

# Slow season ideal for customer service

**BY MELANIE BOLTHOUSE**  
Autumn Guide editor

When the seasons change and tourism slows through northern Michigan, many regional galleries begin to pack up for the winter.

The ones who brave the "dry season," however, find unique opportunities to build relationships with their customers.

"People who want to come in the fall have more time to shop around, have more time to talk with you about your art," said Northport artist Carole Bowker, who owns By the Bight Studio and Gallery with her husband Tom. "They don't want to hurry through things. They spend a lot of time just enjoying the things they see."

For the Bowkers and other gallery owners, fall is an ideal time to create a loyal customer base through interactive events.

To celebrate fall and winter at By the Bight, the Bowkers will host three open houses during October, November and December.

Their fall open house will

be held on Oct. 2 and is entitled "Immerse Yourself in Color by the Bight." The Bowkers, whose work spans all types of media, are the only two artists featured at By the Bight and will be working in their studios that day so people can watch them at work.

The weekend after Thanksgiving, By the Bight

will be part of the Northport Merchants Holidays in the Village Open House on Nov. 26-27.

The final open house will be held Dec. 3-5 and may mark the final time the gallery is open before the owners take time off to concentrate on their work, Carole Bowker said.

During the colder months,

the open houses act as milestones for the Bowkers, who both taught art for 32 years before starting their gallery.

"We've always been goal oriented, and to just open a gallery and sit there and

wait for people would be not really what we're used to doing as educators and artists," Carole Bowker said. "So we structure these events and open houses so

**PLEASE SEE PAGE 18**



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Tom and Carole Bowker own By the Bight Studio and Gallery in Northport. They will be hosting three open house events during the fall and winter months.

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