

The best of times...

By Janet Bergeman Thoma (now resides in Cyprus)

I am from Fruiport Michigan. When I was a child our area code was 616 before it was 231. And most of my clothes came from Kmart, Sears, yard sales, thrift stores and many hand me downs.

Eating out at a restaurant like Ponderosa was a huge deal that only happened for very special occasions. McDonald's was always a treat. Fast food was a cheese or pb&j sandwich to take outside in the yard. Eating ice cream was a treat on a hot day.

You took your school clothes off as soon as you got home and put on your play clothes. We had to do our homework before being allowed outside to play. We ate dinner at the table. We went to school every day and rode a bus with 3 to a seat. There was no taking or picking you up in the car. Our phone hung on the wall in the kitchen and had a cord. There was no private conversation or cell phones! Most TVs didn't have remotes, we had to actually get up to change the channel.

We played Mother May I, Hopscotch, Cowboys and Indians, Cops and Robbers, 1,2,3 Not It, Red Light-Green Light, Red Rover, Hide & Seek, Truth or Dare, Tag, Baseball, Kick Ball, Dodge Ball, and rode bikes.

We went to the local lake to swim. No one had their own pool!

Staying in the house was a punishment and the only thing we knew about "bored" --- "You better find something to do before I find it for you!"

We ate what mom made for dinner or we ate nothing at all. There was no bottled water; we drank from the tap or the water hose (warm).

We watched cartoons on Saturday mornings, and rode our bikes for hours and ran around in the woods.

We weren't AFRAID OF ANYTHING. If someone had a fight, that's what it was and we were friends again a week later, if not SOONER. We played till dark, sunset was our curfew.

School was mandatory and teachers were people who you could TRUST and respect.

We watched our MOUTHS around our elders because ALL of our Aunts, Uncles, Grandpas and Grandmas AND our Parents' best friends were also our PARENTS (they COULD & WOULD WHOOP Y'ALL!) and you didn't want them telling your PARENTS if you misbehaved.

These were the good ole days. Kids today will never know how it feels to be a real kid. I loved my childhood...!!!

Kids these days will never understand how we grew up!!!

Good Times!

Ottawa County receives \$300,000 grant for brownfield redevelopment assistance

West Olive, MI — In a win for local economic revitalization, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) on May 6 awarded Ottawa County \$300,000 for environmental site assessment and cleanup planning for brownfield properties. This grant is part of \$65 million worth of brownfield site assessment, revolving loan fund, and cleanup grants awarded to 155 communities by the USEPA.

This year's grant competition was as fierce as ever — approximately 435 communities submitted applications to the USEPA. Ottawa County last received a grant from this same pool of USEPA funds in 2013. With a \$400,000 award, the County was able to assist 34 different projects and leverage approximately \$35.6 million worth of investment into brownfield properties.

With thriving tourism, agriculture, and manufacturing industries, Ottawa County is a powerhouse of commerce. We have a strong industrial history to thank for this burgeoning economy. But that same industrial history also left behind contaminated or underutilized properties in need of revitalization. Even today, there are tool and die shops, dry cleaning businesses, and gas stations, to name a few, that may have contamination. Contaminated, underutilized, or blighted properties like these all qualify as "brownfields", and that means developers may be saddled with extra costs if they want to site their project on brownfield property.

The USEPA grant funding can be used to offset extra costs to determine what kind of contamination might be present on sites like these and what would be required to clean it up.

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