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Voice

Celebrating the good news below the bridge

Since 2014

You don't have to see the whole staircase, just take the first step.

~ Martin Luther King

Vol2026:
January 9, 2026

Over 20,000 toys were distributed through Northwest Michigan Toys for Tots

By Mike Kent

Traverse City, Mich.— December 24, 2025 - An estimated 5,700 children in the Traverse City region will share the joy of new toys tomorrow thanks to the success of the northwest Michigan Toys for Tots campaign.

While the final numbers will not be fully known for several days, campaign organizers estimate they collected and distributed over 20,000 toys this year. Organizers say they believe they met the needs of more than a dozen human service agencies that distribute the toys to families in need. The northwest Michigan campaign covers Grand Traverse, Antrim, Benzie, Leelanau, and Kalkaska Counties. Other Toys for Tots campaigns operate throughout northern Michigan.

"This was a challenging year," said campaign coordinator Maggie Kent. "Toy requests were up from previous years. But thanks to the tremendous generosity of this community, thousands of toys will be in the grateful hands of kids this Christmas. It would never have happened if not for those who took toys to our drop-off locations and a variety of events."

Kent also praised the long list of sponsors who supported the campaign with cash donations or in-kind gifts.

The toy donations were augmented by 245 bikes donated through Piper's Project This Girl Can, and Bikes for Tikes. Corporate cash donations were given by Meijer, Fox Grand Traverse, Great Wolf Lodge, Leelanau Sands and Turtle Creek Casinos, the Les and Anne Biederman Foundation, Trout Town, and Moose and Stella's restaurants in Kalkaska. An additional \$10,000 gift was received from an anonymous donor.

"This is a campaign built around faith," said Kent. "None of us sees the final results. As it should be, it's the parents who experience the joy when their child opens a present on Christmas morning. All we can do is have a warm feeling because we know that moment will be special."

Local corporate sponsors include Meijer, Fox Grand Traverse, Serra of Traverse City, Great Wolf Lodge, Two Men and A Truck, Up North Live News, Midwestern Broadcasting, Black Diamond Broadcasting, Blarney Stone Broadcasting, Traverse City Record-Eagle, Leelanau Sands Casino, Turtle Creek Casino, The Les & Anne Biederman Foundation, Jen Tees, A. Papano's Pizza, Bay Area Transportation Authority, Fast Signs, US Coast Guard, Menards, Republic Services, Service Masters, Poolside, Home Depot, Grand Traverse Industries, Lowe's, Trout Town Tavern & Eatery, Moose & Stella's Café, Jimmy Johns, and Traverse City Tourism.

Now in its 78th year, the toy drive is part of a national campaign initiated by the Marine Corps Reserves. It is the largest toy collection program in the country, with 800 campaigns in all 50 states. More information is available at <http://www.toysfortots.org>



Above: Toys for Tots display at Odawa casino
Below: Two Men and a Truck help transport bicycles for Piper's Project This Girl Can.



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COMMUNITY

DEAL ME IN

By Mark Pilarski (reprinted with permission of the author)

Meet Jerry, the award-worthy guest writer

22 September 2003

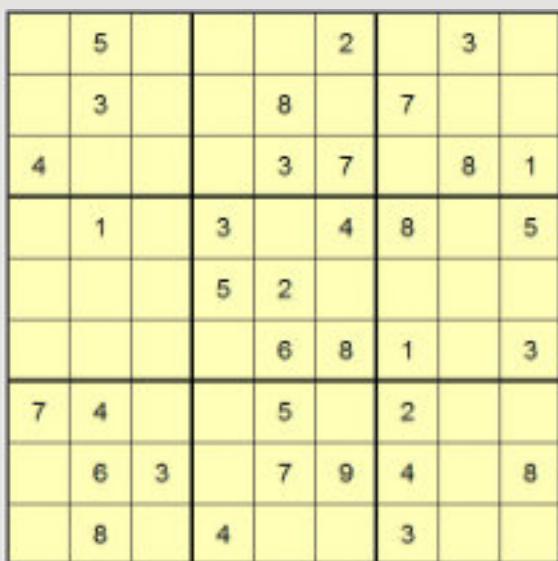
Dear Mark,

A long overdue note to tell you how much I enjoy your column. While I agree 100% with your gambling views, I would offer another take on keno. Having been gambling in Reno since 1948 and as a longtime Nevada resident, I consider gambling to be entertainment. Here is my take on keno. I meet three friends two or three times a week and we each play two games of keno progressive at \$1.25 a game. If we win, we split the winnings. Here's the math: Two games at \$1.25 and a buck for the keno writer. Another \$1.00 for our "free" drink for a total of \$4.50. We take turns playing, so we stay longer. In three years, our biggest win was \$65.00 for 5 out of 6. \$5.00 for the keno writer and a whopping \$20.00 for each of us (only three of us that day). So we are not making any money, right? Now, let's look at it another way. If we met at Starbucks, do you think we could get out for \$4.50? Do you think we would be welcome to hang around as long as we like? Do you think we would ever make any money? Also we have friends who spend several hundred dollars a week playing golf, or what about fishing, hunting, bowling... well, you get

the idea. We enjoy ourselves and COULD win something. Reno has to be the best place in the world to live. We drink, eat and see shows for next to nothing and are welcomed every time we visit. Flash: I delayed writing you for so long, but we finally hit a solid six for \$4700.00! Two hundred dollars for the keno employees and \$1500.00 each of us (three again). Keep up the good work, and I especially enjoy your "war" stories about gambling. Jerry L.

Who am I, Jerry, to fault you on your philosophy? Your gambling coterie is betting money they can afford to lose, and you have set loss limits (\$4.50) and win goals (free drinks). Your impeccable reasoning calls to mind the violet-haired Reno beauty who borrowed \$5,000 from her bank for a two-week trip to Bermuda, leaving her \$250,000 Rolls Royce in the bank's underground parking level as collateral. When she returned, repaid the 5 grand along with \$15.41 in interest, and started toward the parking area, a bank VP approached her discretely and said, "Please forgive my curiosity, but why would anyone leave a car worth a quarter million as collateral for a loan of \$5,000?" She smiled at him and asked, "Where else could I park my car, under guard, for two weeks, for \$15.41?" Understand, Jerry, that keno is a

Sudoku Puzzle January 9, 2026



Solution on page 15

tough beat because of the muffle my claptrap and quietly enormous casino advantage the endorse the proceedings of your house holds on the game. cadre of green felt gamblers. Consequently, table games and selected casino wagers, played intelligently, offer the greatest hope for the player, unlike yourselves, whose dominant purpose is walking out of the casino with the casino's loot. But I do tip my fedora to the "entertainment factor" of gambling, especially with games, keno included, that are enjoyable to play on a modest bankroll (under \$5). I can't be critical of any player whose strategy limits his or her gambling to under five bucks, maintains total bankroll control, and who enjoys the R&R aspect of casino gambling. I think I will just



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Gambling quote of the week:
"Mastering the inherent unpredictability of any game or art form can trigger overpowering 'pleasure,' and this dopamine rush gets deeply embedded in the memory of some of the most talented practitioners." James McManus, *Positively Fifth Street*



Dear Friend,

In 2025, we got a lot of stuff done. That's what we're all about in Michigan. We take care of our family, our friends, and our community. We work together to build a brighter future.

This year, we:

- Eliminated state taxes on tips, overtime, and Social Security.

- Secured the largest roads deal in Michigan history, \$2 billion more every year to fix the damn state AND local roads.
- Provided free pre-K and community college for all.
- Fed all 1.4 million public school students free breakfast and lunch.
- Protected quality, affordable health care for

millions who get their insurance through Medicaid.

- Built more affordable housing, met our goal of 75,000 homes a full year ahead of schedule, and upped that goal for next year.

Sincerely,
Gretchen Whitmer
Governor

COMMUNITY

Learn to ice fish from the pros, build your own snowshoes

The DNR Outdoor Skills Academy offers opportunities to learn how to ice fish with professional anglers and build a pair of snowshoes this winter.

Hard Water School, with virtual instruction Jan. 13 and 20 and an in-person class Jan. 24 at the Carl T. Johnson Hunting and Fishing Center in Cadillac's Mitchell State Park, provides an ice fishing experience for anglers of all skill levels. Focusing on techniques for panfish, walleye and pike, pro staffers from Clam Outdoors, HT Enterprises, Vexilar, K-Drill, Fish Bones and

more will provide expert instruction on setup, rigging, gear selection, fish location, ice safety, and rules and regulations. Participants will have the opportunity for hands-on learning on the ice, including one-on-one guidance from professionals. Cost is \$25, which includes a take-home gift and bait.

During the Snowshoe Building Workshop at Hartwick Pines State Park in Grayling, Jan. 24-25, instructors will teach participants, step by step, how to lace the modified bear paw-style, wooden-framed snowshoes (10 inches by 36

inches). Tubular nylon will be used for the lacing. The snowshoe kit comes with a set of "Super A" bindings. Cost for the class is \$195.

Additional snowshoe-building sessions are available in February and March, and another Hard Water School is scheduled in February. Find more details about these and other classes at Michigan.gov/OutdoorSkills.



Take in fresh air, scenic views during lantern events

Get out and enjoy Michigan's winter with lantern-lit hikes at several state parks:

- Lantern-lit Snowshoe Trail, now through Feb. 28, and Lantern Hike Jan. 9, Jan. 16, Jan. 23 and Jan. 30 at Mitchell State Park in Cadillac.
- Lantern-Lit Snowshoe at Van Riper State Park in Negaunee, Jan. 9 and Jan. 23.
- Lantern Lit Trail Event at Sleeper State Park in Caseville, Jan. 24.
- Lantern Hike at Island Lake Recreation Area in Brighton, Jan. 31.

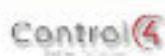




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O&A - cont. from page 11

Alcoholics Anonymous Meeting (AA),
 Forrest Home Township Hall, 351 Bridge
 St, Bellaire

When: Mon, Wed, 12:00 pm

Alcoholics Anonymous Meeting (AA),
 Forrest Home Township Hall, 351 Bridge
 St, Bellaire

When: Mon, Thu, 12:00 pm

TOPS #1304 Meeting, Kalkaska United
 Ministries for Christ, 2525 Beebe Rd,
 Kalkaska, contact 231 384-2154

**When: Tue, 9:00 am weigh ins, 10:00 am
 meeting**

**Al-Anon Family Group, Stepping Toward
 Serenity**, on ZOOM: login information on
 meeting list at Alanon-d39.org

When: Tues, at noon

Al-Anon, Al-Teen Meeting, (Kalkaska
 COA) Senior Center, 303 S Coral St,
 contact Linda 231 384-3227

When: Tue, 7:00 pm

Alcoholics Anonymous Meeting (AA),
 Kalkaska Senior Center, 303 S Coral St
When: Tue, 8:00 pm

Secular Sobriety Group, AA of Traverse
 City, meets on ZOOM, ID#447 584 8945
 PW 628608, more info at
 secularAAinMichigan.org

**When: Tues, Thu, 7 pm, Sun, 12 pm (also
 in person)**

Alcoholics Anonymous Meetings (AA),
 Kalkaska United Ministries for Christ, 2525
 Beebe Rd
When: Tue, Thu, Sat 12:00 pm

Alcoholics Anonymous Meeting (AA),
 Fife Lake Village Office, 616 Bates Rd
When: Wed, 7:00 pm

Alcoholics Anonymous Meeting (AA),
 Central Lake VFW Hall, 1805 S. Main St,
When: Wed, 8:00 pm

Grief Support Group, (Kalkaska COA)
 Senior Center, 303 S Coral St, all ages
 welcome, contact 231 258-5030
When: 2nd and 4th Wed, 10:30 am

Antrim Co Parkinson Support Group,
 Bellaire Family Health Center, 4955 S M-
 88, Bellaire, 231 633-1237
When: 3rd Wed, 2 pm

Grief Support, Kalkaska Church of Christ,
 1725 W. Kalkaska Rd, faith-based grief
 support, contact 231 258-9441
When: Thu, 6:00 pm

S-Anon Support Group - Calvary Lutheran
 Church, 10180 Elk Lake Rd, Elk Rapids.
 For family and friends affected by
 someone else's sex addiction. Contact:
 miplaceofpeace@gmail.com, 231-714-4099
When: Thu, 7:00 pm

All Recovery Meeting, Ursula House, 8099
 West Old State Rd, Central Lake, peer led
 support group for people in recovery and/or
 their family members, 231 266-4412
When: Thu, 8:00 pm

Alcoholics Anonymous Meeting (AA),
 St Paul's Lutheran Church, 2470 Beebe Rd,
 Open Meeting
When: Thu, 8:00 pm

Alcoholics Anonymous Meeting (AA), The
 Rock Youth Center, 115 E Blair, Kingsley
When: Thu, 7:00 pm

Weight Management Support Group,
 Kalkaska Memorial Health Center, 419 S.
 Coral St, Classroom A, contact Ashley
 Snyder, 231 258-3613
When: 2nd Thu, 3:00 to 4:00 pm

Diabetes Support Group, Kalkaska
 Memorial Health Center, 419 S. Coral St,
 Classroom A, contact Katie Daman, 231
 258-3091
When: 4th Thu, 3:00 to 4:00 pm

Deliverance, Kalkaska Baptist Church,
 1651 Co Rd 612, Kalkaska, faith-based
 support for all addictions, contact Heath 231
 564-3715

When: Fri, 6:00 pm

Alcoholics Anonymous Meeting (AA),
 Surrender Today Coldsprings Fellowship
 Church, 532 S. Cedar St, Kalkaska
When: Fri, 7:00 pm

Alcoholics Anonymous Meeting (AA), Fife
 Lake Village Office, 616 Bates Rd,
When: Fri, 8:00 pm

Narcotics Anonymous (NA), Mill Pond
 Pavilion, Hyde St, Kalkaska
When: Sat, 7:00 pm

Alcoholics Anonymous Meeting (AA),
 Bellaire United Methodist Church, 401 N.
 Bridge St, Bellaire
When: Sat, 8:00 pm

Becky's Children's Crocheted Mittens in Three Sizes

First Piece: Fingers and top half of palm

Rnd 1: Begin with ch 1 into a magic ring, then hdc 6 (7, 8) into ring, join (slst into first st of rnd).

Rnd 2: ch 1, 2 hdc in each st around, join (12 sts, 14 sts, 16 sts). TIP: After completing rnd 2, snug up magic ring and secure yarn tail.

Rnd 3: ch 1, 2 hdc in each st around, join (24 sts, 28 sts, 32 sts).

Rnds 4-11 (4-12, 4-13): ch 1, work even, join. Leaving a short tail, cut yarn and set aside.

Second Piece: Thumb, bottom half of palm, cuff

Rnd 1: Begin with ch 1 into a magic ring, then hdc 10 (10, 11) into ring, join.

Rnds 2-6 (2-7, 2-8): ch 1, work even, join.

Rnd 7 (8, 9): join at 1st st of first piece, ch 1, work even, join. TIP: To avoid a gap between the end of the first piece and the start of the thumb, after completing the last st of the first piece, yo, hook through same st just worked, pull yarn through, hook through next (first thumb) st, pull yarn through (4 loops on hook), pull yarn through all loops (34 sts, 38 sts, 43 sts).

Rnd 8 (9, 10): ch 1, work even, join.

Shaping below thumb: Rnds 9-11 (10-13, 10-14) ch 1, follow chart, join.

Size	Round	Dec hdc every #th & next sts tog	Additional sts to finish rnd	End rnd st count
Small	9	7	2	30
	10	9	0	27
	11	8	0	24
Medium	10	8	2	34
	11	10	1	31
	12	9	1	28
	13	13	0	26
Large	11	9	3	39
	12	12	0	36
	13	11	0	33
	14	10	0	30

Rnd 12 (14, 15-16): Ch 1, work even, join.

Cuff:

Row 1: ch 7, turn, sc next 6 chs, sl st next 2 sts.

Row 2: turn, ch 1, sc next 6 sts in back loops.

Row 3: turn, ch 1, sc next 6 sts in back loops, sl st next 2 sts.

Repeat rows 2 & 3 around. Finish by sl st two sides of cuff together.



COMMUNITY

Dates Set for the Second Annual Traverse City Food & Wine

Traverse City, Mich. — Traverse City Tourism announced December 11, 2025, that Traverse City Food & Wine, the celebration of the region's agriculture, culinary and craft beverage scene, will bring five days of events, starting on Wednesday, August 19th and wrapping up Sunday, August 23rd.

Details are still being planned, but organizers say the event will feature celebrity chefs, cooking demonstrations, food and beverage pairings, fine dining, farm tours, and specialty tours and tastings. The Grand Tasting - an afternoon featuring chef demos, dozens of local bites and over 100 locally-made beers, wines and spirits - will be held on Saturday, August 22.

"With the wide variety of freshly grown fruits, vegetables, fish, and meats, the Traverse City area has a unique story to tell," said Traverse City Tourism Chief Operating Officer, Whitney Waara. "The first year of the event was a resounding success. We've seen that chefs, participants, and winemakers are enthusiastic about returning next year."

The 2025 inaugural Traverse City Food & Wine featured over 80 events, and most of them were sold out. The headliner was celebrity chef Tyler Florence, a Food Network veteran and celebrated cookbook author. Visitors from 34 states attended the event.

"We were able to showcase the diversity and creativity of our culinary and craft beverage scene, and that helped introduce visitors to the region," said Traverse City Tourism President Trevor Tkach (tah-KACH).

Traverse City Food & Wine is presented by 4Front Credit Union and organized by Traverse City Tourism. More information about the event is available at www.TraverseCityFoodAndWine.com.

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About Traverse City Tourism

Traverse City Tourism is an independent, not-for-profit destination organization that promotes the greater Traverse City area as a leisure and business destination with an excellent quality-of-life. Through the impact of travel, Traverse City Tourism helps strengthen the local economy and supports a thriving entrepreneurial community. Details of the region's lodging, attractions and area events are available at www.TraverseCity.com.

Mike Kent | Public Relations Manager

231.995.3927 | mikek@traversecity.com

Photos courtesy of Traverse City Tourism.



Tyler Florence takes center stage at The Grand Tasting



Actress Amy Smart introduces a celebrity chef to the main stage.



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