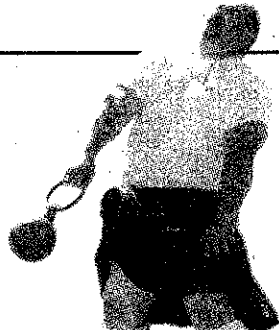


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Scottish strength

Highland games a celebration of heritage

FILTER, INSERTED SECTION



Take the oven outdoors

TASTE, PAGE, B7

Style with a smile - AT HOME, SECTION B

THURSDAY
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Denise Mills (second from left), the marketing manager for Westland Shopping Center, watches Marshall Fields employees Mary Alice, Jan Fry and Marie Evans cut the 40th anniversary cake. The three women were employees of J.L. Hudson's when it opened at the mall 40 years ago.

Happy anniversary!

What a difference 40 years make for 3 longtime employees

BY DARRELL CLEM
STAFF WRITER

There they sat, three proud women. They waited patiently to cut the cake to celebrate Westland Shopping Center's 40th anniversary.

Marie Evans, Janice Fry and Mary Alice Simpson owned this moment. It was theirs, for good reason.

"They've worked in the same store - J.L. Hudson, now Marshall Field's - since the mall opened in July 1965.

"It's still fun after 40 years," Simpson, 61, said last Friday during an anniversary party in the mall's East Court. "It feels good when you can help a customer find what they need and make them feel good about what they bought."

Simpson, a Westland resident who works as a sales person,

recalled what the mall area looked like when she started her job at age 21.

"There was nothing much out here," she said. "It was all farmland."

Fry, a 61-year-old Plymouth resident, defended Westland mall against newer, bigger shopping centers like Novi's Twelve Oaks. She works in food preparation for a cafe inside Marshall Field's.

"People still call us the country store," she said. "We're down to earth here. People love coming to this mall."

Evans, a 59-year-old Canton resident, helped open the Westland Hudson store after working for six months at the company's Northland location.

"I've been here ever since," she said. She now works in the guest services department.

Simpson, Fry and Evans have



Wayne County Commissioner Kay Beard, D-12th District, presents a county resolution to the Westland Mall during the festivities.

PLEASE SEE MALL, A5

Residents defend city trash hauler

BY DARRELL CLEM
STAFF WRITER

Some Westland residents defended the city's trash hauler this week as local officials prepare for talks that potentially could usher in a new company.

City volunteer Barb Polich described Painter & Ruthenberg Inc. as a family-owned company that has donated to local charities and promoted recycling efforts.

"If you get a bigger company to come in, they're not going to do that," she said.

Mayoral candidate Elenor Swistak lauded P&R - also known as Midwest Sanitation - for the trash service in her neighborhood.

"I have had excellent service from this company," she said.

Their comments, made Monday during a Westland City Council meeting, came after Mayor Sandra Cicirelli's office was inundated earlier this summer with complaints about tardy trash pickup.

The complaints have threatened P&R's contract with the city.

P&R and several other trash haulers are expected to make a sales pitch to city officials during talks scheduled for 5:30 p.m. Monday, Aug. 22, at City Hall.

City leaders have invited the companies to give separate presentations on trash services they would provide for Westland - and what the cost would be.

In the meantime, city officials are expected to

PLEASE SEE TRASH, A5

Strip mall builder, council differ over brick work

BY DARRELL CLEM
STAFF WRITER

A shopping center proposal for the near-southwest corner of Wayne and Ford roads may have come crashing down under the weight - or cost - of brick.

City leaders insisted Monday that builders use bricks on all sides of two strip malls proposed for a site where a dilapidated retail building has been demolished.

Westland City Council members refused Monday to allow Romulus-based D&G Building Co. to use concrete block that only has the appearance of brick.

D&G Vice President John Romano said builders already expect to invest about \$6 million on the site. He said an all-brick plan would cost another \$100,000, potentially making the proposal cost-prohibitive.

"If you can't make money, there's no point in doing it," he told city leaders.

Officials all along had expected an all-brick proposal, and they didn't budge Monday when asked to reconsider their demands.

Romano indicated that he would have to discuss the latest developments with other D&G representatives.

On Tuesday, D&G officials said the proposal hadn't yet been scrapped and that they hoped to reach a compromise with city officials.

PLEASE SEE BRICK, A5

Ex-restaurant manager to repay missing money

BY DARRELL CLEM
STAFF WRITER

The former manager of a Westland steakhouse has agreed to repay \$1,400 that he had claimed was taken during a robbery.

Clarence Moon, a 40-year-old Detroit father of two, has agreed to repay Lone Star Steakhouse on Ford Road even though he was never charged with taking the money.

The only official charge ever lodged against Moon was filing a false police report. He had told Westland police that two intruders robbed the restaurant at gunpoint after they followed him into the back entrance about 8:15 a.m. March 1.

Investigators became suspicious after Moon told them that the bandits fled through the front door, even though police found no footprints in freshly fallen snow outside.

Moon will face sentencing Aug. 17 by Wayne County Circuit Judge Cynthia Gray Hathaway after pleading no contest in July to a reduced charge of attempting to file a false police report.

Assistant Wayne County Prosecutor Michele LaFlora confirmed the latest developments Tuesday. She said Moon agreed to plead to the reduced charge and pay \$1,400 amid assurances that he will receive probation rather than jail time.

"He has no prior (criminal) record," she said.

Moon could have faced up to four years in prison and a \$2,000 fine, if he had been found guilty as charged.

Moon has been fired from his job. Police Sgt. David Heater, who investigated the case, has described Moon as "a respected man" by Lone Star employees who worked for him.

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Coming Sunday on the PINK Page

The hottest new Read It! in this weeks PINK Picks!

MHS gets grant for Berman Center

The Michigan Humane Society is on the receiving end of \$650,000 challenge grant from The Kresge Foundation for its new Berman Center for Animal Care in Westland.

MHS has raised \$4.2 million of the necessary \$6.5 million in funding for the project, which includes the renovation and expansion of the organization's original Westland shelter and veterinary medical center.

In order to secure the \$650,000 Kresge challenge grant, MHS must raise the \$1.65 million balance remaining in the campaign by April 1, 2006, from new private gifts and grants.

We are truly grateful that The Kresge Foundation has approved this request and we are confident that we have the initiatives and strategies in place to successfully meet this challenge," said Cal Morgan, executive director of the Michigan Humane Society.

The Berman Center for Animal Care incorporates many features for the safety, comfort and well-being of the animals, public and its employees. Key facility improvements include new main entrance off Newburgh Road; new front lobby; tripled sheltering capacity; design, equipment and building materials to reduce disease transmission and reduce noise; additional "get acquainted" rooms; outdoor, fenced-in

exercise area for sheltered animals; on-site classroom area, and a 60 percent expansion of the veterinary medical center to include additional exam rooms and surgery suites.

"We are delighted that The Kresge Foundation trustees approved our grant request," said Marta Diffen, director of capital campaigns for the Michigan Humane Society. "This challenge means we have hard work ahead of us, but it also means donor participation and contributions mean more than ever now."

The Berman Center for Animal Care is a unique facility for southeast Michigan and it is the beginning of a new era in animal welfare in this area."

The Michigan Humane Society (MHS), headquartered in Southfield, is a private, nonprofit organization which cares for more than 100,000 animals each year at its three metro Detroit adoption and veterinary medical centers in Detroit, Rochester Hills and Westland.

Established in 1877, the MHS is one of the oldest and largest animal welfare organizations in the country.

For more information about the project or how to donate, call Marta Diffen at (248) 799-7400, Ext. 105, or visit the Michigan Humane Society Web site at www.michiganhumane.org.



Karla Hutchings walks her dogs during Saturday's Paws With a Cause event in Kellogg Park in Plymouth.

Peace groups remember Nagasaki on 60th anniversary of atomic bomb

BY DOUG JOHNSON
STAFF WRITER



Gard

will be given inside the church at 7:30 p.m.

"Are nuclear weapons moral or militarily necessary?" asks Colleen Mills of Livonia, Citizens for Peace organizer.

"We are inviting the public to hear an intelligent discussion of how we can reduce and eventually eliminate the threat of nuclear holocaust," Mills added.

"Everyone should hear the talk to raise their awareness of the nuclear threat. Join us to make the world more peaceful," she said.

Mills, a retired Detroit elementary school teacher, said she has invited many elected officials to the meeting and also has sent invitations to the memberships to most of the churches in Livonia.

Citizens for Peace has several goals but their major focus in the creation of a cabinet level Department of Peace, an idea fostered by Ohio Democratic congressman and presidential candidate Dennis Kucinich.

The bombing of Nagasaki killed 39,000 people instantly, destroyed the city and left thousands of others to die later from painful illnesses.

An article in the current National Geographic on Nagasaki estimates Russia currently has 16,000 nuclear weapons and the United States more than 10,000.

Three peace activist groups will sponsor a special talk Tuesday, Aug. 9, at Unity Church of Livonia marking the 60th anniversary of the atomic bomb being dropped on Nagasaki, Japan.

The three groups include Peace Action of Michigan, Swords Into Plowshares Peace Center and Gallery in Detroit, and the Livonia-based Citizens for Peace.

The Citizens for Peace group is loosely organized around Michigan's 11th Congressional District and includes members from Livonia, Ridgeland, Garden City, Westland, Plymouth and Canton.

The speaker at the event will be retired Lt. Gen. Robert Gard, a West Point grad who has served in Germany, Vietnam, Korea and with the Department of Defense.

"Do Nuclear Weapons Protect Our Nation's Security?" will be the topic of his talk. Gard, whose extensive military background is bolstered by master's and doctorate degrees from Harvard, is a senior military fellow at the Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation in Washington, D.C.

The event is set for 6:30 p.m. at Unity Church, 28550 Five Mile Road. Starting at 6:30 p.m. there will be a display of peace signs along Middlebelt Road near the church; the speech

Walk raises cash for canines

BY BRAD KADRICH
STAFF WRITER

With Plymouth's sidewalk sales going on at the same time, it was tough for organizers of the Paws With a Cause "Laps for Learning" walk to be sure exactly how much participation they were getting.

But it was enough for officials to deem the fifth annual event a success. Some 110 walkers, more than 70 dogs and 20 volunteers helped make sure of that.

"It was still a successful event, because no matter how much money we raised, we're getting the word out about the organization," said Sue Brooks, development representative in the Paws With a Cause Southeast Michigan Regional Office in Auburn Hills. "There were a lot of people who got to see the dogs and learn some things, and that's very important."

Paws With a Cause was founded in Michigan in 1979. The group trains assist-

tance dogs to help people with disabilities try to live independent lives. The dogs, according to Brooks mostly labradors, golden retrievers or a mix, function as service dogs, hearing dogs, seizure response dogs and "combo" dogs for people with multiple disabilities.

Saturday's event featured demonstration of the dogs' abilities, along with activities such as "bobbing for tennis balls," an agility obstacle course, a dog/human relay race and a "Smooch the Pooch" booth.

She said the event raised some \$7,200, down from last year's \$10,000 in donations. She said the reasons for the drop are unclear, but could have something to do with the location or the weather.

"You never know in the summertime, but if you go too early in the spring, you get horrible weather, too far at the end and kids are back in school," she said. "So you take your best shot and go with it."

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Camp keeps girls moving during summer

BY STEPHANIE ANGELYN CASOLA
STAFF WRITER

The sounds of sneakers speeding across a gymnasium, and basketballs dribbling across the court could be heard outside the doors of Madonna University in Livonia.

If it's summer time, it's time for the Court of America All Star Basketball Camp.

In its 10th year, Madonna hosted the active summer camp right on campus last week. Girls from grades 4-7, joined in to learn skills from dribbling to ball handling and more.

"There is no wasted time," said Gary Sowpel of Canton. "That's a compliment to the coach."

Sowpel stopped into the gymnasium to catch his granddaughter, Michelle Bishop, in action. Michelle lives in Westland. This is her second year in the camp, he said.

Michelle participated in back-to-back summer camps this year, having just completed a golf camp in Canada.

"Instead of sitting in front of



The Huskies come together before the start of their scrimmage as participants in the Madonna University All-Star Basketball Camp last week in Livonia.

the TV, or computer, what she could do is read or play golf," Sowpel said.

He said he comes to watch

his granddaughter when he can.

"No one is just sitting or hiding," said Sowpel of all the chil-

dren participating. "Some don't have the same skill as others."

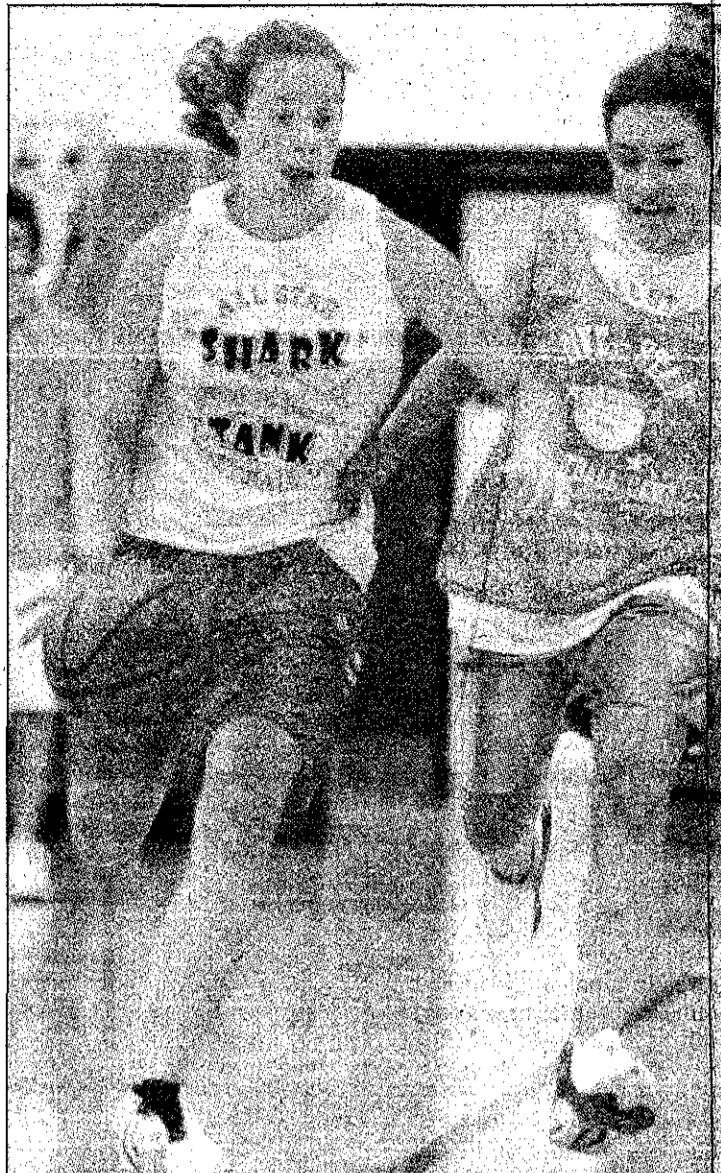
That's reason enough to join, according to Marylou Jansen, head coach of women's basketball at Madonna. She runs the camp, with the assistance of college-level players to help teach the young players. "They look up to us," said Claire Aubrey, a Bloomfield Hills resident and camp coach. "We're good role models."

The week-long camp runs from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the gymnasium and outside at Madonna. Four separate sessions are planned throughout the year. Currently 72 campers are aiming for the basket and honing their skills.

Maureen McCormick, a Plymouth resident and Madonna student, said she can easily spot the campers that are most apt to become basketball players in the future.

They pay closer attention when she's coaching and they tend to ask more questions, she said.

About two-thirds of the group are returning campers from last summer, said Jansen.



PHOTOS BY TOM HOFFMEYER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Mary Fitzgerald, 13, dribbles down the court against 14-year-old Marisa Batters during the Madonna University All-Star Basketball Camp Thursday afternoon. This week, the camp is hosting younger hoop players.

Her coaches are stressing the fundamentals of the game. By the end of the week, they'll be divided into teams and playing against one another.

"I want them to have a good experience," said Jansen, a self-described basketball junkie.

By Monday afternoon, Mary L'Huillier of Woodhaven and Brittany Washington of Southfield, were having a good time.

Brittany said she particularly liked the three-on-three games they played. This week marked her first experience at basketball camp.

"I'm really excited," said Brittany, age 8. "I'm beating all the kids even though I'm the youngest person here."

She said she's making a lot of friends as well.

"It's real fun," added Elena Tantiello of Dearborn.

Asia McArdell of Canton said she learned about the camp from her friend and fellow-camper Grace Stover. "It's brilliant," Asia said.

The funds raised during camp go back into the Madonna Women's Basketball program and help pay for trip to tournaments across the country. Last year, the team traveled to San Francisco to compete. They say they couldn't afford to do so without the money raised from these summer camps.

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TRASH

FROM PAGE A1
extend P&R's contract through December, giving them time to compare companies before approving a longer-term agreement.
On Monday, the council postponed a vote on the extension. Councilman William Wild said P&R needed more time to fine-tune the short-term contract.
Unlike some communities, like neighboring Garden City, Westland has not imposed fines on P&R for late trash pickup.
However, Cicirelli reiterated

earlier statements that P&R will be expected to pay the tab for city workers that she sent out to pick up compost that P&R failed to collect earlier this summer.
P&R has hauled Westland's garbage since Westland became a city in 1966. Ruthenberg has blamed some of his problems on garbage trucks that broke down amid financial struggles.
Polich, defending P&R during Monday's meeting, said the company — without any guarantees of a long-term contract — has had difficulty getting bank loans to make improvements.

Bones found in yard not human remains

Bones found
A Westland woman who moved to a new home in the 36100 area of Cherry Hill told police that she found bones in her back yard while working in it July 27.
Police have since said that the bones are not human bones.
Stranger in the park
A Belleville woman told police that a suspicious man was taking pictures of children in Central City Park about 1:45 p.m. Saturday.

CRIME WATCH
The woman was at the park with her family when she noticed the man taking pictures.
She told police she asked him why he was doing it, and she said he responded "for my own enjoyment."
She said she went to the Bailey Recreation Center to alert police, but the suspect got into a vehicle and left.
Police indicated later that the man didn't appear to be

violating any laws by taking pictures in a public park, but the woman wanted to alert people to the man's actions.
Tools stolen
A resident in the 1800 area of Parent Street told police that someone cut a chain and broke into his tool shed after 4 a.m. Sunday, stealing \$3,000 in tools.
The man also said the intruder spray-painted vulgarities on the front of his house.
The victim told police that someone had tried just two

days earlier to break into a neighbor's garage.
Bad money
A Westland woman told police that someone passed a counterfeit \$20 bill to her husband Sunday, possibly at a drugstore in Washtenaw County.
She reported the incident to police in hopes of alerting others that counterfeit bills are being passed.
-By Darrell Clem

BRICK

FROM PAGE A1
Romano has said the material that D&G hopes to use is the same as that's used on a shopping center at Canton Center and Michigan Avenue, in Canton Township.
Already, much of the former commercial center near Ford and Wayne has been demolished, including a building that once housed such businesses as a carpet store and a video store.
Big Lots remains on the site, but has moved into what was once Kroger. It would anchor two new strip malls, one of them 14,326 square feet and the other 11,808 square feet.
Romano indicated Monday that the two centers would accommodate 18 businesses, although no tenants have confirmed that they will locate there.
"There have been discussions, but nothing has been finalized," he said.
City leaders expect that a new commercial center, with such a prime location, would likely draw tenants.
Still, Councilman Richard LeBlanc said the lack of confirmed tenants "is a legitimate concern" that some people have.
Builders and city officials agreed this week that they hope to reach a compromise to rescue the redevelopment plan. It wasn't clear when D&G would return to council, possibly with a new plan.
Some officials have suggested that D&G may be able to approach the city's Downtown Development Authority to help with some costs.
The DDA is a board committed to spurring redevelopment along Ford Road and part of Wayne Road, although there are restrictions on how the money can be used.

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MALL

FROM PAGE A1
two co-workers - Candy Martin and Jenny Randazzo - who also started their jobs when Hudson opened four decades ago, but they couldn't be at Friday's celebration.
"We've made a lot of good friends working here," Fry said.
Westland Shopping Center opened its doors on July 29, 1965, as one of the nation's first enclosed malls. When Westland became a city the following year, it was named after the mall.
Denise Mills, the mall's marketing manager, led last Friday's celebration, accepting proclamations from local, county and state government officials.
The mall has survived while some of its one-time competitors, such as Livonia's Wonderland, have since closed up.
Although Westland Shopping Center has had some turnover of stores - The Gap recently left - it still has continued to attract shoppers.
"Everyone in this area loves this mall," Simpson said.
During Friday's party, Laurie McGuirk of Romulus won a drawing for a free, one-year vehicle lease from Gordon Chevrolet.
Shoppers like 70-year-old Maria Marino of Redford stopped by Friday to join the party.
"I used to take a bus from Telegraph and Joy to shop here," she recalled. "Then they stopped the buses at that time, so I learned to drive.
"Hudson's was my favorite store," Marino said. "I still like to shop here after all these years."

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OUR VIEWS

Rally, birthday showcase city

Last week, two events took place in Westland that show what a lively, viable community it is.

On Friday, Westland Shopping Center celebrated its 40th anniversary. Opened in 1965, the mall has become a destination and the heart of the city's major shopping district.

Its ability to prosper where other malls have floundered has led to major development along the roads that encompass it. And its ability to attract shoppers from far and near is reflective in the number of restaurants that have opened around the mall.

And last Tuesday night's Westland Chamber of Commerce Restaurant Rally was, in a way, a celebration of that development.

The rally was an evening filled with good food and fellowship, where waiting in line was a pleasure and eating in a hurry acceptable.

This was the second year the chamber has conducted the rally, introducing diners to a few of the dining establishments that call Westland home. From national chains to family-owned, the restaurants set out samples of their signature foods to entice their guests into coming back for more.

Westland isn't the first to offer these kind of casual food fests, but what is amazing is how quickly it has caught on with people living in and around the city. Even before the second installment was done, people were signing up for next year.

The rally may be a fund-raiser for the chamber, but we have to admit that it's one heck of a way of showcasing the city to residents and non-residents alike.

We congratulate the chamber for a job well done on the rally and thank the restaurants which participated. What they did not only benefitted their businesses, but also the city.

And we offer a chorus of Happy Birthday for Westland Shopping Center and offer a birthday pinch to keep on growing. The city may lack an old-fashioned style downtown, but that mall is the next best thing, serving as the anchor of a thriving retail district.

Last week was truly a wonderful week in Westland.

Jobs shouldn't get charter protection

A disturbing trend is becoming increasingly common across Michigan as towns look at creative ways to trim their budgets. Fearing layoffs, police and firefighters in several communities have gone directly to the voters to amend their town charters to specify minimum staffing levels.

It's happened in Dearborn, Royal Oak and Pontiac. And while the results haven't been disastrous — yet — there are ominous implications for the future that could cripple the communities.

Dearborn, for example, was hit doubly hard, with a pair of charter amendments passed in 2001 and 2004 that requires the city to have 1.24 firefighters and 2.1 police officers for each 1,000 residents.

As a result, the city has to add 21 officers at a cost of \$1.5 million a year.

Royal Oak, a city grappling with a \$5.5 million budget deficit, has been forced to hire six new firefighters at an approximate cost of \$50,000 each, because of a voter-approved charter amendment.

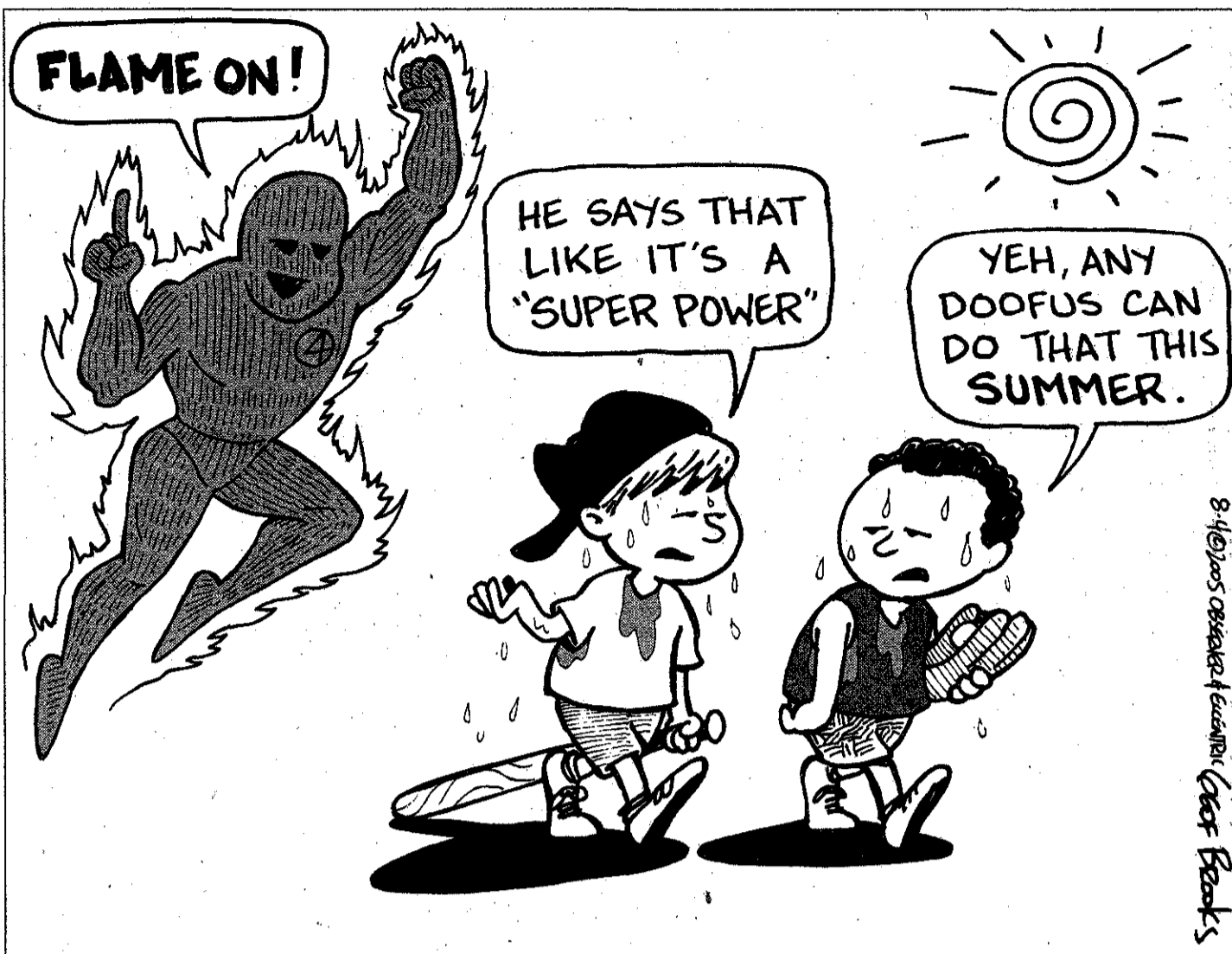
There are several things wrong with mandating staffing levels. It forces towns to artificially maintain a staff it may not be able to afford or even need. Just what is the right number of police officers or firefighters a town should have? Basing it on population alone ignores such other factors as physical size of a community, or even predominant building material. A fire at a brick house on a large lot is less of a threat than a fire at a wood house in a densely packed city block.

It's also worth noting that staffing levels don't mandate the services those firefighters offer. Livonia voters, for instance, were pushed to set a minimum staffing level in 1984, while facing the threat of moving some firefighting positions to volunteer. Since then, Livonia has added advanced life support transport, hazardous materials protection and other services that a lot of towns don't offer.

Public safety is an emotional issue, but it needs to be put in perspective. Towns saddled by these restrictions are faced with cutting some departments while forced to expand others. It simply isn't fair.

Amending city charters is not a trifling matter. Charters are special documents that specify how a town is organized and operated. They are local constitutions and should not be manipulated into self-serving job security guarantees by a handful of municipal employees.

Communities facing these amendments must mount major communications programs to inform the public of the real threat posed by such dangerous moves.



LETTERS

Appointee should reconsider

Just when things began to settle down in our city, due to the efforts of many people including the accomplishments of our mayor, Sandra Cicirelli, our city was again thrown into somewhat of a turmoil by the recent appointment to the DDA board.

Nobody then or now denies the past accomplishments of the new appointee. However, many of us also do not deny the fact that the new appointee to the DDA board made a mistake that does not allow her to sit on this board. She will not make an excellent addition to this board.

All of us go about our daily tasks according to a set of values. With all of our weaknesses and foibles, some of us fall really hard. As a result, some of our mistakes automatically deny us certain rights. This is one of those instances. The new appointee to the DDA board chose to abuse the trust of the people. By violating our trust, she lost the privilege of serving in certain capacities. Most of us know that there are limitations set on people who seek certain positions after they committed certain improprieties.

We were surprised that Mayor Cicirelli was not advised against this appointment by her supporters. It would seem that the five council members who always vote along with the mayor on all significant issues did not really stop and say, this is not right.

However, we were not surprised by the standard 5-2 vote which continues to plague our city. Of the four incumbents running for City Council this fall, only Cheryl Gruenstadt in our opinion, is independent. We have watched for too long that of the seven-member city council, the majority of important issues go down, 5-2. Hopefully the voters will not forget this when it will be time to elect new council members in November.

Too frequently, candidates say, I'm independent, only to get the support of the voters. But watch very carefully for independent thinkers when voting on key issues.

No, we're not suggesting that the council should fight the administration. However, there are a good number of times where voting on significant issues went and continue to go along "party lines." No one is so correct all of the time who would deserve to get unquestioning approval. This is dangerous for any entity.

Going back to the new appointee to the DDA of Westland, she should reconsider and not accept this appointment based on her final act in the position as a director. She violated the public trust and for that there is a very high price to pay. This last act far overshadows all of her previous achievements.

James and Mary Murphy
Westland

Conservatism's effect

It was enjoyable to discuss political matters with friends, neighbors, work

associates, and customers. It was a learning experience, particularly when discussions were somewhat different from your own. A discussion of facts surrounding an issue would help to widen your view of the world. Light hearted banter of political sides and then the discussion would evolve into a movie someone saw or the sports scores.

Today that has changed. The rise of conservatism with Newt Gingrich and the "in your face" diatribes were a major tool of the Republican Party to silence any dissent and have all but eliminated political discourse. The conversion of nearly all talk radio stations in the country to a conservative propaganda mouthpiece and the rise of the forerunning Republican propaganda machine, the Fox network, have left very bitter, spiteful, unknowing Republican Bush supporters.

A typical political conversation today is usually a conservative trying to initiate a discussion of what a non-Republican had done. Any mention of a position different from a conservative, or even a non-Republican supporting a Republican cause, results in an automatic rise in blood pressure and clenching of the jaw, a Pavlov response.

And they usually are not even aware of the rage they possess when talking about an opposing position. The tension can be clearly felt. It has been frightful in unsolicited conversations with conservatives recently.

There was a time when Republicans were skeptical of every politician, including Republicans. No one was guaranteed approval and acceptance. And Republicans were particularly critical of their own party members, insuring the integrity of their party. It was a requirement of a minority party, to make sure their party was united in integrity, perhaps not beliefs.

It was assuring, when a Republican politician met with general approval. There was a feeling they could be trusted. This trust came from inquisitions and questioning and facing the public, something not seen today.

Today's Republicans are much different. The leadership hides in "town hall meetings" which are staged to support the leadership and to hide from the public. The leadership does not face the public, but demonstrates their weakness by hiding in these "town hall meetings" where only the faithful come to praise the leadership. Only those swearing allegiance are permitted.

The followers are not skeptical of the party appointed. They follow the party direction, without question, no matter how the party leadership violates their beliefs. There have been a few governing officials with such blinded party support in history, and they all have turned out quite catastrophic.

It would be great to have Republicans in a minority and have real principles guiding their party. It was refreshing to vote Republicans in those days when they weren't swine at the feeding trough and they were as critical of their own

party instead of running in fear of the party leadership.

Allan Biber
Westland

No fun for animals

I thank the Westland Observer for its July 31 article, "League's circus attracts crowds and protesters." Circuses are no fun for the animals. It just seems to make common sense that wild animals should be in the wild.

Elephants, for example, typically roam about 30 miles per day in large social herds. They have their natural freedoms. They are taken from the wild and ripped from their families, who they have deep bonds with, just to be cooped up and travel across the country.

Big animals like elephants are trained by pain. They are hit with objects such as bullhooks, which is nothing more than a long poll with a sharp hook on the end. Elephants skins are so sensitive, they can feel an insect bite. Imagine how being hit with a sharp hook with forceful swings feels for the elephants. They cry real tears.

I hope the city of Westland passes an ordinance banning circus acts that use exotic animals in the city limits forever.

William McMullin
Clio

Adult stem cells hold promise

Philip Power's column on Michigan not supporting stem cell research is misleading and does not present the truth. If you had done some research, you will find that the stem cells that show promise for cures are adult stem cells, which do not entail killing a human being to obtain. I oppose embryonic stem cell research as do a lot of people in Livonia and the rest of America as this is the destroying of a human being.

So next time you write an article on stem cell research, please mention all the facts. The truth of the matter is that adult stem cell research shows the most promise and is the only one that is morally and ethically permissible.

Jeff Schubert
Livonia

SHARE YOUR OPINIONS

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

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QUOTABLE

"Some 20-25 percent of the 500,000 signatures were done in African-American communities. You've got to know that there are few blacks who will sign an anti-affirmative action petition."

— Lyn Bankes, a member of the Board of State Canvassers, about a controversial bid for a statewide ballot proposal to ban the use of race and gender in government hiring or public university admissions

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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.

Lack of public mass transit remains area's albatross

Last month was a real roller coaster ride for Detroit and southeast Michigan. For once, we enjoyed favorable press from writers in town for All-Star Week. Visitors were impressed by the friendly welcome, beautiful Comerica Park and a spruced up downtown. We rolled up our sleeves as a region, and delivered the goods as best we could.

But a guest mentioned that his visit would have been considerably better if shuttle transit from the airport to downtown and back had been available. Detroit's Achilles heel again — no mass rapid transit system.



Alan C. Helmkamp

The bounce in our step lasted for about two weeks. A visitor's slight of our transportation network became a body slam when the Michigan Court of Appeals invalidated the emerging Detroit Area Regional Transit Authority. Created in 2003 by the leaders of Oakland, Macomb and Wayne counties and the city of Detroit, and supported by the governor, DARTA was tangible proof of the region's commitment to an improved transportation system.

Shortsighted opponents cheered this unfortunate ruling as evidence of the death of mass transit. Celebration of DARTA's demise, however, is premature. In fact, new developments bring renewed hope that metropolitan Detroit may still join the rest of 21st century urban America in offering affordable and reliable public transportation.

Critics of the region's two transit systems — the Detroit Department of Transportation, serving the city, and the Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transit (SMART), with bus routes to the suburbs — speak of wasted taxpayer dollars and a public hooked on their individual cars. But they miss the point. We have no choice but to continue the push for mass transit.

We have no choice because of people like Wanda Martin, who leaves her home in the city two hours early to make bus connections to get to her job in Pontiac. We have no choice because of people like Angelo Binno, a blind student from Farmington who has to take a cab to classes at Wayne State University. Certainly we have no choice but to carry on for the 140,000 daily riders of buses in metropolitan Detroit, who are mostly the working poor, the disabled or the elderly who depend on transit to get to jobs or the doctor and shopping. Apart from the issue of choice, it is a matter of responsibility.

There's no reason to get bogged down in the tired liberal vs. conservative polarization of this issue. Gasoline is around \$2.30 a gallon and ris-

ing. Car insurance has become unaffordable for many. A recent study shows that metro area residents spend over a fifth of their household income on transportation. Time lost in traffic delays on our aging and always-under-repair freeways zap worker productivity. Protecting the bottom line is rock-ribbed conservative.

Cost-efficient and dependable public mass transit must also be viewed as an economic development tool. Workers must get to their jobs, wherever they may be. By providing the means of delivering dependable labor, new business is attracted and existing companies expand. We must reverse the exodus of our young professionals who are drawn to Chicago, Boston and Atlanta with vital urban centers served by excellent transportation systems. Of the nation's 25 largest urban areas, only two — Detroit and Tampa — do not provide rapid public transportation. Economic recovery lags here in part because of the absence of a similar comprehensive transit network.

But all is not lost, to the consternation of misinformed and misguided opponents of public mass transit. Representatives of the regional leaders who created DARTA, as well as the Detroit Regional Chamber, the Michigan Department of Transportation and Gov. Jennifer Granholm's office, recently met to renew their commitment to DARTA. Options on the table include possible appeal of the court's decision, crafting a new intergovernmental agreement and supporting legislation in Lansing to create DARTA II. Not open to speculation is the resolve of leaders like Wayne County Executive Robert Ficano, who emphasized, using a baseball analogy, that "they will keep swinging until they connect on a plan for regional transportation."

Even more encouraging is the news announced by U.S. Sen. Debbie Stabenow last week that the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments will receive \$100 million in federal funds for preliminary engineering of a light rail rapid transit line between Detroit and Ann Arbor. Paralleling the I-94 corridor, passing near the airport and future job centers like Pinnacle in western Wayne County, this rail line will be a significant piece of the transit network. Our congressional delegation obtains federal funding for SEMCOG because the existence of DARTA demonstrates regional support for mass transit.

Serious challenges remain, such as heavy lifting to secure a revenue stream for operational costs of an expanded system. But for those eager to pile dirt on DARTA's grave, put your shovels away. Mass transit is in our future, the sooner the better.

Alan C. Helmkamp is assistant Wayne County executive-government relations.

Court calls strike three, so DARTA should be OUT!

After swinging and missing twice in the state Legislature, the Detroit Area Regional Transportation Authority (DARTA) just had strike three called. The "umpire" this time was a court, rather than the democratic process of the Legislature, but the result should be the same: "You're OUT!"

Notwithstanding this, Gov. Granholm, Mayor Kilpatrick and DARTA's corporate and bureaucratic cheerleaders are pleading to give the transit boondoggle another "at-bat." Instead, they should bench this loser — permanently.

The fascination that certain politicians, bureaucrats and special interests have for a centralized public transit agency is something of mystery to many people. Metro Detroit is not a region in which hundreds of thousands of workers commute in and out of the central city on a daily basis, so such a system makes little sense here.

In Oakland County, for example, 70 percent of commuters drive to work in one suburban community from their home in another. In today's dynamic economy, it is impossible for central planners to accurately predict in any detail future commuter patterns and needs. Given this reality, we should not spend another nickel on the traditional 1930s government-run transit system model before reforming the entire structure right down to its roots, in such a way as to meet the real needs of 21st century citizens. Our economy has moved far beyond the old industrial model in which public transit systems made sense.

Yet the dominant model in public transit today is still a hugely bureaucratized, inefficient, rule-bound, costly, heavily subsidized, underutilized, overregulated, overunioned, often corrupt and always self-serving municipal or regional transit system. The Detroit Department of Transportation (DDOT), which would be the biggest piece of the DARTA pie, is the epitome of that broken model. Union featherbedding is rife, layer after layer of administration ensures that much of the money never gets near an actual bus, and inefficient and ineffective management means that much of the equipment remains out of service for long periods of time.

The DARTA plan is to merge this monument to inefficiency with the suburban SMART transit system. Hey — if improved coordination were what this is really about, nothing would prevent DDOT and SMART from sitting down right now to cooperate on establishing a more seamless interface. To do so they don't need a

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Mass transit is a hot button issue for metro area residents. Do we need it? Can we afford it? Who should run it? Today's *Observer & Eccentric* Op-Ed page features columns representing different points of view on the latest issue to emerge on the mass transit landscape — the Detroit Area Regional Transportation Authority or DARTA. Last month, the Michigan Court of Appeals said DARTA was created illegally and gave it until later this month to disband. We'd like to hear what you have to say on the issue. E-mail your comments to editor@oe.hometownlife.com.

DARTA that would just export DDOT's waste and inefficiency throughout the region.

But improved coordination is not what DARTA is primarily about. Plain and simple, it's about fleecing suburban taxpayers to prop up an obsolete, broken-down big city bus system. Proof of this is seen in the contention by DARTA supporters that the plan only works if reluctant suburban communities are forced into the system and never allowed to leave. Well, if DARTA will be such a benefit to suburban communities, why is it necessary to hold a gun to their heads to get them to participate, hmmm?

That said, there is still the question of how to help those who can't drive for health reasons, or inner-city residents who need to get to a job in the suburbs and can't afford a car and insurance. The answer to that question is surely not to pour more money into a dysfunctional system, so that it can run even more mostly-empty buses to more places. More people could be helped much more efficiently if instead of reinforcing the failure of the traditional transit model, resources were diverted to alternatives such as private sector "micro" systems, like jitneys, commercial van pools, "call-and-ride" and many more concepts that creative entrepreneurs will invent if given the opportunity.

Economics favor such alternatives; only protectionist unions, inbred bureaucracies and the politicians they control prevent them with an impenetrable barrier of laws and regulations. These are the same forces that now want to reach into the pockets of suburban taxpayers to expand their grubby little transit racket.

Heck, they shouldn't just be benched — they should be thrown out of the league!

State Rep. Robert Gosselin, R-Troy, is a member of the House Transportation Committee. He represents the 41st District, which includes the cities of Troy and Clawson. He can be reached by e-mail at robertgosselin@house.mi.gov.

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Renewal of county parks tax wins strong approval

BY HUGH GALLAGHER
STAFF WRITER

Wayne County voters overwhelmingly approved renewal of a five-year, 0.25-mill tax for improvements and maintenance of Wayne County Parks.

The tax, first approved by voters in 1996 and renewed in 2000, is expected to raise nearly \$12 million in 2006. For a home with a taxable value of \$100,000 the tax would be approximately \$25 a year.

With 86 percent of the vote in Wednesday morning, the millage was approved by 76 percent of voters.

"It's an indication that we're spending the money well, certainly in Hines Park and Elizabeth Park," said Alan Helmkamp, assistant county executive for government relations, who led efforts to win approval for the renewal.

He said voters seemed to approve the improvements and maintenance of the parks and don't want to see a reduction in park upkeep. Helmkamp said he understood that the voter turnout in the suburbs was low, but he said he was happy that the proposal was winning approval in many suburban communities.

Vote turnout in most *Observer* communities was low. Plymouth Township had two public safety millages on the ballot, but other communities didn't have other elections. In Canton, voters approved the parks millage 2,507 to 1,977; Livonia voters approved the millage 1,800 to 1,622; Plymouth Township approved the millage 3,511 to 1,756. Plymouth approved the millage 494 to 270; Redford approved the millage 1,572 to 1,132; and Westland approved the millage 2,386 to 1,342.

The millage specifically makes reference to major improvements to Hines Park, Elizabeth Park (in Trenton), Chandler Park (in Detroit) and historic Fort Wayne. In addition, the millage language requires that the parks continue to receive money from the county's general fund.

Money is also allocated for local parks and recreation projects. The millage has been criticized by suburban leaders because of the way these discretionary funds have been distributed for local parks and recreation projects. The county was also criticized for placing the millage on the Aug. 2 ballot, when most suburban communities did not have an election and the city of Detroit had a hotly contested mayoral primary.

During the campaign, County Executive Robert Ficano and Helmkamp met with suburban leaders and proposed a new process for evaluating local projects. Under the proposal, a five-member advisory committee would review proposals to present to the Wayne County Commission.

The committee would consist of the director of parks or a designee, a representative of the county executive's office, a representative of the Wayne County commission, the director of public services and a representative of the Friends of Wayne County Parks. Proposals would be limited to existing parks or related facilities "owned and operated by a governmental unit." Funds could not be used to create a new park.

Helmkamp said he will be the county executive's representative to the panel. He said the panel would be meeting within the month and several proposals have already been received.

County Commissioner Phil

Cavanagh, D-Redford, was critical of the millage timing and favored a vote in November.

Cavanagh had also proposed changing the ballot to require that 50 percent of the funding be sent back to local communities for parks and recreation projects. The proposal was rejected by the commission because of con-

cerns that the proposal was a new tax and required a supermajority approval. This proposal was also presented in the state Legislature by Rep. Phil LaJoy, R-Canton, and then withdrawn after an agreement was reached on the advisory panel.

"My greatest criticism was that we had the vote in August. We could have

passed it in November," Cavanagh said. "The money is needed to run the parks, mow the lawns."

Cavanagh said the new advisory panel is a "step in the right direction."

"The discussion has heightened everyone's awareness that we need more equity in the distribution of parks money," he said.



'It's an indication that we're spending the money well, certainly in Hines Park and Elizabeth Park.'

Alan Helmkamp
government relations for county



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