



## Fort Gratiot Light Station Sand Sculpting Festival and Competition

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

CONTACT:

Denise Brooks

Friends of the Fort Gratiot Light

(810) 241-0953

[fortgratiotlightfriends@gmail.com](mailto:fortgratiotlightfriends@gmail.com)

[www.fortgratiotlight.org](http://www.fortgratiotlight.org)

[www.bluewatersandfest.com](http://www.bluewatersandfest.com)

### 6<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL BLUE WATER SANDFEST RETURNS TO FORT GRATIOT LIGHT STATION JULY 6-8, 2018

A long weekend full of fun for the whole family!

**Port Huron, MI – June 24, 2018** – Master and Advanced Amateur Sculptors from around North America will be gathering for the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Michigan Sand Sculpting Championships when Blue Water SandFest returns to the Fort Gratiot Light Station July 6-8, 2018. The event has become one of the most important sand sculpture competitions in the United States and has been named one of USA Today's Top 10.

This family-friendly event offers a wonderful array of activities for guests of all ages.

Updated items of interest:

**Extended Hours** – The hours for SandFest have been extended to 8:00 PM on Friday and Saturday.

**Songwriters Circle** – A special addition to the musical line-up this year is the Songwriter's Circle with Gary Hannan, Julianne Ankley, and Michelle Chenard at 1:30 PM on Sunday, July 8<sup>th</sup>.

- **Gary Hannan** - Originally from Zimbabwe, Africa, Gary served in the army then worked as a deep sea oil field diver in the North Sea and Gulf Of Mexico. He backpacked the world carrying his guitar and somehow collected a basement full of Gold and Platinum records along the way! "Saying the most with the least, is what I'm good at!" Constantly on the move, he has ridden his motorcycle loaded with a sleeping bag and guitar on a solo journey around the United States and parts of Canada in a constant search for inspiration. This journey took him to Normandy where he wrote on Omaha beach and then back to Africa in 2017 on a solo motorcycle journey to the exact locations where brothers in arms had made the ultimate sacrifice. These songs were then recorded in an ongoing compilation 'Songs from the battlefield.' Currently Gary is touring the US in a built-out van, sharing his songs and blogging from the road.
- **Julianne Ankley** – Her soulful country style hails from a small Michigan border town close to the shore of Lake Huron and within earshot of the musical influences of Detroit. With six Detroit Music Awards and 43 nominations, Julianne has been writing heartfelt songs and delivering electric performances, both solo and with her band The Rogues, for years. To date, she has released 3 albums and two singles with her sophomore album "Vivid" garnering the 2012 DMA for Outstanding Country Recording. She is currently working on her 4<sup>th</sup> album. As a songwriter, Julianne has written with Platinum hit songwriters Gary Hannan, Dave Gibson and Amanda Williams. She has toured nationally and overseas.

- Continued on next page -

## **Fort Gratiot Light Station Sand Sculpting Festival and Competition**

- **Michelle Chenard** – Michelle is a veteran singer/songwriter who has been continually voted a favorite in Northern Michigan as Best Solo Performer, Best of the Best and more in Northern Express, Northern Michigan's largest newsweekly. She continually performs hundreds of shows across the state each year. Singing and playing guitar since she was seven years old, it's no surprise that Chenard has garnered such respect and accolades. Her acoustic performances have built her a strong following throughout the Upper Midwest. From Michigan's unspoiled Upper Peninsula down the coast of Lake Michigan and back, it is her powerful vocals, accomplished guitar work and award winning songwriting that continues to captivate. In addition to her tireless schedule, Michelle founded Mackinac Island Songwriters Workshop with her brother from another mother Pete Kehoe, has been writing and recording with country artist Julianne Ankley and performing with her band, Blood Sisters.

**A New Master Sculptor** – Bryan Obermyer of Grand Rapids, MI and has competed as an Advanced Amateur at Blue Water SandFest for the past 5 years. After taking home silver medals in 2015 and 2016 he became the "Advanced Amateur Michigan State Champion" and he was asked to move up to the Masters Level. Bryan got his start in 2007 at the Grand Haven Sand Sculpting Contest with his wife and 3 girls. From that first year he was hooked.

### **EVENT FACTS**

- It takes a full week from start-up to tear-down
- Over 500 tons of sand are brought to the Fort Gratiot Light Station from Mid Michigan Materials in Jeddo
- The public has three days to view the sculptures as they progress from piles of sand to works of art – Friday, July 6 through Sunday, July 8
- The event will feature 7 Master Sculptors and 10 Advanced Amateurs
- Local summer day camp programs will have the opportunity to participate in sand sculpting schools on Thursday and Friday
- Friday – Salute to our Heroes and Educators Day
  - All active duty and veterans of the armed services, first responders and border patrol get in free with valid ID
  - All education employees get in free with valid ID
- Saturday – Amateur sculptors, individuals and groups, compete. This is an open competition for kids, families, adults and groups with pre-registration available at [www.bluewatersandfest.com](http://www.bluewatersandfest.com)
- Family fun – Kid's Zone with sand sculpting lessons taught by professional sand sculptors
- Live entertainment all weekend – music, Quick Sand Competition, and sand sculpting demonstrations
- Food vendors and the Lighthouse Beer Garden
- Beach access for people to bring their towels and relax on the beautiful Lake Huron shore while watching the progress of the sculptors throughout the day

### **PROCEEDS**

All proceeds from Blue Water SandFest are used for restoration of the historic buildings and grounds of the Fort Gratiot Light Station County Park.

- Continued on next page -

## **Fort Gratiot Light Station Sand Sculpting Festival and Competition**

### **PRESS CALENDAR LISTING**

Blue Water SandFest – Michigan Sand Sculpting Championships  
July 6-8, 2018

#### **Location:**

Fort Gratiot Light Station County Park, 2802 Omar Street, Port Huron, MI 48060

#### **Tickets:**

\$6 per person, online and at the gate. Children 4 and under are free.

Purchase a 3-day pass for just \$15 that will allow visitors to visit the park all weekend long to watch the progress of the sculptors.

Tickets are available in advance on [Eventbrite](#).

Event information is available at [www.bluewatersandfest.com](http://www.bluewatersandfest.com).

#### **Times:**

Friday 10:00 AM to 8:00 PM

Saturday 10:00 AM to 8:00 PM

Sunday 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM

- END -

### **About Friends of the Fort Gratiot Light**

Working Together to Keep the Light Burning Bright - The Friends of the Fort Gratiot Light (FFGL) share a passion for the Fort Gratiot Light Station County Park that has exhibited itself in many ways over the years. At first, the focus was financial to support restoration on the oldest lighthouse in Michigan, the Fort Gratiot Lighthouse. Once that goal was met, the focus shifted to the other historic buildings and the grounds of the park. This created a growing opportunity for volunteers to fulfill their passion by continuing fundraising along with supplying physical labor and guidance in the restoration effort.

Denise Brooks

Friends of the Fort Gratiot Light

(810) 241-0953

[fortgratiotlightfriends@gmail.com](mailto:fortgratiotlightfriends@gmail.com)

[www.fortgratiotlight.org](http://www.fortgratiotlight.org)

[www.bluewatersandfest.com](http://www.bluewatersandfest.com)