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ON THE COVER

Lake Geneva Balloon Company has been around for 20-plus years and offers morning and afternoon flights in the area. From homes and fields to farms and more, the open air view offered is quite the experience.

COURTESY LAKE GENEVA BALLOON COMPANY
Spirit of Geneva Lakes

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Lake Geneva Farmers Market

The annual market, which runs through Oct. 30 is held at Horticultural Hall, 330 Broad St., Thursdays from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m., rain or shine with vendors inside and out. For more information, email market@horticulturalhall.com.

Mind reading

Encounter strange phenomena up close at Joe Diamond's critically acclaimed Evening of Mind-Bending Mysteries at the historic Maxwell Mansion, 304 S. Wells St., Lake Geneva.

Unlike the darkness of a Big City theater, or television camera trickery you might have seen, interactive mind reading in a historic mansion is more refined, more interactive and more personal – all with good humor and a joyous sense of wit.

The audience for each performance is limited to 35 guests, and children younger than 18 must be accompanied by a parent or guardian.

Remaining dates scheduled are Aug. 5, 12, 19 and 26. For tickets go to https://joediamondlive.wellattended.com.

Art in the Park

The annual art show will be held Saturday, Aug. 9 (from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.) and Sunday, Aug. 10 (from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.)

Sponsored by the Geneva Lake Arts Foundation, Art in the Park – held at Flat Iron Park, 201 Wrigley Dr., Lake Geneva – is a juried show that spotlights original fine art from over eighty artists from throughout the U.S. featuring paintings, photography, pottery, graphics, glass, sculptures, jewelry, woodwork and more. The event will also feature a silent auction, live entertainment, food and beverages and children's activities.

It's free entry to the outdoor art show with art available for purchase.

Venetian Festival

This is the 63rd anniversary of the Lake Geneva Jaycees five-day Venetian Festival, which runs from Aug. 13-17 at Flat Iron, Library and Seminary parks in downtown Lake Geneva.

It features a weekend of great family entertainment including an Arts & Craft Fair, Carnival, Live Music, Water Ski Show, Traditional Festival Food including a brat stand and beer tent, and a Lumberjack Exposition This is all capped off on Sunday with a traditional Venetian Style lighted boat parade followed by the area's largest fireworks display high above Geneva Lake.

For details including an event schedule, visit www.venetianfest.com.

Williams Bay Farmers Market

Held Fridays from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Edgewater Park near the lakefront off of Geneva Street in Williams Bay, this is a unique boutique Friday market with a variety of farmers, makers and bakers with homegrown, hand-made, and homemade foods and goods.

All local produce, fresh cooked dishes, baked goods, sweet treats, fresh flowers, hand-made jewelry, hand-designed art and décor, soaps and gifts.

For more information, follow Williams Bay Farmers Market on Facebook.

Sunday Coffee Rides

The riding season has started and Avant Cycle, 912 S. Wells St., Lake Geneva, hosts group rides at a casual pace (12-15 mph).

This is a no-drop, fun ride. Stopping for breakfast before heading back to the shop. Start your Sunday with us!

Rides weather dependent. Routes subject to change, helmets required. All rides, unless noted, leave from Avant's back entrance

Destinations are subject to change. Weather patterns will cancel any rides that would be hazardous.

Start time/destinations: Aug. 3, 7:30 a.m. – Springfield; Aug. 10, 7:30 a.m. – Richmond; Aug. 17, 7:30 a.m. – Burlington; Aug. 24, 7:30 a.m. – Hebron; Aug. 31, 7:30 a.m. – Walworth (Labor Day weekend); Sept. 7, 8 a.m. – Elkhorn; Sept. 14, 8 a.m. – Twin Lakes.

Other rides are also in the works. For more information, visit avant-cycles.com.

Saturdays on the Square

The Farmers Market in Elkhorn hosts fresh market, local artisans, bakers, crafters, commercial and nonprofit vendors. It takes place on the downtown square, Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., Memorial Day weekend to Labor Day weekend.

Vendors set-up on a first come first served basis with plenty of room for all who attend. Find food trucks and a morning workout on the square and get your weekends started off right!

The market is held at Veterans Park, 100 W. Walworth St., Elkhorn.

For more information, send an email to info@elkhornchamber.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.



IS A PUBLICATION OF



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SOUTHERN LAKES NEWSPAPERS

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Beach time a summer favorite for many

by Sandra Landen Machaj

CORRESPONDENT

Summertime. It's time to enjoy the beauty and fresh air of the outdoors especially Geneva Lake. Many visitors make their way to the Lake Geneva area to enjoy a variety of activities with the clear waters of Geneva Lake calling them to the lakefront.

While there is never a lack of fun and interesting things to do, from boating to hiking the shore path, one thing many enjoy – from the time they are young and then later with their children and grandchildren.

Going to the beach is a summer activity looked forward to with great anticipation,

especially for people who live in areas where a lake is not nearby. It's often a summertime outing that seems to take weeks – well, months if considering winter – to arrive.

But those who live in the area have an advantage with Geneva Lake and its beautiful beaches available for residents and visitors to make their way to the shore. Any day when the sun is shining and the temperature is warm enough, the beach is calling.

"We have three major beaches on Geneva Lake that are open to the public," shared Deanna Goodwin, Vice President of Marketing, Communications,



above: On a warm summer day, everyone flocks to the beach.
 This young man in the foreground is ready to hit the water.
 at right: Swimming out to the raft adds fun and excitement to a day at the beach (and in the lake) for many people.



and Development for Visit Lake Geneva.

"Each beach has its own unique look and all three have sandy beaches and lifeguards. The lifeguards are on duty during the day, for your safety during the summer months," she added.

Riviera Beach is the most popular on Geneva Lake as it is located right in downtown Lake Geneva, alongside the famous Riviera Ballroom and the fleet of Lake Geneva Cruise Lines' boats.

When one is in the downtown area, walking the shore path, visiting the library located near the shore, or while at the Riviera for an event, the sounds of happiness from those gathered on the beach radiates through the air. For those planning to spend time on the beach, the sounds make them hope it arrives sooner than later. And for those who hadn't thought about it, it suddenly comes to mind.

Whether headed there with children to play in the sand and keep cool in between by swimming in the lake, or by yourself for a quiet rest or to read a book while listening to the waves, there is no place like it.

Riviera Beach being located adjacent to the Riviera means it offers restrooms and showers available for those using the beach.

Bring your mats or blankets or lounge chairs to sit at the beach and sunbathe. And don't forget the sunscreen. As you wander along the beach you will see a variety of activity – from children building sandcastles to playing with a beach ball on the shore or sitting on a towel while enjoying a snack. A sure sound of summer is hearing the voices and laughter of those enjoying time at the beach.

When it becomes too warm on the beach



above: This heart sign welcomes guests to Riviera Beach in downtown Lake Geneva. **top:** An aerial view of the beach and the Riviera Docks shows the beauty of the area.

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or it's time to rinse the sand off, head for the water to splash, swim and enjoy the cool crisp, clear lake water.

The safety of those on Riviera Beach is protected by lifeguards who, with a few exceptions, are present during business hours from 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. from after Memorial Day until Labor Day, weather permitting.

The beach is open to visitors at all times but when lifeguards are not present, people are swimming at their own risk. The Visit Lake Geneva website lists days lifeguards are not present.

There is a charge for use of the beach during normal business hours when the lifeguards are in place. The cost is \$10 per person over the age of 6 years, free for kids who are younger. Tickets can be purchased at the beach kiosks near the entrance. A season pass is also available and may be purchased for \$100.

Residents can purchase passes at a cost of \$3 each and up to six passes can be bought at a time. Proof of residency is required, such as a current utility bill that lists the address. The resident passes may be purchased at city hall.

In order to keep the beach clean and safe for everyone's use, there are some items that are prohibited on the beach. These include glass containers, alcohol, drugs or smoking – none of which are allowed on the beach. No knives or other weapons are

permitted. And no pets, including dogs or other animals, are allowed on the beach at any time.

Food items may be brought and consumed on the beach along with beverages that are non- alcoholic and not in glass containers. Tables no larger than 2 feet by 2 feet are allowed to be brought in and used but there is a limit of one per family. This allows people to picnic while enjoying a day of fun at the beach.

Williams Bay

If the beach in downtown Lake Geneva is too busy, consider heading to Williams Bay. The crowds are usually not as large as Riviera Beach. Parking might also be less difficult in Williams Bay as there is a lot just across the street from the beach area.

The beach in the Bay is on Geneva Street. In addition to the nice beach, it contains a shaded grassy area where beach visitors can take a break from the sun. There is also a bath house with showers to wash the sand away at the end of the day.

Families with children can be seen on the beach enjoying building sandcastles and carrying pails of water from the edge of the lake back to their creations to fill the moats – an important aspect. The challenge can be filling them before the water disappears into the sand.

While children are enjoying the sand on the beach, adults can be seen resting on

the beach, catching up with their summer reading.

Like Riviera Beach, there are lifeguards on the job during the hours the beach is open to the public, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays and from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. on weekends.

The cost for use of the beach is \$10 for those 12 and older, \$5 for kids 6 to 11 years old, and free for kids 5 and younger.

Fontana

The third major beach on Geneva Lake that is enjoyed by visitors and residents is Fontana Beach, which is on the west side of the lake. It also has a large sandy beach with a wide grassy area. There are changing rooms available for customer use.

Parking is convenient as there is a pay lot adjacent to the beach making it easy to carry water toys, sand toys, towels and other beach necessities to the shore.

There are a number of rules to make time spent there enjoyable for all, similar to the other two beaches. No alcohol is allowed on any village property or piers. No smoking, glass objects, or sharp utensils allowed. Grills and open fires are prohibited and no pets are allowed during the summer season on the beach. All coolers and bags brought onto the beach are subject to search.

The fee for entry is free for kids 5 and younger, \$6 for kids 6 to 11, \$12 for those 12 and older. People in the military and







seniors over the age of 65 pay the discounted price of \$6.

Residents and property owners can purchase up to six season passes at \$5 each.

Daily beach passes and concessions can be purchased at the concession stand from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Lifeguard are on site from 9:30 a.m. to 6 p.m., Memorial Day to Labor Day.

Two Fridays each month during the summer, a family appropriate movie is shown on the inflatable movie screen that measures 16 feet by 9 feet. There are two movie nights remaining on the schedule this summer – Aug. 8 and Aug. 22. Check the Village of Fontana website for details on the movie nights including movies to be shown and plan a family or friends movie night under the stars.

Anyone who spends time at the beach or on the water understands the importance of knowing how swim, for their safety and the safety of others. Throughout the summer, the Water Safety Patrol offers swimming lessons at all three beaches. The lessons are offered twice a week or weekly.

Contact the Water Safety Patrol for more information by calling 262-245-6577 or visiting their website (watersafetypatrol.org) to find out how to register for next year's classes.

The Fischer family from the western suburbs of Illinois are semi-regulars at the beach in Lake Geneva.

"We come up here a few times each summer because the beaches are so nice," John Fisher said. "On the way home, by the time we hit the Wisconsin-Illinois border which is just a half hour away, the two younger children are asleep. In about another 10 minutes our 9-year-old is also asleep.

"By the time we get home, all of us are ready for a good night's sleep after our day at the beach," he added.

For more information about Geneva Lake beaches, go to visitlakegeneva.com.



top: People walk along the beach, taking in the beauty of the area and looking for the perfect spot to stop and relax. above: Elevated lifeguard stands can be seen along Riviera Beach. Lifeguards are on duty during daytime hours in the summer.

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From a variety of grills to meats, the area has plenty of options

by Sandra Landen Machaj

CORRESPONDENT

In addition to summer being the time for many activities outdoors, it's also when many people tend to move at least some of their cooking out to the grill. Whether it's hamburgers, hot dogs, steaks, chicken, fish, or one of Wisconsin's favorites – bratwurst, it's not the kitchen stove warming up but the grill on the patio.

There was a time grills were all very similar and charcoal grills were the grill of choice, and still are for some. The charcoal is placed into the grill, lit with a match and set afire. Once the charcoal gets to the needed temperature, the food is placed on the grill.

"Over the years, the number of different grills available for home use changed," said Sue Schinke, who with her husband Tom are the second generation to own Lyle's Appliance and TV in Elkhorn. "Today, in addition to the simple grills first used by families in the area, they have increased to a large number of outdoor cooking grills that can do more than just grill a sausage, burger or a steak."

After charcoal, it was gas-style grills that



from top: There is really no limit on the types of food that can be prepared on a grill, from ribs and corn to hot dogs; Lake Geneva Country Meats offers much more than meat including bread, buns, spices, cheese and condiments.

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are basically just providing a surface to grill your meats. These days, a stop by Lyle's to pick out a new grill is a major task because there are so many different types. There is no shortage of ways the grill master in your family can cook.

The Big Green Egg, a popular brand carried by Lyle's is a very popular and versatile outdoor cooker. With The Big Green Egg, one is not only able to grill foods but also to smoke meats and even bake items, including desserts and pizzas. It

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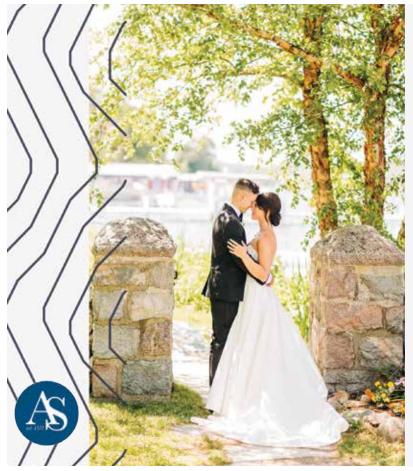
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above: This large Traeger grill is a great option for a large family or when entertaining many guests. **at left:** The Big Green Egg is different from other grills. It's made of a ceramic material and comes in several sizes.

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boasts a cleaner charcoal – known as lump charcoal – than the old-time briquettes.

"The Big Green Egg has been manufactured in Georgia for over 10 years. We carry it in a variety of sizes, four to be exact but we only keep three of the sizes in stock. From the Mini Egg – appropriate for a single person or a couple to the extra, extra-large size often purchased by restaurants, there is one for every need," Sue explained.

Just as popular is the Traeger brand, which like the Big Green Egg allows one to grill, smoke, or bake but uses a different type of fuel – pellets, another of the cleaner fuels.

It's a matter of personal choice which one is better.

According to Schinke, the decision may depend on space available. The Big Green Egg is a ceramic based cooker, while the Traeger is a metal grill. Broil King is a third brand enjoyed by many in the area – it's a gas grill that can be installed using natural gas or an LP tank.

Today, many people are looking for more than just a grill all the way to a complete outdoor kitchen. For the big outdoor kitchen, consider the Viking grill.

"We don't stock the Viking grills, but we can order them as we have for customers who wish to have a real high end outdoor kitchen," shared Sue. "The Viking is the favorite of many of the homeowners along Geneva Lake."

Lyle's TV and Appliances, 17 S. Washington, Elkhorn.. For more information, call 262-723-3477 or stop in during business hours: Monday to Friday 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., Saturday, 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.

The main course

Once the grill is chosen and in place it's time to delve into outdoor cooking. There are so many choices of what to cook on the grill but the most important for many is to choose quality meats and vegetables to put on that grill.

The choice of meats for the grill may depend on the kind of event being held, from a small family meal to an all-out backyard party. From brats, hamburgers and hot dogs to various cuts of steaks, there are plenty of choices to be made when planning the menu.

There are several places in the area to consider going to purchase quality meats for your grill.

Lake Geneva Country Meats on Highway 50, a few miles east of downtown Lake Geneva, has been providing quality meats since John and Rita Leahy first opened the meat packing company in the area in 1965.

Over the years, it has continued to grow and still offers a variety of fresh meats, salads, frozen meats and fish, along with a variety of seasonings to ensure that your meat tastes the best it can regardless of how it's being cooked.

One of the most popular foods to cook on the grill in the summertime is bratwurst, and the quality and variety of brats available at Lake Geneva Country Meats are worthy of a visit. According to Nick Vorpagel, Vice President of Lake Geneva Country Meats, the most popular flavor of their bratwurst is the cherry brat.

"Many people like to cook their brats in beer but often make the mistake of boiling the brat in beer," Vorpagel explained. "Instead, first boil them in water on medium heat for about 10 minutes. This assures that the meat is evenly cooked throughout the brat. Then it is time to place them on the medium grill to brown the outside, and turning them every 2 to 3 minutes so they brown evenly."

If you do want them to be in beer, which is the way many people prefer, Nick recommends heating the beer slowly but not boiling it, add onions to the pan and let them warm slowly, and then place the cooked brats in the warm beer and onions. He also recommends putting the cooked brat on a brat bun, never a hot dog bun, and adding whatever condiments you enjoy.

In addition to brats, Vorpagel recommends their quality steaks for grilling. They offer a variety that all work well on the grill. And don't forget the pork chops or the ribs for they too can be enjoyed whether cooked inside or out on the grill.

And finally, Nick encourages people to broaden their horizons when grilling.

"Don't stop on just cooking the meat or even fish on the grill. Corn and asparagus are also delicious on the grill. Put everything for your meal on the grill," he said.

Lake Geneva Country Meats is at 907 Highway 50, Lake Geneva. Hours are Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.,

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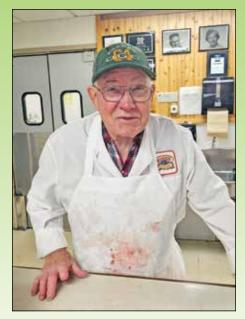
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above: Andy Sorg of Sorg's Meats takes a few minutes away from butchering to visit with customers. **at right:** The variety of brat flavors available is sure to suit many taste preferences at any cookout. A staple at many cookouts are hot dogs – beef or a combination of beef and pork, which come in a variety of flavors. When shopping for meat to grill, popular choices include brats – plain or in a variety of special flavors – and steaks.

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Saturday, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., and Sunday, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. For more information, call 262-248-3339.

Sorgs Quality Meats and Sausages

In Darien, there is another long time meat specialty shop offering quality products, Sorgs Quality Meats and Sausages, now with second and third generation members of the family running the business.

Andy Sorg, 86, still works full time as a butcher although he says that at his age lifting those heavy sides of beef is hard. And, because he helps care for his wife, he is considering slowing down to three days a week this winter.

Sorgs produces over 50 types of sausages, including a variety of bratwurst as well as wieners, burgers and more.

"While cooking brats and hot dogs, on the grill is a favorite of many Wisconsin residents, we also offer a variety of flavored burgers that are enjoyed," said Diane Sorg, part of the current generation of the Sorg family helping run the market on Route 14.

"We offer hamburgers of the top quality meat that are delicious. In addition, we offer a variety of burgers with unique flavors," she said.

Flavored burgers include French onion, cheeseburgers with Jarlsberg or cheddar added, mushroom and Swiss burger, campfire burgers, and Cuban burgers. All







of them are not available at all times but are created at various times of the year.

"One of the most popular of the available burgers is known as the Al Capone Burger, an Italian flavored burger with chunks of summer sausage and mozzarella cheese embedded in the burger," she said. "Any of these burgers offers a unique taste and are wonderful when cooked on the grill. No MSG is ever added to our sausages or burgers."

Sorgs also offers steak on a stick – a skewer with prime pieces of steak on it, which makes it easy to grill. They also recommend baby back ribs for the grill.

In addition to their fresh meats, they also carry a number of seasonings that can add even more flavor.

Additionally, Sorgs offers heat and eat entrees featuring popular meat pies, turkey and vegetables, and chicken rice, along with others. They come in individual size or in 9" family size. Sorgs also has a variety of fruit pies available

Sorgs Quality Meats and Sausages is at N4290 U.S. Hwy 14, Darien. Hours are Monday to Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Saturday, 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. For more information, call 262-724-5554.

Wilson's Farm Meats

In the Elkhorn area, Wilson's Farm Meats offers a wide variety of meat. Initially, and still known for their quality pork raised on the family farm, Wilson's also carries top quality beef and other meats as well as fish and other seafood. Try the freshly made brats, brat patties, burgers or steaks on the grill this summer.

Wilson's Farm Meats is at, 406 S. Wisconsin St., Elkhorn. Hours are Monday to Friday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sat and Sunday from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. For more information, call 262-723-2919.





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Enjoy the view with Lake Geneva Balloon Company

by Sandra Landen Machaj

CORRESPONDENT

As a hot air balloon takes off in the morning for a sunrise ride – or in the afternoon across the Lake Geneva area, most people involved are excited. Some because it's their first trip up in a hot air balloon, others because they are enjoying the view for a second or even third time.

But no one on the balloon is likely more excited than John Trione, owner of the Lake Geneva Balloon Company and the chief pilot.

Trione took his first hot air balloon ride over 20 years ago and said he fell so in love with it that he knew he needed to take the next step.

"I spent the next 18 months learning to

fly balloons. After receiving my Private Pilot's Certificate for hot air balloons from the FAA, I jumped on the balloon racing circuit and traveled the Midwest," Trione said.

During this time on the racing circuit, he sharpened his skills as he raced against some of the best pilots in the area. He moved on in 2000 to acquire his Commercial Pilot's Certificate for piloting balloons and was hired by a local balloon company to fly balloons that could carry six to 12 passengers.

After two years of working for another company and learning more about the business of ballooning at the same time, Trione started Lake Geneva Balloon Company, which has continued to grow and prosper over the years.

"We are most proud of our perfect safety record," Trione said. "We don't ever compromise safety."

There is generally a mix of people on the ride, some taking their first ride and others who gone and returned. Each flight is approximately an hour in length but before the actual flight there is much to be accomplished.

Flight time options

The Lake Geneva Balloon Company offers a choice of two flight times, a morning flight and an afternoon flight, but they are both dependent on weather conditions. Flights are often postponed due to inclement weather, and not wanting to compromise safety.

If booked for a morning flight, a wakeup call from Trione or a member of his crew will take place. They will let the passengers know where to meet for the lift off. Once gathered at the assigned space, guests can view the crew assembling the balloon and basket and then inflating the balloon, which will take about an hour.

The entire preparation, flight, descent, and landing will take about three hours.

Each flight is unique as it's dependent on the wind direction and speed. Where it takes off from and the planned landing area often changes due to the weather especially the wind direction and speed.



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"We have several property owners who are fine with us landing on their land. We call them to let them know we will be landing there and the ground crew makes its way there to help secure the landing," Trione said.

He explained that while many people would like to fly over

Geneva Lake, they rarely do so because of its large size and lack of spaces to land. Most of the homeowners on the lake prefer the balloon does not land in their yard.

Lake Geneva Balloon Company, however, often flies over Lake Como, just north of the city as it's a much smaller lake with more open space to land around it.

Part of the growth of the balloon company is with the equipment used.

"Four seasons ago, we created a new balloon and basket that will hold eight passengers," Trione said. "It contains four compartments that each holds two people."

The new balloon, which was designed by Trione, is green, purple and yellow - his fraternity colors. It's the first brand new

> These passengers enjoy the memories being made while riding on a hot air balloon.

COURTESY LAKE GENEVA BALLOON CO. Spirit of Geneva Lakes

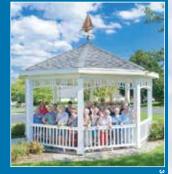
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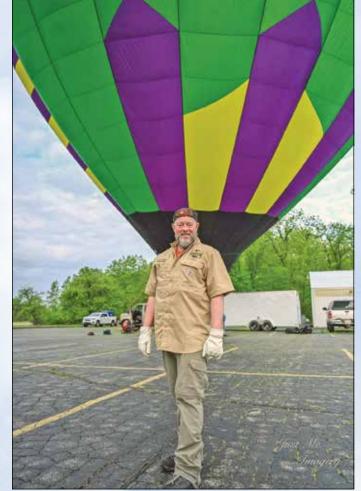
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balloon that he designed and purchased. Coming up with a name that aptly described the new balloon was not a problem. A former mayor of Harvard described the balloon as a reminder of New Orleans and its Mardi Gras because of its colors.

"So, this balloon became Geneva Jester," said Trione.

Patience is key

Because the weather can be so fickle, they may have to cancel flights and reschedule, and sometimes cancellations can occur several times, especially during stretches of inclement weather, with rain, high winds, thunder and lightning.

Having a larger basket and balloon for more people allows for fewer flying days and more people can be accommodated on the days suitable for flying.

Dressing comfortably for the flight is essential. It's hot in the balloon as people are standing under a 220-degree bag of heat and, if it's a bright day, are exposed to the hot sun while up in the basket. Hats are recommended to keep heads protected from the sun.

Climbing into the basket, which is 58 inches high, often requires help. Not only does one have to climb over the side of the basket, but then needs to drop down into it. There are step holds built into the basket to help with the process.

As the balloon lifts off and begins to float in the air and rises slowly passing



left: John Trione stands in front of his newest balloon, Geneva Jester, which features the colors of green, purple and yellow. **right:** Riding in a hot air balloon offers a very different view of the scenery.

COURTESY LAKE GENEVA BALLOON CO. Spirit of Geneva Lakes

homes, sometimes barns and eventually makes its way over the treetops, each person experiences it differently. But the sense of flying in the open air is one that many enjoy so much they return for a subsequent flight.

While some go on a hot air balloon ride just for the experience itself, others are celebrating a special occasion.

According to Trione, there have been people who have gotten engaged on a hot air balloon flight and even married, on at least one flight. Others may be celebrating a birthday or an anniversary or simply be looking to check an experience off their bucket list.

Whatever their reason for the flight, the crew at Lake Geneva Balloon Company aims to make sure they have a great experience.

After the flight is over, the group gathers for a non-alcoholic toast and to celebrate their flight. The Balloonist's prayer is also recited with the toast. Those that have been on the hot air balloon flight are awarded their certificate of having completed it.

A few reminders

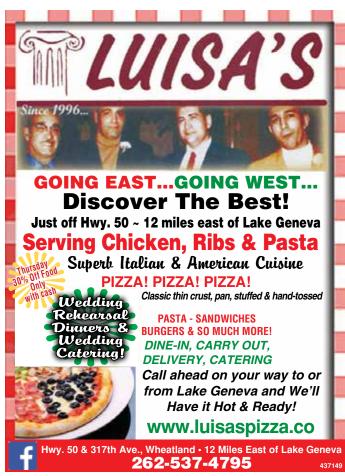
When signing up for a flight there are a few restrictions. Children younger than 8 years of age are not allowed to fly.

Each person, who will be going must be able to understand and follow the directions of the captain for their own safety. The flight requires standing for the one-hour trip and the ability to climb in and out of the basket.

The pilot needs to be aware of any major health issues, especially back issues, neck injuries, pregnancy or any other medical conditions that could make it difficult for one to fly.

"We currently have two pilots and are always looking for additional certified pilots," Trione said. "We have two student pilots who work with us and both of them are women. So, this is not just a field for men."









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There was a store where unique hot air balloon items could be purchased and flights could be booked, but it's been closed as Lake Geneva Balloon Company moves forward to an easier and more modern way of providing service for their customers.

They will soon be opening an online store where items can be purchased such as t-shirts and sweatshirts and hoodies with hot air balloons pictured on them. There are also baseball styled caps and a popular hummingbird feeder, which is shaped like a hot air balloon. It would make a great gift for someone who has taken a hot air balloon ride or someone who has it on their bucket list, as would another item available, hand blown glass balloons.

The online store is being worked on now and will open this fall in time for Christmas shopping. Find the store at hotairballoonstore.com.

Booking a flight has also become easier, according to Trione.

"We are doing it online so all you have to do is go to www.lakegenevaballoon. com and fill out the form with your information," he said. "Frequently asked questions are available on the site and if anything is unclear or you have additional questions feel free to call us during business hours."

Looking ahead, 2027 will mark the 25year celebration of Lake Geneva Balloon Company and they hope to make it a joyous celebration for area residents and visitors.



Trione said they are already working on an exciting event.

"We are planning on bringing a Hot Air Balloon Festival to the area to celebrate our 25th anniversary and to encourage more people to enjoy hot air ballooning," he said. "We hope to bring in a group of balloonists and their balloons to participate in this event.

"Hopefully, this event will not only

bring new people to try hot air ballooning but to also bring in new recruits who are interested in becoming pilots. Watch for further information as we plan this event," he added.

For more information about Lake Geneva Balloon Company call 262-206-3975 during normal business hours, Monday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. or follow the Facebook page.

from top: This photograph shows how the large footprint of a hot air balloon; John Trione and his crew work on inflating a balloon prior to a flight.

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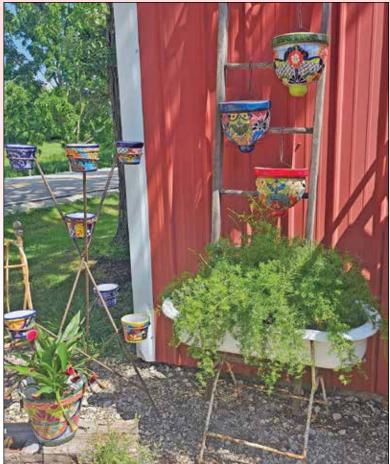
above:

This beautiful light fixture was created for the Mercantile. It can be seen through the open barn door from the road.

right:

A small portable bathtub makes a perfect planter, shown filled with asparagus ferns.

SANDRA LANDEN MACHAJ Spirit of Geneva Lakes



A place to give things a new life

Willow Farm
Mercantile
features items
from near and far

by Sandra Landen Machaj

CORRESPONDENT

The formal opening of Willow Farm Mercantile in Salem in late June was both the beginning and end of a long journey that Donna Schroeder began many years ago. The story begins in her childhood when she and her mother lived on the farm with her grandparents.

"It was always a fun place to grow up," Schroeder said. "Because we lived with my grandparents, my cousins were always coming out to visit and, on the farm, there is always something fun to do."

Willow Farm Mercantile makes its home on Town Road in the large dairy barn that was part of that farm. It has now been transformed into a huge retail space filled with new and antique items from around the world to make any space unique and beautiful.

"Turning this huge barn, and the surrounding space into the Willow Farm Mercantile was a difficult job, one that required many hours of work," Schroeder said. "Many hands went into getting it ready to be a retail store."

The work began by cleaning out the equipment that had accumulated throughout the years and cleaning the barn. Then there was the problem of birds that had always made their way into the barn. According to Schroeder, with the help of a friend, they hung sails near the top of the barn in an effort to keep birds high up, and so far, it seems to have worked. The sails also give the space an open outdoor look with the impression of huge clouds in the sky.

Schroeder has artistic talent and moved to Illinois to attend the Design School of Chicago at the Institute of Art. After

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verlo.com 1-866-99-VERLO completing her studies, she worked for Sherwin Williams Paint as a color-marketing specialist in Cleveland. For a time, she also lived in Oak Park, Illinois, where many artistic people seem to find a home. After all, it was the home of Frank Lloyd Wright.

She returned home to the farm to care for her mother when she became ill. Now it remains her home and also houses her business, Willow Farm Mercantile.

Mercantile is a term we don't often hear used in today's description of a business. It's defined as a place where merchants sold their wares. Early general stores were the mercantile stores, where people went for their everyday needs and maybe some specialty items.

Naming this a mercantile makes sense to Schroeder as much of the merchandise has been collected from around the world and brought here to be sold to people seeking a special look in their homes.

Gathering the goods

As Schroeder began to gather merchandise to fill Willow Tree Mercantile, she took an extensive shopping trip, which included stops in Hungary and India as well as an additional trip to Mexico.

"At each of these places I found a variety of unique items perfect for Willow Farm," she said. "I purchased those I felt would work well and that were in my budget. With a space as large as this two story barn, it would be impossible to purchase everything needed to fill it in one shopping trip."

Many of the items purchased had to be shipped in large shipping containers. It took time to make the trip abroad, ship the items by boat across the ocean, and then additional travel across the country to Wisconsin.

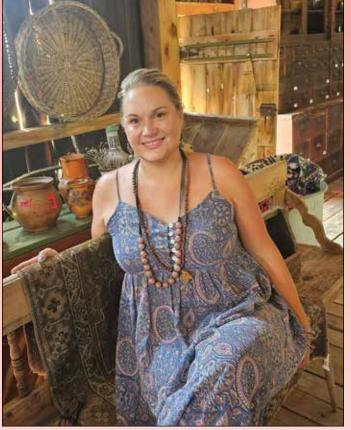
"I would purchase items until the shipping containers were filled," Schroeder explained.

With the main door to the barn open, the beautiful chandelier that Schroeder had designed to hang in the entranceway stands out. This unique light fixture adds bright light to the upper floor of the mercantile. There are also smaller versions of similar lights from Turkey that are for sale, sure to bring a bright and colorful new look to any room in a home.

"Before I settled on the idea of opening the mercantile, I thought I would grow lavender. That was not successful so I went back to what I love to do, working with design and color," Schroeder

from top: Donna Schoeder, owner of Willow Farm Mercantile, relaxes on an antique bench at her business. This wooden wheelbarrow would be a great addition to someone's lawn décor.

SANDRA LANDEN MACHAJ Spirit of Geneva Lakes





WILLOW FARM MERCANTILE



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explained. "I decided to make a space where I could create a place for people to find new and exciting things to add to their lives. I also enjoyed taking objects and repurposing them to give them a new life."

On the first trip to purchase items, Schroeder said she bought a lot of carpets from Turkey.

"I also added some here in the United States from a carpet business that closed," she said. "The beautiful and colorful carpets from Turkey, which is known for their creative carpets, add color to the Mercantile."



Willow Farm Mercantile opened for business in late June and will remain open until around Christmas.

SANDRA LANDEN MACHAJ Spirit of Geneva Lakes

So much to see

As one meanders

through the upper floor of the barn there are a variety of rugs in different colors. There are also other unique pieces including ceramic dishes, and some pottery from both Turkey and Mexico. Time spent perusing the many objects on display may inspire shoppers to change up their own space.

The style throughout the shop is very eclectic with new items, antique items and repurposed items available for sale. Schroeder is just beginning to have some imported clothing items added to the mix and plans to import more next year.



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The goal is to also bring in one of a kind artist created items, including some stained glass pieces created in Seattle by a cousin along with work created by other local artists.

Outside there are a variety of pieces that can enhance a yard or other outdoor space. There are colorful planters that hang on the wall and wooden wheelbarrows that can be planted with flowers to brighten things up. One notably unique item is a portable bathtub that can be filled with a variety of flowers.

The first weekend in October Willow Farm Mercantile will be part of the Shop Hop, a yearly event where shoppers visit a variety of businesses in the Wisconsin and the northern Illinois area. These businesses have signed up to be part of this event with each place carrying unique merchandise.

Last year, Schroeder said, they participated as a pop up before the store officially opened. Those who are out perusing during the Shop Hop are encouraged to stop in and see the barn as well as visiting other area shops that participate.

The goal at the mercantile is to

create a community where people can come and enjoy nature and where artists can support each other and share their art and grow together.

Like most farms, there are several animals on the grounds including three goats, a donkey, and a horse fenced in near the barn. They are all very friendly and when they see visitors near the fence, they will come over to say hello and enjoy a friendly greeting and a soft petting.

Currently, the Mercantile is open Thursday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. The open season will be from spring to Christmas, at which point it will close to allow Donna to travel and purchase more unique items for the store.

When planning a visit to the mercantile, leave enough time to explore the many special items on display. And of course, figure in enough time to say hello to the donkey, the goats, and the horse – all who are happy to be part of the welcoming committee.

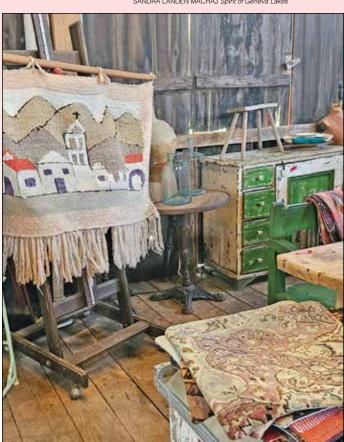
The Willow Farm Mercantile is located at 4719 Town Rd., Salem. For more information, like and follow the Facebook page.





from top right: This donkey is one of numerous animals on the farm and is happy to get a treat or friendly pat from visitors; While at the Mercantile, be sure to visit the goats who enjoy making new friends; These painted jars look similar to old water jars from the Middle East but are actually ceramic jars from Mexico; Rugs, many from Turkey, are displayed throughout the barn, available in a variety of colors and patterns.

SANDRA LANDEN MACHAJ Spirit of Geneva Lakes







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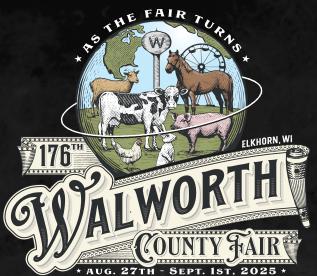
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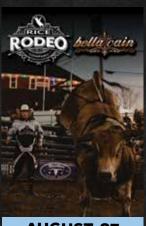
> SPONSORED BY KUNES RV/AUTO/ TRUCK/COMMERCIAL

SUNDAY WARRANT WITH SPECIAL GUEST SIIN

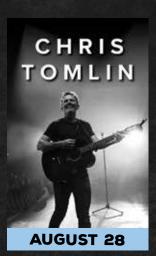
SPONSORED BY THE ECKLUND GROUP @PROPERTIES

MONDAY **DEMOLITION DERBY**

SPONSORED BY AMERICAN TRUCK CENTER, PETE'S TIRE ELKHORN. SUPERIOR CONSTRUCTION



AUGUST 27





AUGUST 29



AUGUST 30



AUGUST 31



SEPTEMBER 1

For entertainment schedules & more info visit:

www.WalworthCountyFairgrounds.com