

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Sunday, Dec. 8

•Al-Anon closed meeting, 7 p.m. Centreville United Methodist Church, 305 E. Main St.
 •Alcoholics Anonymous meeting with speaker, free and open to the public, 7 p.m., George Washington Carver Center, 436 Jefferson St., Three Rivers.

Monday, Dec. 9

•Three Rivers Airport Board, 6 p.m., airport lounge.
 •Healing Hearts, Christ-centered support group for those who grieve, 7-8:30 p.m., Centreville United Methodist Church.
 •Lockport Township Board, 7 p.m., township hall, corner of Holtom and River roads.
 •Animal Rescue Fund meeting, 7 p.m., ISD office, Centreville.
 •Alcoholics Anonymous meeting, 7:00 p.m., Congregational Church, 360 S. Washington, Constantine.
 •Mendon Village Council, 7 p.m., village hall, 206 W. Main St.

Tuesday, Dec. 10

•Food Addicts in Recovery Anonymous (FA), 8:30 a.m., Trinity Episcopal Church, 321 N. Main St., Three Rivers.
 •Three Rivers Food Site open, 9 a.m. — noon, 18 Railroad Drive.
 •St. Joseph County Transportation Authority, 9:10 a.m., ISD office, 62445 Shimmel Road, Centreville.
 •Three Rivers Community Kitchen, 4-5:30 p.m., Trinity Episcopal Church, 321 N. Main St., Three Rivers.
 •St. Joseph County Area Marine Corps League, 5:30 p.m., Mendon Village Hall.
 •Flowerfield Township Board, 7 p.m., township hall, corner of M-216 and Creglow Road.
 •Alcoholics Anonymous meeting, 7 p.m., George Washington Carver Center, 436 Jefferson St., Three Rivers.
 •Alcoholics Anonymous meeting, 8 p.m., St. Clare's Catholic Church, 23126 M-89, Centreville.

Wednesday, Dec. 11

•Three Rivers Park Board, 6 p.m., Department of Public Services Building, 1015 S. Lincoln Ave.
 •Fabius Township Board, 7 p.m., township hall, 13108 W. Broadway Road.
 •Park Township Board, 7 p.m., township hall, 53640 Parkville Road.

JODIE WALKER

Continued from page 1

Colorado beckoned, too. “Tammy Shuler, Kathy Griffin and I competed in the TransRockies Run. They did the six-day race, I did the three day.” For many, the 120-mile point-to-point race—which takes runners over rugged terrain at high elevations—would be a feat in itself. For the trio, the test of endurance was yet another active vacation.

“There’s beauty everywhere—you see things you don’t typically see when you’re running or biking,” Jodie says, noting she does not listen to music while engaged in these activities, preferring to soak up the sights and sounds of nature.

In 2016, she ran the Boston Marathon, one of the world’s toughest courses to finish. “I tore a tendon in my foot at mile three. Yeah, it hurt, but what was I supposed to do—I can’t quit!”

The same goes for owning and operating Jaywalker restaurant in Mottville where she faces a steady barrage of challenges at the popular eatery overlooking the St. Joseph River. “Anything that could go wrong has gone wrong at Jaywalker,” she says chuckling. “Between cars hitting the building—crashing through the front twice—flooding, and a couple of break-ins, there’s never a dull moment. It’s Murphy’s Law all the time.”

Nevertheless, the busy restaurant—now in its 13th year—stands as a testament to her drive and business smarts. Independent restaurants are risky ventures—most go belly up within the first few years of operation. Food quality, service and price must come together for one to survive, let alone thrive. “It’s hard to stay on my A game all the time, but that’s what I strive to do. I have a great staff, too.”

By training and competing in flat-out grueling races, such as Ironman triathlons and long-distance trail runs, she has developed a certain mental toughness, a “can-do” spirit that pulls her through the ups and downs of running a business and managing life in a hectic, unpredictable world.

Even so, she turns to friends for support and fitness for relief. “Working out saves me—mentally it’s a stress relief. It’s how I can cope with things, deal with things. It clears my mind, helps me solve problems, I feel better—everything. I mean, you have days when you run well, days when you run terrible, you have days when you’re crying the whole time. It’s all over the map, and obviously I love the group—the women I train with are awesome.”

She also serves as a coach for

Girls on the Run, a program designed to introduce children to the joys of running while building character and confidence.

An experienced multitasker, careful time management enables her to balance the demands of work, personal relationships and staying fit. “I plan out everything,” she says. “I make a list out every week. I know what I’m doing every day. As far as working out, I have a routine.”

In addition to biking and running outside, her routine includes an intense hour-long session twice per week with personal trainer, Kerry McClain, at HealthTrac. “It forces me to do it,” she says. “I like training and lifting weights. I like the intensity of that as well as the cardio.” From the gym she heads to the HealthTrac pool for Kerry’s master swim class consisting of a variety of challenging drills designed to improve skill and endurance as well as build confidence.

Jodie’s career goals took shape at Michigan State University where she earned a degree in hospitality management. Following graduation, J. Alexander’s, an upscale national restaurant chain, hired her to work at the company’s location in Boca Raton, Florida.

“I took an ROTC conditioning class in college so I wouldn’t gain the freshman 15 and joined a gym. I continued working out after college and starting my career. My life then was very basic. It mainly consisted of working long hours at my job and working out at the gym. I guess not much has changed because that’s sort of what I do now—I work and workout.”

While living in Delray Beach, Florida, she trained for her first marathon, which took place in Chicago in 2004.

J. Alexander’s eventually transferred her to Oak Brook, a Chicago suburb, to serve as assistant general manager of its busy restaurant there. She continued her modus operandi of learning the ins and outs of the restaurant business while staying fit.

“Corporate America is not really for me, and after four years with the company I was ready for a change,” Jodie says.

Originally from Dowagiac, the opportunity to strike out on her own came in 2006. Driving past the former Bridgeview Inn restaurant in Mottville she spotted a For Sale sign out front. “I made an offer and, to my amazement, they took it.”

At age 26, she was now at the helm of her own restaurant. “I said to myself, I’m going to do whatever it takes to make this

work. I did what I know.”

After putting in massive hours cleaning and renovating, creating a new menu, selecting vendors, hiring staff and transforming a ramshackle building into a cozy spot that attracts customers far and wide, she undertook training for the Indy Half Marathon to get back into the swing of competing athletically. “I needed an outlet.”

Jodie’s next goal was topping her Chicago Marathon time of 4:02. She entered a lottery for the 2012 Women’s Nike San Francisco Marathon and got in. “I was going through a lot back then, working hard and I could not make myself run over ten miles. I went to California and ran 3:57. I was super surprised at my performance and how my body held up.”

The following spring, she bought a bike. “All I wanted to do was ride this bike. I saw a poster for the Sister Lakes Triathlon and took swimming lessons at the YMCA in Elkhart. I almost drown at that race. But all I could think about was—I’ve got to finish.”

She did. Next up was the Eagle Lake Triathlon in Edwardsburg. “After the race, they handed me the results. I said, hey, it says I placed first, and they said, yeah, you’re first in your age group. That surprised me—and really got me excited.”

In her mind, the logical progression was to enter a full Ironman triathlon.

“I read a book about six normal people competing in an Ironman and I said, well, I’d like to do that. Then my mom told me about Chrissie Wellington’s book about becoming a world-champion Ironman triathlete. I thought—this is great!”

Following training programs and inspiration conveyed in these and other books, Jodie signed up for her first full Ironman in Chattanooga. She credits Kerry’s master swim class at HealthTrac and friends kayaking alongside for safety while she trained in the lake with helping her prepare for the rigorous open-water swim.

Around this time, she also met Tammy, an experienced Ironman triathlete, who happened to be dining at Jaywalker one evening. They discovered their mutual interest in triathlons and decided to train together. Next on her list was qualifying for the Boston Marathon, a major feat in itself. “I researched all these races and Duluth, Minnesota, worked into my schedule, so Tammy and I drove to Duluth. It was pouring rain at the start of the race and somehow I qualified for Boston.”

The prestigious race—considered the Holy Grail for

long distance runners—lived up to its reputation for being tough. “I swore after Boston I was never going to run 26.2 miles again. But Kathy Griffin couldn’t run the North Country Trail Run in the Manistee forest and asked me if I wanted to. I said yes, and in August 2018 I ran that race. Tammy ran the 50 miler and I ran the marathon. We had two rain delays. I was already a mental wreck. I don’t know what mile it was, but I came to an aid station in the middle of the woods and saw my parents standing there! They surprised me! It was the most amazing thing that they showed up!”

Jodie’s running career began in an unusual way. In seventh grade, a medical screening revealed she had scoliosis, a sideways curvature of the spine. Doctors at Indiana University Hospital performed surgery the following year to correct the condition by fusing two metal rods to her spine. This inhibited her ability to play sports her freshman year of high school, so instead she turned to run cross-country as a sophomore. “My parents were runners, and over the summer break I worked up to running three miles. That’s when my love of running started. I was never very fast, but I worked really hard to be a faster version of myself.”

Family, friends and personal relationships are important to her. “It’s fun for friends and family to watch you race and see your hard work pay off. Seeing you set and achieve goals might inspire others to do the same. Exposing my nieces and nephews to triathlon and racing might make a lasting impression.”

Does she put pressure on herself? “Oh, yeah. I do. Do this—get it together. I’m definitely type A. Strong, hard core type A. No doubt. I don’t relax very well. I’ve been doing yoga once a week for the past six months. I’ve also been reading a mindfulness meditation book daily. Every day is a different reading based on yoga. One day is about accepting the past, another day, it’s about living in the moment.”

Jodie reveals another key to ensuring she keeps moving forward: When opportunities arise, she does not overthink or dwell on them for long. “I sign up for things—then I have to do them. Like when Kathy Griffin sent me a message, ‘Oh, I see there’s a bib for sale on Facebook for the Marine Corps Marathon in D.C., we’re going, do you want it?’ I said okay, I’ll buy it. So there I was—training for another marathon. It was great trip and race.”

In another instance, she

signed up in the summer of 2018 for a “running” cruise-ship tour that took participants the following winter to various Caribbean ports where they disembarked to enjoy running pre-planned courses. “It came to January and I said, did I really sign up for this? Then I got on the ship and said, wow, I’m glad I did this.”

As far as diet goes, Jodie says she eats foods required to train and compete. “You cannot workout on a bad diet. I struggle with that. I like to eat. I eat a lot of fish, vegetables and fruit. I have a sugar problem lately. I love pizza. I go in spurts of really clean eating and then fall off the wagon. It is a constant battle of trying to find balance.”

For inspiration and insight, she regularly reads motivational books such as autobiographies by tennis star Maria Sharapova and Ibtihaj Muhammad, who won a bronze medal as part of the U.S. Olympic saber fencing team in 2016.


“I read this one book where the author said, imagine your life one year from now, what would you have wanted to have accomplished—that’s how you should live now. That’s a really good exercise.”

With this in mind, Jodie is constantly re-evaluating and setting career, fitness and personal goals. “I want to maintain my business at a high level and I want to stay in shape.”

Her advice to women who want to get fit is as practical as her overall approach to everything else: “I like to train with a goal in mind, training without a goal is hard. If you want to run a race, get a training program like Hal Higdon’s and start doing it. Examine your life. Ask yourself, ‘How am I spending my time? What can I eliminate that’s preventing me from my goals?’ Find workout partners or a class to attend where you need to show up—where you’re accountable to yourself and others.”

In addition to working long hours at Jaywalker, she is contemplating other adventures. “I’ve had my eye on New Zealand—I’m going to get there some day—the problem is I need two weeks off of work. I want to do the nine-day backroads cycle trip.”

With each day brimming with possibilities, Jodie shows no signs of living anything other than an active and vibrant life—a life as big, warm and genuine as her smile.

 <p>CHURCH Service DIRECTORY</p>	<p>BETHEL BAPTIST CHURCH: 17852 S. River Rd. 269-273-7915. Pastor Terry Cropper. Sunday service 9:00 a.m.. Pastoral teaching Wednesday nights at 7:00 p.m.</p>	<p>Flowerfield Rd. Sunday School 10:00 a.m., Worship 11:00 a.m. Pastor Josh Mullins. www.flowerfieldmbc.com.</p>	<p>Buckhorn Road. 278-8135. www.newhopetr.com. Pastor Steve Miller. Sunday worship service 10:00 a.m. Wednesday Family Night 6:30 p.m.</p>	<p>am, worship services 10:30 a.m., Pastor James E. Smith. Like us on Facebook or visit us at www.ThreeRiversChurches.org. ALL are welcome!</p>
	<p>CENTER PARK UNITED METHODIST CHURCH: 18662 Moorepark Rd. 279-9109. Pastor Derl Keefer. Modern Service 9:00 a.m., Sunday School 9:30 a.m., Traditional Service 10:30 a.m.</p>	<p>IMMACULATE CONCEPTION CHURCH: 645 S. Douglas. 273-8953. Father R. Mathias. Masses: Monday & Wednesday 8 a.m., Tuesday & Friday 6:30 p.m., Saturday vigil 4 p.m., and Sunday 11 a.m.</p>	<p>NINTH STREET UNITED METHODIST CHURCH: 700 Ninth St. 273-2065. Worship 10:00 a.m. Bible study 11:15. Rev. Ed Ross.</p>	<p>RIVERSIDE CHURCH: 207 E. Michigan Ave. 273-8723. www.riverside-church.com. Pastor Paul Booko. Sunday services 9:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m.</p>
<p>FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH: 215 N. Main St., Three Rivers. Rev. Heather McDougall - Service at 10:30 a.m.</p>	<p>LIGHTHOUSE BAPTIST CHURCH - 436 2nd Ave. Three Rivers, MI 49093. 269-251-0291. Pastor James E. Ingram. Please join for Sunday Services at 10:30 a.m.</p>	<p>ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH: 56050 Buckhorn Rd., Three Rivers. 269-278-7245. Sunday School 9:00</p>	<p>NEW HOPE ASSEMBLY: 56652</p>	<p>ST. CLARE CATHOLIC CHURCH: 23126 M-86 Centreville, MI. 269-273-8953. Sunday Mass 9:20 a.m., Wednesday 9:00 a.m.</p>

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