

October/November 2013

# The Guide

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Antique tractor harvest

## Whitetails Live

Gladwin's deer ranch

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Lighthouse Festival

Five page, 13 county calendar of events



# Beaches, buckthorn, and butterflies



By **BRANDON SCHROEDER**  
and **DANIEL MOFFATT**

ALPENA – Do you remember what you learned in sixth grade?

For today's enthusiastic students at Thunder Bay Jr. High, the lessons they learn are hard to forget.

These sixth graders are sure to remember the times they adopted a Lake Huron beach to lead shoreline clean-up and habitat monitoring projects.

Or days spent stomping through the muck, removing invasive buckthorn along Bagley Creek to promote native habitat restoration and improve water quality in their school's outdoor education site.

And certainly they will remember staying late after school to plant a colorful collage of native plants while creating a schoolyard butterfly garden.

Thanks to teachers and community partners, these Junior Wildcats kicked off their school year by taking their classwork out of the classroom, practicing the methods of place-based education to explore and enhance their community and its natural resources.

All these exciting hands-on projects, illustrate precisely how Alpena students reach out to their community by promoting environmental stewardship of their local natural resources through place-based learning projects.



Students get up close and personal to a thick stand of invasive phragmites at Mich-e-ke-wis Beach with partner Huron Pines.

## Beaches

Launching into the second year of Lake Huron shoreline studies, one team of students is again adopting several public beaches in Alpena through the Adopt-a-Beach Program of Alliance for the Great Lakes. More than just a beach clean up, students observe and test various condition of beach and water health to identify potential issues and monitor changes.

Last year students presented their project findings to the Alpena City Council, including their concern over excessive cigarette butts found during their clean-up effort. Raising their concerns while meeting

with their town's mayor, students influenced the community's awareness and city's policies toward this beach-litter issue.

Continuing this year, the Adopt-a-Beach team aims to collaborate with Huron Pines to document, monitor, and tackle the issue of invasive phragmites along the shoreline.

## Buckthorn

Tracing their way upstream, another student team focuses on the health of Bagley Creek, a tributary of the Thunder Bay River that flows near the school's campus and is being choked by invasive buckthorn.

Buckthorn is a problem in wetlands across Northeast Michigan, particularly in the Alpena area, as it crowds out all other plant life and makes wetlands impassable.

Students and teachers participate in their annual Buckthorn Day to manage the overgrown woody shrub and prepare to restore the creek with native plant species, provide trail interpretation, and continue education through stream monitoring. Open to the public, this trail provides the perfect gateway for school-community partnerships.



A student removes invasive buckthorn from the Thunder Bay Jr. High Outdoor Education Site in order to restore the area.



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## Butterflies

Turning their attention to their own schoolyard, a third team of students uses a butterfly garden as a source of learning. As part of the science, social studies and English language curriculum, students cover plant studies, animal habitats, and ecosystems, and use the garden as literary inspiration when writing thank-you notes to the school's community partners.

The butterfly garden project connects multiple community partners like MSU Extension Master Gardeners, local 4-H groups and the FFA, to name a few. In conjunction, the Junior High participates in the NEMI GLSI network in their ongoing efforts towards becoming certified as an official Michigan Green School.



Getting their hands dirty, students plant a native species butterfly garden on school grounds inviting pollinators to stop by.

In common, these memorable learning opportunities are supported by diverse partnerships through the Northeast Michigan Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative, and supported by local NOAA B-WET and 4-H2O water education programs. Students take on real-world projects by collaborating directly with local partners like Michigan Sea Grant, NOAA Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's Alpena Fish & Wildlife Conservation Office, Michigan DNR, Huron Pines, the City of Alpena and others to help promote water quality, protect Lake Huron shoreline habitats, tackle issues like pollution and invasive species, and recover their own school nature area.

Each project reflects fantastic examples of place-based education in action – students applying science, math, social studies and more, while having fun, contributing to their community and learning in the process.

As a result, the community gains improved water quality, cleaner beaches and accessible nature areas, as well as an increased public awareness about the importance of protecting these valuable coastal Lake Huron resources.

Thanks to the students, these are all things worth remembering. 🌱



## The Northeast Michigan Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative

The Northeast Michigan Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative is a regional partnership of schools and community partners working to promote place-based, community-based learning experiences. This network serves to engage youth as partners in protecting our Great Lakes and natural resources of Northeast Michigan through hands-on, feet-wet learning in (and with) the community.

[www.NEMIGLSI.org](http://www.NEMIGLSI.org)

Visit **NEMIGLSI** online to see projects in action & learn how *you* can participate  
[www.NEMIGLSI.org](http://www.NEMIGLSI.org)

### The NE MI GLSI supports:

- **Place-based education programs with youth:** Hands-on, place-based education is a proven method for developing knowledgeable and active stewards of the environment.
- **Educators and school improvement:** Through training and professional development for teachers, NEMI GLSI supports the use of best practices that maximize the effectiveness of PBE.
- **Strong school-community partnerships:** Schools and communities working together producing powerful partnerships that are beneficial to all.

**Help NE MI GLSI support youth development and environmental stewardship in our communities!**

To donate contact:  
Community Foundation for  
Northeast Michigan  
(877) 354-6881  
or  
[www.cfnem.org](http://www.cfnem.org)

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