

2/13
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 by first-place Wayne



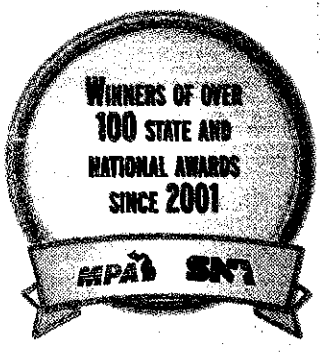
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WESTLAND Observer



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Program focuses on black history

BY DARRELL CLEM
 STAFF WRITER

After captivating hundreds of people with an impassioned speech he delivered on Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday, Westland minister Terrance McClain will be the keynote speaker during a Black History Month celebration.

The program, sponsored by the Southeast Westland Homeowners Association and the NAACP western Wayne County branch, will be held 2-5 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 27, at the Westland public library, on Central City Parkway south of Warren.



McClain

"It should be a very interesting program," event

Chairwoman Nellie Williams said. "Everybody is invited. We can all learn from it."

McClain, a Wayne-Westland school board trustee and minister of Annapolis Park Church of Christ, received acclaim when his church hosted the city's King observance on Jan. 17. He recited an imaginary letter that King, if alive, might have written to address the nation.

For the Black History Month program, McClain said he will use a theme from the movie *Antoine Fisher* - the theme that "I'm still standing, and I'm still strong" - to help explain the African-American experience in the United States.

"From that theme, I want to generalize that minorities, and African-Americans in particular from slavery until now, have

PLEASE SEE HISTORY, A5

DeHart passes muster as clerk

BY DARRELL CLEM
 STAFF WRITER

Eileen DeHart's job performance as Westland's first voter-elected city clerk has won praise not only from her supporters - but also from one-time skeptics who feared the position could become brazenly political.

DeHart, a former state representative, has started the second year of her four-year clerk term amid widespread praise from other elected officials and residents, alike.

After voters passed a ballot measure



DeHart

and started electing the city clerk in 2003, some political observers bristled. Critics didn't believe that the Westland City Council should have lost its appointive powers.

Council President Charles Pickering candidly admits that he was one of those critics.

"In this particular case, I've been proven wrong," he said Friday. "With Eileen, she basically said she was here

to serve, and she has done that."

Some critics feared that an elected clerk wouldn't cooperate with the council or Mayor Sandra Cicirelli - a fear that DeHart, in her first year, eased.

"I think Eileen has done a remarkable job," Cicirelli said. "She works well not only with me, but she works well with my entire staff."

DeHart faced a presidential election in her first year in office, and she has attributed much of her success to a talented staff that includes Deputy Clerk Nancy Bonaparte, who served as

the last council-appointed clerk.

"Coming into a presidential election, Eileen did a fantastic job I think," Cicirelli said. "It wasn't necessarily her background, and she has had to learn a lot. But, she put the time into it. I think future elections will be a piece of cake for her."

DeHart also received some consulting help from former longtime Clerk Diane Fritz. Nonetheless, the buck stopped with DeHart, and observers haven't cited any serious snafus.

PLEASE SEE DEHART, A5



BILL BRESLER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Family tradition

Eighteen-year-old Jennifer Dumouchelle, a student at Eastern Michigan University, made sure she was in town for the annual Daddy-Daughter and Mommy-Son Hoedown last week. It marked the 15th year that she has attended the dance with her father, Don Dumouchelle. For more on the hoedown, see Page A3.

'It was unbelievable'

Students savor Rose Bowl experience

BY SUE MASON
 STAFF WRITER

It's been more than a month since Jessica Dwyer and Nathan Noeyack marched down Colorado Boulevard in Pasadena, Calif., but the experience is as fresh in their minds as if it were yesterday.

"I remember coming down Orange Boulevard before the turn onto Colorado Boulevard and seeing all those cameras," said Dwyer. "That's when it hits you that you're in the Rose Parade."

"It was unbelievable," added Noeyack. "When you turn the corner and all you see is parade for miles and miles and rows and

rows of bleachers. Words can't explain how much fun it was. It was the most unforgettable experience of my life."

Dwyer and Noeyack were members of the first Bands of America Honor Band to ever perform in a Tournament of Roses Parade. They took their march down Orange and Colorado boulevards in this year's New Year's Day parade.

TRUE TO THEIR SCHOOL

Both are members of the John Glenn High School band. A junior, Dwyer plays the flute. A senior,

PLEASE SEE ROSE BOWL, A5



TOM HAWLEY | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

John Glenn High School junior Jessica Dwyer and senior Nathan Noeyack show off the uniform jackets they wore as members of the Bands of America Honor Band in the 2005 Tournament of Roses Parade.

Parade, pageant return to summer fest

BY DARRELL CLEM
 STAFF WRITER

Promising the city's biggest party ever, Westland Summer Festival organizers have unveiled plans for more carnival rides, fireworks and entertainment than residents have seen in the event's 35-year history.

"It will be the biggest summer festival we've ever had - no question about it," chairman Kenneth Mehl said. "There will be something for everybody."

The six-day festival - always staged around City Hall grounds and Central City Park - will run Wednesday, June 29, through Monday, July 4. It will end with thunderous fireworks to celebrate this nation's independence.

"The fireworks will be the biggest we've ever had in the city," Mehl said. Organizers already have started publicizing the event amid hopes of drawing record numbers of participants for

the festival parade, arts and crafts booths, concession stands and the Miss Westland pageant.

The parade and pageant will return after being dropped last summer due to financial difficulties that forced organizers to scale back plans. This year's festival won approval Monday from the Westland City Council.

In supporting the event, Councilman Richard LeBlanc welcomed the return of the parade, which will kick off the festival June 29 with floats, civic clubs and youth groups making the trek west along Ford Road from Schoolcraft College's Radcliff campus to Westland City Hall.

"I think that's a good thing," LeBlanc said of the parade's return.

With the Miss Westland pageant returning, organizer Lisa Tesner said young women who live in Westland and

PLEASE SEE FEST, A5

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INDEX

- Apartments E4
- Automotive F5
- Classified Index D2
- Crossword Puzzle D4
- For the Record A4
- Community Life C1
- Health C6
- Jobs E6
- Obituaries C5
- New Homes D1
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Coming Thursday in Filter

Opera with Sex Appeal
 10 hunky Aussies mix classical vocal training with a pop edge.



Advanced programs start early in Livonia

BY STEPHANIE ANGELYN CASOLA
STAFF WRITER

One draw for families seeking to move into the Livonia Public Schools district involves the programs offered for academically talented students.

Those programs begin early, in kindergarten, with the Alternative Classrooms for the Academically Talented, or ACAT program, housed at Webster Elementary School.

"Our district prides itself on the quality programs we provide to reach the diverse needs of our students," said Sheila Alles, director of elementary instruction.

The ACAT program was founded in 1976 for grades four-six. The following year, it expanded to include grade three. By 1984, ACAT covered early elementary education instituting a program from kindergarten through second grade.

Webster Principal Lorna Durand explained that the school experienced growing enrollment between 1984 and 1996, and began "looping" classes. Students stay with the same teacher for two years, and each level of education is considered a "family" Family One, for example, includes grades K-2.

"When you walk into an ACAT classroom, you'll find an emotionally safe and empowering environment," said Janet Good, gifted specialist for the district. She calls the academically talented student population "a joy to work with."

The ACAT program is based on a the "interactive education model" which Good described as a highly structured, complex, decentralized and individual approach to education. At Webster, this entails opportunities for student choice, an emphasis on hands-on activities, challenging assignments, student-led conferences, and more.

"Each card marking, we create a new benchmark for the next quarter based on the student's current learning," said Durand.

Such students are identified through achievement testing, and parents and teachers can refer students to begin the application process.

Those who score 90 percent

LIVONIA SCHOOLS

or higher on tests including the Stanford/OLSAT are reviewed by a team of educators, including Good and Durand as well as Rob West, assessment coordinator, to determine a pool of possible candidates.

"Historically, we send 140 letters and 100 (students) choose to apply," said Good. By the time students reach middle school, though, fewer of them will make it into MACAT, the Middle School Alternative Classrooms for the Academically Talented.

The program was pared down to 60 students a year - 120 total - and it is housed at Frost Middle School.

Founded in 1977, the program experienced growth in the 1990s, when 200 students in grades seven and eight were part of MACAT. Entrance was based upon performance on the sixth-grade OLSAT.

Principal Chris Berry, a former MACAT teacher, said four teachers handle MACAT.

These classes are also looped, though students are exposed to electives in the school as well.

"Students are challenged and nurtured to be independent learners," said Berry. "Not only do teachers coach the students, students coach each other."

The MACAT program isn't the only option for academically talented students, according to Durand. When the program was scaled back, the district developed more opportunities at all middle schools for accelerated classes.

According to Berry, students in the ACAT program ready to transition to middle school are invited to the MACAT open house, as well as an open house at the middle school designated for their own residential area.

Durand said Livonia's ACAT and MACAT programs are more extensive than those offered in nearby communities, like Plymouth-Canton Schools. For more information on these programs contact Webster Elementary at (734) 744-2795 or Frost Elementary School at (734) 744-2670.

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AAUW gets ready for staging of 'Pinocchio'

BY SUE MASON
STAFF WRITER

The little boy with the nose that grows with each new lie will be center stage when the Plymouth-Canton Branch of the American Association of University Women presents the five performances of Pinocchio March 3-5 at Garden City High School's O'Leary Auditorium.

For more than 40 years, the organization has been presenting children's theater productions, taking classics like *Pinocchio*, *Snow White* and *Peter Pan* and crafting hour-long "AAUW versions."

For more than 40 years, the organization has been presenting children's theater productions, taking classics like *Pinocchio*, *Snow White* and *Peter Pan* and crafting hour-long "AAUW versions."

"We're at liberty to change a few things," said co-director Shirley Zaetta, a Garden City school teacher. "We added hawkers and clowns to *Pinocchio* and have one of the Lost Boys saying 'no more ball playing, no more PlayStation and no more MEAP tests,' but it's pretty much the same play we did five years ago."

"But the main idea is the same. Children shouldn't tell lies."

This is Zaetta's first time directing and she's thankful she's sharing the responsibilities with Becky Copenhaver, a Livonia school teacher who has done it before.

"There's a lot more decisions to be made than I thought there would be," said Copenhaver. "I think I'd rather be on stage than behind it."

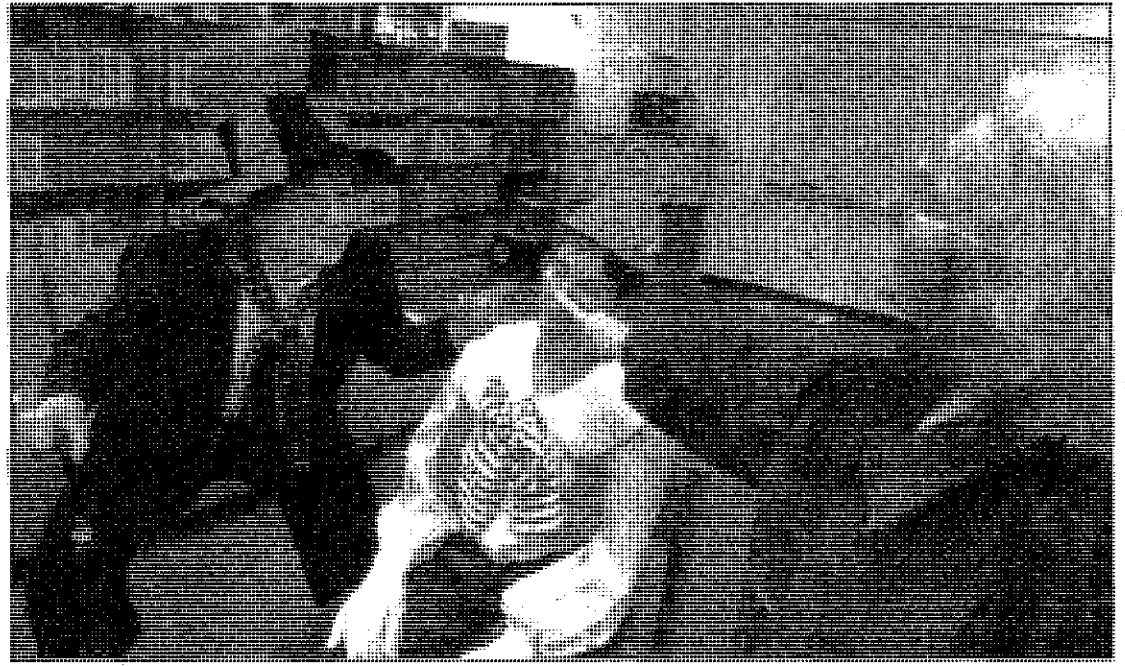
IN REHEARSAL

Members had been rehearsing in the library of Hoben Elementary School in Canton, but then moved to O'Leary Auditorium. The move is when the cast has to know their lines.

"Some have been involved so long, it's the 10th, 11th time they've played the part," said Zaetta.

One of those long-timers is Sharon Belobraidich who has the role of Foul Fellow in this year's production.

"I'm never the goody, I always a bad guy or stupid fellow," she said. "I've played the Tin Man, Captain Hook and



PHOTOS BY BILL BRESLER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER
Jiminy Cricket (Pam Dean) and Gepetto (Sylvia Rozian) discuss the little wooden boy Pinocchio (Melissa Uhl) who just might become a real boy.



Overseeing the production are co-directors Becky Copenhaver and Shirley Zaetta.



The Story Lady (Diana Wilcox) reads the famous tale to Jiminy Cricket (Pam Dean), Candlewick (Sunita Doddamani), Foul Fellow (Sharon Belobraidich), Stromboli (Elaine Bain), Gepetto (Sylvia Rozian), Gideon (Mickey Edell), and Pinocchio (Melissa Uhl).

the Queen in *Cinderella*. The antagonist makes the play.

"I had a kid beat on me when I was padded up for giant, asking me why I was so mean to Jack."

Belobraidich has been doing the plays for 34 years. A retired Plymouth-Canton school teacher, she did the music for the productions for the first five years before joining the casts.

Melissa Uhl, an engineer with Visteon, is playing the part of Pinocchio, a role her mother played when Belobraidich was doing the music.

"It's fun to see the kids when they grow up, but I wouldn't just want that part," she said. "It's just a nothing (role) for me."

COMMON THREAD

Education is a thread that weaves through the chapter. Most members are active or retired educators from the Livonia, Garden City and Plymouth-Canton districts, with a few engineers like Uhl, a lawyer - Sunita Doddamani with the Wayne County Prosecutor's Office - a financial person - Tricia Carney

with Rock Financial - and photographer, Julie Brown.

The AAUW first started doing children's plays more than 40 years ago. The first production was *Hansel and Gretel*. They now have a small repertoire of plays that they rotate through every few years.

"People like Mary Fritz and Peggy Heiney started this," said Zaetta. "They were the ones who came up with the idea that we should have a play group."

The plays are kept to about one hour and are interactive. During the play, members of the cast will move through the audience and afterwards, children have a chance to meet each and everyone one of them in the lobby.

Members all say that it's the camaraderie that makes doing the play so much fun, but it's the reaction of the kids that makes it extra special.

"Meeting the kids after the play, seeing their reaction to play and their expressions on their faces ... I played Doc in *Snow White* and a little boy came up and told me, 'I have your movie,'" said Copenhaver. "He truly believed I was that character."

The AAUW has made a few changes beyond adding PlayStation and MEAP to the script.

New this year is a program after the 10 a.m. show Saturday with activities to help Girl Scouts and Brownies earn their theater badges.

In addition to the 10 a.m. show, the play will be presented at 7:30 p.m. Thursday and Friday, March 3-4, and 1 and 3 p.m. Saturday, March 5.

Tickets are priced at \$5. They're available at Bugaboos in Plymouth, 535 Forest Ave., and at Fanatic U in Garden City, 30409 Ford, and by mail by sending a check, payable to the Plymouth-Canton AAUW, to Play Tickets, 39564 Village Run Drive, Northville MI 48167.

The group also is making will-call tickets available this year. They can be ordered online at alpcaine@comcast.net for pickup at the auditorium before the show. Tickets also will be available at the door. O'Leary Auditorium is at 6500 Middlebelt, north of Ford, in Garden City.

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Cowpoke Benjamin Biber, 6, takes a solo turn around the floor accompanied by his faithful horse.



PHOTOS BY BILL BRESLER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Swing your partner

Moms and dads and their sons and daughters were twirling and whirling for some western-style dancing at the Westland Parks and Recreation Department's annual Western Hoedown. The special couples received souvenir photographs, refreshments and plenty of mementos to remember the dance, held at the Bailey Recreation Center.



Ernie Bracy made sure he was close for a slow dance with his mom, Tynisha.

District recognizes blue ribbon winner

BY SUE MASON
STAFF WRITER

The staff of Edison Elementary School — from its principal right down to one of its bus drivers — was on the receiving end of accolades last week as the Wayne-Westland school board honored its blue ribbon accomplishment.

"This is a very special and unique honor for Wayne-Westland, Edison's teachers, staff and students and the Edison community," Supt. Greg Baracy said. "Blue Ribbon chosen schools meet the toughest standards and rigorous criteria."

Edison was one of 32 schools designated as Blue Ribbon schools for 2005 by the state Board of Education. The award was established in 1982 to recognize schools that demonstrate a strong commitment to educational excellence and significant academic improvement over five years.

"We're proud of each and every one of you," said board President Fred Weaver, who presented Principal Barbara Hastings with a plaque recognizing the school's achievement. "We appreciate so much what you've done, and I trust you will display this proudly."

"The times I've been in Edison I've been impressed by the sense of family and community," board Vice President Cindy Schofield said. "When you come in, you

Edison was one of 32 schools designated as Blue Ribbon schools for 2005 by the state Board of Education. The award was established in 1982 to recognize schools that demonstrate a strong commitment to educational excellence and significant academic improvement over five years.

feel the warmth. It comes through that this is a school that cares about children."

Hastings, who with her staff wore blue lapel ribbons for the ceremony, told the board that a few things have been key to the school's success, the most important of which is the relationship that has been fostered with the families and community.

"We know that no significant learning can take place without significant relationships," she said. "We have a wonderful relationship with our families and the community around us. Parents help us with fund-raising, they help in the class-

room, they help everywhere in the building and even at home."

She also told the board that the North Central Accreditation process also has been instrumental in the school's success, saying that it required her staff to "continue to look at our program and decide where to focus our efforts most."

"The district provided the leadership for our building improvement and it played a part in our success," she added.

She also credited the writing team, which put its "minds and hearts" into completing the 30-page application, which covered such things as academic achievement, school organization and culture and family and community partnerships.

The school also had to make adequate yearly progress as required by the federal No Child Left Behind law and have a grade of A or B on the state's EducationYES! school report card. Edison received an A for the two years the report card has been issued.

While the school was honored by the district last week, it will have to wait until April 7 for the state ceremony. Hastings hopes that the students can be a part of it. "It's a wonderful thing and we're so excited," she said.

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6 candidates file for 2 seat on school board

Six candidates have tossed their hats into the collective ring for two seats on the Livonia Public Schools Board of Education.

Current members Daniel Lessard and Cynthia M. Markarian face terms ending June 30. Both have decided to run in the election.

This will be a first for Markarian, who was appointed to her post last spring once former board Vice President Terri Godfroid-Marecki vacated the seat to join Livonia's City Council.

Markarian has two children in the district and works as vice president of networks and user services for DFCU Financial.

Lessard is a nine-year veteran of the Livonia Board of Education. An active PTA member and retired Michigan Bell employee, he is currently president of the Wayne County Association of School Boards.

Also vying for their turn as trustees will be: William C. Fried, Christopher C.

Kaufman, Frank Kalinski and Steve King.

Fried and King have both run for a school board seat in the past.

Fried, a Livonia attorney, is a married father of two who has lived in Livonia since 1972. He is a member of many civic organizations in Livonia.

King, a teacher and coach, is a Livonia resident and father of four. He is founder and leader of the band Steve King and the Dittilies.

Newcomer Kalinski owns his own business, Frank's Rain Gutter Service, and is a father of two students in the district. This is his first venture in a local election and would like to share new ideas with the board.

Kaufman is a full-time student at Eastern Michigan University and a freelance graphic designer. A Livonia resident, he said he'd like to see more young people in politics.

By Stephanie A. Casola

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Girl Scouts reach out, earn Gold Awards

Three local Girl Scouts have received the highest honor possible for their accomplishments in community service.

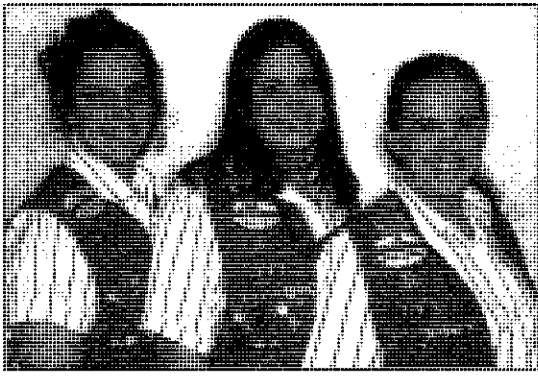
Megan Malinowski, a Stevenson senior, Kelly Mishowski, a Franklin senior, and Christine Swan, a Franklin senior, have all received Gold Awards, the highest honor in Girl Scouting. All are in Troop 713.

Malinowski of Livonia helped kindergartners get in shape while completing her 64-hour service project, called Kindergartners Learn Balancing Act.

She built balancing boards for 10 kindergarten classrooms and assembled crates filled with bean bags, hula hoops, jump ropes and playground balls. The exercises, Malinowski explained, will help improve the kindergartners' balance as well as their mental focus.

Malinowski plans to attend Central Michigan to pursue a career in athletic training/physical education.

Kelly Mishowski of Westland completed 50 hours of service for her project, Cell Phones Fighting Domestic Violence. Seeing the need for wireless phones as a weapon against domestic violence, Mishowski held a seminar with visiting experts of the field who talked about the ways to recognize and deal with domestic violence. She also held a wireless phone drive where more



Megan Malinowski, Kelly Mishowski and Christine Swan all earned their Gold Awards, the highest honor in Girl Scouting. All are in Troop 713.

than 100 refurbished phones were donated to the cause.

Swan's project, Myself and Others, focused on something intangible - self-esteem in young girls.

She completed 56 hours of service and held an overnighter for 47 girls. Activities aimed at boosting self esteem included craft projects, role playing and mini-workshops. Swan, who lives in Livonia, plans to study home economics education at Schoolcraft College.

FEST

FROM PAGE A1

who are high school age may enter the contest, regardless of whether they live in the Wayne-Westland or Livonia school district.

"They have to be willing to be part of the parade and the entire festival," Tesner said. "They need to know that they have to be a part of their community."

Organizers plan to bring in more carnival rides than in previous years, particularly for teens and adults.

"The carnival is going to be the biggest we've ever had," Mehl said. "There will be more rides."

In other festival news:

- The fireworks display will start shortly after 10 p.m. on the Fourth of July, capping the six-day festival.
- Bands will perform nightly on stage. And, although the lineup hasn't been announced, Mehl said, "we've got some very good entertainment coming in."
- Parade organizers are asking those who plan to participate to sign up as soon as possible. Call Jeannie Cox at (734) 722-6979.
- Anyone who wants to join the arts and crafts show should call Gale Chaudoin at (734) 994-0450.
- Food vendors who want to set up concessions are urged to call Sue Haslacker at (734) 425-6072.
- To get involved in the Miss Westland pageant, call Lisa Tesner at (734) 658-8088.

Participants should be 16 to 21 years old.

■ The festival also needs volunteers to help with such tasks as security, maintenance and clean-up efforts. Call (734) 261-5955.

The festival committee is independent from the city and raises its own money to throw the annual party. City officials don't budget any money for the event, although the city provides such services as police officers and paramedics, as needed.

Mehl remains hopeful that this year's festival will be the best yet.

"It's the biggest thing that the city does," he said. "It's an opportunity for everybody in the city to enjoy themselves at a minimal expense."

DEHART

FROM PAGE A1

"I think things have gone very well," Pickering said. "There was no step missed once she took office."

As council president, he said, "my relationship with Eileen is pretty much the same as when Nancy was clerk. It's been a very good working relationship, and the transition was very easy."

Resident Georgia Becker, who campaigned to make the clerk's job an elected position, said she believes that she and others did the right thing.

"I think things have worked out fine. I think Eileen is doing a good job," Becker said.

DeHart took office making \$50,000, while other department heads made \$84,035. Even before it was known who would win the clerk's election in 2003, the Local Officials Compensation Commission, which sets salaries for elected officials, had gutted the clerk's pay.

Some viewed it as punitive toward voters for making the job an elected position. But LOCC member Joe Eadeh, who had suggested an even lower salary of \$25,000, said he and others worried that an elected

clerk might not even be qualified for the job.

"Eileen has answered those concerns," said Eadeh, who, along with other LOCC members, recently boosted DeHart's salary to \$84,035.

"The clerk's job is a very intricate job. It's very detailed, and I wasn't sure if somebody being elected would be able to do the job properly or what obstacles they would run into," Eadeh said. "The clerk is the keeper of all city records. What Eileen has shown is that someone can come in and learn fast and take the helm and run with it."

It is telling that DeHart has won accolades from her one-time political rivals. When Cicirelli won her mayoral race in 2001, DeHart had campaigned that political season for Cicirelli's opponent, Richard LeBlanc. DeHart would have served as LeBlanc's deputy mayor.

Cicirelli confirmed that she and DeHart have long moved past any political differences they had.

LeBlanc, too, has commended the job DeHart has done, saying she has performed so skillfully that he would no longer support any outside contractual help for her office.

"She has done a great job," LeBlanc said during a recent

council session.

Just last week, DeHart announced that she will now have extended office hours - until 7 p.m. - on the nights that the council has its business meetings. That would typically be the first and third Monday of each month, except on holidays.

"I just want to make the clerk's office more user-friendly for people," DeHart said. "A lot of people work until 5 (p.m.) and can't get here before the office closes."

It's that kind of initiative that has won praise for the city's first voter-elected clerk.

"I am pleasantly surprised at how smoothly things have gone," Eadeh said. "I think the fears I had are no longer around. It has gone more smoothly than some people expected, including myself."

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HISTORY

FROM PAGE A1

faced circumstances that have been placed upon us in order to break us down," McClain said.

Despite slavery and racism, "African-Americans have made great contributions to American society and to the world as a whole," he said. "We will continue to be a positive influence, regardless of what we've come through. We're still standing, and we're still strong."

As a segue to his address, McClain will show a video that

he taped in 1995 while he was doing mission work for two weeks in Nigeria. The video will be accompanied by African music.

The Feb. 27 program, which is free, will start with a one-hour reception. Those attending will be able to view African artifacts such as spears, shields and masks, Williams said.

"It will be very colorful," she said. "Some of the women will be wearing African clothing."

This marks the second year that the Southeast Westland Homeowners Association and the NAACP have sponsored a Black History Month program at the William P. Faust Public

Library of Westland.

Last year, organizers placed African artifacts in library display cases throughout the month. This year, however, the cases already had been reserved.

"We'll do that again next year," Williams said.

Organizers chose to schedule the program on a Sunday to give more people an opportunity to attend on a day when fewer of them have to work.

"Sunday is a good day for it," Williams said. "People can go to the program after church."

ROSE BOWL

FROM PAGE A1

Noeyack plays percussion and the bassoon.

The two students were invited to audition for the band. Both sent in letters of recommendation. Dwyer also sent in a DVD of her performance while Noeyack had to send a VHS tape. They found out they were accepted in April 2004.

"Thousands of students received the letter in the mail, so to be accepted was an honor," said Dwyer.

"Everyone wanted to be there because first they had to pay a lot to be there, and everyone showed they wanted to be there," added Noeyack.

BOA sent band members a DVD with information on the marching style and commands that would be used and fitness routine as well as the music so they could memorize it in advance of actual rehearsals the week before the parade. In late November, they sent BOA a tape showing them performing the music from memory.

"They wanted us to be in shape for a 5 1/2-mile march," said Noeyack. "I can say that no one in the drum line dropped out even though we had to carry 60 pounds of drums."

"They wanted students that were going to be self-motivated, student who were going to

accomplish what they wanted without cracking the whip," said band director Scott Cramer. "I have the top students here in band and the tops in academics, so to have an honor band, you have the cream of the crop."

The Honor Band was the largest such national band ever assembled and the first to appear in a national parade in more than a decade. The band had 330 members from 217 high schools in 42 states. Dwyer and Noeyack were two of 13 students from Michigan who were selected for the band.

SOUNDS OF MUSIC

In all, the band had 245 woodwinds, 33 percussionists, a 45-member flag corps and dance team, one vocalist, one keyboard player and five drum majors. George Parks, director of the University of Massachusetts Minuteman Marching Band, was the director.

Dwyer left for California on Dec. 26 and Noeyack a day later. The temperature was in the mid-60s, but most of the time it rained. They practiced eight hours a day to prepare for the parade.

"No one was negative, I didn't hear one negative comment," said Noeyack of the grueling rehearsals. "We were tired a lot, but not tired of

doing it."

It wasn't all work, however. Band members did find time to have lunch and shop on the Santa Monica Pier, see the parade floats being made and perform at Disneyland.

"We spent the whole day there performing," said Dwyer. "We played by Tom Sawyer Island. Someone said that the people ran to hear us. That day they had a full park. It was so full, they had to close the park."

While it was an honor to be a part of the band, it was, as Noeyack said, costly. Each student had to pay \$1,280 and that didn't include airfare to the West Coast. And for an additional \$90, they could buy their Honor Band uniform jacket to keep.

But what they came away with was, as the MasterCard commercial says, priceless.

"I made a lot of friends, a lot who want to try out for drum corps," said Noeyack, who had roommates from Indiana and Kentucky. "You spend seven-eight days with them and then you leave and never see them again, but I think I'll stay in touch with the drummer from Warren."

"It was truly amazing working with people from across the country," added Dwyer. "I still talk online with my friends. I love them, they were the greatest people."

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Granholt, Legislature need to do something - anything

Whatever you think about the dramatic proposals Gov. Jennifer Granholt put forth in her State of the State speech, perhaps the most politically significant thing about them is that she has — for the first time — committed her administration to a major stand on the state's future.

The Democratic governor offered a complex package that includes asking the voters this fall to approve a \$2 billion bond proposal aimed at creating 72,000 jobs. She also announced, among other things, a massive \$800 million set of public works projects that she said would create another 36,000 jobs.

She also announced significant reforms in the state's controversial Single Business Tax, though she stopped short of doing what many expected her to do — get rid of it, period.

And she added a few other proposals, including a new \$4,000 merit scholarship for successful college juniors.

Republicans, as expected, denounced her plans as, in the words of Senate Majority Leader Ken Sikkema, "debt today and debt tomorrow." Democrats, who don't control either house of the Legislature, were somewhere between cautiously supportive and wildly enthusiastic that their governor at last was behaving like both a governor and a Democrat.

Whatever one thinks of her ideas, the governor has, for the first time since her election in 2002, put forth an agenda. Though much has been made of her status as Michigan's first woman governor, the dirty little secret she is widely regarded as the weakest chief executive Michigan has had since the 1940s.

Though widely expected to win by a landslide, she barely prevailed over a weak opponent, and has behaved with considerable timidity ever since. Last year, a Republican leader told me with a tight little smile that his party didn't really mind very much having Jennifer Granholt as governor. Sure, she might nominate a few judges they didn't like but, as they saw it, she had no agenda, and since the GOP had large majorities in both houses of the Legislature, they felt they could get what they wanted through, perhaps with a little bit of trimming at the margins.

But in fact, what has happened since she took the oath more than two years ago largely has been political drift, in which the lawmakers'

chief preoccupation has been to try to finesse a state budget that seems to be perpetually out of balance by \$1 billion a year.

Twenty-two years ago, a new governor named Jim Blanchard took office facing a fiscal crisis that was as bad or worse, and spent his political capital temporarily raising the state income tax. That solved the crisis, and the tax was lowered again as promised, but Democrats lost the state Senate as a result.

Eight years later, Republican John Engler took over and began slashing, burning and cutting programs that had been seen as sacrosanct. There was much screaming, but he prevailed and was re-elected twice by landslides.

But Granholt has proposed nothing of the sort, and both parties have shrunk from tackling the core issue. Instead, it's been all about the death of a thousand cuts. Those who understand higher education are openly worried that the whittling-down process will soon seriously damage the university system, and with it Michigan's future ability to compete.

While both parties will privately admit the state's budget system is massively and structurally flawed, nobody has had the courage to tackle reforming it. Nor will anyone say the words that everyone believes, but regards as politically fatal: You get what you pay for.

Right now, Michigan isn't getting anywhere. The state is drifting downward economically; tied with Alaska for the nation's worst unemployment rate.

But will the governor's proposals, which sound like a combination of Silicon Valley and Franklin Roosevelt, work? Do they have a chance of being enacted by the Republican Legislature? Bill Ballenger, publisher of *Inside Michigan Politics* and a respected political handicapper, says it is dicey.

"She told the Republicans not to just pass the 'good stuff' — the parts they liked — and send it to her, but I think that's exactly what they will do, and dare her to veto it," said the pundit, himself a former state senator.

History suggests that the odds of getting the voters to approve a new spending scheme in a special off-off-year election are not good.

Yet there is a risk for the GOP, too. If the Michigan Legislature refuses to enact any of her agenda, the governor will certainly run next year against the "do-nothing Republicans" who, she will say, played politics while Michigan's economy burned.

Jack Lessenberry is editorial vice president of HomeTown

Michigan's political leaders need to put state above party

Politics is fun. Government is work.

Anyone watching Gov. Jennifer Granholt's State of the State address could see that politics is alive and well. Government doesn't have a chance.



Hugh Gallagher

In the words of state Sen. Laura Toy, R-Livonia, Michigan is a leaking boat, the proverbial Titanic after running smack into the iceberg. Officially, the state is tied with Alaska for the nation's highest unemployment rate.

The state struggles every year with its depleted treasury to maintain its constitutionally mandated balanced budget and vital services. Every year, the state kicks its financial problems down the road to municipal governments, school districts and state universities.

While the rest of the nation's economy seems to be on the rise, Michigan remains stuck.

Sen. Toy and Sen. Michael Bishop, R-Rochester, came to the *Observer* on Monday to present some of their proposals for investing in the life sciences and other technology to get Michigan back on track. Bishop has a bill to provide tax credits to reduce loss risk for "angel investors" who will provide funding for innovative ideas. Toy is proposing a package of ideas to support a "development pipeline" that would bring together public and private investment.

On the same day the governor was getting a chill from the Republicans in the legislature, President Bush was at the Detroit Economic Club to tout his new budget, which includes some deep Medicaid cuts that will only exacerbate the state's problems.

He told assembled business leaders that the time for debate over his budget should be over. Opponents are equally sure the real debate hasn't even begun.

Granholt came out swinging Tuesday night with a bold proposal to launch a \$2 billion bond issue to pay for various programs to encourage high tech development in the state. She also proposed expansive public works projects to provide employment and improve the state's infrastructure. And she ventured into the treacherous waters of school consolidation and changes in the Merit Scholarship. These were bold gestures from a governor who hasn't been a well spring of original ideas in her first two years.

If you watched the speech, you know that a part of the audience rose regularly to give the governor a round of applause. A larger part of the audience didn't. They fiddled with their fingers, or gave a tepid little tea-party hand tap or squirmed miserably.

Everyone rose when reminded that Michigan is the greatest state in the union, when lauding our military and when deploring Hollywood sex

and violence. Otherwise, it was definitely an organized Republican snub.

Apparently some Republicans have also felt snubbed. Sen. Toy said Monday that in two years she has never been invited to Gov. Granholt's office.

"Engler used to call us in quite a bit, both sides of the aisle, and I have yet to be called into Gov. Granholt's office to ask what my position is on an issue," Toy said. "We have to be inclusive, we have to work together. I hear her talk it, but I don't see her walk it."

On Tuesday, the state got to see the GOP neither walk the walk or talk the talk.

In offering a "rebuttal" to the governor, a decidedly sour-faced Sen. Ken Sikkema, the Republican majority leader, and this year's Speaker Craig DeRoche could find nothing but doom and gloom and hard times (high taxes) for the state's "job providers." It was also obvious that they were already looking ahead to next year's gubernatorial race and a governor who's even more vulnerable if they do nothing. (And since the bond proposal requires a two-thirds majority to get it on the ballot, you can forget that idea.)

Meanwhile, we still have the nation's highest unemployment rate; many more have long since given up looking for work; many who once depended on Medicaid to supplement inadequate or non-existent health insurance are doing without; our local governments, schools and universities are struggling to find more ways to cut on top of cuts, which adds to the unemployment problem; high tech industries are going to other states; and the state's infrastructure problems grow worse.

Politics is how things get done. It is necessary to debate ideas, pare away at the details, compromise.

Maybe Sens. Bishop and Toy have some good ideas.

Maybe the governor has some good ideas. But now is the time to get down to the business of government and work through those ideas.

The devil, of course, is in the details, as presented Thursday in Granholt's budget proposal. This is the time to debate those details, discuss the practical merits and demerits of those proposals without automatically rejecting them because there's an election two years away and it's just possible for the GOP to win control of everything.

Michigan can't wait through two more years of inaction and bickering because we have a Republican legislature and a Democratic governor. It's time both parties talked the talk and walked the walk.

Hugh Gallagher is the managing editor of the *Observer* Newspapers. He can be reached by e-mail at hgallagher@oe.homecomm.net, by phone at (734) 953-2149 or by fax at (734) 591-7279.



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State senators propose life science investment package

BY HUGH GALLAGHER
STAFF WRITER

State Sen. Laura Toy, R-Livonia, is supporting a package of bills she says will help Michigan compete in a fast changing economic environment.



Toy



Bishop

"Budget deficits and unemployment problems we've had are all symptoms of a bigger problem," Toy said. "The rest of the country has changed and Michigan hasn't kept up with those needs." Toy and state Sen. Mike Bishop, R-Rochester,

discussed their ideas for supporting investment in new technology Monday, before Gov. Jennifer Granholm presented her proposal in Tuesday's State of the State address to seek voter support for a \$2 billion bond program to invest in new technologies.

Bishop is sponsoring a bill to provide equity loss tax credits for "angel investors." The bill would encourage investment in innovative businesses by guaranteeing up to \$50,000 in tax credits against losses. The total program is capped at \$10 million, with the first claims not accepted until 2008.

"Michigan is way behind in seed funds for venture capital," Bishop said. "We also faced the reality that the manufacturing base was decimated in this state. Michigan needs to step up and do something different. We want to be more than a flyover state between Silicon Valley and

Silicon Alley."

Bishop said the angel investors fund is designed to tell investors that the state is willing to invest in innovative companies.

"We want to create a fund that will not only keep companies here but invite more in," he said. "We'll never be able to keep up with California and Massachusetts but at the same time a journey of 1000 miles begins with one step."

Toy is offering several supporting ideas that aren't yet to the formal bill stage. She proposes creating a life science product development pipeline, working with Michigan companies.

Under the proposal, a Life Sciences Seed Fund would be created for commercializing drugs, diagnostics and medical devices, capitalized with up to \$50 million in revenue bonds.

INVESTING

The fund would invest 10 percent in a life science project, the company bringing the new product would put up 10 percent and other private sector investors would provide the other 80 percent. Initially, bond payments would be subsidized from the existing life science corridor appropriation, about \$4 million a year.

Investments in firms doing embryonic stem cell research would be prohibited.

"We need the vision and expediency because we are behind," said Toy.

She said the old days of high paying assembly line jobs are a thing of the past and new industries will require a higher level of education.

A final portion of Toy's package includes an income tax credit for individuals and small and mid-size companies who invest in job training.

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Bouchard finds support for Senate bid

BY ALEX LUNDBERG
STAFF WRITER

Michael Bouchard tested the waters before deciding to take on Sen. Debbie Stabenow in the mid-term elections, which are still two years off, and found them to be agreeable.

The response from family members and others he asked was "very positive," he said.

Bouchard, 48, currently serves as Oakland County sheriff and has been an elected official since his first term on the Beverly Hills village council in 1986. He served in the state House and state Senate until 1999 when he was appointed Oakland County sheriff. He was elected to the post in 2000 and has been re-elected twice since then.

Now, he's looking at the U.S. Senate and filed to run against Stabenow last week.

He said if people were going to talk about the most pressing issues of the day they'd be talking about his strengths. The pressing issue of the day, he said, is security.

"It's about job security, job creation," Bouchard said. "I was a small business owner and I know where government can help: By getting out of the way." He said he's done consider-



JOHN STORMZAND | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Oakland County Sheriff Michael Bouchard is making a bid for the U.S. Senate.

able work to promote family security by pushing for the creation of a sex offender registry and the launching of an Internet crime unit. When seen in total, combining his career as a law enforcement officer as well as his experience as a member of the state Senate, he said people will see the choice is simple.

"When you look at my experience and the changes I've made, people will conclude that I get results," Bouchard said.

If elected, he said he'd try to end some of the "blind partisanship" he said is plaguing Washington, D.C., today. He said Michigan's incumbent Sens. Carl Levin and Stabenow are a part of that problem, preventing votes on several judgeships: He said the nominees should be voted on, either way, just as long as they get a vote.

"The delay is holding up the system and justice delayed is justice denied," he said. "People

are tired of that."

Bouchard also said he'd make the budget a priority if he's sent to Washington. He said he'd examine government activities closely. If it's necessary, he says he'd work to make it as efficient as possible. If it isn't, he said it should be stopped.

Bill Ballenger, publisher of the Lansing-based Inside Michigan Politics, said Bouchard is a viable candidate, but there is more than one race on the horizon before anyone trades body blows with Stabenow.

"First we need to see how he fares in the Republican primary and who he's going to face in that race," he said. "Then will the national Republican party see Stabenow as vulnerable? Will they send money? Will (President) George W. Bush campaign for him?"

He said comparing their resumes isn't going to tell you who voters are going to smile on in 2006. That Bouchard was both a legislator and sheriff or that Stabenow has been a long-time legislator isn't going to matter all that much in the voting booth.

"People don't make decisions that way," Ballenger said. "They look at name identification and personality."

Michigan Humane Society planning Telethon

On Wednesday, Feb. 23, the studios of WXYZ Channel 7 will air the Ninth Annual Michigan Humane Society Telethon from 6 a.m. through 11 p.m.

For the second year, the Telethon will air on Channel 7 with several two-minute segments scheduled during breaks in regular program-

ming. Radio partner will be Magic 105.1 FM.

Telethon 2005 will again be hosted by Channel 7 meteorologist and animal lover, Dave Rexroth.

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