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A PIRATE FESTIVAL

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HOLISTIC HEALTH

Inside Grand Haven

The key to your community



Learning To Glide

Outdoor Fitness Gurus Navigate New Stand Up Sport

Inside Grand Haven

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Inside

- 14 Stand Up For New Paddle Sport, Learn How To Glide**
- 18 Picnic Talk With Pat McGinnis**
- 21 Dr. Brian Roscoe's Got Your Back**
- 7 The Pirates of Michigan Unite**
- 30 Blue Eyes Wins the Boat Show**

Departments

5 From the Editor

What's special this month — in the magazine, and the area.

7 Around Town

People, places, problems, good causes and occasions.

23 Gotta Go!

Best bets for upcoming concerts, shows and events.

25 Snapshot

Community residents share their photos with readers.

27 Calendar

Your guide to music, theater, kid stuff and lots more.

30 And Another Thing...

A fond farewell from this month's issue of the magazine.

On the Cover

Cari Draft of EcoTrek Fitness takes a ride on a stand up paddleboard in Pottawatomie Bayou in June. Draft co-authored the feature story about this relatively new paddle sport and shared some photos of a recent group paddle excursion.

Photo courtesy of Austin Elliot



You could be a community contributor!

Tonya M. Christiansen writes about animal advocacy and health issues. In July's issue she penned a story about how a dog's demeanor doesn't necessarily tell us if it's in distress. In this month's issue Tonya gives advice about natural flea and tick remedies. Check it out on Page 20.

Get Involved!

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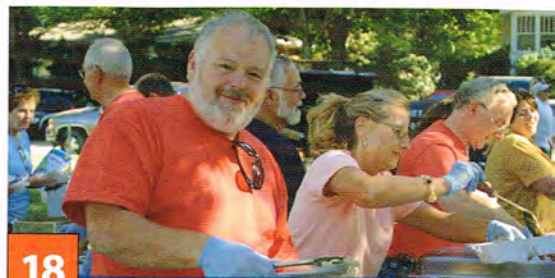
14

Photo courtesy of Cari Draft



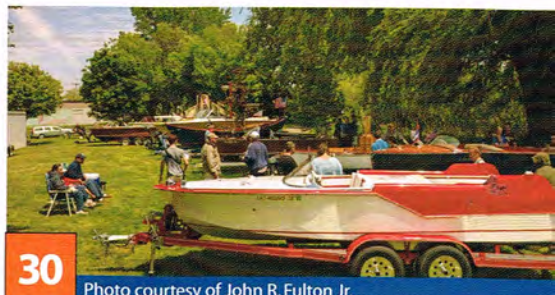
7

Photo courtesy of Danie Dufresne



18

Photo courtesy of Patrick McGinnis



30

Photo courtesy of John R. Fulton Jr.



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Learning To Glide, Paddle and Balance

Experts offer advice on new water sport, SUP— Stand Up Paddling.

*by Cari Draft and Frederick Hartray
Community contributors*

With more than 11,000 inland lakes in the state and an endless number of rivers, streams and bayous, the state of Michigan offers amazing, peaceful venues to try the trendy new sport of Stand Up Paddling (SUP). Still fairly new in Michigan, the word is quickly spreading, as late spring, summer, and early fall are ideal times to SUP in our pure state. We've got two of the hottest spots to SUP right here in West Michigan: Holland and Grand Haven!

Let's look at some specifics when getting into this SUP experience, jumping in with board type. There are rigid boards and there are inflatable boards; which one would be right for you?

Rigid boards are built with an EPS (expanded Poly Styrene) core and layers of fibre glass and or ABS (Acryl Btylene Styrene) over the core. Some may also have bamboo or hard woods and carbon fiber for extra strength and stiffness. These are the boards on which your paddling will be able to progress the most. They will track straighter and glide further than inflatable or other semi-rigid boards. They also accelerate faster when you take your first stroke which facilitates catching waves either at the beach or just riding a friend's stern wake. Rigid boards are perfect for anyone who wants to get into a regular paddleboard workout routine, since you can simply drop them into the water and paddle; no need to worry about whether the board is inflated properly. Within the rigid board category there are a lot of variations in platform, length, width and thickness. They are plenty durable for use on a beach and if you use them carefully around docks and rocks, they will last a long time. Small dings can be easily fixed with epoxy filler or epoxy and fiber glass.

Inflatable boards are great for people who want to travel easily with their boards. They are convenient to keep on a boat and can be deflated and rolled up for storage. Paddlers over 160 lbs may find they flex a bit too much, and this flex makes balance for the heavier or taller paddler more difficult than on a rigid board. The inflatables are great for kids, as they tend



EcoTrek Fitness SUP Wednesday Night Series Group: Trish Arendsen, Carol Kloss, Shanti Ceane, Anne Todd, TiAnna Bennetts, Mandy DeRose, Katie Lister, Jenna Saltzstein, Amy Lutke, Shauna Vugteveen, Ann Haaksma and Sarah Hoffman hold paddles in the air after a successful paddle on Pottawatomie Bayou in June.

Photo courtesy of Cari Draft

to have smaller, softer fins as well. Because of the added flex, they're a little harder if one wants to try catching waves at the beach or riding the stern wake of a passing boat.

The different attributes of a board are going to affect how it performs. First off: length. In general, longer is faster and glides further. You sacrifice turning and maneuverability. Long is good for racing or really long paddles. Short is great for surf catching waves or playing at the beach. A medium all-around board is what is best for beginners, somewhere around 10.5 feet to 11 feet for women and 11' to 11.5 feet for men.

Width is another variable to consider. Wide is stable and narrow is fast -- as long as you're not always falling in. If you are primarily working out on your board (think yoga or pilates), a slightly narrower board (29 inches for men, 27 inches for women) will give your workouts a balance aspect. If you want to progress in waves, wide is great. Width lets you walk back on the board and do things you wouldn't want to try on a narrow board.

Rocker is the curvature of the back half of the board.



This is the part of the board you're going to stand on the most. The more rocker the board has, the easier it is to turn and steer. Boards with more rocker also are more stable in choppy water. Unless you plan to only use your board in really flat water with no boating wakes, some rocker is a good thing.

Scoop is the curvature of the front part of the board. Scoop does keep the front of the board from diving when you are standing too far forward trying to catch a wave, but it also makes the board a little drier and comfortable in lake chop, and makes the board easier to turn anywhere. Together, Scoop and Rocker are the schoopy rocker line.

Fins: One fin is great for going straight. Pairs of thrusters, which are angled fins that create lift, are best for turning. Thrusters work because when the board is put on edge, they essentially push the tail sideways, helping it turn. A board with two pairs of thrusters may turn really well in open-water surf like Lake Michigan. Replacing the thruster with a central fin will make the board track straight for inland bayous, lakes and workout paddling. If you only have one fin slot and can move it: forward will make the board more maneuverable and further back will make it track straighter.

When choosing a paddle, the rule of thumb (and pinky) is Shaka above head high. Shaka is the Hawaiian gesture of shaking your hand with the thumb and pinky extended and the

three central fingers folded. It means "Hang Loose." This is the equivalent of about 10" for an average guy about 9" for a woman. Much of the thrust you get in a paddle stroke is by being able to pull down on the paddle with all your weight, and this will drive the board forward quickly. The blade on SUP paddles should angle forward like the blade on a racing canoe paddle. It is this forward angulation that supports your weight when you put the blade in the water and pull down on it. No angulation and you will have balance issues.

Okay, so there you have all the technical aspects of choosing the right board for you; now let's explore the basics of good SUP technique!

Stand near the balance point of the board. If your board has an indented carry handle, that is the balance point of the board. Face forward (not sideways) with your heels fairly close to the centerline. Keep your toes outward at about 45 degrees for best balance. Knees should be slightly flexed (never locked) and you want to keep your hips loose. Do this in flat water and slowly tip the board from side to side to ensure you are not rigid. You will get tired quickly if you stand rigidly and fight the natural tipping of the board in the water.

Hold the top T-handle of the paddle with either hand. The other hand holds the shaft about chest high above the blade. Reach as far forward and transfer as much of your weight as possible to the blade. Because the blade is angled forward, it will do a good job of resisting your weight. Pull back on the shaft with a relaxed grip. Your arm should work only in tension. You will notice that as soon as the board is moving, it becomes more stable. When the blade reaches your hip, pull it out to the side, away from the board and reach forward again. Repeat this three to four times and then switch hands.

To switch hands: As you are bringing the paddle forward, slide your top hand down the shaft till it is just above your other hand and then switch the old lower hand to the top. It is better to do all this slowly and smoothly than to rush it. Once the top hand is on the T grip, pull on it to raise the blade over the board and switch sides.

To turn: Sweep the blade away from the side opposite of the direction you want to go. On a sweep stroke, bring the blade around and as far back as possible, rather than coming out at the hip as you do in a forward stroke. You can greatly shorten the turning radius of your board by sliding your weight back. Do this by sliding your foot on the outside of the turn back as you bring the blade back. By keeping some of your weight on the paddle, this is much easier than just stepping back. As your weight moves back, the bow comes up, thus shortening the waterline and turning radius.

When you are ready to catch a wave you will again be sliding a foot back as you take a strong stroke to get your board surfing, while it may sound difficult and may take some time to learn, even young children can be seen mastering the maneuver.

If you are having issues with balance on the board you bought or rented, try hand paddling it lying down on your chest at first. From there you can progress to paddling while sitting, then kneeling and eventually you will be able to stand and paddle with ease. Sometimes just knowing you can glide through the water fairly quickly using your hands will give you the confidence to stand up and paddle.

Continued on next page

Top photo: Maunaluua paddleboards come in a wide variety of styles.
Photo courtesy of Bruce Hansen

Bottom, left photos: Kim Evans unloads her board and Sarah Hoffman carries hers to the boat launch in Pottawatomie Park in June.
Photos courtesy of Cari Draft

Middle photo: Georgie Rae Dohl comes in from a sunset paddle.
Photo courtesy of Jeff Dohl

Bottom, middle photo: Rachele Hartray, 8, takes a friend for a ride around Montrose Harbor in Chicago in 2012.
Far right and bottom right photos: Rachele Hartray heads out for a paddle. Rachele catches a ride on a breaking wave. Both photos were taken in Naples, Italy in June.
Photos courtesy of Frederick Hartray



Continued from previous page

Looking for inspiration?

There are several great places to connect with other SUP enthusiasts and be inspired by those who've had longtime involvement with the sport. The TC Watman Challenge and Expo takes place in Grand Traverse Bay in Traverse City August 17. It is the largest event of its type in the Midwest. Visit, tcwaterman.com. Closer to home is the second annual Reeds Lake SUP Race, scheduled for August 31. For information visit, reedslakesup.com. The third annual Great Lakes SUP Classic is scheduled for September 15 in Holland. For information visit, hollandoutpost.com. There's also the South Shore Paddleboard Challenge in Munising, September 20-22. Visit sspbc.com for more information on the Munising event. For information and schedules visit, midwestsup.com, hollandoutpost.com and mackiteboarding.com/stand-up-paddle.

Explore the sport, rent a board, take a lesson and be pleasantly surprised just how easy it is to become addicted to the peacefulness and serenity you'll find paddling on the board. —Cari Draft is a personal fitness trainer and founder of EcoTrek Fitness, outdoor group workouts all over Michigan with locations ranging from Kalamazoo to Grand Rapids to Traverse City, Grand Haven, Holland and Muskegon. EcoTrek Fitness holds SUP events in Grand Haven each summer; all details can be found at EcoTrekFitness.com or at [facebook.com/EcoTrekFitness](https://www.facebook.com/EcoTrekFitness).

—Frederick Hartray works with Maunaluua Surfboards. He got his start in the world of water sports, racing windsurfers in Grand Haven and Chicago and eventually won the Windsurfer North American Championships in 1987. Hartray has pioneered the sport of paddle-boarding, on the mainland, of the United States, working with his long time friend Bruce "Buzz" Hansen from Maunaluua Surfboards in Maui and with Prijon Kayaks. Frederick now splits his time between Chicago, Illinois and Roverto, Italy and West Michigan, raising three small paddle boarders who attend Camp Miniwanca in Stony Lake, Oceana County. For more information visit, maunaluuaboards.com and prijon.com.ayf.com.



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