

# MICHIGAN MEMO



## YOUTH TRIATHLONS RACING ACROSS MICHIGAN



*“We follow up with our triathletes and show them the Bibles studies that we have designed just for kids,” says Pastor EJ Wolf.*

**O**n your mark... Get set... GO! This summer the Frost, Gobles, Mount Pleasant and La Blanc churches are planning on helping the youth in their community get some exercise while learning the eight laws of health. If the triathletes complete the training, they will receive a free bike, t-shirt and medallion, because in our race every child is a winner!

Right after camp meeting the trainers from each church work with the kids in their community for six weeks to help them prepare for the race. Each triathlete is timed and their goal is to beat their own time from the week before. Last year over 70 bikes were given away to kids in the Frost and Gobles community, and this year with more churches participating that number could double.

Church members, along with their

pastor, let the businesses in the community know that they care about the health of the kids in their community. We tell that that we want to give each child who completes the training a free bike to motivate them to keep exercising after the race is completed. The way we were able to do this is through the generosity of our sponsors. One hundred dollars sponsors one child. Many sponsors have donated the money for two or more kids from their community when they see the thank you letters from parents and the triathletes along with the pictures of the year before. Last year over \$7,000 was donated from the community.

It is a great way to introduce our church to the business owners and community organizations in our community. The Lions and Kiwanis clubs have not only donated their money, also their members came out to help

*(continued on page 6)*

JIM MICHEFF



*“Is it possible that the attitude exhibited in a know-it-all is repeated in other ways throughout our lives?”*

## MY FIRST CAR: A LESSON IN LEARNING

Between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade I lived on a small farm in rural Wisconsin. We had 80 acres and for the most part grew hay, but Dad was more interested in character building and us learning to work than actual farming. Dad had the neighbor bale the hay, and it was our privilege to transport the hay from the field to neatly stacked rows in the barn. Our method of transportation was an old Dodge pickup truck. Usually Dad would put the truck in 1<sup>st</sup> gear and then have my brother steer while it idled to the end of the field. The rest of us bigger kids would help him load the hay on the pickup. We all looked forward to the trips to the barn because Dad would let us take turns sitting beside him and steer all the way. I dreamed of someday being able to drive all by myself.

One day Dad told me he had worked out a deal with a man to acquire a car that he was going to give me. It would be mine as long as I followed his instructions and demonstrated that I was able to handle the responsibility entrusted to me. I was only 12 at the time and couldn't believe my good fortune. The car wouldn't be licensed so it could only be driven on the farm.

On the appointed day, my brother-in-law Jim came with us so he could drive the car home. The owner led us to his barn and then pushed the door open. What a beauty! It was a 1951 Chevy two-door coupe. A fresh coat of yellow paint had been generously sprayed on it and two black stripes had been added from the front hood over the roof and

all the way to the back of the trunk. There weren't any bumpers, but large pipes had been put in their place. It had experienced a small fire on the inside that had burned all the interior. The seats had been replaced but the headliner along with the rest of the interior still bore the effects of the fire. It had a 3-speed standard transmission and the shifting mechanism had been moved from the steering column to the floor. With the turn of the ignition key, the motor roared to life and it was then that we discovered that the mufflers had been replaced by two pipes that went all the way to the manifold.

After a short discussion and a few questions, Dad shook hands with the owner to complete the deal (Dad traded a 16-millimeter reel-to-reel projector for it). I was surprised that the owner of such a car seemed so excited with the prospect of the trade.

When we arrived home, mom told us lunch was ready so driving my new car would have to wait until after our meal. As soon as I could, I asked to be excused from the table and I waited for the others in the driver's seat of my car. I had paid close attention to how my brother-in-law shifted from one gear to the other – it seemed easy enough. He had said that the shifting pattern was like the letter “H” and when shifting from one gear to another you had to engage the clutch. I was pretty sure I'd have no problem with the brake and the accelerator, but that clutch seemed a little tricky. I practiced until I could smoothly move from one gear to another using the clutch peddle.

When the others came, Dad sat in the front passenger seat while Jim and my younger brother Kenny sat in the back seat. Dad started to explain how to use the clutch when shifting but I quickly told him I knew all that. I was sure he didn't realize that I had been practicing and had become pretty good at moving through the gears using the clutch peddle. It never occurred to me that shifting gears while moving would be any different. After several attempts to explain, but with the same response he finally said, “Well ok, let's see what you know. Start the engine.”

I started the engine and tapped the accelerator several times. The roar of the engine sent goose bumps all over me. I put it in reverse and then let my foot off the clutch. The car lurched backward and then the motor died. I looked at Dad, but he didn't say anything, so I started the engine again and put it in first gear. I determined to let the clutch out slower next time, but it was evident it was not slow enough because it produced the same results. After a couple more unsuccessful tries, I finally managed to move forward slowly along the lane that led past the barn. My brother asked me if I was going to shift into second gear. “Of course,” I responded with more confidence than I really felt. I tried to put it into second gear, but it didn't move as smoothly as it had when I was practicing. I looked down to see what was wrong and suddenly, everyone in the car started to yell. I looked up just in time to see a fence post disappear under the car. I attempted to slam on the brake but in all the excitement I

# PRAYER FOCUS

Every Monday morning, the Michigan Conference staff meets for worship and prayer. Here is the list for April. Please join with us as we pray for these churches and ministries.

## MARCH 30-APRIL 3

Lapeer/Orion-Oxford/Otter Lake  
Pastor Victor Vaughn  
Lapeer Community Services  
Women's Ministries Retreat - 1

## APRIL 6-10

Living Word  
Pastor Sung Um  
Ruth Murdoch Elementary School  
Neighbor to Neighbor  
Women's Ministries Retreat - 2

## APRIL 13-17

Covert/Hartford/Pullman  
Pastor William Richardson  
Covert Community Services  
Women's Ministries Retreat - 3

## APRIL 20-24

Troy  
Pastor Travis Smith  
Troy Adventist Academy  
Vacation Bible School Workshop

## APRIL 27-MAY 1

Cadillac 13th St/Manton/Mesick  
Pastor Bob Benson  
Northview Christian School

hit the accelerator. The only thing faster than that car was my Dad who in one motion slammed the brake so hard that the motor died... just inches in front of the barn. And so ended my connection with my first car, mine for all of about four hours. All because I thought I knew everything I needed to know and had refused to be a learner.

Thankfully this experience happened when I was only a 12 year-old. Perhaps some of you can relate to something similar in your life. But is it possible that the attitude exhibited in a know-it-all is repeated in other ways throughout our lives? If so, is that attitude inhibiting or resisting God's efforts to teach us? We want God's leading in our lives but fail to listen with the ears of a learner. How can I know or recognize whether or not I am a learner?

The Bible says in Jeremiah 17:9, "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Who can know it?" But in the next verse God answers this question, "I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind." The know-it-all attitude is prompted by the sin-driven mind. Selfishness and sin are so closely linked together that where you find one you will find the other.

The Bible leads us to the solution for this dilemma. "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall."<sup>1</sup> "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up."<sup>2</sup>

In the sermon on the mount Jesus said it this way, "Blessed are the meek."<sup>3</sup> "Meekness" towards God means that we accept His will and His dealing with us as good, that we submit to Him in all things without hesitation.<sup>4</sup> Eventually, says Christ, those who humble themselves – those who learn meekness – will be exalted.

The core of humility entails the act of surrendering control to God. James 4:8 recognizes this as the starting point for the learner that leads to not only wisdom but total victory over sin. "Therefore, submit yourselves to God.

Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded." Surrender or submission is not a one-time event – it is the daily fight of faith.

We need to come to God as a learner so that our prayer will be, "Teach me to do Your will, for You are my God. Your Spirit is good. Lead me in the land of uprightness."<sup>5</sup>

Perhaps one of the greatest lessons in life is to learn to recognize God's voice of instruction. To make this possible Jesus promised to send us a helper, the Holy Spirit, who will teach us all things.<sup>6</sup> He promises to give us wisdom.<sup>7</sup> And invites us to come and reason with Him.<sup>8</sup>

The Bible was given to us for instruction<sup>9</sup> to reveal God's will in all matters of life. When we ask God for help when making important decisions or when we are trying to understand Bible doctrines, His promise is certain. "Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know."<sup>10</sup> Taking God at is word is called faith. You may not hear an audible voice; the answer may already be in scripture and God will lead you to it. We are encouraged to be learners, workers who do not need to be ashamed or frustrated, rightly divining the word of truth.<sup>11</sup> The questions we must continue to ask ourselves are, "Am I humble and teachable today? Do I have the attitude of a learner?" If so, God's promises are reality!



<sup>1</sup> Proverbs 16:18

<sup>2</sup> James 4:10

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 5:5

<sup>4</sup> Bible Commentary, Vol. 5, p. 326

<sup>5</sup> Psalm 143:10

<sup>6</sup> John 14:26

<sup>7</sup> James 1:5

<sup>8</sup> Isaiah 1:18

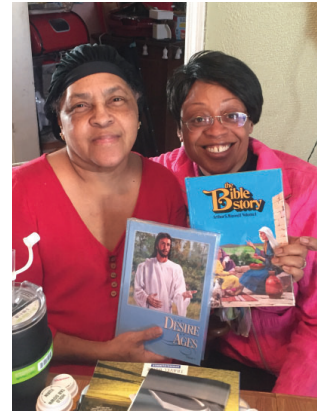
<sup>9</sup> 2 Timothy 3:16

<sup>10</sup> Jeremiah 33.3

<sup>11</sup> 2 Timothy 2:15

see her purchase the books, and select the *Desire of Ages* as her bonus book for herself! In addition, Desi discovered that the woman was struggling with some health concerns. It seems that she will also be very much interested in

our health materials, but in the meantime, Desi will begin coming by to share some vegetarian recipes with her that will



help her immediate health goals. That is evangelism at its finest and gives the literature evangelist a satisfied feeling that they have touched a life and made a difference!

**E**vangelism in all of its forms should be the work of the church. We exist for no other reason. As we grow in grace, we are to win souls for eternity. To accomplish this end, we need Children's Evangelism, Youth Evangelism, Public Campus Evangelism, Women's Evangelism, Men's Evangelism, Community Evangelism, Educational Evangelism, Health Evangelism, Family Evangelism, and yes, Literature Evangelism (which can aid many of the evangelistic thrusts listed above).

The work of the literature evangelist is a personal ministry, visiting with individuals in their homes and interesting them in books which can change their lives! Throughout Adventist history, literature evangelists were often at the forefront of breaking ground in new territories. They were foot soldiers that found interests in their daily toil from house-to-house, and often developed a Bible study or two on the side, as well. Many churches were raised and many souls won by this special ministry. Literature evangelists did not wait for souls to come to them, but rather went out to find souls through

attractive, relevant books/materials. Such dedicated souls are still needed in Michigan!



Desi and I were following up a lead card for someone interested in the Bible Story books in February. As we approached, the pleasant woman had for-

gotten our appointment, but let us in just the same. She was still very much interested! Once seated, Desi began to go through her canvass and share the very important features and benefits of the books for her home as I prayed. The woman listened with interest and truly believed that these books were important for her grandchildren. They weren't being raised with the Bible as she had raised her children, and she wanted the opportunity to introduce her grandchildren to Jesus with these beautiful books and the excellent lessons they shared. She had once owned these books but had given them away some time before. What a joy it was to

We also invite young people to engage in this personal ministry using a youth group format and soft cover books (or Magabooks). Through the smiles and winsome ways of young people, many of these books find their way into homes across Michigan. What a joy to know that these seeds are planted and Bible study interests are developed through this youth ministry!

Finally, *GLOW* tracts provide a wonderful, simple method that everyone can utilize to share literature on a daily basis. Whether we are filling our gas tanks or stopping by a store, going to a restaurant or staying at a hotel on vacation, we can share these pocket-sized tracts with people directly or leave one in a conspicuous place for people to find! God has given us marvelous stories of how He is using *GLOW* here in Michigan, like this story below:

Something had happened in John's life to cause him to make the drastic move from Long Island, New York to Bay City, Michigan, leaving his family

*(continued on page 7)*



Photo: Dr. Gordon Atkins

## BUSY BEAVERS!

The North American Beaver can be found across much of the United States and Canada, and has been introduced to parts of South America and Europe. They are rodents like mice and squirrels and are the second largest rodent in the world, weighing up to seventy pounds, although the average is around forty pounds.

Beavers are semiaquatic animals and are very well equipped to thrive in their environment. Beavers have valves in their ears and noses to keep the water out while they are under the water. These creatures even come equipped with their own special underwater goggles! Beavers have a transparent membrane that covers their eyes while they are underwater allowing them to see. They have webbed hind feet that help them to be strong swimmers. The tail of the beaver is flat, scaly, and paddle shaped and acts like the rudder on a boat helping the beaver steer through their aquatic home. They can also use their tail to warn other beavers when there is a predator nearby by slapping their tail on the water.

Beavers keep themselves waterproof by producing a special oil called castoreum that they groom into their fur with their feet and special “comb” called a preening toe. When needed,

beavers can swim for up to half a mile underwater because of their ability to store oxygen in their lungs. As mentioned earlier, beavers are excellent swimmers, but they are quite clumsy on land. If they must venture out on land for food, they risk being eaten by one of their many predators. For this reason, beavers build dams in order to flood the surrounding area creating a pond that makes it easier for them to get to their food (buds, leaves, and the inside bark of trees) and helps to protect them from predators. Not only do the ponds help the beavers, but they create habitats for other animals such as moose and migrating birds.

These dams may look like a mass of sticks and mud, but they are engineering masterpieces. Beaver dams can range in size from a few feet to huge structures that can be seen from space. To build the dam, beavers drive branches into the mud to form a base that can withstand a current, create spillways to allow water to flow over the dam to allow the excess water to spill over without damaging the dam, and design it to withstand the swiftness of the water.

As you can see God has equipped beavers with special “equipment” and “know how” for thriving in their

environment. Beavers aren’t the only members of God’s creation who God has given equipment to. All of God’s creation is given what it needs in order to thrive. We as humans are no exception. Ephesians 6:13-17 (*New International Version*) says, “Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” God has given us exactly what we need to survive on this earth and withstand our “predator,” the devil, until He comes again to take us home.

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**Bethany Nietling**, intern, Camp Au Sable



**(TRIATHLONS)**

pass out water, pump up tires, adjust bike seats, administer first aid and put medallions around the necks of each child who crosses the finish line.

We celebrate the triathletes hard work by having a picnic together. What is on the menu? Haystacks of course! Each parent brings toppings and we get to know the parents and their kids better. Here is what a few of the parents have said.

“My kiddos really enjoyed the program, and it challenged them to grow by making them practice when they didn't ‘feel like it’ in order to achieve a goal they set.”

“The youth get exercise tailored for their age group!”

“I think this is an awesome way to get kids outside and having fun.”

The triathlon program was birthed in the Gaylord Church out of the desire to help us reach the young people in our community. Joanne Jordan was leading out in New Start programs every spring and fall. In our area the classes quickly filled up, but so many

of the participants already had high blood pressure, diabetes, and some had experienced quadruple bypass surgery. How could we reach them before they were suffering from all of this? We have to start getting this message out to a younger audience.

After reading the the following passage from the book *Ministry of Healing*, an idea popped into my head. “Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Savior mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence.” I thought we could do a triathlon for kids and share the health message with them before they came down with debilitating diseases. The board approved it, and the first year we had 36 kids sign up. The Gaylord Sportsplex hosted the event and were so grateful we were doing something for the youth in our community. Alma College hosted the event for the Ithaca Church free of charge for two years, even opening up the pool on Sundays for us. Every year we have more kids join us. Frost started out with 12 kids the first year; in year two they had 40 and last year 71 kids participated.

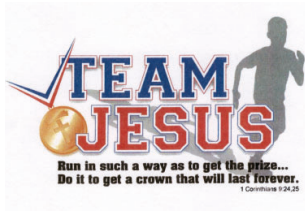
To start the trainings, we share a story of Bible heroes like Noah, Abraham, David, and Samson that go along with the health nugget for that day. We stretch with them and have prayer before they start. While the triathletes are swimming, biking and running, the church members get to know the parents. We let them know about our Pathfinder clubs, our church school, and VBS that is planned the week right after the race. After school starts we follow up with our triathletes and show them the Bible studies that we have designed just for kids. Because we have developed relationships with the parents and the kids, most start the Bible studies and learn about the Sabbath for the first time. In Gaylord one of those families got baptized, and the father is now a deacon faithfully serving the church.

If you would like to know more, visit our website at [youth-triathlon.com](http://youth-triathlon.com). We would love to help you start one in your community next year!

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**Ernest J Wolf**, pastor, Frost and Ithaca churches

## NEWS BRIEF



**The Vacation Bible School (VBS) Workshop** will take place this month from April 24-26. This year's theme is **Team Jesus** and will focus on Bible champions. After attending the workshop, you will be equipped to teach our young to be champions for Jesus through Bible stories, memory verses, activities, crafts, and more! Join us at Camp Au Sable for a Spirit-filled weekend of powerful sermons, training, and fellowship. For questions and registration, please email [jclark@misda.org](mailto:jclark@misda.org) or call 517-316-1552.



**Save the date!** A one-week-long Emmanuel on Location will be held at the conference office from September 27 to October 3. This intensive week is specifically designed to help you become a more active and effective witness for Christ anytime, anywhere. Classes will run daily from 8:30 AM to 6:30 PM. More details will be posted as they become available, but feel free to give us a call at 517-316-1578.



**Daniel Jean-Francois** is the pastor of the Alma and Ithaca churches. Previously, he was the pastor of the Edmore and Lakeview churches. **EJ Wolf** is pastor of the Frost, Edmore, and Lakeview churches. He previously pastored two churches—Frost and Ithaca.

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### (LITERATURE)

behind. However, in this season of barrenness a time of renewal had come.

John had left a message on the *GLOW* phone number, and when we finally were able to connect with him, we were delighted to learn that he was interested in Bible studies! He felt that he must have called us from something he had seen on TV, but we highly doubted it, as we don't have the funds to invest in TV ads! When we mentioned that it was a tract or pamphlet he must have picked up somewhere, his memory was jogged: "Oh, yes! I found that pamphlet pinned to a bulletin board at Save-a-lot! Yes! That's where I saw it."

Flipping the tract over, he had seen the offer for Bible studies and felt his need to call.

We had an engaging conversation in which he shared that he had recently taken care of some personal financial issues that needed to be settled and was hoping to sell his house and move back to Long Island to reconcile with his estranged wife. And in the midst of making better choices, he saw the need to strengthen his walk with God.

Some people will walk right into our churches, curious and interested in what we have to share. However, for

most we need to put forth the effort to win them. It will involve sowing seeds everywhere, knowing that only some will take root. But it is for the joy of those that take root that we work.

Thank you for supporting Literature Ministry! Why not ask God how He wants you to be involved in Literature Ministry today?

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**Annette Metz**, assistant to the director for Literature Ministries

**Do you want to receive the weekly e-newsletter of the Michigan Conference for the latest in news and upcoming events? Subscribe now by copying the following link to your browser: <http://bit.ly/MISDA7>.**

## MICHIGAN CONFERENCE OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

5801 W Michigan Ave

Lansing, MI 48917

PHONE 517.316.1500 FAX 517.316.1501

commdept@misda.org

www.misda.org

www.facebook.com/miconf

## MONTHLY CALENDAR

### April

- 1 Camp Meeting Directors
- 3-5 Women's Ministries Retreat 1  
Camp Au Sable
- 11 Impact Day
- 10-12 Women's Ministries Retreat 2  
Camp Au Sable
- 17-19 Women's Ministries Retreat 3  
Camp Au Sable
- 19-21 Literature Evangelist Retreat
- 20-26 GLAA Home Leave
- 24-26 Vacation Bible School Workshop  
Camp Au Sable
- 26 Adventurer Fun Day  
Great Lakes Adv Academy

### May

- 3-7 Camp Au Sable Work Week
- 12 District Superintendents
- 13 Camp Meeting Directors  
and Leaders
- 14 MI K-12 Board of Education
- 15-17 Pathfinder Fair  
Camp Au Sable
- 22-24 Hispanic Camp Meeting  
Camp Au Sable
- 22-24 Great Lakes Adv Academy  
Graduation Weekend
- 25 Memorial Day - Office Closed

## A WALK-IN GETS BAPTIZED

Pat Lykins, Communication Secretary, Bunker Hill Church

Michele Ramalia walked into our church one Sabbath back in February of 2019, and she's been attending ever since. In fact, she's only missed a few Sabbaths!

She had been living in the vicinity since 2011 and had it in her mind to visit one day. The Holy Spirit was obviously at work and was able to provide her the necessary courage last year. Prior to her move to Michigan, she had worked for an Adventist Hospital in Jellico, TN for about two and a half years. She was already acquainted with many of our doctrines. Over the past year, she accepted the Adventist faith and made the decision to be baptized.

Last year, on December 21, we had what turned out to be a beautiful baptism for her. She also had the support of her family at the baptism—her father, aunt, cousin and husband, a stepsister and even a friend from work.

Sadly, for us, she moved to Knoxville, TN to be near her three children: Natasha, Jacob and Joshua. She is also continuing her nursing career there and

working at one of the larger hospitals in the area. We praise God because she has sought the Lord's guidance and direction every step of the way.

For Pastor Raymond Torres, it had been such a pleasure and blessing to study with someone so eager to learn. Also, she clearly desired to know and follow through with God's will in all areas of her life. If it was in the word of God, she wanted to do it!

Part of her story entails having a spouse that wasn't supportive of her new faith. He had asked her to give up church or to get out. She decided to remain in the Adventist faith and to continue her relationship with

Jesus, even though it has been very challenging. We have prayed with her, poured out our love upon her, shared in her sorrow and pain, and wept with her.

Now she is living in Knoxville to begin a new life with Jesus at her side, her constant Companion. She sees her children more often and is visiting churches in the area to claim her new church family.

Please keep Michele in your prayers.

