

CAMPGROUND GUIDE

Volunteer campground hosts make visitors' stays easier, safer

BY ANDY TAYLOR-FABE
Record-Eagle staff writer

Staying mostly in their own RVs, but occasionally roughing it in tents, northern Michigan's campground hosts live day and night in parks, sometimes for months.

As volunteers, they stay for periods as short as 30 days to as long as an entire season, acting as guides for campers and caretakers for the campgrounds.

Many campground hosts are young retirees, being that they have the free time needed to take on the responsibilities of a campground host, said Mary-Kate Chalup, a ranger at the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore.

But whether the host is technically on duty or merely available to answer questions, there is always work to be done.

Many of the hosts' duties focus on the smooth operation of the campground. Don Saffron, a campground host at the Platte River Campground, said one of the first things hosts do each morning is a sort of head-count, checking the sites and making sure that everyone camping has the proper tags.

Additionally, the hosts are on the lookout for violations, such as the use of fireworks.

"You don't want any of that stuff up in the trees," Saffron said.

But don't think of camp-

ground hosts as nosy hall monitors with RVs. On the contrary, their main purpose, as Chalup said, is to serve as "a support staff," present to assist campers.

"Remember, I'm here to help you," Saffron said.

Anytime a camper needs information and directions or has a type of question, the hosts are at their disposal.

"We can tell you what there is to do and how to get there," Saffron said.

Carol Donaldson, a host at the D.H. Day campground in the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, said she enjoys "just being there to say 'Hi.'"

But the role of the campground host extends far beyond that of friendly neighbor. Trained in CPR



Record-Eagle/John L. Russell

Carol and Jim Donaldson at their campsite in D.H. Day campground, where they are hosts for the summer.

and familiar with hospital locations, they can be a valuable resource when something goes wrong.

Take the camper at D.H. Day who was stung by a bee and went into anaphylactic shock. Or, last year, when another camper suffered a miscarriage.

But the life of a campground host is usually more subdued. Saffron spends much of his time picking up trash and items to be recycled or cleaning various parts of the campgrounds.

"I like to keep it like I would keep my own place," he said.

Campgrounds around the region

ALANSON

Camp Petosega 33 sites. 347-6536.
Crooked River RV Park 17 sites. 548-5534.

ATLANTA

Big Oaks 27 sites. (989) 785-4251.
Clear Lake State Park 200 sites. (989) 785-4388 or (800) PARKS.
Mackinaw State Forest: Avery Lake 16 sites. (989) 785-4251;
Jackson Lake 18 sites. (989) 785-4251.

BEAR LAKE

Hopkins Memorial Park 30 sites. 864-3281.
Kampvilla RV Park 92 sites. 864-3757.

BEAVER ISLAND

Wagner Campground 22 sites. 448-2505. (Chamber of

Commerce.)
St. James Township Campground 12 sites. 448-2505. (Chamber of Commerce.)

BENZONIA

Homestead Resort: 6 sites. 882-4163 or (800) 686-4163.
Timberline Campground 189 sites. 882-9548.
Vacation Trailer Park 100 sites. 882-5101.

BOYNE CITY

Young State Park 240 sites. 582-7523.

BUCKLEY

Traverse City KOA 119 sites, 5 cabins and 2 lodges. 269-3203.

CADILLAC

Birchwood Resort and Campground 33 sites. 775-9101.
Cadillac KOA 50 sites. 825-2012.
Camp Cadillac 115 sites. 775-9724.
Hemlock 15 sites. 775-8539.
Mitchell State Park 215 sites. 775-7911.

Pere Marquette State Forest, Long Lake 18 sites. 824-3591.
Peterson Bridge South 20 sites. 775-8539.

CEDAR

Leelanau Pines 182 sites, 228-5742.

CHARLEVOIX

Fisherman's Island State Park 81 sites. 547-6641 or (800) 44-PARKS.

CHEBOYGAN

Cheboygan State Park 76 sites. 627-2811 or (800) 44-PARKS.
Waterways Campground 50 sites. 627-7066.

EAST JORDAN

East Jordan Tourist Park 100 sites. 536-2561.

EASTPORT

Barnes Park 66 sites. 599-2712.

ELK RAPIDS

Honcho Rest Campground 50

sites. 264-8548.

ELLSWORTH

Wieland's Whistling Pines 14 sites. 544-6348.

EMPIRE

Sleepy Bear Campground 220 sites. 326-5566.

FIFE LAKE

Pere Marquette State Forest: Spring Lake 32 sites. 824-3591.

FRANKFORT

Betsie River Campsite 100 sites. 352-9535.

FREDERICK

Happi Days Campground and Diner 40 sites. (989) 348-6115.
Trails Campground 63 sites. (989) 348-8692.

GAYLORD

Gaylord Michaywe Wilderness Resort KOA 100 sites. (989) 732-4126.
Otsego Lake State Park 155

sites and one mini cabin. (989) 732-5485 or (800) 44-PARKS.

GLEN LAKE

Glen Lake Trailer Park and Resort four sites and four vacation rentals are available. 334-3419.

GRAYLING

Au Sable State Forest: Au Sable River Canoe Camp 13 sites. (989) 348-6371;
Burton's Landing 12 sites. (989) 348-6371;
Canoe Harbor 54 sites. (989) 826-3211;
Keystone Landing 18 sites. (989) 348-6371;
Lake Margrethe 37 sites. (989) 348-6371;

Manistee River Bridge, 18 sites. (989) 348-6371.
Hartwick Pines State Park 100 sites. (989) 348-7068.
Kneff Lake 27 sites. (989) 826-3252.
Yogi Bear's Jellystone Park: Heart of the North 218 sites. (989) 348-2157.

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