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AT HOME, SECTION B

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TASTE, SECTION D



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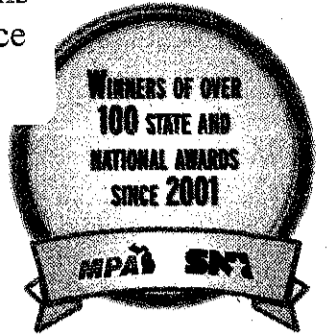
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THURSDAY
January 20, 2005
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VOLUME 40 NUMBER 68

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Apartment manager charged in scheme

BY DARRELL CLEM
STAFF WRITER

An office manager for a Westland apartment complex is accused of embezzling as much as \$76,000 by renting to new tenants and pocketing the money herself.

Mary Adele Olson, 35, of Livonia is accused of renting out apartments, not telling the management company and embezzling the money, police Sgt. Steve Borisch said.

Olson is charged with one count of embezzling more than \$20,000 while she worked at Warris Farms, a north-side apartment complex on Newburgh south of Joy.

Her attorney, Charles Marr, declined to comment on the allegations against Olson, who faces a Jan. 27 court hearing that will determine whether she should stand trial.

Olson was arraigned Friday by Westland 18th District Court Magistrate Donald Vandersloot, who released her on a \$25,000 personal bond and entered a not-guilty plea in her court file.

It wasn't clear how long the apartment complex had been losing money.

"Most of it appears to be in 2004," said Borisch, when questioned about the case.

The case came to light when the management company learned that apartments that should have been clean were, in fact, dirty because people had been living in them, Borisch said.

Olson is accused of providing leases to tenants but diverting money to herself rather than turning it over to the management company.

The tenants played no role in the alleged scam, Borisch said.

Olson's hearing next week will determine whether she should stand trial in Wayne County Circuit Court. If convicted, she could face penalties ranging up to 10 years in prison.

dclcm@oe.hometownlife.com | (734) 953-2100

Teen faces hearing on holdup charge

BY DARRELL CLEM
STAFF WRITER

A Livonia man faces a court hearing today amid allegations he robbed a Westland convenience store in December while wearing a Halloween mask.

James Nathaniel Todd, 20, is accused of robbing the 7-Eleven at Wayne and Joy roads, where police said a store clerk was threatened with a sharp, broken chunk of concrete.

"It was big enough to split somebody's head open," police Sgt. John

PLEASE SEE CHARGE, A2

'... A family today instead of a city'

Inspiring ceremony reflects on MLK's dream

BY DARRELL CLEM
STAFF WRITER



Barbara Jordan and Mary Jones listen to the keynote speech by the Rev. Terrance McClain during Westland's sixth annual Dr. Martin Luther King Day Jr. ceremony Monday.

Hundreds of people - black and white, all ages - helped keep alive the dream of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. during a rousing, inspiring ceremony widely praised Monday as Westland's biggest and best ever.

The crowd inside Annapolis Park Church of Christ rose repeatedly and applauded as church choirs sang gospel songs, as a teenager delivered his heartfelt poem and as a minister read an imaginary letter reflecting how King, if alive, might view the world.

The city's sixth observance of King's birthday stirred emotions and left many people feeling more committed to King's message of racial equality.

"If this is what it brings out in our people and our community, then we need to celebrate it every day," Westland City Council Charles Pickering told the crowd.

As the 90-minute ceremony began, mistress of ceremonies Debra Fowlkes - who made history when she became the first African-American woman chosen as Wayne-Westland school board president - commended city lead-

PLEASE SEE CEREMONY, A3

Teen's poem draws praise

BY DARRELL CLEM
STAFF WRITER

He's not even old enough to vote, but he's being touted for national office.

Darius Antonio Osborne, 15, made quite an impression Monday when he recited a poem he wrote, *Who Cares*, during Westland's observance of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday.

Osborne received a standing ovation from hundreds who attended

the ceremony at Annapolis Park Church of Christ.

"We just need a few more people like him to lead our world," Westland City Council President Charles Pickering said.

Pickering told the crowd that he believes Osborne will likely hold public office someday, possibly at the national level.

Osborne, a Romulus High School freshman, already has accumulated a long list of accomplishments. He was named Student of

the Month in 2004, and he won his school's citizenship award in 2003.

He has earned many certificates and awards from such groups as Boy Scouts of America and the Boys & Girls Club, and he is a member of the Detroit chapter of the Kappa Leaguers Organization (Kappa fraternity).

He helped with a food drive for senior citizens in 2004. His hobbies include reading, writing, poet-

PLEASE SEE POEM, A3



Terrance McClain, minister of Annapolis Park Church of Christ, gives the keynote address, an imaginary letter from the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.



BRYAN MITCHELL

Inaugural strut

Elyse Bartos (in the hockey shirt), and Emily D'Annunzio (front) of Livonia Churchill High School practices with the Mid-American Pompon All Star team Monday night, before leaving for Washington, D.C., where they are performing in the Presidential Inaugural Parade today, Jan. 20.

Pick a pal to please with pizza party prize

Starting next month, Buddy's Pizza and the *Observer Newspapers* will honor good citizens with "A Random Act of Pizza."

Each week, *Observer* readers will nominate a person or family who will receive a home-delivered Buddy's Pizza dinner. Tell us in 50 words or less why you or someone else deserves this home-delivered treat.

Do you know someone too busy to cook because of volunteer work?

Or do you know a single mom or dad who could use a break? Tell us about your great neighbors, the new family down the street or the

busy family who could use some time together.

Be sure to include the name, address and telephone number of the family you nominate.

Selection will be done by *O&E* staff members. Send nominations by e-mail to: Ken Abramczyk at kabramczyk@oe.hometownlife.com.

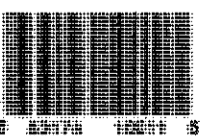
Dinner includes pizza, salad, Buddy Bread, soft drinks and table setting.

"The dinner is just a small way to celebrate a special person or family in 2005," said Marcy Brontman, marketing director for Buddy's.



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Magic Moments

Do you remember the magic that happened the first time you met that special person? It's those special moments, sometimes even funny, that remain in our memory forever.

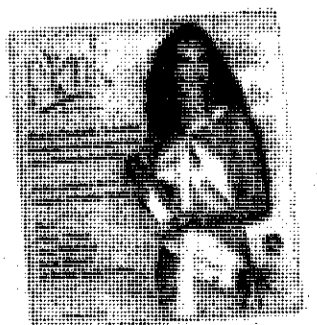
Tell us about the first time you met your sweetheart and you could win a

\$200 gift certificate from Murray's, and two tickets for *Phantom of the Opera* at the Masonic Temple on Wednesday, March 2. On Sunday, Feb. 13, the *Observer* Community Life section will feature readers' Magic Moments.

Send yours by Friday, Feb. 4, to Hugh Gallagher, *Observer Newspapers*, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48150. E-mail to hgallagher@oe.hometownlife.com.

Coming Sunday in PINK

Red Carpet Glamour
Looks from the Golden Globes



CEREMONY

FROM PAGE A1
 ers for committing to honor King's birthday.
 "Many communities just pay lip service or they ignore Dr. King's birthday," she said.
 Carrying flags of countries around the world, students in John Glenn High School's JROTC program marched through the church.

The Rev. David Powless, visiting from Warren Road Light & Life Church, urged people sitting near the back of the vast church to move forward and close ranks.

"If you squeeze in a little bit, we can be a family today instead of a city," he said.

The Annapolis Park Church of Christ PUSH (Pray Until Something Happens) Choir earned a standing ovation for its a cappella, soul-stirring performance of *Swing Low Sweet Chariot* and *Stand*.

With student-made posters of King as a stage backdrop, 15-year-old Darius Osborne inspired the crowd as he read his own poem, *Who Cares*. He spoke of four little girls who died in a 1963 church bombing in Birmingham, Ala., of racial hatred, of lynchings by the Ku Klux Klan and of civil rights pioneer Rosa Parks.

Pickering later said he wouldn't be surprised someday to see Osborne elected to a national office. "This young man is on his way."

Terrance McClain, a Wayne-Westland school trustee and minister of the host church, gave a powerful, crowd-rousing delivery of a letter he wrote - a letter that he said King might write, if alive today.

McClain praised human advances in science and technology but worried aloud about the decline of morals. He spoke of U.S. corporate greed and lamented that one in four African-Americans live in poverty.

McClain recalled how blacks couldn't sit at lunch counters during the civil rights struggle. "The question is no longer where shall we eat, but whether we shall eat," he said.

McClain said King today would reflect on an unemploy-



Cordaro Harper, Christopher Moody and Erika Straka-Conway, members of the John Glenn High School Army ROTC program, listen to the presentations. The JROTC presented the colors for the event.

ment rate that is nearly three times that for blacks as for whites, and he said King would remark, "This disturbs me, America."

McClain commended the political gains made by African-Americans who have been elected to many offices, but he voiced discouragement that many people still face workplace discrimination and that many inner-city students are forced to attend inferior schools.

McClain's speech was followed by another a cappella performance, this one by the Peoples Community Baptist Church Sanctuary Choir, which performed *The Storm Is Passing Over* and *Someday*.

The choir received a standing ovation before Pickering addressed the crowd and said, "I want to welcome you back to earth."

Many people lauded the decision this year to move the ceremony from a city building to Annapolis Park Church of Christ, located in the predominantly black Annapolis Park neighborhood on the city's



Carl Bow Jr., Britney Johnson and Toya Taylor listen to the PUSH Choir from the Annapolis Park Church of Christ.

southeast side.
 "I think the setting is very, very appropriate," Mayor Sandra Cicirelli said early in the ceremony. She later implored the crowd to help fulfill King's dream.

"His dream was to treat everyone equally, and we need to continue to do that," she said. The audience stood together and sang what is considered the national black

PHOTOS BY BILL BRESLER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER



Performing during the program is the Sanctuary Choir of People's Community Baptist Church.

POEM

FROM PAGE A1

ry and art. He enjoys basketball, baseball and track.

What follows is the poem Osborne read at Monday's ceremony honoring King:

*Who cares about who dies?
 Who cares about four little lives?*

*Addie Mae, Denise, Carole and Cynthia play it cool
 Going off to Sunday School
 Not breaking any rules
 Who cares that the man was so cruel?*

Who cares about the prejudice?

Who cares about the messages that Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. tried to get through to me and you?

Who cared what was on our mind at the time?

Who cared about the pain when we got called out of our names?

*Who cares about black faces?
 Who cares about discrimination?*

Who cares about the hate in our nation?

Who cares about a poor Negro family?

Who cares if they are sad or happy?

Who cares about the civil rights movement?

Who cares about the NAACP?

Who cares that they fought to free you and me?



Darius Osborne reads his poem, 'Who Cares,' at the ceremony.

Who cares about the Ku Klux Klan?

Who cares about them hanging a man or a woman?

*Who cares about Rosa Parks?
 Who cared that African-Americans were left in the dark?*

Who cares about us getting ignored?

Who cared that we prayed to the Lord that all the hate would end forever?

Who cares we weren't allowed to read letters?

Who cares about the police beating us black and blue?

Who cares? I do, and so should you.

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Do you have temporomandibular joint dysfunction (TMJD)?

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The University of Michigan Chronic Pain and Fatigue Research Center (CPFRC) is recruiting and screening individuals diagnosed with TMJD to become part of a research candidate pool. Candidates should be between 18-45 years of age and have no concurrent, serious medical conditions.

Upon completion of a screening evaluation, eligible volunteers will be advised of upcoming studies and have the opportunity to participate in a variety of research projects to be conducted over the next 1-3 years.

Volunteers receive financial compensation for time and participation.

For more information about the research candidate pool and/or to schedule a screening appointment contact the CPFRC at: 1-866-288-0046

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SINGH

Proposal warms ice festival

Couple celebrates 1st-date's date with wedding plan

BY BRAD KADRICH
STAFF WRITER

Elise Goudreau walked through Kellogg Park Tuesday with her boyfriend, Adam Burton, enjoying the ice sculptures much like they did on their first date at the Plymouth International Ice Sculpture Spectacular three years ago.

She seemed surprised when she turned to see her mother, Tricia Bayer, and other family members coming up the opposite sidewalk.

And she was stunned when she turned back and Burton was on one knee in front of a heart-shaped sculpture which encased a couple of red roses and included the inscription, "Elise, Will You Marry Me?"

Even the television news crew and the two newspaper photographers didn't set off any bells.

"I'm totally speechless," she said after agreeing to marry Burton. "I had no clue. When I saw my mom, all I thought was, 'Oh, my mom's here.'"

Burton's proposal was old-fashioned in more ways than one. Not only did he get down on one knee to propose, he asked Goudreau's family beforehand for permission to propose. Burton went over to talk to Goudreau's family and hatched the plan.

"He came over Sunday and asked if it was OK," said Bayer, a Wayne resident. "It was hard to keep the secret for those few days. We think (Burton) is wonderful."

Burton admitted to having some nerves, particularly when family members were a little slow arriving, but said his only real concern was that everything go well.

"I wasn't really nervous, it was more I was just hoping everything was going to go right, that I wouldn't trip or anything," the prospective groom said. "I wanted it to go smoothly, which it did."

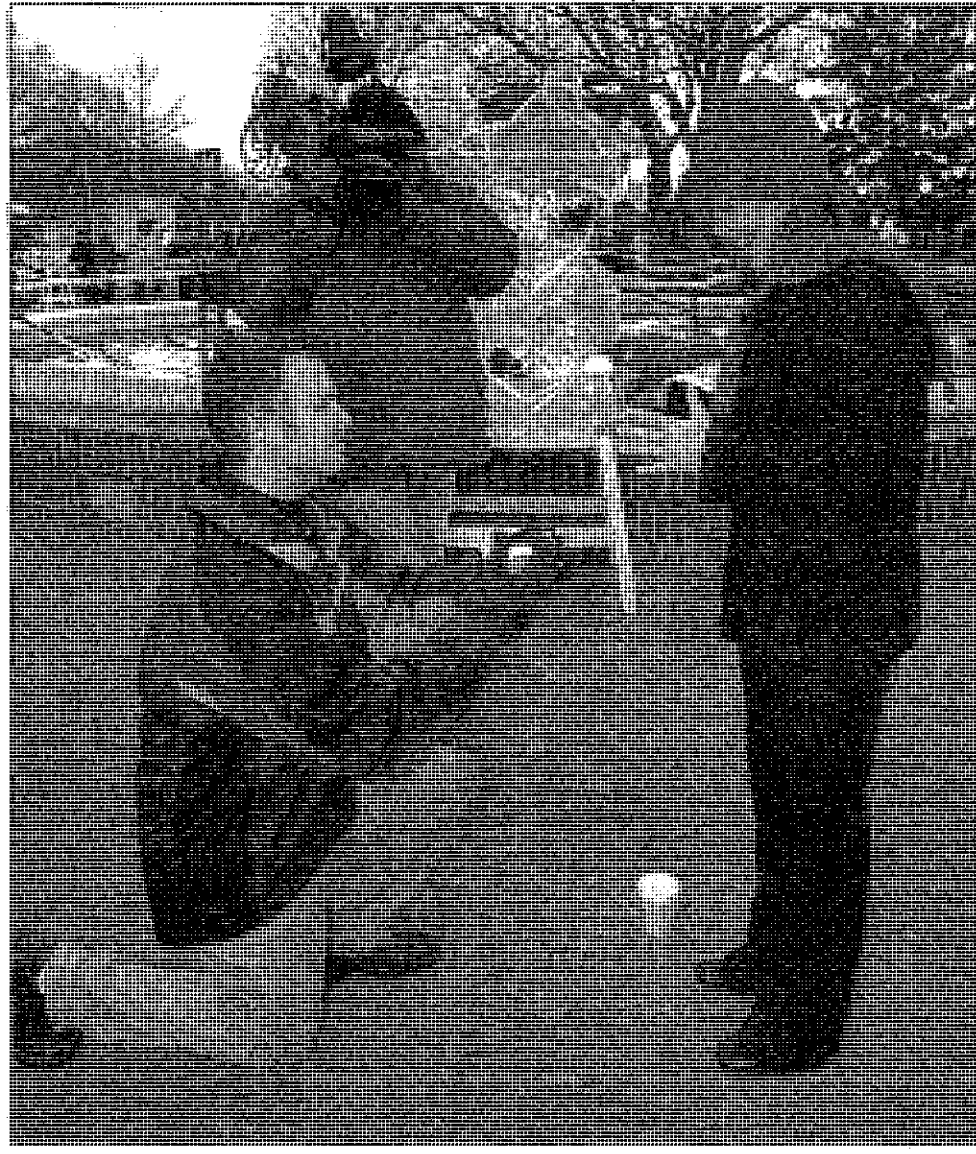
The proposal capped three years of dating. Burton brought Goudreau to the ice festival Jan. 18, 2002, on the couple's first date. The couple has returned to Plymouth on the anniversary of that first date every year.

This year was no different — until the proposal, an idea which began cooking in Burton's mind last year.

"We go there every year, and I got the idea when we went there last year," Burton said. "When it was coming up again this year, I thought it would be a good time to do it."

He successfully caught his bride-to-be off-guard.

"I am completely stunned," Goudreau



Adam Burton of Wayne didn't let a television camera unnerve him when he proposed to his girlfriend of three years, Elise Goudreau, Tuesday at the Plymouth ice festival.

said. "He seemed a little nervous when we left the house, but I had no idea this was coming."

In case anyone's wondering, she said "yes."

The proposal was the highlight of the first few days of the 23rd annual festival, which expanded to a full week this year. Temperatures stayed in the teens and 20s throughout the first few days, and the festival even survived a few inches of snow that fell in the early hours of Wednesday morning.

The festival continues through Sunday, and features the work of a professional ice-

carving team from Japan. Also on tap are competitive performances from local world champions Ted Wakar of Canton Township and Tajana Raukar of Plymouth.

Saturday's schedule features exhibitions and competitions among culinary arts students from Schoolcraft, Washtenaw, Henry Ford, Macomb and Oakland community colleges, as well as from the University of Michigan-Dearborn.

Among the other highlights are an exhibit of the gowns of First Ladies at the Plymouth Historical Museum and the "Rockin' the Ice Age" exhibit in the annual Fantasyland in the Gathering.

Rouge friends seek help with annual frog survey

Friends of the Rouge is looking for volunteers who are willing to survey wetlands in their Rouge neighborhood for frogs and toads.

Volunteers are asked to attend one of five training sessions held at locations throughout the Rouge River Watershed in February and March.

All materials necessary for the survey will be provided at the training session.

Volunteers interested in participating in the survey are asked to register for one of the training sessions by calling Friends of the Rouge's Public Involvement department at (313) 792-9621 or e-mailing picoordinator@througe.org. Pre-registration is required.

Local training sessions are scheduled for:

■ Saturday, Feb. 12, 10 a.m.-noon, Farmington Hills City Council Chambers, 31555 Eleven Mile Road.

■ Wednesday, Feb. 16, 7-9 p.m., Environmental Interpretive Center, University of Michigan-Dearborn, 4901 Evergreen Road.

■ Saturday, March 5, 10 a.m.-noon, Salem Township Hall, 9600 Six Mile Road.

■ Wednesday, March 9, 7-9 p.m., Walnut Room, Summit on the Park, 46000 Summit Parkway, Canton.

■ Saturday, March 12, 10 a.m.-noon, Bloomfield Township Hall, 4200 Telegraph Road, Bloomfield Township.

Friends of the Rouge has been training volunteers to survey for frogs and toads since 1998.

Volunteers who participate become more attuned to their local wetlands as they listen and learn what species live in their neighborhood. The results of the survey are helping Friends of the Rouge to learn more about the health of the watershed.

Friends of the Rouge is a non-profit group of citizens established in 1986 and dedicated to promoting restoration

Volunteers are asked to attend one of five training sessions held at locations throughout the Rouge River Watershed in February and March.

and stewardship of the Rouge River ecosystem through education, citizen involvement and other collaborative efforts, for the purpose of improving the quality of life for the people, plants, and animals of the watershed.

Surveying involves visiting a nearby wetland site at least twice a month beginning as soon as temperatures are above 46 degrees Fahrenheit (late February or early March) and continuing through July. Surveys are done after sunset and require listening for three minutes.

Data collected by volunteers is mapped and summarized and this information is provided to participants, Rouge communities and other interested parties.

The Rouge River Watershed is 466 square miles and there are over 1,000 blocks that need coverage. Surveys are best done in teams to increase safety at night.

Because amphibians depend on clean water for breeding and need good quality upland habitat for the adult portion of their life, their presence is an indication good quality habitat. The more species a site can support, the better the habitat. Ten species of frogs and toads call the Rouge River Watershed home.

More information and 2004 summary report available at http://www.therouge.org/Programs/PI/frog_and_toad_survey.htm

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Credit Union casual day benefits kids

Co-op Services Credit Union staff raised more than \$1,600 during 2004 for Children's Miracle Network, a nonprofit organization that provides health care for children through local hospitals.

The credit union's staff participated by paying \$1 to dress casually once a week. The funds are donated to CMN, which is a recipient of the Credit Unions for Kids program and is supported by the Michigan Credit Union League.

Co-op Services Credit Union has raised more than \$20,000 for CMN during the past six years, according to Angie Krogol, senior vice

president of Member Services and chair of the MCUL's Children's Miracle Network Committee.

Co-op Services Credit Union's name is engraved on the Beaumont Society Donor Wall at the hospital's main facility in Royal Oak in recognition for its total giving.

"Children's Miracle Network is one of the many fine community-based programs that we support throughout the year to demonstrate the credit union philosophy of 'people helping people,'" said Co-op Services President and CEO Anthony Carnarvon.

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Thief gets cash from tsunami collection

BY MATT JACHMAN
STAFF WRITER

Honor among thieves?
Seemingly not the one who ripped off money intended to help victims of the devastating Dec. 26 tsunami.

A man, a Westland resident, was captured on video at La Ziza Pizzeria in Redford on Jan. 6, pilfering cash from the box employees had set on the counter, which was clearly marked for donations for tsunami relief. "If it's not one thing, it's another," said Mohamad Hussein, manager of the

Plymouth Road pizzeria, on Thursday. It wasn't the amount of money stolen - estimated at \$30 - that bothered him, Hussein said, but "just the thought" that someone would take money that was supposed to help people.

The suspect - he had not been charged as of Thursday - was known to pizzeria employees, and police are seeking a large charge.

"He hangs around the neighborhood," Hussein said. "His friend lives down the street." The man works at a car wash in Livonia, he said.

The theft occurred about 9:20 p.m. Jan. 6. An employee noticed the man acting suspiciously around the donation box, a police report said.

The man left, and when it was discovered that money was missing, Hussein reviewed a security video that showed him taking the money.

Hussein said the man didn't empty the box, which had only been out for a few hours and into which employees and customers had put donations. But he took most of the money in it, he said.

Hussein said the pizzeria is

still collecting, and will continue to do so for perhaps two weeks. They'll send the money to the Red Cross or another relief organization, he said.

"It doesn't really matter ... as long as the money gets over there," he said.

The theft may have an up side, in that it seems to have increased donations. Hussein said some customers who've heard about the incident have called, and a woman who also knew of it stopped in to make a contribution.

"Hopefully we can get a good amount," he said.

Open House 5:30-6:30 p.m.

Tuesday, January 25, 2005
Elementary/Middle School Information Meeting 6:30-7:30 p.m.



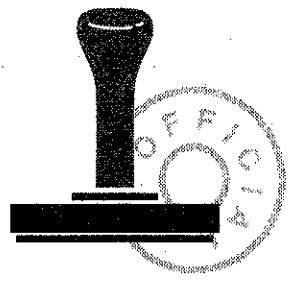
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FOR THE RECORD



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 C7.

DEATHS

A
Alexander N. Adair, 82, formerly of Livonia, died Jan. 15.

E
John C. Eising, of Plymouth, died Jan. 13.

H
Mary Rose (Fricker) Hausman, 75, of Plymouth, died Jan. 15.

J
Mary Janeczko, of Westland, died Jan. 13.

L
Mary Alice Luce, 74, of Wayne, died Jan. 15.

M
Gertrude E. MacDonald, 93, of Farmington, died Dec. 21.
Olive Jeanne Mettetal, 81, of Plymouth, died Jan. 10.
Thomas P. Moore II, 68, died Jan. 14.

P
Eileen Pott, 82, of Birmingham died Jan. 12.

R
Loella Roehm, 92, of Franklin, died Jan. 11.
The Rev. Michael (Gilbert) Rozewicz, 64, died Jan. 14.

S
Francis Patrick Xavier Sullivan Jr., of Redford, died Jan. 14.
Jewell V. Swiercz, of Westland, died Jan. 14.

V
William Alfred Villerot, of Westland, died Jan. 17.

W
Rena Wax, 92, of Bloomfield Hills, died Jan. 13.

Z
Paul William Zuber, 52, formerly of Redford, died Jan. 3.

INFORMATION CENTRAL

Do you love to try out new groups and types of music, but don't want to go into debt buying CDs? Are you not quite up on the latest MP3 or Napster technology?

If so, then the Public Library of Westland is the place for you. The library has a collection of CDs that is added to on a monthly basis in categories such as pop/rock, jazz/R&B, international, opera, country, and classical.

In their collection, variety is key. Artists in each category range from classic greats like The Beatles, Johnny Cash, Ray Charles and Mozart to current artists like Franz Ferdinand, Gretchen Wilson, Usher and Josh Groban.

The library has soundtracks from movies such as *Cold Mountain*, *Chicago* and *O Brother Where Art Thou?* Television soundtracks include music from *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *American Idol* and *The O.C.*

All CDs and cassettes can be checked out for two weeks at a time at no cost.

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

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*Excludes Super Specials, Doorbusters, Incredible Value Items, Jane Seymour Furniture, Schaeffer Optical Products, Shoes, Ladies' Suits, Dresses and Outerwear, Aromatique, Brighton, Burberry, Coach, Columbia Sportswear, Club Libby Lu, Cosmetic Accessories, Cosmetics, Electronics, FAO Schwarz, Flurryville, Fragrances, Furs, Gift Cards, Great Buys and Designer Collections in Fine Jewelry, Special Events and Watches in Fine Jewelry, Service Contracts in Fine Jewelry, Indigo Palmers Men's, Intimate Apparel, Island Soft, Kate Spade, Ladies' and Juniors' Swimwear, Lee Middleton, Levi's, Magazines, Men's Sport Coats and Suits, Nat Nast, Oakley, Ralph Lauren Childrenswear, Reef, Robert Talbot Neckwear, Salons, Services, Sharper Image, Sharp TVs, Special Orders, Tech Trek, Thomas Kinkade Art, Tommy Bahama, Tratalgar and Vera Wang. Must present this discount offer for savings. Cannot be combined with any other discount offer. Not valid on previously purchased items.



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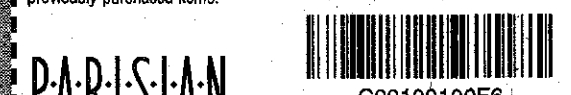
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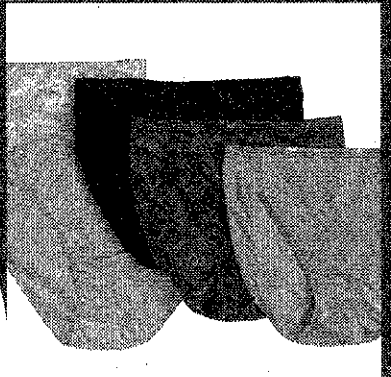
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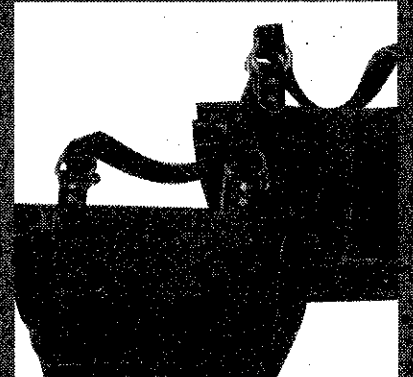
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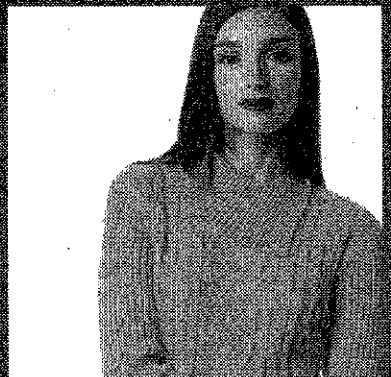
5 for 25.00
ENTIRE STOCK of panties from Vanity Fair, Bali, Barely There and Hue. Orig. 6.50-9.00. IN INTIMATE APPAREL. SELECTION VARIES BY STORE.



44.99
Select Merrell shoes for women. Orig. 65.00-80.00. IN WOMEN'S SHOES.



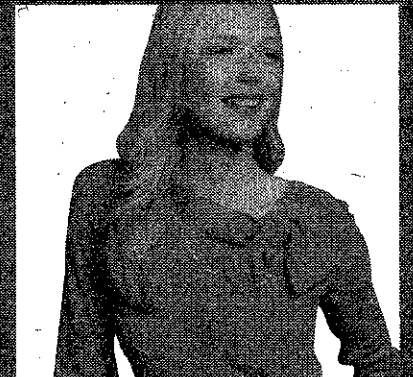
50% off
Leather handbags from Roll's. Orig. 120.00, sale 60.00. IN HANDBAGS. SELECTION VARIES BY STORE.



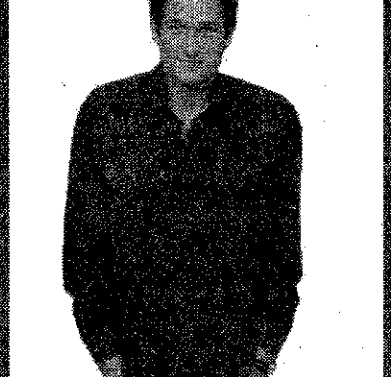
9.99
Novelty sweaters by Parisian Works. Orig. 30.00-40.00. IN LADIES' SPORTSWEAR AND PETITES. SELECTION VARIES BY STORE.



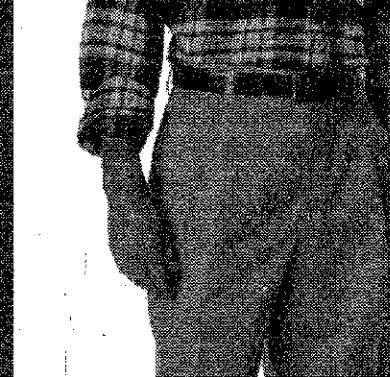
9.99
Microsuede separates from relativity and Parisian Works. Orig. 40.00. IN LADIES' SPORTSWEAR AND PARISIAN WOMAN. AVAILABLE AT SELECTED STORES. SELECTION VARIES BY STORE.



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OUR VIEWS

Time to consider school board run

If you're considering running for the Wayne-Westland Board of Education, you don't have as long as you might think to make the decision.

And if you're not thinking about it, maybe you should. Either way, the filing deadline is coming up faster than it has in previous years, thanks to the new state law that only allows elections in four months of the year. With the school board election moved from June to May, the filing deadline has also crept closer, coming this year Feb. 8.

Which gives prospective board members just under four weeks to answer this basic question: "Do I want to have a role in determining the course of our schools?"

Historically, there isn't a whole lot of interest in running for the board. Traditionally, there aren't a lot of candidates.

And, judging by the annual vote totals, where the last few years turnout has been less than 5 percent, there isn't a lot of interest in the school board ... period.

This always baffles us, because perhaps nowhere in elective government can an elected official affect more lives than on the school board. It's the one body that has control over the future of our most important asset — our children.

And in these tight economic times, the Wayne-Westland school board — along with school boards across the state, really — faces huge challenges, particularly with its budget.

There are two seats up for grabs this year — that of incumbent Ed Turner and newcomer Steve Becher — which might keep the field lower than normal. And there's also an inclination to think that inexperience will keep you off the board. However, last year, Becher and Terrance McClain were elected to the board.

There are a lot of reasons not to run for the school board: "I don't have the time." "It's a big responsibility." "I don't know anything about running a school district." "The dog ate my filing application."

The truth is, not running is much easier than running. However, the one true reason for getting involved trumps all excuses for not: You can help determine the future of our children.

Taxpayers deserve frugal governments

At the end of last year, Gov. Jennifer Granholm and Lt. Gov. John Cherry made a gesture in the fight to rein in the troubled state budget by volunteering to take a pay cut.

Though small and fiscally insignificant, the symbolism is important. We must look at every option to trim fat from government at all levels, eliminate non-essential services to preserve essential services, cut back administrative costs and find ways to eliminate duplication of services.

Right-sizing government won't be easy. People in power want to retain that power. Any reductions in work force or benefits are going to be resisted by employee unions. Questions of ownership and power sharing, as in the ongoing dispute over water and sewer rates and services, are a legal tangle with racial and urban vs. suburban overtones.

And some residents feel they have more control and get more response from their local government.

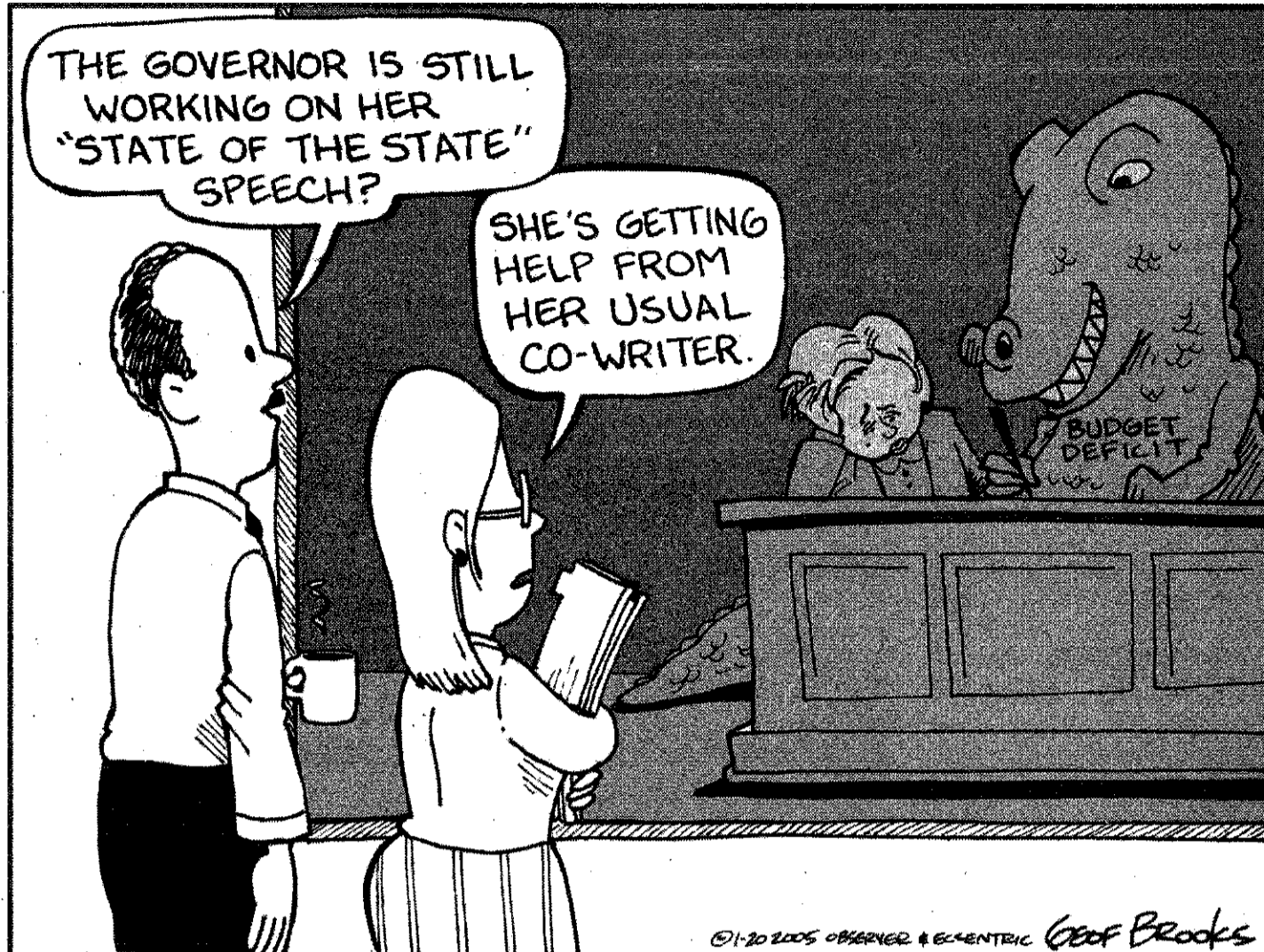
But it is clear that taxpayers are willing to pay only so much for government services and they want to know that they will get a fair return on their dollar. They also want to know that they aren't paying twice for the same service.

Governments are aware that more needs to be done. Plymouth and Plymouth Township share a joint fire department and police/fire dispatch. Livonia, Redford and other communities have been in discussions about combining emergency dispatch services. Farmington and Farmington Hills combine library and recreation services and are discussing combining police/fire dispatch.

But in this time of reduced revenues, we need to take a hard look at the layers upon layers of government and decide what is necessary and what isn't.

As a case in point, Wayne County government provides many needed services — roads, parks, mental health, the prosecutor's office, the jail and much more — but it is also a government that many call too expensive and inefficient. Recent reports on county pensions and high administrative salaries (64 appointees making more than \$100,000 a year) have placed the county's government under the spotlight.

We need to decide whether government is here to serve residents or to serve itself. At the local and county level, we need, to borrow the governor's favorite phrase, to think outside the box and create a leaner, less top-heavy government structure.



LETTERS

Lawmakers' priorities

I enjoyed reading staff writer Dan West's op-ed page column about the impact of term limits in Thursday's *Observer*.

From my perspective as an *Observer* community editor for more than 33 years, I would like to suggest a "clarification" on how newly elected state representatives organize their priorities for the maximum of six years in office.

In the first year, they learn not just where the restrooms are in the Capitol, but where the senior citizens' centers are so they can mail newsletters and press releases at taxpayer expense on what a great job they are doing for the elderly. In this era of budget-cutting, the seniors should be glad to know that the legislature cut their prescription subsidies but not nearly as much as the administration proposed.

In the second year, the representatives are already planning to run for a higher or comparable public office when their six years in the House expire. Typically, they look for an open state Senate seat — to be open because the senator may soon be term-limited and unable to run again. There are other possibilities, such as county sheriff (such as Michael Bouchard in Oakland) or Congress (such as Thaddeus McCotter in Livonia, among others).

In some cases, a term-limited representative may run for county commissioner. Why not? The pay and fringe benefits are very good and the commute is far shorter.

In the representatives' third term, they are now holding a series of fund-raisers so they can run for another office in two years. All this results in is a political merry-go-round or a game of musical chairs — the same faces, same names, just different positions.

In conclusion, the voters were had by the term-limits proposal approved 12 years ago. The lesson learned here is when a politician talks about "political reform," he/she is really using "political chloroform" on the public.

Leonard Pogor
Westland

Ways to cut costs

Gov. Granholm:
Every time we pick up the paper, the state is broke and the only way you seem to try to fix it is to raise taxes, or cut out programs. We have a perfect solution to save millions. Cut out the lucrative pensions that the cities and counties have when, if you are on the job for five years, you get 50 percent of your salary as retirement and 100 percent, no co-pay, insurance.

We cannot afford these ludicrous pensions anymore, and never could.

Also, when you die, you pass 100 percent of your pension to your spouse. There is no company in the world that does that. And most of all, those county jobs pay over \$100,000 a year, what a deal!

If you need a person to help you do this, get State Sen. Laura M. Toy, assistant majority whip. You can reach her at (517) 373-1707. This lady works for both parties. She is bipartisan.

Let's see if you are. If you really want to save money, let's get started. You may get a second term if you do something about these big retirements, including state reps. Unfortunately, I don't think

you have the guts! You seem to be all talk and no action unless it's cutting services and raising taxes.

Wayne Mirth
Westland

Agree with letter

I read with interest Vince Berna's Jan. 13 letter to the editor of the *Westland Observer*, "Doesn't appreciate remarks." I am in total agreement with Mr. Berna's viewpoint. Bravo, Mr. Berna, bravo!

Jeff Cullen
Plymouth

Thanks to all who serve

I would like to openly express my thanks to those individuals who served all of us without respite during the holiday season — our military personnel; medical personnel; municipal servants, such as our firemen and policemen; clergy members; and also those who assist the homeless, abused, and impoverished.

Many times, these individuals are taken for granted as the rest of us go about enjoying our holidays. I believe, however, that they deserve a special thanks for serving us. So, to all who have served in some capacity during this busy time, I would like to say thank you. May your New Year be extra special.

Virginia Gruse
Livonia

Need fairness

The president has declared his intent to overhaul the federal tax code along with Social Security. That can only mean one thing, doing away with the progressive income tax. Ever since the "modern" income tax was implemented in 1913, the fairness of a progressively higher rate for people with higher incomes has been well-accepted.

The argument is that it is fair for the wealthy, who benefit more from our economic system and have a higher percentage of disposable income, to pay a higher percent than the rest of us. Until now. Some are suggesting a flat income tax rate. Even a federal sales tax. The clever idea being to invert the whole deal and tax those of us at the lower end of the ladder more. Local, state and federal taxes are already stacked against the least fortunate.

It surprised me to learn that due to special breaks, a very high portion of business pays no federal income tax whatsoever (and don't tell me it's because they aren't making money).

Let me make one very simple suggestion. If a flat tax is fair, it seems like it would also be fair to eliminate the \$87,000 cap on income taxable for Social Security. That would mean, for example, that a person earning \$200,000 would pay \$26,000 (instead of under \$6,000), or just about enough to cover their own retirement benefit for one year.

That seems fair to me. Oh, incidentally, it would pump billions into the trust fund and go a long way toward bailing our Social Security — without the inherent risk of "privatizing" that the president insists on.

Dick Landback
Farmington Hills

It's about accountability

After reading the article regarding possible tax hikes and services being cut to make ends meet, I was amazed at how no one ever talks about accountability of our tax dollars. Mentioned was the Headlee Amendment and Proposal A as tax reducers.

But the article was missing a very important element. While taxpayers did agree to Proposal A to limit our property tax, we also agreed to a sales tax increase from 4 percent to 6 percent. (That may not seem like a lot, but it is a 50 percent increase in income for the state in sales tax since 1994. And with that increase, the proposal states "dedicate additional revenue to schools.")

I am not opposed to paying taxes for necessary protection and services, but I don't like to have my taxes increased without any accountability. If, with 50 percent more sales tax income, the state can't meet community revenue sharing needs, what guarantee do taxpayers have that another tax increase will get us out of any fiscal crisis?

I find it offensive when scare tactics are used for a tax increase. Why are the most important services attacked first, like police and fire services or school programs or reductions in social services for children and disabled?

Instead, why can't frivolous things go first — trim department expense accounts, eliminate conventions, cell phones for public officials and chauffeur-driven cars. As public officials, they are supposed to be working for our best interest and not their own. If we indeed are in a fiscal mess, it's not the taxpayers' responsibility to get us out. It's the elected officials.

Generally speaking, the average person pays 26 percent income tax, 7.5 percent Social Security tax, and 1.5 percent Medicare tax. An estimate of 3 percent of their income on property tax, 16 percent per gallon on gasoline tax, 6 percent sales tax on goods, 6 percent service tax on food in restaurants, 4 percent utility tax, 4 percent phone tax, cable tax and all sorts of fees (taxes) when you buy tickets to a show, sporting event or state park.

The state also receives income from the lottery, casinos, business taxes, licensing fees, ordinance violations, etc. All that income and they still can't make ends meet. It's not about more taxes or cutting services that is going to get the state out of a fiscal crisis — it's accountability!

Tom Karabatakis
Livonia

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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QUOTABLE

"We're crawling now. We're going to start walking. We'll try jogging next."

— Councilman James Godbout, about a new computer system and software that will streamline city business and improve services for residents

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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.

Help the tsunami victims, but be careful how you do it

It's been nearly four weeks since a killer tsunami snuffed out an estimated 150,000 lives in parts of southeast Asia, and caused untold billions of dollars worth of property damage.

Even with the passage of time, images of one of the worst natural disasters in history remain fresh. Still, it is hard to grasp the magnitude of the disaster, even with a steady stream of videotape and news reports flooding the Internet and television on an hourly basis.

Predictably, the world — led once again by the United States — has mobilized to help the tens of thousands of people whose lives and spirits were broken by the giant waves. Not since the terrible day that the twin towers of the World Trade Center came crashing down have we seen such an outpouring of support.

Locally, it seems everybody is raising money for the relief effort. The vast majority of the efforts, I'm sure, are sincere and well-intended. Still, being a

trained cynic, some of the press releases that have come across my desk recently from businesses promoting fund-raisers have activated my scam radar.

I'm not saying any of the efforts are a fraud or in any way illegal. But I have to question if some of the fund-raisers are intentionally or otherwise — using a tragedy to promote a business or product.

Many local businesses are using their locations as collection sites for donations, which is a good thing. Several are going a step further and matching the donations up to a set amount, which is a great thing.

But a fund-raising effort that requires the purchase of a product or service calls into question just who is really benefiting from the effort.

Some recent examples of fuzzy fund-raisers that have crossed my desk in the past week include:

■ A group of 40 car dealers pledging to donate \$25 to the Salvation Army for each vehicle sold during the month of January.

■ A Southfield chiropractor offering \$25 evaluations with the proceeds being donated to the relief effort.

■ A Franklin bead store offering to host free bead parties and donate a percentage of the resulting sales.

■ A "local gay church" boasting it had collected \$1,214.17 from its congregation and then using the rest of the six-paragraph

Locally, it seems everybody is raising money for the relief effort. The vast majority of the efforts, I'm sure, are sincere and well-intended. Still, being a trained cynic, some of the press releases that have come across my desk recently from businesses promoting fund-raisers have activated my scam radar.

release to promote the church.

■ A local university offering to donate the proceeds from a soup supper to the relief effort, and throwing in either a ticket to a women's basketball game or salsa dance lesson.

Asking people to give money to any cause is never easy. Over the years, I have been involved in many fund-raising campaigns for various groups and organizations I have worked with.

My experience has been that if the person you are asking believes in the organization you are pitching or, more importantly, has faith in you, the cash will come. Demonstrate a need, build a sense of trust that the money raised will be spent for the intended purpose, and the rest will take care of itself.

Hundreds of millions of dollars have been raised to date to aid the tsunami victims and begin the rebuilding process. It will take years, and hundreds of million dollars more, before the physical scars caused by the disaster are repaired.

Events like the tsunami serve as painful reminders of just how fortunate we are to live in a time and place where most of us take for granted life's basic necessities of food, shelter, clean water and sanitation. We can't help but feel a need to reach out and help those who now have none of these things.

We all need to do our part. But before deciding how to help, ask yourself this question: Does it make more sense to simply write a check directly to one of the relief organizations, or buy a car, take a salsa lesson, host a bead party or schedule a chiropractic evaluation in the name of tsunami relief?

Joe Bauman is managing editor for the *Eccentric Newspapers*. He welcomes feedback at (248) 901-2563 or feel free to e-mail him at jbauman@oe.hometownlife.com.



Joe Bauman

Tsunami reminds us of false security, what's really important

In light of the tsunami tragedy, how can we make sense of all that's happening?

It seems to me that it is unfortunate that nothing is new under the sun as far as human tragedy. The Bible is full of our human stories: Triumph, defeat, war, peace, justice, injustice, earthquakes, floods and rainbows are all there to remind us how fragile life is. We can either reach out by helping, or we can close ourselves off and live in isolation.

We can only compare the tsunami tragedy of nature's fury to the black plague, which hit in the 15th and 16th centuries, the volcano of Pompeii, or the flood of Noah. No death caused by nature can be compared to what war has brought about. Ancient wars, especially wars that are still living memories, for example, World War I; the Armenian Genocide, in which millions were massacred by the hands of the Turks; World War II, wherein millions of Jews were annihilated by the Germans, 29 million Russians slaughtered between Hitler and Stalin; the continuing slaughter between the Palestinians and Israelis; the African massacre (ethnic cleansing in Rwanda);

and the ongoing Iraqi war, which has caused no less than 200,000 casualties. No one can control nature, people will rebuild their lives, but man has the capacity to limit war and create peace.

When we reflect upon nature's destruction, homelessness, disease and poverty, we are more than able to accept the outcome, because nature is void of malice, discrimination and racism. There is simply nothing to forgive. However, the greatest tragedy ever known to man is war, injustice, racism and occupation. Unfortunately, this is what man is able to inflict on his fellow man. These facts seem hard to forgive. Tsunami, on the other hand, reminds us of how close our universe has become. We can rise and take this opportunity to bridge the world closer together the way 9/11 brought America together, closer and stronger than ever. This is an opportunity to show that love can conquer any and all tragedy.

"For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing,

shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

(Romans 8:38-39)

We are reminded of the promises of God in the Bible:

"Of old You have laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but You will endure; Yes, they will grow old like a garment;



Rev. George H. Shalhoub

All our economic security, the security we feel in our homes and careers, and all the military arms will not make us any more secure. Humanity can only express itself when it reaches out to others in need.

Like a cloak you will change them, and they will be changed. But You are the same, And Your years will have no end. The children of Your servants will continue, and their descendants will be established before You."

(Psalms 102:25-28)

All our economic security, the security we feel in our homes and careers, and all the military arms will not make us any more secure. Humanity can only express itself when it reaches out to others in need.

We have become so preoccupied with our everyday lives and needs with school, sports, etc., that our hectic schedules are becoming a new god, a new religion. One day our children will grow up and realize that they have missed out on the importance of life. The most important act in life is to extend ourselves to others, whether your neighbor or someone across the continent. It is at that moment that you will begin to truly live your life as a human being made in the image and likeness of God.

How do you explain this uncertainty to your children?

■ Monitor what you and your family watch on television;

■ Set aside a portion of your paycheck and send it to a charity to help the victims. Teach your children to do the same with their allowance;

■ Pray as a family (especially for God's peace in the world);

■ Remind them that God is merciful, not vengeful;

■ Explain that nature has and always will be a mystery, like creation itself.

The victims of the tsunami will rebuild a better life, just as an eagle renews his feathers. The human spirit is very resilient and prayer can reach the furthest part of the universe. The answer is within you, to always reach out and assure them that the earth is the Lord's.

The Rev. George H. Shalhoub is pastor of The Basilica of St. Mary Antiochian Orthodox Church in Livonia. He is also an associate professor in Madonna University's department of religion and philosophy.

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She's no 'dumb blonde'; Canton model knows cars

BY SAM TRICOMO
STAFF WRITER

Dressed in smart black slacks and a white shirt, blonde-haired Justine Blazer of Canton has a surprise in store for any would be challengers to her automotive knowledge.

The surprise: She has the answer.

"A lot of guys will try to stump you, but I'm prepared," she said as she stood near Chevrolet's latest incarnation of the mini-van, the Uplander.

Blazer is one of scores of spokes models helping automakers explain their products to throngs of people attending the North American International Auto Show.

The 2002 Canton High School graduate regularly travels with General Motors to various auto shows throughout the country.

"I absolutely love it, and the people are great," she said.

Behind Blazer's Uplander display a fellow spokes model is explaining the features of Chevy's Sierra pickup truck to a gathered crowd.

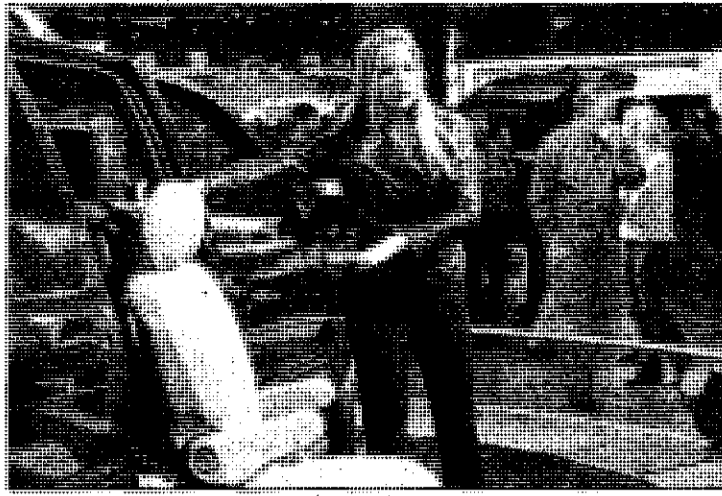
Within a second of that presentation's conclusion Blazer quickly checks her wireless microphone, collects her thoughts and launches into her own presentation about the Uplander.

From the V-6 powerplant to the mix of car and mini van features in the vehicle, Blazer delivers her message seamlessly.

Blazer is well practiced before a crowd. In addition to regular auto show work, she is the lead singer of her own band, Justine Blazer and the Dogmatics.

This year she has also broadened her reach by performing the National Anthem for several professional sports teams including the Detroit Pistons, Boston Celtics and Green Bay Packers.

Before the week is out,



BILL BRESLER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Justine Blazer explains the advanced mobility features on the Chevy Uplander. Blazer is a resident of Canton.

Blazer will have come in contact with an estimated 800,000 visitors. By day two of the show Jan. 16, 210,332 people had already paid the \$12 entry fee to get into the show.

But cars not people are the real stars of the show and for U.S. Army Sgt. Calvin Hill of Detroit there could be no better way to spend an afternoon than squeezing between people in crowded Cobo to view the latest in sleek sedans.

"It's been three years since I've been to the show and it's

really something. Seems bigger and better than I remember," he said.

Hill isn't necessarily car shopping though he'd like to be.

Soon he will be rejoining his unit in Iraq where his vehicle of choice will likely be the military version of the famed Hummer.

Hill and his brother-in-law Leon McGee were hoping to get close to the Ferrari display to view the newly launched Superamerica.

Also hot on their list was the Cadillac hotrod the STS-V, a

Getting to and from the North American International Auto Show

PRNewswire - Planning to go to the North American International Auto Show, but worried about parking? The NAIAS Web site www.naias.com features an interactive map of Detroit that includes all parking garages as well as driving directions.

The NAIAS is running six to ten shuttle buses daily along the Detroit River from Joe Louis Arena to the Renaissance Center parking structures. There are approximately 10,000 parking spaces in the Renaissance Center parking facilities. In addition, the Detroit People Mover is fully functional, and has several convenient stops near the NAIAS. Visit www.thepeoplemover.com for more information.

The 2005 show runs through

440-horsepower version of the already popular STS.

"It was already great with the 300-horsepower engine. This is really going to be something," McGee said.

Auto show organizers feel

Sunday, Jan. 23 at Cobo Center, 300 Civic Center Dr. in downtown Detroit. Show hours are 9 a.m. to 10 p.m. through Saturday, and 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. on Sunday. Admittance ends one hour prior to show closing.

Admission is \$12 adult, \$6 senior citizens 65 and older, (tickets must be purchased on-site), children 12 and under free when accompanied by a parent. E Tickets can be purchased online at www.naias.com. A voucher will be issued with every eTicket order. This voucher must be used to redeem eTickets at the eTicket window, located at the Oakland Hall entrance of Cobo Center. Tickets are also available through the Ticketmaster Web site, www.ticketmaster.com or by calling (248) 645-6666.

2005 will prove to be a good year in terms of attendance.

"We're thrilled with the reception we've seen so far," said Detroit Auto Dealer's Association President Bob Thibodeau.

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