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GEOCACHING



MAGGIE PETERSON/GRAPHIC

Boyer City resident Jim King (from left), Greg Stachler of Charlevoix and King's nephew, 12-year-old Max Deno of Jackson, check their GPSes as they look for a geocache.

BY MAGGIE PETERSON
GRAPHIC EDITOR

really bad," she noted.

Geocaching is a fairly new activity, starting about nine years ago. It reaches worldwide, and some caches called "travel bugs" have made their way around the world.

The Web site www.geocaching.com is considered the authority on geocaching, with options to search out caches in specific areas by ZIP code.

"If you like traveling and camping and sightseeing and stuff like that, that's a big part of it," said Greg Stachler of Charlevoix.

Stachler and King were introduced separately to geocaching in the beginning of October by friends. As the two friends got to talking, they discovered they each geocached.

Since, they have joined the group Straits Area Geocachers of Northern Michigan and have gone on many caching outings together.

They said it's a family-friendly activity, and many times their wives will cache with them or they'll stop for a cache while on vacation. King said a goal of his is to cache in every county in the state.

Winter is not the most opportune time for

caching, but there are winter-friendly hides. King said snow, sometimes thigh-deep, can make accessing caches more challenging, but that has not stopped him from getting out quite a bit this winter.

It's a fairly inexpensive activity, as the priciest piece of equipment is the GPS, which can cost as little as \$75 to \$100.

One of Stachler's favorite caches was a microcache inside a bolt attached to a park bench. Lachiusa said she enjoys multi-caches, which are caches in a series. She went on a multi-cache in the East Jordan area, where inside each cache was a clue that when deciphered led to a different species of tree.

King added that one of his favorite caching expeditions was a nighttime cache in the Pigeon River Forest, where the hunt was helped by reflective thumbtacks.

There's a want for growth in geocaching, but when on the actual hunt stealth is desired.

"You do want people to know about geocaching, but if you're out, especially in very public places, you don't want to be noticed," Lachiusa noted.

In addition to finding caches, Stachler places them. This involves some maintenance, but he noted that he enjoys creating new



MAGGIE PETERSON/GRAPHIC

Alissa Lachiusa of Charlevoix displays some of the swag she's found during her four years geocaching.

hides. He is releasing a new cache in conjunction with this article called "Photo 'Graphic'."

Lachiusa said geocaching can be nothing but beneficial, if done correctly. One big idea within the geocaching communities is "Cache in, trash out." The idea is to clean up the area you're in while geocaching.

She noted another benefit of the activity is getting out and active.

"I love seeing new areas, getting out in the woods and walking, and it gets you places you've never been," she said.

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MAGGIE PETERSON/GRAPHIC

These geocaches are ones Greg Stachler of Charlevoix created, and are an example of the variety of caches that can be found.

Zeroing in on a geocache:



MAGGIE PETERSON/GRAPHIC

This tree limb is hiding a microcache.



MAGGIE PETERSON/GRAPHIC

Greg Stachler of Charlevoix removes part of a sawed-off tree limb to reveal a micro-cache.



MAGGIE PETERSON/GRAPHIC

The orange tube microcache contains a logbook, where those who have found the cache write their name and a note. "F.T.F." means "first to find," and is considered an honor.

Tips from Straits Area Geocachers:

- "The thing I've found out is that when I'm out caching, go with your gut instinct ... It's usually right." *Karen Sydow of Brutus*
- "Take a (Geocaching 101) class," which are usually taught at events. This gives you a chance to test it out without making the investment in a GPS. *Melissa Felmlee of Cheboygan*
- "Just don't give up ... Persistence pays off." *Mike Fiebig of Petoskey*
- "It's way (more fun) in the summer." *Michelle Shaw-Fiebig of Petoskey*
- "I would say don't give up. It's there, you just have to enlarge your search pattern larger and larger because the coords (coordinates) could be off." *Jim Chimmer of Cheboygan*
- "Use your geosense. Don't overthink it. Go with the obvious first because that's usually where it is." *Jenny Kerr of Levering*
- "If you're a beginner, go with a veteran geocacher and get some geosense." *GiGi English of Carp Lake*

Common acronyms:

- BYOP:** Bring Your Own Pen/Pencil to sign the logbook.
 - CITO:** Cache In Trash Out, which means clean up the trail as you go.
 - DNF:** Did Not Find the cache.
 - FTF:** First To Find the cache.
 - GPS:** Global Positioning System, which is key to caching.
 - GPSr:** Global Positioning System receiver.
 - SWAG:** Stuff We All Get, which in caching are trinkets inside the cache.
 - TFTC:** Thanks For The Cache.
 - TFTH:** Thanks For The Hide.
 - TNLN:** Took Nothing. Left Nothing.
 - TNLSL:** Took Nothing. Left Nothing. Signed Logbook.
 - TNSL:** Took Nothing. Signed Logbook.
- Source: *Glossary of Terms, www.geocaching.com*

Photo "Graphic" cache

Greg Stachler has hidden a geocache titled "Photo 'Graphic'" in conjunction with this article, and it's expected to be posted Saturday, Feb. 14. Go to www.geocaching.com and search the Petoskey area for "Photo 'Graphic'," or enter in cache code **GC1M1DA**. There's a prize for first to find.



Signal is the official mascot for Groundspeak. Simply put, he represents the combination of the outdoors and location-based technology.

