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Crews preserve Sleeping Bear history

By CAROL SOUTH

Special to the Record-Eagle

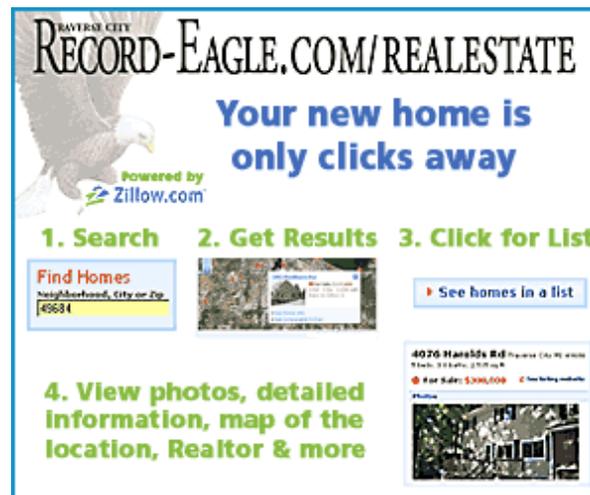
TRAVERSE CITY -- Planning, planning is key.

The crew of 25-30 people working to preserve the Katie Shepherd Hotel on North Manitou Island over 11 days lives this mantra.

With a rotating daily count of eight to 12 volunteers, work continues apace thanks to precise planning coupled with the workers' energetic enthusiasm. Everyone from experienced contractors to novice painters are helping to shore up the foundation of the century-old building and wrap-around porch as well as redo the interior flooring and ceiling.

"When you take on a project on an island, there's no walking back to your truck to get something you forgot," said Len Allgaier, project supervisor for the Preserve Historic Sleeping Bear group.

All time and materials are donated by the Preserve Historic



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Since 1998, volunteers with Preserve Historic Sleeping Bear have tackled preservation and restoration projects in the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore. Here, Jim Fuscaldo and Bernie Senske put siding on the Oleson granary in July. **Preserve Historic Sleeping**

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Sleeping Bear organization, for whom such projects are red meat. Formed in 1998 with just such intensive work bees in mind, the nonprofit is dedicated to saving and restoring the park's more than 360 historic structures, features and landscapes.

As the summer winds down, the main project this month is the Katie Shepherd, which served as a hotel situated on the island's cottage row. July tasks included having a team of volunteers re-side the Oleson granary and complete restoration work at both the Charles Oleson house and the Martin Basch farmstead.

"We're kind of a conservancy for historic structures in the park, we facilitate, coordinate and fund volunteer projects, get all the materials and try to raise funds for some contractual work," said Susan Pocklington, director of Preserve Historic Sleeping Bear. "We're also working on telling the story of what we're saving, so it's not just empty buildings we're saving."

A project such as the Katie Shepherd draws a cross-section of knowledge and experience, people who are willing to give up days or a week of their own time to work hard on a remote island. Preserve Historic Sleeping Bear volunteers provide meals while the park service puts up the volunteers.

"We have couples out there, retirees, we've got some young people, a father and a daughter," Pocklington said. "I think people are very excited to get out there."

Preserve Historic Sleeping Bear basically tackles projects that the park cannot get to, noted Tom Ulrich, the park's deputy superintendent who is the liaison with the group. Their efforts are a boon to the park, which spans 35 miles and 71,000 acres along Benzie and Leelanau county shorelines as well as the Manitou islands. Considered a medium-sized park nationwide -- although one of the larger ones in the Midwest

Bear/Special to the Record-Eagle (Click for larger image)



The nonprofit Preserve Historic Sleeping Bear is working this month on the North Manitou Island to restore the Katie Shepherd Hotel. **Preserve Historic Sleeping Bear/Special to the Record-Eagle** (Click for larger image)

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-- Sleeping Bear Dunes draws 1.1 million visitors annually.

"It's a citizens' commitment to preserving our heritage," he said of the nonprofit. "They have gotten a lot of support from the community, people who really care about these historic resources."

This support manifests as either swinging a hammer or making a donation.

"The great thing about Preserve Historic Sleeping Bear is they both coordinate these volunteers on projects but they also can coordinate the funding," Ulrich said.

Allgaier, a retired General Motors executive, leverages his planning and organizational skills to ensure a restoration's success. He also helps determine whether a project is worth doing and how to approach the task. In the case of the Katie Shepherd, the run-down structure required a leap of faith to see the possibilities.

"But I tell you, North Manitou was sort of compelling," he said. "It took a lot of planing but it's clicking right off. Did the walk through last fall: Are we going to do it or are we not going to do it? Then did the planning last spring."

For more information on the Preserve Historic Sleeping Bear organization, call (231) 334-6103 or see www.phsb.org. For more information on the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, see <http://www.sleepingbeardunes.com/>.



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