

# Perceptions

## Saginaw Valley

www.PerceptionsSV.org

Serving the Tri-City area LGBT Community



May 2008

## 2008 Camp Out Michigan Bike Tour

By Tim



July 25 - 27, 2008, will mark the 17th annual gathering of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender outdoor enthusiasts in Northern Michigan. The weekend of outdoor fun centers around a bicycle tour for riders of all ability levels. Although, not all participants will actually ride a bicycle. In its most successful years, attendance has passed 100 campers. Participants come from all over Michigan and even surrounding states and Canada. Many of last year's participants had attended 10 or more previous events.

The first 15 years of the Bike Tour were organized by Friends North, a GLBT organization based in Traverse City. The event was a fund raiser for Friends North and other GLBT organizations in Northern Michigan. Perceptions has been connected to the Bike Tour for the past five years. In 2004

and 2005, volunteers from Perceptions sponsored and served the Friday night dinner for Bike Tour participants as a way to increase our visibility outside of the Saginaw Valley.

When Friends North dissolved and dispersed their remaining funds in 2006, Perceptions was awarded a \$500 grant that started our Scholarship Fund. Friends North also donated additional money to Perceptions for general operating expenses.

Not wanting to see the Bike Tour tradition come to an end when Friends North dissolved, a small group of Bike Tour veterans formed [Camp Out Michigan](#) to continue to organize the yearly event. The weekend continues to be a fund raiser for GLBT causes, but the primary objective is to bring together GLBT people and their friends for a weekend of camaraderie and fun. In 2007, Camp Out Michigan split proceeds from the event between the Perceptions Scholarship Fund and a Traverse City based HIV/AIDS services program (The Thomas Judd Care Center at Munson Medical). Bike Tour participants also made additional contributions directly to these two charities.

In its second year of organizing the event, Camp Out Michigan has made a few changes. The most significant change is moving to a new venue. The first 16 years of the event were held in Leelanau, Grand Traverse or Benzie County. Our home for 2008 will be near Mio in Oscoda County. The family who owns the campground is *See **Bike Tour** on the last page*

### Register by June 1st to qualify for the early bird discount



## Perceptions Saginaw Valley

P.O. Box 1525  
Midland, MI 48641  
(989)891-1GAY  
[www.perceptionsSV.org](http://www.perceptionsSV.org)

### EDITOR

Tana Michaels  
[Editor@PerceptionsSV.org](mailto:Editor@PerceptionsSV.org)

### AD SALES

Joy D Clark  
[Joy@PerceptionsSV.org](mailto:Joy@PerceptionsSV.org)

### Print Distribution,

Jim Kleinsorge,  
[Jim@PerceptionsSV.org](mailto:Jim@PerceptionsSV.org)

### Webmaster, Tim

[Tim@PerceptionsSV.org](mailto:Tim@PerceptionsSV.org)

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

[editor@PerceptionsSV.org](mailto:editor@PerceptionsSV.org)

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[editor@PerceptionsSV.org](mailto:editor@PerceptionsSV.org)

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**Mid-Michigan's leading resource for enriching and empowering GLBT individuals and their community**

Perceptions is a 501 ( c ) ( 3 ) charitable organization. Your contributions to Perceptions which exceed the minimum amount to qualify for membership are tax deductible.

**Mission statement:** Our mission is to provide superior educational programs, networking opportunities and services for the well being of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender individuals and their community.

# Why Have a Spiritual Home?

By Kathy VanBuskirk



**Dear Rev. Kathy:**

**I have been reading your articles but one thing is not clear to me. Why do I need to go to church? Isn't it enough that I try to be good person?**

**-Confused**

Dear Confused,

In my opinion going to a church or another type of spiritual home is not a requirement to be considered a good person. I do not believe you are "going to hell in a hand basket" if you do not pass over the threshold of a church weekly! However, having a spiritual home that you visit on a somewhat regular basis can make life a little easier and less stressful. Let's face it, no matter how spiritually minded you are, everyone, unless they live in absolute mental or physical seclusion has things in their lives that aren't necessarily pleasant to deal with. This might be a difficult work environment, an argumentative partner or spouse, grouchy neighbors, personal inner conflicts or driving down a busy street.

Having a spiritual home, where you go once a week for an hour or so, can be very uplifting and refreshing. Being around spiritually minded people can be very supportive and can help renew a fresh feeling for life. It is energy giving. Often it can set the pace for a peaceful week. I think of this as one of the true meanings of being "born again." You are refreshed and in touch with a renewed consciousness. It helps you be positive in a sometimes frustrating world!

Going to a spiritual home and listening to a spiritual talk or sermon can refresh a certain thought about something you already know but it got buried under all the "garbage" you've dealt with during the week. For example, I'm sure you've heard some form of the golden rule expressed in whatever religious path you've been affiliated with in the past. **"Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."** It's *always* there although it may be worded a little differently. We all know this as a goal to work towards. Dealing with some people can easily make you lose sight of this goal. When you go listen to a sermon (which shouldn't be condemning but uplifting, by the way) that reminds you of this teaching and why it's important, it can help you get back on track. It should strengthen your love for humanity and assist you in being a little more patient and compassionate.

If you haven't found a spiritual home which helps you in this manner, maybe you haven't connected with the best choice for you. Don't give up! Keep looking! There are many places which offer a positive refreshing environment. You deserve to be part of one. You **ARE A GOOD PERSON!**

Rev. Kathy holds regular meetings in her home currently. If interested in attending please contact her at 989-752-9227 or [rev\\_kathyv@yahoo.com](mailto:rev_kathyv@yahoo.com). Website: [www.divinelightinterfaithministry.com](http://www.divinelightinterfaithministry.com) You may also contact her with any questions you would like answered in future articles.



## *Life After Death:* **This Doug's Life**

*By Douglas Solosky*

**Depression: A State of Mind** - Last month, I admitted that I was depressed and I wrote an article about it. I sent it to several friends. All of them were surprised to learn of my condition, thanked me and commiserated with me. It seems I unintentionally hit a nerve.

One told me that not only does he get depressed but that it runs in his family with some disastrous results. To my knowledge, it does not run in mine

Another told of being extremely depressed after his divorce. He remained in a semi-depressed condition for years and only recently has begun to come out of it. It was a very hard and long road for him but with help he is succeeding.

A very good friend and Pharmacist I met on line, read the article and called me. We had a long and somewhat clinical visit. He concluded that I was clinically depressed and in his opinion did not need medication at this time. But, if the symptoms continued or got worse, I should seek professional help.

A lady friend and retired school teacher brought a different point of view to the table. She wondered if I wasn't experiencing grief instead of depression making reference to the passing of my partner of 36 years. She said grief over the loss of a loved one comes to each of us in different ways and sometimes take years to get over.

### **grief over the loss of a loved one comes to each of us in different ways**

We all have feelings of highs and lows. It is when these feelings take control of our lives that we have problems.

A very good friend of mine, after learning of my plight, wondered if a change in direction wouldn't be beneficial. His suggestion caused me to take a look at my current life.

I have concluded that I have suffered from depression coupled with grief.

The long and the short of it is I was turning inside myself. I was becoming self-sorrowful, not doing what I've always been able to do all my life: be a self starter. I was gaining the attitude of "what difference does it make?" and wallowing in self pity.

I remembered something my father said about drinking and smoking, "You control the habit; the habit doesn't control you." He had been a heavy drinker and smoker and stopped cold turkey. His frame of mind enabled him to do that.

In a similar sense, my depression was becoming a frame of mind. (I must emphasize that is how I see myself and only myself.) I was feeling sorry for myself and letting it happen.

See: **Depression** on page 4





**"I get sick of listening to straight people complain about, "Well, hey, we don't have a heterosexual-pride day, why do you need a gay-pride day?"**

**We have a Mother's Day and a Father's Day, but why don't we have a Kid's Day?"**

**My mom would always say, "Every day is Kid's Day."**

**To all those heterosexuals that bitch about gay pride, I say the same thing: Every day is heterosexual-pride day! Can't you people enjoy your banquet and not piss on those of us enjoying our crumbs over here in the corner?"**

## Chocolate Party Sweet!

*by Brian Carstensen*

Have you ever gained 5 pounds in a matter of 2 hours? You may have if you attended this year's Perceptions/PFLAG Chocolate Party.

On March 29th, Terry welcomed around 70 members and friends of Perceptions and PFLAG into his beautiful, Victorian, Bay City home for an evening of conversation, fellowship and of course, chocolate, chocolate, chocolate!

People gathered in various parts of the house rekindling old friendships and forging new ones. Some of us gathered around the television where we were treated to a wonderful pictorial presentation of Terry's recent trip to Antarctica.

The evening was a great success, even though I gained that 5 pounds! I wish to extend my personal thanks to Terry for providing us with such a warm and inviting atmosphere for this year's party.



## Viva! Cinco de Mayo!

*by Leo Romo*

Cinco de Mayo (5<sup>th</sup> of May) has become an annual celebration of Mexican history, culture and pride in the United States. It is NOT Independence Day in Mexico - that is September 16<sup>th</sup>. Interestingly, Cinco de Mayo is celebrated more in the United States than in Mexico where it is a minor holiday.

Cinco de Mayo commemorates the victory of the Mexican militia over the larger and better equipped French army at The Battle of Puebla in 1862 when the French planned to invade Mexico. The celebration was short lived because the French returned and set up a foreign emperor, Maximilian I, from 1864 to 1867. The French were finally expelled in 1867.

Today the holiday is celebrated and observed by all Americans regardless of ethnic origin as we celebrate St. Patrick's Day, Oktoberfest, Chinese New Year, and other holidays. As GLBT people, we can remember that civil unions are legal in Mexico City and the state of Coahuila. Other parts of Mexico are also beginning to protect GLBT individuals. Viva Cinco de Mayo!

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### *Depression* continued from page 3

I would wake up in the morning, lie in bed and think, "Why bother getting up? It won't change anything anyway," and stay there feeling dejected. When I did arise, I felt listless, without energy and sad. I felt I had no purpose - no one to look forward to.

I have changed that. Now, when I get up, I garner within myself a positive attitude. I look forward to what the day has to offer. If that means staying home enjoying my "children" (my cats), playing the piano, lawn work, or just watching T.V., so be it. Part of the change in direction is in not actively looking for someone. If that is meant to be it will be. And, I'm trying to get out more.

Now, since I have come to this conclusion, I really am happier.



## Current Events

### May 1 & 15, Thurs - Womyn's Circle

**5:30 - 7:00 pm.** This program provides support and socialization to Tri-County lesbian women and facilitates community awareness projects in partnership with Perceptions and PFLAG. It provides safety, socialization, and help to women and their families experiencing hostility and isolation. The free and confidential group sessions are held at the YWCA, [3405 E. Midland Rd.](#) in Bay City. (989)686-4800

### May 2, Friday Night Dinner 7pm

#### **Super Buffet, 3823 Bay Rd., Saginaw.**

Join Perceptions members and friends this week. If you plan to attend, please reply to [Jim@PerceptionsSV.org](mailto:Jim@PerceptionsSV.org) by 3:00 pm Friday.

### May 7, Wed - Saginaw Meet & Greet

**7:00 - 9:00 pm.** An informal gathering for the Tri-Cities' GLBT community. All are welcome. Meet your old friends and make some new ones while eating fantastic baked goods. Enjoy hot and cold drinks in a non-smoking environment. [Bambi's by Java Dave's](#), 4632 State Street, in the Green Acres Plaza.

### May 9, Friday Night Dinner 7pm

#### **Mario's, 7467 Gratiot Rd., Saginaw.**

Join Perceptions members and friends this week. If you plan to attend, please reply to [Jim@PerceptionsSV.org](mailto:Jim@PerceptionsSV.org) by 3:00 pm Friday.

### May 14, Wednesday - Freeland Meet & Greet

**7:00 - 9:00 pm.** **Riverside Restaurant**, 8295 Midland Road (M-47), Freeland. This event will repeat on the 2nd Wed. of each month.

### May 14, Wednesday - Perceptions Transgender

**Group 6:00 - 8:00 pm.** Meeting at The Mixx/Metro Grille, [115 N. Hamilton St.](#), Saginaw. The group offers an informal gathering, taking a more 'light-hearted' approach to allow transgenders in the Tri-City area an opportunity to connect with one another for socializing and support. If you have any questions, contact Rebecca at [Rebecca@PerceptionsSV.org](mailto:Rebecca@PerceptionsSV.org). This event will repeat on the second Wednesday of each month.

### May 15, Thurs - Womyn's Circle

**5:30 - 7:00 pm.** Support for Tri-County lesbians. The free, confidential support group sessions meet at the YWCA, [3405 E. Midland Rd.](#) in Bay City.

### May 15, Thurs - Perceptions Membership Meet-

**ing 7:00 pm.** St John's Episcopal Church, [123 N. Michigan](#), Saginaw. Across from Pasong's **All are welcome!**

### May 16, Friday Night Dinner 7pm

#### **Atrium, 1100 N. Water St., Bay City.**

Join Perceptions members and friends this week. If you plan to attend, please reply to [Jim@PerceptionsSV.org](mailto:Jim@PerceptionsSV.org) by 3:00 pm Friday. Sign up for our email list on [Yahoo Groups](#) to be notified of future venues.

### May 20, Tues - Men's Discussion Group

**7:00 - 8:30 pm.** Zael Memorial Library, [3100 Center Rd.](#), Saginaw. Discussion and informal support for gay and bisexual men. The group will be facilitated by Thomas Brubaker. You may contact him at [Thomas@PerceptionsSV.org](mailto:Thomas@PerceptionsSV.org)

### May 22, Thursday - Bay City Meet & Greet

**7:00 - 9:00 p.m.** An informal gathering of the Tri-Cities LGBT community. All are welcome in this smoke-free environment. **Espresso Express** located at [916 N. Water St.](#), Bay City, offers a variety of delicious drinks, baked goods and desserts.

### May 23, Friday Night Dinner 7pm

#### **Stockpot, 1007 Washington Ave., Bay City.**

Join Perceptions members and friends this week. If you plan to attend, please reply to [Jim@PerceptionsSV.org](mailto:Jim@PerceptionsSV.org) by 3:00 pm Friday.

### May 25, Sunday, PFLAG Meeting

**2:00 - 4:30 pm** at the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Midland, [6220 Jefferson Ave.](#), Midland.

### May 27, Tues - HIV Support Group














**7:30 - 8:30 pm.** Confidential peer to peer support group for those living with HIV/AIDS and their loved ones. Discreet and safe east-side Saginaw location. Please call 989 992-9664, or email [IMpossibleSV@yahoo.com](mailto:IMpossibleSV@yahoo.com)

### May 30, Friday Night Dinner 7pm

#### **Kabob and Curry House, 4070 Bay Rd.,**

**Saginaw.** Join Perceptions members and friends this week. If you plan to attend, please reply to [Jim@PerceptionsSV.org](mailto:Jim@PerceptionsSV.org) by 3:00 pm Friday.

# MAY 2008

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday																																																																																				
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# Meet the Board

by [Kay Sural](#)

Hi, my name is Kay Sural and I just completed my first year as a board member for Perceptions. I was born and raised in Saginaw, the middle of 5 kids. My parents liked to move so I lived in 6 different houses before I was 16. I moved out at 19 and continued on my parents path, living in 9 different houses in the years since. Crazy. I know, it explains a lot.



I was a late bloomer in the recognition process not recognizing I was a lesbian until my mid 30's. When I did figure it out I went looking for others. Not an easy process before Perceptions existed. I went to NOW meetings, I went to women's basketball games and then, I went to the hardware! There I found the cutest girl behind the counter. I bought a lot of hardware that summer! We did eventually go to lunch and even though she had a girl friend, she helped me find the community.

That experience has reminded me how grateful I am and you should be, to have Perceptions. Today, someone looking for us just has to read the paper, look at the coffee shop or the library and they will find this newspaper. They will find us. I will continue to work for you as a board member and I ask you to

work for Perceptions with your membership, your feedback, your volunteering. We all need each other and oh, I need a date. So if you can do any of the above let me know!




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## Board R Line

by *Alan Shinaver*

As I contemplate the writing of this article, it occurs to me that I have had the pleasure of composing for the spring newsletter in the past. Personally, I find spring to be a pleasurable time of renewal; A time of reflecting over the accomplishments of the winter months' activities and taking an introspective look at where we are, and where we need to be. Perceptions has so much to look forward to and so many wonderful memories to look back upon. We're still growing, sprouting new branches such as the **scholarship fund** which saw eleven highly qualified applicants this spring. Then there is the newly formed **Perceptions Transgender Group** which has enjoyed very successful meetings and shows great potential for establishing itself and gaining strength. [RespectFest](#) and Deb Barber's driving force to make a difference in the world in which we live has found a home with Perceptions. Yes, we are definitely growing

As spring gently envelops the Saginaw Valley, I am also reminded that soon we will be planning and preparing for our **pot luck picnics**, the **annual yard sale**, and our **Adopt a Highway** service program. The warm months will surely take us to a **Garden Party**, [Lansing PRIDE](#), [CampOut Michigan's annual bike tour](#), and possibly a few spontaneous road trips or maybe a Chuck Darr memorial ride. Perceptions offers such a variety of activities and opportunities for our friends and members that it is difficult, upon reflection, to not feel deeply proud of this organization and its members. Looking back over the few short years this organization has existed, I can see that we have so much to be grateful for as an organization and as a community.

As a grass roots organization we continue to benefit from the strength of mind and spirit that this organization was founded on. Through the selflessness of the membership who volunteer, give, donate and support because they believe in the mission of Perceptions to provide superior educational programs, networking opportunities and services for the well being of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender individuals and their community, we are able to continue to grow and better serve our communities needs. Perceptions is only as strong as its membership permits it to be, as they nurture its growth, each in their own individual way.



## GSA Forum

by Jim Kleinsorge

Perceptions' April monthly General Membership meeting was the setting for the 1<sup>st</sup> of its kind GSA forum in the Tri Cities. The gathering brought together members from 3 of our area's Gay-Straight Alliance groups which included Bay City Central High School's GSA, Carrolton High School's GSA, and the GSA from Saginaw Valley State University.

Two very enthusiastic students from Bay City Central High told us about the formation of their group last



November and the struggles they had getting it formed. There was a protest from a teacher at a local Lutheran school who voiced her objections about the group in the Bay City Times and also tried stopping it by going to the school board. Fortunately, the school board gave the group its full support and the GSA is currently still meeting. They said the faculty has also been very supportive. The group is small but dedicated to making things better for all students at Central High School. They are organizing activities for the 'Day of Silence' which they hope to have observed at the school. The students have been involved in lobbying efforts in Washington, DC and also held a vigil for Lawrence King, a young student in California who was murdered because of his sexual orientation and gender expression. (see page 4 of the April newsletter.)

A student and an advisor representing Carrollton High school told us that their group is the second attempt to form a GSA at the school. The first attempt was met with apathy by the school administration and faculty. After much persistence the students have been able to get the group off the ground and although their group is not very large, their enthusiasm makes up for its small size. They have hosted a presentation by Hearth Home of Saginaw and did a show during a study hall for International AIDS month in March.

SVSU's group is active at the university. They recently hosted a Drag Show to raise money for the 2008 AIDS Walk and it was extremely successful. The event was the first of its kind at the college, but won't be the last. The group is committed to make this an annual event. The SVSU GSA has about 75 members, with a few committed students comprising the backbone of the group. They speak to other groups on campus about GLBT issues when requested if their schedules permit. They also participated in last year's Respect Fest. Goals of the group include having a 'Pride Day' at the college and getting their own office space. Their activities can be viewed at the following address: <http://www.freewebs.com/svsugaystraightalliance/>

Many from the Perceptions group offered advice, encouragement, and praise to the 3 groups. The forum gave the groups a chance to get acquainted with us and with each other and hopefully there will be much collaboration between us in the future. Each group has so much to offer the others. My personal hope is that this is just the first of many of these forums. The old saying is so true, 'there is strength in numbers,' and together we can accomplish so much more than any one group can alone. By following the example of these 7 wonderful young people and becoming involved, we can truly make change happen. They are the proof. They are our inspiration and our future!



## Did Someone Say Podcasting?

May's guest speakers will be Tom aka Ramble Redhead who does a podcast called "The Ramble Redhead Show" and David aka That Blue Jeans Guy, who does a show called "That Blue Jeans Guy Podcast". Tom and David will speak to our group about their shows and some of the guests they have interviewed. They will also answer the question 'What is podcasting?' and talk about podcasting in general and what it has to offer the GLBT community. (Hint: Podcasting is similar to an Internet radio show and they're available on almost any topic imaginable).

Tom has done interviews with dozens of people from the GLBT and ally communities, including musical artists, actors, movie producers and directors, comedians, and the

list goes on. He talks to his guests about their coming out processes, their lives, their current work, and what's in store for the future. Tom pours his heart into his podcast and it really shows. For a preview of Tom's show, go to [www.rambleredhead.com](http://www.rambleredhead.com) and click on the 'play' button on any episode.

David is a resident of Bay City and often speaks of local issues. His show's tagline is 'The best thing to come from Bay City, Michigan since Madonna'. David talks about his life, religion, politics, and current events. He also mixes in great music from independent artists. David's show is an example of podcasting at its best. For a preview of David's podcast, go to [www.thatbluejeansguy.com](http://www.thatbluejeansguy.com) and click on Podcast/Blog.



## SVSU: What a Drag

by Tim

The Gay Straight Alliance at SVSU hosted its First Annual Benefit Drag Show on Wednesday night, April 9th. The event was held in the Student Life Center and marked the first time that a drag show was held on campus. All proceeds from the evening will be donated to [AIDS Walk Michigan](http://AIDS Walk Michigan), which will be held on September 27th.

Two professional entertainers, Miss Dalylah Desmond and Alexa Vogel, donated their talents for the evening, with Alexa acting as Mistress of Ceremonies. Several amateurs competed for prizes that were donated by individuals and area businesses. Audience members "voted" for contestants with their tip money. Each dollar collected by the performers counted as a vote.

A very good-sized crowd turned out to support the cause. Organizers had to bring out additional chairs to seat everyone. The audience included several Perceptions Members and Friends, many of whom had attended the Freeland Meet and Greet earlier in the evening.



Photos: John Rolando



The GSA charged only a \$1 admission. When the admissions were combined with the performers' and wait staff's tips, over \$300 was raised for AIDS Walk. This year's Benefit Drag Show was sponsored in part by The Mixx Nightclub. The GSA looks forward to planning the 2nd Annual Event to be held in 2009.

## Bike Tour



very welcoming and is looking forward to hosting the event. There is a small motel and rental cabins adjoining the campground, so those who prefer electricity and indoor plumbing to a tent may easily participate in all of the group activities that are centered in the campground. Another change for 2008 is the addition of a special route for street-legal scooters and mopeds.

Camp Out Michigan organizers decided that since participants come from all over Michigan, the charities selected this year should service all of Michigan. Lansing-based Michigan Equality was chosen as a new partner. [Michigan Equality](#) is a statewide organization dedicated to building and using political power to promote equality and eliminate discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. They are changing the face of politics in Michigan by fighting for the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender families and individuals. The Perceptions Scholarship Fund will also receive a portion of this year's proceeds. Any Michigan resident may apply for the annual scholarship which is dedicated to promoting respect for diversity across all borders including race, religion, sexual orientation and gender expression.

Although billed as the "Bike Tour," you do not need to be an avid cyclist to enjoy the weekend. In fact, a few regular attendees don't even bring their bikes. Less experienced cyclists can make arrangements to do a shorter route. Or at anytime you decide that you can't complete the route, one of our sup-



port vehicles will take you back to camp. If you don't care to attempt a ride, there are plenty of alternative activities during the time on Saturday when most people are pedaling. We'll need a few volunteers to work as support crew for the riders. Some people will choose to explore the area by car.



Camp Out Michigan will provide information about local points of interest. Motorcyclists are encouraged to attend and enjoy all of the activities at the camp site with us. They can do a self-guided tour of the area instead of one of the planned routes that the bicycles and scooters will be doing.

The Bike Tour is an all-inclusive weekend. Your registration includes two nights of rustic camping, evening meals served at the campsite on Friday & Saturday, continental breakfast on Saturday & Sunday, your choice of bicycle rides or the scooter/moped route with road support, group activities, entertainment and evening bonfires. A Sunday canoe trip is a popular optional activity. Matt & Steve who catered last year's evening meals set the bar pretty high for quality of food. They've volunteered to come back and cook for us again this year. This year's menu hasn't been announced, but it's sure to be delicious. *À la carte* registration options are available to suit individual needs. Register by June 1st to qualify for the early bird discount prices. Visit the Camp Out Michigan web site at [www.campoutmichigan.org](http://www.campoutmichigan.org) for additional information and registration options.