***Pathfinder Community Library***

**BALDWIN PATHFINDER COMMUNITY LIBRARY**

Kathy Oostmeyer, President, Board of Trustees

PROGRAM PARTNERING WITH THE U.S. FOREST SERVICE

We hear a lot about partnering these days-- a way to work with others to enhance the end product, in a “win-win” situation. The Pathfinder Library can tell you that it works! In past years, our goal was to find programs that would appeal to our rural community, and when our small library would not have enough seating, find a venue that would. Two years ago, our U.S. Forest Service built a brand new building, complete with a technologically sophisticated meeting room, which they were happy to lend us for our programs.

Last summer, Pathfinder had four programs there: a Black Bear program, a Michigan Wild Flowers and their usage in pollinator habitat program, a mushroom Identification program and a white tail deer program. All were well attended, in fact the mushroom program so well attended the Forest Service put seating limits on our future programs as the 75-80 attendees far exceeded their limit.

This spring, 2018, a new Ranger was assigned to the Baldwin/White Cloud District and I set up a meeting to introduce myself and ensure that the meeting room was still available. At that meeting, he suggested, and we developed, a much broader plan: a summer series of eight programs covering the land we live on as well as the animals, insects, plants and trees which depend on that land for their existence. The programs:

May 23rd. **It’s all yours:** An introduction to National Forests. An overview of the land in your backyard as well as the other lands you own that you may not know about.

June 6th. **Watch out for Invasive Species!** The outreach coordinator for the North Country Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area (NCCISMA) talked about how to identify high priority invasive plant species, and why you should be concerned.

June 20th. **Smoke in the air: Fire’s Role in Land Management.** The Huron/Manistee National Forest Fire Staff discussed why prescribed burning is an important tool for landscape restoration as well as public safety and ways to make your property safe.

July 11th. **Look! There’s a bear!** Katie Keen, DNR Wildlife Technician, kindly agreed to repeat her very popular black bear program, helping us understand these intelligent and powerful animals. Her program included the local history of black bears, their habits and biology, how the DNR manages them, and tips for what you can do to discourage bears from visiting your property.

July 25th. **The National trails Act and Wild and Scenic River Act: Celebrating 50 years of the creation and protection of some of American’s favorite places.** Two of these nationally recognized treasures are in our own back yards—a National Scenic Trail as well as a Wild and Scenic River. Ranger Dave Jaunese discussed ways you can enjoy these treasures as well as protect them.

August 1st. **Savannah Restoration: Reversing the Loss of Pollinators.** Dr. Heather Keough talked about the devastating effect the loss of pollinators will have on every aspect of our lives, and the need for habitat creation for these pollinators, including the Karner Blue and Monarch Butterflies

August 15th. **The Bugs and Crud that threaten the Forest.** The Emerald Ash Borer and Oak Wilt are examples of the accidental introduction of new pests and diseases to our ecosystem. Forester Mark Shermak shared his knowledge of known primary forest insects and diseases and discussed how property owners can identify and prevent these damaging agents on their own land.

August 29th.  **What is that Mushroom?** Linda Scribner, a Michigan Dept. of Agriculture Certified Wild Mushroom Expert, explained simple mushroom biology, and what to look for when identifying different species. She had dried and fresh mushroom specimens, and hand-outs to help on your next trip to the woods. Her presentation concluded with the identification of the 20 species of mushrooms that the State of Michigan has deemed safe to eat.

We called this series “Wednesday Nights with the Ranger”, and our program flyers around town and our ads appearing in the local paper made it clear through verbiage and graphics that this was a partnering of not just two, but in the end, three , organizations.

The “win” for the library was programs by Forest Service experts we never would have had access to before, in addition to those programs we had initiated.

The “win” for the Forest Service was that since they had no promotional dollars to make the public aware of the series of programs, the Library accepted responsibility for that cost.

The “win” for all of us was that another important local organization, the Lake County Riverside Property Owners Association, was aware of our project and offered to help with the advertising budget in return for acknowledgment in our promotional verbiage and graphics.

The end result was that public support for all three organizations has increased--our Lake County residents and summer people had access to excellent programs all summer, and were aware that we cared enough about our community to invest thought and effort into presentations that were interesting, educational and geared to our way of life. After each and every program participants thanked us for making these talks available to them, and took one of our schedules home with them. Very much a win-win-win situation! We are already planning for next summer. Partnering works!

The Libraries of Lake County (Pathfinder, Luther & Chase) had a .2942 millage renewal on the August 7th primary ballot. I don’t know if the programs and the vote were related, but each Township in Lake County voted overwhelmingly in favor of the renewal.