

News Advisory



Blue Water Area Transportation Commission *“Celebrating 150 Years of Public Transportation”*

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 1, 2016

Downtown Sail In Café & Convenience Store Holds Grand Opening July 12th in BWAT Bus Hub

PORT HURON, MICHIGAN — Blue Water Area Transit invites you to attend the Grand Opening of the Sail In Café & Convenience Store located in the agency’s downtown bus transfer center. The event will take place on Tuesday, July 12, 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m., with samples of food items provided.

Sail In is owned and operated by St. Clair County Community Mental Health. The local agency, which provides mental health services to individuals in St. Clair County, will use the operation as a training center for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and/or mental illness who want to gain employment skills in the food service and retail service industries. They will have the opportunity to learn skills in such areas as safe food handling, customer service, cashier operation and inventory.

“This new location will operate a lot like our Galley Cafe, which has served as a job training site since 2008,” says Debra Johnson, SCCCMH executive director. “Initially, we plan for each working shift to include a store clerk and six trainees.”

Sail In will be open to the public Monday through Saturday, from 6:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

The new café and convenience store will be filling a recognized need in an area that has been designated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture as a “food desert.” This designation indicates that it is an area where affordable and healthy food is hard to obtain, particularly for those without access to transportation.

“CMH has created a great café and store here,” says Jim Wilson, BWAT general manager. “I’m sure our passengers will enjoy it.”

The 1500 square foot space includes a service counter, shelving, and a seating area. The building also provides a unisex public restroom and a storage area, as well as an outdoor seating area.

Sail In will sell a selection of meal and snack items, such as nachos, hot dogs, sandwiches, frozen yogurt, cappuccino, slushies and smoothies. It will also sell groceries and toiletries, including such convenience items as milk, eggs, and bread.

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Nine contractors have prepared Sail In to open: Watson Brothers Plumbing, Eagan Drywall, Stevenson Electric, Edwards Glass, Fessler and Bowman Concrete, Artisan Tile, Edward J Painting, Troy Millwork, Michigan Fence, RK Hoppe, and Rayhaven Group.

“All nine are Michigan contractors, and three of the four main contractors are local,” explains Dave Frasier, BWAT director of procurement.

For additional information about the Grand Opening, go to scccmh.org.

St. Clair County Community Mental Health provides public services and supports to adults with mental illnesses, children with serious emotional disturbances, individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities and persons with co-occurring substance use disorders.

Blue Water Area Transit is currently celebrating the sesquicentennial of public transportation service in the Blue Water Area, as well as its own start 40 years ago.

William Pitt Edison (Tom’s older brother) started the local tradition of innovation 150 years ago, in 1866, when his horse-drawn trolleys carried passengers from the Grand Trunk Railroad station to downtown Port Huron.

The Blue Water Area soon became one of the nation’s first communities to operate electrified trolleys in the 1880s and then motor coaches in the late 1920s. Bus service started in 1927 and continued until an eight-year hiatus from 1968 to 1976. Since BWAT started publicly funded bus service in September 1976, the transit agency has carried more than 28 million riders.

Following in the steps of earlier leaders in innovation, BWAT started producing compressed natural gas in 1996 and now ranks as Michigan’s largest producer of the alternative fuel. The transit agency runs the state’s largest fleet of natural gas fueled buses and operates four public CNG fueling stations.

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