September 2024 FREE TO RESIDENTS

Danby News

Flowers in the Park

Calling all flower lovers! Come take part—or come and watch—in a Flower arranging workshop in Dotson Park on Sunday, September 15, 2pm.

Last year's flower workshop was such a hit that Danby's Community Council asked Julie Clougherty to do it again. Up to ten participants will gather around the stone table under Dotson Park's pavilion. There, we will let our creativity flow through the beauty of flowers. The variety of arrangements created last August was spectacular. Come see what happens this year, a bit later in the season.

Flowers and other plant materials will be provided by Okalee Farm. Julie isn't growing as much this year, so please bring any flowers, seedpods, grasses, etc. that catch your eye! Wildflowers and garden flowers are all welcome. Tools and vases will be available. Space is limited to ten participants, and the workshop will be held outside.

Please RSVP to **[okalee.farm@gmail.com]** if you're interested. Julie will need to know how much material to bring. And she will let participants know last minute details, including any needed changes due to weather.

The workshop is free. There will be a donation jar, where participants can support future community programming in Dotson Park. Together, we can share beauty and joy. (pg)

Going Bats

Summertime, when attics may be too warm to comfortably shelter, it is common for bats to enter our homes. Additionally, in late summer, inexperienced young bats may fall down a chimney, fly down an attic stairway, fly through an open window, or land on the ground.

Bats can enter buildings through holes or crevices as small as half an inch. If more than one bat has found its way into your home within a year's time, it may mean that your home needs remediation. Bat Conservation International **[batcon.org]** and the Wild Things Sanctuary **[bats.org]** have excellent tips for remediation. You can also contact a wildlife nuisance control company that specializes in bat remediation. Remediation inside your home can happen year-round, but—to avoid trapping bats inside your home—make sure that outside remediation happens only in spring or fall.

A small number of rabid bats are confirmed in Tompkins County every year. If possible that contact has occurred with any human or pet, it is important to avoid the risk of rabies by safely capturing the bat and submitting it for laboratory testing. If you are not sure if contact occurred, contact TCWH's Environmental Health Division, 607.274.6688.

Harvest Festival Sunday, October 13

Join the Danby Community at Dotson Park for the 10th Annual Harvest Festival. There's a lot to celebrate. Apples, pumpkins, autumn leaves. The beauty of Danby and it's people. And a bright future for the Park.

Save the date—Sunday, October 13, 1-5pm. It's a family event, and there are lots of favorite activities. The Harvest Festival centerpiece is the pumpkin-throwing trebuchet (and its diminutive sidekick, the potato launcher). Bring a pumpkin (6 to 8" diameter, max)! This is always a crowd pleaser.

There's a small bonfire for roasting hotdogs (meat and vegetarian), marshmallows for s'mores and, at the end of the afternoon, for singing around at. We've traditionally offered hay wagon rides touring the park. There will be activities for children of all ages, including exploring the natural beauty that is Dotson Park.

Dotson Park, the centerpiece of downtown Danby features a Natural Playground, a Pavilion under a hyperbolic paraboloid roof, a Disc Golf course, and miles of trails. Find it at 1825 Danby Road or online at **[dotsonpark.org]**. Make a donation, online or in person, to help preserve the park and provide resources for future improvement.

We'll have more details about Harvest Festival activities, including a list of the musicians performing, in the October Danby News. Keep an eye out, and join us in the park for a fine Autumn Afternoon. (pg)

This Month Inside the Danby News:

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September 2024

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Post Office Crew:
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To contribute items:
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Text submissions:
Send text in the body of an unencoded, plain-text Email message (**not** as an attachment); or mail typewritten copy, double-spaced on white paper. Short handwritten submissions accepted; please write legibly.

Graphics: JPEG preferred for photos, GIF for line graphics. PNG also works. Check with editor before sending hardcopy graphics.

Deadline is the 15th of the month prior to publication date. Materials may be accepted later if time allows. Submissions should generally not exceed 250-350 words (one column). We cannot print political material or letters of opinion.

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...plus all those who have sent subscription-level donations

Carl and Marge Seamon

A certificate of appreciation was awarded to Carl and Marge for their decades of service the to West Danby Water District and the Town of Danby.

—photo by Ted Crane

Danby News Notes

Submission Guidelines: Before submitting an item for the Danby News, please have a look at the *Submission Guidelines*. You can request them by Email from the editor at [danbynews@danbycc.org] or find them at [danbyny.org/DanbyNews]. If you're thinking of sending something for publication in the Danby News, there's two documents to read: the *Guidelines* and the *Submission Guidelines* at the same web location.

You'll learn what is, and isn't acceptable material for publication. If it's acceptable, we'll make an effort to include it; generally, we print everything we receive! You'll find hints about how to prepare a submission. Following these guidelines makes the editing and layout easier.

A terse version of these guidelines is in the left-hand column of this page. (tc)

Know Your Neighbors: The Sczepanski Farm

On a beautiful mid-August day, we had a chance to sit and talk with Jim, Gene, and Jessika of the Sczepanski family. These are neighbors with such a solid, long standing presence in Danby that they might seem like the fields where they farm—so much a part of town, that you hardly even notice any more.

Some of the family is working to change that perception. A standout example is what's come to be an annual tradition—the hay bale art structures on the East Miller Road farm. In previous years there have been things you just can't miss: an enormous cow, a lion, and a tractor.

This year, round and square bales have been made into the largest and most adorable Teddy Bear you've ever seen. We encourage everyone to drive by, slow down, stop, and get a picture of yourself with the Hay Bear. You can pick up some flowers at the same time.

Jim and Gene are the 2nd and 3rd generations of Sczepanskis to farm in Danby. The family has been farming on East Miller Road for more than 90 years...and the 4th generation is beginning to get involved. Such a multi-generational farm is a rare thing in our town. In fact, this is the only large, traditional style farm remaining in Danby.

"When I was five or six years old, there were at least 40 dairy farms in Danby," Jim remembers. None of those remain today. Now, the Sczepanskis keep beef cattle (70, of all sizes), farm 78 acres of corn, 18 acres of oats, 25 acres of wheat, and manage 300 acres for hay. Along with the meat, they sell their corn, oats, and wheat—and sunflowers.

The sunflowers are Jessika's operation. She calls herself a "stay at home mom." While that may be true she's also very involved in re-imagining and expanding the vision of Sczepanski farm. Selling cut sunflowers and varied flower bouquets, right next to the hay bear, is part of a plan to develop the family farms into something of an agri-tourism business. This new direction started small, about four years ago, and is growing each year.

"We're trying to reinvent the farm," Jessika says. "So we're doing different things, like the sunflowers. Eventually, we'd like to be more like the Iron Kettle farm [in Candor]. We're doing well this year. A lot of people stop by to take pictures with the bear and to buy some flowers."

As with most family farms, pretty much everyone has an "outside job." Gene is a farm manager for one of Cornell's research farms. "I play farming at Cornell, and then come home and do real farming," Gene jokes. This makes for, in essence, two full time jobs and means working from sun up to sun down most days of the week. "I need to be mindful of our neighbors," he says. "So I try not to start running machinery too early."

Speaking of machinery, Jim greatly appreciates your patience when he's moving hay from fields on Comfort Road to the farm on East Miller Road. If you're following behind him on West Miller Road, he'd be happy for you to pass him where possible.

Jim is the youngest of ten; his oldest brother was a generation older than him. A lifetime of farm work is beginning to slow Jim down. How much does he still do? "As little as possible," Jim says. "As much as I can get him to do," Gene interjects.

Jim's father came to America from Poland when he was 16 years old and never talked much about his early days. In terms of family history, life really began when the Sczepanski patriarch moved to Danby. He started looking for farm land in Danby in the early 1930s. He looked at property at the intersection of Comfort and Lieb, but it wasn't right. He looked at some property at the top of Gunderman, but it was too wet. "He said, 'I don't want to grow rice.'" In 1932, he bought land on East Miller Road, and the family has farmed there ever since.

Now, the extended family lives all along East Miller Road and has spread out to several the adjacent roads. Gene and Jessika moved to 54 East Miller, after Jim's brother Walter passed away. For the younger Sczepanski generation, this return to the family farm neighborhood is all part of a deep connection to the land.

"We want to see the farm last, we want to see it grow, and we want the next generation of kids to be there for that," Gene says. (pg)

Danby Calls It *Clustering* ...But Is It Really *Scattering*?

Beyond his penchant for rhyming, Yogi Bear had several signature phrases. His favorite self-promotion, "Smarter than the av-er-age bear!" brings to mind the remarkable number of Cluster Subdivisions in Danby.

Zoning and Subdivision Laws are, by nature, complicated and almost arcane. Yet, quite a few Danby-ites are smarter than the average bear and have taken advantage of a misconceived section of it: Cluster Subdivisions. Perhaps, as one of Danby's previous Planners noted, interpreting the law in the way that's most favorable to the applicant is part of the job; presumably this includes finding loopholes.

Many feel that Clustering is *Good Thing*. It certainly seems to lend itself toward one of Danby's goals stated in its Comprehensive Plan: preserving rural character.

The general idea behind a Cluster is that, given a sufficiently large chunk of land, creating a cluster of homes on a small portion of it while leaving the greater portion open is preferable to dividing into a checkerboard of scattered homes.

White Hawk Ecovillage, whose closely-spaced homes are set far back from NYS Rt.96B on about 100 acres of open space, is an example of the intent of Clustering and its benefits. Clustering works when it's applied as intended.

Danby's Misconceived Subdivision Law has a record of applications that follow its Letter while skirting its Spirit

In order to make Clustering work, it is often necessary to set aside all the other detailed requirements of Zoning. Clustering is close to impossible, for example, if every property is required to have a minimum number of acres. In Danby, creating a cluster in a rural zone with a 10-acre minimum lot size would mean that every property would have to touch—or come close to touching—and every home would have to be built at the "touching" end (a clever driveway plan would be needed).

Loosely speaking, the entire 100+ pages of Danby's Zoning and Subdivision are ignored when the Planning Board considers a Cluster Subdivision. All that detail is replaced by a single requirement—that **the parent parcel contain at least five (5) acres**...and the PB has discretion to allow (or require) pretty much what else it wants to.

Under typical conditions, a Planning Board has very limited discretion. It might better be called, "The Board Responsible For Compliance With The Zoning Law." In most cases, it's a cut-and-dried checklist. If an application meets all the requirements of the Law, it cannot be denied. That's why a Planning Board has a "ministerial" role: if the application is in order, it can (and must) be signed. *[The Board of Zoning Appeals is a "magisterial" body. It can make independent judgement—within defined bounds—to grant an exception to the rules.]*

Who makes the rules? Danby's Zoning and Subdivision Laws are enacted by its Town Board. When the wholesale rewrite of Danby's Zoning Law was enacted a few years ago, public comment noted several problems. The then-Planner acknowledged the known problems ("We can fix them later.") and the Town Board approved the Law.

One of those problems was the simplistic 5-acre requirement for a Cluster Subdivision. Think about the loophole! If you own a wee bit more than 5 acres in a 10-acre-minimum rural neighborhood that the Zoning was intended to protect, you can divide it into any number of postage-stamp parcels by calling it a Cluster (caveat: the Health Department imposes requirements, too).

If you own dozens of acres, you can parcel out small lots, too, and they don't have to be close together.

Or, you can call it a Cluster, even if you separate only one (1) small lot, smaller than the size required by the Zoning Law. You'd be surprised about how many Cluster Subdivisions Danby has approved that don't resemble White Hawk in any way.

Perhaps the worst part of the problem was described by the Town Planner when he wrote, "...the proposal meets the *letter* of the law, but not really the *spirit* of the law. ...the Planning Board [previously] approved [another similar subdivision] and is advised to follow the precedent in this case." In other words, because the mistake was made once, it should be made again

It only seems reasonable to ask the Town to extend better protections: a larger parent parcel (possibly one that is several times the required minimum size in the Zone), a minimum number of lots in the cluster, guidance about the proportion of the resulting open space, and other provisions that ensure a Cluster Subdivision is really for, you know, a beneficial Cluster. (tc)

Man should not ask how his laws or his sausages are made.
—Otto von Bismarck

Medicare Open Enrollment

If you are enrolled in a Medicare Advantage Plan or a Part D plan, look in your mailbox for your Annual Notice of Coverage. It is usually mailed in September.

The Notice will provide you with important information about changes in coverage that your plan is identifying for 2025. With so many changes in drug prices and access to physicians and hospitals, it is important to review and make an informed decision about your coverage options for next year.

Questions to consider:

- Is your plan changing costs like premiums, deductibles, and copays?
- Is your plan changing its provider network?
- Is your plan changing its drug formulary that might affect coverage of your current prescriptions or their prices?

Support The *Danby News*

If you want information beyond official, sanitized announcements in expensive, tax-dollar-funded publications, the *Danby News* is the place to go.

We try to include a mix of event announcements, features about life in Danby, public service information, and brief, but in-depth explanations of the things that Danby residents need to know about their community.

We have to keep asking for your help and you've been responding. Paid subscriptions ($15 or more per household) are appreciated. If you can afford it, help keep your neighbors in touch with our community; larger contributions support our community-building efforts. Join the **Danby 100**!

Please make checks payable to *Danby Community Council*, note *Danby News* in the memo, and mail to P.O.Box 6886, Ithaca, NY 14851-6886. (dcc)

Child: How old are you Grandma?
Grandma: I'm so old, I can remember when getting a tattoo was an act of rebellion, not conformity.

One More Summer Market!

Danby's Summer Market completes its fourth year on September 18, 4-7pm. In addition to local produce and crafts vendors, there's a community yard sale on the lawn.

Gather in and around the Sue Beeners Pavilion near the Danby Fire Station on NYS Rt.96B in central Danby. Enjoy an afternoon of shopping and listening to the background sound of local music from *John Petronzio,* courtesy of Danby's Community Council. You'll see neighbors and friends. Bring a blanket or picnic and relax into the weekend!

Parking is available in the lot off Gunderman Road and along Gunderman Road.

Danby Community Music Jam in Dotson Park

Danby Food Pantry

The Food Pantry has traditionally set up its larder in the Danby Community Church on the 3rd Thursday of each month, 4-6pm (this month, that's Thursday, August 15).

Those in need at other times can call Joan Barber, 607.280.4776, for an appointment.

Set-up help is needed the day before Food Pantry, 2:30-6pm, on the day of Food Pantry to hand out food, etc., and at 6pm the day of Food Pantry to help put extra food away and clean up the room.

The fundamental cause of trouble today is that in the modern world the stupid are cocksure while the intelligent are full of doubt. —Bertrand Russell

Reminiscing #25

I have gone back to my very first Ithaca Journal column, from September 4, 2004 to share here in the Danby News! I wrote about how some say, "Danby Road," and some say, "Route 96B." They are both right!

I wrote about the Rural Tompkins County Farmers' Market, held on Thursdays under the pavilion next to the Danby Fire Hall, now known as the Sue Beeners Pavilion. Sue was a powerhouse, working so hard on putting together great parades to go along with the Danby Fair/Fun Day event each July. [2024: the Summer Market is held on 3rd Fridays, June thru September.]

There was going to be a community barbecue on September 18 at the Common Ground on the Danby Road [2024: it's gone]. *Dee Specker and Swingsation* would be performing (we are lucky to now have *Bob & Dee* performing at many venues and they are so good). At the barbecue there would be food, a quilt raffle and more.

Also on September 18, a concert of Scottish songs would be held at the Danby Town Hall, with the performers joined by Danby resident Pamela Goddard.

The Danby Market [2024: Goldenrod Depot] decided that its Country Scoop ice cream spot would remain open through the winter. Just go inside the Market for an ice cream treat!

The Danby Seniors were gearing up for a one-day trip to Old Forge (to this day one of my favorite places to visit), where they would board the luncheon cruise boat and take a train ride. [2024: the Danby Seniors are still going on fun excursions, with a hardworking Travel Committee coming up with great ideas.]

The Danby Pirates Club would be hosting a 3-D Shoot on September 19. This event would include raffles, door prizes, a pancake breakfast, a chicken barbecue, and of course trophies awarded in each shooting class. The shooting course was always well-maintained and well-marked.

I dedicated this first column, as well as my final column, to my great-Aunt Josephine Little, as she was always such a fan of my writing. I also dedicated it to the "wonderful folks of Danby" and went on to write 685 columns about Danby, West Danby, Newfield, Brooktondale and the South Hill area. I really miss writing those columns and appreciate being able to share some of them here in the *Danby News*. (gh)

Give a man a fish, he eats for a day. Teach a woman to garden and the whole neighborhood gets zucchini.

Community Library

Time to head back to school! Don't forget to turn in your Reading Challenge Sheets and pick out a prize!

The Cornell Companions will be returning to read with us on Saturday, October 5! Mark your calendars!

Thanks to a donation we are featuring Elly Griffiths books this month. Elly Griffiths is a pen name for Domenica de Rosa, a British crime novelist. She has written three series as Griffiths, one featuring Detective Inspector Edgar Stephens and Max Mephisto, the Harbinder Kaur series, and the 14 books featuring Ruth Galloway, a forensic archeologist. We have the first 4 Galloway books:

1. *The Crossing Places*
2. *Janus Stone*
3. *House at Sea's End*
4. *Room Full of Bones*

A new selection of children's books has just arrived from TCPL. (cp)

Hunter Education Courses

First-time hunters planning to go afield this fall: before you can purchase a hunting license, you must complete a mandatory hunter education course. In-person, instructor-led hunter education courses are being offered throughout NYS during August, September, and October.

Bowhunter education and trapper education courses are also available.

All in-person courses offer hands-on experience and are free of charge. To locate a hunter education, bowhunter education, or trapper education course near you, visit the Hunter Education Program Courses and Certifications web page: google "NYS DEC hunter certification".

Do not wait until just before the hunting season to take a class. Classes fill quickly, so it is important to sign up early!

Q: What do you call holding Olympic swimming events in a polluted river?
A: In-Seine

Rabies Vaccinations For Pets

New York State requires all cats, dogs, and ferrets to have their first rabies vaccination between 3 and 4 months of age. Since this is required by law, the Tompkins County Whole Health Department holds rabies clinics throughout the year to ensure you are able to keep your pets protected.

Ferrets must be vaccinated yearly after the initial vaccine. Cats may receive either a 1-year or 3-year vaccine after the initial vaccine, depending on the type of rabies vaccine given and whether proof of previous vaccination is available. TCWH currently use a vaccine that is effective for three years after the initial 1-year vaccination. Dogs receive a 3-year vaccine after the initial vaccine.

If a 3-year vaccine is given to a pet with no proof of previous vaccination, then the vaccine is only considered effective for 1 year.

Upcoming Free Rabies Vaccination Clinic
When: Saturday, September 14, 2024, 11am-2pm
Where: TCAT Bus Garage, 737 Willow Avenue, Ithaca
Note: This is a drive-through clinic.
Important: Dogs must be on a leash or in a carrier. Cats and ferrets must be in a carrier. Bring proof of your pet's most recent vaccination.
Questions: TCWH's Environmental Health Division, 607.274.6688.

Vaccines For You

Protect yourself and protect others by knowing your health risks and which vaccines are right for you. Have a discussion with your medical providers about what vaccines they recommend for you.

It's easier than ever to get vaccinated. Many pharmacies can do the job and under new federal Medicare rules, most vaccines have no co-pay.

To get you started, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has created a helpful anonymous online quiz, [www2.cdc.gov/nip/adultimmsched]. Answer 12 questions to get your personalized recommendations.

This Issue's Writers

- cp.... Cindy Parlett
- dcc.. Comm. Council
- gh ... Gay Huddle
- pg ... Pamela Goddard
- tc .... Ted Crane
- tk .... Theresa Klinger

Seniors Update

Come join us for our next dish-to-share lunch on Thursday, September 5, Noon, in the Danby Community Church. We meet the first Thursday of the month, so mark your calendar for Thursday, October 3 as well. Bring your own table service and a utensil to share your dish.

Upcoming Trips:
Unfortunately, we had to postpone our overnight trip to Lancaster and the Sight & Sound Theater 'til the Spring, but you can still view the performance of *Daniel* over Labor Day weekend at Regal Cinemas in the Ithaca Mall. For the first time ever, Sight & Sound is broadcasting live into movie theaters nationwide! Google "Sight Sound Regal Cinemas" for more information.

Fall Foliage Train Excursion: There are still a few seats available for this train ride scheduled for October 16. For more information or if you have already signed up and have not paid yet, please contact Theresa, [tklinger617@gmail.com].

Rockettes Christmas Spectacular: There are a few seats still available for this day trip to NYC on December 4. Contact Tammy [tml24@yahoo.com] for more informa-

Q: Why did the politician bring a ladder to a debate?
A: So he could reach new heights with his promises.

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Sep 2024

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Danby News
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Danby News: Event Calendar

Sep 2 • Mon
6pm Town Hall+Zoom • **No Town Board Meeting**
Sep 3 • Tue
7pm Town Hall+Zoom • **SPECIAL Planning Brd Mtg**
Sep 4 • Wed
5pm WD Fire Station • **West Danby Water District**
Sep 5 • Thu
Noon Community Church • **Seniors**
7pm Zoom • **Danby Community Council Mtg**
Sep 7 • Sat
9:15am Town Hall • **Library Volunteers Meeting**
Sep 9 • Mon
6pm Town Hall+Zoom • **Town Board Meeting**
7pm DVFC Station • **Fire Dep't Meeting**
7pm WDFC Station • **WD Fire Dep't Meeting**
Sep 10 • Tue
7pm DVFC Station/YouTube • **Fire District Meeting**
7pm Zoom • **Conservation Advisory Council**
Sep 15 • Sun
2pm Dotson Park
Flower Workshop — Make Your Own!
Sep 16 • Mon
6pm Town Hall+Zoom • **No Town Board Meeting**
Sep 17 • Tue
7pm Town Hall+Zoom • **Planning Board Meeting**
Sep 19 • Thu
4pm Community Church • **Danby Food Pantry**
Sep 20 • Fri
4pm DVFC Station • FINAL **Danby Summer Market**

Meeting	Date	Zoom MtgID	Passcode
Town Board	Sept 9	882 2697 6101	905098
CAC	Sept 10	835 4940 5296	879507
Youth Commission	Sept 12	See Town web site	
Planning Board	Sept 17	893 3897 1114	956288
Town Board	Sept 23	847 9505 5187	308958
Zoning Appeals	Sept 24	Unknown?	None?
To join a meeting by telephone, call 646.876.9923			

Warning: Zoom meeting info and agendas change frequently!

Sep 23 • Mon
6pm Town Hall+Zoom • **Town Board Meeting**
Sep 24 • Tue
7pm DVFC Station/YouTube • **Fire District Meeting**
7pm Town Hall+Zoom • **Board of Zoning Appeals**

Oct 2 • Wed
5pm WD Fire Station • **West Danby Water District**
Oct 3 • Thu
Noon Community Church • **Seniors**
7pm Zoom • **Danby Community Council Mtg**
Oct 5 • Sat
9:15am Town Hall • **Library Volunteers Meeting**
Oct 7 • Mon
6pm Town Hall+Zoom • **Town Board Meeting**
Oct 8 • Tue
7pm DVFC Station/YouTube • **Fire District Meeting**
7pm Zoom • **Conservation Advisory Council**
Oct 13 • Sun
1-5pm Dotson Park
10th Annual Harvest Festival
Oct 14 • Mon
7pm DVFC Station • **Fire Dep't Meeting**
7pm WDFC Station • **WD Fire Dep't Meeting**

Ongoing Events

Seniors Strength Class via Zoom
Mondays and Thursdays, 9–10am
Contact [jmchurch@twcny.rr.com] for Zoom link
Danby Community Library Town Hall
Tuesday, 1–3pm; Thursday & Saturday, 10am–Noon
Books can be returned via the outdoor drop box.
Food Scrap Recycling Town Hall
Saturdays, 9am-Noon
AA Meeting via Zoom: [zoom.us/j/8209358263]
Wednesdays, 7pm

Where Things Happen

Danby Town Hall • 1830 Danby Road
DVFC Station • 1780 Danby Road
WDFD Station • 47 Sylvan Drive, off Rt.34/96
Danby Community Church • 1859 Danby Road