

# HIGH 5 FIVE

important stuff on all our minds

Here's some local stuff that probably gets oversold and overrated:

## 1 SAFETY

For one of the "safest cities in America," we sure seem to have enough police chases, gas station robberies, property theft, and meth deals gone bad to keep Chris Earl's articulate lips moving for a half hour every evening.

## 2 COST OF LIVING

Congratulations, college graduate who stayed in town! You've probably accepted a lower wage to stay in a town you've grown to love. But hey, everything's cool because things cost less around here, and it all balances out, right? Sure it does!

Yep. Um ... good thing you kept all that leftover ramen.



## 3 THE GREAT OUTDOORS

Sure, the Chippewa Valley's own chunk of the great outdoors is totally great ... except for that six-month stretch of time when "outside" consists of dead-looking branches, dingy patches of snow, and air cold enough to flash-freeze your naked eyeballs. Besides that, it's a freaking natural wonderland out there.

## 4 ANTI-BINGE DRINKING CAMPAIGNS

Every year it's the same thing ... We near Homecoming, and some organizations raise the issue that drinking is rampant and out of control. There's some funding, there are some presentations, and the issue disappears until the next year. But the "issue" is never solved and the story keeps going. College is college. And lip service is lip service.



## 5 SOUTH MIDDLE SCHOOL'S 4TH PERIOD PICKLEBALL SQUAD

Sure, their oversized wooden paddles can make those wiffle balls fly like hollow point bullets filled with lightning and accuracy, but their off-court antics (did someone say "spitwads?") and non-stop post-victory showboating tend to ruin the fun for the whole phys. ed. class.

# CHIPPEWA VALLEY HAIKUNEWS

hockey pros return face off for Altoona ice dreams begin to freeze

pull up to the lot find the prettiest needles be honest, leave cash

the snow banks arrive happy kids burrow and play watch out for snow plows!

# LOCAL LOOK

A BIG HEAP OF INTERESTING NEWS, VIEWS, STORIES, PEOPLE, AND IDEAS FROM AROUND THE CHIPPEWA VALLEY

PANTS, A GRENADE LAUNCHER, THE FBI, AND LOG HOUSES (IN DISGUISE)



ANDREA SEELEY

JEFF NELSON, SPORTING HIS SPECTACULAR 'STACHE AMID HIS SPECTACULAR STASH OF SALVAGE. Nelson preserves and sells local architectural treasure.

## ANTIQUE EXPLORER

local carpenter saves our architectural history

BY BRIDGET KURTENBACH

If there were a place where old homes and buildings would go for reincarnation, Dell's Architectural Antiques would be that place and Jeff Nelson would be their Buddha.

Nelson, a carpenter and preservationist for 35 years, saves the "guts" of historical homes and buildings before they are demolished. Sometimes that means being up until the wee hours of the morning to get everything salvageable out of a place. It also means lots of nights and weekends.

In the past 10 weeks, Nelson and his crew have salvaged items from five downtown Eau Claire buildings near Phoenix Park, two log cabins, a Queen Anne Victorian in Eleva, and a church. Many of the homes and buildings taken down were outside of Eau Claire.

When the crew goes into a building they take everything - including the nails. The only thing left in a room, Nelson said, is the plaster and lumber to make the walls and ceiling.

"I've never had the heart to watch (the demolition crew) tear (a house or

building) down or to watch them burn one yet," Nelson said. "I just don't have the heart. I'm a carpenter and I save things. I don't tear things apart and I don't burn them down."

Nelson opened Dell's Architectural Antiques eight years ago as a sort of graveyard of old buildings. The store is stocked with everything from oak, maple, birch and pine floorboards in what was once a hayloft to stained glass windows, light fixtures, religious artifacts, and doorknobs. Just walking inside takes the customer to a time past when most houses had intricate woodwork banisters and hardwood floors.

A recent side business sprung out of an interesting discovery: while Nelson and his crew were removing the walls and

nearby to showcase them. He has several erected homes on display so potential customers can see what the home looks like once constructed. Each log is numbered and comes with a diagram so the buyer can easily reconstruct the home. Nelson said so far, though, his crew has reconstructed every home he has sold.

The log homes are used for everything from a primary residence to a cottage, cabin, or weekend retreat. A Boyceville couple Nelson worked with bought three of the homes and had them combined to create one 3,200 square foot home. Another couple combined two log homes to make a lakeside cabin.

"These log cabins are constructed of 140- to 150-year-old wood," Nelson added. "Some logs weigh 500 pounds apiece."

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floors of a home, they found a completely intact log cabin.

Nelson said that as times changed the homeowners would simply add siding and more rooms until a Queen Anne may be covering what was once a pioneer's log home. The cabins usually date from the 1840s to 1900. Since finding the first log home in Chippewa Falls, Nelson has unearthed nearly 20 log homes, 11 of which have been sold.

He currently has eight such homes for sale. Because of the difficulty for customers to visualize log homes, Nelson now rents a former auto recycler property

One of the homes showcased is an L-shaped log cabin found inside a Victorian home his crew took down and is something Nelson has never seen before.

Whether Nelson is working as a carpenter, salvaging items for Dell's Architectural Antiques or erecting a log cabin, preservation is always in the details.

When asked what part of his job he treasures most, Nelson said it's getting out and doing something to save our history.

Dell's Architectural Antiques, 121 Maple St. Open 10am-5:30pm Friday-Saturday and by appointment. 834-8872.