

# Bellaire Golf Club to reopen soon

By LINDA GALLAGHER

BELLAIRE-After more than a year of sitting idle and empty, the Bellaire Golf Club will reopen soon, with new owners and a new name for the restaurant and pub.

"We're excited," said new owner Dick Willbee, a resident of the south Torch Lake area, of the plans he and his family have for the 147 acre property. "But we're going to start off slowly, a

little at a time."

Willbee formally purchased the course through Paradise Properties from Wonderland, Inc., a subsidiary of O.I.L. Energy, last November.

"I was out here working on the course before I even bought it," said Willbee, an avid golfer for many years. "You can't just walk away from a golf course if you ever want to use it again, you

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have to keep up the maintenance end of it-so I did-all winter."

Helping the retired concrete business owner do that is his daughter Dee, the club's general manager, and a staff of several other employees hired recently.

Looking out the window and grinning wryly, Dee said, "Of course, everything is weather dependent, but we're hoping to open up the nine original holes of the course on the east side of the road to the public some time in early May. Another two holes will open a bit later this summer. We're also hoping to have the pub and patio open for snacks, sandwiches, and sodas by then, too."

The pub, and later on, the restaurant as well, will have a new name with much significance to the Willbee family-Morgan's. "Morgan is a family name that dates back to our early years on Elk Lake," Dee smiled. "From 1928 until 1956, Lena Morgan ran a girl's camp on the lake-in fact, there's a road in that area called Morgan Shores. Our family has very deep roots in Antrim



Father and daughter Dick and Dee Willbee, the new owners of Bellaire Golf Club, will have nine holes of the course open to the public soon.

County."

Which is what led her father to purchase the Bellaire Golf Club. "I've golfed here a couple of times a year for many years," he said. "I just hated to see the club closed, it's an integral part of Antrim County, and Antrim County's history."

Of concerns from area residents regarding possible future natural gas development on the property, which Willbee pur-

chased without mineral rights to, he said, "There will be some development at some point, but not this year, and not anywhere integral to the course like the first tee," he grinned. "Fortunately, we were able to work out an agreement with Wonderland to that effect-the owners and investors of that company wanted, like me, to see the course continue as something everyone could enjoy."

Also open to the public will be the club's pro shop at some point, his daughter said. "We'll have things like balls, tees, and gloves that golfers need."

Getting the once very popular golf leagues going, as well as possibly a youth's golf league, is something else the family is considering, she said. "But for now, it's one step at a time."