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Frosty Dan's: Serving Ice Cream to a 'Tight-Knit' Community Since 1970

Sophia Valchine
Multimedia Journalist

At 1455 N. Eaton St. stands a local ice cream shop that has been serving sweet treats and smiles to Albion since 1970: Frosty Dan's.

The business is run by Dan Earl, the owner, who said he has maintained Frosty Dan's as a "family-run operation" for more than 50 years. He works with his daughter, Kelly Earl, and a team of family friends who make ice cream, milkshakes, malts, sandwiches and hot dogs.

How Frosty Dan's Began

Dan Earl said he began working when he was 10 years old after his father had the idea to build Frosty Dan's to teach him how to run a small business.

"He was big into banking, and he thought this is a good way for me to learn about money, banking, how a small business operated back in those days," Dan Earl said. "It's a lot different today, but it was a good test of what business is all about."

Dan Earl added that his father might've chosen to open an ice cream shop because he "saw that Albion at the time could use one."



A side view of Frosty Dan's. Dan Earl said his shop was a way for him to teach his kids about business (Photo by Sophia Valchine).

The business didn't earn its title until Dan Earl's older sister, Denise, came up with the name, he said. His parents were insistent that Dan Earl should use his own name, and he said his sister added the final touch.

"She said that it needs to be something cold," Dan Earl said. "You know, like something really frosty, cold, and then the word just came out. 'Well, let's just call it Frosty Dan's.' And that's how it got started."

Dan Earl said he gets his ice cream from Prairie Farms and Kuster's, frequently experimenting with combining the products to create his own unique flavors.

"I try things, and if I think things could be better, I mix them together and try to see how it comes out," Dan Earl said. "A lot of times it's even better."



Kelly Earl, Dan Earl's daughter, makes a swirl of chocolate and vanilla ice cream at Frosty Dan's. She said that when she was younger, she and her siblings were close because they all worked at Frosty Dan's (Photo by Sophia Valchine).

As Dan Earl got older and became a father, he said he needed a place to look after his four kids, and Frosty Dan's became what his daughter Kelly Earl called her "daycare."

"Me and my three siblings would come and hang out while my dad worked, and then maybe when I was about 10 years old, I started working a little bit, with filling, cleaning, doing little things," Kelly Earl said.

Frosty Dan's and the Community

Dan Earl said he would describe himself as a "social" person, and that he loves "seeing where people go with their future."

"What I enjoy most would be the camaraderie between the kids that I hire to work here," Dan Earl said. "The kids that I meet at the store give me a chance to relate to a lot of different people, different cultures, different everything."

Kelly Earl said she knows "almost every single person" who goes to Frosty Dan's and has made connections with them. It makes her happy to make other people happy, she said.

"Some people, since I've been here for so long, they've known me since I was a little kid," Kelly Earl said.

Albion senior Cadence Easterwood has also been going to Frosty Dan's since she was a kid; she said the first time she remembers going was with her grandpa when she was four years old. Dan knows her ice cream order, she said, and to her the shop feels "inviting."

"He likes a lot of the kids around town and tries to support them in the best way that he can," Easterwood said.

Since technical lecturer in mathematics and computer sciences April Grow moved to Albion, she said she has been regularly going to Frosty Dan's with her family and loves to "experience it" through her kids.

"I think that living in ways that support the people you care about is important," Grow said.

'He's very pro-Albion, which is awesome, obviously, because we're such a close, tight-knit community.'

Northville junior and member of Alpha Xi Delta Sophie Aheimer is a part of an annual fundraiser with Frosty Dan's, where sorority members come help at the store for a day, she said. Dan Earl taught them how to work the register and make ice cream, and Aheimer said she felt "lucky" to be able to work with him.

"He's very pro-Albion, which is awesome, obviously, because we're such a close, tight-knit community," Aheimer said.

The Future of Frosty Dan's

With the new Dairy Queen being built directly across the street, Frosty Dan's could have competition, which Dan Earl said "can be good."

"I'd rather them not come," Dan Earl said. "But since they are, I feel we're going to be just fine. We still cater more to the Albion College and the town."

Kelly Earl said Frosty Dan's is now on DoorDash for people to order online, and they have recently started making sandwiches to increase revenue.

"Maybe we'll draw some people off the highway, and since we're right next door, they'll see Frosty Dan's and support a local business instead of a big franchise," Kelly Earl said.

Even before Grow lived in Albion, she said she went to local ice cream shops to support her community.

"I think it's so important to have something that is of the people and by the people and that is in the community so that we can just support the people that live here," Grow said.

Easterwood said she is "worried" about the future of Frosty Dan's, and hopes that the pressure from the incoming Dairy Queen isn't too strong.



The front of the Dairy Queen being built across the street from Frosty Dan's. Some community members expressed worry about the business that Dairy Queen may draw away from Frosty Dan's (Photo by Sophia Valchine).

"It feels a lot better to purchase from there than a big company," Easterwood said.

Aheimer said she thought it was "crazy" that the Dairy Queen will be so close to Frosty Dan's, but that she will not be going there once it is open.

"I'm loyal to Dan," Aheimer said.

Dan Earl said that the following of Frosty Dan's has only increased since he took over because of support from Albion College and the community, and what matters to him most is that he gets to keep his Albion business.

"From day one it was Frosty Dan's, and it's still Frosty Dan's," Dan Earl said.

Wild Rice Program Explores 'Shared History,' Ecology of Manoomin



Anthropology professor Brad Chase displays two rice harvesting tools given to him by the NHBP. "The manoomin (wild rice) has always been harvested in a very gentle manner," Chase said (Photo illustration by Kai Taylor).

Kai Taylor
Multimedia Journalist

For nearly five years, Albion's anthropology and biology departments have partnered with the Nottawaseppi Huron Band of the Potawatomi (NHBP) to form a class and program that "doesn't exist anywhere else besides Albion," according to associate anthropology professor Brad Chase.

According to associate professor of biology Abigail Cahill, in 2020, associate professor of anthropology Allison Harnish initiated a joint research project between the Tribal Historic Preservation office and the NHBP to "learn more about the shared history with the college." The Anishinabe people of the NHBP were "interested in starting collaboration" with Cahill and the biology department on the research of manoomin, also known as the wild rice plant, according to Cahill.

"It was a little bit of a coincidence that I was also working on this," Cahill said. "So these things came together."

The Pleiad reached out to the NHBP on Oct. 31 and Nov. 10. They did not respond in time for publication.

Chase, who is also involved in the project, teaches a class called Archeology of Wild Rice in Michigan.

Cadillac sophomore and student in the class Corra Santangelo said by engaging with the project, those involved learn about the "culture and importance" of the manoomin, as well as "the archaeology, the history of the region, of the indigenous people who live there and how they exist now."

Manoomin grows in lakes and rivers all across the Great Lakes region. Some of it grows right in Albion's backyard on the Kalamazoo river.

"There's about a two or three mile stretch out here that we monitor very closely so that we know how the rice is doing from year to year," Chase said. "It was by going out together, with folks from the tribe in canoes, that we learned how to do this."

According to Cahill, Chase's students "often collaborate" with their peers in Cahill's insect and invertebrate biology classes to assist with their research. However, the lessons from this class aren't just learned in the classroom.

Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands, senior Cloud Rimer said that she "definitely has more of an appreciation for nature" after being involved in the project.

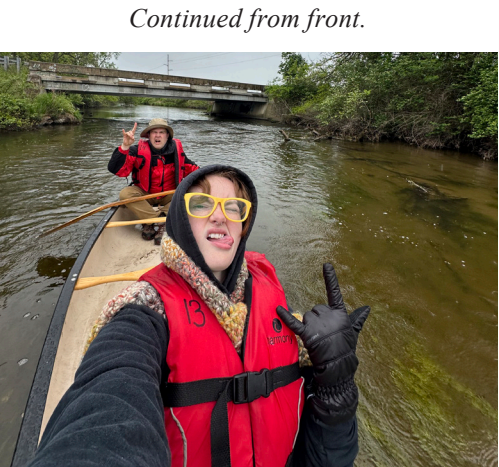
"I did a FURSCA project this summer about wild rice, and it definitely made me slow down," Rimer said. "Before we could even get into the river, we had rituals to do – sort of pause yourself from the business of it, and relax, take a second."

Continued on back.



A device constructed by Albion students and staff to collect the invertebrates in the water, used to study the environment in which wild rice grows. Abigail Cahill, associate professor of biology, said the device "uses bioindicators to tell us something about the health of the ecosystem" (Photo courtesy of Abigail Cahill).

Wild Rice Program



Walled Lake senior Shaylyn Athayde canoes down the Kalamazoo River with Chase. “Brad loves field trips, and he loves taking the class out onto the river where the wild rice grows,” Athayde said (Photo illustration courtesy of Shaylyn Athayde).

In addition to working with the NHBP, Rimer took a course with the National Association for Interpretation and learned how to be an interpretive guide to tell people about manoomin.

“Right now, we’re planning an exhibit for the Whitehouse Nature Center, and given my background with interpretation, I find that really interesting,” Rimer said.

The exhibit will act as a museum to communicate what has been observed and learned from the class.

“People will also learn a lot about Michigan archaeology along the way,” Chase said.

‘There’s other ways to see and understand the natural world that are equally valid and important.’

Walled Lake senior Shaylyn Athayde said for her, the class ignited an “interest in archival work and working in a museum.”

There “isn’t a set end goal” for the project, but the groups will continue to work together and build strong relationships, Cahill said.

“I think the biggest real-world skill I want them to take away is communication, actually, and learning to communicate and work with NHBP partners more than anything,” Cahill said. “There’s other ways to see and understand the natural world that are equally valid and important.”

Cahill added the project helps “bring these ways of knowing things together, and that it just requires listening and thinking about science in a different way.”

The class is open to any student, regardless of major. “I think a lot of people think about Indigenous stuff only in the past tense,” Santangelo said. “A big part of this class is engaging with history and learning how alive and relevant it is to the environment, like the good things we can do now to create change.”

Shay Athayde was a member of the Pleiad in the 2024-2025 school year.



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Cheer Team Has ‘Each Other’s Back No Matter What’



Albion College’s cheer team in action at the home football game between Albion and Hope on Nov. 1. Pace said that as a coach, she likes to work on the relationship between “the cheer team and the football team, the marching band and the crowd” (Photo by Bonnie Lord).

Kyla Lawrence
Multimedia Journalist

Albion College closed out their 2025 football season on Saturday with a game against Calvin University. For the rest of the school year, Albion’s cheer team will no longer be found cheering outdoors on the track, but on the basketball court sidelines.

On Aug. 16, 2024, Albion announced they had hired a new head cheer coach, Mercedes Pace, alumna ‘20, thus “reviving” the cheer program. Since then, Pace said she has observed the team “build a reputation for itself,” something she added was “inspiring” and “helpful” for the team’s growth.

New Beginnings

Pace said she cheered for Albion for all four years of her attendance, and was a student coach during her “extra semester.”

“That’s kind of how I got into this,” Pace said. “I knew that stepping into this role would be me building up the program.”

Pace said that upon inquiring about the status of the team a couple of years prior, she learned the college struggled with “student involvement,” as well as “from a coach aspect.”

“I knew that it was going to be a lot of teaching them what it’s like to be a cheerleader and building the team for what the college needs,” Pace said. “Cheer to me has always been about school spirit.”

Detroit senior and cheer captain Bria Jackson has been on the team for all four years at Albion and helped grow the team even when they didn’t have a coach. Jackson said that during her second year, the team “stopped having a coach.”

It wasn’t until Pace stepped in during Jackson’s junior year that the head coach title would be in use again. Though, Jackson added, that didn’t mean team members weren’t working behind the scenes.

“I was able to get a couple of girls with the permission from the athletic director,” Jackson said. “We were able to have a mini team, but I was pretty much the one orchestrating everything as far as bringing people to the games to cheer.”

The Leadership Behind It All

Since Pace’s addition to the team, she said there’s been an influx of new members and changes.

“I’m trying to build the program up,” Pace said. “Last year I had 12, this year I started with 28.”

Pace added that she worked hard over this past summer to build a leadership team of captains, co-captains, community service managers and social media managers. These roles are given to team members that she knows she can “trust” to “get things done.”

Jackson is the team’s captain, whilst fellow Detroit senior Hailey Manson-Wilson serves as the team’s co-captain.

“It gives me a lot of responsibility, but it’s very rewarding, especially when having freshmen on the team,” Jackson said. “Seeing them learn things or be able to get things that they didn’t think they could before is very rewarding to see.”

In their leadership positions, Manson-Wilson said she and Jackson work to ensure that all of their teammates are comfortable in their space.

“We spend a lot of time outside of practice trying to help the cheerleaders,” Manson-Wilson said. “Asking questions, answering questions as well as just trying to make sure that everybody has comfortability within themselves and within each other.”

Other leaders on the team include Dallas sophomore Stephane Ortiz, the underclassmen co-captain, and Chicago junior Sarynete Holmes, the community engagement manager. Norridge senior Hayla-Lyn Gilly and Detroit senior Kaylun Butler serve as the team’s social media managers.

As the team’s community engagement manager, Holmes said that she works to expand their involvement with the Albion community, whether it’s “people contacting” them or “wanting to get involved” with them.

“It does make a difference if people know we exist,” Ortiz said.

Not Just a Team

Both in and outside of practice or at games, Pace said she works “really hard” to encourage “team bonding” and let her athletes “know that this is a team sport versus an individual sport.”

“They know that they can talk to me about anything. A lot of the ladies are really good friends or have become really good friends,” Pace said.

Some bonding activities include themed practices, study tables and team breakfasts or “bond” nights together, Butler added.

“Our coach ensures that we spend a lot of time with each other,” Manson-Wilson said.

Another way that the team spends more time with each other is through community service. Pace requires that all members of the team complete two community service hours a month. These hours consist of attending events planned by Holmes.

“We’re making sure that we stay active in our community,” Holmes said. “So we’re also getting our name out a little more.”

Jackson says that the team interacts with each other in a “sisterly” manner and not just as teammates.

“It’s nice being captain,” Jackson said. “It’s not just me telling people what to do, it’s more so just me having a big sister role.”

Holmes said that the leadership team works “together,” even when making “tough calls with the team.”

“I’ve built a lot of rapport with my teammates,” Manson-Wilson said. “I’m also a teammate as well. We’re cheerleaders; we’re all a part of the team.”

Ortiz says that if there was one word to describe the team, it would be “sisterhood.”

“I love the cheer team,” Ortiz said. “I feel like it’s a bunch of sisters. We’re going to have each other’s back no matter what.”

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Detroit senior Kaylun Butler cheers for the bleachers with her purple pom-pom during the Albion home game. Butler said she feels like cheerleaders “bring the school spirit” (Photo by Bonnie Lord).

Photos: Falling for Albion’s Fall Colors



Indianapolis, Ind., sophomore Koranay Rogers gazes up at the orange leaves of a tree in “The Quad.” The tree, located right near a walking path, sometimes drops its leaves near “The Rock” (Photo illustration by Elly Cantoni).

Elly Cantoni
Volunteer Multimedia Journalist

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The view behind 810 E. Michigan Ave. looks over an area designated a Green Space by the college and surrounded by various types of foliage. This is one of many places in Albion where fall colors can be observed (Photo by Elly Cantoni).



The author, Phoenix, Ariz., first-year Elly Cantoni, stands in a pile of leaves of assorted colors. According to the Old Farmers Almanac, “Leaves can change their color from as early as mid-September all the way through early November” (Photo illustration by Elly Cantoni).



The train tracks, covered with crisp, orange leaves outside the Dow (Photo by Elly Cantoni).



An Albion squirrel climbs down a tree. According to SkedaddleWildlife.com, squirrels’ tails begin to grow more as winter approaches (Photo by Elly Cantoni).



Union City junior Grady lobe walks his dog, Chai, on a fall day. Chai modeled her fall sweater on the walk (Photo by Elly Cantoni).