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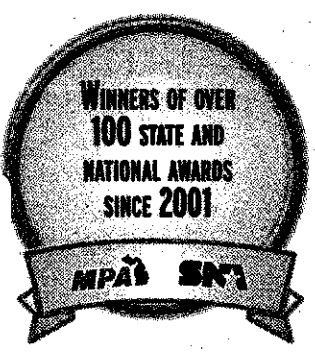
Happy Easter



A chat with 'Bridal Designer of the Year,' Reem Acra
PINK PAGE, C8

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Phony good Samaritans steal from elderly driver

BY DARRELL CLEM
STAFF WRITER

A 77-year-old Westland woman was bilked of \$260 after a pair of con artists followed her home and offered to repair a wheel that they told her was about to fall off of her 2003 Mercury Sable.

The woman, a widow who didn't want her name used, told her story in hopes that her warning will help other potential victims avoid a similar scam.

During the afternoon of Friday, March 18, the victim noticed that a black minivan was trailing her after

she had gone to a doctor's appointment and then stopped at a grocery store in Canton Township. She was followed to her home on Hix Road, near Warren Road.

A male suspect, accompanied by a woman he said was his pregnant wife, pulled behind the victim in her driveway and identified himself as a tire company employee.

"He got out of the minivan and told me that a wheel on my car would come off unless I got it repaired," she said.

The man pretended to call a tire company employer, and he convinced the victim to give him \$260 so that he

could supposedly go to buy parts to fix her car.

"He was supposedly going to get parts," the woman said. "He said he was going to leave his wife here. He said she was pregnant and cold, and he asked if I would fix her a cup of tea."

The victim agreed and left the female suspect alone in her home while she went to make the tea. When she came back into the room, the woman and man were both gone.

The victim learned later that the man had tampered with wiring on her car, a move that ultimately cost her another \$180 in repairs, bringing

her total losses to \$440.

"I would advise anyone who notices someone following them to drive to the police station or someplace," the victim said.

That's good advice, according to Westland police Lt. James Ridener, who is in charge of the detective bureau.

"If you know you're being followed, don't go home," he said. "Drive to the nearest police station, whether it's in Westland, Canton, Livonia or wherever."

If a potential victim is followed home, however, Ridener recommended going inside and calling the police

rather than inviting the possible swindlers inside.

"These type of con artists tend to be very cordial and polite, but they can be pushy, too," Ridener said.

By acting as a couple, he said, the swindlers are able to distract the woman and "divide and conquer."

Such swindlers aren't typically violent, Ridener said. "They're just thieves."

No arrest has been made. Anyone who is the victim of such con artists is encouraged to call the Westland Police Department at (734) 722-9600.

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



TOM HOFFMEYER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Hoppin' good time

The Easter Bunny got just as excited as the kids as he made his way along saying hello before the annual Marshmallow Drop at Nankin Mills Park Friday morning along Hines Drive. For more on the fun, please see page A3 of today's Observer.

Expansion of Humane Society site nearly done

BY JULIE BROWN
STAFF WRITER

When the work's done on renovating and expanding the Michigan Humane Society's Westland facility, the site will serve even more animals.

"We're really excited to get it done," said Cal Morgan, executive director of the MHS, which operates shelters in Westland, Rochester Hills and Detroit. "That's big news for us."

Morgan spoke Thursday, March 24, at the Westland Rotary Club, updating members on the \$6.5 million project at the Westland site, at Marquette and Newburgh. The facility is about 90 percent done, he said, and will expand to some 40,000 square feet. It will include a state-of-the-art animal hospital, along with space for shelter and training. Some 25,000 animals are taken in yearly at the Westland site and Morgan expects that to grow.

"Word will get around," said Morgan, a black Lab owner who shared pet stories with Rotarians during the lunch time.

"We're so pleased to be a part of this community," he added, noting the great cooperation of city of Westland officials. "It's so appropriate to talk to Westland community leaders."

He noted the MHS was founded in 1877 "to protect women, children and horses."

In the 1930s, it began looking after companion animals. These days, there are five cruelty investigators who work with local police on animal cruelty complaints.

Morgan, who's been on the job four years, talked about dogfights, problems with exotic pets and strays. Many tend to look at animals as disposable.



An artist's rendition shows the expansion of the Michigan Humane Society shelter in Westland.

Cooler rates aimed at heating arena use

BY DARRELL CLEM
STAFF WRITER

Hourly rates for using the city's ice arena have been slashed from \$160 to \$130 through mid-August, but a Westland Hockey Association leader said the

decrease won't bring much financial relief to his organization during off-season months.

Todd Kerrigan, manager of the arena named after Dallas Stars player and Westland native Mike Modano, sought the rate reduction to keep the facility competi-

tive with others during the spring and summer months.

"It's a good thing. It's just that it won't help us that much," WHA President Kristopher Simonian said. "We don't contract that much during that time."

The latest move comes after hockey association officials criticized the city last year for increasing hourly ice rates from \$140 to \$160. WHA leaders said the increase posed financial diffi-

PLEASE SEE ARENA, A5

Limousine falls, fatally injuring local mechanic

A Garden City mechanic was killed Thursday when a vehicle, hoisted up by a wrecker, fell and crushed him at a Westland service station, police said.

Johnny Hart, 42, was working under a limousine and attempting to remove the engine when the vehicle fell off the wrecker he had used to raise it up, police Lt. James Ridener said.

The incident happened Thursday afternoon at the Sunoco station on the northwest corner of Merriman and Palmer.

"One of the witnesses heard a snap, and the car just slammed to the ground," Ridener said. "He was killed instantly. It looks like a tragic accident."

Hart apparently had lifted the stretch limo up with the wrecker chains and was using a torch while trying to remove the engine,

Ridener said.


Hart was lying on his side at the time, Ridener said. The limousine fell and crushed his head, but most of his body wasn't under the vehicle, he said.

No one could be reached at the service station on Friday.

A telephone recording said the business would be closed until Monday due to an emergency.

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INDEX

Apartments E3
Automotive F4
Classified Index D3
Crossword Puzzle E2
For the Record A4
Community Life C1
Health C6
Jobs E5
Obituaries C5
New Homes D1
Service Guide E5
Sports B1

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Underground
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Hockey has Heart

Fund-raising group helps 'hockey families' in need

BY PAUL R. PACE
STAFF WRITER

Hockey may be known as a sport where only the tough survive, but there's a dedicated group of volunteers that meets in Farmington Hills who show it's also a sport with a lot of heart.

Starting out as a single fund-raiser in 2002, the organization Hockey has Heart has grown by leaps and bounds in helping folks who are, in some way, connected to hockey. It doesn't matter how they're related to the sport, as long as there's an affiliation, said HHH President Lucy Oakleaf of Farmington Hills.

Simply put, the group hosts fund-raisers and donates the money to hockey families in need. In a short time, they've helped several hockey families across the state.

Livonia resident Susan McCoy is one of the group's benefactors.

She said she used to get a little jealous when her husband, Rick, kept playing in the Livonia Over 30 hockey league, but his interest in hockey is now helping the family through a very difficult time.

Rick, 54, suffered a massive stroke last summer and now needs constant care. Because he was self-employed, his medical insurance was limited.

Susan, a teacher, had to go back to work, but there is still the issue of having to pay \$600 a week for Rick's professional care. When someone mentioned the situation to the volunteers at Hockey has Heart, the board decided to donate money that would cover three months of care for Rick.

The gift is a godsend, said Susan.

"I can't say enough about them," she said. "They're just a wonderful organization."

Oakleaf said the hockey community is a tight-knit bunch. So, it's no surprise that there are 250 volunteers who host several fund-raisers throughout the year to keep a pool of funds for those families that need help.

"We get calls from people or a family member or other times, we'll hear about something and contact them," Oakleaf said about how benefactors are found.

"We've helped families from Livonia, Plymouth, Grand Rapids to Traverse City," she said. "Our charter is the state of Michigan."

Since forming, the organization has raised more than \$230,000 through its annual gala.

Friday, April 8, is the next gala for Hockey has Heart. It takes place at the Laurel Manor Banquet facility in Livonia.

Guests will enjoy cocktails, appetizers, multi-course dinner, open bar, dancing and music.



Hockey legend Gordy Howe chats with Denise Ilitch-Murray and her husband, Glen Murray, at last year's Hockey has Heart Gala. Hockey has Heart raises money to help hockey families in need.

The ticket price is \$225 per couple and includes two raffle tickets. There will also be a silent auction and basket raffles. To purchase tickets, call (248) 476-9127.

As far as the future is concerned, Oakleaf said members are discussing the possibility of

expanding outside of Michigan.

"And we're always looking for new people who want to come on board and help," she said.

To learn more, check out the group's Web site at www.hockeyhasheart.com.

ppace@oe.homecomm.net | (734) 953-2128

CLUBS IN ACTION

Listings for Clubs in Action should be submitted in writing. They can be mailed to Sue Mason at 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150, by fax at (734) 591-7279 or by e-mail at smason@oe.homecomm.net. For more information, call (734) 953-2112.

T.O.P.S.

Take Off Pounds Sensibly No. M128, a support group for sensible weight loss, meets 6:30 p.m. Tuesdays at Good Shepherd Reformed Church, Wayne Road and Hunter in Westland. Call Jackie at (734) 722-7225.
n Take Off Pounds Sensibly No. M153

meets at 6:30 p.m. Wednesdays at St. John Episcopal Church, 555 S. Wayne Road, Westland. Call (734) 721-5023. Call Rosalie at (734) 728-0299 for more information.

Toastmasters

The Westland Easy Talkers Toastmasters Club No. 6694 (formerly Holy Smokemasters) teaches public speaking at the club's weekly meetings 6:30 p.m. Thursdays at Denny's Restaurant, 7725 N. Wayne Road, next to Westland Shopping Center. Call John Elbe at (734) 414-3401 noon to 8 p.m.
n The Dearborn Dynamic Toastmasters meets 6:30-8:30 p.m. Tuesdays at the Hawthorne Valley Country Club, 7300 N. Merriman in Westland. For information, visit

www.toastmasters.org.

■ Toastmasters International meets 7 p.m. every first and third Monday of the month at St. John Episcopal Church, on Sheldon in Plymouth. Guests are welcome, and there is no pressure to speak. Call (734) 459-0715 for information.

Genealogical society

The Western Wayne County Genealogical Society meets the third Monday of every month at 7:30 p.m. at the Livonia Civic Park Senior Center on Farmington Road, south of Five Mile. Beginning genealogy and computer classes start at 6:30 p.m. Guests are welcome.

Hospital retirees

The Oakwood-Annapolis Retirees meet at 1 p.m. the first Monday of the

month at Oakwood Hospital Annapolis Center, Venoy at Howe in Wayne. All Oakwood Retirees are welcome to attend.

Sliver Strings Dulcimer

Musicians and listeners are welcome to stop by and visit a traditional music jam 7-9 p.m. the first and third Thursday of the month at Good Hope Lutheran Church, 28680 Cherry Hill, Garden City. Acoustic instruments include hammered and mountain dulcimer, guitar, banjo, fiddle, harmonica, concertina, autoharp, recorder, pennywhistle, ukulele and upright bass. Call (734) 482-2902 or check out the Web site at <http://geocities.com/ssd-society>.

Westland Rotary

The Westland Rotary Club meets 12:15

p.m. Thursdays at Joy Manor, 28999 Joy, east of Middlebelt in Westland.

Spirit of Detroit

Spirit of Detroit Chorus rehearsals are 7-10 p.m. every Tuesday at St. Paul's Presbyterian Church, Five Mile and Inkster. The group is for women who love to sing. It is active in chorus competition. For information, call (734) 721-7742.

Sweet Adelines

The County Connection Chorus of Sweet Adelines International is looking for women who love to sing. The group sings a cappella music in barbershop style. Rehearsals are 6:45 p.m. Tuesdays at UAW Local 898 at 8975 Textile, Ypsilanti. For more information, call (734) 480-8843 or visit www.sweetadelines.org

CITY OF GARDEN CITY

To all residents and interested parties, The Council minutes will be available for review on the internet at www.gardencitymi.org

You can access this information at the Garden City Library or City Hall during regular Business hours or in the Police Station Lobby 24 hours a day.

ALLYSON M. BETTIS, Treasurer/City Clerk

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Class offers weather spotter training

Garden City Emergency Management, in cooperation with the Wayne County Amateur Radio Public Service Corps and the National Weather Service, will offer severe weather spotter training 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Saturday, April 2, at the Maplewood Community Center.

The training is designed for community volunteers, amateur radio operators and public safety officials to enable them to identify key cloud formations and storm effects and report their findings to weather service meteorologists at the Detroit/Pontiac Forecast Office. The information is used, along with sophisticated technology, including Doppler radar, to issue severe thunderstorm and tornado watches and warnings to protect the public.

The Skywarn training class is open to the public and is offered free of charge. To register, contact Diane at (734) 793-1782 or by e-mail fire@gardencitymi.org.

Dems meet

The Westland Democratic Club will meet at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, March 29, at the Dorsey Community Center, on Dorsey east of Venoy and south of Palmer. Officers will meet at 7 p.m.

Club dues are due at \$12 a year, or \$6 for senior citizens.

The guest speaker at the meeting will be Westland City Clerk Eileen DeHart, who will speak about the election process for schools, the city and general elections.

April's speaker will be Sam Jenkins, who will address the Wounded Warriors project for assisting wounded veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan.



PHOTOS BY TOM HOFFMEYER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Bunny hop

To the participants' delight, the Easter Bunny's helicopter graciously dropped thousands of marshmallows during the annual Marshmallow Drop Friday.

At right, 4-year-old Mitchell James was careful to inspect the marshmallows as he picked them up, hoping to be able to make a quick snack out of a few before turning them in for his prize.

Suspect held in local armed robbery

BY DARRELL CLEM
STAFF WRITER

A man arrested following a Thursday evening standoff with Detroit police was the same suspect wanted for a tanning salon holdup in Westland, police Lt. James Ridener said.

The 18-year-old man was arrested near the Greyhound bus station in Detroit after he told police that he had a gun and would shoot, authorities said. He was arrested without firing any shots.

His whereabouts became known after he telephoned a Westland house whose residents he had earlier visited on Terry Lane, on the city's northwest side.

The suspect apparently had caused trouble at the Terry Lane house, Ridener said, because the residents called police to ask for help in getting him to leave.

Officers went to Terry Lane and then drove the suspect to an Inkster house, not realizing immediately that he was the man suspected of robbing a tanning salon at Joy and Hix on Friday, March 18.

Only later, after a Westland detective found a red bandana with holes cut out for eyes at the

The 18-year-old man was arrested near the Greyhound bus station in Detroit after he told police that he had a gun and would shoot, authorities said.

Terry Lane residence, did police link the suspect to the tanning salon robbery, Ridener said.

A tanning salon employee had told police that the armed robber wore a similar red bandana and a hooded sweat shirt, and that he was carrying a revolver during the 9 p.m. holdup.

No shots were fired and no one was hurt during either the robbery in Westland or the standoff in Detroit.

The suspect, who was turned over by Detroit police to Westland authorities, was expected to be arraigned this weekend on an armed robbery charge stemming from the tanning salon holdup, Ridener said.

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PRESCHOOLS

Preschool listings should be submitted in writing. They can be mailed to Sue Mason at 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150, by fax at (734) 591-7279 or by e-mail at smason@oe.homecomm.net. For more information, call (734) 953-2112.

Willow Creek
Willow Creek Cooperative Preschool, on Cherry Hill between Newburgh and Wayne Road in Westland, is a non-profit co-op preschool for tots, 3 and 4 years old. It serves Westland, Canton and surrounding communities. The Morns and Tots program meets Friday mornings. Three-year-olds meet Tuesday and Thursday and four-year-olds meet Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Morning and afternoon sessions available. For more information, call Lucy Arunachalam at (734) 453-5959.

Preschool program
The Wayne-Westland Community Schools district has registration for preschool programs at Stottlemeyer Early Childhood and Family Development Center, on Marquette between Wayne and Wildwood. Included are an early intervention program, Head Start, Kids/Plus Preschool, a preprimary impaired program and Sparkey Preschool. Registration takes place 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Call (734) 419-2635.

McKinley
Looking for a great preschool? Choose McKinley Cooperative Preschool at 6500 N. Wayne Road in Westland. Nondiscriminatory and fully licensed, the program is open to youngsters ages 2-4. Morning and afternoon classes are offered. For information, call (734) 729-7222 or visit the Web site at www.mckinleypreschool.org.

YWCA Readiness
The YWCA of Western Wayne County

Early Childhood School Readiness Program is available to 4- and 5-year-old children. The YWCA is at 26279 Michigan in Inkster. Call (313) 561-4110.

Charter school
The Academy of Detroit-Westland, an entrepreneurial and business charter school, serves children in kindergarten through sixth grade. The school emphasizes basic education with business and entrepreneurial skills and offers a foreign language class, music and art, a dress code and a computer lab with access to the Internet. Call (734) 722-1465 or (248) 569-7787.

Methodist
The Westland Free Methodist Preschool is now enrolling for the 2004-05 school year. Four-year-olds attend on Mondays and Wednesdays; three-year-olds attend on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Call the preschool office at (734) 728-3559. Office hours are 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday-Thursday and 9-11:30 a.m.

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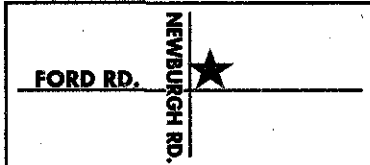
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NOVA helps brighten their way

Button-making business just another way of beating odds

BY DIANE GALE ANDREASSI
CORRESPONDENT

Christine Condon has worked a lifetime trying to beat the odds in almost every aspect of her life. She struggles with debilitating effects of cerebral palsy and has certainly exceeded all expectations with her business selling pins, key chains and magnets with clever sayings, like "Hand Over Your Chocolate and No One Gets Hurt," and "I Got Out of Bed for This?"

Despite the laborious effort she puts into making each button, her products sell for \$2 and less. Each button she makes is a trial in endurance as she struggles to make her body move the way she wants.

Condon is confined to a wheelchair and has limited use of her hands. But, she recently received a new automatic button presser and her job isn't as hard as it was with the old, manual press.

"What I'd like to do is make people realize how hard it is to be physically challenged," explains Condon who has difficulty speaking, but makes sure that each of her well formed thoughts is expressed.

"An automatic device helps you overcome the fears and the frustration," Condon says. "It helps you overcome what you need to overcome to be a successful business person."

She makes and sells her buttons out of the NOVA office in Redford. The North Oakland Vocational Association, Inc. is funded mostly by Community Living Services and provides people with disabilities an opportunity to learn a skill and even have a business.

A portion of the money earned goes to running the



TOM HOFFMEYER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Christine Condon of Westland sits next to a display of buttons she has made at the NOVA center in Redford.

business and the rest goes to the business people, like Condon. Other disabled people associated with NOVA in Redford sell candles, jewelry, custom made greeting cards, soft fleece blankets, gift baskets and makeup. NOVA also receives funding from the county and state.

Condon has been at her business for five years and last week she was working on an order of buttons for the Autism Society.

GROWING BUSINESS

"This business is the most successful of all I've had," says Condon, explaining she also had NOVA sponsored hat and T-shirt businesses that were less prosperous.

"I want to keep this business," Condon says. "Hopefully, it will grow. I'm going to try to expand it and make it bigger."

Condon lives in an apartment with a roommate in Westland and usually visits with family members on weekends.

"Carol's trying to expand her business," explains Carol Mann, NOVA Redford pro-

gram director. "It really helps with her self-esteem."

These small business people, who also happen to have disabilities, hire staff to assist them at the NOVA building.

"We have several bright and talented people here who are working their businesses and making money," Mann says.

"We'd like to invite the community to come in and see what we're all about."

NOVA is located at 17150 Inkster Road, north of Six Mile in Redford.

Quick-witted, Christine sells her buttons whenever and wherever she can and as a result her company "Buttons and Things" has grown since she began it three years ago.

"You know what, I don't have time to sit around and wait for things to happen," Condon says in a CLS press release. "I have to get out, show my product and get some more customers."

I want people to know they can buy these buttons and have whatever saying or slogan they want on them. They are great for kid's pictures, Bible sayings, a company logo and they are pretty quick and easy to make.

SHARING THE SPIRIT

"I admit, I am pretty impatient," she says. "I want things to move faster than they usually do. I like having my own business and being independent and I like to talk with people about how to start their own business."

Last year, she spoke at an Ypsilanti elementary school about what it takes to run a button business.

"It was so much fun."

NOVA is currently working on ways to encourage the public to visit all four locations - Redford, two in Lake Orion and Taylor - to see what the micro-enterprises have to offer.

"We try to get them more and more out in the community," Mann says.

CLS is a nonprofit organization that promotes a self-determined life for people with developmental disabilities providing support and services to 2,700 people in Wayne County and is funded through the Detroit-Wayne County Community Mental Health Agency.

FOR THE RECORD

DEATHS

B
William Earl Black, of Waterford, died March 22.

C
William A. Cross, 74, of Clarkston, died March 21.

D
Eleanor Dombrowski, 94, of Waterford, died March 12.
Robert Joseph DuCharme, 81, of Canton, died March 23.

G
Robert Carl Gill, of Northville, died March 20.

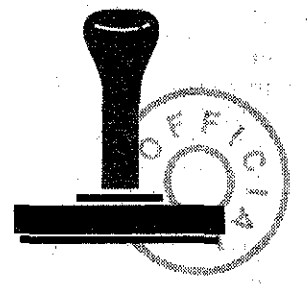
H
William A. Herd Jr., 72, of Oakland, died March 15.
David Hodgson, 64, of Rochester Hills, died March 10.

J
Arthur Janson, of Westland, died March 21.

L
Margaret Lucille Lander, 75, formerly of Farmington Hills, died March 22.
Robert J. "Bob" Linder, 64, of Union Lake, died March 22.

M
Stephen P. Malone, 88, of Naples, Fla., died March 21.
Philip A. Martz, 76, of Birmingham, died March 17.

N
Norma E. McDonnell, 71, of Garden City, died March 23.
William L. McMurphy, 77, of Chesterfield Township, died March 10.



For the Record appears in every edition of the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers. Complete paid obituaries can be found inside today's Community Life in Passages on page C5.

Garry A. Messerschmitt, of Redford Township, died March 22.

Sofie Miess, 91, of Leonard, formerly of Eastpointe, died March 7.

Norman F. Prentice, 90, of Auburn Hills, died March 5.

Eleanor G. Smith, of Westland, died March 20.

Allen L. Smyth, 71, of Pontiac, died March 18.
Stanley F. Svoboda Sr., 84, died March 22.

Robert E. Tobin, of Livonia, died March 18.

Matthew Scott Wray, 52, died March 24.

REUNIONS

As space permits, the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers print, without charge, announcements of class reunions. Send the information to Reunions, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48170. Please include the date of the reunion, one contact person, and a telephone number.

REUNIONS

Camp Nahelu
1940-1970
Camp Nahelu, located in Ortonville, is planning a reunion on Sunday, May 29, in Orchard Lake. Organizers are looking for anyone who attended or worked at the camp from 1940 to 1970. Please contact Fran Gurwin Bell at (248) 706-0738 or e-mail

JFARBell@aol.com.
Clawson High School
Class of 1955
A 50-year reunion is being planned. For more information, call Barbara or Warner at (248) 435-4351 or e-mail wiseppi@wideopenwest.com. Class of 1975

A 30-year reunion is planned for July 9, 2005, at San Marino Club in Troy. For more information, visit www.clawson1975.com or contact Bev Serre-Raine at (248) 689-3381 or e-mail bevraine@comcast.net.

Cooley High School
Class of 1955
A 50-year reunion is planned for Sept. 17, 2005. For more information, contact Penny Mertz Howley at (248) 553-2195.



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PDF 02/03/04/74

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We are pleased to announce that **Edward Merkel, MD**, will be joining our healthcare team.

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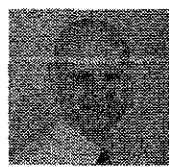
Dr. Merkel is looking forward to seeing patients in his new office. To schedule an appointment, please call (734)398-7888.

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02/03/07/24

HUMANE SOCIETY

FROM PAGE A1

"It's not just in Detroit, it's in the suburbs as well," he said.

The MHS emphasizes spaying and neutering to cut down on animal overpopulation. Animals are available for adoption, another MHS goal.

"Our goal is to place 100 percent of all adoptable animals by the year 2010," said Marta Diffen, capital campaign administrator, who spoke earlier that week to the Plymouth A.M. Rotary.

The society will host an open house 1-5 p.m. Sunday, May 22, at the renovated Westland facility. It's open to the public.

"It's a result of people giving," Morgan said, adding that business and individual contributions are vital as the MHS receives no government funds.

Meals on Wheels volunteers deliver aid, too

John Klisz got more than a hot meal on March 15, when Meals on Wheels volunteers Neal and Sharon Kalish made their weekly visit.

Neal Kalish entered the Livonia home and sensed something was wrong.

"He came to the door with my Meals on Wheels and he smelled gas," said Klisz. "I couldn't smell it because I had a slight cold."

"He said 'That's bad. You're

liable to have trouble.'"

Without hesitation Kalish called the gas company and a representative came out to Klisz's home.

"There was a leak in my stove," recalled Klisz.

In the process of having his house redecorated recently, the hose to the stove was broken and replaced. But it was not properly sealed and gas was escaping into his home.

"The person from the gas

company resealed it and it's OK," said Klisz. "It's quite a deal for people to be that alert."

He's seen the couple since then and said "they were quite pleased."

The Kalishes live in Livonia and volunteer through the Meals on Wheels program at Civic Park Senior Center, at Farmington and Five Mile roads. They've been making the home visits since

November.

"This was the second incident," said Neal Kalish. "It happened twice in one month."

The first time he detected gas, at another Meals recipient's home, he did the very same thing. He picked up the phone and called the gas company.

"I felt good," said Kalish. "I saved a life."

So the Kalishes knew just

what to do when the same instance occurred at Klisz' home.

"You don't have to go to Harvard for this," he said.

Kalish called Meals on Wheels an "invaluable program." "It's more than just getting food," he said.

Klisz said: "It was very nice of (them). They were very observant. It saved me a lot of trouble."

By Stephanie A. Casola

ARENA

FROM PAGE A1

culties for their organization and prompted some members to quit.

Kerrigan proposed reducing the rates in a letter to Westland City Council members, who approved the measure Monday in a 4-2 vote.

"With your approval," Kerrigan wrote to council members, "this price break will allow us to be competitive with other arenas in our area, while allowing us to expand our spring and summer renters."

The proposal was supported by council members Charles Pickering, James Godbout, Michael Kehrer and William Wild. It was opposed by two of their colleagues, Cheryl Graunstadt and Robert Stottlemeyer. Councilman Richard LeBlanc wasn't there for the vote.

On Thursday, Graunstadt said she voted against the proposal because she didn't receive enough financial information about how the rate reduction would affect the city's budget. City officials have said the ice arena has been losing money in recent years.

"In general, I felt that we were not given a convincing argument in terms of other communities dropping their rates," Graunstadt said. "We were not given any information about other communities."

"I just didn't care for the way it was handled," she added.

Graunstadt also noted that the council was asked to vote on the plan before a vote was taken by the city's Municipal Service Bureau, which oversees the ice arena. MSB officials ultimately endorsed the measure, however.

Simonian, meanwhile, said the reduced rates may help some organizations that look for facilities to use during the spring and summer months.

Local hockey association officials would like to see the rates remain at the lower rate when their organization starts using the facility, on Wildwood near Hunter, during colder months.

However, Simonian said WHA leaders aren't optimistic that the reduced rate structure will be extended.

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Schiavo case raises questions about state and personal rights

It's a story many of us have enacted. We have been forced to make a decision on whether to end or prolong the life of a family member who is beyond the reach of medical care. We desperately want to believe that this person we love can someday return to us, though deep in our hearts we know they have left us.

In the case of Terri Schiavo, the story is especially painful because of her age, her visible if involuntary response even after 15 years in what doctors call a "vegetative state" and the acrimonious battle between her parents and her husband.

It's a personal, private, painful affair that has become snared in a political whirlwind.

On Monday, the Republican leadership in Congress with the support of the president reached into this private matter using the 14th Amendment as an excuse for moving the Schiavo case from a Florida state court to a federal court. The action was an extraordinary departure from Republican federalist principles. Many southern Republicans are former southern Democrats or their heirs who fought just such a use of federal intervention during the height of the civil rights movement.

It is on that principle that the South moved from the Democratic Party to the Republican Party.

But the Republican leadership also has a strong voting base rooted in conservative Christian religious groups. They represent a crucial element in the GOP's recent ascendancy as the majority party. Their support is important to advance the GOP's economic positions.

Torn between two principles, Tom DeLay, Bill Frist and George Bush decided to play to the religious right.

Bush made the extraordinary comment that it was "always better to err on the side of life." This from a man who as governor of Texas presided over a large number of executions (even when there was doubt) and as president has never shied from sending others into battle long before exhausting diplomacy for the sake of life.

But as anti-abortion advocate Randall Terry has been saying over the last couple weeks, the Republican Party wasn't sent to Washington without some expectations. Terri Schiavo's case is really about abortion rights, not about Terri Schiavo.

The painful thing is that this private matter has become a media circus, with wild accusations, carnival-like demonstrations and rhetorical posturing on all sides. We don't know what Terri Schiavo's wishes are as she never left written instructions (and what 26-year-old thinks about making a living will?). We have only her husband's word for what she said 15 years ago and he has been demonized, because that's what

The painful thing is that this private matter has become a media circus, with wild accusations, carnival-like demonstrations and rhetorical posturing on all sides.

these people do to people who have different views than they do. Following a federal court ruling, one person is quoted in a news story as saying, "This is a clear-cut case of judicial tyranny. All the judges who have ruled against Terri are tyrants, and we fully expected this decision."

Never mind that every state and now every federal court has upheld the decision to remove her feeding tube as requested by her husband. Never mind that such a ruling might be "for" Terri rather than "against" her.

It is hard not to be sympathetic to Terri Schiavo's parents and siblings. But this sad story should never have become a national cause celebre.

And what about the issue of states' rights (or as it's now known federalism, to distance itself from those nasty racial overtones)? How does the GOP defend that principle now?

In a column a couple months ago, I wrote that the Civil War was fought over slavery. A reader corrected me and wrote that the war was actually fought over states' rights. He then challenged me to consider what my position would be if the federal government decided to drain Great Lakes' water to fertilize Texas fields or fill Arizona swimming pools.

It was a good question, a conundrum without an easy answer. On the question of the lakes, the issue is really international as we share all but Lake Michigan with Canada and they would not support draining the lakes.

But that's too easy, obviously there are reasons for a federalist system that separates national and state powers. Where is that line? Was slavery and the government's decision to limit its spread a reason? Were the rights of millions of African Americans to equal protection under the law a reason? Was a perceived weakness in our educational system a reason? Was the case of one tragically injured woman caught between her parents and her husband a reason?

It's something to ponder when this sad case runs its course.

One of the positives of this story is a reminder that we all need to make our wishes known about what we want when we can no longer say.

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



Hugh Gallagher

There's a lesson to be found in the closing of the schools

It's difficult seeing your old school die. It's even worse presiding over its death.

For the past 15 months, I have been a member of the St. Florian school board in Hamtramck. It has been an enormously challenging time as we have been faced with building enrollment, which is down to 116 students. Still, we were enthusiastic and optimistic that we could increase enrollment and get back on sound financial footing in a relatively short time. We have initiated a number of programs and outreach efforts to attract new students and were making progress.

None of that matters anymore.

I got a call from a fellow board member Tuesday April 15. She had learned that we were on a list of schools to be closed by the archdiocese. This was shocking because until that

day we didn't know there was such a list and, in fact, we had been assured earlier that any decision to close the school would be made by the parish, not the archdiocese, and a year ago we were promised two years of operation to rebuild the school.

On Wednesday, it was made official. Instead of making plans for our open house next month at our newly renovated facilities, we are closing the doors for good.

My initial reaction was anger. And I still feel a good deal of that. But more than that, I just feel sad. Cardinal Maida said closing the schools — 15 in all across the metro area — was a "difficult" move.

I don't think he knows how difficult.

You can't argue with the numbers. Catholic schools have lost nearly half of their enrollment in the last five years. And while tuition there is cheap, it isn't as cheap as charter schools, which have siphoned away much of our student base.

The archdiocese has pumped millions of dollars into the schools over the last two decades and must stem the losses.

But this isn't — or at least shouldn't — be just an issue of dollars.

More and more, I see the church turning its back to the people. Its rigid stance against abortion, gays and, yes, even divorced people; its steadfast opposition to allowing women to assume a larger role in

More and more I see the church turning its back to the people. Its rigid stance against abortion, gays, and, yes, even divorced people; its steadfast opposition to allowing women to assume a large role in the ministry is driving some people away and placing a ridiculous strain on the existing priests.

the ministry is driving some people away and placing a ridiculous strain on the existing priests.

The Archdiocese of Detroit, specifically, is abandoning metro Detroit. It's being done in stages, first with the consolidation of some parishes, now with the closing of schools and later this year when the closing of more parishes will be announced in the "Together in Faith" process.

The church argues that it is going to where the people are.

But what about the people left behind? We have a school that we think is viable and, just as important, a school board and pastor dedicated to making it succeed.

And after 96 years of continuous operation, St. Florian will close this June.

That will not have much, if any, impact on the Birmingham-Bloomfield area.

Or will it?

Our school once had nearly 2,700 students and the parish was the second largest in the archdiocese. But when you play a numbers game, the only thing that counts is the tally sheet. And if the tally sheet doesn't add up the right way, no parish anywhere is secure. Even here.

That's the price you pay when the only thing that ultimately matters is money.

Greg Kowalski is editor of the *Birmingham Eccentric*. He can be reached at (248) 901-2570 or by e-mail at gkowalski@oe.homecomm.net.



Greg Kowalski

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Globetrotter with a cause

Volunteer will travel the world to help less fortunate

BY KIMBERLY A. MORTSON
CORRESPONDENT

Tammy Fisher is a globetrotter.

Not the seven-foot tall kind with a basketball, but one with a forty-pound backpack and a well-worn passport.

The 27-year-old is on the verge of leaving for a 12-month trip abroad that will undoubtedly change her life - and the lives of the people she'll meet along the way - forever.

Fisher has essentially sold everything she owns to pay for 10 months of volunteer work through an international organization called i-to-i. Her year-long adventure will include working with orphaned and terminally-ill children suffering from the HIV virus in Cape Town, South Africa; conservation work with wild animals at the Vervet Rehabilitation Center near Johannesburg; schooling mildly impaired children in China; and teaching English to students in rural regions of Thailand.

"I used to work all the time but since I've traveled abroad I have so much more respect for life. My humility has really grown and I now know I don't have to get paid to do what I love," said Fisher, an Eastern Michigan University student majoring in Cognitively Impaired Elementary Special Education.

DESTINATION UNKNOWN

Fisher said when she was 22 she planned a trip to Australia

with a friend. At the very last minute her acquaintance called off the trip.

"I started thinking about how people were always telling me I should travel and see the world while I was young so I decided to go alone," she said.

Before departing she canceled their hotel reservations and other extravagances the two had planned and left indefinitely with a 70-pound backpack chock full of naiveté. "I've learned so much since that trip," admitted Fisher who recalls struggling with the language the first night she arrived in Greece. "I basically couldn't read anything that was written and when I tried to ask if anyone knew English, they couldn't understand me. I was really scared. I got an expensive hotel room and cried all night."

She pulled herself together and spent a total of seven months backpacking through more than a dozen countries, including Fiji, Australia, Switzerland, Poland, Scotland and Ecuador. She pitched a tent on the edge of a 150-foot waterfall, went scuba diving in the Great Barrier Reef and trekked in astonishment through the Amazon rain forest.

Fisher's parents, Jim and Diane Fisher, undoubtedly have concerns about their daughter traveling abroad, but it's obvious when you talk to the 27-year-old that her zeal for life and her desire to volunteer have thwarted any attempts the couple may have

made to talk her out of her plans.

"I'm really looking forward to working with children and to spread America's hospitality as a role model," she said.

What makes this upcoming trip so different from previous excursions is Fisher's agenda. She has planned her itinerary around volunteer opportunities in several underdeveloped countries to work with both children and animals - two of her biggest passions.

"People have a misconception that volunteering doesn't cost anything. I'm going abroad to help people who can't afford to even feed me and work in places without electricity or running water. I'm paying for this trip myself and with funds I'm able to raise on my own so that I can make a difference," said Fisher.

HELP FROM FRIENDS

Two of her first fund-raising endeavors were a bowl-a-thon at Super Bowl in Canton and a silent auction that was held at 4 Friends on Warren Road east of Sheldon.

"Tammy is such a beautiful and enlightened person," said 4 Friends owner Deana Brotherton. "This trip is so Tammy. She has been a very good and loyal employee and we're glad to be able to sponsor this fund-raiser to help her."

According to Fisher, who has spent months researching and planning her trip through i-to-i, she'll need \$12,600 for 10 months of volunteer work, very basic housing, medical coverage and meals; \$3,000 for round-trip airfare; and \$2,100 for all the vaccinations/med-

'People have a misconception that volunteering doesn't cost anything. I'm going abroad to help people who can't afford to even feed me and work in places without electricity or running water.'

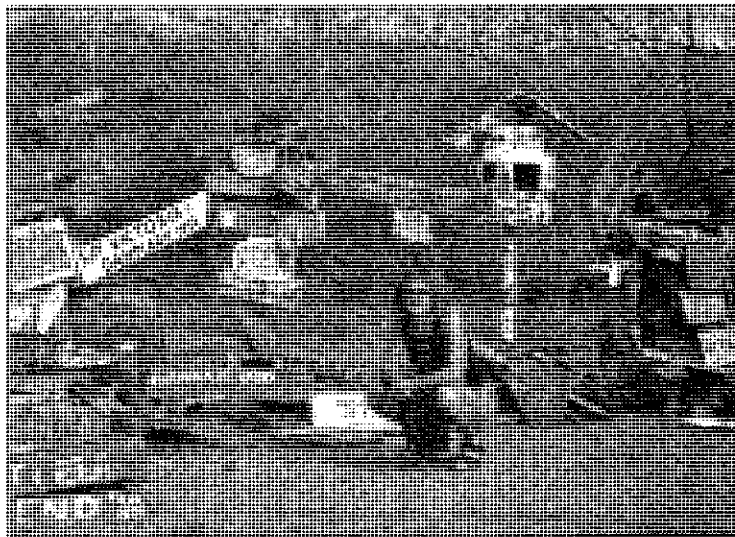
Tammy Fisher
volunteer

ications she'll need before and during the trip to safeguard her health against disease.

She has a two-month break planned from her volunteer commitments for which none of her fund-raising money will be spent. She intends on camping for 56 days up the east coast of Africa where she'll travel to Victoria Falls, then climb Mt. Kilimanjaro before heading to Uganda for two weeks to see the home of half the remaining 700 gorillas in the world.

"I'll be updating my Web site with digital pictures from my trip so people can follow where I've been and what I'm doing," said Fisher.

Although Fisher's around-the-world ticket and her volunteer plans are set to conclude in May 2006, it would be her dream to live and work in an area of the world that needs her talents and passion the most.



Tammy Fisher, 27, has already seen much of the world, including this trip to Ecuador.

"A lot of people have asked me why I don't stay in the United States and volunteer. There is an extraordinary world right before our eyes; it is one big university, a hands-on library, a social gathering, an ocean full of resources and a continent's worth of poverty. "Other countries and people are not as fortunate as Americans to have people, resources and education at their fingertips. So I, for one, am going to them."

She says she's not sure what

lies ahead for her.

"I do want to return to get my degree but beyond that I can't say for sure what's going to happen. I just know working with the children of this world who are less fortunate is the best education and experience I could ask for."

To make a donation online, learn more about her itinerary or follow Tammy Fisher as she travels around the world visit her Web site at <http://passionatetravels.150m.com>.



Tammy Fisher during a recent backpacking trip to Tanzania. She is preparing for a 12-month trip that will take her around the world to volunteer for a number of causes.

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