

Grand Marais Library Reopens After Flooding

Grand Marais Public Library reopened its building to the public on Monday, May 9, after sustaining a month's worth of flooding. Public access to the collection, computers, and conference room have been restored, and the library is operating its normal hours. With significant restoration work expected, staff anticipate fluctuations in service levels will continue this summer.

"It's so good to be open again," said Library Director Amanda St. John. "I don't think our staff was going to rest until this moment happened. We can feel the joy emanating from patrons as they pass through the lobby into the stacks."

St. John explained that the building last experienced flooding activity the weekend of April 24th. Since then, staff efforts shifted from flood recovery to preparing the library for public access. Foundation and waterproofing experts are being consulted for repairs to prevent the library from flooding again. Once the repairs are made, drywall will need to be refinished, and carpet tiles must be replaced. In the meantime, some of the staff are utilizing the magazine room as a temporary workspace, and in-person programs scheduled for June will be held off site.

It is Grand Marais Public Library's mission to increase knowledge, inspire creativity, remove barriers, and build community across Cook County. Learn more about free take and make kits, State Parks Passes, and the early literacy Reading Ready program by calling the library at 218-387-1140.

North Shore Adventure Park offers new ticket options and lower prices for local residents

A Teen Climbing Club, locals' tickets, season passes, and drawings for free admission for kids who read more books this summer are all offered at the adventure park this season.

"We welcome thousands of tourists each year but we want to see more local kids and families enjoy the park too," said Alice Tibbetts, President of the business. "We came up with these ideas by talking with library staff in Silver Bay and Two Harbors."

Each product offers significant discounts and even gives out of town friends a price break when they come along with a resident of Lake or Cook County. The library summer programs encourage kids from ages 2 to 18 to read more books this summer and win prizes. "We are excited about this program since supporting libraries is one of our top priorities as a business," Tibbetts said.

The park is also working with the Black Beach Mini Golf Course to encourage large school groups to choose Silver Bay vs. other attractions off the shore. "We get requests for

visits of 150 kids at one time. That is too many visitors at one time for the park, but we could make it work in partnership with neighboring attractions," Tibbetts said.

New park attractions are on hold. Axe Throwing is scheduled to open this fall, if staffing allows. The Kids' Bike Adventure track was damaged in the recent storms and will not open this season. Current Ticket options are on the park's website:

The library programs can be found at:

www.northshoreadventurepark.com/

Silver Bay: <http://silverbaynews.blogspot.com/2022/02/library-events.html>

Two Harbors: <http://www.twoharborspubliclibrary.com/events/>

The North Shore Adventure Park is the only forested climbing park in Minnesota, providing exciting adventures for families, individuals, and groups. The park offers 75 adventure challenges that help develop skills and endurance. It was built in 2019 and is locally owned and operated.

The Long Way Home

By Steve Fernlund



Overtourism

Am I qualified to express an opinion on the North Shore economy? I'm not an economist. I suffer from a K-12 public school education and the exhilarating lifetime of experience brokering freight transportation and putting my opinions in writing. With that disclaimer out of the way I

can add that, other than being a tourist from time to time, I don't know much about the so-called tourism industry.

While researching the current state of Short Term Vacation Rentals (STRs) on the North Shore I came across a new word (a new one to me)--*Overtourism*. It is defined on the website www.responsiblevacation.com. "Overtourism occurs when there are too many visitors to a particular destination ... When rent prices push out local tenants to make way for vacation rentals, that is overtourism. When narrow roads become jammed with tourist vehicles, that is overtourism. When wildlife is scared away, when tourists cannot view landmarks because of the crowds, when fragile environments become degraded - these are all signs of overtourism."

I'm not a part of the "in-crowd" of the tourism industry on the North Shore, but I've not heard anything from tourism leaders or government officials that would indicate anyone is concerned about tourism exceeding its growth limits. In fact, Cook County tourism leaders recently secured legislation in the state capital that retains the "Lodging Tax" that funds tourism promotion efforts for an additional 15 years. In case you're wondering, that'll be millions of dollars spent promoting this wonderful part of the world to potential visitors.

My own business experience, in small markets and large markets, taught me that growth is always limited, whether by the capacity of the market or the capacity of the organization and the people leading it. I learned that you ignore that teaching at your peril.

The North Shore was settled and developed by people who were in the fishing and logging industry. The market for those commodities

was large enough to sustain and build a vibrant community until it wasn't. As transportation allowed, tourism was added to the economic mix. A shirttail relative of mine, fisherman Ole Brunen out of Chicago Bay, built a small hotel in what is now Hovland over a century ago.

During the 20th century, families built and operated resorts on the shore and on inland lakes to make a living off tourism. Many of those resorts have closed as the economics changed or the government claimed properties (See BWCA).

By the middle of the last century, tourism was enhanced by the arts. Grand Marais became a magnet for artists of all stripes, and those artists contributed mightily to the prosperity Grand Marais enjoys as "The Coolest Small Town in America." Grand Marais' arts success serves as a model for small towns around the country, if not the world, for how to build a tourism economy to replace whatever they had that no longer was growing. Art and craft education centers are everywhere now.

When we moved to Grand Marais in the 90s, tourists started arriving around Memorial Day and all but disappeared at Labor Day--except for the fall color season which brought the newlyweds and nearly deads. Snowmobilers, downhill, and skinny ski folks came in the snowy months in much smaller numbers than they do today. With the effective promotion of Visit Cook County, the summer season crowd is almost overwhelming and visitors are here in numbers almost year-round.

Homes that once served as rental homes for local workers and families are now serving as STRs. Traffic in Grand Marais, and the surrounding attractions, can be horrendous. The pandemic years saw campers overnighting along rural roads, creating public safety hazards and dumping trash and holding tanks where they sat.

Restaurants and retail businesses operate with restricted hours due to the lack of staffing needed to serve customers. The hospital ambulance service is strapped for first responders and EMTs now, and the season will increase the population exponentially putting public safety in further danger.

Like overfishing and overlogging, the effects of overtourism are evident. We suffer from OVERTOURISM. And no one is talking about it.

Mental Wellness is for All of Us

May is Mental Health Month. Mental illnesses are medical conditions with a biologic basis, and can be treated. Mental illnesses may be chronic and disabling, as heart disease can be. Heart disease can also be very mild, not evident to others, and respond well to medical treatment. This is also true of mental illness. Yet while most people would be quick to seek treatment for symptoms of heart disease, they may be reluctant to admit to, or seek treatment for mental illnesses.

Research is also showing a significant connection between general inflammation and mental illness, as well as heart disease. Our modern lifestyle with high stress, not enough exercise and a diet high in sugar and other inflammatory foods contributes to our risk for many illnesses, including mental illness. One in four adults in the U.S. experience some kind of mental health disorder in a given year, but only 1 in 17 live with a serious mental illness. The earlier mental illness is treated (like other diseases), the better the outcome.

The rise in suicides in young people is even more concerning. One impulsive action can deprive all of us of the joy and benefits that person could bring to our lives.

Local resources include:

- Crisis line 844-772-4724, call can be for yourself or someone else
- Txt 4 life Crisis Line: text "MN" to 741741 and a counselor will text back
- Let's Talk, Region 3 Mental Health Initiative: letstalkmn.com
- Local Group Living with Anxiety and Depression (GLAD) meets on Zoom the 2nd and 4th Mondays at 6:30pm. Confidential peer support group. Email nsmentalhealth@gmail.com
- MN Warmline 877-404-3190 or text support to 85511 to chat with a peer
- Contact your primary care provider, or St. Luke's Hillside Clinic 218-249-7000
- Human Development Center 218-834-5520
- Accend Services 218-724-3122

Simple things anyone can do to help: just be a friend, listen without judgement, share your own story. Watch how you talk about mental illness, don't dismiss people as just "crazy", "psycho". Challenge negative attitudes toward mental illness among friends, acquaintances and in the media.

Learn more facts about mental illnesses, from National Alliance on Mental Illness www.nami.org, or National Institute of Mental Health, www.nimh.nih.gov.