

Make 'The Cherry Connection' part of your festival plan

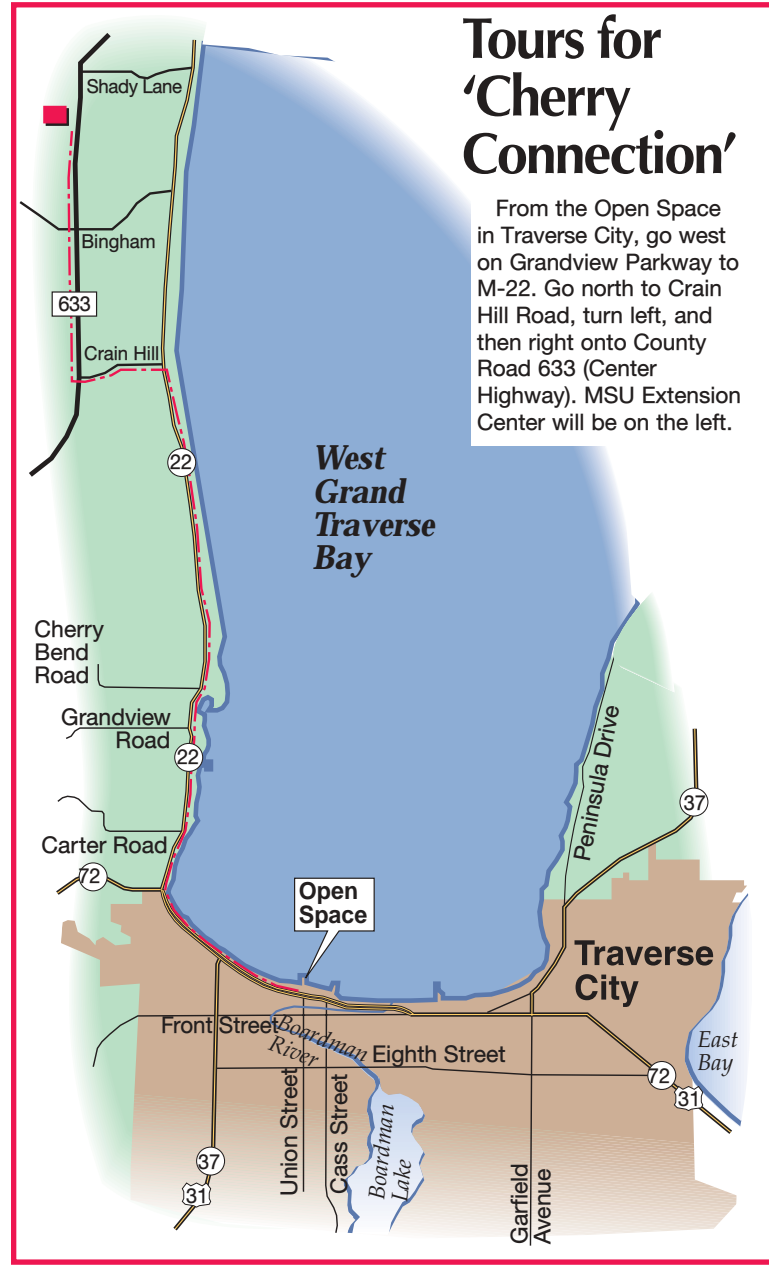
By SARAH CHUBY
Record-Eagle staff writer

Want to get to the roots of the National Cherry Festival? Make the Cherry Connection part of your festival plan. Cherry Connection Director Jennifer Berkey said the family-friendly event is designed to show festival-goers why northern Michigan is very cherry and includes orchard tours, cherry product tastings and an educational display at the Northwest Michigan Horticultural Research station, all focused on one thing: teaching how cherries are important and useful in everyday life.

"The research farm is where they do lots of different studies so they try different methods for growing cherries," Berkey said. "So you learn how cherries grow, as well as sample local cherry products." Cherries may not be a spice, but they add an extra kick to food. Berkey said the Cherry Connection focuses on how people find different ways to use cherries in everyday cooking. "People can put dried cherries in salads or use cherry vinaigrette. Last year, Bay Bread had a wonderful display and allowed people to sample different cherry breads," she said. "We had cherry concentrate so we could make cherry lemon-

ade." Ray Pleva's Plevaroni, cherry caramel sauce, cherry pie and cherry pasta sauce also were on hand. If people don't want to try unusual cherry products, they can stick with the traditional, Berkey added, like cherry juices, jams, yogurt-covered cherries and chocolate-covered cherries. Berkey said her goal is to open minds when it comes to the fruit. "When people think of cherries, they think of Maraschino cherries. My goal was to show individuals the wide breadth of products out there and show them how you can use cherries in everyday cooking."

Berkey said the festival offers a shuttle to the horticultural station "so people don't have to leave their coveted parking spots." BATA buses will arrive for pick-up every 15 minutes at the Open Space beginning at 9:45 a.m. Monday, July 8. Among the Connection's other displays and events are a children's coloring contest and a mini-petting zoo with 4H animals. The Cherryland Humane Society also will be on hand with animals youngsters can pet. A Special Industry Program celebrating the Cherry Industry Person of the Year will take place at 1:30 p.m. Tuesday, July 9. The hour-long program also will honor the Cherry Queen and the Cherry Festival Commemorative Print, said Cherry Promotion Director Judy LaCross. Dave Barrons, meteorologist for TV 9&10, will talk about the significance of this



Tours for 'Cherry Connection'

From the Open Space in Traverse City, go west on Grandview Parkway to M-22. Go north to Crain Hill Road, turn left, and then right onto County Road 633 (Center Highway). MSU Extension Center will be on the left.



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year's cherry crop and why it is so small. An "all-American cake" decorated with cherries and blueberries will be served after the presentation. The Cherry Connection runs from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Monday through Friday. "It is just a little feast for all of the senses," LaCross said.

Cherry Memories

"Last year, our two German exchange students arrived on the day that an invitation came from the Williams Brothers and the Dennos Museum to participate in their entry. They thought that would be fun, and when they knew they were expected to wear a diaper-like costume, I was afraid they might back out. But they didn't, and even ended up leading the parade. They loved it, though they had a difficult time explaining the event to their friends and family back in Germany."

Carol Hale,
Community activist and former mayor

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