

# MASON

## COUNTY



*at a  
glance*





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# Mason County: At A Glance

Life in Mason County unfolds at the intersection of water, woods, and community. From the Lake Michigan shoreline to inland rivers, farms, forests, and small towns, the county’s rhythm is shaped as much by the seasons as by the people who live, work, and gather here.

**Mason County: At A Glance** is designed to capture that rhythm. More than a list of dates, this section offers a snapshot of how residents and visitors experience the county throughout the year—through festivals and fairs, outdoor recreation, arts and culture, civic traditions, and everyday moments that define life along the lakeshore.

Winter brings a quieter pace, marked by gallery openings, community gatherings, theater productions, and events that draw people together despite the cold. As the snow falls and ice forms along the shoreline, Mason County turns inward—celebrating creativity, local talent, and shared traditions that sustain the community until spring.

With spring comes renewal. Lighthouses reopen, trails and parks come alive, and the calendar fills with concerts, markets, and outdoor events. Downtown streets and public spaces become gathering places again, reflecting the county’s strong connection to place and to one another. Spring also signals the return of agricultural markets and civic celebrations, underscoring Mason County’s deep ties to both land and community.

Summer is the county’s most visible season, when Mason County welcomes visitors from across Michigan and beyond. Beaches, parks, marinas, and downtowns are animated by music, festivals, athletic events, and long-stand-

ing traditions. From waterfront concerts and farmers markets to nationally recognized fishing tournaments and holiday celebrations, summer reflects the county at full stride—active, welcoming, and deeply connected to Lake Michigan.

Fall brings a shift in tone, but not in energy. Community festivals, harvest celebrations, and downtown events highlight the county’s heritage and small-town character. As colors change and crowds thin, Mason County settles into a season that blends reflection with celebration, closing the year with holiday traditions that bring the community together once more.

Throughout all four seasons, Mason County’s identity is shaped by more than events alone. It is reflected in its parks and public spaces, its commitment to the arts, its support for local businesses, and its strong civic culture. Residents value access to nature, opportunities to gather, and traditions that are passed down year after year. Visitors often come for the scenery, but stay for the sense of place.

At A Glance is intended as an entry point into that experience—an easy-to-use overview of the moments that define Mason County life across the calendar year. While this section highlights many of the county’s signature events and traditions, it represents just a portion of what happens here. Dates and details may change due to printing deadlines, and new events continue to emerge as the year unfolds.

For the most up-to-date listings, expanded coverage, and daily community news, readers are encouraged to follow the Ludington Daily News and its local platforms throughout the year.

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# agriculture

## At the root of life - farming and agriculture

Agriculture continues to play a central role in Mason County's economy, landscape and cultural identity. Beyond its forests, inland lakes and Lake Michigan shoreline, the county supports a diverse agricultural sector rooted in both crop production and livestock farming, with operations ranging from small family farms to specialized production facilities.

Mason County is home to hundreds of farms operating across a mix of small, mid-size and large agricultural enterprises. While the number of farms has declined over time — reflecting broader statewide and national trends — agriculture remains a significant land use and economic driver locally.

Orchards are a defining feature of Mason County's rural landscape, producing apples, cherries and other fruit crops. Local farms also grow asparagus, corn and additional grains, while livestock production represents another major component of the agricultural economy. Together, these operations generate a wide range of farm sales, underscoring the sector's economic diversity and resilience.

Historically, agriculture has occupied a substantial share of county land and continues to shape rural development patterns. Farming remains closely tied to Mason County's identity, economy and working landscape.

### Production, Markets and Agritourism Connect Farms and Community

On the production side, Mason County is home to a variety of agriculture-based businesses that raise livestock, grow crops and produce food for direct sale, local markets and regional distribution. These include beef and pork producers, fruit growers, diversified crop farms and specialty livestock operations. Many of these farms also raise feed crops on-site, reinforcing a closed-loop agricultural system that supports both production and sustainability.

Several farms operate on-farm markets, self-serve stands or direct-to-consumer sales,



offering fresh meat, produce and value-added goods. These operations form the backbone of the county's agricultural production network, supplying local residents while contributing to the regional food system.

Agriculture's footprint extends beyond farm fields into Mason County's communities through farmers' markets and agritourism destinations that connect producers directly with residents and visitors.

Each summer, the Ludington Farmers' Market brings locally grown produce, honey, eggs, baked goods, flowers and other Michigan-grown products to downtown Ludington, providing an important outlet for farmers while supporting downtown activity and tourism.

The Scottville Farmers Market offers another seasonal venue for local growers and producers, strengthening access to fresh, locally produced food for residents throughout central Mason County and supporting small and mid-sized agricultural operations.

Agritourism also plays an expanding role in the county's agricultural economy. Amber Elk Ranch, located on 130 acres in Amber Township, operates as both a working agricultural enterprise and a seasonal visitor destination. Founded by Bob Northrup, who began raising elk in the late 1990s, the ranch raises more than 100 elk, with a primary focus on breeding stock. Some animals are sold to hunting preserves or for meat, while antlers are marketed

as decorative racks, dog chews and pet products.

In addition to organized markets and tours, seasonal farm markets and roadside stands throughout the county provide access to fresh produce and locally made goods, further strengthening connections between farmers and consumers.

### Stewardship, Skills and Agricultural Heritage

Agricultural stewardship and land management are supported by the Mason Lake Conservation District, which works with farmers, landowners and residents on soil health, water quality and natural resource conservation. Through technical assistance, education and conservation programming, the district supports sustainable farming practices while helping protect the county's agricultural land base and watersheds.

Agriculture's influence also reaches into education and community life. Gateway to Success Academy includes agriculture among its hands-on instructional offerings, alongside engineering, cooking, robotics and electron-

ics. The program emphasizes practical learning and introduces students to agricultural concepts as part of broader workforce preparation.

Community organizations reinforce food-related skills at the household level. FiveCAP offers training in gardening and food preparation, including workshops on canning, drying and food preservation, supporting food security while preserving skills historically associated with agricultural communities.

Agriculture is also reflected in Mason County's historical interpretation and tourism offerings. Historic White Pine Village includes a preserved farmstead and seasonal demonstrations that highlight early farming practices, helping tell the story of how agriculture shaped settlement, commerce and daily life in the region.

Together, these elements underscore agriculture's enduring presence in Mason County — not only as an economic sector, but as a defining feature of its heritage, environmental stewardship, community life and tourism economy.



STEVE BEGNOCHE PHOTO

STEVE BEGNOCHE PHOTO



# Mason County's Creative Core

From gallery walls and theater stages to outdoor sculpture trails and open-air concerts along Lake Michigan, Mason County's arts scene is both vibrant and deeply rooted in community. One of these vibrant places that appeal to all ages is the Ludington Area Center for the Arts, a multidisciplinary hub that anchors visual, performing, literary, and public arts—together shaping a cultural landscape that is accessible, collaborative, and distinctly reflective of life in this county on Michigan's west shore.

## Ludington Area Center for the Arts

*Where the Lakeshore Comes to Create*

On any given day in downtown Ludington, the sound of footsteps along Harrison Street may lead to a gallery opening, a rehearsal drifting through an open door, or a classroom filled with people rediscovering the simple joy of making something by hand. This is the rhythm of the Ludington Area Center for the Arts—where creativity is not reserved for special occasions, but woven into everyday life on Michigan's west shore.

Just blocks from Lake Michigan, the Ludington Area Center for the Arts (LACA) serves as Mason County's cultural crossroads, bringing together artists, audiences, students, and visitors in a space designed for exploration, expression, and connection.

### A Creative Home in the Heart of Downtown

LACA is housed in a thoughtfully renovated former church on South Harrison Street—an architectural transformation that mirrors the Center's mission of renewal through creativity. The building now features multiple gallery spaces, classrooms, studios, and a performance hall, allowing visual, performing, and literary arts to coexist under one roof.

Rotating exhibitions showcase work by local, regional, and national artists across a wide range of media, from

painting and photography to sculpture, fiber art, and mixed media. Exhibits change frequently, encouraging repeat visits and ensuring the Center remains a dynamic destination throughout the year. Opening receptions and artist talks often coincide with downtown events, reinforcing LACA's role as both a cultural and social gathering place.

### Live Arts That Bring People Together

LACA's impact extends well beyond its gallery walls. The Center maintains an active calendar of live performances, including concerts, theater productions, spoken-word events, and seasonal programs. From intimate acoustic sets to ensemble performances and community theater, programming is curated to balance artistic excellence with local relevance.

Holiday concerts, touring performers, and collaborations with regional arts organizations help ensure that live performance remains a visible and accessible part of Ludington's cultural landscape year-round.

### Music Under the Summer Sky

In addition to its indoor performance schedule, LACA sponsors a popular summer concert series held at Waterfront Park, one of Ludington's most iconic public spaces overlooking Lake Michigan. Presented during the peak visitor season, the series features a mix of regional and touring musicians across multiple genres, pairing live music with sweeping lakeshore views.

Designed to be informal and welcoming, the concerts encourage audiences to gather with friends and family, bring lawn chairs or blankets, and enjoy live performances in a relaxed, open-air setting. The Waterfront Park series has become a seasonal tradition, extending LACA's mission beyond its walls and reinforcing the Center's role as a cultural connector during the summer months.



### Learning, Participation, and Creative Access

Education lies at the core of LACA's mission. The Center offers classes and workshops for all ages and experience levels, covering disciplines such as painting, drawing, ceramics, creative writing, dance, and mixed media. These programs emphasize both technical skill and creative confidence, inviting participants to experiment, learn, and grow.

By welcoming beginners alongside experienced artists, LACA reinforces the idea that the arts are not exclusive—they are a shared community resource.

### Signature Events with Regional Reach

Among LACA's most recognizable contributions is the West Shore Art Fair, a juried fine arts and crafts event held each summer in Rotary Park along the Ludington waterfront. Drawing artists and visitors from across Michigan and beyond, the fair is both a cultural high-

light and a significant economic driver for the region. A popular Children's Art Buying Tent encourages young attendees to select and purchase original artwork, nurturing early appreciation for the arts.

LACA also plays a central role in collaborative community events, partnering with other cultural organizations, nonprofits, and downtown businesses to present festivals, street events, and multidisciplinary programming that strengthens Mason County's creative ecosystem.

### A Cultural Anchor for the Lakeshore

More than a venue, the Ludington Area Center for the Arts functions as a cultural anchor—supporting artists, enriching quality of life, and enhancing the region's identity as a destination for arts and culture. Its year-round programming complements Mason County's natural beauty, offering meaningful cultural experiences in every season.

For visitors, LACA provides an authentic window into the local creative community. For residents, it is a place to learn, perform, exhibit, and belong. As the lakeshore continues to evolve, the Ludington Area Center for the Arts remains a vital force—celebrating creativity, fostering connection, and ensuring the arts remain central to life on Michigan's west shore.

### Ludington Area Center for the Arts

107 S. Harrison St., Ludington, MI 49431  
(231) 845-2787  
[www.ludingtonartscenter.org](http://www.ludingtonartscenter.org)

Gallery hours are Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.; Wednesday from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.; and Saturday from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Hours, exhibitions, performances, Waterfront Park summer concert series dates, and class schedules are subject to change and are updated regularly on the Center's website.



## Arts and Cultural Organizations in Mason County

### *Heritage, History & Public Art*

#### **Mason County Historical Society** *Preserving History Through Culture and Storytelling*

The Mason County Historical Society preserves and interprets local history through museums, exhibits, archives, and educational programming. While focused on historical preservation, the Society contributes significantly to the county's cultural life through exhibit design, living history interpretation, public art, and community storytelling.

The organization operates several sites, including Historic White Pine Village, the Port of Ludington Maritime Museum, and the Mason County Research Center, and offers lectures, tours, demonstrations, and special events throughout the year.

**Contact:**  
130 E. Ludington Ave.,  
Ludington, MI 49431  
(231) 843-4808  
[www.masoncountymihistory.org](http://www.masoncountymihistory.org)

#### **Mason County Sculpture Trail** *Art in Everyday Places*

The Mason County Sculpture Trail is a countywide public art initiative featuring permanent outdoor sculptures installed in communities throughout the county. The trail blends visual art with local history, agriculture, and cultural identity, encouraging residents and visitors to explore Mason County through art in public spaces.

New works are added periodically and unveiled through community celebrations, often in partnership with local artists, municipalities, and cultural organizations.

**Contact:**  
Information coordinated through local partners and tourism agencies  
[www.pureludington.com](http://www.pureludington.com) (search "Sculpture Trail")

#### **Cartier Park Art Trail** *Public Art Along the Lakeshore*

The Cartier Park Art Trail is a permanent outdoor art installation located at Cartier Park in Ludington. The trail features large-scale, site-specific artworks that reflect the natural environment, maritime heritage, and creative spirit of the lakeshore. Designed to be accessible year-round, the trail invites visitors to experience art while enjoying scenic views of Lake Michigan.

The Cartier Park Art Trail complements the broader Mason County Sculpture Trail and contributes to Ludington's identity as a destination for outdoor public art.

**Contact:**  
Cartier Park, Ludington, MI  
Information available through local tourism and parks partners  
[www.pureludington.com](http://www.pureludington.com) (search "Cartier Park Art Trail")

## Performing Arts & Music

#### **Scottville Clown Band** *A Century-Old Musical Tradition*

Founded in 1903, the Scottville Clown Band is a nationally recognized community performance ensemble known for its distinctive clown costumes and concert band music. The group performs at parades, festivals, civic celebrations, and special events throughout Mason County and the surrounding region.

The Clown Band also supports music education by awarding scholarships to local students attending summer music programs.

**Contact:**  
Scottville, MI  
[www.scottvilleclownband.com](http://www.scottvilleclownband.com)

#### **West Shore Community College Center Stage Theater** *Performing Arts on Campus*

Center Stage Theater at West Shore Community College is a major performing arts venue serving Mason County and the surrounding region. The theater presents a year-round calendar of live performances, including theater productions, concerts, touring artists, student and faculty work, and special seasonal events.

Programming is designed to engage both campus and community audiences.

**Contact:**  
West Shore Community College  
3000 N. Stiles Rd., Scottville, MI 49454  
Box Office: (231) 845-5506  
[www.westshore.edu/performing-arts](http://www.westshore.edu/performing-arts)

#### **Stage Left Theatre Company** *Community-Driven Theatre and Education*

Stage Left Theatre Company is a non-profit community theatre organization dedicated to producing live theatrical performances and expanding access to theatre education in Mason County. Productions range from comedies and musicals to dinner theatre and youth-focused performances, often featuring local talent.

Stage Left also offers acting and improv workshops and provides scholarships for students pursuing the performing arts.

**Contact:**  
803 E. Filer St., Ludington, MI 49431  
(231) 425-7768  
[www.stageleftmi.org](http://www.stageleftmi.org)  
[stagelefttheatreco@gmail.com](mailto:stagelefttheatreco@gmail.com)

## Visual Arts

#### **Manierre Dawson Gallery** *Visual Arts and Regional Legacy*

Located in the Arts & Sciences Center

at West Shore Community College, the Manierre Dawson Gallery hosts rotating visual art exhibitions throughout the academic year. Named for Mason County native Manierre Dawson, an early American abstract artist, the gallery features work by students, regional artists, and curated thematic exhibitions, as well as community and student art shows.

**Contact:**  
Arts & Sciences Center  
West Shore Community College  
3000 N. Stiles Rd., Scottville, MI 49454  
(231) 845-6211  
[www.westshore.edu](http://www.westshore.edu) (search "Manierre Dawson Gallery")

## Literary Arts

#### **Ludington Writers** *Supporting Literary Arts and Creative Community*

Ludington Writers is a community of poets, authors, and readers dedicated to supporting and growing the literary arts in West Michigan. Through workshops, critique groups, salons, readings, and special events, the group provides opportunities for writers of all experience levels to develop their craft and share their work.

Regular programming includes Critique Nights on the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month, a monthly Third Tuesday Salon, and special events such as ekphrastic workshops and readings. All events are free and open to the public.

**Contact:**  
Programs hosted at the Ludington Area Center for the Arts

Meeting details and updates shared via community calendars and social media

(Search "Ludington Writers" for current information)



# More Than Classrooms: Education Shapes Life

Education in Mason County is supported by a comprehensive network of public school districts, private and charter schools, alternative education programs, and post-secondary institutions serving learners from early childhood through adulthood. Together, these offerings provide not only academic instruction but also extracurricular, cultural, and recreational opportunities that play a significant role in the county's overall quality of life. Families in Mason County have access to traditional classroom education, home-schooling options, early childhood programs, and lifelong learning resources that allow students and residents to pursue educational pathways aligned with their goals and interests.

Ludington Area Schools serves the City of Ludington and surrounding areas, offering instruction from early elementary through high school. Schools within the district include Ludington Elementary School serving grades K-2, O.J. DeJonge Middle School serving grades 3-8, and Ludington High School serving grades 9-12. The district provides comprehensive academic programming along with athletics, music, and extracurricular activities that support student development inside and outside the classroom.

Mason County Central Schools, based in Scottville, serves a large geographic portion of the county and includes early childhood through secondary education. The district operates Victory Early Childhood Center for early childhood education, Scottville Elementary School for grades K-2, Mason County Central Upper Elementary for grades 3-5, Mason County Central Middle School for grades 6-8, and Mason County Central High School for grades 9-12. Programming emphasizes a balance of college preparation, career and technical education, and student engagement through a wide range of extracurricular opportunities.

Mason County Eastern Schools serves the eastern portion of Mason County from a single campus in the Village of Custer. The district includes Mason County Eastern Elementary School serving grades K-5 and Mason County Eastern Middle/High School serving grades 6-12, offering a close-knit educational environ-

ment for students in that region.

In addition to public school districts, families have access to private, charter, and alternative education options. Ludington Area Catholic School provides faith-based education for students in grades K-8, emphasizing academic achievement and character development. Gateway to Success Academy, a public charter school in Scottville, serves students in grades 6-12 and offers a hands-on, non-traditional learning environment with instruction in areas such as engineering, robotics, agriculture, cooking, and life skills, along with transportation and student support services.

Special education services and shared instructional support across Mason County are coordinated through the West Shore Educational Service District, which serves Ludington Area Schools, Mason County Central Schools, and Mason County Eastern Schools. The ESD provides special education programming, professional development, and coordinated services to ensure consistency and access across districts.

Post-secondary education in Mason County is anchored by West Shore Community College, located in Victory Township. The two-year institution offers associate degrees, certificate programs, workforce training, and transfer pathways to four-year colleges and universities. Beyond academics, the college plays a key role in community life through its on-campus recreation center, which provides fitness facilities and wellness programming, and the Center Stage Theater, which hosts theatrical productions, concerts, lectures, and cultural events throughout the year. The college also offers non-credit community education and lifelong learning classes for residents of all ages.

Athletics and music are central components of student life across Mason County and contribute significantly to overall quality of life. All three public school districts offer organized athletic programs at the middle school and high school levels, aligned with Michigan High School Athletic Association standards. Offerings typically include football, basketball,



volleyball, baseball, softball, track and field, cross country, and other seasonal sports. Middle school programs emphasize participation and skill development, while high school athletics focus on competitive play, sportsmanship, leadership, and academic accountability. Sporting events are among the most visible and well-attended community gatherings in the county, reinforcing school pride and long-standing local traditions.

Music education begins in the elementary grades and expands through middle and high school, with students participating in general music, band, and choir programs. At the secondary level, offerings often include concert bands, jazz ensembles, marching bands, and vocal groups. Concerts and performances are held throughout the school year at school and community venues, strengthening connections between schools and residents. Theater productions and musicals further expand creative opportunities and encourage collaboration among students with diverse talents.

Home schooling is also a recognized educational option in Mason County. Michigan law allows families to educate children independently or through cooperatives, faith-based programs, or online curricula, without a state registration

requirement. Home-school families may access public resources such as libraries and standardized testing, and in some cases may participate in limited public school coursework or extracurricular activities, depending on district policy.

Early childhood education is available through both public and community-based programs. FiveCAP operates Head Start and Early Head Start programs in Mason County, serving children from birth through age five with school readiness, early literacy, and family support services. Local public school districts also provide preschool and early childhood education programs, including special education services.

Community-based learning resources further extend educational opportunities. The Mason County District Library, with branches in Ludington and Scot-

ville, supports literacy, youth programming, technology access, and lifelong learning for students, home-school families, and adults. Michigan State University Extension and 4-H programs add educational opportunities in youth development, agriculture, and family and consumer sciences.



Together, Mason County's educational system combines strong academics with extracurricular, cultural, and lifelong learning opportunities. Public, private, charter, alternative, and home-based instruction—supported by early childhood education, post-secondary access, athletics, music, and community resources—help make Mason County an attractive place to live, learn, and raise a family.





## A Guide to Local Government Structure

Mason County residents are served by several layers of government, each responsible for specific functions—from managing local services and land use to representing citizens at the state and federal levels. Understanding these structures helps residents know which officials make decisions, where to direct questions or concerns, and how authority is shared among various entities.

### Mason County Government

Mason County operates under a **commission-administrator form of government**.

The **Mason County Board of Commissioners**, composed of seven elected commissioners, serves as the county's legislative and policy-making body. The board adopts the county budget, sets policy priorities and oversees countywide services. A **county administrator**, appointed by the board, handles day-to-day operations, implements board policies and manages county departments.

Several county officials are **elected independently** by voters, including the sheriff, clerk, treasurer, prosecuting attorney, register of deeds and drain commissioner. The county judicial system includes the **Circuit Court, District Court and Probate Court**.

### City Governments

#### City of Ludington

Ludington uses a **council-manager form of government**.

An elected **city council**, including the mayor, adopts ordinances and sets policy. The council appoints a **city manager** to oversee daily operations, manage city departments and carry out council policy.

#### City of Scottville

Scottville operates under a **city commission form of government**.

An elected **city commission** performs both legislative and executive functions. The mayor is selected by the commission from among its members. Administrative operations are carried out by a city manager or administrator who reports to the commission.

either elected directly or chosen by the council, presides over meetings. Village clerks and treasurers oversee records and finances.

Villages are autonomous municipalities but remain geographically within the surrounding township(s).

### Township Governments

Mason County includes **14 townships**, most governed under Michigan's general law township structure. Each township has an elected **township board** consisting of a supervisor, clerk, treasurer and trustees. Townships provide services such as zoning administration, election management, fire protection, road maintenance coordination and tax collection.

**Pere Marquette Charter Township** is organized under **charter township status**, which provides greater statutory authority and protection from annexation compared with general law townships.

### School Districts

Public school districts are **independent units of local government** and are not controlled by the county, cities or townships.

Each district is governed by an elected **board of education**, which hires a superintendent to manage daily operations. Major districts serving Mason County include **Ludington Area School District, Mason County Central Schools** and **Mason County Eastern Schools**. Regional coordination and specialized services are provided through an intermediate educational service agency.

### Village Governments

Mason County has three incorporated villages: **Custer, Fountain and Free Soil**. Villages operate under a **council-president form of government**. An elected **village council** enacts local ordinances and sets policy. A **village president**,

### Special Districts and Authorities

Some services in Mason County are provided by **special-purpose governments**, which focus on a singular function rather than general governance. These entities are typically overseen by appointed or representative boards.

Examples include public health services, public transportation, library services and community mental health services. These organizations operate independently but often coordinate with local units of government.

### State Legislative Representation

Mason County is represented in the **Michigan Legislature** through specific state legislative districts:

- **Michigan House of Representatives — District 102:** This district includes parts of Manistee, Mason, Muskegon and Oceana counties. Residents of Mason County within this area are represented in the lower chamber of the Michigan Legislature.
- **Michigan Senate — District 32:** Mason County is part of the 32nd State Senate District, which also covers all of Benzie, Muskegon and Oceana counties and portions of Manistee County.

These districts define who represents Mason County residents in the state legislative process, including lawmaking and the state budget.

### Federal Congressional Representation

At the federal level, Mason County is part of **Michigan's 2nd Congressional District** for the U.S. House of Representatives. This district covers much of western Michigan and includes all of Barry, Clare, Gladwin, Gratiot, Ionia, Isabella, Lake, Manistee, Mason, Mecosta, Montcalm, Newaygo, Oceana and Osceola counties, along with portions of several others.

While federal representatives do not manage local services, they represent Mason County residents in the U.S. House, influencing national lawmaking, federal funding and policy.





who to call

MASON COUNTY  
GOVERNMENT &  
OFFICES

- Mason County Administrator**  
5300 W. U.S. 10, Ludington, MI 49431  
Phone: 231-843-7999  
Website: [www.masoncounty.net](http://www.masoncounty.net)
- Mason County Clerk**  
304 E. Ludington Ave., Ludington, MI 49431  
Phone: 231-843-8202  
Email: [cakelly@masoncounty.net](mailto:cakelly@masoncounty.net)  
Website: [www.masoncounty.net](http://www.masoncounty.net)
- Mason County Prosecuting Attorney**  
304 E. Ludington Ave., Ludington, MI 49431  
Phone: 231-845-7377  
Email: [prosecutor@masoncounty.net](mailto:prosecutor@masoncounty.net)  
Website: [www.masoncounty.net](http://www.masoncounty.net)
- Mason County Register of Deeds**  
304 E. Ludington Ave., Ludington, MI 49431  
Phone: 231-843-4466  
Email: [register@masoncounty.net](mailto:register@masoncounty.net)  
Website: [www.masoncounty.net](http://www.masoncounty.net)
- Mason County Treasurer**  
304 E. Ludington Ave., Ludington, MI 49431  
Phone: 231-843-8411  
Email: [akmetz@masoncounty.net](mailto:akmetz@masoncounty.net)
- Mason County Equalization Department**  
304 E. Ludington Ave., Ludington, MI 49431  
Phone: 231-845-6288  
Email: [ameyaard@masoncounty.net](mailto:ameyaard@masoncounty.net)
- Mason County Animal Control**  
305 N. Meyer Road, Ludington, MI 49431  
Phone: 231-843-8644
- Mason County Airport**  
5300 W. U.S. 10, Ludington, MI 49431  
Phone: 231-843-2049  
Email: [airport@masoncounty.net](mailto:airport@masoncounty.net)
- Mason County Building Department**  
102 E. Fifth St., Scottville, MI 49454  
Phone: 231-757-9345
- Mason County Planning & Zoning**  
102 E. Fifth St., Scottville, MI 49454  
Phone: 231-757-9272

- Mason County Drain Commissioner**  
102 E. Fifth St., Scottville, MI 49454  
Phone: 231-757-9366
- Mason County Emergency Management**  
408 Resseguie St., Suite 100,  
Ludington, MI 49431  
Phone: 231-845-5911  
Email: [emergencymanagement@mason-county.net](mailto:emergencymanagement@mason-county.net)
- Mason County Public Works**  
102 E. Fifth St., Scottville, MI 49454  
Phone: 231-757-9370
- Mason County Road Commission**  
510 E. State St., Scottville, MI 49454  
Phone: 231-757-2882
- Mason County Sheriff's Office**  
302 N. Delia St., Ludington, MI 49431  
Phone: 231-843-3475  
Website: [www.masoncountysheriff.org](http://www.masoncountysheriff.org)
- Mason County Veterans Affairs**  
920 E. Tinkham Ave., Ludington, MI 49431  
Phone: 231-583-2028
- Oakview Medical Care Facility**  
1001 Diana St., Ludington, MI 49431  
Phone: 231-845-5185  
Website: [www.oakviewmcf.com](http://www.oakviewmcf.com)
- HEALTH, HUMAN &  
COMMUNITY SERVICES**
- District Health Department  
No. 10 – Mason County**  
916 Diana St., Ludington, MI 49431  
Phone: 231-845-7381  
WIC: 231-316-8584  
Website: [www.dhd10.org](http://www.dhd10.org)
- West Michigan Community Mental Health –  
Mason County**  
920 Diana St., Ludington, MI 49431  
Phone: 231-845-6294  
Crisis Line: 800-992-2061
- FiveCAP – Mason County Office**  
302 N. Main St., Scottville, MI 49454  
Phone: 231-757-3785  
Website: [www.fivecap.org](http://www.fivecap.org)



SENIOR CENTERS

- Ludington Area Senior Center**  
308 S. Rowe St., Ludington, MI 49431  
Phone: 231-845-6841  
Website: [www.ludingtonseniorcenter.org](http://www.ludingtonseniorcenter.org)
- Scottville Area Senior Center**  
140 S. Main St., Scottville, MI 49454  
Phone: 231-757-4705
- Tallman Lake Area Senior Center**  
6765 E. Marshall Rd., Fountain, MI 49410  
Phone: 231-757-3306
- Free Soil Senior Center**  
8480 N. Democrat St., Free Soil, MI 49411  
Phone: 231-464-6789 | 231-425-6691
- COURTS & LEGAL  
SERVICES**
- 51st Circuit Court**  
304 E. Ludington Ave.,  
Ludington, MI 49431  
Phone: 231-845-0516
- 79th District Court**  
304 E. Ludington Ave.,  
Ludington, MI 49431  
Phone: 231-843-4130
- Friend of the Court**  
304 E. Ludington Ave.,  
Ludington, MI 49431  
Phone: 231-843-4791
- Probation & Parole (MDOC)**  
408 Resseguie St., Suite 101,  
Ludington, MI 49431  
Phone: 231-845-1266

LIBRARIES

- Mason County District Library –  
Ludington**  
217 E. Ludington Ave.,  
Ludington, MI 49431  
Phone: 231-843-8465
- Mason County District Library –  
Scottville**  
204 E. State St.,  
Scottville, MI 49454  
Phone: 231-757-2588

EDUCATION

- Ludington Area School District**  
**Elementary School** – 5771 W. Bryant  
Rd., Ludington | 231-845-3820  
**O.J. DeJonge Middle School** – 706 E.  
Tinkham Ave., Ludington | 231-845-3810  
**Ludington High School** – 508 N. Wash-  
ington Ave., Ludington | 231-845-3880
- Mason County Central Schools**  
**Victory Early Childhood Center** – 4171  
N. Stiles Rd., Scottville | 231-843-2410  
**Scottville Elementary** – 201 W. Maple  
St., Scottville | 231-757-4701  
**Upper Elementary** – 505 W. Maple St.,  
Scottville | 231-757-5720  
**Middle School** – 310 W. Beryl St., Scot-  
tville | 231-757-3724  
**High School** – 210 W. Broadway, Scot-  
tville | 231-757-4748
- Mason County Eastern Schools**  
18 S. Main St., Custer, MI 49405  
Phone: 231-757-3733
- Gateway to Success Academy**  
526 N. Scottville Rd.,  
Scottville, MI 49454  
Phone: 231-845-0922
- West Shore Community College**  
3000 N. Stiles Rd., Scottville, MI 49454  
Phone: 231-845-6211  
Website: [www.westshore.edu](http://www.westshore.edu)
- TRANSPORTATION  
& MUNICIPAL  
GOVERNMENT**
- Ludington Mass Transit Authority  
(LMTA)**  
Phone: 231-845-6218  
Email: [transit@lmta.us](mailto:transit@lmta.us)  
Website: [www.dialaridelmta.com](http://www.dialaridelmta.com)
- City of Ludington – City Hall**  
400 S. Harrison St., Ludington, MI 49431  
Phone: 231-845-6237  
Website: [www.ludington.mi.us](http://www.ludington.mi.us)
- City of Scottville – City Hall**  
105 N. Main St., Scottville, MI 49454  
Phone: 231-757-4729
- TOWNSHIP OFFICES**
- Amber Township** – 171 S. Amber Rd.,  
Scottville, MI 49454
- Branch Township** – 6688 E. First St.,  
Fountain, MI 49410
- Custer Township** – Office administered  
via township board
- Eden Township** – 3369 E. Hawley Rd.,  
Custer, MI 49405
- Free Soil Township** – 2691 E. Michigan  
St., Free Soil, MI 49411
- Grant Township** – 843 W. Hoague Rd.,  
Manistee, MI
- Hamlin Township** – 3775 N. Jebavy Dr.,  
Ludington, MI
- Logan Township** – 3975 Tyndall Rd.,  
Branch, MI
- Meade Township** – 5435 E. Free Soil/  
Larsen Rds., Free Soil, MI
- Pere Marquette Charter Township** –  
1699 S. Pere Marquette Hwy.,  
Ludington, MI
- Riverton Township** – 2122 W. Hawley  
Rd., Scottville, MI
- Summit Township** – 4879 W. Deren Rd.,  
Ludington, MI
- Victory Township** – 2417 N. Victory Cor-  
ner Rd., Scottville, MI





## Discovering Mason County's early history

**By Shanna Avery**  
Ludington Daily News Staff Writer

Mason County is rich with vast resources; bountiful farmland and orchards; the popular Lake Michigan beach town of Ludington; Scottville and Custer in the heart of the county to outlying charming towns such as Fountain and Free Soil. The Ludington State Park, Stearns Park and Buttersville Beach draw thousands of outdoors enthusiasts. Culture abounds with places such as Ludington Area Center for the Arts, and local history is preserved at the Mason County Historical Research Center, Historic White Pine Village and the Port of Ludington Maritime Museum.

There is no doubt Mason County has developed into one of Michigan's beloved treasures through the bends and turns throughout the past centuries, when first inhabited by Native Americans, and through the Jesuit exploration when Fr. Jaques Marquette passed away near the mouth of the Pere Marquette River while traveling up Lake Michigan's coastline on May 18, 1675.

The Lake Michigan route brought early trappers and shingle makers as early as 1835, arriving in small schooners and traveling by canoe. French-Canadian fur trapper William Quevillon was one of these trappers, building a cabin on the Buttersville Peninsula.

The county was originally named Notipekago in 1840, which translates to 'the place of the skulls,' which, according to signage at the registered Michigan Historic site where South Custer Road now meets the Pere Marquette River, a war between the Ottawa and Mascouten tribes took place in the 1600s, with a large battle occurring in that vicinity. Years later, erosion exposed the buried remains of those from both tribes, where skulls were said to be placed along the river bank.

The county was renamed in 1843 after Michigan's first governor, Stevens T. Mason, and was attached to Ottawa County.

Burr Caswell was said to be the first permanent settler of European descent, arriving with his family in 1847 aboard the Schooner, Eagle.

"When Burr Caswell arrived the area was a vir-



tual wilderness, giant pines crowded the shores of the lake, wolves were common and travel was hard. There were no roads to bring travelers to the new settlement that would begin to develop in the midst of the wilderness," according to the Mason County Michigan History & Genealogy on the USGENWEB Project website.

Logging soon sprang up.

"Lumber was the reason for the existence of the town. The mills scattered along the banks of the little lake were the means. A lake area two miles in



length by half or three quarters of a mile in width afforded ample shore space for all the timber industries the adjacent forests could support or the river float in logs and bolts," according to 'Lumber Lath and Shingles' by Luman Good-enough.

The maritime industry was a result of the logging boom, with the easy access to water helping move goods to market and more settlers and lumberjacks in search of work and opportunities to the area.

Some of the logging giants to take on

the swath of huge pines are names well known by locals today, such as James Ludington, Eber Ward and Charles Mears, fierce competitors each trying to form a monopoly on the industry in the area.

The land surrounding Pere Marquette Lake was purchased by a man with the last name of Ford who took a note out with James Ludington to establish a sawmill. The town Pere Marquette sprang up with the settlement of the north side of Pere Marquette Lake in 1849. When it came time for the village to have a post office, the paperwork was filled out with the name of Ludington. The village retained its name for a bit longer, but the post office was named for James Ludington.

By 1855, the county was organized. The first three townships were Free Soil, Little Sable and Pere Marquette. Little Sable, later to become Lincoln, was the county seat.

After the Civil War, homesteads began to fill out the county as veterans received their 40 acres, built businesses, homes and established farms.

By 1865, the layout for city of Pere Marquette begun, which was chartered by 1873, with Ludington offering to donate \$5,000 for the city to be named







for him. It grew in leaps and bounds, especially with the soon arrival of the Flint & Pere Marquette Railroad. The county seat was removed from Lincoln to Ludington.

Some of origins of the other townships and place names in the county are as follows: Summit Township was organized by 1860. Old settlers said it was named such for having the highest hills in the county, according to a Ludington Daily News article from Oct. 3, 1987. Riverton, named by Sam Hull, got its name for being bound by the Pere Marquette River on the north.

Victory was organized April 6, 1868, the name being given for a series of revival meetings at Bird's Settlement or Rayne's Corners. This also was the time when Civil War victories were etched on the hearts of settlers, with other townships forming in honor for Civil War generals Grant, Sherman, Meade, Custer and Sheridan.

Grant Township first met at the home of Charles Mears in April, 1868. Branch Township was named for Branch County, the home of two of its pioneers. Logan Township was named for John A. Logan, Republican Vice President in 1884. Amber was named for Amber Township, N.Y., from where early township settler John B. Wallace moved from.



Eden Township, organized in 1878, was named "because it offered opportunities as the original Eden," according to the LDN article.

The lake and village of Little Sable changed to Lincoln, and Big Sable to Hamlin, named for Hannibal Hamlin, vice president under Abraham Lincoln.

Scottville was Sweetland, before becoming Mason Center. It was finally christened Scottville after George Reader and Hiram Scott flipped a coin to see who would give it a new name.

Though the following decades, the lumber boom really took off, attracting many settlers and immigrants, with a strong showing of Scandinavian



ethnicities and Polish/Eastern European ethnicities that are still here to this day. A discovery of salt deposits also made Ludington an important port. The Pere Marquette Railroad began a car ferry service to Wisconsin in the 1898, with Ludington becoming the largest car ferry port by the mid-1950s, continued by the S.S. Badger

The Mason County Historical Society which formed in 1937 is the glue that holds all of this extensive and fascinating history together with thousands of archives, artifacts and exhibits, and the community honors its heritage with such festivals as the new Ludington Logging Days.



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# Museums and Cultural Heritage

## museums

Mason County's museums and historical institutions serve as living classrooms that document how the region was shaped by lumber, lake commerce, industry, and community life. Through preserved buildings, interactive exhibits, and carefully maintained archives, these organizations connect past and present, offering residents and visitors a deeper understanding of the people, work, and traditions that defined the county. Together, they anchor Mason County's cultural identity while supporting education, tourism, and historical preservation.

At the center of Mason County's public history experience is **Historic White Pine Village**, a living-history museum celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2026. Operated by the **Mason County Historical Society**, White Pine Village is the county's largest museum complex and its most immersive interpretation of everyday life in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Located on more than 30 acres just outside Ludington, the village features more than 30 preserved and restored buildings, including a working sawmill, blacksmith shop, general store, church, schoolhouse, print shop, and railroad depot. Each structure is interpreted to reflect Mason County's lumbering, agricultural, and small-town heritage.



**Historic White Pine Village is open May 3 through Oct. 18**, Tuesday through Saturday, from **10 a.m. to 5 p.m.**, with last admission at 3:30 p.m. The village operates primarily as a self-guided experience, with interpreters, demonstrations, and special programming offered throughout the season. Tickets are required for admission, and emergency closures are posted on the museum's Facebook page.

Beyond daily operations, the Mason County Historical Society maintains an active **year-round educational mission**. During the winter months, when White Pine Village is closed to regular visitation, the society hosts a **winter speaker series** featuring local historians, authors, and researchers presenting on regional history, preservation, and cultural topics. The society also coordinates field trips, school programs, and outreach presentations for students and community groups, supporting curriculum-based learning and lifelong education throughout the year.

Complementing White Pine Village's hands-on interpretation is the **Mason County Historical Society Research Center**, which serves as the county's primary archival and genealogical resource. The research center houses historic photographs, maps, newspapers, family histories, business records, and other primary documents that chronicle Mason County's development.

The research center is **open seasonally from May 27 through Sept. 30** and operates on limited, scheduled days, primarily as a research facility rather than a walk-through museum. Access is geared toward historians, students, journalists, genealogists, and residents conducting in-depth research. Appointments are recommended, particularly for those seeking specific collections or extended research assistance.

Mason County's museum landscape also reflects its deep maritime roots. Located on the Ludington waterfront, the **Port of Ludington Maritime Museum** explores the city's long-standing relationship with Lake Michigan and Great Lakes shipping. Exhibits highlight commercial freighters, carferry



operations, lifesaving services, and the daily work of sailors and dockworkers who helped establish Ludington as a vital port city.

The maritime museum is open **May 27 through Sept. 30**. During the core season, it is open Tuesday from noon to 7 p.m., and Wednesday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. In May and October, the museum is closed on Tuesdays and Wednesdays and is open Thursday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Together, White Pine Village, the Mason County Historical Society Research Center, and the Port of Ludington Maritime Museum preserve and interpret the stories of the people and industries that built Mason County. Through exhibits, seasonal events, winter programming, archival research, and educational outreach, these institutions ensure local history remains accessible, accurate, and relevant throughout the year.





# organizations

Mason County is home to a wide range of nonprofit, volunteer, civic, cultural, and service organizations that contribute to the county's quality of life and community well-being. These organizations support residents across all stages of life and areas of need, including philanthropy, business development, public safety, social services, the arts, historic preservation, environmental stewardship, youth and senior programming, and volunteer engagement.

The following directory is intended as a reference guide to organizations that are active in or serve Mason County. Listings are grouped by general focus area and include a brief description of each organization's mission or services, along with public contact information. Together, these organizations reflect the civic involvement, collaboration, and volunteer spirit that help shape Mason County's communities.

## Philanthropy & Community Investment

### Community Foundation for Mason County

**Website:** <https://www.mason-foundation.org>

Supports local philanthropy by managing endowed funds and distributing grants and scholarships that address education, arts and culture, health, environment, and community development needs in Mason County.

### United Way of Mason County

**Website:** <https://www.masoncountyuw.org>

Funds and coordinates local programs focused on health, education, and financial stability, investing community donations back into Mason County through nonprofit partnerships.

### Women Who Care of Mason County

**Website:** <https://womenwhocare.org>

A collective giving organization in which members pool donations and vote to award funds directly to local nonprofits.

### Men Who Care of Mason County

**Website:** <https://www.masoncountyuw.org>

A community giving circle that engages men in pooled charitable giving to support Mason County nonprofit organizations.

## Business, Economic Development & Professional Organizations

### Ludington Area Chamber of Commerce

**Website:** <https://www.ludington.org>

Supports local businesses through advocacy, networking, workforce initiatives, and community promotion, while also serving as the county's primary visitor information organization.

### Mason County Economic Development Corporation

**Website:** <https://www.masoncountyedc.com>

Works to attract, retain, and expand businesses through site selection assistance, financing coordination, workforce development, and regional partnerships.

### Ludington Downtown Development Authority

**Website:** <https://www.downtownludington.org>

Promotes downtown economic vitality through redevelopment, infrastructure investment, business support, events, and place-making initiatives.

### Scottville Downtown Development Authority

**Website:** <https://www.cityofscottville.org/downtown-development-authority>

Supports business development and physical improvements within Scottville's downtown district.

### West Michigan Small Business Development Center

**Website:** <https://www.wmsbdc.org>

Provides no-cost business consulting, training, and market research assistance to entrepreneurs and small business owners in Mason County and the region.

### SCORE West Michigan

**Website:** <https://www.score.org/west-michigan>

Offers free mentoring and educational workshops to help small businesses start, grow, and succeed.

### Michigan Works! West Central

**Website:** <https://www.michiganworks.org>

Connects employers with workforce resources and assists job seekers with training, education, and employment services.

## Crisis Response, Advocacy & Family Support

### COVE

**Website:** <https://www.callcove.com>

Provides emergency shelter, advocacy, crisis response, and support services for survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault in Mason County and surrounding areas.

### HELP Ministry

**Website:** <https://www.help-ministry.org>

Offers practical assistance including furniture, household goods, limited financial support, transportation, and minor home repairs.

## Food Security & Basic Needs

### Lakeshore Food Club

**Website:** <https://www.lakeshorefood-club.org>

Provides affordable access to nutritious food through a membership-based grocery model emphasizing dignity and choice.

### FiveCAP

**Website:** <https://www.fivecap.org>

Delivers Head Start, housing assistance, food programs, weatherization, and

family support services.

### Meals on Wheels of Mason County

**Website:** <https://www.fivecap.org>

Provides home-delivered meals to seniors and individuals with mobility limitations.

## Senior Services & Aging Support

### Ludington Area Senior Center

**Website:** <https://www.ludingtonsenior-center.org>

Offers meals, social activities, fitness programs, and supportive services for older adults.

### Scottville Area Senior Center

**Website:** <https://www.facebook.com/ScottvilleSeniorCenter>

Provides meals, recreation, and social programming for seniors.

### Tallman Lake Area Senior Center

**Website:** <https://www.facebook.com/TallmanLakeSeniorCenter>

Serves older adults with meals and community activities in the Fountain area.

### Free Soil Senior Center

**Website:** <https://www.facebook.com/FreeSoilSeniorCenter>

Offers nutrition and social engagement opportunities for seniors.

## Health & Behavioral Health Services

### West Michigan Community Mental Health

**Website:** <https://www.wmcmh.org>

Provides mental health, developmental disability, and substance use disorder services.





## Arts, Culture & History

### Ludington Area Center for the Arts

**Website:** <https://www.ludington-artscenter.org>

Promotes visual and performing arts through exhibitions, classes, and community events.

### Mason County Historical Society

**Website:** <https://www.mchshistory.org>

Preserves and interprets Mason County history through museums, archives, and educational programming.

### Stage Left Theatre Company

**Website:** <https://www.stageleftmi.org>

Produces live theatrical performances and provides opportunities for local performers and volunteers.

### Scottville Clown Band

**Website:** <https://www.westshoreciv-icband.org>

Performs at parades, festivals, and civic events, preserving a long-standing local musical tradition.

### West Shore Chorale

**Website:** <https://www.westshorechorale.org>

Presents seasonal choral concerts and offers participatory singing opportunities for adults.

## Civic, Service & Leadership Organizations

### Ludington Area Jaycees

**Website:** <https://www.usjaycees.org>

Engages young adults in leadership



development and community service projects.

### Rotary Club of Ludington

**Website:** <https://portal.clubrunner.ca/6590>

Supports humanitarian service projects locally and internationally.

### American Association of University Women

**Website:** <https://www.aauw.org>

Advocates for gender equity through education, research, and community engagement.

### Church Women United of Mason County

**Website:** <https://www.churchwomenunited.org>

Brings together women from multiple Christian denominations to support local service projects and outreach.

## Veterans Organizations & Support

### American Legion Post 76

**Website:** <https://www.legion.org>

Provides advocacy, camaraderie, and support services for veterans and their families.

### Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 4499

**Website:** <https://www.vfw.org>

Supports veterans through service programs, advocacy, and community engagement.

### AMVETS Post 22

**Website:** <https://www.amvets.org>

Assists veterans through benefits support, community service, and outreach.

### Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 977

**Website:** <https://www.vva.org>

Advocates for veterans' rights and provides support programs and community education.

## Volunteer & Community Service Organizations

### Friends of Ludington State Park

**Website:** <https://www.friendsofludingtonstatepark.org>

Supports park improvements, educa-

tion, and stewardship projects through volunteer efforts.

### Mason-Lake Conservation District

**Website:** <https://www.mason-lakeconservation.org>

Provides conservation education, land stewardship assistance, and environmental programming.

### AFFEW

**Website:** <https://www.affew.org>

Focuses on prevention of domestic and sexual violence through education, advocacy, and community awareness programming.

### Mason County Search and Rescue

**Website:** <https://www.facebook.com/MasonCountySearchAndRescue>

Assists law enforcement with missing person searches and emergency response.

### Friends of Ludington Police

**Website:** <https://www.facebook.com/FriendsofLudingtonPolice>

Supports the Ludington Police Department through fundraising and community engagement.

## Pet Rescues & Animal Welfare

### Mason County PAWS Humane Society

**Website:** <https://www.masoncountypaws.org>



Rescues, fosters, and places adoptable animals while promoting responsible pet ownership.

### Mason County Animal Control

**Website:** <https://www.masoncounty.net/departments/animal-control>

Provides sheltering, lost-and-found services, and pet adoption.

### Spay Neuter Assistance Program of Michigan

**Website:** <https://www.spayneuterassistanceprogramofmichigan.org>

Provides financial assistance to help income-eligible residents access spay and neuter services.

### Directory Note

Every effort was made to compile an accurate and representative listing of organizations serving Mason County at the time of publication. However, this directory may not include every organization active in the county. Some groups may have been inadvertently omitted, may have formed after publication, or may operate informally or on a seasonal basis. Inclusion in this directory does not constitute endorsement, nor does omission reflect on the value or impact of any organization.

Organizations wishing to be considered for inclusion in future editions are encouraged to contact the editor Lois Tomaszewski, [editor@ludingtondailynews.com](mailto:editor@ludingtondailynews.com).

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# Outdoor recreation defines life in Mason County

Outdoor recreation is central to life in Mason County, where Lake Michigan, inland lakes, rivers, forests and an extensive system of public parks provide year-round opportunities for residents and visitors alike. From swimming and hiking to paddling, fishing and winter sports, the county's natural assets shape both daily life and the local economy.

Along the Lake Michigan shoreline, **Ludington State Park** anchors outdoor recreation in the county. Covering more than 5,300 acres, the park features seven miles of sandy Lake Michigan beach, expansive dune systems, forested trails and access to both Hamlin Lake and the Big Sable River. Its trail network supports hiking, biking, snowshoeing and cross-country skiing, while the shoreline attracts swimmers, anglers and sunset watchers throughout the warmer months. Big Sable Point Lighthouse, reached by foot or bicycle, offers sweeping views of the lakeshore and surrounding dunes.

North of Ludington, the federally protected **Nordhouse Dunes Wilderness Area** offers a more remote outdoor experience. Managed as part of the Manistee National Forest, the wilderness area features undeveloped Lake Michigan shoreline, towering dunes and backcountry trails. Motorized vehicles and bicycles are prohibited, preserving the area for hiking, wildlife viewing and dispersed camping.

Water recreation extends well beyond the Lake Michigan shoreline. Hamlin Lake, Bass Lake and numerous smaller inland lakes throughout Mason County support boating, kayaking, paddleboarding and fishing. The Pere Marquette River, one of Michigan's premier cold-water trout streams, flows through the county and draws anglers from across the Midwest, while also offering scenic paddling routes through forested corridors.

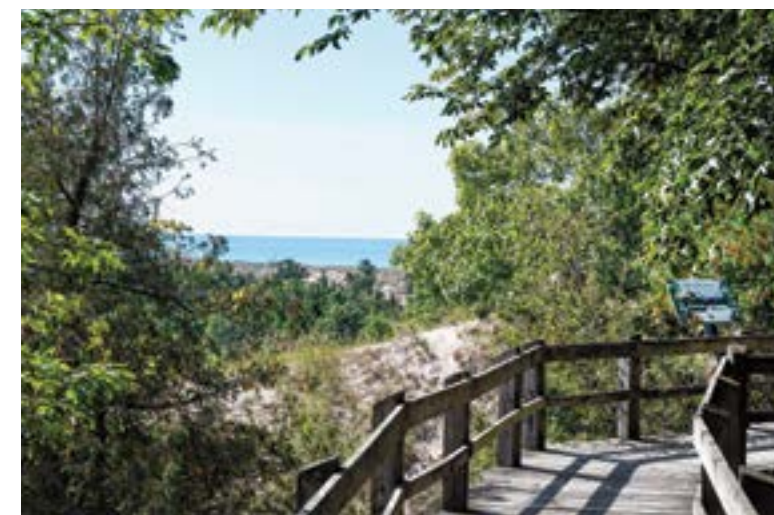
Public lands also play a major role inland. Portions of the **Manistee National Forest** lie

within Mason County, providing thousands of acres for hiking, hunting, wildlife viewing and seasonal trail use. These forested areas support recreation year-round, from fall hunting seasons to winter snowmobiling and cross-country skiing.

Local parks further expand access to outdoor recreation and serve as community gathering spaces. In the City of Ludington, **Stearns Park** provides a popular public beach along Lake Michigan and hosts a range of seasonal activities. During the summer months, the park is a gathering place for **community beach bonfires**, drawing people to the shoreline for evening social events centered on sunsets and the lake. Stearns Park is also home to **West Shore Bank Rhythm & Dunes**, a well-known outdoor concert series that brings live music to the beach and highlights the park's role as both a recreational and cultural venue. The park also serves as the primary viewing area for Ludington's Independence Day fireworks celebration.

Nearby, **Waterfront Park** functions as one of the city's most active public spaces, offering marina access, fishing areas, playgrounds and views of Pere Marquette Lake. The park regularly hosts outdoor gatherings, concerts and community programming tied to the downtown waterfront. Additional neighborhood and athletic facilities, including **Rotary Park**, **Copeyon Park** and the **Ludington Avenue Linear Park**, support everyday recreation, youth activities and organized sports.

In Scottville, **Riverside Park** stands as one of the county's largest municipal recreation areas, offering camping facilities, open space, disc golf and event grounds along the Pere Marquette River. Smaller community parks throughout the county's townships provide playgrounds, picnic areas and neighborhood green space, contributing to outdoor access across Mason County.



## Outdoor events connect recreation and community

Mason County's outdoor amenities are celebrated each year through a variety of events that bring residents and visitors outdoors and highlight the region's natural setting. One of the most prominent is the **Ludington Offshore Classic**, a nationally recognized Lake Michigan salmon fishing tournament that draws anglers from across the Great Lakes region and features public weigh-ins and waterfront activity at the Ludington Municipal Marina.

Other events reinforce the county's outdoor culture and community identity. The **Ludington Gus Macker** transforms downtown streets and nearby public spaces into outdoor basketball courts each summer, while the **Blessing of the Boats** celebrates Ludington's maritime heritage and working waterfront. Endurance events such as the **Ludington Lakestride** and the **Big Sable Point Lighthouse Run** showcase the county's shoreline, dunes and trail systems.

## A year-round outdoor destination

Outdoor recreation in Mason County continues through every season. Winter brings snowmobiling, cross-country skiing and ice fishing when conditions allow, while spring, summer and fall are marked by beach activity, paddling, fishing tournaments and park-based community events. Together, the county's parks, public lands and outdoor traditions define Mason County as a place where access to the outdoors is both a defining feature of daily life and a cornerstone of community.





calendar

**FOR COMPLETE** daily calendar updates check out the Ludington Daily News. Dates may have changed due to printing deadlines for this edition.

**JANUARY 24**  
**ANNUAL LOCAL** Artist Exhibit, 11 a.m. - 2 p.m., Ludington Area Center for the Arts, 107 S. Harrison St., Ludington

**JANUARY 31**  
**PURE LUDINGTON** BRRRewfest, 1 - 6 p.m., Legacy Plaza, 112 N. James St., Ludington

**FEBRUARY 7**  
**SIPS AND** Soups Walk, 1 - 5 p.m., Downtown Ludington

**FEBRUARY 11**  
**STATE OF** the Community Breakfast, 8:30 - 10:30 a.m., Lincoln Hills Golf Club, 1527 N. Lakeshore Dr., Ludington

**FEBRUARY 28**  
**THE CRUCIBLE** by Arthur Miller, 7:30 p.m., Center Stage Theater, WSCC, 3000 N. Stiles Rd., Scottville

**MARCH 1**  
**THE CRUCIBLE** by Arthur Miller, 2 p.m., Center Stage Theater, WSCC, 3000 N. Stiles Rd., Scottville

**MARCH 6**  
**THE CRUCIBLE** by Arthur Miller, 7:30 p.m., Center Stage Theater, WSCC, 3000 N. Stiles Rd., Scottville  
**TIES AND** Tutus - Daddy Daughter Dance, 5:30 - 8 p.m., Radiant Church, 409 S. Washington Ave., Ludington

**MARCH 7**  
**THE CRUCIBLE** by Arthur Miller, 7:30 p.m., Center Stage Theater, WSCC, 3000 N. Stiles Rd., Scottville  
**CUT, PASTE,** Create - a collage exhibition, 11 a.m. - 2 p.m., Ludington Area Center for the Arts, 107 S.

Harrison St., Ludington

**MARCH 8**  
**THE CRUCIBLE** by Arthur Miller, 2 p.m., Center Stage Theater, WSCC, 3000 N. Stiles Rd., Scottville  
**BEN TRAVERSE** and The Little River Céilí Band, 2 p.m., Ludington Area Center for the Arts, 107 S. Harrison St., Ludington



**MARCH 21**  
**J2B2** - John Jorgenson Bluegrass Band, 7:30 p.m., Center Stage Theater, WSCC, 3000 N. Stiles Rd., Scottville

**APRIL 14**  
**WSCC CONCERT** Choir, 7:30 p.m., Center Stage Theater, WSCC, 3000 N. Stiles Rd., Scottville



**APRIL 16**  
**WSCC JAZZ** Ensemble I and II, 7:30 p.m., Center Stage Theater, WSCC, 3000 N. Stiles Rd., Scottville

**MAY 4**  
**BIG SABLE** Lighthouse Opens for the Season, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m., Ludington State Park, 8800 M-116, Ludington

**MAY 19**  
**NORTH BREAKWATER** Light Opens, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m., Stearns Park Beach, 420 N. Lakeshore Dr., Ludington

**MAY 22**  
**LIVE IN** the Plaza, 6 - 8 p.m., Legacy Plaza, 102 W. Ludington Ave., Ludington  
**DOWNTOWN LUDINGTON** Farmers Market, 2 - 7 p.m., Legacy Plaza, 112 N. James St., Ludington

**MAY 23**  
**2026 MEMORIAL** Day Weekend Craft Fair, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m., Rotary Park, 152 N. Lewis St., Ludington

**MAY 24**  
**2026 MEMORIAL** Day Weekend Craft Fair, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m., Rotary Park, 152 N. Lewis St., Ludington

**MAY 29**  
**LIVE IN** the Plaza, 6 - 8 p.m., Legacy Plaza, 102 W. Ludington Ave., Ludington

**DOWNTOWN LUDINGTON** Farmers Market, 2 - 7 p.m., Legacy Plaza, 112 N. James St., Ludington

**JUNE 4**  
**LIVE IN** the Plaza, 6 - 8 p.m., Legacy Plaza, 102 W. Ludington Ave., Ludington

**JUNE 5**  
**LOVE LUDINGTON** Street Party, 6 - 9 p.m., Downtown Ludington  
**DOWNTOWN LUDINGTON** Farmers Market, 2 - 7 p.m., Legacy Plaza, 112 N. James St., Ludington

**JUNE 6**  
**BLESSING OF** the Boats, 5 - 10 p.m., West End, 950 W. Ludington Ave., Ludington

**JUNE 11**  
**LIVE IN** the Plaza, 6 - 8 p.m., Legacy Plaza, 102 W. Ludington Ave., Ludington

**JUNE 12**  
**LIVE IN** the Plaza, 6 - 8 p.m., Legacy Plaza, 102 W. Ludington Ave., Ludington

**DOWNTOWN LUDINGTON** Farmers Market, 2 - 7 p.m., Legacy Plaza, 112 N. James St., Ludington

**JUNE 13**  
**LUDINGTON LAKESTRIDE** Half-Marathon/10K/5K, 8 a.m. - 12 p.m., Stearns Park Beach, 420 N. Lakeshore Dr., Ludington

**JUNE 17**  
**LACA SUMMER** Concert Series, 7 - 9 p.m., Waterfront Park, 300 W. William St., Ludington

**JUNE 18**  
**LIVE IN** the Plaza, 6 - 8 p.m., Legacy Plaza, 102 W. Ludington Ave., Ludington

**JUNE 19**  
**LIVE IN** the Plaza, 6 - 8 p.m., Legacy Plaza, 102 W. Ludington Ave., Ludington

**DOWNTOWN LUDINGTON** Farmers Market, 2 - 7 p.m., Legacy Plaza, 112 N. James St., Ludington

**JUNE 20** - 21  
**GUS MACKER** 3-On-3 Charity Basketball Tournament, 8 a.m. - 6 p.m., Stearns Park, 420 N. Lakeshore Dr., Ludington

**JUNE 24**  
**LACA SUMMER** Concert Series, 7 - 9 p.m., Waterfront Park, 300 W. William St., Ludington

**JUNE 25**  
**PURE LUDINGTON** Sunset Beach Bonfire, 8 - 10 p.m., Stearns Park Beach, 420 N. Lakeshore Dr., Ludington  
**LIVE IN** the Plaza, 6 - 8 p.m., Legacy Plaza, 102 W. Ludington Ave., Ludington

**JUNE 26**  
**LIVE IN** the Plaza, 6 - 8 p.m., Legacy Plaza, 102 W. Ludington Ave., Ludington



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**DOWNTOWN LUDINGTON** Farmers Market, 2 - 7 p.m., Legacy Plaza, 112 N. James St., Ludington

#### JUNE 27

**COAST TO** Coast Gravel Grinder, 12 a.m. - 11 p.m., Stearns Park Beach, 420 N. Lakeshore Dr., Ludington

#### JULY 1

**LACA SUMMER** Concert Series, 7 - 9 p.m., Waterfront Park, 300 W. William St., Ludington

#### JULY 2

**LIVE IN** the Plaza, 6 - 8 p.m., Legacy Plaza, 102 W. Ludington Ave., Ludington

#### JULY 3

**LIVE IN** the Plaza, 6 - 8 p.m., Legacy Plaza, 102 W. Ludington Ave., Ludington

**DOWNTOWN LUDINGTON** Farmers Market, 2 - 7 p.m., Legacy Plaza, 112 N. James St., Ludington



#### JULY 4

**FREEDOM FESTIVAL** Parade and Fireworks, 2 - 11 p.m., Downtown Ludington

**WEST SHORE** Art Fair, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m., Rotary

Park, 500 W. Ludington Ave., Ludington

#### JULY 5

**WEST SHORE** Art Fair, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m., Rotary

Park, 500 W. Ludington Ave., Ludington

#### JULY 8

**LACA SUMMER** Concert Series, 7 - 9 p.m., Waterfront Park, 300 W. William St., Ludington

#### JULY 9

**LIVE IN** the Plaza, 6 - 8 p.m., Legacy Plaza, 102 W. Ludington Ave., Ludington

#### JULY 10

**LIVE IN** the Plaza, 6 - 8 p.m., Legacy Plaza, 102 W. Ludington Ave., Ludington

**DOWNTOWN LUDINGTON** Farmers Market, 2 - 7 p.m., Legacy Plaza, 112 N. James St., Ludington

#### JULY 13 - 19

**LUDINGTON OFFSHORE** Classic begins

#### JULY 15

**LACA SUMMER** Concert Series, 7 - 9 p.m., Waterfront Park, 300 W. William St., Ludington



#### JULY 16

**LIVE IN** the Plaza, 6 - 8 p.m., Legacy Plaza, 102 W. Ludington Ave., Ludington

#### JULY 17

**LIVE IN** the Plaza, 6 - 8 p.m., Legacy Plaza, 102 W. Ludington Ave., Ludington

**DOWNTOWN LUDINGTON** Farmers Market,



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2 - 7 p.m., Legacy Plaza, 112 N. James St., Ludington

#### JULY 22

**LACA SUMMER** Concert Series, 7 - 9 p.m., Waterfront Park, 300 W. William St., Ludington

#### JULY 23

**LIVE IN** the Plaza, 6 - 8 p.m., Legacy Plaza, 102 W. Ludington Ave., Ludington

#### JULY 24

**LIVE IN** the Plaza, 6 - 8 p.m., Legacy Plaza, 102 W. Ludington Ave., Ludington

**DOWNTOWN LUDINGTON** Farmers Market, 2 - 7 p.m., Legacy Plaza, 112 N. James St., Ludington

#### JULY 25

**WEST SHORE** Bank's Rhythm & Dunes Fundraiser Concert Series, 6 - 9 p.m., Waterfront Park, 391 S. William St., Ludington



#### JULY 29

**LACA SUMMER** Concert Series, 7 - 9 p.m., Waterfront Park, 300 W. William St., Ludington

#### JULY 30

**PURE LUDINGTON** Sunset Beach Bonfire, 8 - 10 p.m., Stearns Park Beach, 420 N. Lakeshore Dr., Ludington

**LIVE IN** the Plaza, 6 - 8 p.m., Legacy Plaza, 102 W. Ludington Ave., Ludington

#### JULY 31

**LIVE IN** the Plaza, 6 - 8 p.m., Legacy Plaza, 102 W. Ludington Ave., Ludington

**DOWNTOWN LUDINGTON** Farmers Market, 2 - 7 p.m., Legacy Plaza, 112 N. James St., Ludington

#### JULY 31 - August 2

**DOWNTOWN LUDINGTON** Sidewalk Sales, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m., Downtown Ludington





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AUGUST 1

**WEST SHORE** Bank's Rhythm & Dunes Fundraiser Concert Series, 6 - 9 p.m., Waterfront Park, 391 S. William St., Ludington

AUGUST 5

**LACA SUMMER** Concert Series, 7 - 9 p.m., Waterfront Park, 300 W. William St., Ludington

AUGUST 6

**LIVE IN** the Plaza, 6 - 8 p.m., Legacy Plaza, 102 W. Ludington Ave., Ludington

AUGUST 7

**LIVE IN** the Plaza, 6 - 8 p.m., Legacy Plaza, 102 W. Ludington Ave., Ludington  
**DOWNTOWN LUDINGTON** Farmers Market, 2 - 7 p.m., Legacy Plaza, 112 N. James St., Ludington

AUGUST 8 - 9

**GOLD COAST** Artisan Fair, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m., Rotary Park, 500 W. Ludington Ave., Ludington

AUGUST 12

**LACA SUMMER** Concert Series, 7 - 9 p.m., Waterfront Park, 300 W. William St., Ludington

AUGUST 13

**LIVE IN** the Plaza, 6 - 8 p.m., Legacy Plaza, 102 W. Ludington Ave., Ludington

AUGUST 14

**LIVE IN** the Plaza, 6 - 8 p.m., Legacy Plaza, 102 W. Ludington Ave., Ludington  
**DOWNTOWN LUDINGTON** Farmers Market, 2 - 7 p.m., Legacy Plaza, 112 N. James St., Ludington

AUGUST 15

**SUDS ON** the Shore, 12 - 5 p.m., Rotary Park, 500 W. Ludington Ave., Ludington

AUGUST 19

**LACA SUMMER** Concert Series, 7 - 9 p.m., Waterfront Park, 300 W. William St., Ludington

AUGUST 20

**LIVE IN** the Plaza, 6 - 8 p.m., Legacy Plaza, 102 W. Ludington Ave., Ludington

AUGUST 21

**LIVE IN** the Plaza, 6 - 8 p.m., Legacy Plaza, 102 W. Ludington Ave., Ludington  
**DOWNTOWN LUDINGTON** Farmers Market, 2 - 7 p.m., Legacy Plaza, 112 N. James St., Ludington

AUGUST 26

**LACA SUMMER** Concert Series, 7 - 9 p.m., Waterfront Park, 300 W. William St., Ludington

AUGUST 27

**PURE LUDINGTON** Sunset Beach Bonfire, 8 - 10 p.m., Stearns Park Beach, 420 N. Lakeshore Dr., Ludington  
**LIVE IN** the Plaza, 6 - 8 p.m., Legacy Plaza, 102 W. Ludington Ave., Ludington

AUGUST 28

**LIVE IN** the Plaza, 6 - 8 p.m., Legacy Plaza, 102 W. Ludington Ave., Ludington

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**DOWNTOWN LUDINGTON** Farmers Market, 2 - 7 p.m., Legacy Plaza, 112 N. James St., Ludington

SEPTEMBER 2

**LACA SUMMER** Concert Series, 7 - 9 p.m., Waterfront Park, 300 W. William St., Ludington

SEPTEMBER 3

**LIVE IN** the Plaza, 6 - 8 p.m., Legacy Plaza, 102 W. Ludington Ave., Ludington

SEPTEMBER 4

**LIVE IN** the Plaza, 6 - 8 p.m., Legacy Plaza, 102 W. Ludington Ave., Ludington  
**DOWNTOWN LUDINGTON** Farmers Market, 2 - 7 p.m., Legacy Plaza, 112 N. James St., Ludington

SEPTEMBER 11

**LIVE IN** the Plaza, 6 - 8 p.m., Legacy Plaza, 102 W. Ludington Ave., Ludington  
**DOWNTOWN LUDINGTON** Farmers Market, 2 - 7 p.m., Legacy Plaza, 112 N. James St., Ludington



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**SEPTEMBER 18**

**DOWNTOWN LUDINGTON** Farmers Market,  
2 - 7 p.m., Legacy Plaza, 112 N. James St., Lud-  
ington

**OCTOBER 2 - 4**

**LUDINGTON LUMBER** Days, Downtown Lud-  
ington

**OCTOBER 25**

**DOWNTOWN TRICK-OR-TREAT**, 2 - 4 p.m.,  
Downtown Ludington

**NOVEMBER 28**

**SMALL BUSINESS** Saturday, 10 a.m. - 7 p.m.,

Downtown Ludington

**AGLOW ON** the Avenue Parade, 6 - 7 p.m.,  
Downtown Ludington

**DECEMBER 31**

**NEW YEAR'S** Eve Ball Drop, 9 p.m. - 12:15 a.m.,  
Downtown Ludington



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