

Music and love; what more you could you ask for?

If you have never played ukulele with 200 ukulele players, then you are really missing out! (At least in my opinion!) This past weekend, Carolyn and I attended Ukulele camp officially called Mighty Uke Day which, of course, lasted for more than a day! These ukulele camps or festivals turn into reunions



LOU ANN HOMAN-SAYLOR

for uke players as well as playing for hours and hours! We are fortunate to live in an area where we can attend many uke festivals since Michigan is a great uke capital of the country. With our bags packed early on Friday, we hit the road on a sunny day to get to camp to register early. As we arrived in Lansing there were so many old friends and new friends to connect with for these short few days. Nametags, lunch, check in to our hotel

and back for our first workshop.

Carolyn and I have been teachers forever, and so we know how to be good students ... well pretty good students. We took our seats, tuned our ukes and waited for the lovely workshop to begin. However, it seemed as if everyone came out of hiding (finally!) as a hundred players came to that particular workshop. We kept moving our chairs closer and closer together. Finally, everyone was seated, and it sounded as if we were all in a huge band with all the tuning and the ukes in place. The first workshop was hard, by the way! We stumbled through it, taking notes, practicing and then at the end of the first workshop knew that we had already had a great brain workout!

By late afternoon, we could barely zip our uke bags back up as we scurried to dinner to get back in time for the night concert. It is completely amazing to me how fabulously talented are the folks in the uke world. As I told Adam, I will never, ever be that kind of player, but listening to the concert is overwhelming. How can one small ukulele make all of those sounds? Rock band. Classical. Country western. Jazz. Blues. All of those genres were expertly played on the ukulele to a huge crowd of happy listeners.

You would think the evening would be over at 10:30, but oh no. Following the concert, we all headed back to the hotel and filled the lobby with a uke jam until well past midnight. I think the Marriott will never be the same; although they did greet each guest with a small ukulele token attached to our keys! The jam was again so crowded as player after player came into the lobby. The songs were put up on a big screen and we just played our hearts out until one-by-one folks called it a night!

The next day was no exception as we were transported back into our musical world. Again, workshops, networking and a late-night jam session.

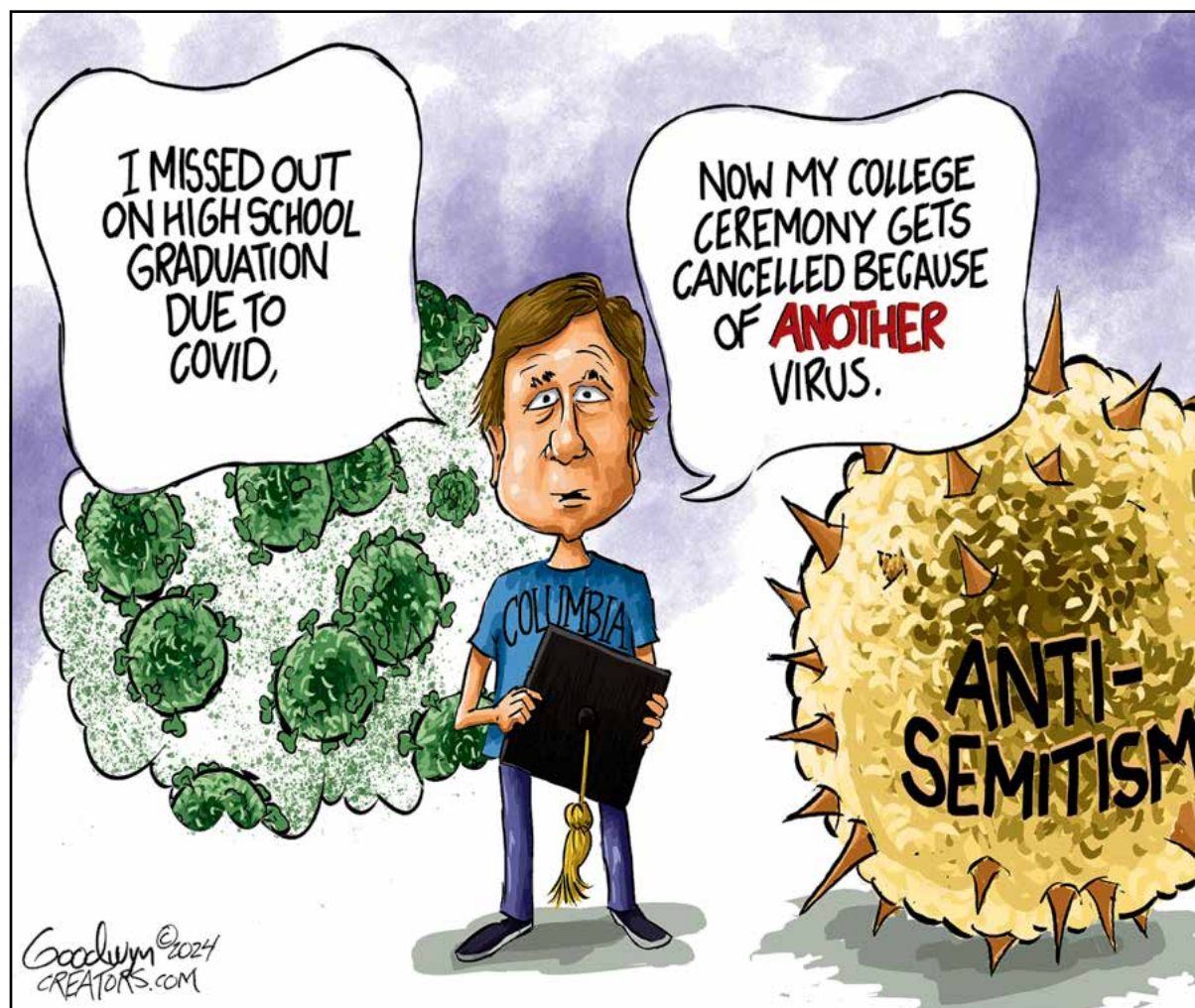
By Sunday morning we were packing the car to head home. With a notebook full of notes and a tired uke, we made our way back as the conversation was as colorful as the music we played all weekend. Carolyn is much more a musician than I am, yet I love playing and thinking I am a musician! (I guess we can think we can do anything, and why not?) Research shows that we need "structural and functional brain reorganization beyond the developmental maturation period as an intrinsic property of the human central nervous system." (Professor Bogdan Draganski, consultant in neurology at the University Hospital in Switzerland.) In layman terms, learning and playing music helps with an aging brain, and let's face it, everyone has an aging brain! Ukuleles are so reasonable to purchase. They are not expensive, unless you want them to be, and you can have a great time no matter how much you pay.

You don't know how to play? Oh well, you are in luck, our ukulele group, The Steuben Strummers meets the second Monday of every month at the Angola Carnegie Library. Don't be shy! We welcome you into our group. As I always say bike riding on long trails and playing the uke are definitely Zen moments for me!

Arriving home, I unpacked until Aaron and Rachel stopped by with a dozen pastel roses and an invitation to dinner. Of course, I would never turn that down! I did hear from my other boys and the grandchildren as well, so the weekend ended with a flourish of love.

Music and love ... anything better?

LOU ANN Homan-Saylor lives in Angola at the White Picket Gardens where you can find her gardening or writing late into the night under the light of her frayed scarlet lamp. She is a storyteller, teacher, writer, actress and a collector of front porch stories. She can be contacted at locketoftime@aol.com.



Let's create a community that reflects God's love for all

To the Editor:
I am deeply saddened by the recent letter from Robert Sparkman of Rome City, condemning an entire group of people in our community: LGBTQ+ people. Why the animosity toward our LGBTQ+ neighbors? Mr. Sparkman uses religion to justify hatred, yet true faith calls for love and acceptance. The core message of the Bible rings clear: love your neighbor as yourself (Leviticus 19:18). Nowhere does Scripture condemn loving relationships based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

Genesis 1:27 tells us God created humanity "male and female." This passage celebrates the beauty of diversity, not a limitation. God doesn't create cookie-cutter people; He delights in the rich tapestry of human experience. Likewise, in Galatians 3:28, Paul emphasizes that in Christ "there is no Jew or Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Faith transcends earthly categories, uniting us in God's love.

Some point to the story of Sodom and Gomorrah, but a closer look reveals the true sin. These cities were destroyed for rampant violence and inhospitality (Ezekiel 16:49-50). LGBTQ+ people simply desire to live with dignity and respect — the very qualities Sodom and Gomorrah lacked.

Jesus himself associated with the marginalized, the ostracized. He dined with tax collectors and sinners (Luke 15:1-2), showing compassion for those deemed "unclean" by society. Following Jesus' example, shouldn't we extend the same kindness to all, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity?

Let us move beyond fear and prejudice. The Bible is a book of love, not hate. Let's create a community that reflects God's love for all His children, offering acceptance and celebrating the rich tapestry of human experience.

As state representative I will work for equal legal protections for all Hoosiers regardless of age, race, ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation.

**Walt Sorg
Auburn**

Letters to the Editor

Congratulations for win in U.S. Congress primary

To the Editor:
Congratulations to Fremont native Kiley Adolph, for her win in the U.S. Congress Indiana District 3 primary election. Kiley is a proven leader who is dedicated to helping the people of northeast Indiana. In the coming months, there will be many opportunities for everyone in the community to meet her, so open your door when she knocks, or attend an event that she hosts, and get to know her. Kiley's promise is simple: She will work with the people and for the people.

**Amy Klingenberg
Fremont**

Referendum support is appreciated

To the Editor:
I want to take a moment to give a huge "thank you" to the voters of the Fremont School District who supported the referendum. I am so proud that Fremont, Jamestown, and Clear Lake know and understand the value of a strong commitment to our students through wise investment. Fremont Community Schools, during the previous referendum (2015-2022), showed true stewardship and wise, conservative practices in utilizing taxpayer funds to achieve the advertised goals. In fact, that was a seven-year referendum that stretched funds across nine years (by the upcoming end of the 2024 calendar year). Based on the same fiscal responsibility to the FCS constituency, it would certainly be expected that the leadership will be working hard to replicate that commitment.

To those who voted against or are skeptical of the referendum, please pay close attention over the next seven-plus years as to how FCS works to keep its commitments to all of us. Attend school board meetings and gather information. Ask a teacher how the referendum helps them in their classrooms. Visit the schools and take a look at why your investment has created an "A" corporation, "A" schools, and an "A" work ethic. Look for evidence of your funds at work: Is Fremont Community Schools improving safety? Is FCS decreasing class sizes? Has FCS committed to competitive pay? Has FCS increased programs? Are the number of students at FCS increasing because families see the value

that our schools — and, in turn, our town — offers? I believe that FCS has and will continue to remain accountable to all voters. Unfortunately, there are those who will not do many or any of these things. They will come with preconceived agendas or belief systems without fact-finding for themselves at the local level. And, that's a shame. The bottom line is that we owe it to our young people to give them the best possible shot at growing and prospering. The new referendum will do its part to aid in that growth and prosperity. At Fremont, I'm proud that so many are willing to do just that: make our current and future Eagles into the best possible, successful, and responsible adults, taxpayers, and neighbors who value our region and reinvest themselves into our great community. Thank you again!

**Drew Kuespert
Fremont**

Grateful for support of Spencerville Covered Bridge preservation

To the Editor:
The Spencerville Covered Bridge Association and the Friends of the Spencerville Covered Bridge wish to extend our heartfelt gratitude to the Indiana Native Plant Society and the many volunteers who participated in the Indiana Native Plant Society Spring Stewardship Project at our beloved historic site.

Thanks to the tireless efforts of volunteers from three counties, the Covered Bridge Nature Trail has less invasive species like garlic mustard, Dame's Rocket, winter creeper, and poison hemlock. This vital work will promote the growth of native plants and elevate the experience for the 100,000 visitors who come to enjoy the Spencerville Covered Bridge each year.

We are deeply grateful for the partnership with the Indiana Native Plant Society, the DeKalb County Soil and Water Conservation District for promoting the event, and all who contributed to this project. It truly takes a community to care for our county's treasured historical gems.

We invite everyone to become a Friend of the Bridge and join us in preserving and enhancing this special place for future generations.

**Mary Hollabaugh-Diehl
Spencerville Covered Bridge Association**

What Others Say

Indiana to host cicada emergences that last occurred 221 years ago

Parts of Indiana and Illinois will host a natural event this spring that last occurred in 1803, when Thomas Jefferson was president. Two separate broods of cicadas — the 17-year Brood XIII and 13-year Brood XIX — will emerge in the same year.

"The majority of them for Brood XIX are going to emerge in southwest Indiana, the very far southwest corner of the state," said Vince Burkle, the Fort Wayne-based assistant director and survey coordinator of the Indiana Department of Natural Resources' Division of

Entomology and Plant Pathology. "And then you have Brood XIII, which will emerge up around Lake Michigan, around the Indiana Dunes and back up into Chicago.

"So over here in the Fort Wayne area, or any other part of Indiana, we will not see any of these emergences of these two broods," Burkle told The Journal Gazette.

The black-bodied insects crawl out of the ground from around late May to June to reproduce. There are more than 3,000 cicada species worldwide, according to Purdue University. Three species make up Brood XIII, and four are a part of Brood XIX.

Cicadas' loud buzz can be a noisy nuisance to residents

of rural and suburban areas. Last week in Newberry, South Carolina, emerging cicadas were so loud that residents were calling the sheriff's department asking why they were hearing a loud roar.

Male cicadas use tymbals, drum-like structures on their abdomen, to create a high-pitched buzz to attract females, which respond with a quick rub of their wings. The mating call and response sounds like the whine of electrical wires and can reach 80 to 120 decibels when at close range.

For perspective, leaf blowers, rock concerts and large sporting events generate 110 to 120 decibels. Sounds above 85 decibels can result in hearing

damage or loss, depending on the duration of exposure, according to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health.

Cicadas might look scary, with their red eyes, large wings and prickly feet, but they don't sting, carry disease or bite, according to Purdue entomologist Elizabeth Barnes. But people hiking in the wooded areas of Jasper, Newton, Posey and Warrick counties in southwest Indiana, and folks in Lake, LaPorte and Porter counties in the northwest, might want to follow the lead of entomologists.

Scientists who study cicadas often wear earmuffs or earplugs in such areas to protect their hearing.

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