

5/5

REFERENCE ONLY

WILLIAM P. FAUST  
Mayor of Westland

Tools require safe handling around the home - At Home, B1

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FILTER, INSERTED SECTION

# Celebrating Cinco de Mayo

TASTE, PAGE B5

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**THURSDAY**  
May 5, 2005

# WESTLAND Observer

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## Boyfriend sought by police in shooting incident

### Girlfriend and her children not hurt

BY DARRELL CLEM  
STAFF WRITER

Westland police were searching Wednesday afternoon for a gunman accused of opening fire on a van occupied by his girlfriend and their two children.

No one was injured. Authorities sought help Wednesday finding 24-year-old Charles Edward Withers, described as a 5-foot-11, 170-pound black male with brown hair,

dark eyes and a dark complexion.

Withers was last seen wearing a dark shirt and light colored pants. Police Chief Daniel Pfannes urged anyone with information to call the Westland Police Department at (734) 722-9600 or Michigan Crime Stoppers at (800) 773-2587.

Withers was being sought following an incident that Pfannes said started about 2 a.m. on Belding Court, near Glenwood and Venoy in the city's Norwayne neighborhood.

Police received reports of shots being fired in the 33000 block of Belding.

"Upon arrival, officers investigated the matter and discovered that a domestic dispute resulted in the male partner firing several shots from a long gun into a van that was occupied by his girlfriend and their children," Pfannes said in a statement he issued Wednesday afternoon.

The woman was inside the van with two children, including a 1-year-old girl and a 2-year-old boy. All three victims escaped injury.

Police surrounded the home and ultimately made their way inside, but

they didn't find the suspect.

"A subsequent search of the home revealed that the male suspect had fled the scene with his long gun, prior to the arrival of police," Pfannes said.

As a precautionary measure, Wayne-Westland Community Schools officials closed two buildings close to the area - Adams Middle School and Lincoln Elementary School.

Officials closed the schools for the day. Some students who didn't get word of the closings were allowed inside the school until their parents or guardians could be notified to pick them up, according to the district's administration office.

Teachers had met at Wayne Memorial High School until they received permission to go to Adams and Lincoln.

The incident came just four days after Wayne-Westland officials had a lockdown at Franklin Middle School and Roosevelt Elementary.

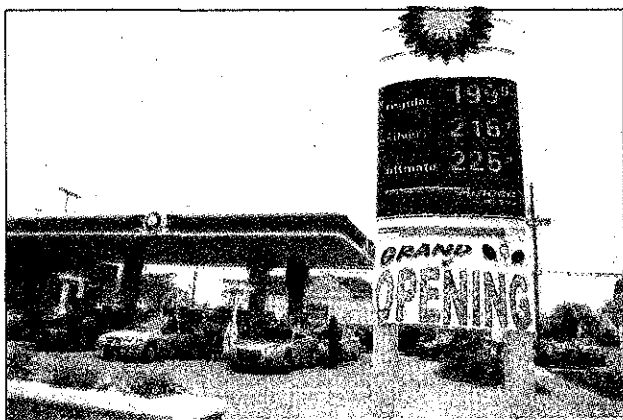
Students had to stay inside those buildings amid reports of a potentially threatening situation involving a parent.

In that incident, no real threat ever materialized, Deputy Superintendent Charlotte Sherman said.

dclem@oe.hometownlife.com | (734) 953-2110

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## Long time, no see



The new BP gas station at the corner of Wayne and Warren Road has had long lines as customers this week as people line up to fill up their gas tanks at \$1.99 per gallon.



Lines have spilled out on to the roads as motorists have lined up at the BP gas station at Wayne and Warren where gas has been selling for \$1.99 per gallon this week. Among those at the pump Tuesday was Nathan Beard of Westland who was filling up girlfriend Angela Starachan's car. It was the second time Starachan had been by the station in hopes of getting gas. The price has been so good that the station was at three days and counting for being listed on WDIV-TV's Channel 4 'Prices to Drive For.'

## Ex-director warns of problem with retiree health costs

BY DARRELL CLEM  
STAFF WRITER

Westland city leaders will need to come up with millions of dollars to pay rising health care costs for city retirees, a former official warned Monday.

"It's a big issue," said Kent Herbert, former city budget, finance and personnel director. "It's millions of dollars."

Herbert's warning came as the Westland City Council held

a public hearing on Mayor Sandra Cicirelli's newly proposed, \$56 million general budget.

Herbert gave city leaders a financial analysis of the problem and indicated that retiree health care costs will increase by millions of dollars in coming years.

City officials should start addressing the problem now to avert a financial crisis, he said.

PLEASE SEE COSTS, A8

## Election 2005

### Markarian, Lessard retain seats in Livonia

BY STEPHANIE ANGELYN CASOLA  
STAFF WRITER

The Livonia Public Schools Board of Education will look unchanged come July 1. Both incumbent candidates, Cynthia Markarian and Daniel Lessard, were top vote-getters in Tuesday's election.

Markarian, who was appointed to fill a vacancy last spring, earned the most votes at 3,169. On Wednesday afternoon, she said she didn't think the reality of it had sunk in. "I'm happy the board will (remain) whole," she said.

PLEASE SEE SEATS, A5

### Few residents cast votes in Westland

BY SUE MASON  
STAFF WRITER

After handling her first school election, Westland City Clerk Eileen DeHart is ready to press for a change in the state's new election consolidation law.

DeHart would like the deadline filing as a write-in candi-

date moved from the Friday before the election to three weeks earlier, giving clerks the ability to cancel an election if the races are uncontested.

Her decision to lobby Lansing for the change comes on the heels of Tuesday's Wayne-

PLEASE SEE VOTES, A6

### Seniors warm up to Health & Fitness Day

BY DARRELL CLEM  
STAFF WRITER

Hundreds of Westland senior citizens are expected to celebrate staying healthy as the city joins a national campaign that encourages older Americans to stay fit.

Marlene Manke, 68, will be among a projected crowd of 200-300 seniors celebrating National Senior Health & Fitness Day at the city's Friendship Center.

"It's always a good time," Manke said.

Seniors will gather at the center, on Newburgh south of Ford, about 9 a.m. Friday, May 20. They'll start with warm-up exercises before departing for a two-mile walk to and from Thomas H. Brown Central City Park.

"It's a really nice walk," Manke said. "It's not really that hard, and it's nice to take a walk like that in the morning."

Seniors who can't make the walk will participate in chair-based exercises led by personal trainer Dorice Moylan. Seniors also will receive free

screenings for blood pressure, diabetes and osteoporosis, Friendship Center Director Peggy Ellenwood said.

They will be able to talk with eye doctors, podiatrists, senior housing representatives and others who will be on hand to provide services.

Manke said seniors who participate in line-dancing and Jazzercise classes at the center also will be showing their commitment to health and fitness.

"There's always a lot of seniors who are familiar with the senior center that participate," she said. "We all show up."

Even before Manke joined National Senior Health & Fitness Day, her late parents, John and Helen Hickey of Westland, used to participate.

Senior center members will be asked to pay \$5 to defray costs; nonmembers, \$7. But, they'll also be served a healthful lunch, Ellenwood said.

Seniors who want to buy National Health & Fitness Day T-shirts may do so for \$6.

For more information, call the center at (734) 722-7632. dclem@oe.hometownlife.com | (734) 953-2110

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Volume 40 Number 98

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**INDEX**

APARTMENTS	F9
AT HOME	B1
BELIEFS & VALUES	C11
CLASSIFIED INDEX	G6
CROSSWORD	F6
JOBS	F7
MOVIES	F11
OBITUARIES	D14
REAL ESTATE	C11
SPORTS	F1
TASTE	C1

**Coming Sunday on the PINK page**

Discover the hottest new T-shirt in PINK Picks



# Start - and fix - your engine

## Growth sends repair shop packing to new location

BY BRAD KADRICH  
STAFF WRITER

Randy Ryan, born and raised in Plymouth, recently moved into a house in Westland.

But his heart — and his business — are still right at home in Plymouth.

Ryan, who attended Plymouth Canton High School, last month moved his small engine repair shop, Ryan's Small Engine Repair, out of the family garage and into a new 1,600-square-foot space on Joy Road across from Mettetal Airport.

Ryan, who established the business at home in 2001, said the move was necessary because business was getting too good to stay where it was.

"We outgrew the garage," said Ryan, who runs the place with his mom, Pam. "On any given day, we'd have two or three customers fighting to get in. And now we're selling parts ... so we had to take the next step."

The shop specializes in the repair of all lawn and snow equipment.

In the last couple of years, Ryan has gone to trade school to become a certified auto



Randy Ryan works on tuning up a Honda lawnmower in his shop, which recently relocated to its new space on Joy Road across from Mettetal Airport.

mechanic. He's also completed training on Honda engines, and the store is a popular Tecumseh outlet.

Ryan provides customers with free estimates, and customers aren't required to dish out any up-front cash. If Ryan can't fix the problem, he doesn't charge the customer anything.

The shop's biggest business comes in the form of tune-ups, but Ryan can also do major overhauls of small engines. The shop has also added a line-

up that includes batteries and a variety of accessories since moving into the new location.

"This location gives us large shop-room," said Ryan, who pointed out that a 50-job week isn't out of the ordinary. "It gave us the opportunity to expand and help our customers."

Ryan's uncle owns a gravel hauling business, so he's been around large trucks and small engines most of his life, he said.

Pam Ryan's whole family



PHOTOS BY TOM HOFFMEYER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Randy Ryan, owner and technician of Ryan's Small Engine Repair in Plymouth, stands in his new workshop, which is much bigger than the garage in which the business started.

lives in the area, so when the family was talking about opening a business, Plymouth seemed like the natural place.

"Why leave?" said Pam Ryan, who serves as the shop's parts manager. "I grew up in a family business. My dad owned a garbage business, my sister owns her own business. It's nice being together. We have tons of family here."

Ryan also likes the fact it's a

two-person operation, with him serving as the primary mechanic, because it gives his customers the chance to deal directly with the person doing the work.

"All of my customers deal one-on-one with the owner," he said. "If there are questions or problems, they know who worked on it, and you get the right answers the first time." This week's snowstorm

notwithstanding, spring has arrived and Ryan said he expects business to pick up quickly.

"We're approaching the busy season," he said. "People are thinking about spring cleanup, and realizing that lawn mower isn't working like maybe it did last summer."

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# WESTLAND Observer

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### Circulation Business Hours/Subscription Rates

Monday-Tuesday-Wednesday-Friday 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.  
Thursday 8:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.  
Sunday 8 a.m. to noon

If you missed a delivery please call by 6 p.m. Thursday and 11 a.m. Sunday.

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### POSTAL PERIODICAL REQUIREMENTS

The Westland Observer - Publication NO. USPS 663-530 Published every Thursday and Sunday. Periodical postage is paid at Livonia, Michigan 48150.

36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48150



# WalkAmerica deemed success

BY JULIE BROWN  
STAFF WRITER

Rolland Walt, who celebrated his 80th birthday a while back, isn't one to miss the March of Dimes WalkAmerica.

"He has walked for 32 years," event coordinator Katie Koch said of the annual event. "He walked the whole six miles."

"I was thankful to have three normal children," said Walt, a Farmington Hills resident and semi-retired business broker. He recalled the early days of stores collecting dimes for the March of Dimes.

The March of Dimes holds WalkAmerica events in the spring, with 33 in the state and four in metro Detroit this past weekend. The local walk started at Nankin Mills in Westland and continued along Hines Drive through Livonia just past Newburgh Road, where walkers turned and came back.

"We didn't have any rain," said Koch, a Redford resident. "I was so happy."

About 2,500 walkers were at the Hines event, up from previous years. This is the 35th year for the event, the March of Dimes' largest yearly fund-raiser.

"We had a wonderful turnout. It was definitely a success. We were very pleased," Koch said. The fund-raising goal locally was \$270,000 and although final figures aren't in organizers are confident they'll pass it.

The March of Dimes works to help premature babies and those with birth defects. Koch noted one in eight babies is born prematurely.

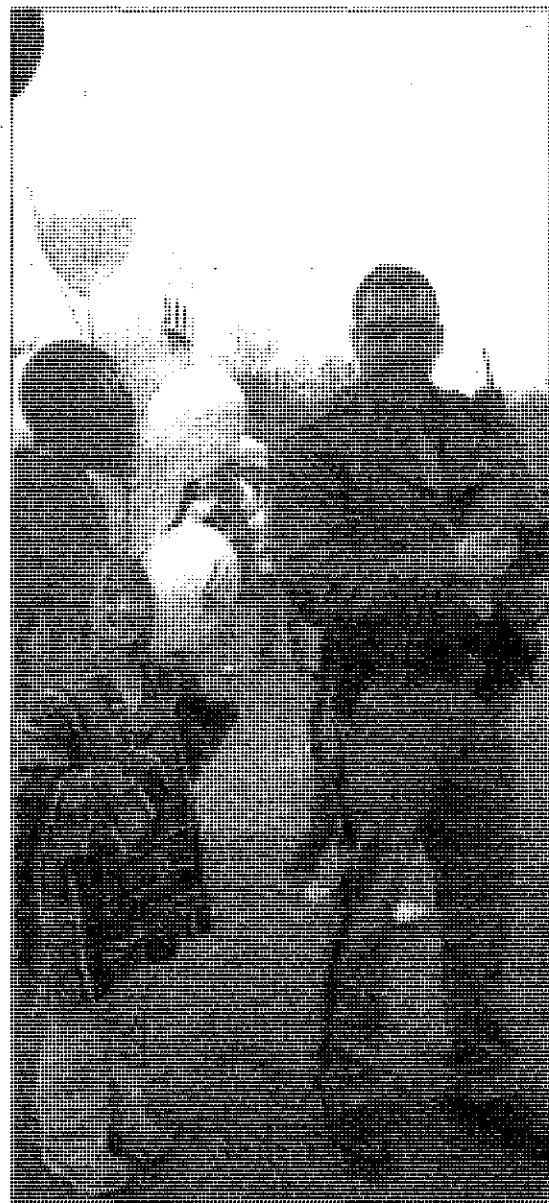
"We want people to be aware." She has a cousin, now in his early 20s and doing well, who was born at one pound and eight ounces.

Other walks were held over the weekend at Hart Plaza in Detroit, the Troy Civic Center, and Metro Beach in Macomb County. Additional information is available at [marchofdimes.com](http://marchofdimes.com) on the Web or at (248) 359-1550.

Walt recalled taking a bus into Detroit, and walking on Belle Isle, through downtown and by Tiger Stadium for the March of Dimes in earlier times. "We've helped a lot of people over the years," said Walt, who walked this year with daughter and son-in-law Benn and Judy Perry. "Beautiful. Perfect weather. It couldn't have been nicer."

He's raised \$500-\$1,000 a year for the cause. Walt walks outdoors three-four miles at least three to five times a week.

The March of Dimes started in 1938 under



Elisha Sambrone, 9, of Canton visits with Brian Patrick Keating of the Wayne County Sheriff's Department and a friend during WalkAmerica. She attended with her mother, Anna. "We all enjoyed a wonderful rain passed our event by day," Anna said. "I couldn't have asked for a better experience. It was my sister's (Frances Yousif) seventh year walk, my fourth ... and I finally did the whole six miles."

the encouragement of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt who asked people to send in dimes to fight polio, Koch added.

# Hospice volunteer wins Light Award

Westland Mayor Sandra Cicirelli recognized volunteers from Community Hospice recently during the hospice's National Volunteer Week appreciation luncheon. The Mayor praised those in attendance for their dedication and compassion in assisting terminally ill patients and their families.

Volunteer Marion Lyman was presented with the Light of Hospice Award for exemplifying the hospice mission to provide the best possible quality of life for patients.

Lyman, a hairdresser, has been helping hospice patients since 1987. She travels to homes, hospitals and nursing homes volunteering her time, talents, and supplies to hospice patients, giving them shampoos, hair cuts, perms and manicures.

Cicirelli emphasized the importance of Lyman's contributions along with those of the many volunteers who give of themselves every day in organizations across the state.

The mayor noted that the role of the volunteer is growing increasingly important to the daily operations of municipal, governmental and non-profit organizations.

Community Hospice is currently seeking volunteers for a variety of patient and non-patient-related opportunities. For more information, call (800) 444-0425 or send an e-mail inquiry to [community@chpc.info](mailto:community@chpc.info).

## RECREATION CLASSES

The following programs are offered through the Westland Parks and Recreation Department at the Bailey Recreation Center, 36651 Ford Road. For more information, call (734) 722-7620.

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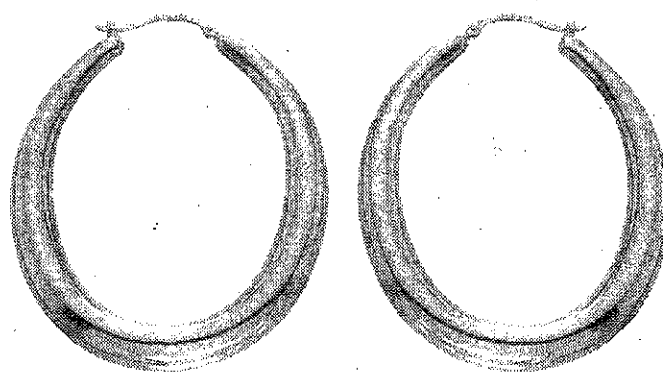
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# '... fantastic, wonderful'

## Wayne Memorial plays host to BYU Singers for May 18 concert

BY SUE MASON  
STAFF WRITER

When the Brigham Young University Orchestra European tour was canceled following 9/11, managers began looking for venues for a stateside tour.

They noticed that Wayne Memorial High School had an auditorium and asked if the school would be interested in hosting the orchestra for a performance.

Six hundred people attended the 2002 concert, and organizers "felt good about that." Now they're hoping to fill the almost 900-seat Norman Stockmeyer Auditorium for a May 18 concert by the Brigham Young University Singers.

"It's a great opportunity to have an event shine a light on our district," said Matthew Diroff. "To be on the list of destinations with Washington, D.C., and Boston is pretty special."

Diroff and Howard Mehler, music teachers at Wayne Memorial High School, are the point men for the choir's visit and are working with parents and students in getting the word out about the concert and to gather community sup-

port to help pay the \$2,000 cost.

The BYU Singers group has been on tour since mid-April, making stops in the nation's Capitol, historic Boston and Providence, R.I. Its performance in Wayne is its second to last show before ending the tour in Lansing on May 19.

As with the orchestra's visit in 2002, BYU approached the school about hosting the singers.

The school "jumped at the chance" and with more than three months to plan, organizers are hoping to fill the auditorium.

"Ideally, to have a university contact you because it wants to use your facility is a unique opportunity," said Diroff. "But the planning reminds me of doing the 'Apprentice.' There's so many things that go into hosting this group."

The Brigham Young University Singers' repertoire is rooted in the classic choral tradition, but extends to pieces from almost every musical period and style, such as folk songs, spirituals and musical theater hits.

"I think there's a thought

that this is a religious event, but we're trying to make people understand that it's an all-encompassing concert," Diroff said.

One requirement is overnight housing. Working with the Mormon church in the area, the school has found host families for the group which includes 21 male and 21 female singers.

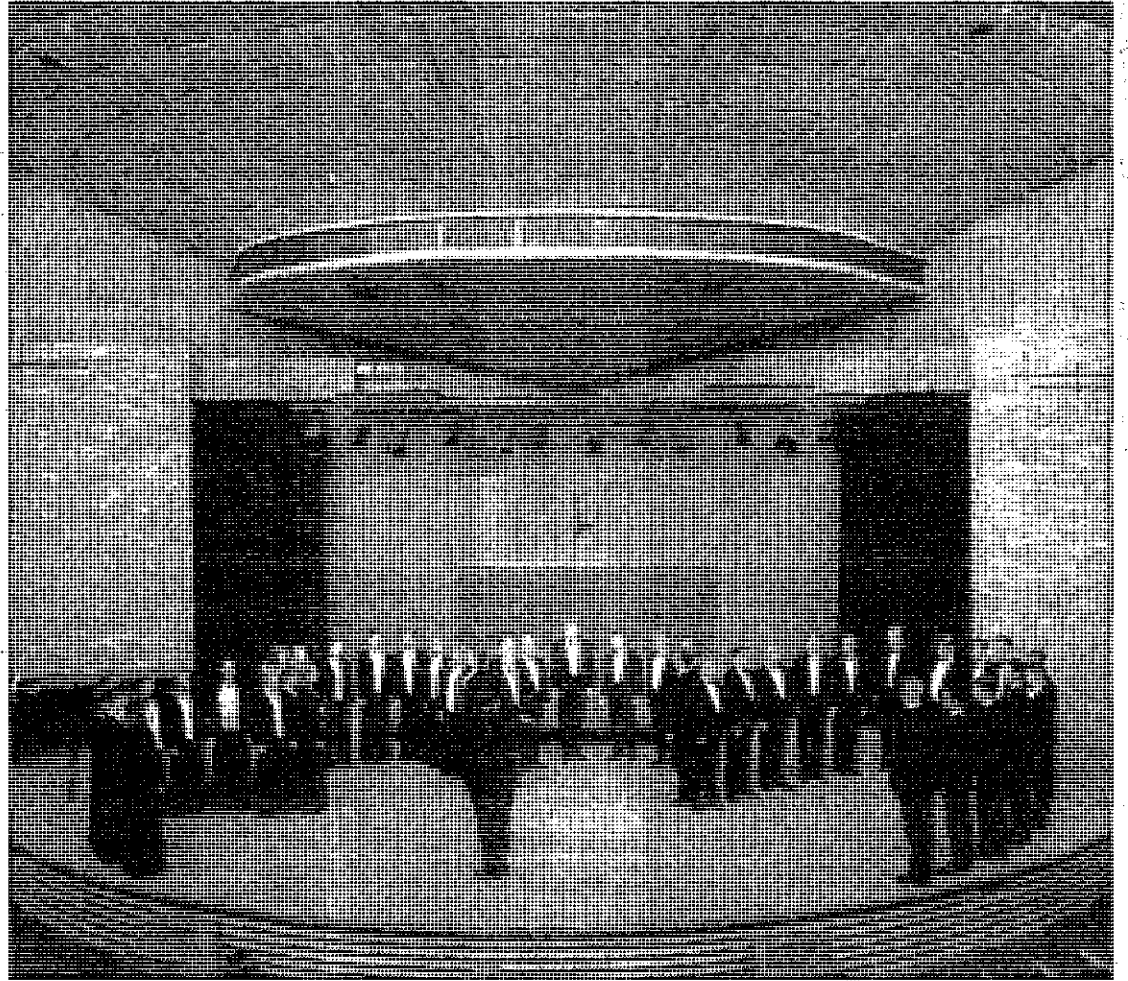
They've been enormously helpful," said Diroff. "They talked directly with BYU and are taking care of the housing. That's a huge load off us."

Plans also are being finalized for a catered dinner that will be served in the school cafeteria which will be decorated in blue, gold and white, the BYU colors.

Life skills teacher Lisa Austin's food classes have taken on the job of providing snacks after the concert and bag lunches for the trip to Lansing.

Organizers also are looking for a donation of a large amount of bottled water that will be available to the chorus throughout the afternoon and evening of the performance.

According to Diroff, the group will arrive at Wayne High around 2:30 p.m. May 18. The stage, lighting and sound will be set up before the singers go into a one-hour workshop with the choir students from Wayne and John



The Brigham Young University Singers combine versatility, sound and innovative staging in their performance. The singers will perform on May 18 at Wayne Memorial High School's Norman Stockmeyer Auditorium.

Glenn high schools.

The BYU Singers and the choir students are working on the same piece of music, they'll perform together and get some help from the BYU director," Diroff said. "It'll be a really unique experience."

Following the workshop, the group will do a one-hour rehearsal, open to the students, followed by the dinner and performance.

"It's very exciting, the kids are ecstatic," said Diroff.

Organizers also are reaching out to the business community for help. They're looking for cash donations or advertising

in the program that will be given out at the performance. There are three donation levels - Allegro, \$10-\$19.99, Vivace, \$20-\$49.99, and Presto, \$50 or more. Donors will be listed by category on a large poster in the auditorium lobby as well as on an insert in the program.

Advertising costs \$25 for a business card, \$50 for a 5 1/2-by-4 1/4-inch ad and \$75 for a 5 1/2-by-8 1/2-inch ad.

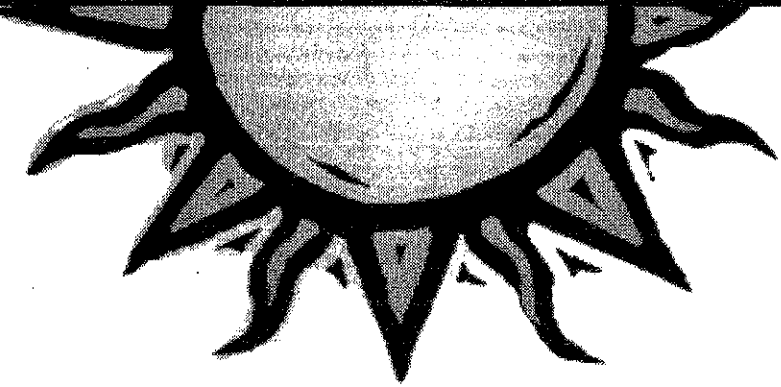
Donors at the top level for both will also receive two tickets to the concert.

"For us, all we want to do is break even," said Diroff. Ads should be camera ready

and must be received by no later than 3 p.m. Friday, May 13. They can be e-mailed to Diroff at diroffm@wwcsd.net or dropped off at the high school, 3001 Fourth St. at Glenwood in Wayne.

Ticket prices are \$10 per adult and \$5 per student and \$8 for adults and \$4 for students for groups of 20 who reserve by May 8. Tickets are available through Matthew Diroff at (734) 419-2244 or diroffm@wwcsd.net and Howard Mehler at (734) 419-2245 or mehlerh@wwcsd.net.

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## SPORTS section



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# Get pet grooming, or try 'Cheeburger'

## DOG DAYS

Jenny Robertson always wished she could bring her dogs - Oreo and Miss Ivory - to work with her. Now that she's opened a new business, My Dog's Groomer in Canton, she does just that.

Robertson, a Plymouth Township resident, attended dog-grooming school two years ago with the intention of someday opening her own business. Once the right location became available in January, she made the move.

Robertson hosted a grand opening last week. She describes the business as a "clean, non-smoking shop." Dogs are groomed one at a time so the pets don't sit around the shop all day.

My Dog's Groomer takes walk-ins and appointments, and tours are available to anyone interested in learning more.

Robertson's is a one-woman operation, which she believes provides the best service to her customers. They talk directly with her. And she enjoys the work. "It's hard to have a bad day here," she said.

Grooming services are all inclusive, and priced based on the size of the pet. All dogs are treated to a hydro massage. Grooming for small dogs costs about \$33, while medium-sized dogs are \$40-\$45 and large dogs may cost \$55-\$60, depending on their coat condition. Pups can return between groomings for a quick nail trimming, for \$5-\$7. Deep conditioning and shedless treatments are available. My Dog's Groomer is at 4000 Lilley Road, in a strip mall on the east side, just south of Ford Road in Canton. Hours are 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday-Saturday. Evening appointments available upon request. Call (734) 844-8280.

## EXTRA CHEESE

Cheeburger, Cheeburger, a

Florida-based restaurant chain, is looking to open its first restaurant in Michigan at the College Park development on Haggerty, north of Six Mile in Livonia.

The full-service, 1950s-style hamburger restaurant has locations in 14 states. A Canton couple, Brian and Laura Switalski, plans to open the 3,300-square-foot restaurant in a strip center which is already home to Caribou Coffee and Cold Stone Creamery.

Laura Switalski said her husband has always wanted to open this restaurant since eating at the Naples, Fla. location. They've decided to go ahead with it, here in Livonia. "We liked the decor; it's bright neon pink," she said, "the family atmosphere. We loved the milkshakes. We liked the burgers."

The Switalski's have been working to open Cheeburger since last fall, when they found the potential site. Plans call for 123 seats for inside dining and 24 seats for those who want to eat outside.

Food is fresh and made-to-order at this sit-down establishment, said Laura Switalski. A milkshake bar will be featured, along with 82 flavors of milkshakes. Diners can enjoy trivia cards while waiting on their meal. And those with the biggest appetite, for the 1-pound burger, might find their picture on the restaurant's wall of fame.

The Livonia Planning Commission will vote on these plans on Tuesday, May 10. Pending approval, the restaurant would take about 90 days to construct. Cheeburger Cheeburger's potential location would be 17398 Haggerty Road. Hours are planned to be 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. daily. Switalski said they will be seeking a restaurant manager. Those interested in more information may send e-mail to livonia@cheeburger.com. Staff Writer Dan West contributed to this report.



RONALD PONKEY

The Snodgrass family was riding in this Ford Taurus when it was hit by a Dodge Dakota truck Sunday night at Merriman and Plymouth.

# Car crash kills woman, 46

## Mourning family faces hospital bills without insurance

BY DAN WEST  
STAFF WRITER

A Livonia family is grieving the loss of their wife and mother and facing massive medical bills required to treat the injuries they suffered in a two-car crash Sunday.

Denise Marie Snodgrass, 46, was driving her husband, Douglas, her 16-year-old stepson, Donald, and 4-year-old son, Christopher, to dinner at 8:40 p.m. As the family's Ford Taurus was turning left from southbound Merriman to eastbound Plymouth, it was struck in on the driver's side by a Dodge Dakota moving west on Plymouth, driven by Jason Akker, 21, of Waterford.

All five people involved in the crash were taken to hospitals. Denise Snodgrass was pronounced dead at St. Mary Mercy Hospital. Douglas Snodgrass suffered broken



Snodgrass

ribs and was released Tuesday from Botsford Hospital in Farmington Hills. Donald Snodgrass, a student at Stevenson High School, suffered cuts to the head. He was released Monday from Mott Children's Hospital in Ann Arbor.

Christopher Snodgrass, who had surgery to remove glass from his skin, was still at Mott Children's Hospital on Wednesday. His grandfather, Ivan Love, said Christopher was expected to be released soon.

Akker was treated at Botsford Hospital and released Sunday evening. Lt. Greg Winn said the accident was still under investigation Wednesday as police continued to interview eyewitnesses to try to figure out who was at fault in the crash.

Denise Snodgrass worked part time at Metro Airport for Northwest Airlines.

The Churchill High School graduate loved dogs and was a volunteer who brought her dogs to visit residents staying at assisted living facilities.

"She had five chihuahuas of her own

and she loved playing with them," said Love, her father.

She also volunteered her time as a grief counselor with Ward Presbyterian Church.

Snodgrass is also survived by her parents, Ivan and Dorothy Love, who have lived in Livonia for 41 years. She is also survived by her 23-year-old son from a previous marriage, Jeffrey Swiger of Lincoln Park; a sister, Colleen Blaisdell of Redford; a brother, Michael Love of Redford; two nieces and a nephew.

Visitation will take place from noon to 9 p.m. today, May 5, at the Fred Wood Funeral Home on Five Mile, just east of Levan. The funeral will take place at 11 a.m. Friday.

Since Denise worked part time and Douglas worked as a contracted robotics programmer without benefits, Love said the family does not have health insurance and must pay for the hospital treatment Douglas, Donald and Christopher received. Love said the family is looking for help.

Anyone interested in making a donation the family can send them to the Fred Wood Funeral Home. For more information, call the funeral home at (734) 464-8060.

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**Garage sale**

It's like having more than 80 garage sales all in the same place at the same time. The Westland community garage sale will take place 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday in the parking lot west of Westland City Hall, 36601 Ford Road, next to the Police Department. For further information, call Margaret Martin at (734) 722-7620.

**Flea market**

VFW Harris-Kehrer Post 3323 will sponsor an outdoor flea market 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday, May 21, at its 1055 S. Wayne Road location. Cost is \$25 per parking space. No food or beverages may be sold. For more information, call (734) 812-7978.

**Surplus food**

The city will distribute surplus federal food 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Thursday, May 19, at the Dorsey Community Center, on Dorsey south of Palmer and east of Venoy. That distribution will be for residents north of Michigan Avenue. Residents south of Michigan should pick up their commodities on the third Monday of each month at St. James United Methodist Church, 30055

Annapolis, between Henry Ruff and Middlebelt.

Senior citizens in Taylor Towers should contact their building manager to learn when to pick up their food.

Food distributed in May will include green beans, mixed fruit, pineapple juice and pudding. For more information, call (734) 595-0366.

**Need a pet?**

The Michigan Humane Society will bring its mobile adoption until to Art Van Furniture, 8300 N. Wayne Road, noon to 4 p.m. Sunday, May 15. For more information, call (866)-MHUMANE. For a complete listing of mobile adoption events, go online at www.michiganhumane.org.

**Memorial service**

The Vermeulen Funeral Homes in Plymouth and Westland will hold two memorial balloon release services for people to pay tribute to their loved ones.

The services will be: ■ 7 p.m. Thursday, May 19, at the Vermeulen Funeral Home at 980 N. Newburgh, south of Ford, in Westland. For more information call (734) 326-1300.

■ 7 p.m. Sunday, May 22, at the Vermeulen Funeral Home at 46401 W. Ann Arbor Road, between Sheldon and Beck, in Plymouth. For more information call (734) 459-2250.

Each balloon release will include a presentation by licensed grief counselor Wes Baldwin.

Anyone planning to attend is asked to call ahead because the funeral home, in preparation for serving refreshments, would like a head-count.

**Curtain call**

The City of Wane Arts and Entertainment Department Actors Community Theatre will present Rodgers and Hammerstein's Cinderella at 8 p.m. Friday-Saturday, May 6-7, 13-14 and 20-21, and 2 p.m. 2 p.m. Sunday, May 8 and 15, at the State Wayne Theater, 35310 Michigan Ave., Wayne. Tickets cost \$15 for adults, \$13 for students and senior citizens and \$8 for children.

There also will be a Mothers Day Lunch - Cinderella Spectacular at noon Sunday, May 8. There will be a full lunch buffet, served at the Wayne Community Center, 4635 Howe, followed by the matinee performance of Cinderella at 2

p.m. at the State Wayne Theater. Tickets are \$20 for adults and \$15 for children 12 years and under. Package fees available. Call (734) 721-7400.

**Free seminar**

Kate Ferrett, hospital liaison for Arbor Hospice and Home Care, will speak about such issues as advanced directives in a presentation 9-10 p.m. Thursday, May 10, at Westland Convalescent Center.

Ferrett will discuss such topics as what are advance directives, when is it time to think about advance directives, who needs advance directives, what is the difference between advance directives and a living will and how to get started.

The seminar is free of charge and open to the public. Contact Judy Bianchi at (734) 728-6100 to sign up for this event.

**Golf outing**

The Westland Rotary Club will hold a Centennial Golf Celebration Thursday, May 26, at the Golden Fox at Fox Hills in Salem Township. The outing will have a scramble format and 11 a.m. shotgun start. It includes 18 holes of golf, lunch and beverages at the turn, door

prizes and a filet mignon dinner and banquet.

The costs is \$160 per golfer or \$600 for a foursome. Sponsorships also are available. For more information, call Dr. Kim Shunkwiler at (734) 728-5533, Tom North at (734) 421-1300, Todd Blevins at (734) 425-7766 or Capt. Matt O'Neil at (734) 722-3660.

To register, send a check, payable to Westland Rotary to the Rotary Golf Outing, Shunkwiler Chiropractic Health Center, 5978 N. Wayne Road, Westland, MI 48185. Proceeds will benefit the Salvation Army and Westland Rotary charities.

**Off and running**

North Brothers Ford and the City of Westland are sponsoring the seventh annual 5K Fun Run and Walk Saturday, May 14, for the benefit of the Karmanos Cancer Institute.

Runners and walkers collect donation in advance of the race/walk which will start at 9 a.m. at the Bailey Recreation Center. Prizes and recognition will be awarded to the top three females and top three males in seven age groups - ages 1-10, 11-19, 20-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, 60 and over.

The pre-registration deadline

is May 7 and T-shirts are guaranteed for all registered by that date. The registration fee is \$12 for students age 18 and under and \$15 for adults. After May 7, the fee is \$18. Registration starts at 8 a.m. on race day.

For more information, contact Erin Jackson at North Brothers Ford at (734) 524-1232. Registrations can be sent to her attention at the dealership, 33300 Ford Road, Westland, MI 48185. Checks should be made payable to North Brothers Ford.

**Meet the author**

Native Detroitier Richard Bak, award winning author and historian, will discuss the history of the Civil War with an emphasis on Michigan's role during the tumultuous time when he speaks at the Wayne Public Library at 7 p.m. Thursday, May 26.

Bak has written numerous books about such subjects as the city of Detroit, Ty Cobb, Henry and Edsel Ford, Abraham Lincoln, Joe Louis, Lou Gehrig, the Detroit Red Wings and Tiger Stadium.

There is no charge for the program, however, seating is limited, so registration is required. Call (734) 721-7832.

**SEATS**

FROM PAGE A1

"That tells us we're doing something right. I'm really excited about that."

Because the board will remain the same, she said, they will have more time to continue the projects they have begun. Markarian said she thinks the school board has "a nice blend of people" from relative newcomers like herself and Tom Bailey to those trustees that have been on the board for many years. They represent many different viewpoints, she said.

Her focus will remain on school funding and No Child Left Behind-related issues over the course of this coming term, Markarian said.

Lessard, a nine-year veteran of the board, came in second with 2,280. "It's exciting that people have faith in me to vote for me," said Lessard, who was humbled by the support. "We're playing with \$150 odd million of other people's money and their kids' education." He said it makes him feel proud to be trusted with that duty. Third place was earned by Steve King with 1,737 votes. He was followed in the election by William C. Fried with 1,602 votes, Frank Kalinski with 742

votes and Christopher Kaufman, who chose not to run midway in the election, with 247 votes.

"We're just going to continue with what we've been doing, trying to put financing together," said Lessard of the next four years. He said he won't back down until the Legislature fixes school funding and does "what needs to be done for the kids."

Supt. Randy Liepa said the election results show people are happy with the way things are going in the district. "I think it's an opportunity to continue to move ahead," he said.

Of the 84,481 registered voters in Livonia Public Schools district, which also encompasses part of Westland, 6.13 percent cast ballots in the election.

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# Credit Union marks milestones

At the same time that Co-op Services Credit Union is celebrating its 50th year anniversary, it also is recognizing 25 years of service in the Westland community.

"We opened our first Westland branch on Wayne Road in July 1980 and moved to our current location at 35050 Ford Road in October 2001," said Angie Krogol, senior vice president of member services. "Westland became our fourth full-service branch."

Kathy Jahn, a long-time credit union employee, has served as the Westland branch manager since May 2004.

"We have a very loyal membership in Westland," said

Krogol. "When we opened our current branch, we were greatly able to expand services with more parking, drive-thru service and a 24-hour drive-up ATM."

Co-op Services Credit Union also actively participates in the Westland community and is a member of the Westland Chamber of Commerce. Kathy Hurt, assistant vice-president of marketing, serves as an Ambassador with the Chamber. In 1995, Co-op Services Credit Union initiated a scholarship program for outstanding high school seniors who are also members. Over the years, Westland residents have been among the deserving

students receiving scholarship awards, ranging from \$500 to \$4,000 each. Beginning in June, Co-op Services Credit Union will invite members to enter a drawing for a 42-inch plasma television that will be awarded on the credit union's anniversary of Nov. 30.

Co-op Services Credit Union has approximately 43,000 members with branch offices in Dearborn, Livonia, Walled Lake, Westland and Downriver. Members also have access to any of 23 Family Service Center shared branches throughout Michigan.

For more information, visit [www.cscu.org](http://www.cscu.org) or call (800) 321-8570 toll free.

# McCotter bill offers tax credit for those who hire military veterans

Congressman Thaddeus McCotter introduced legislation calling on Congress to amend the Internal Revenue Code to allow employers an income tax credit for hiring combat veterans.

McCotter, R-Livonia, discussed the legislation, entitled the Veterans' Employment Transition Support (VETS) Act, with local veterans and business owners at a press conference April 19 at Veteran's Haven in Wayne.

The VETS Act would provide a one-time credit to employers against income tax for hiring

military service personnel who have been honorably discharged and have served in a combat zone or hazardous duty area. The credit would equal 40 percent of the veterans' first year wages, or up to 50 percent for disabled veterans.

The bill has 10 original co-sponsors, including Phil English, R-Pennsylvania, Don Manzullo, R-Illinois, Candice Miller, R-Michigan, Stevan Pearce, R-New Mexico, Rick Renzi, R-Arizona, Silvestre Reyes, D-Texas, Bill Shuster, R-Pennsylvania, John Sullivan, R-Oklahoma, John Sweeney,

R-New York, and Walter B. Jones, R-North Carolina.

"This bill ensures our valiant veterans' service to our nation continues when they come home," McCotter said. "By facilitating their transition to civilian life, we further their good works on behalf of our country and our communities."

"I look forward to working with my Congressional colleagues on this and a host of other proposals to ensure our veterans receive their full measure of our support as they return to their loved ones."

## RUBBISH RULES

City officials have issued the following guidelines to help local residents.

The city of Westland's rubbish transfer site, 37137 Marquette, is open now Saturday, Oct. 29. Hours are 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays. Only Westland residents may use the transfer site. No commercial vehicles or contractors may use it. Proof of Westland residency must be shown. To cover disposal costs, the city will charge a fee at the site before dumping is allowed. It's \$13 for a car, sport utility vehicle or minivan; \$23 for a small pickup or van; \$31 for a standard pickup or a 4-by-6 trailer; \$46 for a trailer that's 4-by-8 or 5-by-8; and \$62 for large trailers 5-by-10 or 5-by-12. Car and truck parts and tires will not be accepted. Household furniture and appliances are to be removed at the residential premises by the city's waste disposal contractor. Call (734) 728-1770 prior to the regular trash pickup day.

Tree branches, shrubs, stumps, dirt and roof shingles will not be accepted at the transfer site. Used motor oil will only be accepted on Friday and Saturday by an attendant on duty. Recycling center: How through Oct. 21, the city's recyclable drop-off center will open for summer hours from 7:30 p.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday and from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturdays. The site will be closed Sundays and holidays. Here's what's accepted:

■ Glass bottles and jars: They must

be washed clean with lids and metal rings removed. No plate glass is accepted and no ceramics, Pyrex cookware, Mr. Coffee pots, dirty containers with food, and no mirrors.

■ Newspapers: They must be stacked neatly 6 to 15 inches high and tied with twine or packed into paper bags. They should be dry and have no mold. No junk mail, catalogs, magazines or phone books are accepted, and no office paper, computer paper or cardboard.

■ Metal aluminum that won't stick to a magnet: This applies to cans only, no scrap metal. No foil or foil containers will be accepted.

■ Metal steel that will stick to a magnet: This includes tin cans, which should be rinsed clean with both ends removed and flattened to save room in the Dumpster. No paint, aerosol cans or scrap metal will be accepted.

■ Plastics: This includes plastic drink jugs and colored laundry detergent jugs, and they must be cleaned out. The following will not be accepted: lids, plastic bags, caustic material containers, such as drain cleaner, oil or antifreeze containers.

■ Batteries: Accepted will be flashlight type dry cell batteries, watch batteries, camera batteries, hearing aid batteries, NiCD batteries and automotive batteries.

■ Used motor oil: It will be accepted 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Friday and Saturday. No medical waste will be accepted. To dispose of hazardous waste, such as antifreeze, gasoline and paint, contact

Painter & Ruthenberg at (313) 561-0303 or the state Department of Environmental Quality at (800) 662-9278. They can provide suggestions for disposal.

**Chipping season**  
The city's public service department will begin chipping tree branches March 28. Scheduling already has begun. Residents who want to use this service should call (734) 728-1770. Branches will be disposed of on the day following trash day. They should be at least four feet in length and no larger than three inches in diameter, neatly stacked with the butt end facing the curb. The city will chip branches only, not stumps, roots, shrubs or trunks.

**Compost season**  
The city's compost season is now through Dec. 9. Compost will be picked up the same day as regular trash. Compost must be in cans labeled yard waste or in Kraft-type brown paper bags specifically designed for yard waste. Leaves and other yard waste in plastic bags will not be picked up. Compost must be separated from regular trash by at least 10 feet. All brush and limbs must be tied in bundles of 4-foot length and can't be more than 60 pounds. No stumps or roots will be accepted. Cardboard boxes containing compost will not be picked up. Sod, dirt, wood chips, vines or landscaping material will not be picked up. Residents will have the responsibility of disposal.

## VOTES

FROM PAGE A1

Westland school election in which incumbents Ed Turner and Steven Becher were elected, Turner to his third four-year term and Becher to his first four-year term.

"It was a long day, it was a boring day," said DeHart. "We had to be here at 5:30 a.m. and stayed here until it was done."

The two men faced no challengers in the election which attracted about 3 percent of the district's more than 60,000 registered voters. More than 2,000 votes were cast in this year's uncontested election, far exceeding the almost 900 votes recorded in the 2004 election in which had six candidates were vying for three seats.

Becher received the most votes with 2,277, while Turner received 2,219 votes, according to DeHart who coordinated the election.

She estimates that roughly 3 percent of the district's more than 60,000 voters cast ballots on Tuesday.

DeHart handled the election in the Westland, Canton, Dearborn Heights and Inkster portions of the district while the clerks in Wayne and

Romulus handle voting in their respective communities. Anticipating a low turnout, DeHart manned each poll with three workers, the minimum number allowed by law.

The precinct at Madison Elementary in Westland was the busiest with 47 votes cast for Becher. Both men are well-known in the area. Becher taught at Madison while Turner lives in its attendance area.

One precinct, at Hayes Elementary, had no voters show up throughout the 13-hour time the poll was open.

DeHart said that the date change for filing as a write-in candidate would allow for the election to be canceled and the candidates declared the winners. It would also save school districts a large portion of what would be spent on an election. She estimates Tuesday's voting will cost the district about \$50,000.

"There would be some cost expended as far as absentee ballots and cards, but by being able to call an election if there is no challenge, would cut the cost by about two-thirds," she said. "It (a write-in) may never happen, but if you know enough in advance, you could end up not needing the election."

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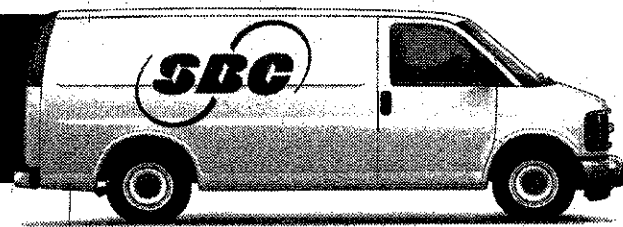
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**COSTS**

FROM PAGE A1

Herbert estimated that costs could soar by as much as \$2 million a year, although he later conceded that his projection wasn't a firm one.

Nonetheless, just one tab like that could eliminate the city's general fund surplus, which has risen from \$200,000 to \$1.5 million amid efforts by Mayor Sandra Cicirelli's administration to trim spending.

Herbert urged city officials to consider creating a new fund, similar to a pension fund, to start setting aside money for retiree health care costs.

Otherwise, he said, retirees will be complaining in years to come as their health insurance erodes.

"I do not want to be 80 years old and hobble back up here," he told the council.

His remarks stem from new rules by the Government Accounting Standards Board that will require cities to give better projections of how they will live up to their promises to pay retiree health care costs.

In other budget hearing issues Monday, city officials defended a decision to buy 10 new police cars during the next year - the same number as last year.

"They are needed," Finance Director Steve Smith said, citing the high mileage on aging police cars.

Police Chief Daniel Pfannes said that some patrol cars have more than 80,000 miles on them and still are heavily used.

City officials last year replaced 10 of the police department's 30 patrol cars with the retro-looking, black-and-white vehicles. The mayor's budget recommends buying 10 more.

"That still will leave 10 old cars in the fleet," Pfannes said Monday.

On other budget issues, community volunteer Normie Brazier urged the city administration, in hiring a new economic development director, to seek a candidate with a strong background in sales.

Brazier said the new director should have a talent for luring businesses that will be a good fit with residents' buying habits.

Moreover, she said, the director should receive a lesser salary than other department heads and should partly be paid by commission.

Council members are expected to approve a new budget in June. The spending plan would become effective July 1.

dciem@oe.hometownlife.com | (734) 953-2110



TOM HAWLEY | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

**Musical memory**

Fourth- and fifth graders in the Wayne-Westland school district practiced their best concert manners for a performance of the Plymouth Symphony Orchestra at Wayne Memorial High School's Stockmeyer Auditorium last week. The performance is part of a music enrichment program the symphony is doing in the elementary schools. It featured a special visit from Composer André Myers (center), who wrote music to the story 'Paddle to the Sea.' He told the story to the children while symphony performed his music.

**ADAMS MIDDLE SCHOOL HONOR ROLL**

Named to the honor roll at Adams Middle School for the third marking period of the 2004-2005 school year were:

Keith Adams, Summer Adams, Alexandra Akers, Erika Akubeno, Mariysann Alkson, Angela Altimus, Della Altman, D'Vonteono Anderson, Ashley Antonelli, Paul Austin, Caitlin Badrak, Shirelle Bailey, Matthew Baker, Devin Bartos, Ryan Bartz, Samantha Bawcum, Crystal-Car Beneteau, Jimmel Bennett.

Jacob Black, Colleen Blake, Terrior Blakely, Treston Blakely, Alexander Bledsoe, Christopher Blevins, Paul Robin, Robert Bono, Maryann Boogern, Danielle Boston, Deanna Boston, Erika Boyington, Alex Brasil, Trevor Britton, David Brooks, Dajuarné Burton, Antwain Calloway, Arlene Carter, Bradley Chandler.

Kimberly Chau, Kristine Chau, Melissa Chestnut, Lindsay Chmiel, Moriah Claydon, Nathaniel Clendennin, Taylor Coleman, Amanda Cook, Pedro Cortes, Krystle Crandall, Kayleigh Crumme, Daisy Cruz, Mariah Cryderman, William Cunningham, Kya Cathrel, Cupino, Ashley Cyprus, Chelsea Davis.

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Brandie Bishop-Stacker, Adam Szydzki, Chelsey Tabot, Tiana Tatum, Amanda Thieleman, Robie Tomlin, Zachary Tykoski, Margaret VanDyke, Michael Walker, Dustin Webb, Carla Werimert, Edward West, Jamie Williams, Makayla Williams, Michelle Williams, Crystal Wilson, Shane Wilson, Kara Windsor, Brianna Winn, Cassandra Woods, Robert Woodson and Natalie Yambrich.

**BUDGET HEARING NOTICE**

Academy of Westland will be holding its annual budget hearing on May 13, 2005 at 2:00 p.m. The location will be at 300 Henry Ruff Rd., Westland, MI 48186. The budget is available for public inspection at the same address. The meeting will be conducted in accordance with the Open Meetings Act.

Publish: May 5, 2005

OE0520045

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# Yankee Air Museum launches \$55 million fund drive

BY HEATHER NEEDHAM  
STAFF WRITER

Years before a fire tore through the Willow Run Airport's historic Yankee Air Museum, there were big plans to turn it into a historic hot spot.

Despite the October 2004 fire that destroyed the museum, that dream is still alive. A \$55 million fund-raising drive kicked off April 22 at the museum, amid flight demonstrations and unveiling of a Willow Run site plan that will include 11 new buildings.

Dennis Norton, president of the Michigan Aerospace Foundation, said the purpose of the restoration will be twofold - to educate visitors about Willow Run's place in history, and to take visitors back in time.

"From the exterior, we want it to look like the old Willow Run Air Base," Nelson said. "It will be kind of like a walk through history."

In the 1940s, Willow Run was the base of World War II B-24 Bomber production. Automaker Henry Ford brought his mass-production know-how to Willow Run, where more than 8,000 bombers were built on assembly lines.

World War II provided the backdrop for these pages in history

"The entire nation was mobilized for the war - it has never happened before and it's never happened since," Nelson said.

Willow Run also was a nerve center of invention and innovation, with many laboratories in operation. Aviator Charles Lindbergh even spent a couple of years at Willow Run, helping to test aircraft.

"There was a lot of very top-secret research going on," Nelson said, adding that strides were made toward inventing the laser at Willow Run.

The Ford Motor Co.'s Rouge facility made the parts, which were transported along what is today called I-94. Then, it was called the "Willow Run Expressway."

Plans include building a new Yankee Air Museum and

additional buildings, including a theater, aerospace and aviation educational facilities, an outdoor air park, aerospace library, restaurant, research center and meeting facilities.

To make all this happen, Nelson said big donations - preferably those with six or seven figures in the dollar amount - are going to have to pour in.

"We're talking big money," he said.

Eastern Michigan University wants to start an aerospace/aviation-based charter school at Willow Run. Under current state law, which capped the number of schools that could be chartered, additional charter schools cannot be authorized.

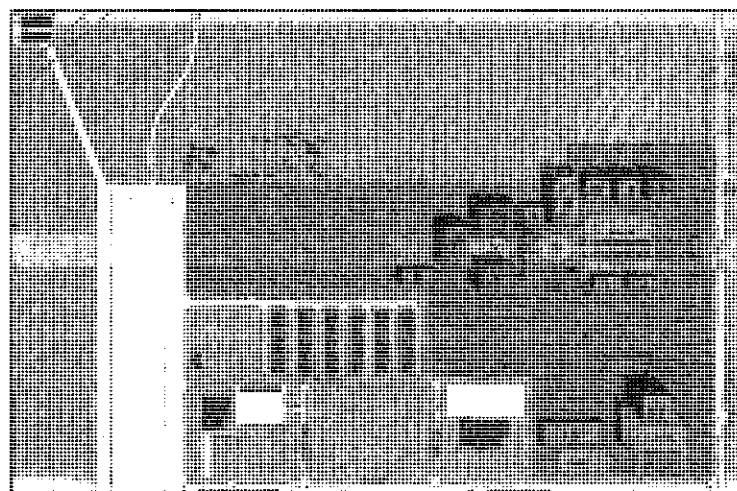
Tim Doyle, program coordinator for EMU's aviation management program in the School of Technology Studies,

said that being able to charter the school would be a plus.

"The primary interest in having a charter school with an aerospace focus is the chance (for aviation/aerospace) to compete with other careers that are rewarding to young people," Doyle said.

An aerospace-oriented charter school would help fill an educational niche.

"There is not a ton of these schools around," he said.



This is the proposed layout for the Yankee Air Museum restoration.

## Start saving two days EARLIER!

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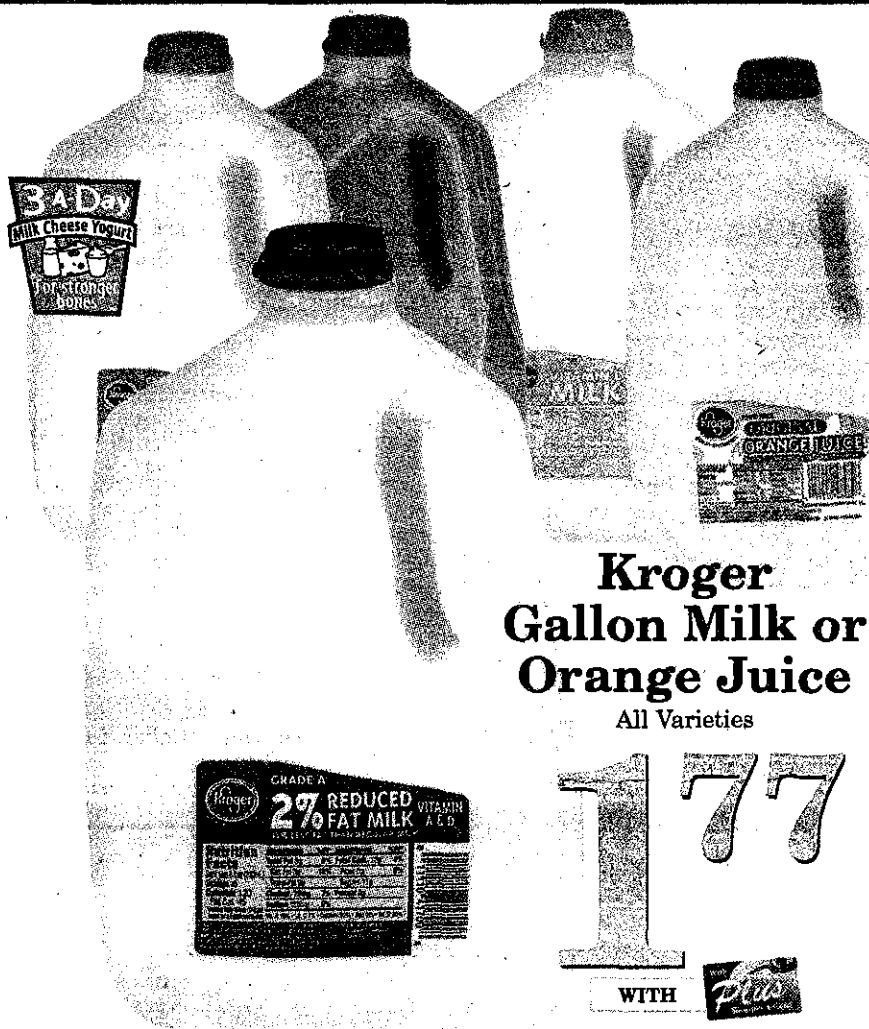
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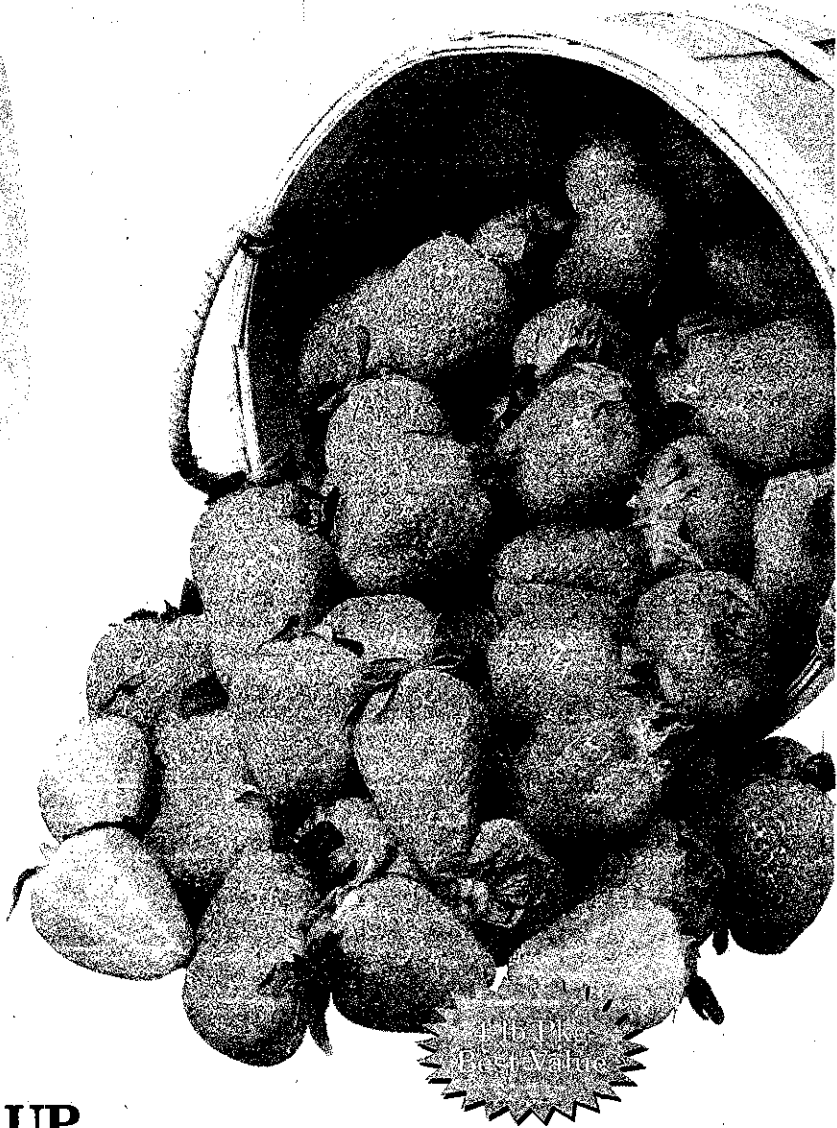
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## Students to engage in hands-on learning

On May 18, nearly 6,000 students from 88 Metro Detroit schools will engage in hands-on learning and community service at dozens of sites along the Rouge River and its tributaries.

They will be participating in the Rouge Education Project, a program that promotes awareness and stewardship of the Rouge River watershed through school-based water quality monitoring, investigation and problem solving.

The non-profit organization Friends of the Rouge has coordinated the Rouge Education Project since 1987.

Elementary, middle and high school students from 33 communities will monitor biological, chemical and physical characteristics of the river, in many cases using methods similar to those used by professional scientists.

"The program is an incredible opportunity for students to gain experience in real-world science and provide a service to their communities by gathering information about the Rouge River," says Courtney Shosh, Rouge Education Project Coordinator.

"Also, as students learn about their local environment and what affects it, they develop a greater sense of ownership and responsibility to protect it. This is especially important in a highly developed watershed like the Rouge, where it's the individual actions of our daily lives that can cause the most harm to the river - such as how we care for our homes, cars and yards, for example."



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## OUR VIEWS

# City should look at insurance cost

Preparing a city budget is never an easy thing, especially when money is tight. What needs to be done is weighed against what can be done and how much money is available.

Mayor Sandra Cicirelli has done a yeoman's job in building up the city's surplus from \$200,000 to \$1.5 million during her first term. She has not been extravagant in what she has proposed and has been able to maintain city services.

A lot of decisions will be made as the city council pours over her latest budget proposal, and one we feel needs to be addressed is health care for the employees of the Youth Assistance Program.

The program uses volunteer mentors to work with local youngsters to keep them out of trouble and potentially out of juvenile correctional facilities. The program spends an average of \$115 on each youngster who is enrolled in the program for four to six months.

Compared with the more than \$400 a day cost to place a youngster in juvenile detention, the city, as Director Ronalee Bowman says, has gotten a good bang for its buck.

But because Bowman runs the program as an independent contractor, the city has not been able to provide health coverage for her and her two employees. With Bowman leaving at the end of the year, now may be a good time to look at providing some additional assistance.

Health care has not been an issue for Bowman and one of her employees, who have tapped into their spouses' benefits, but that may not be the case for Bowman's successor. It could well hinder finding a top-notch replacement.

Thanks to Bowman and many others, the city has an excellent program, and it's evident by the number of referrals which are expected to surpass 300 this year. Granted, health care is a costly item for any employer, but the city should consider putting more money into the Youth Assistance Program to allow employees to get health care coverage.

We are encouraged that the council has heard Bowman's call to look at health care for the program's employees. We sincerely hope it will give serious consideration to a fix now, so that the program can go forward and continue to grow.

# Motherhood: There's no job more valuable

A mother may also be a surgeon, judge, CEO or CPA, but raising her children will always be the most important job she does.

Study after study documents the influence a mother has on her children — from how well they perform in school to how well they get along with others.

It's no wonder. A mother carries her baby in her womb for nine months, forming a close bond unlike any other. She is her child's first teacher, imparting life's most important lessons — including those about love, compassion and caring — during those critical formative years.

Even in homes where both parents work, mom often continues to be the primary caregiver. She's more likely to pass up promotions, limit out-of-town travel and take time off around her children's schedules so she can be with her children as much as possible.

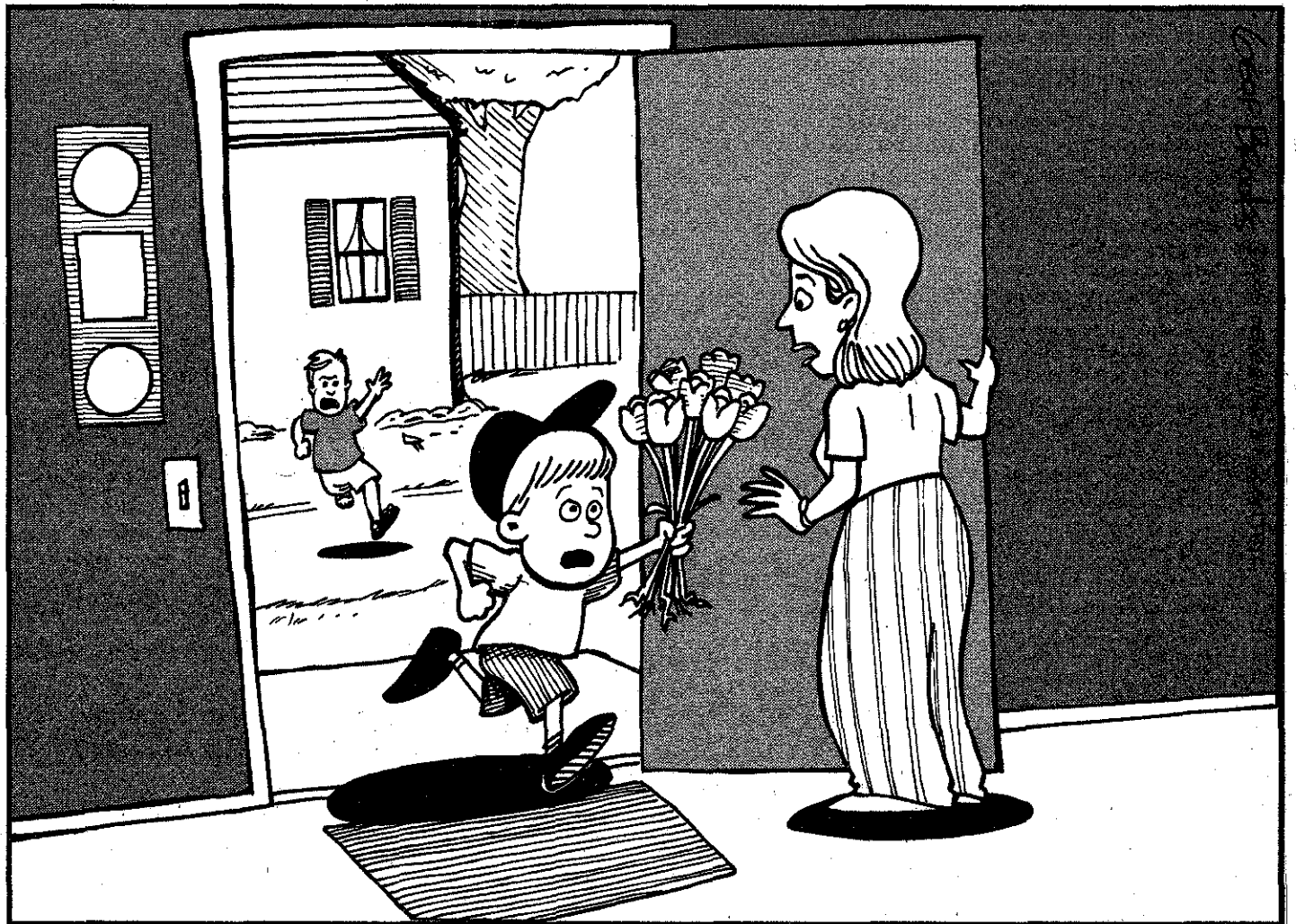
Long after her children are grown, her legacy lives on — in the way her children parent their children and then their children parent their children. From one generation to the next, the values she imparted are handed down.

If you are in the throes of parenting — especially as the mother of a tot or teen — take heart: Your days may be long and your nights sleepless, but these years pass quickly. You will not regret the time you spend with your children, holding them, praying for them, watching over them, supporting them.

If you appreciate the sacrifices your mother made for you — and you're fortunate to still have her around — thank her. Tell her how much you love her.

If you know a single mother who could use a little encouragement, help her anyway you can. She needs it.

If you are considering becoming a mother, know there is no more important job on Earth — or any that is more rewarding.



"Happy Mother's Day, Mom! Quick, say thanks before Mr. Benson gets here!"

## LETTERS

### Reducing democracy

I listened to a discussion of several conservative politicians from Germany last week. The conservatives were calling for less democracy in their country. They felt unions and the ordinary majority of the people had too much control in the governance of the citizens and in essence left politicians with too little control to manipulate the government.

It is baffling considering the direction of this country and the agenda of the current administration. Conservative Germans call it reduced democracy and our administration calls it less government.

The Republican Party has struggled with the English language for years, in particular, democracy. (Irony for a party siding with English-only education.) The conflicts of the rhetoric and results of action are numerous.

The democratic idea of freedom of speech, according to the Republican administration, is for a select few, not the majority. Mr. Bush's campaigns across the country do not allow the freedom of all its citizens to question Mr. Bush's agenda or programs, only citizens committed to allegiance to his ideas.

Mr. Bush also supports his religion should be law, not laws tolerant of the beliefs of all the people within the country and certainly not laws built from the consensus of all citizens.

The 500 or so soldiers in Guantanamo Bay prison camp being locked up in inhumane conditions in full knowledge of this administration deny their freedom to be judged fairly and speedily. The administration is trying hard to ramrod extremist judges onto the federal appeal court, even going as far as rewriting procedures established over many administrations.

What the Republicans are calling shrinking of government is really a call for reducing democracy. Every recent Republican administration has campaigned for a smaller government, but actually increased the size of government saddling the citizens with even greater burden and less freedom.

The phrase Mr. Bush uses quite frequently, "I believe in my heart," can be added to a thesaurus and interpreted as, "I know I am lying, but you have to suck it up anyway."

Allan Biber  
Westland

### Civic league meeting

On April 10, at a so-called membership meeting of the Wayne-Ford Civic League, a nonprofit organization, we had at least five or six police officers and four or five police cars there.

I asked at the council meeting in a tongue-in-cheek manner if they were there to protect us from Mr. Vic Barra of Wayne and his bodyguard, but no one answered my question.

That night after the council meeting, I thought, when was the last time I saw so many police officers together at one place without it being a coffee shop? Then I remembered the year 2000, when the council fired the city clerk and the people were up in arms over it and packed the

council meetings. At every meeting, we had at least eight to 10 police officers present, I think, to intimidate the people and allow what a couple of people wanted to stay the course.

Back in 2000 and on March 13 and April 10, 2005, police officers, when asked why they were there, said they were ordered to be there and they had followed orders no matter how dumb they seem.

I wondered why it happened at the civic league. After all, they had their puppet from Wayne claiming to be in charge and it looked as though they would finally get the land. Then I remembered that the members could still stop the sale of the civic league so let's use the police force to keep the deal on track (and I guess they did.)

At an earlier council meeting, Vic Barra (from Wayne), made the mayor, council and department heads members of the civic league at no cost, but on April 10, none were to be found at the civic league. Seems as if they didn't want to be at the scene ...

Those two people help put into office people who will do just what they tell them to do and when it comes to the land they want, that's all that matters. That's why they put them there. Oh, brother.

By the way, my last letter was sent to the paper five days before the April 10 civic league meeting, and today is Sunday. Remember what I said at the last council meeting about snow? What do I know?

Jim Davis  
Westland

### Support the troops

After 9/11 and the start of the Operation Iraqi Freedom war, our communities were united and showing support everywhere for our nation and our troops. Now that the weather is getting nice again, and I have been outside, I have noticed that you just don't see the outward signs of support much. No flags, no "support our troops" signs, no yellow ribbons.

I know a lot of people do not agree with the president's decision on this war, but let's face the facts that there are tens of thousands of troops (and civilian volunteers) deployed in Iraq, Afghanistan, Kuwait and dozens of other locations around the world who desperately need our support and need to know that we support them!

So please, fly your flags, plant that "support our troops" in your front yard and tie yellow ribbons on your trees.

Additionally, there is a wonderful Web site, anysoldier.com, that you can access with names and addresses of our service members who are willing to accept letters, cards and even packages to share with their units or to give to service members who do not get any mail at all. They echo the sentiment that the worst feeling is an "empty" mail call. One of the biggest requests is just a note to say we support them and are thinking about them.

So please, let's show our support and thanks to our military forces.

Jill Brani  
Troy

### Don't privatize Social Security

Congress is considering proposals that would privatize the Social Security system. Social Security is one of the most successful social programs of the 20th century. The system's financing problems are manageable and can be addressed by reasonable adjustments over time. Rushing into private accounts does not solve the so-called Social Security crisis, but rather would add to the cost of the program.

Social Security is not merely a retirement program — it is a social insurance program with broad effect. Many of our most vulnerable citizens rely upon the safety net provided by the system. Before Social Security, one in three senior citizens lived in poverty. Today, that number is one in 10. In addition, disability and survivor benefits under Social Security have provided for millions of American families. This is particularly important for women. Nearly two-thirds of women 65 and over get a majority of their income from Social Security.

Social Security works for America's workers. The great success of Social Security has contributed to the unprecedented economic growth of the 20th century. If the demographic challenges of the 21st century require changes in the financing of the system, then Congress should lead America in a discussion about the most reasonable and secure methods for achieving financial stability. Diverting money from the Social Security trust fund into private accounts could hasten the insolvency of the fund, not save it.

The League of Women Voters of Northwest Wayne County opposes any attempts to privatize the Social Security system.

Paula Bowman, president  
League of Women Voters  
Northwest Wayne County

## SHARE YOUR OPINIONS

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

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WESTLAND  
**Observer**

PUBLISHED THURSDAY AND SUNDAY

GANNETT

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

## QUOTABLE

"This festival is more family oriented than festivals in some of the other communities."

— Chairman Kenneth Mehl, about the 2005 Westland Summer Festival lineup



## Here's one idea for fixing our broken political system

In last week's column, I argued that our politics have become excessively partisan, sterile and uncompetitive, largely because both political parties have mastered the art of gerrymandering boundaries so that the vast majority of districts are now virtually always safe for one party or the other.

The political process has been further distorted because activist partisans of both left and right often hijack our primary selection process by nominating candidates who are extremists of one sort or another. That, in turn, causes each party to largely play to its hard-core supporters, meaning that all too often, reasonable moderates in both parties feel left out.

But what can we do about it? Lots of well-intentioned people have proposed fixing the way district lines are drawn, but no solution solves the problem that partisanship will inevitably creep into any redistricting process. So I think we need to look at it in a new and different way. I've come to the conclusion that the core of the problem is not in the way that district lines are drawn, but in the fact that we have only single-member,

winner-take-all districts.

Life is much more complicated than that. And way back in 1989, Bernard Apol, the universally respected Michigan elections director from 1967-80, wrote a paper for Public Sector Consultants in which he suggested we seat in our legislative bodies the two highest vote getters in each district.

Each would be allowed to vote on every bill — but their votes would be weighted to count just as much as the percentage of the vote they received in the general election. The Republican who won 70 percent of the district votes would have 0.7 of a legislative vote; the Democrat who won 30 percent of the votes could cast 0.3 of a legislative vote, and so on.

Here's why that would be better:

First, it would do away entirely with gerrymandering. Each political party would get the same share of legislative voting power as it received in the popular votes across all districts, so there would be no point in fooling with district boundaries to guarantee election victories to one or party or the other.

Second, it would provide each voter, whether on the winning or losing side, with real representation. A Republican candidate running in Detroit might get only 10 percent of the vote, but the GOP split-vote representative would still have 0.1 of a legislative vote counted every time. Under our current system, citizens who vote for a loser wind up entirely unrepresented.

Third, it would make our political system far more competitive. Because in a split-vote system every citizen's vote would count, it would encour-

age each candidate to campaign hard and not take re-election for granted.

Fourth, it would curtail the tendency of each party to nominate the most extreme candidates. Two-member districts would give political parties new incentive to nominate attractive, middle-of-the-road candidates who can appeal to a broad cross-section, thereby increasing their total vote. Republicans would quickly realize it would be smart to nominate moderate candidates to run in Democratic areas to win the biggest possible share of voting power; conservative Democrats could run in Republican districts and emerge with enough votes to still have influence on policy-making.

Both party caucuses would be obliged to consider moderate voices.

Sure, there are problems with this proposal. Dual representation from each legislative district could double the numbers of legislators (God forbid!) and double salary, fringe and staff costs. One solution would be to create a unicameral (one house) Legislature, as they have in Nebraska.

Another, which I prefer, would be to double the size of each current district in both the House and Senate. That would give us a state House consisting of 55 districts, each represented by two legislators, while the Senate would have 19 districts, with two lawmakers for each.

Would voting in each chamber be unnecessarily complicated, with each member having a fractional vote? That would perhaps have been a problem in the old days, when many legislators were hard put to add fractions (or much of anything else) without squinting at their fingers and toes. But today's computerized tote boards could solve the problem of recording proportionate votes for each legislator in a nanosecond.

Apol concluded his paper with these words: "Of all institutions in U.S. society, none has changed less than our political process and governing structure. Essentially, we run for office and run government much the same way as we did in the early years of the 19th century. Our dedication to a vital, representative form of government requires us to question age-old conventions and to seek means to make government as accountable, responsible and fairly representative as possible."

Amen. Anybody interested in improving our currently sterile, bitter and increasingly ineffective politics ought to be excited about the possibility of a change like this. Of course, current incumbent politicians will poo-poo the idea ... but what does that tell you? To me, that makes it even more clear that this is an idea whose time has come.

Phil Power, the former chairman of Hometown Communications Network and regent of the University of Michigan, is a longtime observer of politics, economics, and education issues in Michigan.



Phil Power

## Service clubs offer members fun, sense of satisfaction

It was back-to-school day last Saturday for a number of local Rotarians.

Jim Karolyi, district governor-elect, greeted a group from Rotary District 6400 during an assembly April 30 at Schoolcraft College in Livonia. After a brief review of Rotary International and district goals, it was off to Schoolcraft classrooms for training on everything from the Internet and Web design to how to be an effective club officer.

"It's really good," Garden City Rotary President-elect Richard Witkowski said of the district assembly. "I think there's a lot of good information that comes out."

As Garden City's school superintendent, Witkowski believes he should be involved in his community. "It's a lot of fun," he said. "It's a good group."

Those thoughts were echoed by Cindy Bartlett of Plymouth A.M. Rotary, who will be district Interact chair for 2005-06. She works with Interact, Rotary's high school organization, at Plymouth-Canton Educational Park and was recruited to Rotary by daughter Meagan, a charter member of that Interact club.

"It's awesome," Cindy Bartlett said of the assembly. "It's a great way to expand and find out information that's available to you."

She cited Interact support of the club's senior Christmas party in December, which included making fleece scarves for seniors. The Children of the Dump project in Nicaragua has received P-CEP Interact support, as has the Relay for Life American Cancer Society fund-raiser set for May 14-15 in Canton. Students have also produced an anti-smoking program for youth.

"I just love working with kids," said educator Bartlett.

Youth exchange programs are also a big draw for Ron Gaffney of Livonia Rotary, a past president, board member and foundation treasurer for that club. He and wife Deanna have hosted students from Mexico, Belgium, Turkey and Colombia and enjoyed the experience.

"It's great," Ron Gaffney, who works in insurance with Cambridge Underwriters, said of the gathering. "I think it's something every Rotarian needs to attend. There's always something to learn."

Sue Kowalski, Canton Rotary treasurer, has been involved about 2½ years. She raised her family and then returned to school, working now as a certified public accountant. Three of

Have you ever considered joining Rotary, Kiwanis, the Lions or another service organization? Membership, both recruitment and retention, remains a perennial concern for such groups, and chances are they'd be glad to have you.

her five children have been Rotary exchange students, visiting Finland, Australia and Italy.

The family has hosted a number of exchange students over the years, some through Rotary, and currently has a young woman visiting from Indonesia. "It's very rewarding," said Kowalski, who also benefited from her training at district assembly.

Her club is putting a clock in at Heritage Park in Canton. "We're hoping to have it done by Liberty Fest" in June, Kowalski said.

Mary Carlson, secretary-elect for Westland Rotary, was glad she attended that training session and others. Carlson is co-owner of the C&M printing business in Westland.

"I thought it was very informative," she said, adding she especially enjoyed the idea exchange among members of clubs. Four Westland Rotarians attended Saturday's program.

"Because I love to do things to help other people and I think Rotary's an effective way to do that," Carlson said in explaining her involvement. "And it's a lot of fun."

There was time Saturday for lunch and visiting before the Rotarians went their separate ways. Many cited the energizing impact of such an assembly, and how it invigorates clubs to do even more to serve their communities.

Have you ever considered joining Rotary, Kiwanis, the Lions or another service organization? Membership, both recruitment and retention, remains a perennial concern for such groups, and chances are they'd be glad to have you.

Why not consider stopping by the next meeting of your local service organization? By joining, you'll gain the satisfaction of serving your community and the larger world beyond it. You'll make some great friends at the same time.

Julie Brown, a Rotarian, is presentation editor for the *Observer & Eccentric Newspapers*. She can be reached at (248) 901-2565 or via e-mail at jrbrown@oe.homecomm.net.



Julie Brown

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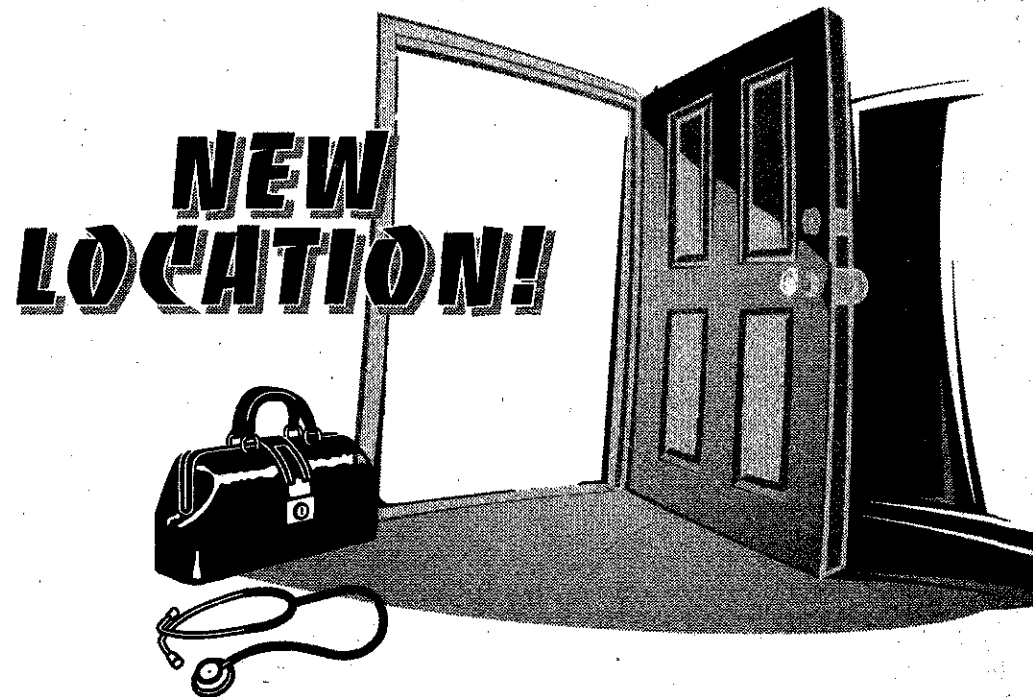
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