

October 2023

Northern Pines News

Northern Pines Assisted Living | 130 Mary Ann St. Grayling, MI 49738 | (989) 344-2010



Celebrating October

Popcorn Poppin' Month

International Day of Older Persons

October 1

Spinning and Weaving Week

October 2-8

World Teachers' Day

October 5

Helen's Birthday

October 8

Columbus Day and Indigenous Peoples' Day

October 9

Farmer's Day

October 12

Newspaper Comic Strip Appreciation Day

October 18

International Artist Day

October 25

Kay's Birthday

October 28

Halloween

October 31

To everything there is a season, A time for every purpose under heaven" Ecclesiastes 3:1

Harvest season at the end of summer is wonderful. Vegetables fresh from the farm. Red and orange tomatoes, full heads of cauliflower, broccoli, and squash. Corn so tender and sweet, needing only a light drizzle of butter. Each bite crisp and very, very good. I also like asparagus in the spring, and juicy oranges from Florida in the winter season. Each season brings its own goodness. And to get that goodness requires a lot. Jesus often used images of seasons and farming. Farmers understand that timing is important. That crops need nurture and time and attention. That the soil needs rest in between times of growth and abundance. Farmers understand cycles of birth and death. They have learned that out of death comes new life in seeds. Farming may not be as familiar to us as it was to the people in Jesus' time, but the images do still teach us about living our human lives. Life is not just constant abundance. We have endings, and pauses, often not of our own choosing. We have times where we are growing physically, spiritually, and emotionally. We have times of "harvest" where we complete projects or see where we've made a difference. We also have different seasons of life as we age. Ecclesiastes 3 ponders the meaning and purpose of life, and that there is goodness in every part. Each "season" of life has value. Paul wrote in Philippians "I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength." He is talking about developing an attitude of thanksgiving, of believing that God is at work in every season of our life. Each day, each season, may we grow in this gratitude. Every day, remember to ask, "Where do we see good and where do we see God at work?"

Chaplain Karen

Great Balls of Fire

On October 29, thousands of visitors will line the banks of the Mekong River in Thailand to celebrate the end of *Vassa*, a period of intensive Buddhist meditation when Buddhists often give up meat or alcohol, a practice that has led some to call *Vassa* “Buddhist Lent.” But the real highlight is the river itself, which holds a mysterious secret.



Each year, along a 150-mile stretch of river, glowing balls of red light shoot from the river and disappear into the sky. A local legend attributes the fireballs to Naga, a massive serpent who lives in the river and awakens at the end of *Vassa*. The Naga is a deity who is believed to guard a treasure in the underwater kingdom of Naga-Loka, a palace adorned with precious gems. The god is also a protector of Vientiane, the capital of Laos.

Scientists have attempted to explain the fireball phenomenon. The fireballs may be the result of a buildup of the swamp gas methane. As organic matter in the riverbed decomposes, methane increases until it is released in great underwater bubbles. When the methane touches the oxygen-rich air, it spontaneously combusts, creating brief explosions of fire. Other researchers have discovered traces of the flammable gas phosphine, a gas that is typically manufactured for industrial uses. None of the research explains why the fireballs always coincide with the end of *Vassa*, although some scientists have concluded that the phenomenon might correspond to a unique alignment of the sun, moon, and Earth, which coincides with the lunar holiday of *Vassa*.

Some skeptics have an alternate explanation. They assert that people from the county of Laos across the river from Thailand shoot flares up into the sky, perpetrating a massive ruse on the spectators. However, local villagers who have witnessed the Naga lights for decades find this hard to believe. While the debate over the origin of the fireballs continues, people still flock to the river to watch the mysterious lights, often joining in the fun by setting off fireworks of their own.

October Birthdays

In astrology, those born from October 1–22 balance the scales of Libra. Libras strive to find equilibrium and fight for equality and justice. They use their sharp minds to de-escalate conflicts and find peace. Those born from October 23-31 are Scorpio’s scorpions. Scorpions seek deep connections and nurture deep empathy and commitment.

Gandhi (activist) – October 2, 1869
 Neil deGrasse Tyson (astrophysicist) – Oct. 5, 1958
 Thor Heyerdahl (explorer) – October 6, 1914
 Jesse Jackson (politician) – October 8, 1941
 John Lennon (musician) – October 9, 1940
 Eleanor Roosevelt (first lady) – Oct. 11, 1884
 Margaret Thatcher (politician) – Oct. 13, 1925
 Mae Jemison (astronaut) – October 17, 1956
 Kamala Harris (vice president) – Oct. 20, 1964
 Carrie Fisher (actress) – October 21, 1956
 Pelé (athlete) – October 23, 1940
 Pat Sajak (TV host) – October 26, 1946
 Bill Gates (tech mogul) – October 28, 1955

The Lady with the Lamp



Would the “Florence Nightingale effect” exist if Florence Nightingale never left for Crimea on October 21, 1854? Nightingale and her nurses arrived at the Crimean War hospital in Scutari to find that conditions were so unsanitary that soldiers were dying ten times faster than they should have. Nightingale nearly single-handedly turned the hospital around, cleaning the rooms, providing laundered clothes and linens to patients, bringing fresher food, flushing out the sewers, and ventilating the rooms. She made her nightly rounds with a handheld light, earning her the nickname the “Lady with the Lamp.” Some wonder, did Florence Nightingale fall in love with any of the patients under her care? Records show that Nightingale never married out of fear that it would interrupt her duties as a nurse. Perhaps we should be thankful for that decision, as Nightingale’s efforts have earned her renown as the “Founder of Modern Nursing.”