

'Top-notch' golfing, boating draw many to Gull Lake, Richland

By Tara Marion

"We're a stone's throw away from Kalamazoo and Battle Creek," said Joe Messenger, about his home in the Gull Lake/Richland area. "You don't have to go very far to find anything you can't find right here in town," he added.

Annette Tiller, assistant manager at the Bean Grinder Café Bakery Inc. in Richland, agreed. "We're conveniently located between Kalamazoo and Battle Creek. We're in the center hub of it all," she said.

Those living and working in the Gull Lake and Richland area say the community has a lot to offer. "It's a very well-rounded area, and there's a lot to do," said Linda Rogers, owner of Gull Lake Tanning.

Rogers and her husband purchased 10 acres of land in Gull Lake because they wanted to have a place to play, although the entire family enjoys the land.

My husband hunts right on the property with his oldest son," she said. Her family also enjoys riding "quads," which are four wheelers, around their property.

Tiller said there's a lot to do in the area. She said that many residents take advantage of the area's lakes and golf courses.

Messenger agreed, confirming that golf is popular in the area and that golf courses like Gull Lake View and Stonehenge are fantastic. "They're as nice as any other golf courses that people drive 200 miles to play, and we've got them in our backyard," he said. "They're top notch-courses."

For the past three years, Messenger said that he's rented dock space at Gull Lake to keep his boat. "It's probably one of the nicest inland lakes around, and it's just five minutes down the road," he said. The lake is a tourist attraction according to Gull Lake's residents. Rogers said a lot of people go there to ski and fish.

Although there are many things to do in the area during the daytime, Messenger said, it is quiet in the evening hours, which is one of the things he likes best about it.

One of the fun things to do on weekend evenings is to go to Bayview Gardens. There, at the restaurant, Rogers said she and her husband enjoy going to dance and listen to music. "Bayview Gardens is one of our favorite spots," she said. "We really like it."

Although it's often said that business and pleasure don't mix, they're a great combination in the Gull Lake/Richland area.

According to Messenger, most of the businesses are locally owned by the people that live in the area, which is one of the major reasons he moved to Richland. "It's a nice feeling to know who you're dealing with," he said, "particularly in our business." Messenger manages the Farley-Estes & Dowdle Richland Chapel. "The funeral business," he said, "is really a personal-type business."

Businesses and families in the area support each other. Tiller said the area's Chamber of Commerce encourages residents to support their local businesses. And, she said, one special way that local businesses thank their patrons is with "Wassailing in Richland" in December. During the evening, area stores and business associations open their doors to customers in an effort to thank them for patronizing local businesses. Treats like cookies, punch, cocoa and cider are

available at many of the local businesses. "They all have something to hand out to the citizens that helped them grow," Tiller said.

Another way of showing community support is by helping out the area school system. Rogers and her husband support school activities like the sports boosters for Gull Lake Middle School. "Gull Lake has a lot to offer my sons for education," she said, "We are really pleased with that."

Although Messenger doesn't have children, he said the Gull Lake/Richland area appears to be a great place to raise a family. "Gull Lake school district has had an outstanding reputation for years—academically and athletically."

The Gull Lake/Richland area is a great place to call "home," according to the locals. "We have good ties here," Tiller said.

Messenger added that he would stay in the immediate area of Gull Lake/Richland, even if he wasn't working there.

And concludes Rogers, "We've based our home here with our family." She explained: "Once you put your roots down somewhere, you just have to realize that this is your home."