

## Petoskey Holiday Open House- A history of joy and merriment

Just a couple of weeks ago, I happened to be in the downtown Meyer Ace Hardware location when I overheard that “it” would be starting soon. The “it” was the downtown business “trick-or-treating”. As I was leaving, Petoskey’s newest firetruck was driving into town for kiddos to checkout, barricades were being pulled across the street and children dressed as princesses, super heroes, and various movie characters were bundled in warm coats making their way out of cars and onto sidewalks.

One thing that Petoskey does extremely well is celebrations.

This past year, I experienced my first Petoskey Summer Open House. The streets were crowded with people having fun and a happy energy hung in the air. Businesses were actively welcoming people in, there was side walk chalk, a bouncy house, an outdoor fashion show, and the Petoskey Steel Drum Band.

The Petoskey Steel Drum Band, according to their facebook page, made up of Petoskey High School students, “was formed in 1997 under the direction of Barry Bennett. The band has since performed at Disney, Hawaii, on the Norwegian Dawn Cruise Ship, 7 times at Mardi Gras in New Orleans, and over 30 concerts around the state each year.” Often included in the concert line-up is the open houses hosted in the communities around Northern Michigan, including Petoskey, Harbor Springs and Alanson. The band plays infectiously upbeat music that invites the concert goers to come out and dance along.

This December 1st marks the annual Holiday Open House in Petoskey. Holiday open houses have been a tradition in Northern Michigan for years. In fact, the tree lighting ceremony which takes place in Harbor Springs just after Thanksgiving has been going on for 102 years! Let that sink in! 102 years!

Over the past week, the snow has really started to fall. Along with dropping temperatures, it feels like the holidays are upon us. Something about the weather invokes in me a feeling of joy and hopefulness, a feeling that comes upon me year over year at this time. The world takes on a new look with fresh snow and crisp air. With that, an excitement blooms, an excitement to eat hearty meals with family. An excitement builds to see extended family that you haven’t seen since the last holiday.

Lastly, an excitement builds for a new year coming with new promises and opportunities.

The open houses help to put the season in perspective by offering friendship with strangers as you all partake in same joy and merriment. Knowing that whatever issues you have had to overcome in the past year can be put aside for an evening of innocence makes the events so much the sweeter.

This year's schedule:

December 1<sup>st</sup> - Petoskey Holiday Open House

December 2<sup>nd</sup> - Merchant's Holiday Open House in Harbor Springs

December 8<sup>th</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> annual "Christmas in Alanson" Open House

The Petoskey Steel Drum Band will be performing at each event.