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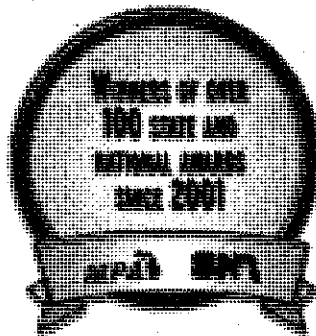


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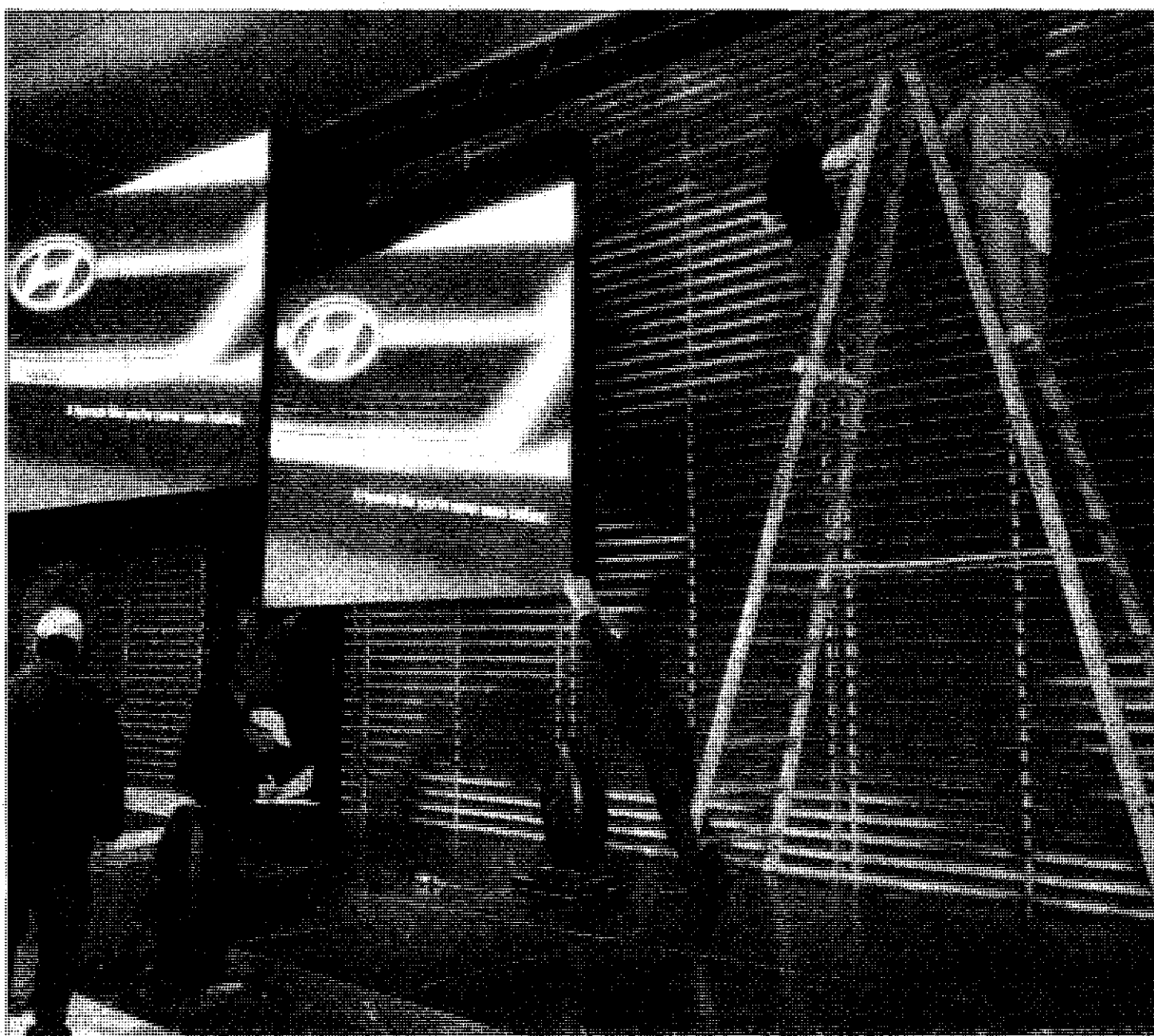
WESTLAND Observer



VOLUME 40 NUMBER 66

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BILL BRESLER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Setting the stage

Staff from Exhibit Works, based in Livonia, set up the Hyundai display for a Monday press conference at the North American International Auto Show at the Cobo Center. For more of the story, see page A4.

Work plan for Cooper site drafted

BY DARRELL CLEM
STAFF WRITER

Local officials appear more optimistic than ever that the old Cooper School site – a former landfill fenced off since 1991 amid a contamination scare – will be cleaned up and redeveloped.

"I feel more confident than I did in the past that this is going to come to fruition," Westland Mayor Sandra Cicirelli said.

City officials, Livonia school officials, developers, consultants and state environmental representatives met Wednesday as they continued to chart a work

PLEASE SEE COOPER, A2

Taxpayers 'win' with refunding of school bonds

BY SUE MASON
STAFF WRITER

The Wayne-Westland Community Schools found what it was looking for in the bond market and, as a result, taxpayers will pay less to retire bonds related to recent school renovations.

That was the message Gary Martin, assistant superintendent for business, delivered to the board of education at its meeting Monday evening.

"The bond market got a little active and we were fortunate we waited," he said. "Had we gone in earlier, we wouldn't have had that extra \$800,000 in savings."

The district refunded the remainder of the \$108 million in bonds sold in 1998, roughly \$80.5 million, shaving \$3.8 million of the cost to taxpayers for the bonds which will expire between 2008 and 2019.

The district began discussing the possibility of

PLEASE SEE REFUNDING, A2

Sri Lanka

Help for homeland starts at home

BY STEPHANIE ANGELYN CASOLA
STAFF WRITER

Sheran and Hiranthini Alles didn't waste much time. They awoke on Dec. 26 to hear the devastating news that their native Sri Lanka had been hit by a tsunami. By that same evening the couple had already composed a letter to send around the community seeking help for a relief effort aimed at near-destroyed the region.

Since then, the Sri Lanka Disaster Relief Fund has been arranged through the Great Lakes Buddhist Vihara, a temple in Southfield, using a tax-exempt account with Bank One.

"We don't have many Sri Lankans (in the area)," said Sheran Alles. "We all got together the next day itself and started to think how we can help."

Residents from Livonia, Westland, Novi, Northville, Farmington Hills, Troy, Rochester Hills, and even Windsor, Ontario are part of this multi-community effort to support the rebuilding of Sri Lanka. Those involved – like the Alles family – hope to provide long-term support in addition to the immediate assistance already being sent by the U.S. government.

The money raised locally will go toward rebuilding housing, and eventually schools, for those in the hardest-hit places, those who have the least income.

For \$2,000 to \$3,000, a basic two-bedroom home can be built in Sri Lanka, according to Sheran Alles. A third world country located in

PLEASE SEE SRI LANKA, A2



BILL BRESLER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Hiranthini Alles shares photos from Sri Lanka with her children, 10-year-old Hiran, and 4-year-old Shehani.

Police, schools probe assault

BY DARRELL CLEM
STAFF WRITER

A parent, possibly angry that his son didn't get more playing time in a basketball game, attacked a coach Friday night at John Glenn High School, officials said.

The parent is accused of assaulting junior varsity coach Mark Anderson from behind as Anderson sat on a bench facing the basketball court, said Wayne-Westland Community Schools Superintendent Greg Baracy.

"He assaulted him in the gymnasium as our coach sat on the bench," Baracy said. "Shortly thereafter, there was another skirmish in a hallway."

Anderson wasn't seriously hurt, but he was caught off guard by being attacked by a parent, Baracy said.

PLEASE SEE ASSAULT, A5

Calling all former Observer & Eccentric Academic All-Stars

Since 1985, the Observer & Eccentric has honored outstanding students through its Academic All-Star program.

This year marks the Observer's 20th year of honoring local students and we'd like to hear from our former Academic All-Stars.

If you were an Observer Academic All-Star, let us know what you have been doing since your selection. What did you study? What careers did you have? What's your life been like

since that time? Tell us your story and include your high school graduation photo and a recent photo, too.

Special annual sections about the Academic All-Stars have saluted the intelligence, involvement and industry of the best and brightest students in public and private high schools around Oakland and Wayne counties

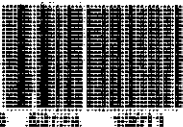
This year, we're planning a special edition in honor of the program's 20th anniversary.

If you're a former All-Star or a parent who can provide information and photos about your former All-Star, e-mail Special Editor Mary Klemic at mklemic@oe.homecomm.net or mail to Observer & Eccentric, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham 48009 Attn: Mary Klemic. Be sure to include a phone number where you can be reached. You can e-mail photos in a jpeg format (please send largest size possible) and make sure photos are identified.

The special section will be published in May 2005.

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Taste D1

Kids! Grab your Crayons!

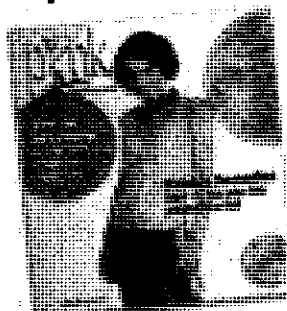
Color Big Bird, send your entry in and you could be the lucky winner of a pizza party for 25 people and tickets to Sesame Street Live's new show!

Look for Big Bird in today's paper

Coming Sunday in PINK

The Art of Fashion

Local artist paints with style.



Westland Center starts tsunami relief collection

Westland Shopping Center has begun collecting donations to aid in the relief efforts of the tsunami victims in South and Southeast Asia.

The mall is serving as a centralized community location for donations.

One hundred percent of the money collected will be given to AmeriCares, a nonprofit disaster relief and humanitarian aid organization that provides immediate response to emergency medical needs.

The goal of the mall is to raise \$5,000 dollars.

"We know Westland residents as well as other communities want to help the victims of this horrible catastrophe," said Ed McHale, Westland Shopping Center general manager. "Our goal is for the members of the community to come together in this great time of need and to help survivors maintain their health and

rebuild their lives and communities.

"We want to show the rest of the world that America cares."

All donations are tax deductible, and individuals will be sent a thank you letter and a receipt directly from AmeriCares.

Only cash and check donations are being accepted.

Community members will be able to see how much money has been raised by a "thermometer" tracking the donations. The collection efforts will run through the next 30 days and will be extended, if necessary.

Westland Shopping Center is at Wayne Road and Warren in Westland.

It is leased and managed by Jones Lang LaSalle.

All Jones Lang LaSalle leased and managed malls will participate in the collection effort.

SRI LANKA

FROM PAGE A1

the Indian Ocean, it was one of 11 nations affected by the disaster. Sri Lanka is home to 18 million people. The entire island is about one-quarter of the size of Michigan.

Sheran Alles hopes those Sri Lankans who lost their homes will play an active role in the rebuilding effort. And anyone who donates to this cause will be informed with updates on the progress.

Sherap and Hiranthini Alles are originally from Sri Lanka and still have family and friends living there. Though their relatives live in or near Colombo, along the west coast, the storms still affected the area. The southeastern part of the country was hardest hit.

Initially after the tsunami struck, Hiranthini Alles said it was "difficult to get ahold of people."

HOLIDAY VISIT MISSED

Sheran Alles said nearly every Christmas they travel to Sri Lanka to visit relatives. This was the first time they opted to stay home.

"This is the first time my parents said 'We're happy you didn't come,'" he said.

The couple moved to the United States in 1988 and both attended Wayne State University. They lived in university housing until 1995 when they moved to Westland.

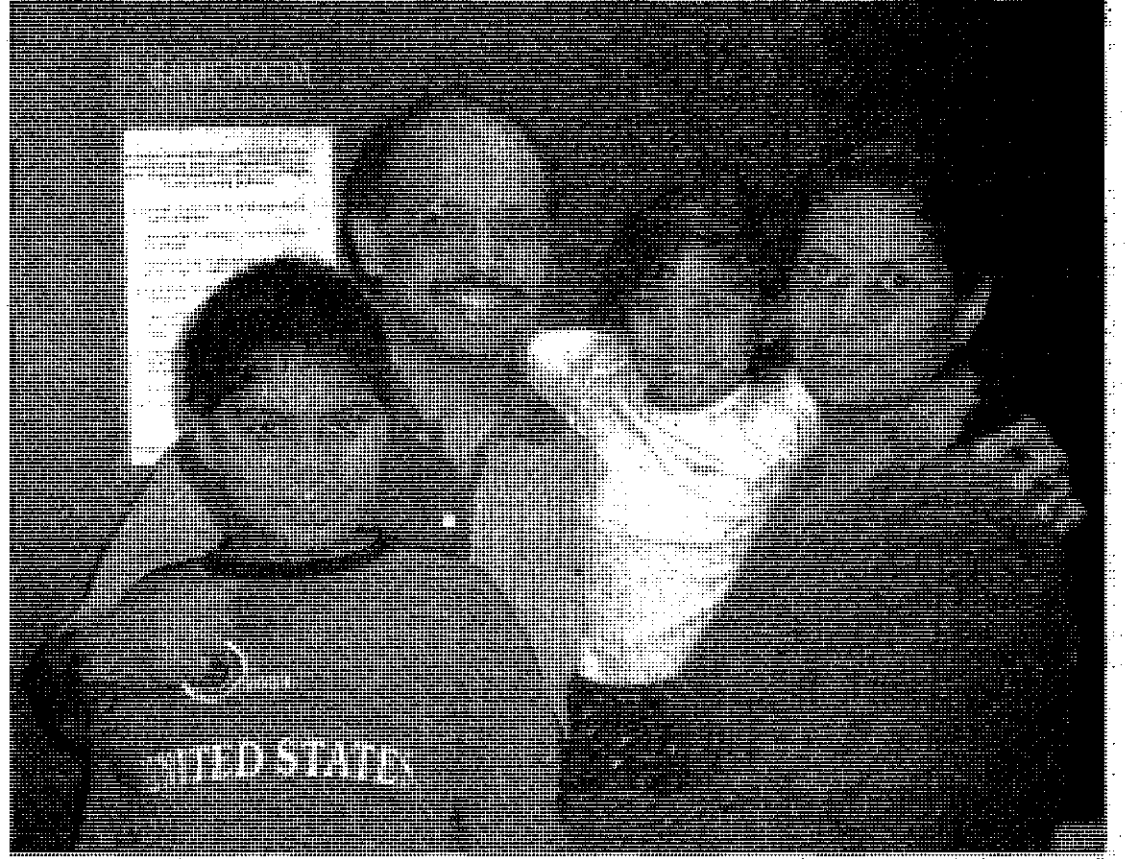
In 2002, they bought their first home in Livonia.

The Alles' have two children. Their son, Hiran, is 10 years old and attends Tyler Elementary.

Their daughter, Shehani is 4 and attends Livonia Montessori Center. According to Hiranthini, her daughter's school has adopted the tsunami relief effort as a school-wide service project this year.

Because she is a PTA member at Tyler, Hiranthini has been in contact with Livonia Public Schools to assist with relief efforts as well.

The Alles family had just visited Sri Lanka in August. The



The Alles family is heading up efforts to support those in need in Sri Lanka, following the tsunami disaster. The family - Hiran (from left), Sheran, Shehani and Hiranthini - visited the country in August, where they still have many family and friends.

news of the tsunami came as a shock, since such extreme weather is not common to the area. There had never been an earthquake before, they said. That's why it took so many people by surprise, and took so many lives. Current estimates show 35,000 people died and 1.5 million were left homeless in Sri Lanka alone.

"I have never heard of a large-scale natural disaster in Sri Lanka," said Hiranthini Alles.

The fishing and tourism industries so crucial to Sri Lanka have been devastated by the disaster, they said. Unlike the United States, residents with lower income tend to live and work on the coastline.

In addition, roads and rail lines circling Sri Lanka have been demolished.

"Several friends have lost family," said Hiranthini Alles.

Though the Alles family itself has not lost anyone, they

have been hearing about friends and acquaintances who perished. Some were just visiting the country on holiday. Such news fuels the effort to continue.

LONG-TERM RECOVERY

They plan to collect donations through mid-February before putting the relief efforts in action. And for Sri Lankans, this project will continue indefinitely.

Sheran Alles said he feels a responsibility to reach out and help, as long as its needed.

And that sentiment has come through for his son, Hiran, as well. Hiran asked his parents if he could collect money from his friends at school for the relief effort.

"I was really touched by that," said his mother. "It doesn't matter if they make a 25-cent donation. They care. They want to help kids they've never

seen who live half-way around

the world."

That's the sort of response the Alles family has found from their neighbors as well.

"Everyone wants to be part of it," said Hiranthini Alles.

Her husband added: "This is the least we can do."

He believes it could take 20 years to bring about change and make a difference in the country.

To donate to this local effort for the homeless families and orphaned children in Sri Lanka, send checks payable to Help Sri-Lanka Disaster Relief Fund to Great Lakes Buddhist Vihara, 21491 Beech Road, Southfield, MI 48034. All donations are tax-deductible and 100 percent of the proceeds will go toward this effort.

To donate online, see the Web at glbvi-hara.org. For more information, contact the Alles family at (734) 474-5650.

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Comcast adds channels for tsunami coverage

Residents in four western Wayne County communities will have access to the International Channel for offer extensive news coverage of the tsunami recovery efforts.

Comcast Digital Cable is making the channel available to customers in Westland, Canton, Plymouth and Plymouth Township through Jan. 31 at no additional cost, even to those customers that do not currently subscribe to these channels (which are normally offered on a subscription basis).

In light of the tragic aftermath of the Dec. 26 tsunami, Comcast Cable is providing access to two South Asian television news channels - TV Asia and Zee TV.

According to the cable provider, Comcast "is committed to providing our valued customers with the most up-to-date information available from Asia. News about the tsunami recovery efforts will be especially important to South Asian Americans in Michigan who are desperately seeking information about the welfare of family and friends in their homelands."

A digital set-top box and remote control are required to receive the signal.

Customers don't need to request the channels or make any changes to their existing equipment.

Customers who have questions can call Comcast at (888) COMCAST.

COOPER

FROM PAGE A1

plan that will guide the multi-million project.

Southfield-based Jonna Cos. unveiled a plan last October to build a three-story, 144-unit senior citizen complex, a medical office building, an outpatient surgical center and a golf driving range on the site, on Ann Arbor Trail east of Middlebelt.

The work plan will have to win approval from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality. It will serve as a blueprint for environmental testing of the site, cleaning up the property, tearing down the former school and preparing the land for redevelopment, said Livonia Public Schools Superintendent Randy Liepa.

The work plan also will address ways to ensure that area air and water quality will not be affected by cleanup

efforts. Former Livonia Mayor Jack Kirksey, who is working with local officials on the project, pledged that, above all, the public's safety will not be compromised.

"Things are progressing very well," Kirksey said. "There is nothing ahead of us that seems insurmountable."

If local officials can get the work plan approved by state environmental officials, Cicirelli said it's possible that the school could be torn down as early as next summer.

"Our goal is to get it down by the end of June or July," she said, although she and others cautioned that progress will hinge on the state approval process.

Local officials, developers, consultants and state environmental officials are expected to continue meeting each month as they develop a work plan that will ultimately be submitted to Lansing.

"The linchpin is the work

plan," Kirksey said.

Officials also have started identifying potential contractors who would be qualified to do work on the site, he said.

Moreover, Cicirelli said Jonna Cos. is expected soon to submit what is called a planned unit development proposal to the Westland City Council for approval.

The Livonia school district has secured a \$1.3 million grant from MDEQ to spur the project. The city has been assured that it will receive a \$1 million loan for similar purposes.

City officials have said that new tax revenues from the development could be used to help pay off the loan.

Meanwhile, Cooper School area residents should in coming weeks receive a newsletter that local officials plan to mail to some 2,500 residences to inform them of the latest developments, Kirksey said.

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REFUNDING

FROM PAGE A1

refunding in October. In November, the board gave Martin the green light to test the bond market. The district was looking for a gross savings of \$3 million, and Martin did better.

"There is a cost for doing this and that's the savings after we paid all the professional fees," said Martin of the \$3.8 million. "That's a true savings."

The sale was a "window of opportunity" for the district. Bonds rates have been at historic lows, and experts have been projecting them to rise.

The sale took place Dec. 1 and was finalized Dec. 16. Four different underwriters handled the transactions.

"They were the ones who suggested we go in now," Martin said.

The proceeds from the sale of the new bonds will be used to pay off the old bonds. The money raised by the district's debt levy will pay off the new bonds.

Taxpayers, not the school district, benefit from the refunding. However, the savings won't show up in tax bills for several years and it won't be a windfall. Martin had previously estimated the district's

taxpayers would see an \$8-\$10 savings on their individual tax bills.

"On an individual basis per year, it's not huge, but it adds up," Martin said. "Taxpayers will pay \$3.8 million less than what they expected when they approved the bond in 1998."

Martin and his staff earned praise for their work, with Trustee Ed Turner noting that "Gary can spend 10 cents and get 15 cents in change."

"I'm glad it turned out higher than what we expected," board Secretary Martha Pitsenbarger added.

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Suit targets 5 officers involved in shooting

BY LEANNE ROGERS
STAFF WRITER

A Westland Police officer is among five officers being sued by a bystander, stemming from a fatal shooting in Garden City in December 2002.

Two years after the incident, Stella King has filed a lawsuit in Wayne County Circuit Court charging that the officers - Westland Police Sgt. Jeff Przybinski, Garden City police Officer Robert Muery, and Inkster police Officer Shawn Adams, all assigned at the time to the Metro Street Enforcement Team - used unnecessary and excessive force as they pulled her from her car at gunpoint.

Seeking in excess of \$25,000 in damages, the lawsuit also names Garden City Police Officer Rodney Donald, who was shot seven times.

On the afternoon of Dec. 31, 2002, Donald had been handling a traffic stop - he reported that King had been stopped for running a red light at Maplewood and Middlebelt - in the driveway of O'Leary Auditorium at Garden City High School.

As Donald stood near the driver's door talking with King, Garden City resident Lance Morton came from his nearby vehicle and began shooting a rifle at the officer. Morton pursued Donald and continued firing at him until three other uniformed officers arrived.

Morton exchanged gunfire with each of the uniformed officers as they arrived until he was fatally wounded.

Still in her vehicle, King was among a number of people who called 9-1-1 after witnessing the shooting. As the incident was unfolding, some of the callers described a second shooter and vehicle being involved in the incident.

According to the lawsuit, Muery and Adams confronted King with guns drawn without having identified themselves as police officers. Fearful for her life, King said that she put her head down and stepped on the gas, slamming her car into a tree.

The officers subsequently identified themselves and apologized, according to the complaint, although King's vehicle was impounded as part of the

investigation.

The lawsuit charges that the physical contact or threat of contact was unnecessary and excessive, that the officers lacked probable cause to believe King was guilty of any criminal act, that she was falsely arrested at the traffic stop and that the officers were grossly negligent regarding her safety.

King's attorney did not respond to a request for comments on the lawsuit.

A review of the incident by the Wayne County Prosecutor's Office found the shooting of Morton to have been justified.

Additionally, the police department also conducted an internal investigation headed by then-Deputy Chief Kim Scott, who is now chief.

"Any time there is a shooting, we do an internal review separate from the prosecutor. It looks at our rules and regulations - none were violated," said City Manager David Harvey, who was police chief at the time of the shooting. "She (King) made no complaint at the time."

Since Donald had just made contact with King when the shooting happened, Harvey said

he doesn't know if she was going to be ticketed.

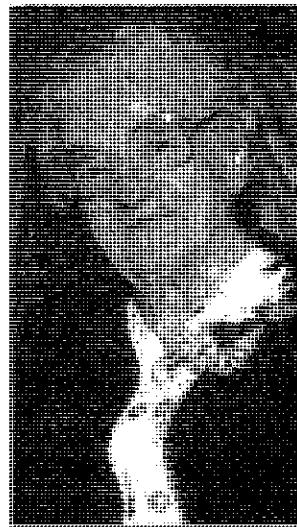
The lawsuit has been turned over to the Michigan Municipal Risk Management Authority attorneys. Harvey particularly questioned Donald being named in King's lawsuit.

Immediately following the shooting, Harvey quoted King as crediting Donald with saving her life by running away from the vehicle and taking her out of the line of fire. Injured in the arm, leg and foot, Donald subsequently took a medical retirement from the police department.

"I don't know what there would be in this complaint to suggest that Rodney Donald was involved in any of those charges," said Harvey. "Rodney received awards and accolades from many organizations - specifically he was praised by his actions by the city council in form of a resolution. He received the highest award for valor you can receive without losing your life from the Michigan Association of Chiefs of Police."

irogers@oe.homecomm.net | (734) 953-2103

Happy birthday!



Kompoltowicz Westland.

If you're at Marquette House and happen to see Vera Kompoltowicz, be sure to wish her a happy birthday. She celebrated her 99th birthday Wednesday.

Born in Poland, Kompoltowicz came to the U.S. on a boat with her sisters on May 30, 1914. She married her husband, Boleslaw, in 1925 and they had five children - Jenny Siwicki, Sylvia Skrel, Lottie Buchinsky, Raymond Kompoltowicz and George Kompoltowicz.

Her husband died in 1964, and Kompoltowicz continued to live in Detroit until a year ago when she moved into the Marquette House in

In addition to her children, she also has 18 grandchildren, 19 great-grandchildren and six great, great-grandchildren. According to her family, she still enjoys playing cards, especially nickel poker, and bingo.

Companies must let consumers know cost of call

BY DARRELL CLEM
STAFF WRITER

Deanna Haupt of Westland was shocked when she got her telephone bill and saw how much she owed for a call she placed from a pay phone at Detroit Metro Airport.

She had used a calling card provided by her long distance company to let a relative know that she and husband Robert needed a ride home.

"I called and probably talked one or two minutes. When I got my phone bill, I saw that the call cost me over \$7," Haupt said. "It's not a great deal of money, but for such a short call I didn't think it should have cost me more than 50 cents."

Haupt mentioned the phone

call to her neighbor, state Rep. Glenn Anderson, D-Westland, who championed her cause in Lansing by getting a new consumer protection bill passed.

Under a bill passed by both houses and signed by Gov. Jennifer Granholm, calling card companies have to advise customers how to get a rate quote before placing a call.

The law states that callers can get the rate quote by pressing no more than two phone keys or by staying on the line for a company representative.

"I've always felt that legislators at all levels of government can have an impact on consumer legislation," Anderson said. "Never a day passes that you don't discover another scam or overcharge or unjust

situation."

Anderson introduced the bill and shepherded it through the House and Senate, and he kept Haupt informed of its status as it moved through the system.

"I just thought it was a good piece of legislation to remedy a situation that was brought to my attention," he said.

While Haupt may have saved only a few dollars by not using her calling card, Michigan consumers as a group could realize substantial savings.

"Collectively it could make a big difference over time," Anderson said.

Haupt couldn't agree more. "I didn't lose a great deal of money, but for what I got, it was a lot of money," she said.

"I really have to give Glenn all the credit. He took the ball and ran with it."

Haupt and her husband accompanied Anderson to Lansing for a ceremonial signing of the bill by Granholm. The couple received a signed copy of the bill and the governor's signature pen.

Haupt said she's gratified that she may have played a role in helping to protect other pay phone users.

"I'm amazed," she said. "When I tell my friends about it, they all tell me, 'See. We can make a difference.'"

dclem@oe.homecomm.net | (734) 953-2110

Fair features summer camps and activities

Parents looking for summer opportunities for their children and high school and college students interested in summer employment can find it at the 16th annual Super Summer for Kids: A Camp and Activities Fair Sunday, Feb. 27.

The fair, which offers a one-stop shopping for interesting and stimulating camps, will be 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. in the Birmingham Public Schools Corporate Training and Conference Center behind Groves High School at 31301 Evergreen, Beverly Hills. Admission is free.

More than 70 U.S. and Canadian camps, both day and overnight, will be showcased at

the event. Many new camps will attend this year, according to Elaine Sturnam, camp fair organizer.

In addition, new programs for older children that include overnight travel programs, computer camps, sports camps, and programs that have a community service component will be represented.

In addition, high school and college students interested in summer employment will have the opportunity to obtain valuable information.

The camp fair is presented by Elaine S. Events and co-sponsored by The Observer & Eccentric Newspapers and Metro Parent Magazine.

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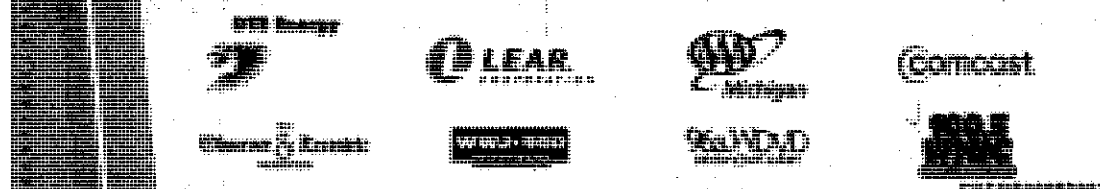
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Mike Thoresen of Exhibit Works, at the Ford display which is designed to have an open, spacious feeling.

Local company sets stage to showcase latest auto designs

BY SAM TRICOMO
STAFF WRITER

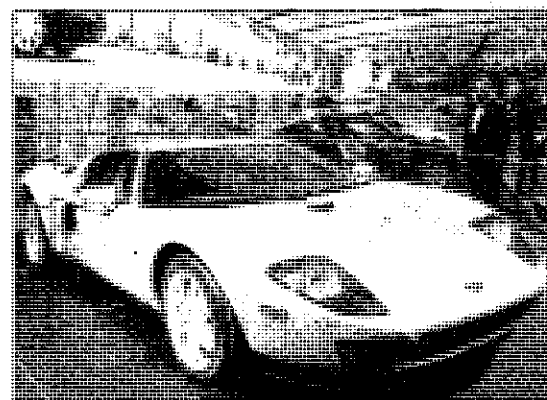


Exhibit Works display for Ford Motor shows off everything from the Ford Focus to their Ford GT supercar.

Within several thousand square feet Mike Thoresen creates an entire world.

Thoresen is vice president of Exhibit Works a Livonia-based company that creates the dramatic and often glitzy staging areas at shows where automakers showcase their latest designs and attempt to woo buyers.

Fresh from setting up displays at the Los Angeles Auto Show, Thoresen and his crews were busy putting together displays for the entire Ford line up, Hyundai, Porsche, Kia and Saab at the North American International Auto Show in Detroit earlier this week.

"We have to create something that reflects the personality of the vehicle and projects the ideas of the company overall," Thoresen said.

That means attention to detail and that's where Exhibit Works' 350 skilled trades people, designers and consultants get to work.

One of the company's newest customers, Hyundai Motors, charged Exhibit Works with helping to set the stage for the introduction of its redesigned Sonata.

To do that, Exhibit Works created a 134-foot by 24-foot translucent wall with multi-color light displays, a 192-square-foot LED screen featuring commercials and past auto show footage and an electronic center where show goers can access vehicle information.

Contractual agreements with his clients prevent Thoresen from discussing the strategies behind the various exhibits.

"I can tell you that in all cases, it's very important to make sure that visitors know immediately that they are leaving one company's display and entering another," he said.

His company also had a hand in creating the massive display area for the Ford family of vehicles including Lincoln-Mercury and Mazda.

As Ford also owns Range Rover, Volvo, Jaguar and Aston Martin, the exhibit area containing the Blue Oval's holdings is vast.

Cobo is an open exhibit space but Exhibit Works used different lighting as one way to differentiate the various brands.

Music and flooring materials are other obvious boundary creators.

Near the Macomb entrance to the show is a good example of corporate boundaries. To the left visitors will see the Honda exhibit where the company is showing off its first ever pickup, the Ridgeline.

Known for high quality and for grabbing market share from domestic automakers in the

small and medium sized markets, Honda is attacking the truck market with a sort of cross over vehicle complete with unique bed storage options and comfortable appointments inside.

Directly to the right though is a reminder that Ford doesn't plan to let go of its king of the truck market hill position easily as the company's F-250 Harley Davidson Edition sits bathed in bright light.

The contrast between the two trucks is obvious and also highlighted by the music playing near each. Honda opted for a near New Age sound and Ford further enhanced the bad boy image of the F-series truck with pounding rock.

Across from the truck area is more evidence of the company's success as the '05, retro inspired Mustang sits in all its various trim packages.

A flat panoramic screen television monitor stretching 150 feet is hoisted high above the pony cars and viewers can see the new street machines racing around mountain roads.

NAIAS chairman Bill Cook said companies like Exhibit Works, together with manufacturers, have worked hard to recreate the show.

"It's very evident that this year's show is already proving to be our best. The exhibit companies and manufacturers really stepped up and helped us to create a very open feel to the show," Cook said.

Improved lighting in Cobo Hall is one improvement that was ready and waiting for the show but Cook said improving sight lines and traffic flow were among the major charges for this year's show.

"One thing that people will really notice as a new standard this year is the use of very large, high quality video screens as a way of conveying a company's message," Cook said.

Early positive responses from foreign media tell Cook the '05 show will be one to beat.

The North American International Auto Show runs Saturday-Sunday, Jan. 15-23 at the Cobo Conference Center, One Washington Blvd., Detroit. Show hours are 9 a.m. to 10 p.m. Saturday-Saturday, Jan. 15-22; 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 23. Admission \$12 adult, \$6 seniors 65 and older, children 12 and under free with parent, at door. To order tickets online, or more information, visit www.naias.com

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DEATHS

B
James Wellington Bushway III, 58, of Westland, died Dec. 25.

C
Marie L. Crockett, of Westland, died Jan. 9.

G
Arthur John Giese Jr., 82, died Jan. 9.

H
Thomas E. Herman and Mary Louise Herman, died Jan. 9.

J
Nina A. Johnston, 87, of Rochester Hills, formerly of Bloomfield Hills, died Jan. 8.

L
Wanda Jewelene "Julie" Lahr, 73, died Jan. 8.
Evan J. "Jake" Leonard, of Clarkston, died Jan. 7.

N
Mary Nelson, 87, died Jan. 9.

P
Ahti Ellis Petaja, 90, of Rochester Hills, died Dec. 24.

S
Geneva Juanita Shira, of Clarkston, 93, formerly of Muskegon, died Jan. 8.
Melvin Charles St. Pierre, of Garden City, died Jan. 5.

W
Mike Waldecker, 74, formerly of Plymouth, died Jan. 10.

Y
Ogans Donna York, of Clarkston, died Jan. 7.

INFORMATION CENTRAL

The holidays are over, the weather is cold and blustery, and many warm weather activities have been put on hold. This is the perfect time of year to

ASSAULT

FROM PAGE A1

"I think he was in shock."

The junior varsity game had ended, and Anderson was sitting on the bench with a varsity coach during a game against Northville when the attack occurred, Baracy said.

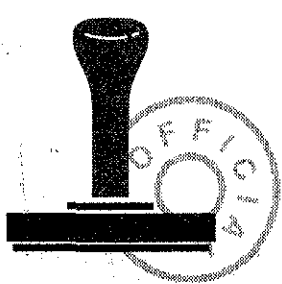
Witnesses told authorities that the parent had made comments about his son not getting enough playing time on the junior varsity team, the superintendent said.

Westland police are investigating the incident, police Sgt. Michael Willard said, and possible charges could be brought against the parent. Willard said he was trying to contact witnesses this week.

School officials reviewed a videotape from inside the gymnasium, and they have taken statements from witnesses attending the game, Baracy said.

With an investigation continuing, Baracy said he couldn't divulge much more about the incident.

"We are right now in the midst of an investigation involving an athlete's parent who allegedly assaulted our junior varsity basketball coach," he said, adding that "it would be premature" to further speculate on the incident.



For the Record appears in every edition of the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers. Complete paid obituaries can be found inside today's Sports section in *Passages* on page C9.

develop new hobbies and skills, and a great place to find ideas and instructions for those new interests is the video/DVD collection at the Public Library of Westland.

Want to learn more about computers? We have basic videos, such as *Introduction to Computers*, *Discovering the Internet and Learn! Microsoft Word 2000: Creating Powerful Documents*, and more advanced titles dealing with PowerPoint, C++, Java, ColdFusion, ASP.net and Perl.

Or work up a sweat with a new fitness regimen. You will find videos on fat burning, toning and shaping and videos on yoga, pilates, Tai Chi, callanetics, weight training and aerobics. Train with the best: Kathy Smith, Denise Austin, Jane Fonda, Richard Simmons, Rodney Yee or Liliias.

You can learn a new dance step. With the many titles we offer, you are sure to find one you like - tap dancing, country line dancing, ballet, swing, Latin, hip hop, polka, African and

Caribbean, Celtic or jazz.

Winter can be a great time to plan or complete indoor renovations. You can find some great tips in *Woodworking Made Easy*, *Tiling Floor*, *Tiling Countertops*, *Faux Finishing*, *Rag Painting and Sponge Painting*. Add some color to your home after watching *Decorating with Flowers* or *Flower Arranging Made Easy*.

Maybe you have always wanted to play a musical instrument. To complement our extensive book collection, we own many how-to videos on piano, guitar, drums, flute, saxophone, uke, banjo, dobro, mandolin, dulcimer and even spoons.

There are many indoor activities that you can learn in the wintertime, such as darts, bowling, bridge, bingo and yo-yoing, and we have videos for all. Or, you can try: *Skills & Drills:*

Volleyball, *Table Tennis: The Sport*, *Basics of Ice Skating*, *Cardio Kickboxing*, *Principles of Aikido*, *Trampoline Training for Body, Mind and Spirit*, *Basketball Camp 101* and *Wrestling Essentials*.

You can also get prepared for warm weather sports by watching one of our many videos on golf, baseball, football, soccer, skateboarding, horseshoes, fishing, hunting and boating.

Whatever your interest, you are likely to find a helpful video or DVD at the library to support it. Come in sometime and browse our audio-visual shelves, or call us at (734) 326-6123 for more information.

The William P. Faust Public Library is at 6123 Central City Parkway, Westland. For more information, call (734) 326-6123.

RECYCLING

Westland's Recycling Center, located behind the Economic Growth Center at 37095 Marquette, is open all year for Westland residents only. Hours of operation through March 31 are 7:30 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday-Friday and 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Saturday. The center is closed on Sunday and holidays year round.

The center accepts:

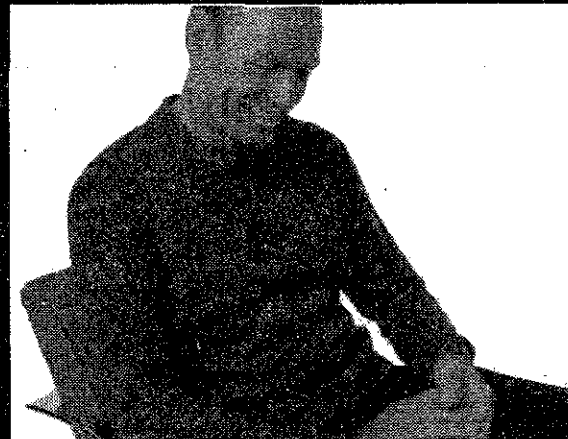
- Clean newsprint stacked neatly, 6-15 inches high, tied with twine, or packed into paper bags. Papers must be dry, no mold. NO junk mail, catalogs, magazines or phone books, office paper, computer paper or cardboard accepted.
- Plastics (#1 or #2) drink jugs and colored laundry detergent-type jugs (HDPE No. 2 and PET No. 1) that are cleaned and washed out.

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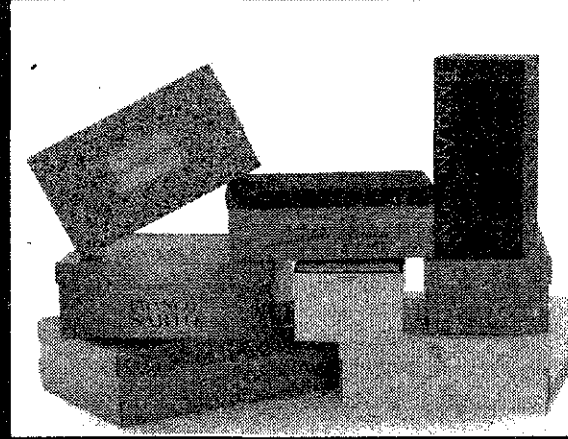


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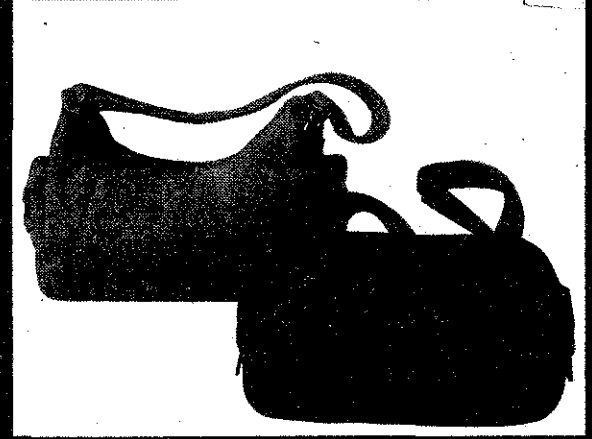
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OUR VIEWS

All Americans have reason to honor King

Next week, an ever-increasing number of programs and activities will take place to honor the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

On Monday, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, some of our towns will hold parades. Others, like Westland, will gather to celebrate his legacy and reflect on his themes of tolerance, understanding and equal rights for all. And, for the first time, the Westland celebration will be held in a place where King would have felt most comfortable — a church.

It is proper to celebrate King's life in such a way. He has, after all, become an American symbol of justice and the power of positive change. More than any leader, regardless of color, he is the man who carries the message forward even from beyond the grave.

Just as John F. Kennedy inspired his fellow Americans as to what we could accomplish as a nation, King's legacy continues to inspire us as to what we can accomplish as individuals.

We all should remember that M.L. King Jr. Day is not a "black" holiday, nor a celebration of his life. It is a dedication to his cause, which should be the cause of all Americans: justice and equality for all. And that message is even more important as our nation struggles to comprehend the ongoing war in Iraq and lends a helping hand to victims of the recent tsunami.

If you can, participate in the Prayer Breakfast. If that isn't possible and you're away from the community, find a Martin Luther King Jr. Day march or celebration where you're at and join it. Or at the least take time to read his famous "I Have a Dream" speech. It's short; direct and challenges all Americans to live up to the principles of this country.

New test is good for students and schools

For the last few years many suburban high school juniors turned up their noses at the MEAP. Even the enticement of a scholarship wouldn't convince them that taking the test had any relationship to their plans to go to college.

The result was that many schools didn't have the necessary 95 percent participation in the Michigan Educational Assessment Program test to make adequate yearly progress under the No Child Left Behind legislation.

Beginning with the 2006-07 school year, the MEAP high school proficiency test will be replaced by the new Michigan Merit Exam, a college entrance-style test. The legislation was signed last week by Gov. Jennifer Granholm.

The new test was one of the 19 recommendations of the Cherry Commission on Higher Education and Economic Growth report released in December. The report calls for more rigorous standards for high school students based on skills needed in the college classroom and the workplace.

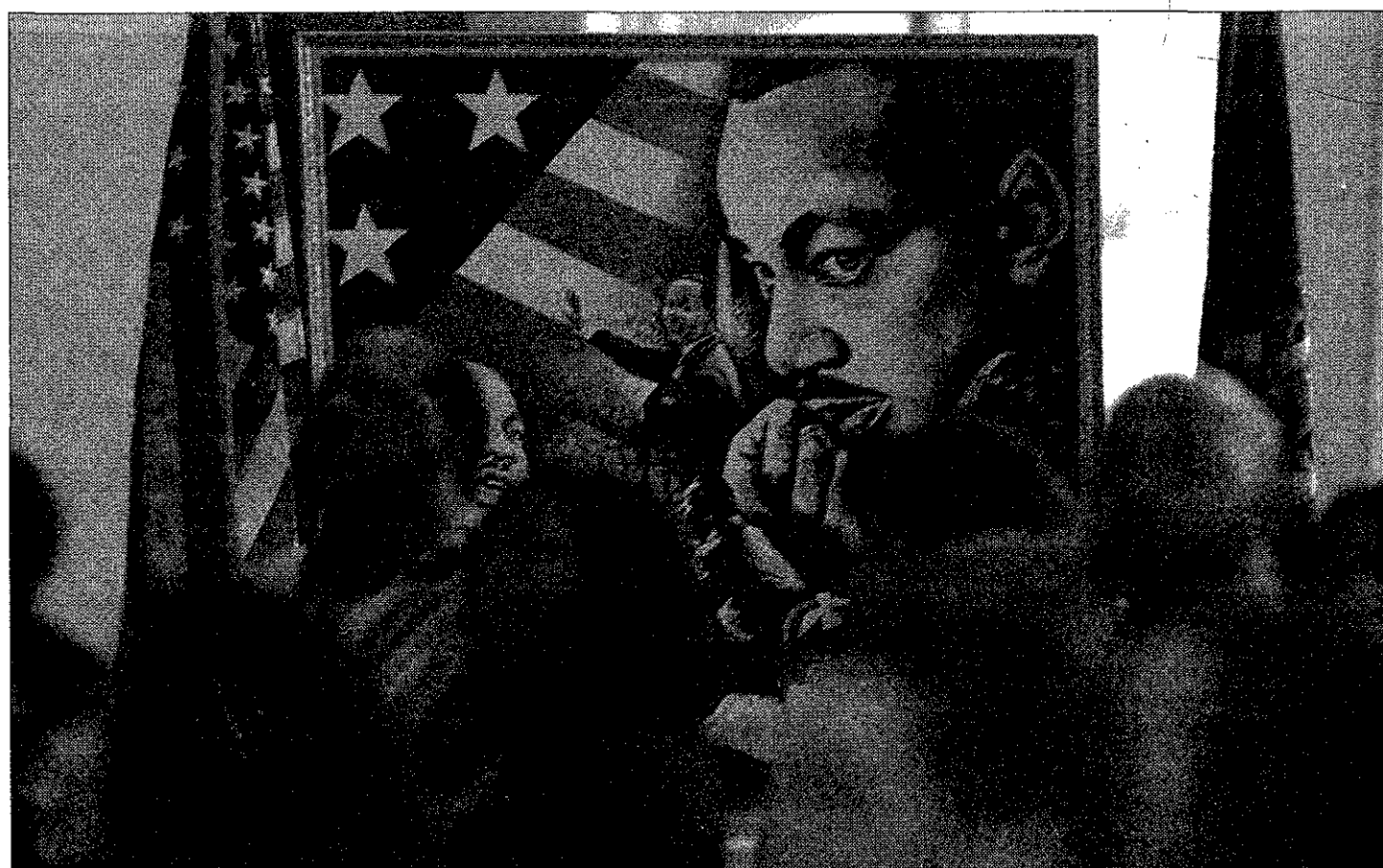
The Merit Exam will measure both the readiness of students to compete at the college level and whether the high school is meeting state curriculum standards.

Many high school juniors balked at taking a test that wasn't accepted for college entrance. Michigan colleges traditionally use the ACT in their evaluation of students; schools in other parts of the country use the SAT. The MEAP became just another test that didn't serve the needs of the students and their parents, but was needed by the state to evaluate the school.

Some have questioned whether the new test might be inappropriate for students who aren't planning to attend college. But the Cherry Commission and Granholm make a strong case that our changing economy demands higher standards and an expectation that most students will need post-secondary education.

"To create a strong economy and good jobs, we need to reach our goal of doubling the number of college graduates in Michigan," Granholm said on signing the legislation. "We know the more you learn, the more you earn, and this new exam will help high school students gain the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in college and the workplace. This new exam sends the message that we expect every student will continue their education beyond high school."

It also sends the message to local school districts that they need to elevate their curriculums to meet these standards.



FILE PHOTO

Many communities throughout metro Detroit will hold ceremonies and celebrations Monday marking the annual Martin Luther King Jr. Day holiday. We should all embrace the message of tolerance and equal opportunity that King delivered.

LETTERS

Shabby treatment

To Reid Thebault, president of the YMCA:

A local newspaper referred to the demolition of the Wayne-Westland YMCA as "bringing down junk." This facility was a multi-million dollar investment by hundreds of citizens of the Wayne-Westland community, the United Foundation and the Metro YMCA.

I could go on at length about the shabby way this branch, this Wayne-Westland Board, and the Wayne-Westland communities were treated by you until the time of closing in June 2003. However, it is the position of the YMCA since the time of closing that once again reaffirms your lack of commitment to community and to citizens who have been very good not only to the Wayne-Westland YMCA, but to the Metro YMCA.

The doors were just closed, but not closed well. The building was just abandoned with papers, stuff, and I assume the plaques with the names of hundreds of citizens who built our YMCA.

Because it was not closed well or properly, the building was subject to fires. Luckily, the Westland Fire Department put them out without harm to the firefighters, the neighbors or the probable young adults who set them.

The condition of the YMCA grounds for these past 18 months was atrocious. The grass was rarely cut. The weeds were allowed to grow up when flowers used to be planted by volunteers. Papers and other trash blew across the grounds causing the corner to be a blight to the community. I kept wondering when was the City of Westland going to issue you a criminal ordinance violation for the blight.

I spent more than 30 years at the Wayne-Westland YMCA as a volunteer, board member, board chair, and member. I chaired the annual Recognition Dinner where we, the Wayne-Westland board, held an annual Celebration of Community Pride, honoring volunteers and teachers for their work in the community. Not once did you ever attend such a function, or any other branch activity, but only attended one Board meeting.

You were entrusted with the Wayne-Westland YMCA. Your stewardship was clearly lacking when our branch was open, when it was closed and poorly cared for, and when this valuable community building was demolished. Therefore, my husband and I are resigning as members of the Livonia YMCA, as well as members of the Heritage Club of the YMCA. I will not send in my pledge to the Strong Kids Campaign, preferring to donate the money to other charities in this community. I truly believe that you have lost your commitment to the mission of the YMCA, but that is your choice and the choice of the Metro Board. I know that we no longer wish to have our good names associated with the YMCA.

Gail and Richard McKnight
Westland

Doesn't appreciate remarks

Recently Mother Nature has produced another catastrophic disaster in southeast Asia called a Tsunami. Unfortunately, thousands of people have been injured, killed and displaced — homeless, they lost

everything they own. We should help those in need, but I also believe charity begins at home — take care of our own first. Why is it when things are running smooth in the world, we the "Americans" are called capitalistic pigs, profiteers and are hated around the globe. Our country and way of life is the envy of the world. But, as soon as there is a hot spot across the oceans the same people that detest us soon remember the number and call 1-800-AMERICA for help.

And again, after being ridiculed and cursed, we will pitch in and send hope and relief to the people and countries in need. Why, because we are "Americans" and that's what we do. As the song by Byron McGregor, a Canadian, highlights "Americans are the most generous, least appreciated people in all the world."

The news media gives these morons from the UN a platform to hurriedly come out and criticize our President and country for not doing more in the time of crises. The story wasn't even a day old when these diplomats started throwing their poison darts at America.

I, for one, do not appreciate their snide remarks. Where is Russia, China, Vietnam and Cuba when the call for help goes out. America is the piggy bank of the world. Why doesn't Kofi Annan, the General Secretary of the UN, and his son kick in some of the cash skimmed off the top from the Food for Oil program the UN set up in Iraq. According to news reports, they botched that deal and the "Stash of Iraq" was able to siphon billions, instead of helping his own people.

What are the large corporations that do business in these countries doing to help these people they pay 25 cents an hour to manufacture sneakers to keep costs down and profits up, before they ship their products to the good old USA for the American consumers. Most of the people in these countries can't afford to buy the products they produce.

What was the UN doing before the Tsunami to protect kids in these third world countries from being kidnapped, sold into the sex trade and becoming slaves? I think the UN should not throw stones, if they live in glass houses. They need to knock off the negative and promote all the positive the United States and We the Americans do around the world.

We are a very blessed bountiful country. One nation under God. I just hope all the money people donate finds its way to the individuals in need and does not get "lost" along the way.

Vince Berna
Westland

Thanks for help

On behalf of the Salvation Army, I cannot express enough of our gratitude for you outpouring of support and help through this Asian crisis. What a day it is for us to work together for such a worthy international cause. Never in my lifetime have I experienced such an outpouring of support and unity of purpose.

My one request is that we as a community, both the Salvation Army and the news media always be aware that our efforts to help the victims of the tsunami disaster are unified in purpose and outcome. As we view our role to be service providers, we are concerned that no one

single fund raising effort view their success alone. We are committed to a community effort. If your efforts result in little or large results, you are part of the "total" Salvation Army tsunami effort. And our public reporting will only indicate this.

When we say "From Michigan With Love," we are saying together we can make a difference. Thank you for your support in this challenging project.

Maj. Norman S. Marshall
divisional commander
Salvation Army

Remember Armenia

The world mourns the loss of tens of thousands that were killed by the earthquake in the Indian Ocean and the subsequent Tsunami. As usual, the United States of America was the first to respond with humanitarian aid while many other countries are still debating the issue.

The United States always responds in humanitarian crises without thinking about the political or economic consequences; without thinking whether those in need are friend or foe, as it did not too long ago in Iran. Yet, when we have disasters in America, no country comes to our aid.

Contrast this to what happened in Armenia on Dec. 7, 1988. Armenia suffered a devastating earthquake in the middle of winter in a mountainous country that killed more than 30,000 souls and left over 200,000 homeless. Predictably the United States responded. But wait, Turkey would not allow the U.S. to fly in Turkish air space to bring aid to those suffering Armenians.

They (Turkey) blockaded Armenia and the blockade still exists today. After 16 years many people in the earthquake zone are still living in shipping containers with no running water and kerosene heaters to warm them. As a result of Turkey's blockade, the U.S. Congress passed the Humanitarian Aid Corridor Act, which prevents any nation receiving humanitarian aid from the United States to hinder U.S. aid to another country. Turkey is the only country this has ever applied to.

These are the same people that consider themselves civilized enough to join the European Union. Perhaps in another 100 years.

Edgar Hagopian
Bloomfield Hills

SHARE YOUR OPINIONS

We welcome your letters to the editor. Please include your name, address and phone number for verification. We ask that your letters be 400 words or less. We may edit for clarity, space and content.

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Our fundamental purposes are to enhance the lives of our readers, nurture the hometowns we serve and contribute to the business success of our customers.

QUOTABLE

"The premise is what I believe he would say to us if he were alive today. It's based on occurrences in his life, his mission and his teachings while he was alive."

— Wayne-Westland school board trustee Terrance McClain, about an imaginary letter from the late Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. he will read as part of the celebration of his birthday Jan. 17 at Annapolis Park Church of Christ