FREE



GEOCACHING

Searching for treasure not far from your backyard!

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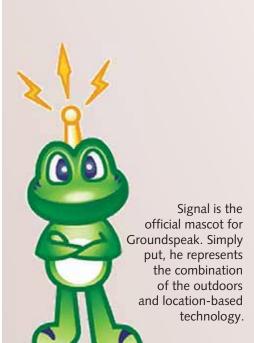
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GEOCACHING **

MAGGIE PETERSON/GRAPHIC Boyne 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**

eocaching is all about the hunt. "It's kind of a treasure hunt for adults. It's kind of the thrill of the hunt. It's out video not necessarily what you find of a geocache hunt at that's so exciting, it's finding thegraphicweekly.com. it," said Jim King of Boyne

Check

In geocaching, a cacher enters coordinates on a Global Positioning System where a cache is placed. A cache can be any number of things — ammo boxes and camouflage tape-covered containers official mascot for are common — and the goal is to reach the roundspeak. Simply cache and sign a logbook inside of it.

> Sometimes, there are items inside the caches called swag, which can be traded or swapped out by cachers. Four-year caching veteran Alissa Lachiusa of Charlevoix has found some interesting items in her caching days, including stamps from India, patches, a perfume sample and a belly ring.

"There's an etiquette. You don't take something really cool and leave something 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

"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

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.

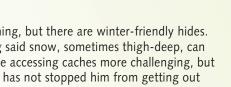
microcache inside a bolt attached to a park bench. Lachiusa said she enjoys multi-caches, which are caches in a series. She went on a mutli-cache in the East Jordan area, where inside each cache was a clue that when deciphered led to a different species of tree.

Pigeon River Forest, where the hunt was helped by reflective thumbtacks.

but when on the actual hunt stealth is

"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



One of Stachler's favorite caches was a

King added that one of his favorite caching expeditions was a nighttime cache in the

There's a want for growth in geocaching,



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. 6

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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-



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 Chimner 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.

TNLNSL: 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.