

DESIGN IDEAS APLENTY FOR PENTWATER SAND SCULPTURE CONTEST

This year's Sand Sculpture Contest, scheduled for August 12, will draw sculptors of all ages that are now beginning to imagine their design. Trophies will be awarded to 21 teams whose entries are judged to best reflect Pentwater's 2022 Homecoming theme: "Celebrating the History of Pentwater."

The 2022 annual contest is the 49th to be held at Charles Mears State Park in Pentwater. The Pentwater Sand Sculpture Contest was founded in 1974 by the late Al Ringquist who, at age 26, chose to make a life in Pentwater with his new wife, Alice. Ringquest opened the Leprechaun Shop and sold custom furniture and cabinetry. He also crafted small wooden toys and a few are on display in the Pentwater Historical Museum. Ringquest's community involvement is best known from his idea to hold a contest at the State Park beach where folks would come and sculpt along the beautiful sandy shoreline. A few of the earliest participants remember the wonderful wooden sand castles Ringquest created and awarded to the children participating.

Always a part of Pentwater's Homecoming activities, the Pentwater Chamber of Commerce continued the tradition Ringquist started and eventually the Pentwater Service Club assumed responsibility working closely with the Chamber. Contestants sculpt designs in the sand that demonstrate each year's Pentwater Homecoming theme, such as "Picture Yourself in Pentwater," "Hats Off to Pentwater," "Support Our Troops," "Historic Pentwater," "Sailing Into the Future," "75 Years of Yachting in Pentwater," "Pentwater Sunset," and "Senses of Summer."

In 2020, the contest was reimagined due to COVID-19 precautions. Beachgoers could still sculpt creative designs anytime during a four-week stretch. Entries were posted online and recognized for their work. But there's nothing like having all the teams busily sculpting away on event day, shoulder to shoulder. The Pentwater Service Club resumed the traditional contest format last year. Ann Sayles was one of the 2021 entrants; her family has participated for 43 years, winning three times. "I think it's great fun for family and friends," Ann says. She remembers the wooden sandcastles that Al Ringquist made and gave to children; her kids loved to play with them. The Sayles family finished third, last year, in one of the categories, sculpting an ice cream cone surrounded by seagulls.

Sherry and Ray Kloostra describe their family's involvement over the years. "Our kids and grandkids would arrive in Pentwater from different places, sit on the front porch the night before, and plan their design, sometimes pulling all-nighters. Our equipment-filled wagon would be loaded and ready to go. Ten years ago, as we kicked around ideas for that year's Homecoming Theme, 'Year-Round Fun', our second-grader granddaughter said 'we've got an app for that.' And that became the design for our 'Pentwater's Got An App for That' entry. We had fingers coming out of the sand, holding a Blackberry-type device that showed various apps for things to do, and we won our category that year."

There are numerous possibilities for this year's design. One good resource for design ideas would be the Pentwater Historical Society's website, <https://pentwaterhistoricalsociety.org/>, or

Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/pentH2Ohistoricalsociety>. There are also plenty of sand sculpting tips online using water spritzers, shovels, buckets, watering cans, spoons, putty scrapers, brushes, trowels, butter knives, drinking straws, and pieces of aluminum flashing.

Entering teams are assigned to either one of four age groups categories; 1-7, 8-9, 10-12, 13-and-over (determined by the age of the oldest youth), or one of three family categories. The finished works are judged on four criteria: adherence to this year's Homecoming theme, creativity, attention to detail, and neatness. Sculptures can only be decorated with naturally-uprooted dune grass, feathers and drift wood found on the Charles Mears State Park beach. Judges will ignore any decorating items that are foreign to the beach, as well as any just-pulled dune grass because it protects the shoreline from erosion.

Free registration at the State Park pavilion begins at 8 a.m. on the day of the event. Teams sculpt between 8 and 11 a.m., when judging begins and the public comes by to view the various entries. There's a short awards program at noon with 21 trophies awarded to winning teams. Free parking is available at the Park for anyone with a State of Michigan Recreation Passport. For more information, check out the [Pentwater Sand Sculpture Contest community page on Facebook](#).

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