



# Icy Spectacle

Frozen formation enchants visitors to the Lake Erie shore

Christian Marchand, 15, and his little brother Judah Marchand, 5, of Toledo walk along the massive ice shelves on the Lake Erie shore along Lakeshore Drive in Port Clinton. BLADE PHOTOS BY JEREMY WADSWORTH

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PORT CLINTON — The cool thing — bad pun intended — about those huge slabs of ice that were recently pushed across Lake Erie and up against the Ottawa County shoreline goes beyond the obvious, unpredictable beauty of nature itself.

It's the reactions of people young and old, how it brings them together in these troubled times and allows them a brief mental respite from their worries.

On one hand, there's the gleeful exuberance of youth — schoolchildren and college students alike — who set down their video games and cell phones to scale impromptu ice sculptures as tall as buildings. That joy and euphoria was evident in little Raelynn Mitchell, a 4-year-old preschooler from Woodville, who — for obvious reasons — wasn't allowed to go out as far or as high as other climbers, yet still felt a sense of conquest.

"I need to climb these ice mountains!" she squealed.

The trip was a birthday gift for Raelynn's grandmother, Cathy Artressia, 54, also of Woodville, from the child's father and Cathy's son, Jeremy Mitchell, 34, who thought they knew what to expect yet were stunned any-



Lynn Dee Gillam of Elyria brought climbing shoes for the massive ice shelves on Lake Erie.

weekend, were frozen earlier this winter, then pushed against the shoreline on Jan. 12 by unusually strong winds and the lake current. Hence the term "ice shelves."

They are an amazing spectacle with their awe-inspiring splashes of color emanating from the crystalline formations as they are kissed by rays of sunshine against a deep blue sky. Up close, the ice sparkles like rock candy and diamonds. Yet it also screams out caution with its menacing-looking and potentially dangerous shards.

"We couldn't wait to get out here. It keeps you coming back for more," said Shari Anderson, 44, one of several Port Clinton residents who said they made daily visits and saw something new each time.

Another Port Clinton woman who'd made multiple trips agreed, saying it's "crazy what nature can do."

Barb Deerwater, 63, and her husband, Gary Deerwater, 65, of Van Buren, Ohio, were accompanied by their lab-retriever mix, Clifford. They began Wednesday by driving over to Castalia, Ohio, to witness the release of a snowy owl rehabilitated by the group Back to the Wild. They then drove over to Port Clinton for lunch and to the ice shelves, which Mrs. Deerwater said impressed her as a "land of gemstones."

"It makes you feel like you're in a Winter Wonderland, like you're a child in a dream," she said.

Mrs. Deerwater was adventurous enough to climb the ice while her husband, who has an upcoming surgery, was content to watch from the parking lot with their dog. "Remember, that's ice," Gary told her as she went up. "We don't climb and bounce as good as we used to."

Upon her return, Mrs. Deerwater remained in awe. "Our Heavenly Father is just so amazing," she said. "His artwork and how He helps us see it is just so amazing."

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These formations were created when ice was pushed against the shore by lake currents and strong winds.



A spire of ice sits atop a particularly tall ice shove.



A clear blue sky can partially be seen through a translucent block of ice.

BELOW: The towering ice shelves drew visitors from around the region to experience the amazing view.

