

MAY/NEWS

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MAY 22

TC a top spot to visit

TRAVERSE CITY — With about 1.2 million Michigan residents planning to travel during Memorial Day weekend according to AAA, the state's two top driving destinations — Mackinaw City and Traverse City — foresee it kicking off a strong summer tourist season.

Travel during the holiday weekend is expected to be down slightly from last year, according to a survey by the auto club.

The estimated dip from 1.4 million holiday-weekend travelers in 2002 likely can be attributed to the economy, spokesman Jim Rink said.

MAY 22

Training ship shoves off

TRAVERSE CITY — It's the first bon voyage for the Great Lakes Maritime Academy's training ship.

The 225-foot former Naval vessel State of Michigan is pushing off for a seven-city, two week tour of the Great Lakes this morning. The ship, which is federally owned but operated by Northwest Michigan College, was acquired by the maritime academy last August.

"We are really looking forward to this," said John Tanner, maritime academy superintendent. "Our alumni have come back to help man

the ship and have volunteered their time and expertise."

The 28-member crew includes academy faculty, alumni and 16 maritime cadets. Tanner said for some of the cadets this will be their first time aboard ship.

MAY 23

GT weighs recycling plan

TRAVERSE CITY — Grand Traverse County would operate rural recycling drop-off sites instead of Waste Management under a proposal put forward by the county Board of Public Works.

The board is recommending an interim recycling plan where the county would take over responsibility for operating the nine recycling drop-off sites. A \$1.50 per cubic yard tipping fee on all waste collected in the county would pay for the program. The current tipping fee is 50 cents per yard.

The county is overhauling a major component of its recycling efforts — the rural drop-off sites — because of ongoing objections to the program by Waste Management, the area's dominant trash hauler. Company officials complained because Waste Management was the only hauler with enough customers under a county solid waste ordinance required to provide the drop-off sites.

MAY 24

Swindler pleads guilty

TRAVERSE CITY — A New York City man accused of bilking an elderly Traverse City couple out of their life savings in an investment scheme has pleaded guilty to one count of mail fraud.

Robert L. Aguas, 56, of Brooklyn, could be sentenced to as much as five years in jail and fines as high as \$250,000 on the federal charge, and he is still facing state charges for violating Michigan's Blue Sky laws. He pleaded guilty to the mail fraud charge Thursday in federal court.

In January, Aguas was indicted by a federal grand jury on seven counts of mail fraud and two counts of wire fraud. Investigators said he swindled Traverse City residents Meredith and Alice Fall of \$125,000 between 1998 and 1999.

MAY 25

Top speller studies roots

TRAVERSE CITY — Even for Aubrey Blanche — a straight-A student, athlete and musician who in eighth grade seems to have done much already — competing in the 76th annual Scripps Howard National Spelling Bee is an exciting prospect.

The 14-year old Traverse City resident and student at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton is preparing to spell her way through several rounds of intense competition in the Washington, D.C., contest.

In March, Blanche correctly spelled "enthalpy" to win the

22nd annual Grand Traverse Regional Spelling Bee and a chance to compete Wednesday in the opening rounds of the national spelling bee. The regional bee is sponsored by the Record-Eagle and Tom's Food Markets.

Since then, the daughter of Marilyn and Greg Blanche has been studying the more than 400,000 words that she could possibly be asked to spell in hopes of defeating the other 250 third- through eighth-graders competing.

MAY 26

Team to track air levels

PESHAWBESTOWN — As summer brings warmer temperatures, air quality is likely to decline — even in north-west Lower Michigan.

So a group of volunteers plans to warn people of any potential health threat.

The Grand Traverse Regional Ozone Action Committee will monitor the air and let people know when ozone levels get high.

MAY 27

Grayling spices up menu

GRAYLING — Students at Grayling High School are helping add flair to the fare served in the school's cafeteria — and at home.

The cafeteria was recently transformed into "Little Italy" as food service employees and the Student Senate dished up an Italian Extravaganza.

Students were given an opportunity to sample fennel salad, chicken Parmesan, vegetable frittata and baked apples during their lunch period to encourage them to try new items on the school menu.

The event was part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Changing the Scene grant program, funded through the Michigan Department of Community Health. The Crawford-AuSable School District was one of 12 in the state to receive the grant and the only high school included.

MAY 28

NMH hires travel nurses

PETOSKEY — Northern Michigan Hospital officials are beginning to phase out the strike replacement nurses the facility has used for more than six months.

In their place will be travel nurses, who will be paid an unspecified but lower wage than the \$40 per hour received by the strike replacements supplied by U.S. Nursing Corp. of Denver. The replacement-nurse wage is about double what a typical on-staff nurse at the hospital receives.

Hospital spokesman Thomas Spencer declined to discuss specific dollar figures, but said the change is being made as a cost-saving measure.

Travel nurses take temporary jobs at health care facilities.

MAY/SPORTS

MAY 25

Houghton, Plaxton win race

TRAVERSE CITY — After hitting the pavement, the men's and women's Bayshore Marathon winners hit an extra payday.

Not that race officials minded one bit.

Men's champion Eric Houghton of Glen Arbor and women's winner Sarah Plaxton of Highland both finished under established per-

formance standards to win an extra \$1,000.

Houghton needed to finish under 2:30 to pick up the bonus and ran a 2:28:54. Plaxton, who has won three straight women's Bayshore Marathon titles, came in 30 seconds under the 2:55 limit for the bonus.

"It's nice," Houghton said of the extra cash. "It's definitely not about the money, but it's a nice added bonus."

"I cut it a little close today," said the 34-year-old Plaxton,

who has won the race in five of the previous six years. "But yes, it feels nice."

MAY 30

West rolls to earn spot

TRAVERSE CITY — It took Traverse City West a little while to get going.

But once the Titans did, there wasn't much Marquette could do. TC West downed Marquette 5-0 in the Division I district semifinals on Thursday at the TC Coast

Guard Soccer Fields.

A four-goal flurry in a span of about 18 minutes propelled the Titans (18-2-1) into today's district final against Traverse City Central.

MAY 31

Trojans edge Titans 1-0

TRAVERSE CITY — The third time was the charm for Traverse City Central.

After losing to Traverse City West twice during the regular season, the Trojans broke

through Friday night in the Division I district final, edging their cross-town rival 1-0 on a sudden death penalty kick.

The Trojans, 14-5-2, now advance to the Division I regional at Midland Dow on Tuesday evening. Central will play the winner of today's Davison-Flint Carman Ainsworth game.

Junior Shawne Ashton scored the game-winner Friday night to keep Central's season alive.