garden and entertainment for all ages.

To learn more, visit lcfairgrounds.com.

Beach Party/Bike Rodeo

Saturday, May 31 from noon to 6 p.m. at Lakefront Park, 71 Nippersink Blvd., Fox Lake.

Lakefront Park beach party and Bike Rodeo will celebrate the grand opening of the brand-new beach! Bring your family to have an evening of fun under the sun, with activities for all ages. Enjoy music, food vendors, activities and the annual Bike Rodeo where kids can get their bike inspected by police officers!

Taste of Summer

May 29-June 1 – Families, get ready for Antioch's Taste of Summer Festival with new dates and an exciting new carnival.

Four amazing days filled with live music, delicious food, thrilling carnival rides, unique exhibitors and shopping galore. Free admission.

For more information, call 847-395-2233 or visit antiochchamber.org.

Outdoor Vintage Market

Saturday, June 7 from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., the Reclaimed Artisans will host the 14th Annual Spring Outdoor Vintage Market at 302 Peterson Rd., Libertyville.

Featured live music, a variety of food and drink and 40-plus vendors. Free admission – no tickets needed.

For more information, visit Reclaimed Artisans Inc. on Facebook.

Zion Nostalgia Days

Friday, June 13 – Saturday, June 14 from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., 2828 Sheridan Rd., Zion.

Enjoy the antique and custom car show and cruise, food vendors, kid's activities, DJ's, radio stations and fun for everyone. After the car show, stick around for the Midwest's largest Cruise.

Wizards Weekend Day

Saturday, June 14 in downtown Antioch.

Wizards, Witches and Muggles (adults, teens, kids) magically appear in Antioch to experience a Wizards Village filled with Magical Moments, Magical Bands, new Diagon Alley, Kids School of Magic, new Marauders Experience for all ages, Magical Meet Ups, Scavenger Hunts, Crafts and New Magic for all.

For details, visit antiochchamber.org.

THE SPIRIT

IS A PUBLICATION OF



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The Spirit of The Lakes is a complimentary publication, distributed throughout the Chain O' Lakes and Kenosha County area. Keeping up with the same great tradition as the Spirit of Geneva Lakes.

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THE SPIRIT

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On the cover: The Wall That Heals – a 3/4-scale replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial – will be on site for visitation at the Tim Osmond Sports Complex, 38 Depot St., Antioch, from July 17-20.

NAT'L VETERANS MEMORIAL & MUSEUM PHOTO *Spirit of the Lakes*

CRUISIN' THE chain

– IN A PONTOON

by **Sandra Landen Machaj**
CORRESPONDENT

With the sun shining brightly in the sky and shimmering down on the clear blue waters of the chain of lakes, it's not surprising to see many boats begin to appear on the water.

Whether boats are filled with family members or friends, today's most popular boat still seems to be the pontoon boat.

While each type of boat has a specific use and appeals to different people depending on their boating needs, the pontoon has become a boat that has grown in usage and is enjoyed by more people for a variety of activities.

The pontoon is a fairly recent development, unlike canoes or sailboats, which can go back hundreds or thousands of years. The pontoon dates back to the early 1950s, when its invention was credited to Ambrose Weeres of Minnesota – a farmer who lived in the Land of 10,000 lakes ... on a lake.

The story is that Weeres was looking to create a more stable boat for use on the lakes, so he added two columns of steel barrels to a wood platform to create a sturdy deck. This worked for him, so Weeres created a few more of these boats, which he sold through local dealers. He then started Weeres Industries as there

became a demand for the boats.

While these early pontoon boats often had a small outboard motor attached, they were not known for speed or for any of the activities such as water skiing or tubing. Instead, it offered slower, gentler rides.

"These early pontoons were used as family boats because they were easy to climb onto, had comfortable seats, were known for being very safe, and did not go very fast," said John Hainsley, who has had several pontoons. "They were often called the boat to take Grandma and Grandpa for a ride because of the ease of use."

Pontoon boats became popular because of their size and comfortable seat designs, but also for their safety – things for which they are still known. Soon the boats were being built larger and with more powerful motors, and pontoons changed from the boat to take Grandma and Grandpa for a ride to one of the most popular and versatile boats on the water. That now includes often being the boat of choice for water activities, including water skiing and tubing.

Boat of choice

"Today the pontoon boat, with two pontoons – one down each side – or the Tritoon, which has an additional tube in the center, are among the most popular boats on the lakes," said Tanner Gazzano, service

advisor at the Boat House on Pistakee Lake.

Tritoons offer a smoother ride than the pontoons because of that extra tube of air in the center of the watercraft. The extra tube adds to the buoyancy of the craft.

While boats begin to appear on the Chain O' Lakes as soon as lakes are open for boating – when the weather and temperature of the water are ready – usually around mid-April is when the boaters are ready to head out, even if it is just for a short ride.

Those interested in purchasing a new boat generally have been looking and have ordered their boat by this time and may be waiting for it to arrive.

Three large boat shows often lead up to boat purchases, and those shows start in January. The Chicago Boat Show is held in Rosemont at the Donald Stephens Convention Center, and then there are the Milwaukee Boat Show and the Lake County Boat Show.

"If they order them this early, they will most likely be ready for spring," said Todd Muehler of the Boat House.

New boats – especially the largest and fanciest, like automobiles or homes – are expensive. New pontoons range from \$40,000 to \$200,000 and, like automobiles, they do depreciate, but not as quickly as an automobile. New boats, just like new

It's clear that spring is here when boats are back on the water, waiting to go for a ride.

SANDRA LANDEN MACHAJ *Spirit of the Lakes*



automobile, come with a warranty.

For those not ready to purchase a new boat, there are always used boats to consider. Boats, if well cared for, last for many years. It isn't unusual to have a 20-year-old boat still in fine condition.

Just as some automobile owners turn their vehicles yearly, so do some boat owners but not nearly as many. Three to five years is more likely. In this area, boating season is limited so not as much use is put on the boat yearly.

"Some people will trade in their boats yearly, while others will hold onto that boat for up to 20 years," added Gazzano. "Boats are different from automobiles, as they do not look at a boat by age but by motor usage."

According to the crew at The Boat House, most of the pontoons are now

built in Indiana, with a number of quality companies building them and offering different seating arrangements and quality of upholstery materials.

When purchasing a boat, many purchase a trailer to haul the boat to the lakes where they plan to use it. If they go to different areas to boat, a trailer is needed. Those who live on the waterfront will dock their boats right on their property.

Proper storage

Due to our cold winter weather, it is necessary to store a boat, an additional expense. Before winter sets in, the boat must be winterized to protect the engine from freezing. Some companies will service the boat, then shrink wrap it and take it to an outdoor lot where it will sit until spring.

When customers are ready to return it to

the water, it will have to be prepared for use and then transported back to the water or to a boat trailer.

Some docks offer inside storage, with The Boat House one such place. Their storage garages are several stories high. The boats are placed up there very gently by a heavy duty lift and brought down the same way.

"We also offer on-site storage during the boating season," said Bryan Adams, a sales associate at The Boat House. "Boat owners who do not own property on the waterfront need to have a place to keep their boat even during the season. Some may keep it on a trailer or rent a dock but others enjoy having their boat in inside storage."

With boats stored at the dock, owners call when they need an oil change or other service and have it done before they need to use the boat. When they want the boat, they call in and set a day and time they need the boat and when they arrive at the dock, it's in the water ready to go.

To pilot a boat for recreation does not require a special license. However, anyone born after January 1, 1998, must complete



above: The helpful (and fun) staff at The Boat House of Chicago – Johnsburg, will work with customers to make sure their new boat has everything on their list. **from far left:** The beginning of the boating season is a good time to check on the condition of water skis and other equipment to be sure they are in safe condition. If not, it's time to replace them; When ordering a new boat, the color of the upholstery can be chosen from a variety of combinations.

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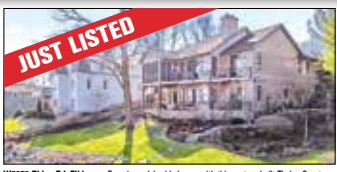
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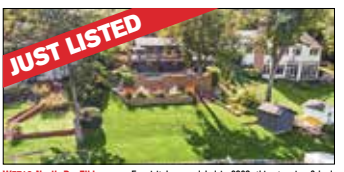
W1260 South Shore, Palmyra - Your lakefront search stops here! Move-in ready two-story with walk-out lower level and 65' of frontage on Blue Spring Lake. Low-voltage lighting runs to the floating pier and boat. Shown with lake views and access to multi-level decking which leads to lake access. Lakeside level lawn and shed. Cozy living room with wood-burning fireplace. In-floor heating system upgraded in 2021 with backup furnace and new A/C system installed in 2025. Main floor laundry room and Master Suite with lakeside sitting room. Upstairs offers four bedrooms and a full bath. Lower-level rec room with sliding glass door for lake access. Blue Spring Lake is an all-sports lake with crystal clear water. **\$789,700**



W5672 Ridge Rd, Elkhorn - Experience lakeside luxury with this custom-built Thelen Construction home, offering 83' of private frontage on Lauderdale Lakes. This elegant 3BR, 2.5BA lake home is designed to impress, blending timeless craftsmanship with upscale finishes throughout. Enjoy stunning lake views from expansive windows, a gourmet kitchen, vaulted ceilings, and a spacious open-concept layout perfect for entertaining. Step outside to a beautifully landscaped yard with ample space for lakeside relaxation and recreation. Trex balconies, screened porch w/ heaters facing the lake, LL family room, stone fireplace, wet bars, zoned heating & heated 3 car garage. For additional fun, turn the rec space into a bar or gym. A rare opportunity to own a true luxury retreat on one of Wisconsin's most sought-after lakes. **\$1,899,700**



W6367 Hillburn Mill Rd, Elkhorn - 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 glass fireplace adjacent to Rich 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 - Exquisitely remodeled in 2020, this stunning 3-bed, 2-bath ranch offers 92 feet of Middle Lake frontage with breathtaking, expansive views. The main level features soaring vaulted ceilings, a wall of sliding glass doors opening to a spacious wraparound deck, and a chef's kitchen with elegant Quartz countertops, designer backsplash, KitchenAid SS appliances, and a striking waterfall island with bar seating. A luxurious bedroom and spa-like bath with heated floors and a glass shower complete the main floor. The walk-out lower level boasts a chic beverage center, 2 additional bedrooms, a modern bath with glass shower, and laundry. Two 9x12 sheds, including one lakeside, lead to the pier and manicured yard. **\$1,099,700**



W5693 Ridge Rd, Elkhorn - This Lauderdale Lakefront home has everything you been looking for. Situated on 76' of Middle Lake frontage with southern exposure, offers you a 3BR, 3.5 multi-level with walk-out lower level to screened in porch. Main floor features living room with hardwood floors, natural fireplace and sliding glass door to deck, kitchen with breakfast bar and dinette with sliding glass door to 3 season room adjacent to deck offering extending lake views. In the second floor you'll find the master BR ensuite with sliding glass door to private balcony, plus 2nd and 3rd bedrooms and full bath. Lower-level family room with bar & walk-out to huge, screened porch and deck, full BA and laundry room. Level lakeside yard featuring shed, fire-pit and Forever Pier installed last summer. Come enjoy the lake life! **\$559,700**



W5135 Sterlingworth Ct, Elkhorn - Located in a prime spot at Sterlingworth Condominiums in the atrium, this 2-bedroom, 2-bath unit is just steps from the beach with its own boat slip. Enjoy stunning lake views through a wall of sliding glass doors leading to a spacious deck. The eat-in kitchen features a breakfast bar and dinette, while the living room offers a cozy gas fireplace. The master suite boasts an updated bath with a walk-in multi-head tile shower and double vanity. Wood flooring throughout. Direct access to the indoor pool, tennis and pickleball courts, and the finest sand beach on the lake. Just a short walk to Lauderdale Golf Course & minutes to Kettle Moraine trailhead. Turn-key for effortless lakefront living! **\$697,700**



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**



W7729 Laura Lane, Elkhorn - Luxurious lakefront estate on Lauderdale Lakes' exclusive "Gold Coast" with 142' of pristine sand frontage and 1.28 acres of gated, wooded privacy, all on a private road for additional exclusivity. The 4BD, 4.5BA main home is designed for elevated lake living, with panoramic views, lakeside dining, a vaulted screened porch, and a lakeside primary suite with private deck. Entertain with ease in the walkout lower level featuring a family room, wet bar, brick fireplace & patio with fire pit. A rare wet boathouse includes a stunning 280'IBA guest cottage above with vaulted ceilings, full kitchen, living room, and screened porch. Premium amenities include a 36x30 heated/cooled garage with 4 vaulted rooms including workout room & dog run, plus an additional heated 3.5-car detached garage. **\$3,199,997**



above: Whatever type of boat, for water enthusiasts being on the lake is the most relaxing way to spend a day. **below:** Visiting a boat showroom or show is a way to view a variety of boats and price ranges to help you make your decision on what watercraft is best for you.

SANDRA LANDEN MACHAJ *Spirit of the Lakes*

a boating safety course and acquire a valid Boating Safety Certificate to operate a boat with more than a 10-horsepower engine. While it is only required that those born after 1998 take the course, it is recommended that everyone take the course to help with water safety.

Another requirement is that there be a safety vest for each person on the boat and it is recommended that they keep it on while on the boat. However, only children are required to wear their life jacket while on the water.

According to the U.S. Coast Guard, all children under the age of 13 years must wear an approved and fitted for weight life jacket when the boat is on the water. Children's jackets are not by age but by the weight of the child.

There are several ways to have the use

of a boat for the summer even without owning one. Many of the docks and boat stores along the chain will rent watercraft for a few hours – some for a day on the water, and others for a week or even the season.

With short-term rentals, it is also possible to test a variety of different watercraft to determine what is best for you and your family or even if you need to own your own boat. For those who do not have the time to boat regularly, perhaps renting an occasional boat is all you need.

Once you determine whether you need a boat for fishing, cruising the lakes, waterskiing or tubing or a combination of these activities, and the number of people that need to fit on the boat, you will be ready to decide on your need to become a boat owner.



from top: Colorful life jackets are fun and it is recommended that everyone wear one while the craft is on the water for your safety; Boats, even a large pontoon such as this one are moved from shore to the water using these large lifts; One of the best ways to store your boat is indoors in a facility such as this one. There are also suitable outdoor storage options where the craft is wrapped in a sealer to protect it.

SANDRA LANDEN MACHAJ *Spirit of the Lakes*

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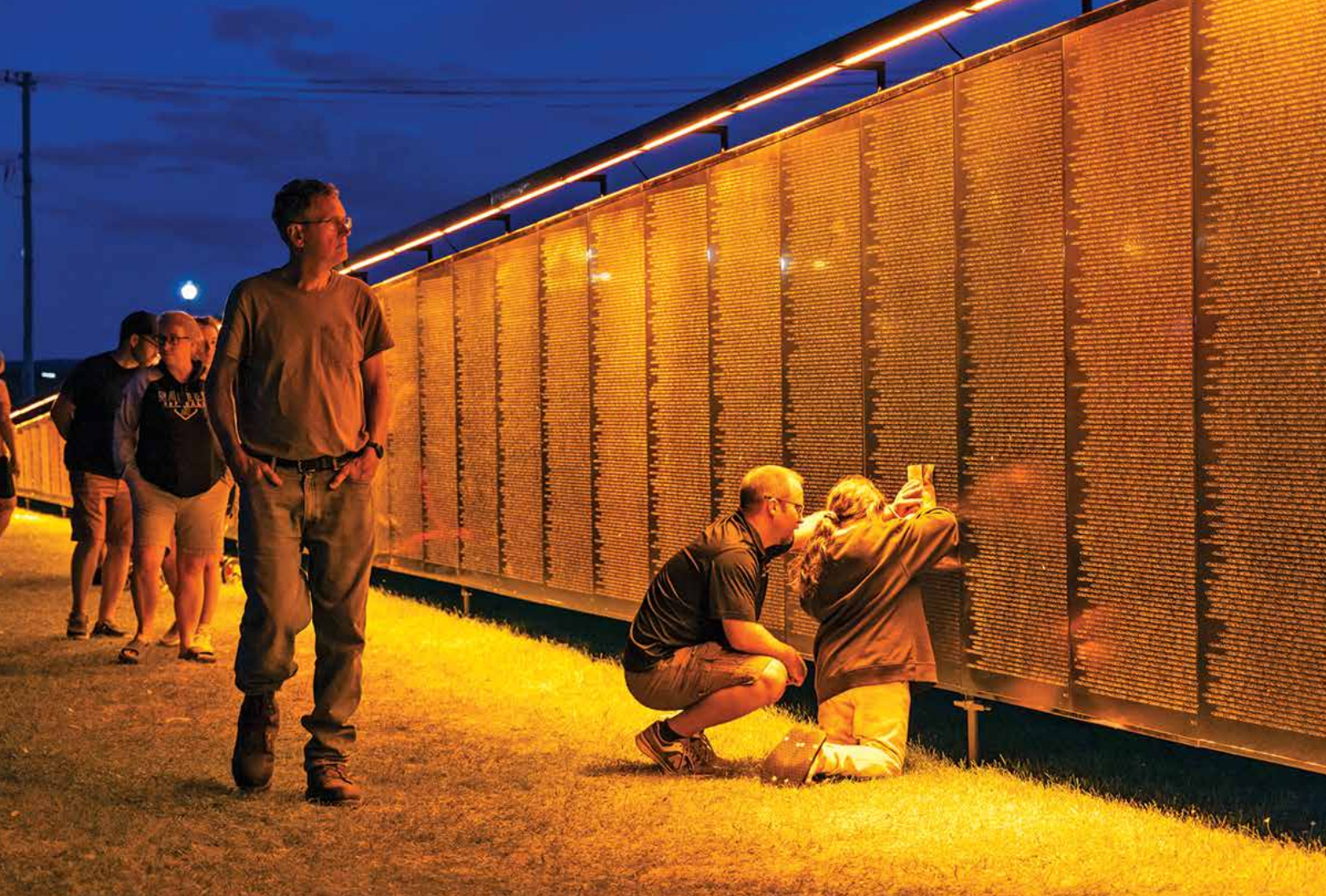
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Honoring those who died for our freedom

by **Sandra Landen Machaj**

CORRESPONDENT

In 1982, a Memorial Wall was erected in Washington D.C., honoring those men and women who gave their lives for our country during the Vietnam War. It soon became the most visited memorial on the National Mall, attracting more than 5 million visitors each year.

It contains the names of more than 58,000 service men and women, who lost their lives during that war. While many family members and friends have made their way to Washington over the years to see the Memorial on the National Mall, and some have taken rubbings of their loved one's name on the wall, there are many others who have not been able to make the journey.

Eventually, portable traveling replicas were created to serve as a way to bring the memorial to people in their own communities.



One is the Wall That Heals. It is a 3/4-scale replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, 375 feet in length, and has a mobile education center. It will make its way to Antioch this summer where residents and other area community members will have the opportunity to view the wall and visit the education center.

"We applied to have the wall here in Antioch. We were one of 163 applicants, and we were one of the only 31 communities accepted by the Wall That Heals," shared Barbara Porch, Executive Director of the Antioch Chamber of

Commerce.

The wall will be on display in Antioch at the Tim Osmond Sports Complex July 17-20. During the time of the display, there will not be any sports activities taking place at the Osmond Center out of respect for the wall and to assure that there is ample space for those who visit.

Many hands helping out

Before the wall is in place and ready to be viewed, there will be a lot of work by local sponsors and volunteers to construct it.

Like the Memorial in Washington D. C., The Wall That Heals is erected in a chevron shape. Visitors will experience it rising above them as they advance toward the apex. Here, visitors can also choose to do rubbings of individual service member's names. The wall is readable day or night as modern LED Lighting is installed to provide illumination.

"The lights will be installed by High

People visit the traveling wall day and night with many of them rubbing the name of their loved one on paper as a keepsake.

SUBMITTED PHOTO *Spirit of the Lakes*

Caliber Electric, a local business owned by Marine Veteran Rob Bednarz,” shared Porch.

According to Matt Adams, of High Caliber Electric, Bednarz plans to take all of his employees to the site for the installation and take down of the lights.

The official hosts bringing the wall to Antioch are the Antioch Chamber of Commerce and Post 748 American Legion. But of course, it requires many sponsors and volunteers.

“The Rotary Club of Antioch will be involved in the event also,” shared Rebecca Dunleavy, head of public relations for the club. “We will be donating funds and providing volunteers to work at the wall.”

In addition to constructing it and taking it apart afterwards, many volunteers will also help out on-site.

Raymond Chevrolet is often the first to step up and offer support for local events and good causes and this was no different. They became the first sponsor and though others have also stepped up, there is still ample need for additional sponsors.

“While there are several traveling walls, we have chosen the Wall That Heals to be the wall that will be on display in Antioch, as they are the only non-profit wall and they support the D.C. Wall,” shared Porch. “There is no charge to visit the Wall. If we have any donated money – or sponsorship money left after the event – it will be donated to The Wall That Heals.”

Visiting the wall day or night is encouraged and be sure to stop at the Mobile Education Exhibit. Here, visitors can observe digital photo displays of Hometown Heroes, members listed on the wall that are from the area where the wall is displayed. In this case it will include veterans from McHenry and Lake counties and from Kenosha County in Wisconsin.

As of this writing, they were still in need of volunteers for the setting up of the wall as well as ambassadors who will be present at the wall to speak with and to support the members of the public visiting. For some, it’s a very emotional visit and they welcome emotional support while they again deal with the loss of loved ones.



An American Flag is placed predominantly in the foreground near The Wall That Heals. In July, the replica wall will be in Antioch.

SUBMITTED PHOTO *Spirit of the Lakes*

Group tour options

If interested in a group tour of the wall – whether in honor of a family member or friend, to bring a group of veterans to the site, or any other group – times can be arranged through the chamber.

The wall is expected to arrive in a 53-foot truck on July 15 and an honor guard wearing white gloves will accompany the panels on site.

All are invited to attend the opening ceremony at 10 a.m., July 17, which will be coordinated by Paul J. Hettish, a retired Colonel from the U. S. Army, and Senior Vice Commander of the Antioch VFW.

The Wall That Heals will be on site

for visitation at the Tim Osmond Sports Complex, 38 Depot St., Antioch, July 17-20.

A closing ceremony will be held at 2 p.m., July 20, also open to anyone interested in attending.

Recognizing Vietnam War service members who made the ultimate sacrifice is essential to honor their bravery and ensure their legacy is remembered. Seeing the Wall That Heals is an opportunity to honor those who gave their lives for our country during the Vietnam War.

Contact Barbara Porch at the Antioch Chamber for information on volunteering or to set up a group tour by calling 847-395-2233 or visiting AntiochChamber.org.

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A worthy mission

by **Sandra Landen Machaj**

CORRESPONDENT

On Sept. 11, 2011, Bill Kraus and Steve “Newt” Newton opened the first of what would become a large chain of unique BBQ restaurants. This first was in Glen Burnie, Maryland.

It was 10 years after the 9/11/01 terrorist attacks and the date was chosen for the opening to honor the military, police, firefighters, and first responders who were quickly on the scene to offer their assistance, many who lost their lives trying to help others.

The decision to open a BBQ restaurant was made after a study that revealed the popularity of BBQ. They then traveled around the country and created the menu for Mission BBQ. It includes quality smoked meats, special BBQ sauces created for the restaurant, and a variety of side dishes.

Aside from the quality foods that appeal to visitors, the décor of the restaurants keep many returning for it reveals the love the company has for veterans and first responders.

Inside, the walls are lined with photos of area residents who served in the military or as first responders. They are brought into the restaurant by residents and are then added to the collection.

At various times throughout the week, free food is offered to active or retired servicemen and women, police, firefighters and first responders as a thank you for their service. The company also supports many



from top: The walls at Mission BBQ restaurants feature photos and memorabilia from those who have served, donated so they can be displayed; Mission BBQ, which started as one restaurant 10 years after the 9/11/01 terrorist attacks, now has 150 locations throughout the U.S. Each serves BBQ and honors the military and first responders – overall and from local communities; Each day at noon, customers and employees of Mission BBQ stand and face one of the American Flags for the playing of the National Anthem. **below:** This portion of a wall honors the first responders at the Twin Towers in New York on Sept. 11, 2001.

SANDRA LANDEN MACHAJ *Spirit of the Lakes*

service organizations such as contributing to an Honor Flight or a Veteran’s group in need.

The feeling of patriotism is palpable in the restaurants, especially at noon each day when the National Anthem is played at every Mission BBQ. Customers and workers alike stand and face the American Flag hanging from the ceiling. Current and past military are often seen saluting the flag, some people have tears in their eyes.

“Every day we strive to serve BBQ made from the finest ingredients and serve it to you in a patriotic dining room filled with tributes to those who made our country great, given to us by those who earned then,” the founders Kraus and Newton are quoted on the website.

Joe Liss, manager of Mission BBQ in Gurnee talked about the company’s growth and its consistent priorities.

“While the founders began with a single restaurant in Glen Burnie, Maryland, now there are about 150 restaurants spread across the country,” Liss said. “We are

closed on major holidays to allow workers to have time with their families.”

Another thing that’s worth noting at Mission BBQ is the friendliness and kindness of the servers. They are pleasant and helpful, even when busy.

The owners encourage everyone to join them in proudly serving those who serve or have served.

“Come help us complete our mission.”

Mission BBQ has the following area locations:

6430 Grand Avenue • Unit 101
Gurnee, IL • 847-278-4577

6930 75th St. • Kenosha, WI
262-649-9773

2927 S. 108th St. • West Allis, WI
414-420-1152

18340 W. Bluemound Rd.
Brookfield, WI • 262-649-5972

For more information, visit mission-bbq.com



Artist crafts fanciful hats in honor of late mom

Art for Adrienne owner donating percent of sales to mental health

by **Cynthia Wolf**

CONTRIBUTOR

Editor's note: The content of this article references suicide. It is intended to be informative, but please be aware that it may be emotionally difficult to read.

Mere minutes after Lauren Sharp placed several of the wide-brimmed fedoras she hand-etches on a back table at a McHenry coffee shop, curious onlookers couldn't help themselves.

"I love these!" exclaimed McHenry resident Dana Ferguson, who had stopped by Toast & Roast with her friend David Arroyo of Grayslake.

"I could tell when I saw her face she's an artist," added Arroyo. "I had to come ask about these hats."

Over the next hour, between visits with others drawn to gaining a more up-close glimpse of her intricately crafted headgear, Sharp, of Johnsburg, explained the motivation behind the name of her home-



CYNTHIA WOLF PHOTOS Spirit of the Lakes

above: Lauren Sharp founded Art for Adrienne in honor of her late mother, Adrienne Paradise. During the month of May, National Mental Health Awareness Month, she will dedicate 10 percent of sales of her hand-etched hats to the National Alliance on Mental Illness of McHenry County, Illinois.

right: Sharp and her mother are shown during happier times in this photo. Adrienne Paradise committed suicide in 2009, when Sharp was 19. Sharp, who just turned 36, is dedicating 10 percent of all of her sales throughout May to a mental health agency.



PHOTO COURTESY
LAUREN SHARP
Spirit of the Lakes

based business, Art for Adrienne.

It is an homage to Sharp's mother, a talented artist herself, who committed suicide in 2009 at age 47. Sharp was just 19. The death followed years of tumult, as Adrienne Paradise battled mental health and substance abuse struggles, said Sharp.

This May, during National Mental Health Awareness Month, Sharp will dedicate 10 percent of her sales to the National Alliance on Mental Illness of McHenry County. She also is donating one of her fanciful chapeau to NAMI for its May gala.

"Lauren's hats are gorgeous and her talent and passion for her craft is evident in every single piece," said Abbey Nicholas, executive director of NAMI McHenry County. "NAMI is so honored to feature a one-of-a-kind donated hat in our Sunset Gala auction ... Lauren's personal story reminds us that we are all touched by mental health, and her generosity will help ensure that everyone in our community has access to free mental health services."

Sharp said she is grateful to have formed a connection with Nicholas and NAMI.

"This is an opportunity to spread some positivity, turn some bad things that have happened in my life into good," Sharp said. "I love seeing people wear my art, and I love helping women feel beautiful. I'm hoping that, in working with Abbey, it will also help to bring healing to others."

Sharp, who turns 36 on May 7, takes blank, wide-brimmed, "vegan" fedoras of various hues and, using a wood-burning technique known as pyrography, engraves them with a range of free-handed, imaginative, feminine or fierce designs. A gallery may be viewed and orders placed at artforadrienne.com.

Ranging in price from about \$75 to \$110, some of her designs are subtle, featuring rose petals and vines, while on others, alligators lurk or a moon casts its shadow across a desolate landscape. Acrylic paints provide an extra pop of color to some. Others bear beading and lacy ribbon, while still others show off feathers, leather braids or ropes of rough-cut stone. Even the undersides of Sharp's brims delight.

Between the visits from curious passers-by, Sharp spoke openly about both her own mental health challenges and the one that ultimately took her mother's life.

As Sharp and her three siblings were growing up in McHenry and Wonder Lake, she said, their mother struggled off and on with alcohol abuse.

"At times, I was mad at her," Sharp said. "But when she was well, she had such a shining personality. She truly lit up a room. She was amazingly talented artistically. She'd take an old, dilapidated antique and give it a new life. Whether it was a rock or a piece of wood, she could paint it and make something truly beautiful out of it."

Sharp said her mom was also a muralist. She served in the U.S. Army from 1984 to 1986, meeting her husband, John Paradise,



from top: Shown is the detail of one of the intricately crafted fedoras Sharp created. A gallery of designs can be viewed at artforadrienne.com, where orders may be placed including custom orders. During a recent interview at a McHenry coffee shop to talk about her hats and her dedication to mental health awareness, Sharp and her fanciful hats repeatedly drew the attention of intrigued shop customers such as Dana Ferguson and David Arroyo.

CYNTHIA WOLF PHOTOS *Spirit of the Lakes*

while both were stationed in Germany.

"She painted my whole bedroom wall this beautiful ocean theme with dolphins and fish and coral. My friends would come over and they were so jealous," Sharp said.

About a year before Adrienne Paradise died, she was diagnosed with bipolar disorder. She began treatment, and for the next 12 months, doctors tried to dial in an effective regimen, her daughter said.

However, one early morning in March

2009, John Paradise ran screaming into Lauren's room. Adrienne Paradise had swallowed a bottle of Tylenol after a day-long bender. She was alive, but unconscious. A day later, her organs failing, she was removed from life support and died.

The experience left Lauren Sharp – who fought mental health demons of her own – fearful.

"I always struggled so bad," said Sharp,

“but I was scared to get help.”

Years later, after the birth of her second child, in 2022, Lauren Sharp suffered severe postpartum depression. Her husband, Landon Sharp, and his mother persuaded Lauren to see a mental health professional. And she is so grateful they did.

“For the past year, I have felt like a whole new person” she said. “I’m mad that I waited this long.”

Sharp said the grief that follows the suicide of a close family member is pitted with guilt. At the time of her mother’s death, Sharp and her sister were “just getting into trouble,” she said, tearing up as she wondered aloud whether she’d done anything by then to make her mother proud. Sharp also often wonders how her mother’s life might have progressed had the artist survived.

“She died before social media took off and before Etsy was a thing,” Sharp said. “I can just imagine what she could be doing today in a world where it is so much easier to have your art seen.”

Of at least one thing, Sharp has grown supremely assured.

“Getting help is the best thing I’ve ever done,” she said. “I don’t know if this feeling will ever go away that there’s a big piece of my heart missing. But now that I’m doing things to benefit my mental health, and making art that I know would make my mom proud, I feel like that hole is filling.”

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 49,000 Americans committed suicide and 1.5 million attempted it in 2023, the last year for which statistics are noted on the website.

If you or someone you know is in crisis, call the National Suicide & Crisis Lifeline at 988. The lifeline offers judgment-free support for mental health crises, substance use and more. Text, call or chat 988.



from top: Carolyn Stahl, her daughter, Kara Hoffmann, and Hoffman's daughter, Blakely, all of Johnsburg, were among Toast & Roast coffee shop customers drawn to Sharp's hats during an interview to talk about her business and mental health awareness advocacy; Sharp looks over some pictures of her late mother, Adrienne Paradise, during an interview for this story.

CYNTHIA WOLF PHOTOS *Spirit of the Lakes*

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