

Arts, Architecture & Authors of Iron County

The art of mental clarity



BY MEGAN STROM

Have you ever experienced a loss of energy, a constant lingering sadness, or an anxious emptiness that seems to weigh you down day after day? You are not alone.

Statistics from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services show that nearly one in four adults aged 18 and older, and one in three adults aged 18–25, go through similar feelings daily. These symptoms are just a few of the many challenges individuals encounter when dealing with their mental health. Regardless of the situation, it’s important to know that there are coping strategies and techniques available to assist you in navigating your mental struggles and finding clarity.

Art therapy is an approach widely used for mental health concerns and complex psychological issues. It provides a safe space for individuals, both adults and children, to express themselves without fear of judgment. Through artistic expression, people can navigate and process difficult emotions from experiences and traumas they may have encountered throughout their lives. The act of creating art can serve as a powerful tool for emotional regulation and healing, allowing individuals to communicate their innermost thoughts and feelings without the need for verbal expression.

Art therapy offers an alternative to help navigate your problems in a healthy and positive way.

One of the most common and cost-effective ways to exercise the techniques of art therapy from home is painting. With a simple canvas and a brush, you can open your mind up to heal in many different ways. Engaging in painting has been shown to elevate dopamine levels in the brain, which leads to feelings of happiness and excitement. Also, when you engage in new activities and set goals for yourself, you can surpass expectations beyond anything you could have ever imagined. This practice can ultimately change behavior and thought patterns to aid you in personal healing. The process of this practice can be helpful for addressing feelings of anxiety and depression, moving you towards greater mental well-being.

Painting is one of many ways you can improve your mental health with art. Dancing, photography, writing and sculpture are other alternatives to try as well. Engaging with art is a fantastic way to heighten your serotonin levels and boost blood flow to your brain to feel happier and find mental clarity. Many artistic hobbies are cost-effective and beneficial to your mental health. Through art, we can find balance in our hearts and minds.

Local artist seeks to spread happiness through her illustrations



Author Melanie Bess

BY NIKKI MITCHELL

Soft and whimsical illustrations are what you’ll find in local artist, Melanie Bess’ books. What started as a published mermaid coloring book is now an illustration career for Bess, including a recent project for an author writing a book about a little boy with Down syndrome called “Cooper is Super and so are you”

“This most recent project was a bit out of my comfort zone,” Bess said. “I usually illustrate little girls and nature, but this one was a little boy who loves baseball.”

Bess said it was a great learning opportunity for her, and while the children’s picture books she has illustrated can be hard topics for kids, she seeks to add soft illustrations and humor whenever possible.

The idea for the coloring books began in 2020. Before having her daughter, she mainly used physical supplies for her artwork, which became difficult to do as her daughter grew. This led Bess to purchase an iPad and begin creating art in an electronic medium.

“I was so excited about the idea,” she said. “And seeing my daughter hold my coloring book in her hands for the first time was amazing.”

From the mermaid coloring book, her illustrations spread into more coloring books including her alphabet, woodland and cottage core coloring books. In addition to purchasing her books, she has color-along- with-me YouTube videos where you can color together.

“These aren’t a cash grab for me. I make them so people can spend time being creative. It’s amazing how creating art helps the mind.”

Bess said that when she gets an idea for a coloring book, she first pulls inspiration from photos, nature, etc. and starts sketching 30-40 images. From there, she does the inking and adds details before printing them out and putting them into an order that makes sense in her mind.

“I like to tell a story, even in my coloring books,” she said.

Coloring books aren’t the only illustrations Bess does, though. She does professional illustrations for multiple authors.

“It started when local author, Chandra Ziegler asked if I would be interested in illustrating her books for her. The book, ‘Let Nature Be Your Teacher’ was a learning process. There were bumps and hurdles that seemed huge, but it was so worth it.”

Bess began building her portfolio and her website to attract more authors looking for illustrators.

Her next project though, will be her own children’s book, “Pockets are for Rocks.”

As for advice for artists wishing to illustrate books, Bess said to jump in before you think you’re ready and just start completing your own projects.

“Even if you look back at your first books in five years and think they aren’t great, it’s about the learning process and getting better as you go. My biggest regret is that I didn’t start sooner.”

For more information about Bess, her books, or her art, visit her website at www.theswimmingowl.com or stop into the Twisted Twig in Crystal Falls.



Coloring Book Portfolio Images - Cozy Cottagecore Coloring Book.

Paintings and plantings at the Pocket Park

The Pocket Park, located off Genesee Street in downtown Iron River was started by the Art & Garden club through the Windsor Center. The idea was to have a park that encourages people to get their hands in the dirt, grow their own food and enjoy nature. Taproot Community Farm has helped out with the community park.

Bigari **ACE** Hardware Inc

IRON RIVER, MI

1/2 MILE FROM DOWNTOWN IRON RIVER ON M-189 • (906) 265-9614 • HOURS: MON.-FRI. 7-6; SAT. 8-3; SUN. 9-NOON

supports the local arts!

Arts, Architecture & Authors of Iron County

Camp Batawagama 2024 Summer Review



The C-5 Boys preparing supper on their Michigamme River Overnight excursion.

CRYSTAL FALLS – Camp Batawagama, located on beautiful Indian Lake, has been a staple in Iron County since 1945. Generation after generation of children, ages 10-16, have come to enjoy their summers here at Camp Batawagama.

The camp offers many indoor and outdoor activities from boating, kayaking and canoeing, arts and crafts to archery. There is also a large swimming program. Campers learn how to build fires and set up campsites, and there's even a nature program that's taught by an instructor known as "Mother Nature".

For more information about Camp Batawagama go to campbatawagama.com. (Submitted photos)



Campers work at perfecting their Pour Paintings.

Come and Create with us!

Class offerings can be viewed and registered for at www.cfcontemporarycenter.com

Follow CFCC on Facebook/Instagram as well for upcoming classes!

We are located in the **Forest Park School** at the **East Entrance**

cfcontemporarycenter@gmail.com

907-687-7245

CRYSTAL FALLS CONTEMPORARY CENTER

ENRICH — INSPIRE — CREATE

Discover the works of local artist Melanie Bess!

Look for Melanie's coloring books at the Twisted Twig in Crystal Falls!

theswimmingowl.com
@theswimmingowl
theswimmingowl.etsy.com

401789

Arts, Architecture & Authors of Iron County

Rohde’s Northwoods Mysteries

BY NIKKI MITCHELL

Cozy Northwoods mysteries are Janet Rohde’s (J.K. Rohde) specialty, and you’ll find yourself submerged into the culture and quirks of the Upper Peninsula and northern Wisconsin as soon as you dive into one of her books.

Her desire to write these mysteries started when she struggled to find good mysteries that were set in the U.P. and around Lake Superior.

“They say write what you know, so I write the culture and characters who feel like they are from up here,” she said. “You pick up information from areas you’re visiting, and you write that local pizzazz.”

For example, her characters are al-

ways eating pasties or exploring the Ottawa National Forest. She also makes it a point to choose names that fit the area.

She currently has three books published, “Triggered by Fear,” “Bitter Cold Holiday,” and “Ghost of the Green Lady.” Each book follows characters on a haunting mystery in the Northwoods.

Rohde is currently in editing stages of another book set to release before Christmas called “Superior—she never gives up her dead,” and currently writing another book where the characters will be traveling in their campers and experiencing different ghost encounters.

“You will see some of the same characters from my other books in this one as



well,” she said.

After writing and publishing several cozy mysteries, Rohde does have some tips for up-and-coming authors that want to write about the U.P. and northern Wisconsin.

She believes that getting the first draft done is important because it’s where the heart of the story is. The second draft is where the details and timelines come in. She also recommends doing research and visiting the places you want to write about.

“Sometimes research as an author means spending the whole day at the beach,” she said. “You have to try and make it as realistic as possible, especially when you’re writing about small towns. I know when I’m reading, I get pulled out of the book if it doesn’t feel realistic.”

Writing mysteries has its own set of challenges, according to Rohde. You must have the plots and subplots all fig-

ured out, so the story makes sense.

“I suggest researching how to write mysteries,” she said. “There’s a whole set of rules about how to throw in clues without confusing your reader or giving too much away.”

As the writer, you will often know background information about the characters or the plot, but you have to make sure you give your readers the information they need.

“You give your readers a chance to figure out the mystery, but you hope they don’t because the twist is what people like.”

Readers can find Rohde at local farmers markets and vendor events with her books and handmade jewelry, her Etsy shop, Wishingsone Woods, at the Iron County Museum and on Amazon. She is also a member of the Upper Peninsula Publishers and Authors Association (UPPAA).



NicoletCoffee.com

You'll Love Our Fresh as the Northwoods Tastes



Roasted and Shipped the Same Day!



(833) 642-6538

Central Arts & Gifts

Let us do your picture framing!

All kinds of mat board and glass available!

Clear Picture Glass & Non-Glare Glass

UVF Glass in Clear and Non-Glare

Museum Glass and Acrylic Glazing

Hundreds of framing choices available!

POLISH STONEWARE & GIFTWARE

and much more!



216 W. Genesee St. • Downtown Iron River, MI • 906-265-2114 •



Arts, Architecture & Authors of Iron County

Cooks Run showcases Northwoods architecture

BY ALLISON JOY

IRON RIVER — A modest cabin sits along a creek, tucked away on 122 acres of wilderness off of US Hwy 2 west of Iron River. Known colloquially simply as “Cooks Run,” the site was developed in the mid-1930s by the Works Progress Administration as a public works project.

A former fish hatchery, the site includes the caretaker’s cabin as well as rearing ponds, a small dam and several out-buildings. It was added to the National Registry of Historic Places in 1983.

The registry reads: “The most significant building is the caretaker’s cabin, which is notable as an outstanding example of vernacular wilderness camp architecture, with finely crafted details and using local building materials.”

Robert McKay, a historical architect with the State Historic Preservation Office, shared his thoughts on Cooks Run in a 2019 letter to former executive director of the Iron County Economic Chamber Alliance Paul Schuytema.

“While its design is not pristine, it remains an exceptionally intact example of publicly funded rustic architecture associated with the early years of the environmental conservation movement,” wrote McKay. “Unique to this building are its cantilevered second story, woven branch railings on the interior stairs, tree branch light fixtures and sizable flagstone patio and walk system... These



details in particular are, as far as I know, unique to this property. In 20 years with the SHPO, I have not encountered another 1930’s cabin in Michigan which included all of them.”

The craftsman behind the features described by McKay is Frank Rawnick, according

to records at the Iron County Historical Museum in Caspian, which has Rawnick’s carvings on display.

McKay described Cooks Run as “one of the most interesting Depression Era public use log cabins I have seen in Michigan.”

Despite the County Parks

and Recreation Committee noting Cooks Run as a priority, Iron County has struggled with what do with the site and how to pay for restoration. The county is unable to leverage any private investment or justify using public dollars to fund upkeep for the cabin and sur-

rounding acreage. Last year, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources pledged to work with the county on potential solutions, but as of early August no progress had been made on better-defining the property’s future.



The Carrie Jacobs-Bond Quilters displayed their quilts at the West Iron District Library.

The Carrie Jacob-Bond Quilters is a non-profit organization who uses their skills in quilting to provide quilts for those in need through charitable organizations including U.S. Veterans, dialysis unit and foster care system. All funds raised support the ongoing community projects.

Treat yourself and someone else too!

906-284-1486

THE Twisted Twig STUDIO & GIFTS

CRYSTAL FALLS MICHIGAN

Where shopping is fun!

Many Local Artisans - See their art here!

Watercolor Paintings ♦ Pottery ♦ Oil Paintings ♦ Cutting Boards ♦ So Much More!

♦ Small Individualized Art Classes for You and Your Friends & Family ♦

CALL MAUREEN TO SETUP

293013

Large Selection of U.P. Items!

Thousands of handmade items!

Homemade Soaps & Lotions • Handmade Signs & Decor

Chainsaw Bears & Eagles • Homemade Chocolates & Candy

Wink's Woods

Open 7 Days 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. • 1225 West U.S. 2 Crystal Falls, MI 906-875-3750

293010