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Festival prepares for a star-spangled finale

BY DARRELL CLEM
STAFF WRITER

Westland's biggest party - the summer festival - will continue early this week, culminating Monday night with what organizers say will be a dazzling fireworks display over Central City Park.

The six-day festival started Wednesday with a parade of 55 units along Ford Road - the city's major east-west thoroughfare.

"The parade went very well, everybody liked it," festival chairman Kenneth Mehl said.

Art Van Furniture sent a 40-foot-tall Flicker the Dinosaur float.

"That was probably the most popular thing," Mehl said. "He was a big hit."

After the parade, University of Michigan sophomore Leah Potvin was crowned Miss Westland on the main festival stage, beating out eight other contestants.

"The pageant went off really, really nice," organizer Lisa Tesner said. "We lost power for a little bit, but then everything went well."

A former Wayne Junior

Miss, Potvin plans to continue her education at U-M and eventually attend law school. Her hobbies are dance, cheerleading, travel and volunteer work.

Potvin has volunteered her time at anti-drugs D.A.R.E. basketball games. She also has coached the Wayne Wildcats cheer team for girls ages 6-13.

Potvin won a \$1,200 scholarship.

First-runner up Kimberly Hagelthorn received \$800; second-runner up Alexa Larimore, \$500.

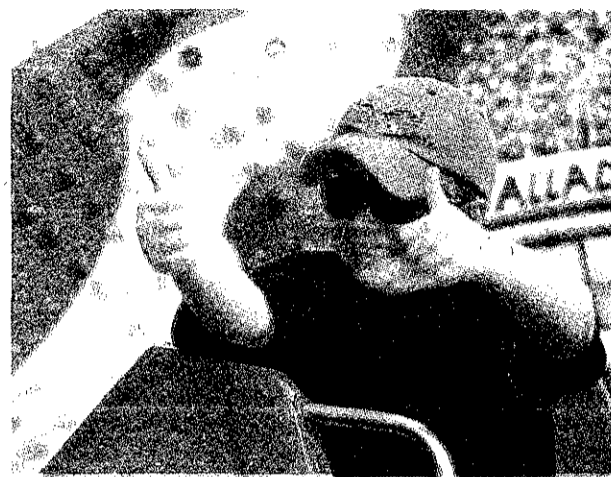
The festival, with carnival

rides and other attractions, will continue today and Monday from noon until closing, Mehl said. Free shuttles will be available at John Glenn High School and at the Westland public library.

Motorists who use Carlson Road, between Ford and Marquette, should find another route as of 4 p.m. Monday, when the road will be closed off for the evening fireworks, Mehl said.

The fireworks are expected to start shortly after 10 p.m.

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Six-year-old Andrew Fedel gives a double thumbs up to riding the Speedway at the Westland Summer Festival.

BILL BRESLER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER



The balloons that greeted Carl Blessing when he stepped off his plane at Detroit Metro Airport decorate the living room of pen pal Linda Jackson's Westland home.

TOM HAWLEY | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Angel hugs, 'I love you' greet Grami Linda's pen pal

BY SUE MASON
STAFF WRITER

"This is my oldest son," Linda Jackson said, draping an arm around Carl Blessing's shoulder. "He's everything I thought he would be and more."

The comment brought a grin to the face of the 37-year-old Houston, Texas, native, who was in Westland for four days last week to meet the woman he has come to know as Grami Linda.

"This is like a second home to me," said Blessing, who was making his first visit.

The twosome are related not by birth but by mail. She has been his pen pal for more than two years as part of OPM.A.L.E.-STAR (Operation Make a Life Enriched-Saying Thanks and Remembering), a stateside volunteer group which sends mail and care pack-

ages to service personnel.

Stationed aboard the USS Cleveland, an LPD (amphibious landing) ship, Blessing has been corresponding with Jackson ever since 2002 when he opened a plastic Easter egg to find a note saying she was available to write.

Not one to write to strangers, he stepped outside the box to send her an e-mail.

GRATEFUL

"It was a nice gesture," said Blessing, a yeoman first class. "Here we were in the middle of the Mediterranean away from home and someone remembered us. I didn't know if anyone else had written her, so I thought I'd thank her for the ship."

Since then, he has written from ports of call around the globe and has taken to

sending gifts and notes to Jackson and her grandchildren, Nathaniel and Christiaan.

They call him Uncle C.B., he refers to them as his nephews. He has sent e-mails meant just for them, as well as a stuffed moose from Canada and kangaroos from Australia, postcards from Alaska and banners with their names on them done in handpainted animals.

The kids, with Jackson's help, sent him CDs, candy and photos, including one in a talking picture frame of two boys with their kangaroos that he carried in his pocket. Their message was simple: "We love you, Uncle C.B."

"I wouldn't have it any other way," said Blessing as Nathaniel sprawled across his lap and Christiaan squirmed at his feet.

PLEASE SEE PEN PAL, A5

Ho, ho, ho

Community Foundation party benefits Salvation Army

BY DARRELL CLEM
STAFF WRITER

The Beatles are back. Sort of.

Beatles impersonators will play at this year's Christmas in July party, thrown every year by the Westland Community Foundation.

The event will start at 6 p.m. Thursday, July 21, at the Hellenic Cultural Center. With a minimum \$50 donation to get in, the event will raise money for The Salvation Army's summer camps and for scholarships to help Westland students continue their education.

"We generally raise around \$20,000," foundation President Glenn Shaw Jr. said.

The party will borrow from TV's *American Idol* for a *Westland Idol* contest that will feature eight finalists from local karaoke competitions.

Karaoke auditions will be at 9 p.m. July 8 at Marvaso's Italian Grille, 10 p.m. July 10 at Malarkey's Irish Pub, 10 p.m.

July 13 at Greg's lounge, and 10 p.m. July 14 at Chatters.

The first-place winner will receive \$300 and studio recording time.

The second-place finisher will get \$200 and recording time; the third-place winner, \$100.

Baseball legend Willie Horton also is expected to attend the Christmas in July event and be available to sign autographs, Shaw said.

The foundation also will honor local volunteer Carol Sharp of the Warm Hearts organization, which knits blankets, hats, baby clothing and other items for those in need, Shaw said.

Admission to the event can be paid at the door or by sending checks to the Westland Community Foundation, 38110 Executive Drive, Suite 100, Westland, MI 48185.

For more information, call (734) 595-7727.

dclm@oe.hometownlife.com (734) 953-2110

Tenant's belongings stolen and burned following eviction

An incident at Willow Creek Apartments has served as a reminder to any tenant facing eviction: Get your things or somebody else will.

Not only did people pick through and take what they wanted from the belongings of a tenant who was evicted June 24 at the apartment complex on Newburgh Road, south of Ford.

Then, someone set fire to what was left behind.

"We believe it was probably a child that set the fire," said Westland Assistant Fire Chief Chris Szpara, the city's fire marshal. The incident happened about 4:30 a.m., but Szpara said the fire didn't damage any buildings.

Local officials said the incident should serve as a warning to people to remove their belongings before they are placed on the curb.

"Leaving that type of property out there, it's always a good possibility that it will be stolen or vandalized," Szpara said.

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Coming Thursday
in Filter

Intimate festival

Big names will headline The Community House Jazzfest in Birmingham

Success leads to life of generous giving

BY JONI GOLDEN
CORRESPONDENT

The benefactor behind a city park in downtown Farmington and a new public television broadcast center has the kind of life story that would make Horatio Alger proud.

Fresh out of the service in 1952, George Riley opened a television repair shop in Plymouth to support his growing family. But he also took notice of an interesting phenomenon at a downtown Plymouth hotel that offered guests a television in every room.

"I can tell you the day when I got out of the service, the Mayflower Hotel had an antenna on the roof for every television," Riley told WJR's Tom Campbell in a recent interview. "It was like an antenna farm."

Seeing an opportunity, he said, "We figured out a way to do it with one antenna and an amplifier."

Riley sold his shop in 1959 and got into the business of educational television, wiring schools and colleges throughout Michigan and, eventually, creating a system that allowed automakers to set up a video camera in a testing lab and watch the activity from a distant board room. It was the first stage of broadband, a method of sending data over cable wires.

Riley's company, Clover Communications, caught the



Riley

The Riley Foundation, opening a new and amazing chapter in their lives.

"The mission was really to help children," Riley said. "We have a large family ... and 10 grandchildren. I'd like to see them not have any difficulties in life."

The Foundation's latest project will create a haven for children and their families in downtown Farmington. As part of the Main Street redevelopment program, The Riley Foundation has provided \$400,000 to completely fund creation of a park in the Downtown Farmington Business Center parking lot.

Riley said he was happy to contribute to the project; the park is a natural connection to the Foundation's mission, which from day one has focused on making children's lives better.

The Rileys first reached out to benefit children and families at Our Lady of Sorrows Catholic Church and School, the family's home parish. Funds helped build the Family and Early Childhood Center, improved facilities in the

school, as well as the church building. A sculpture of Jesus with several children graces the school grounds, in memory of the Rileys' son who died in a tragic car accident at age 15.

The five surviving Riley children are all Foundation board members; daughter Kim Riley-Fouts serves as its director. The organization has never taken applications or requests. Somehow, the needs find them.

Take the case of tiny Maja Rembisz, a four-year-old Polish girl who was deathly ill.

"Every morning, I read the Free Press on the Internet," Riley said. "One of the reporters wrote about this girl. Her aunt lived in Sterling. She had an incurable blood disease."

The Riley Foundation not only paid for the cost of treatment, they flew Maja and her parents to the United States, where they lived for six months while the child underwent treatment. They are now back in Poland, and Maja is doing very well. The Rileys hope to arrange for her to visit next year.

The assistance they provided had a couple of unexpected blessings. Another woman whose mother had suffered from similar symptoms was able to obtain life-saving treatment, when she realized from Maja's story that the doctors had incorrectly diagnosed the ailment. And Maja now has a new sibling, a child conceived

while the family was in the U.S.

"I've said I'm going to get the baby a T-shirt that says 'Made in America,'" Riley joked.

Dozens of children and teachers have expanded their horizons with the help of the Foundation, through scholarships to outdoor adventures and wilderness programs. Having grown up as an avid outdoorsman, Riley sees the value in introducing young people to the 'great outdoors'.

One of the Foundation's largest projects has been a partnership with Detroit Public Television. When Channel 56 decided to move to Wixom, The Riley Foundation struck a deal to provide them with a building, which will be called the Riley Broadcast Center.

"The connection there is that they do a good job with children's programs," Riley said.

Now that a non-compete agreement with SBC Ameritech has expired, Riley has founded a new company, RF Connect, which engineers wireless systems for large companies.

And while he is a busy man, George Riley never seems to run out of the energy that lies at the heart of The Riley Foundation.

"It's a good feeling to help people," he said. "But I don't look at it as something special. I look at it as something that's got to be done. It's a commitment."

Deputy will be charged in Southfield shoot-out

BY PAT MURPHY
STAFF WRITER

A Wayne County deputy sheriff has been charged in the road rage incident that turned into a shoot-out in Southfield after another motorist reportedly "looked at" the officer's fiancée.

A warrant charging Derrick A. Wade, 34, with felonious assault and reckless driving was issued Tuesday by the Oakland County prosecutor's office in connection with the incident near the intersection of Southfield and Eight Mile roads, about 7:15 a.m. on April 2. Felonious assault, felony, can lead to four years imprisonment and reckless driving, a misdemeanor, can bring a 93-day jail sentence, upon conviction.

According to Oakland County Chief Deputy Prosecutor Deborah Carley, several shots were exchanged between Wade and the other driver, James Manley Jr., 47, of Detroit. Manley was hit in the ankle by one of the shots, while another bullet smashed the window of a business on Eight Mile, she said.

A spokesman for the Wayne County Sheriff's Department Friday said Wade, whose police powers had been suspended, now faces suspension.

"He (Wade) surrendered his weapon and badge, shortly after the incident," said John Roach, a civilian who handles public information for the

department.

"More recently he's been on unpaid medical leave," Roach said. But standard department procedure calls for suspension if a deputy is charged with a felony, he said.

The deputy was off duty at the time of the incident. Wade - accompanied by his fiancée, also a Wayne County deputy - and Manley were driving on Southfield Road at the time, Carley said.

The two drivers exchanged words after Manley supposedly "looked at" Wade's fiancée, Carley said. Wade subsequently told officers Manley made a "kissing gesture" toward his fiancée. Carley said Wade then pulled in front of Manley's vehicle and stopped, and there was "minor contact."

As Wade exited his car, he was holding his pistol, Carley said. He and Manley, who had a pistol as well as a concealed weapon permit, exchanged shots, she said.

Manley told investigators he quit firing once Wade identified himself as a deputy sheriff, Carley said, and there were five rounds in his pistol when he surrendered it to investigators.

Wade had not been arrested as of Friday afternoon, and neither the prosecutor's office nor the sheriff's department knew if he had obtained a lawyer. His fiancée is not charged with anything, said Carley, although she is expected to be a witness.

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Car show raises money for autistic students

BY SUE MASON
STAFF WRITER

In 2000, a small group of parents had an idea: Hold a custom car show to raise money for the Burger Center for Students with Autism.

Five years later, the group has grown to an 18-member committee and the show has gone from 75 cars to 200 cars and motorcycles.

"I'm surprised by the way it has grown," said Cecilia Nesbitt who is co-chairing the Monday, July 11, show with Debbie Cross. "There's a lot of good people out there who like cars and like helping kids."

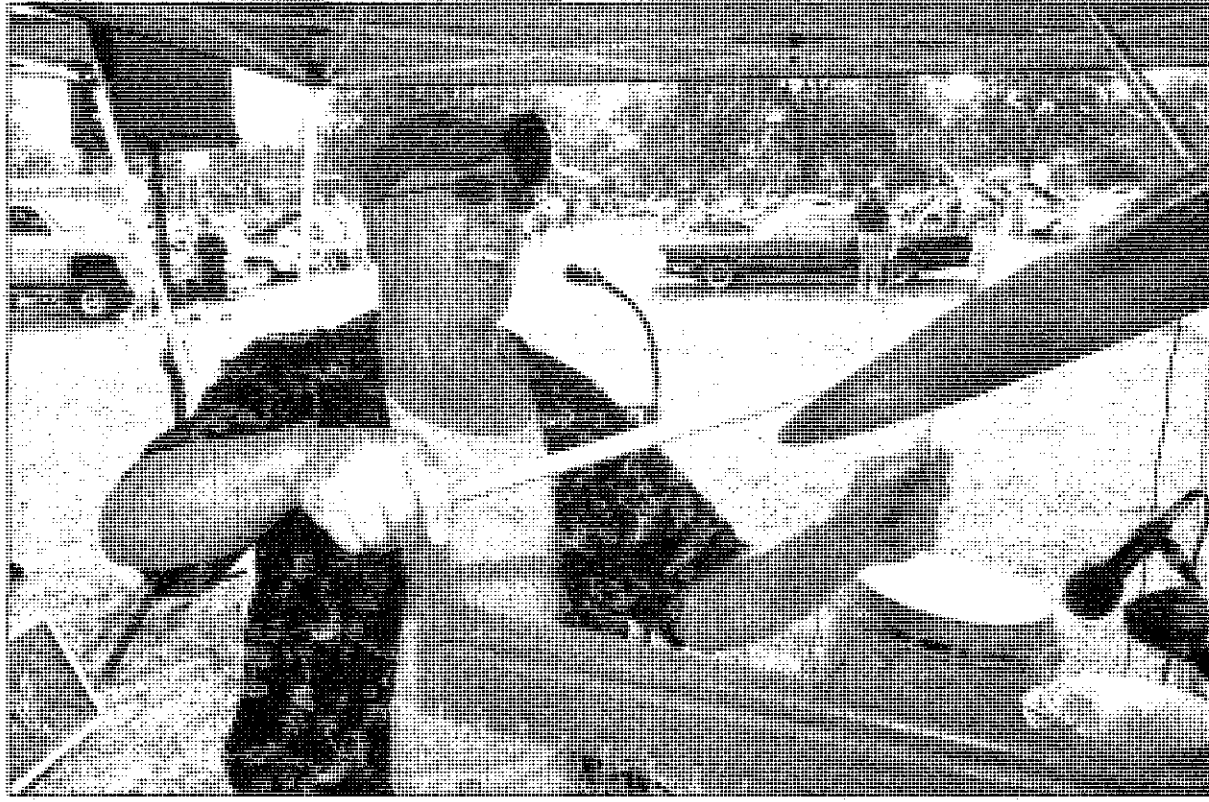
The fifth annual Autos for Autism Car Show will be 6-9 p.m. on the lawn of Garden City High School, 6500 Middlebelt, between Warren and Ford Road.

The car show will benefit the Autistic School Association Inc., which raises money for the Burger Center. Based in a former junior high school in Garden City, the school has an enrollment of 335 students who range in age from 3 to 26 and who come from throughout Wayne County.

"Burger relies a lot on its own funding for special programs," said David Talaga who is new to the organizing committee. "The money goes towards activities throughout the year - field trips, outings in the community, playground equipment upgrades."

The show will feature eight car classes - original, restored, street rod, custom, street machine, sports, truck/van, competition - and one for motorcycles.

Awards include Best in Show, Club Participation and Celebrities Choice. The latter will be awarded by a celebrity panel of judges - Garden City Mayor Jaylee Lynch, state Sen. Laura Toy, R-Livonia, and Valde Garcia, R-Howell, county Commissioner Phil Cavanagh, D-Redford, state Rep. Andy Dillon, D-Redford, and the presidents of the Road Knights Car Club and Westside



Stan Bialach of Sweet Release and a teacher at Burger Center will be back for a third year to perform at the car show.

Rod and Custom Car Club.

There also will be Best in Show award created by former Garden City resident Jack Spurlin of Klai Enterprises Inc. in Wayne. According to Nesbitt, the award is a working clock, shaped like a wheel, that incorporates the show's dash plaque. "It's his own creation," she said.

There also will be entertainment provided by DJ Ellen Mohan of Dance Pro who's been a part of the show since its inception and a husband and wife duo of Stan and Char Bialach who have been with the car show for three years. Stan is a teacher at the center.

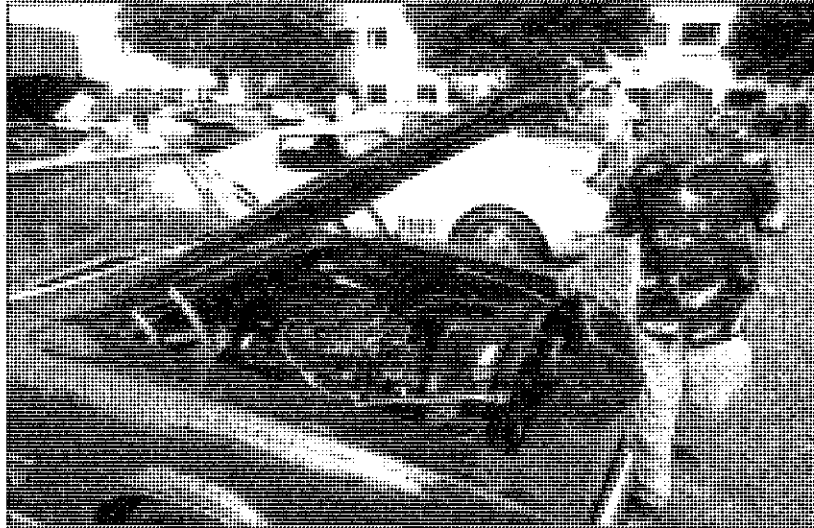
New to the show this year will be 11-year-old Elvis impersonator Ryan Elvis, Talaga's son, who will perform several songs, Nesbitt said.

"I've met him, but I haven't seen him perform although I hear he's phenomenal," she added.

Food also will be available with United Wholesale Grocery Co. and Kroger donating the hot dogs, brats, chips and pop and nachos. Burger Center is providing the nachos and popcorn.

There also will 50/50 raffle and one with autographed photographs of sports figures past and present and door prizes.

According to Nesbitt, workers start setting up for the show at 2:30 p.m., with the gate opening at 4:30 p.m.



Among last year's participants was Don Diener of Westland who brought his '67 Camero Rally Sport to the Autos for Autism Car Show.

for participants. Those who opt to register the day of the show will be charged \$10. Cars and motorcycles will be displayed on the lawn around the high school while the parking lot will be reserved for patrons.

"One year we got there at 2:30 and there were two cars already parked under the trees," Nesbitt said. "We told them we weren't going to throw them out, but since they were there they had to help set up."

Last year the show generated, \$7,400 for the center, and organizers

are aiming for \$10,000 this year. Nesbitt believes the show will exceed that mark.

"Each year we try to do more," she said. "We started out so small and to see it grow. The sponsors pass on word about us and that gives us credibility. In fact, we have two Canadian sponsors this year, so I guess that makes us international."

For more information about Autos for Autism, call (734) 421-5065.

smason@oe.homecomm.net | (734) 953-2112

United Way announces 2005 Torch Drive goal

The United Way for Southeastern Michigan's 2005 Torch Drive goal will be \$66.5 million.

The goal was approved by the United Way Board of Directors on the recommendation and support of United Way's 2005 Campaign Cabinet, led by Torch Drive General Chair, Dieter Zetsche, president and CEO of DaimlerChrysler. Last year's Torch Drive goal and amount received was \$64.5 million.

"Even in tough economic times, it's important that we as a community come together to support the Torch Drive," said Anthony F. Earley Jr., United Way board chair, and chairman and CEO of DTE Energy. "By investing in United Way you invest in our community. The only way we can continue to make effective change in the lives of others is to envision the possibility of going beyond what we've done in the past."

Zetsche will lead tri-county area community volunteers who will be responsible for inviting participation in the Torch Drive and raising awareness of the impact that each investment makes to improve lives in Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties.

"Economic challenges increase demands for health and human services," said Zetsche. "The campaign leadership truly believes that metro Detroiters unite in times of need. Our goal of \$66.5 million will enable us to sustain core services, as well as enhance our capacity to meet critical needs in our community and get at the root causes of long-standing issues."

United Way's campaign leadership will have a sharp focus on new and expanding participation, including reaching out to new companies, individual donors and leadership givers who are in the position to give \$1,000 or more.

The Torch Drive supports core services through United Way's 155 partner agencies, other collaborative partnerships and hundreds of programs and services devoted to nurturing children and youth, strengthening families, promoting health and wellness, and empowering neighborhoods and communities.

This year's Torch Drive will kick off Friday, Sept. 9, and include an early morning lighting of United Way's 54-foot torch in downtown Detroit and the construction of wheelchair ramps throughout southeast Michigan by hundreds of volunteers. The ramp build is an extension of United Way's Ray West Memorial Ramp Project, which builds wheelchair ramps year-round throughout metro Detroit. The campaign will conclude Nov. 22.

For more information on the Torch Drive, call (313) 226-9300 or click on www.uwsem.org.

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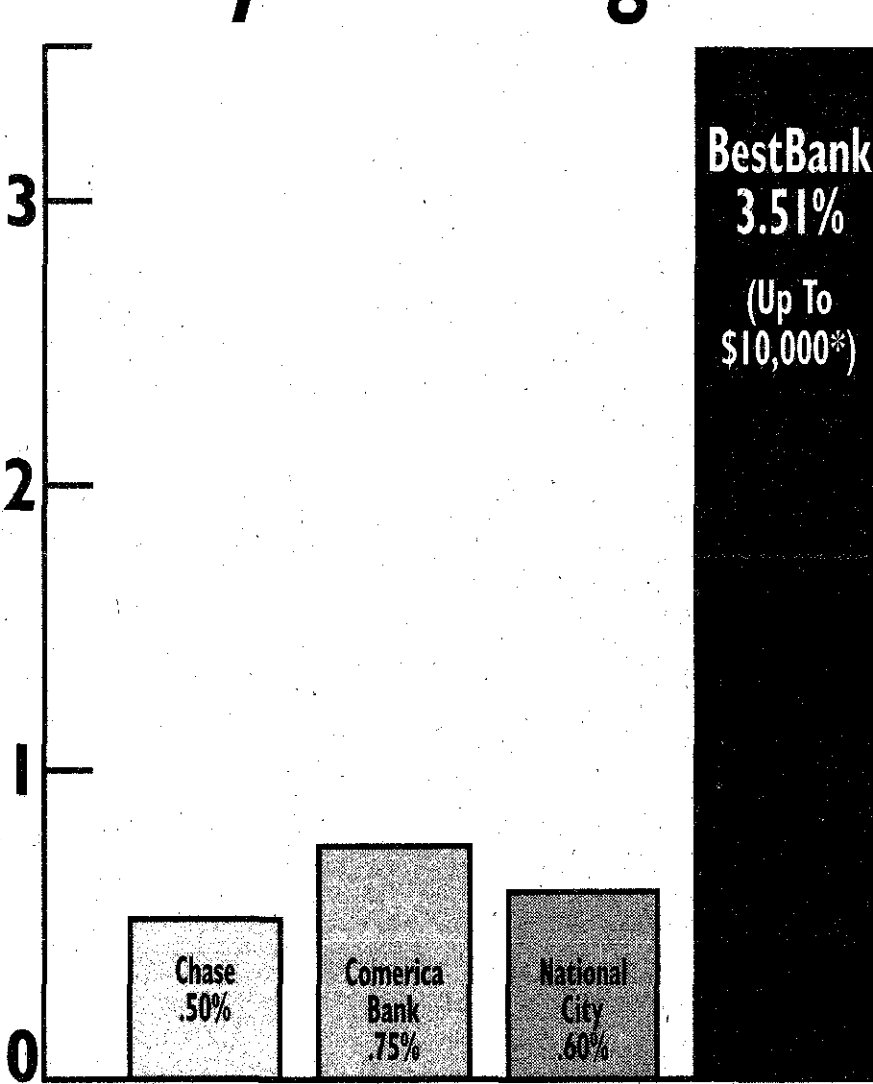
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NEWS ROUNDUP

New waste hauler

The Plymouth Township Board recently approved a five-year contract for a new company to perform recycling, compost and waste hauling services.

Allied Waste Systems, Inc., takes over the contract beginning Tuesday, July 5. Township officials said the new contract will not affect the day of collection for township residents, and reminded residents to consult the Guide to Trash, Compost, Recycling and Household Hazardous Wastes, available at the township offices.

The manual contains a list of items that can be set curbside for collection. That information, officials said, is also available on the township's Web site, www.plymouthtwp.org.

"There will be a change, however, in how your recycling is collected," said Susan Vignoe, the township's solid waste and public service coordinator.

"Through an innovative new process, Allied can collect recyclables without sorting them curbside."

Vignoe said that means drivers won't have to spend time at the curb sorting plastics, glass and papers. The move saves time in the short-term and money in the long run, Vignoe said.

Residents must put trash, recycle and compost to the curb before 7 a.m. on the scheduled collection day. Trash cans have to be 35 gallons or less, and cans, bags, compost containers and bundles must weigh less than 50 pounds, Vignoe explained.

For more information, call (734) 453-8131, Ext. 33.

Scoping out smiles

Livonia senior citizens are invited to join U.S. Rep. Thaddeus McCotter, R-Livonia,

at the 22nd annual Senior Ice Cream Social from noon to 2 p.m. Wednesday, July 6, at the Civic Center Park, at Five Mile and Farmington roads.

The event, which was started in 1983 by McCotter's mother and former Livonia City Clerk Joan McCotter, will feature ice cream and door prizes. The entertainment will be provided by Bunny Sanford's School of Dance.

Trash delay

Livonia city officials remind homeowners that the Independence Day Holiday will delay trash collection services by one day during the coming week.

Under the Big Top

The Wayne Ford Civic League at 1645 N. Wayne Road, Westland, will host the Royal Hanneford Circus Wednesday-Sunday, July 26-31.

Ringside seating will be \$18 for all ages, adult general admission will be \$12 and general admission for children 12 years and under will be \$8. Showtimes will be 11 a.m., 4 p.m., and 8 p.m.

Tickets can be purchased online at www.wayneford.org, at the league hall or by credit or debit card by calling (734) 728-5010 from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

There will be elephant and pony rides, kiddy carnival rides and bouncers available on site. Daily dinner specials also will be served.

There are a limited number of seats available for each show so get your tickets as soon as possible. For more information, call the hall at (734) 728-5010.

Adopt a pet

The Michigan Humane Society and Art Van will sponsor a pet adoption noon to 4 p.m.

Sunday, July 10, at the furniture store, 8300 Wayne Road, north of Ford.

The humane society's mobile adoption unit will be on site with homeless companion animals looking for new, loving homes.

For more information, call (866) 648-6263.

Cropping for a cause

Join Scrapping Around Town and Scrapbook Goodies for a scrapbook fund-raiser 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday, Aug. 14, at Skateland West, 37550 Cherry Hill, Westland.

The cost is \$25 per person and includes seven hours of cropping time — one cropper per 6-foot table — light breakfast, lunch, snacks, goodie bags, make-n-takes and door prizes. Proceeds will benefit the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation. Register online at www.scrapbookgoodies.com or call Cindy at (734) 579-4167. Registration deadline is Aug. 1. Skateland West will not be open to roller skating during the event.

An Olympic event

For the 47th year, Redford Township Parks and Recreation will host a Junior Olympics competition. Children ages 6-12 may attend and compete in a variety of field events. Registration begins at 9 a.m. Wednesday, July 6 at Hilbert Middle School, 26440 Puritan, north of Five Mile and west of Beech Daly.

Participation is free to all Redford residents, and \$5 for non-residents.

Children ages 6 and under fall into the Bantams team and can participate in the long jump and softball throw, as well as the 35 and 50 meter dash events. Ages 7 and 8 are Squirts and may participate in the softball throw and long jump, as well as the 35, 50 and 75 meter dash events.

Nine and 10-year-olds fall into the Peewee category and will participate in the softball throw, high jump and long jump, and the 35, 50, 75 meter dash events and 400 meter relay. Midgets, ages 11 and 12, may try the high jump, softball throw and long jump, as well as the 50, 75 and 100 meter dash, the 400 meter relay and the 800 meter run.

Ribbons will be handed to those who earn first through sixth place in each heat, in these running events.

For more information, call the department at (313) 387-2650. In the event of rain, the Junior Olympics will be canceled.

Safety week

Redford youths can learn about fire safety and stranger danger, get bike helmets inspected and enter a drawing to win bicycles during Safety Week at Redford's summer playground program Thursday and Friday.

The safety event, which will be presented at four different playground sites, is free for Redford children up to age 12. Participants needn't be enrolled in the regular playground program.

The police and fire departments are expected to send representatives to the sites, child identification kits and a limited number of helmets will be given away, and participants at each site can enter a grand-prize drawing for a bicycle. Bicycle winners will be notified by phone on Monday, July 11.

The program schedule is:
 ■ 9-11 a.m. Thursday at Fisher Elementary School.
 ■ 12:30-2:30 p.m. Thursday at Capitol Park.
 ■ 9-11 a.m. Friday at MacGowan Elementary.
 ■ 12:30-2:30 p.m. at Bulman Elementary.
 For more information, call (313) 387-2787.



Violet Koch (stripe shirt, fifth from left) stands next to her husband, Richard, and surrounded by their fellow early morning walkers at Laurel Park Place mall, during a surprise 50th wedding anniversary party last week.

Fellow mall walkers throw couple a surprise party

BY BRAD KADRICH
STAFF WRITER

For years, Richard and Violet Koch of Plymouth have gotten their exercise by walking around Laurel Park Place Mall in Livonia, fixtures there around 6 every morning.

However, with their 50th wedding anniversary approaching and errands to run, Violet was just going to drop Richard off and go about her day that Friday, June 24. She asked one of the regulars to drive Richard home, but the man encouraged Violet to "stay for a few minutes."

"He said they'd gotten us a cake and a few drinks," Violet Sherman recalled. "So I went in, and when we got to the Marriott Hotel, there was all this food and balloons and drinks. It was fantastic."

The occasion was an anniversary party thrown for the couple by staffers at the mall.

Instead of cake and a few drinks, organizer Betty Derrickson had helped arrange for a sheet cake, fruit tray, cheese and crackers, muffins, breakfast breads and pastries, doughnuts, coffee, tea, juice and water, set up by the Marriott out in the mall.

The response, and the number of people able to keep the surprise party a secret, astounded the Kochs.

"We were really surprised," Richard said. "We expected to get maybe a card signed by a lot

of people, but that was about it. I was completely surprised," Violet said. "I couldn't believe at 6 in the morning to have something catered by the Marriott and all those people there, I couldn't believe it."

The surprise on the faces of the Kochs was enough for Derrickson, who organized the party. She said she's also been walking the mall "for years."

"I like doing stuff like that, I organize a lot," Derrickson said. "With so many people knowing about it, and it still came off as a surprise, that's a feat in itself."

The party helped mark the latest step in the Kochs' 50-year marriage, which has produced four children and nine grandchildren. Richard and Violet were married June 25, 1955 in Detroit. Richard worked for Air Conditioning Products Co., from which he's now retired; Violet worked for American Motors. The couple has four children. Son Mark lives in Texas, but their daughters are closer: Joyce lives in Livonia, Ellen in Taylor and Rosemary in Troy. There are also nine grandchildren: Carl, Michael, Lisa, Brian, Hillary, Robert, Claire, Michelle and Natalie.

Richard and Violet, who enjoy gardening, walking and swimming, have simple secrets to their longevity.

"You have to find a good wife," Richard said.

"You just keep plugging along," said Violet.



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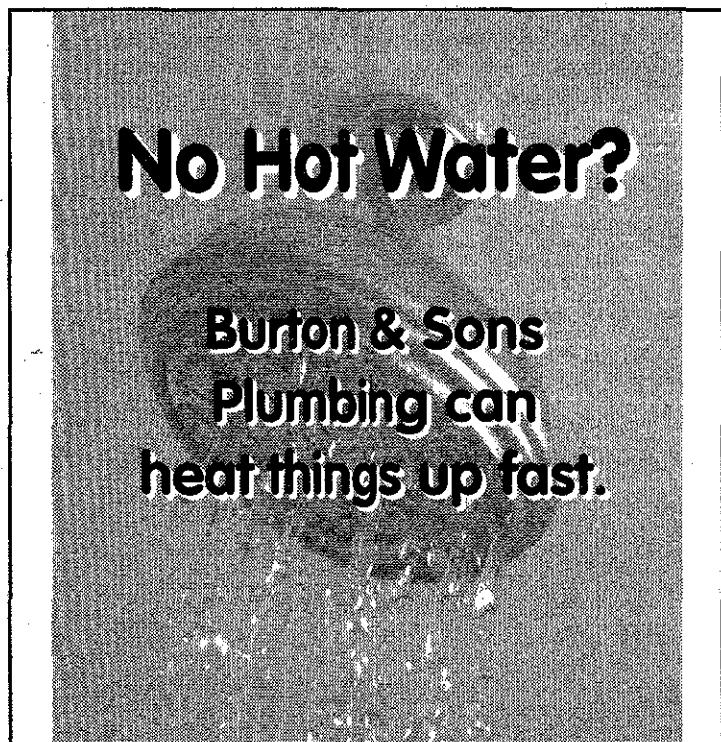
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CASINO WINDSOR

PEN PAL

FROM PAGE A1

Jackson has had as many as 50 pen pals through OPM.A.L.E.-STAR and has sent out hundreds of packages and thousands of hand-made cards throughout the year.

But Blessing is her "special pen pal." He was the first one to write back from the Cleveland.

INSPIRATION RETURNED

"I sent those letters to make them feel that someone out there cares about them," she said. "But he picked me up on those days I didn't think I could make it. He's been an inspiration to me. I'd tell him I was having a bad brain day, and he'd say, 'That's OK, Grami, I'm having one, too.'"

"It's hard to be out in the middle of nowhere and wonder if someone is thinking about you," said Blessing. "With her letters and gifts, it's a constant reminder that you're being thought of."

Blessing was able to spend four days with Jackson before returning to San Diego, Calif., where the Cleveland is readying for deployment. Where it will end up is unknown although the 450 sailors and somewhat larger contingent of Marines have been told they will go to Hawaii. From there, they might make stops in Singapore and Egypt.

"It's a lot of nights," he said. "We're constantly doing drills, constantly being reminded of the (USS) Cole. Even though it got bombed, the ship pulled together and kept it from sinking."

When Blessing arrived at Detroit Metro Airport, the Jackson family had found a way to be as close as possible, holding balloons and signs. The first thing Jackson did was give him an "angel hug." That's how she signs all of her letters.

She sent him off with one, too.

"I'm going to miss him," she said. "Up until the day before he arrived I was on pins and needles. I was so excited. Oh my God, I was going to meet my child. It was like giving a birth to a baby, but instead of waiting nine months, I waited 2 1/2 years."

And Blessing admits leaving will be just as hard as leaving his - a brother and friends in Texas and his parents in North Carolina.

"It's always hard to leave from leave and go back to the ship," he said. "But knowing people are still thinking of us, still rooting for us and wishing that we would come home ... I know how tough it can be, but I know I'm not alone."



Linda Jackson shares a laugh after meeting her pen pal, Carl Blessing, a sailor and native of Texas.

REMEMBERING THE TROOPS

OPM.A.L.E.-STAR (Operation Make a Life Enriched-Saying Thanks and Remembering) is a group of 100 percent volunteers organized, primarily through the Internet.

Members provide deployed and stateside armed forces personnel moral support by supplying them with STAR packages, individual adoptions for support and pen pals. STAR packages are sent all year long and especially during special mail-outs for holidays.

The organization wants to make sure that U.S. troops regardless of where they are - air, land and sea - are treated with the greatest of respect.

OPM.A.L.E.-STAR has a pen pal list that includes the people's names. It is pick and choose from the troops' end. Military names are not placed on the list.

People interested in becoming part of OPM.A.L.E.-STAR can send an e-mail to OPMALe1@aol.com. For more about the organization, including its history, visit the Web site at www.opmalestar.com.

Investigators rule house fire was arson

An arson fire in an unoccupied house on Henry Ruff just north of Joy Road Friday caused about \$15,000-20,000 damage, according to Livonia Fire Marshal Andy Walker.

The fire was started with some type of ignitable liquid in "multiple points of origin throughout the house," Walker said, all separated by a large area.

It was discovered by a neighbor and Livonia firefighters responded with three engines, two squads and heavy rescue. No one was injured and the fire was put out rather quickly, he said.

The house, about 1,000 square feet, had burned in December 2003 and was being refurbished and readied to be put on the market, Walker

CRIME

noted. Arson of a dwelling is a 20-year felony. The Michigan Arson Prevention Committee's Arson Hotline offers up to a \$5,000 reward for the arrest and conviction in an arson case.

Workers accused

A pair of Target employees suspected of stealing items - including iPods, compact discs, digital video discs and even a \$3 egg-and-sausage breakfast - were arrested Thursday, according to Livonia police reports.

The men, Detroiters 21 and 22 years of age, raised the sus-

picious of the loss prevention manager by wearing coats in the stockroom, which is against store rules. Packaging from new items were also found hidden among the trash in the stock room.

The loss prevention manager watched each man remove CDs from their packaging and put the items in their pants at different times.

Another time, he watched the two open and share the breakfast in the stock room, police said.

When confronted, one of the men admitted to stealing for months, including iPods - one worth \$199, the other \$249 - a video camera and plenty of candy, pop and other food items. He estimated the total value at \$1,500.

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 2:25, 3:05, 3:50, 4:20, 4:50, 5:25, 6:15,
 6:45, 7:15, 7:45, 8:40, 9:10, 9:40, 10:05

FRI/SAT LS 11:05, 11:35, 12:00

LAND OF THE DEAD (R)
 11:20, 1:20, 3:20, 5:20, 7:20, 9:20

FRI/SAT LS 11:20

MR. AND MRS. SMITH (PG-13)
 11:45, 2:10, 4:35, 7:00, 9:25

FRI/SAT LS 11:50

MONSTER-IN-LAW (PG-13)
 7:40, 9:45

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KICKING & SCREAMING (PG)
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State committee to mull 10 Commandments decision

BY ALEX LUNDBERG
STAFF WRITER

In the wake of recent decisions by the Supreme Court, representatives of both houses of the legislature and the governor's office will meet to decide whether to place a display of the Ten Commandments somewhere on state property in Lansing.

State Rep. Bob Gosselin (R-Troy) introduced a bill in February to place a display somewhere in the capitol. The bill had several co-sponsors but a vote on it was postponed pending decisions on two cases which were decided by the U.S. Supreme Court last week. The nation's highest court ruled against a display in Kentucky and approved of one in Texas.

The two decisions will help lawmakers in Michigan come up with a compromise that will be intended to keep the state out of court. Of course, nothing is going to please



Gosselin

everyone. "You can't make everyone happy all the time," Gosselin said. "The Capitol Committee will discuss how

to put the two decisions together and make a compromise."

Gov. Jennifer Granholm has asked the Capitol Committee, which is in charge of the state capitol building and its grounds, to look at the issue.

"The legislature adopted a resolution asking the committee to determine whether (the display) can be done," Granholm said Wednesday. "It appears the Supreme Court decision allows it if it's done in a historical context. That's what the committee will be reviewing," Granholm's Press Secretary

Liz Boyd said the Capitol Committee, will meet in the next couple of weeks to decide what, if anything, will be done to put a display in place.

"The governor supports a display if it can be done in a way that does not violate the Constitution," she said. "It appears, by the court's ruling, that it can be done if it's part of a historical context but not in a way that promotes religion."

What will not be in question, Gosselin said, is the funding of the project if the committee decides to go ahead with some representation of the commandments. The funding for any such display, a plaque on a wall or a stone monument, would come from private donations rather than tax dollars.

He said there is no shortage of private donors for such a project.

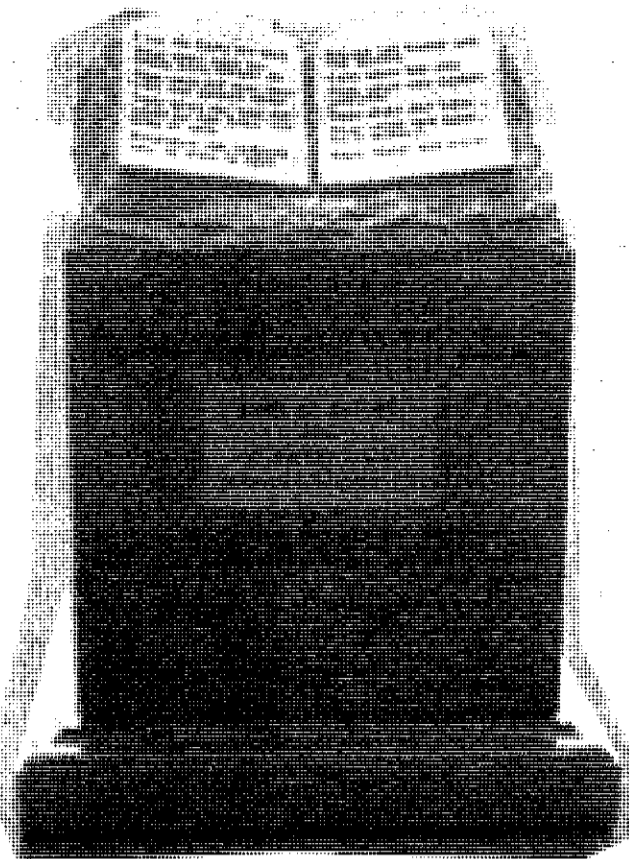
But is debating the Ten Commandments a good use of legislator's time?

"There is time to do this, there is time to talk about the budget and transportation, we do thousands of things every year," Gosselin said.

"Five or 10 years down the line, will people remember the 2005 budget? No. Will people remember what happened with the Ten Commandments? Yes."

Michigan American Civil Liberties Union Communications Director Wendy Wagenheim said that it was unfortunate the court didn't make a clear one way or the other decision on the issue. She also said nothing would ever finally put an end to the debate over the Ten Commandments.

"People will always be able to express themselves in their homes, their churches, synagogues and mosques. There has always been a place for religion in the public square and there always will be, but it's inappropriate for the government to put it there."



This replica of the Ten Commandments display in Alabama was on tour in Michigan, having made a stop in Troy in March.

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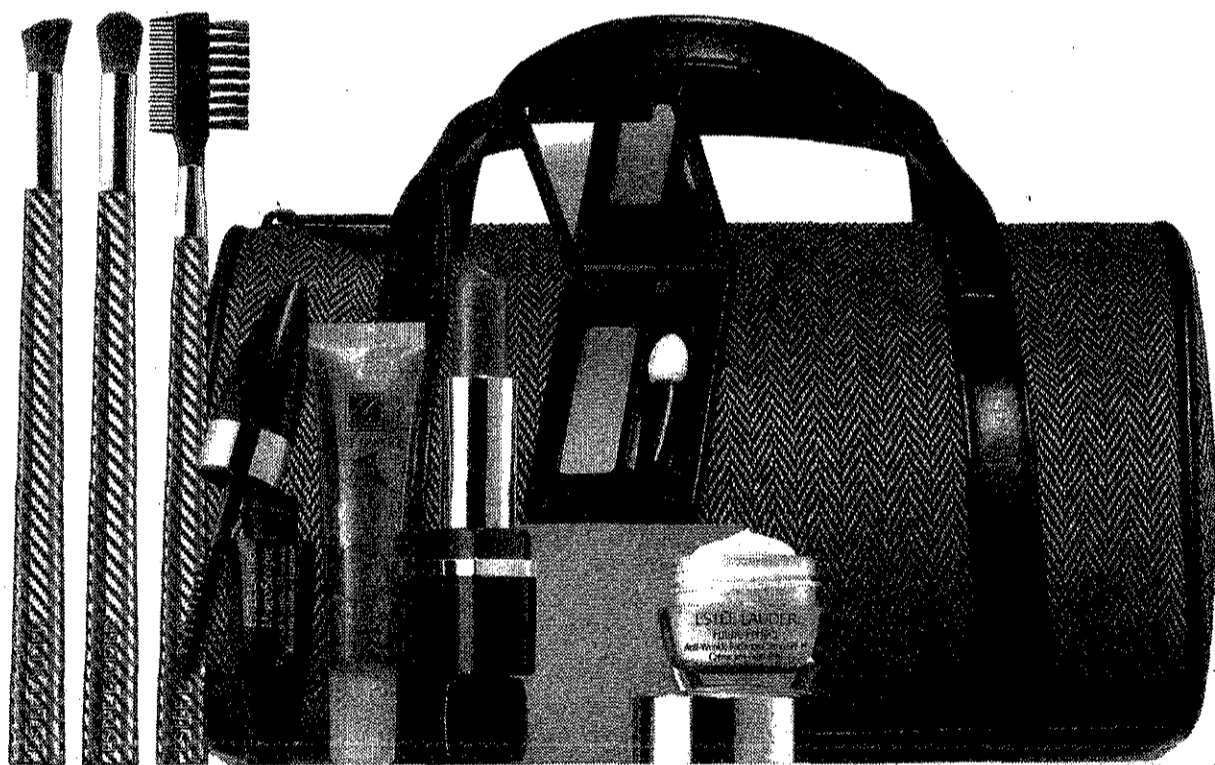
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■ P.A.C.S. - 7 p.m. 2nd and 4th Mondays in Room C309.
■ Praying Together - 7 p.m. Tuesdays in the Sanctuary at Ward

Church.

■ Learner's - 7:30 p.m. Thursdays in Room A101.

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Friday, July 8, at 7:30 p.m. in Knox Hall. Don Jarvi, MSW, CSW, licensed therapist will discuss "Boxing with God... The Task of Everyday Living." Free child care.

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Summer session begins July 11 and runs six consecutive evenings ending on Saturday, July 16. Monday-Friday 7-9:30 p.m. and Saturday 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Cost is \$35 for registration at the door; \$30 for pre-registration; and \$20 for returning participants. Child-care provided for every session.

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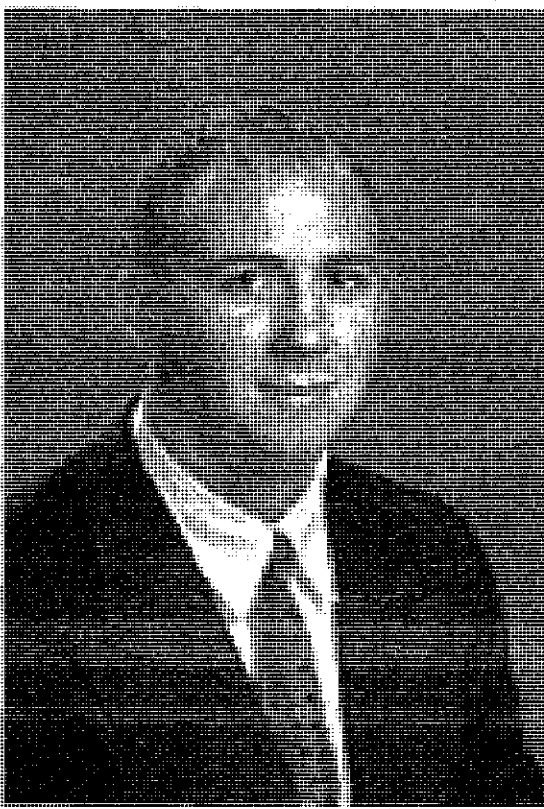
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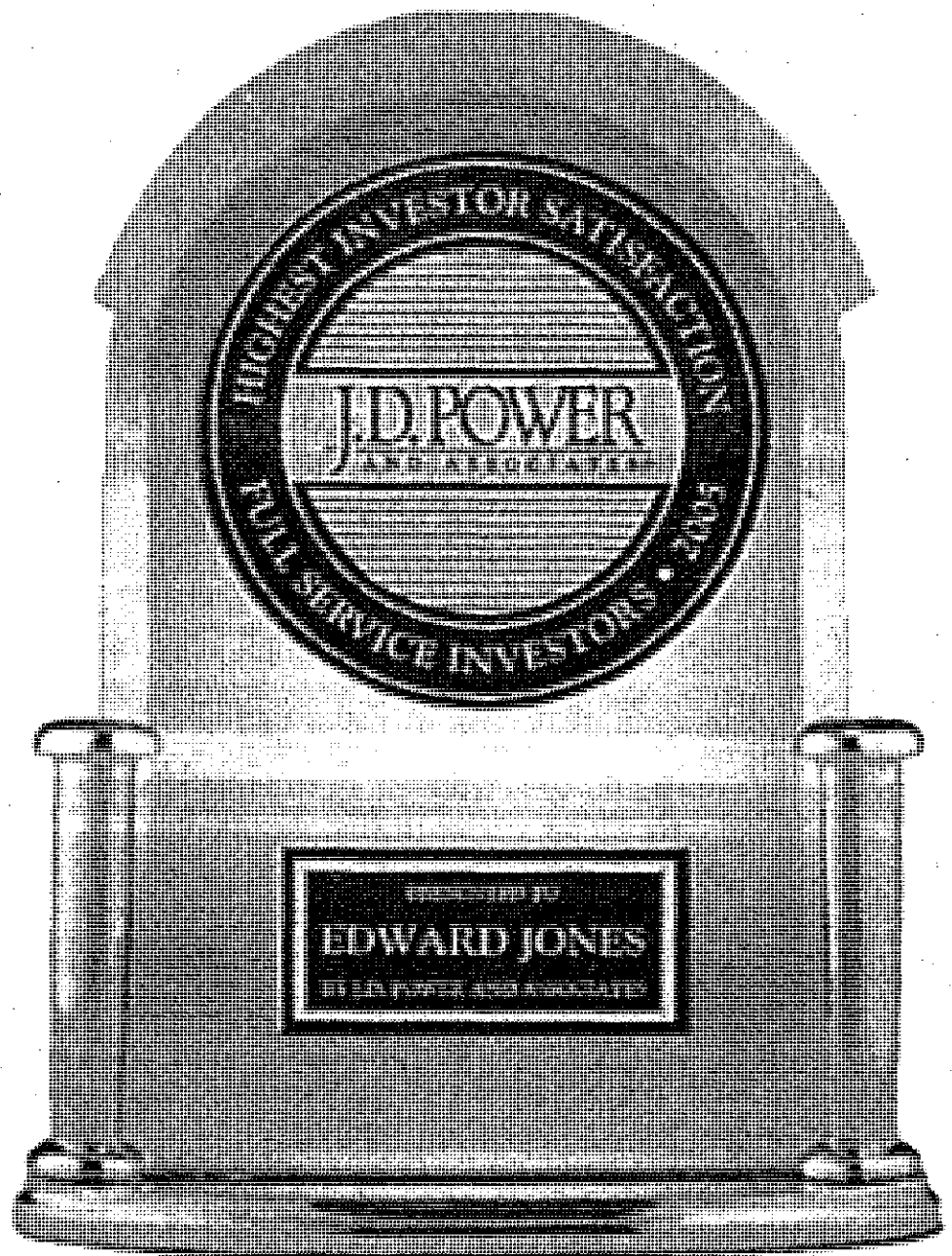
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CRIME WATCH

Tool theft

A witness watched a couple break into a truck and steal \$1,200 worth of tools early Tuesday outside a house on Grantland Street in Livonia. A woman reported being awakened by her husband getting ready for work about 3:30 a.m. and hearing a loud exhaust. She looked outside to see a young woman get out of a maroon Chevrolet Cavalier and try unsuccessfully to open the cap on a truck in the street. The car turned around and the driver, a man, got out and opened the cap with his hands, taking a number of objects. Then they both left in the car. The female was described as blond, with a ponytail, fair skin and wearing a halter top. The man was young, tanned, with short brown hair and a small, trimmed mustache.

Among the stolen tools were a power saw with blades, a dry-wall screw gun and a roto-zip tool.

Home break-in

A Canton woman called police after someone broke into her home on June 21.

According to police reports, she had gone out for a few hours, and had left her screen door open, something she's done in the past, she said.

When she returned at about noon to her home in the 47000 block of Warren, she noticed someone had disturbed her belongings in an upstairs bedroom.

She said several items were missing, including her wedding ring, coins from a glass that had been full of change, and a jewelry box with several gold necklaces and bracelets inside. She estimated that the culprit made off with about \$2,000 worth of her belongings.

Hail Mary?

A Garden City resident living in the 5700 block of Gilman told police that a gold rosary, valued at \$150, had been stolen from a vehicle.

A window had been left partially down, and a coat hanger was used to unlock the vehicle, police said.

Chase, arrest

Garden City Police arrested

Inkster man on Thursday on a charge of receiving and concealing a stolen vehicle.

An officer said he spotted a 1993 Chrysler New Yorker parked at a gas station, running, with its bright lights on. He ran a check of the license plate and found that the vehicle had been reported stolen in Westland by a Taylor man.

The driver pulled onto Cherry Hill and refused to stop for the officer, ignoring stop signs and driving 45-50 mph on residential streets in Inkster.

The New Yorker collided with another vehicle at Middlebelt and Hively, and the driver lost control during a turn onto Betty Lane, where he hit a fire hydrant. The man fled on foot, but was arrested nearby. The officer said the vehicle was running without keys, the ignition having been punched out.

Shoplifting

Garden City Police were called to Kmart at 29600 Ford on Wednesday after an employee reported that a man had shoplifted clothing at the store.

The employee told police he confronted the man outside the store and that the man left the store in a shopping cart.

When told he needed to return to the store, the employee said the man got in the vehicle, put it into reverse and attempted to back over the worker.

The suspect and a female passenger then drove off.

Road rage

Young people in a pair of vehicles were stopped by Redford police on Beech Daly Tuesday night after a reported road-rage incident. No one was hurt.

One woman, 17, of Westland, told police that two people in the other car had been throwing objects at her car as they drove in the area of Beech Daly and West Chicago, a Redford Township police report said.

She said the attack stemmed from an earlier confrontation at a Livonia pool hall, during which she had been called a "slut."

The victim said she was the ex-girlfriend of the driver of the other car, who was out that night with his new girlfriend.

The suspects were released, but the victim told police she wanted to press charges.

Bill would alter how parks millage money is spent

BY CAROL MARSHALL
STAFF WRITER

A state house committee will consider a bill that could help Wayne County suburbs spend more of their money closer to home. The bill, House Bill 5004, was introduced by Rep. Phil LaJoy, R-Canton, into the house clerk's office on June 23, and would legislate how some of the Wayne County Parks millage money is spent.



LaJoy

The .25-mill tax is up for vote on a special election ballot on Aug. 2. The millage, which raises some \$10.5 million annually, expires at the end of this year.

"County park millage funds should be fairly distributed among local municipalities," LaJoy said. "Residents vote for millages believing the extra money would positively impact their communities. That is not how it actually works."

How it does work is that some communities wind up paying, while receiving no direct benefit.

"Basically just about every community in Western Wayne County is a donor community," said Canton Township Supervisor Tom Yack. Canton's 85,000 residents' .25-mill added up to about \$825,000 in 2004. Since the millage was first approved in 1996, Canton has contributed nearly \$5.1 million, but has received \$600,000 for local projects.

Because only half the millage money is spent on the county parks' maintenance and administration, the other half is available for distribution in out-county communities.

The house bill would require half of the money raised by

county parks millages to be spent on projects in the community from which it was received. Using that formula, Canton would get back more than \$400,000. Livonia would get more than \$500,000 per year, and Westland would receive approximately \$250,000.

But that was not the intent of the tax when it was approved by Wayne County voters, noted Wayne County Commissioner John Sullivan, who represents Canton and several other communities.

"I am not opposed to a percentage going back to each community, but that was certainly not the intent of the millage as passed by the voters of Wayne County in the past," he said. "However, we must keep in mind that this is a county parks millage, not a local millage. Each community is free to go to the taxpayers and seek a local parks millage on their own which 100 percent of the funds could be used for their local parks."

He added that when the millage was last up for renewal, leaders in some communities that have no county parks were told they may receive some of the millage money for municipal park projects, as a means to entice the voters in those communities. Since then, local communities have come to see the tax money as an entitlement, he said.

But out-county residents feel frustrated because they don't understand how local projects are selected to receive county funds.

"I'm not really sure how the county decides which projects get funded and which ones don't," said Laura Cox, Wayne County Commissioner, 10th district. Cox represents most of Livonia, Plymouth and Northville and Northville Township. "The five communities I represent are frustrated. In my district, the voters sent

ESTIMATED COUNTY PARK MILLAGE REVENUE FOR 2005			
Community	SEV	Taxable Value	1/4 Mill
Canton Twp.	3,950,000,000	3,300,000,000	825,000
Garden City	880,000,000	625,000,000	150,000
Livonia	5,600,000,000	4,500,000,000	1,100,000
Plymouth	550,000,000	415,000,000	100,000
Plymouth Twp.	2,100,000,000	1,900,000,000	475,000
Redford Twp.	1,600,000,000	1,250,000,000	300,000
Westland	2,640,000,000	2,000,000,000	500,000

Funding received since 1996 through County Park Millage Revenue	Community	Project	Amount
	Canton	Performing Art Center	\$400,000
	Garden City	Pool	\$100,000
	Westland	Skate Park	\$200,000
	Detroit	8 Projects	\$8,639,000

WAYNE COUNTY			
All Parks	\$7,228,000	Lola Park	\$110,000
Hines Park	\$5,395,000	Crosswinds Marsh	\$75,000
Holiday Preserve	\$315,000	Fort Wayne	\$2,150,000
Elizabeth Park	\$3,060,000	Warren Valley Golf	\$500,000
		Total:	\$18,833,000

\$2.2 million down to the county in parks millage money and they feel they don't have any guarantee that they get any parks projects done.

SOURCE: Conference of Western Wayne

ELECTION TIMING

She added that her constituents are angry that the renewal ballot question coincides with Detroit's mayoral primary, while her communities have no other ballot issues, and voters will have to go to the polls to vote on this single issue.

While Hines Park, a Wayne County park runs through Cox's district, and is maintained by the county, Cox still feels that suburban communities don't have enough representation in deciding which projects receive millage money, and the legislation would take away any politicizing of the way the money is spent.

The bill was referred to the Local Government and Urban Policy Committee in Lansing. Republican representatives John Pastor (Livonia), Daniel Acciavatti (Chesterfield Township), Neal Nitz (Baroda), John Stewart (Plymouth), and John Garfield (Rochester Hills) also signed the bill.

LaJoy said he's not sure if the bill will become a partisan issue.

It has not been scheduled for committee hearing yet. But when it does get scheduled, the millage will be under

scrutiny, according to Yack. "There will be some questions raised about the expenditure of some of these dollars," Yack said.

The tax, when first passed in 1996, was intended to make improvements at Fort Wayne and Chandler Park in Detroit, and Elizabeth Park in Trenton. Since that time, a water park at Chandler Park was constructed, and between construction costs and an annual subsidies has cost \$19 million.

"They get 20,000 visitors a year. That boils down to a \$60 per person subsidy for that park," Yack said. "I think people would question that, and when you talk about this stuff in public, it's going to get people's ire up."

Ultimately, spending a portion of the recreation tax money could be good for garnering support for the millage.

The millage passed the first time it went to vote in 1996, even though only Detroit, Trenton and Hamtramck favored the millage. But in 2001, the tax was supported by suburban voters as well.

"But this time around, tax dollars are much more precious. Local elected officials are speaking out about this," Yack said. "I think there has to be some kind of formula to make distribution a little more fair."

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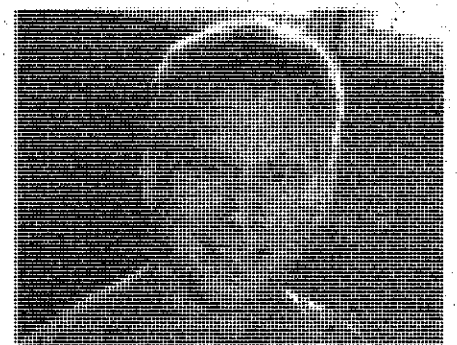
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Geologist shares love of Great Lakes with children

BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN
STAFF WRITER

Charles Ferguson Barker was looking at maps from the National Geophysical Data Center in Boulder, Colo., in early 2004 when the huge ridges of rock at the bottom of Lake Huron caught his eye.

As a youngster growing up in Bloomfield Hills, he'd spent many a weekend sailing the Great Lakes with his family, but never imagined the surfaces were anything but flat. If he as a geologist found that fact interesting imagine the expression on a child's face if they read about the cave stretching from Alpena to Amberley, Ontario under



Charles Ferguson Barker signs copies of his book at Michigan Made & More on Saturday, July 9.

Lake Huron. Barker knew he had to write a children's book.

On those long sailing trips to Mackinac Island he had passed the time by drawing freighters on the cardboard which backed his father's clean shirts. Before long he was sketching illustrations for *The Day The Great Lakes Drained Away*. Published by Mackinac Island Press, the book tells the story of Michiganders who could no longer boat, swim or fish in Lake Superior, Michigan, Erie, Huron and Ontario. After pipes drained the water away even mighty freighters sat helplessly on the bottom.

"I thought these were some pretty exciting things. Most of us think about the water and fish swimming around in there. That

it's muddy and deep, but it turns out there's some fantastic landscape. It's sort of this hidden world," said Barker, a 46-year old Plymouth resident who works as a geologist for Hands & Associates, an environmental consulting firm in Detroit by day and teaches geology at Wayne State University at night.

"A lot of the rock is limestone under Lake Huron. Imagine some of the features on Mackinac Island like Devil's Kitchen being underwater."

Before Barker ever began writing the book, he researched the Great Lakes for information about geologic features like the suspected meteor crater on the east end of Lake Ontario. Barker, however, wanted to make it more than a science book. After being rejected by one publisher he called Anne Lewis at Mackinac Island Press. She helped him fine tune the environmental aspect of the story.

Barker's wife, Peggy, gave feedback as well in addition to posing their beagle Duncan for illustrations. Gov. Jennifer Granholm wrote the forward about protecting these irreplaceable resources.

"It brought forth a great opportunity to talk about environmental issues. The book helps to never take the Great Lakes for granted," said Barker. "I remember sailing around the Great Lakes in the 1970s and being in Lake Erie and out of sight of land and going through gross soap suds and scum. We've



Charles Ferguson Barker visits North Bay near Presque Isle on Lake Huron. Barker illustrated the Old Presque Isle Lighthouse for his book.

cleaned up our act but it shows things can go wrong."

Since the book was released this spring Barker has been visiting schools around the state to spread his message as well as share his knowledge of the Great Lakes. On Saturday, July 9 at Michigan Made & More, 830 West Ann Arbor Trail in Plymouth, he'll sign copies of the book and answer questions from noon to 3 p.m. during Art in the Park. Call (734) 207-8794 for more information.

"It's interesting just to know what goes on, how the natural world functions. Only by understanding how the processes work can you protect the resources," said Barker. "Sometimes I use the analogy of medicine. You have to understand the systems before you can trouble shoot the disease. If you find out what affects the lake levels then you can try to figure out the best ways to prevent major problems. I don't know that we're in trou-

ble right now but we could be. It's important to understand consequences like putting pipes in to drain the lakes."

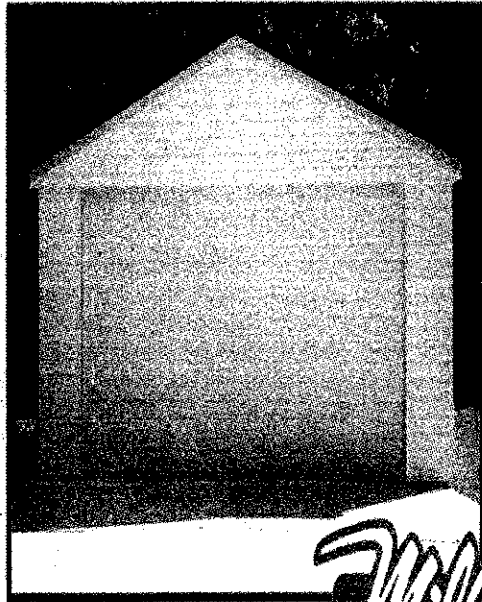
Barker first learned about geology by digging up the fields near the old farm house where he lived in Bloomfield Hills. Once school let out for summer, his interest in science increased with every fossil and cow bone he uncovered. But not until his days at Arizona State University did he reluctantly sign up for a geology class. After graduation his fondness for underwater landscapes grew as he worked on the research vessel SEA-MARK, mapping the seafloor offshore California.

"It sounds boring," said Barker, "but I had great instructors who made it sound fascinating. I hope the book helps kids expand their horizons of what the great lakes are all about in addition to the surface. Children like the neat fun facts at the back of the book. That's a cool thing even the adults would like. The more we learn about the Great Lakes the more we'll protect and appreciate them."

"Watching the boats or waves is very calming. It's hard to describe what it is that draws us to the lakes. Is it swimming or sailing? It's presence? Whatever it is you want to be near them."

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Two congressional votes weigh limits of freedom

Monday we mark the most important day in our civic calendar. It is the day we celebrate radicalism, rebellion and rabble rousing. It is the day we stand up for individual freedom in the face of distant tyranny. It is the day we celebrate the "unalienable" rights of all men.

The Declaration of Independence is a plea with a "decent respect to the opinions of mankind" and a litany of royal and parliamentary abuses that made it necessary to "dissolve the political bands" connecting the 13 colonies and Great Britain. But even today its language, however measured and exacting, is electric in its declarations of "equality" and the supremacy of individual liberty over undue government tyranny. At the same time, the document recognizes the basic need for government to "secure" human rights, among which are "Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness." But, as Thomas Jefferson's language so beautifully says, "governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed."

Recently, Congress has been wrestling with questions on the limits of personal freedom and government power. On June 15, the House of Representatives voted 238-187 to amend the Patriot Act to restrict investigators from using the anti-terrorism law to look at library records and bookstore sales slips. The Patriot Act is up for reconsideration this year and the section allowing access to such records has been widely criticized by civil liberties and library groups.

On June 22, the House voted 286-130 in favor of a constitutional amendment outlawing flag burning. Courts have ruled that flag burning is protected under the First Amendment to the Constitution, so an amendment specific to flag burning would be required to ban it. The amendment now goes to the Senate where it needs a two-thirds approval and then to the States where it must be approved by three-fourths of the states. Previous bills have never gotten past the Senate.

The flag burning amendment is pure political hogwash, meant to stir up swells of mock patriotism.

Flag burning is a ridiculous and counterproductive form of protest. The American Socialist leader Norman Thomas said it best when talking about protesters of the war in Vietnam, "A symbol? If they want an appropriate symbol they should be washing the flag, not burning it."

Radicals are better served by embracing the flag and its meaning than destroying it.

But a special amendment to undermine the First Amendment is an assault on the very flag it

seeks to protect. Because the flag is itself a symbol of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

U.S. Rep. Thaddeus McCotter, R-Livonia, said Tuesday he supported the amendment because he makes a distinction between constructive dissent and destructive dissent. He said he supports freedom of expression but not destruction of the flag.

U.S. Rep. Candice Miller, R-Harrison Township, is quoted in an AP story as saying, "Who can forget Sept. 11, 2001, when firefighters in New York pulled the flag out of the rubble of the World Trade Center and hoisted it in defiance of terror." This was her excuse for voting for the amendment. But it is an equally good excuse for voting against it. The freedom to express discontent with government is what we value, what we celebrate Monday, even when it is expressed in the burning of the flag. (We are not talking about vandalism of a public building or burning someone else's flag, separate laws cover that. Here the flag is understood in its symbolic sense.) As Miller's Republican colleague Peter Hoekstra, R-Holland, says in the same AP story, the flag is "an enduring symbol of democracy, justice and sacrifice" but "to outlaw a form of political expression is to oppose the very individual liberty and personal freedom the American flag represents."

In the vote on the amendment to the Patriot Act, representatives were asked to balance real concerns about terrorism with equally real concerns about civil liberties. The section of the act allowing government access to library and bookstore records has been a hot button since it was originally passed. The Justice Department has said it hasn't used the provision but wants to keep it as a tool to investigate terrorism. Advocates for the amendment argue that the law already provides a long respected process for obtaining such information without giving the government an open door to pry into our reading habits.

McCotter said he continues to have concerns about the provision in the Patriot Act but voted against the amendment sponsored by Rep. Bernie Sanders, I-Vermont, because it was part of an appropriations bill. He said he thinks the vote opposing the provision would have been even greater if it were not part of an appropriations bill but instead part of the process of reconsidering the Patriot Act, which is up for renewal this session.

Our freedom is a precious commodity, one that always needs vigilant protection. This is the perfect weekend to reflect on just what we mean when we honor the Declaration of Independence.

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

Naming of state Poet Laureate would carry cultural benefits

How much learning do you owe to rhyme and poetry? Michigan's children are the foremost beneficiaries of creating a permanent post of State Poet Laureate. Children learn much from poetry. Remember your rules?

■ I before E, except after C, or when sounded as "A" as in "neighbor" or "weigh."
■ "When two vowels go out walking, the first one does the talking."

Poems also stir the imagination to think in fresh, new ways. Einstein maintained that poetic imagination is the true key to brilliance; if imagination is not cultivated, intelligence alone is of little creative power.

Depriving children of poetry, we may rob our country of future invention! Cultivating poetry, who can tell what discoveries we could see!

The Poetry Society of Michigan sponsored a children's poetry contest in 2005. Winning poems automatically qualified for the national Manningham Student Trust Competition. From the village of Negaunee, in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, over 100 student poems were entered, as happened with students in the Grand Rapids area. Here, their own teachers inspired creativity. It gushed forth from these children, as from artesian springs.

Imagine children all over the state prompted to turn thoughts into carefully crafted poetic forms!

Tapping their imagination, their language learning would be lifted from mundane to purposeful, even inspired.

Children write amazing poems. Their poetry sparkles with fresh simplicity only young minds can tap. Children love poetry because they do not need to be born with artist's eyes, be natural musicians, or throw 98-mile-an-hour fastballs to participate in the art form.

All they must do is be trained in writing fundamentals like grammar, spelling, and vocabulary. An art form that promotes the basics of reading and writing is a win-win situation for Michigan education. Children will look upon a visit from the State Poet Laureate as an inspiring, memorable event in their young lives.

Edgar Guest was appointed Michigan's State Poet Laureate in 1952, honoring his inspired contributions to a Detroit daily. His poems were often notable comments on life and living. They enriched the lives of many.

Depriving children of poetry, we may rob our country of future invention!

Cultivating poetry, who can tell what discoveries we could see!

His life and work were featured last year in an article in *Michigan History*. State Senate Bill 181 would restore that position to our state and give Guest's proud name renewed and well-deserved respect.

In discussions of SB 181, a recurring question surfaced: "Why do we need a State Poet Laureate?" Aside from Michigan being one of just 11 states without such an appointment, the cultural benefits can be easily measured if one takes time to look about both our pleasant peninsulas.

In May 2004, for example, Ludington hosted a weekend of poetry and workshops. Twenty-one remarkable Michigan poets gathered on Lake Michigan's shores for the Ludington Poetry Festival, joined by many hundreds of appreciative devotees. Not only did Ludington arise as a cultural beacon within our state, its hotels and restaurants greatly benefited from the commerce. A State Poet Laureate's attendance would have signaled official state recognition, adding even more luster to this event.

Consider the Wayne County Council for Arts, History, & Humanities Contest. A confluence of poetry, art and music converges in metro Detroit this fall to celebrate a unique event in which creative participants of every age and race meld their creative energy to write poems and music inspired by the works of visual artists. A Poet Laureate would represent our state in this multifaceted event, bringing even greater distinction to this deserving competition.

These examples are the mere tip of the poetic Michigan mitten. Similar festivals and schools across the state will benefit from the appointment of a Poet Laureate. So when people ask, "Why bother with a poet laureate?" tell of Edgar Guest, Ludington, Negaunee, kids ...

SB 181 is apolitical legislation that can provide ongoing motivation to poets and poetry fans in Michigan. Let's work to make it a reality. We will all benefit. Why not craft a poem for your senator or representative and elicit a vote for this proposal?

Mono V. D'Angelo is president of the Poetry Society of Michigan, and a resident of Grosse Ile. **State Sen. Bruce Patterson** represents the Seventh District, western and southern Wayne County.



Mono V. D'Angelo



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