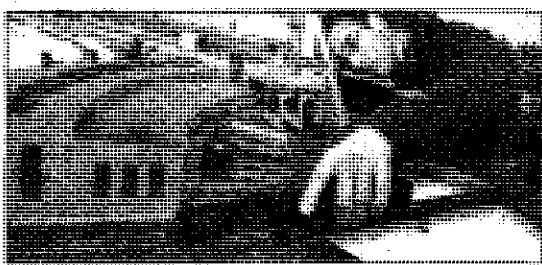


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PHOTOS BY TOM HAWLEY | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Christmas wish

At nine months old, Abigail Rice (above) may be a bit young to talk to Santa, but she wasn't too young for her first visit with her mother Beth with the Jolly Old Elf at Westland Shopping Center. Abigail did sit on Santa's lap for a picture. Listen to youngsters' wishes is nothing new to Santa Andy whose been listening to youngsters of all ages for 14 years, including nine at the Westland mall. Santa Andy, who recently finished on his bachelor's degree as Santa, estimates that 20,000 youngsters and adults sit on his lap a year. "I love it, it is just a wonderful job," he said.

Five-year-old Katie Griffen tells Santa she would like "Polly Pockets" for Christmas this year.



'Living proof'

Police Officer of Year has positive effect on safety in city

BY DARRELL CLEM
STAFF WRITER

It's a good thing Kenneth Percin isn't superstitious about numbers: He marked year 13 of his career as a Westland police officer on 9/11 of this year.

Rather than bad luck, Percin has had an exemplary year of helping to solve armed robberies and a graffiti vandalism spree - all while taking 91 drunken drivers off city streets.

Percin, who will be 37 years old on Dec. 27, received Police Officer of the Year honors Thursday during the Westland Police Department's 18th awards ceremony at City Hall.

"Officer Percin has proven himself to be a valuable asset to the Westland Police Department," Chief Daniel

Westland Police also recognized the crime-fighting efforts of its officers and civilians during the awards ceremony. **Page A4.**

Pfannes said. "He serves as living proof that one man can have a positive effect on the safety and quality of life for the citizens of the city of Westland."

Percin accepted his award quietly in front of a packed room of police officers and their families, friends and supporters.

Away from the spotlight, he seemed gratified for being chosen by his colleagues to receive the top award in a department with 100 sworn officers, from the rank of patrol officer to chief.

"It's an honor when your colleagues look at what you do on the street every day and recognize you for the work you perform," he said.

His philosophy of being a

PLEASE SEE OFFICER, A4

Teen's refusal forces hearing for 4 involved in carjacking incident

BY DARRELL CLEM
STAFF WRITER

Three Detroit teens charged in a Westland carjacking came to court Thursday ready to waive their right to a preliminary hearing and set the stage for a trial.

But a fourth defendant refused to waive the proceedings - a decision that will apparently force a pretrial hearing for all four teens.

According to authorities, defendant Damien James Thomas, 17, abruptly changed his mind about waiving his hearing and decided to proceed with testimony in Westland 18th District Court.

Thomas' decision delayed the hearing until Dec. 16 and prompted prosecuting attorney Luke Skywalker to declare that all four teens will have to appear. He said it's the only fair way to proceed.

The sudden developments Thursday prompted 18th District Judge Gail McKnight to remark that Thomas' decision to force a preliminary hearing left the other teens "somewhat hostage" to his demands.

Charged in a Nov. 20 carjacking at Warren and

According to authorities, defendant Damien James Thomas, 17, abruptly changed his mind about waiving his hearing and decided to proceed with testimony in Westland 18th District Court.

Merriman roads are Thomas and three other Detroit defendants - Ernest Young, 19, Roxanne Silvia, 17, and Cory Lee-Nathan Donald, 16.

The defendants are accused of driving up behind a BMW at 5 a.m., forcing two men out at gunpoint, robbing them, forcing them to lie on the road and taking the car.

A subsequent police chase ended in Dearborn Heights, and police ultimately arrested the four suspects.

Young is charged with driving the BMW and fleeing from police. Thomas is accused of accompanying him in the stolen car.

Donald is accused of driving

PLEASE SEE CARJACKING, A4



Mayor Sandra Cicirelli and Santa Claus will throw the switch to light up the holiday display at Westland City Hall.

City collects mittens, gloves at tree lighting

Organizers of Westland's annual tree lighting ceremony are hoping to see plenty of mittens and gloves Monday evening.

Mittens and gloves on hands, and mittens and gloves hanging on a holiday tree.

Mayor Sandra Cicirelli is asking participants to bring new pairs of children's mittens and gloves to the 6:15 p.m. program to help the Westland Goodfellows with its No Child Without A Christmas campaign.

The mayor will be joined by Santa Claus in throwing the switch to turn on the Christmas lights at Westland City Hall during the ceremony which also includes a sing-along and presentation of awards to children who won the What Christmas Means to Me essay contest.

The program also will feature Westland resident Nancy Spinelle, a retired Livonia school teacher and published children's author, who will present her new 2005 story, The Mitten Tree.

The ceremony is a popular holiday event for families who finish off the evening with a visit with Santa and refreshments at Fire Station No. 1 next door to city hall on Ford west of Wayne Road.

School groups and Scout troops also will help give a festive look to the pine trees in front of the Bailey Recreation Center when Cicirelli hosts a Bring in the Holidays with the Mayor program at 4:30 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 7.

Youngsters will decorate the trees, participate in a Christmas carol sing-along and enjoy refreshments.

Board votes on Monday on Legacy

Parents question the legitimacy of the plan because of the way the demographics committee interpreted information obtained by a community survey. **Page A2.**

Livonia Public Schools Board of Education is expected to cast a vote Monday on the district's proposed Legacy Initiative.

The board has moved this meeting to Churchill High School, at 8900 Newburgh Road. The meeting begins at 7 p.m. Monday, Dec. 5.

"The primary agenda item is a decision on the Legacy Initiative," said Jay Young, director of community relations for the district.

The controversial Legacy Initiative calls for closing of seven elementary buildings, the establishment of three upper elementary schools for grades 5-6, and one less middle school for grades 7-8. School communities would merge and boundary lines would be redrawn to allow those students to remain with their peers from fifth grade through graduation.

If passed, the district could put the Legacy plan into place as early as the next school year.

The meeting venue change was made to accommodate a larger crowd than the board office. Those who plan to attend will find additional parking on the south end, behind Churchill High School, as well as across the street at the Livonia Career Technical Center. Enter from Joy Road or Newburgh Road and follow the event parking sign.

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Coming Thursday in Filter

Aerosmith brings its 'Rockin' The Joint' tour to The Palace on Dec. 15.





Toys for the giving

Members of the John Glenn High School National Honor Society - Kady Morgan, president (from left), Jaclyn Burgess, vice-president, and Andrew Galuszka, secretary - show off some of the 70 toys collected during a recent NHS sponsored Toys for Tots drive.

Parents: Some survey results ignored

BY STEPHANIE ANGELYN CASOLA
STAFF WRITER

Residents opposed to the Livonia Public Schools Legacy Initiative continued to raise concerns on the legitimacy of the plan to overhaul grade configurations within buildings across the district.

Some parents have focused on the way the demographics committee interpreted information obtained by a community survey, while forming the Legacy proposal.

The survey, conducted Oct. 6-13 of 2004 by School Public Relations Consultant Services in Lansing, polled 373 registered voters in the district on issues ranging from communication to school millages.

It later became part of the criteria committee members used to evaluate the cost-savings plan they developed.

Parents like Livonia's Denise Beaudoin say some results were used, others ignored when it came to the committee's recommendation to establish upper elementary schools in the district.

One question asked: "Should Livonia consider different ways to organize the grade levels (e.g., K-3 and 4-6 grade buildings, or K-8 buildings, etc.)?"

And 65 percent of parents responded with a "no." "Two-thirds of Livonia voters do not want to change grade

configurations," said Liz Schnell, a Livonia parent who also attended Monday's board meeting. She said it felt as if that sentiment was being "pushed under the rug" by the proposal.

For Beaudoin, the question remains - if that was the case, why did the committee pursue this path? The recommendation to the board includes setting up three upper elementary buildings in the district.

"Why would the committee listen to the LPS parents regarding putting sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-graders together (another survey question), but not listen to 65 percent of the LPS parents not wanting consideration of different ways to organize grade levels?" Beaudoin asked Monday.

Supt. Randy Liepa has said the specific K-4, 5-6 plan was not detailed on the community survey because at the time the survey was taken no specific grade configurations had been laid out.

Another parent, Michele Hanania, said she felt misled. "The committee apparently chose to ignore and conceal this finding," she said.

But committee members said that was not the case. Principal Joe Anderson of Churchill High School participated on the demographics committee.

"I do not mind people disagreeing with the plan at all. I can understand why some people would, but I am disappointed that people somehow think the

committee had a hidden agenda or were trying to deceive people," he said. "That was not the case at all. It was a group of folks who tried their best to come up with a plan to help the district move forward in tough times."

Liepa said: "There has been no deception."

During his presentation of the Legacy proposal Nov. 14, Liepa told trustees the recommended K-4 plan did not match community response on that particular survey question. Still, the committee has stood behind its recommendation.

Andrea Oquist, committee member and Taylor Elementary principal, has repeatedly spoken in favor of the proposal, even though her school is one of the seven buildings that would be closed.

"We are deeply, deeply committed to providing strong, high quality programs for our students," she said. "I am passionate about the educational model. This is the model that best serves students in Livonia Public Schools at this time."

Liepa said: "There is no question, we've heard loud and clear what the issues are. We've provided many avenues for the community to provide input. They have been very active in the process."

Now, the decision falls into the hands of the school board.

Whatever happens, Liepa said, it will be a "significant undertaking."

Demographics group faces parents in Legacy Q&A session

BY DAVE VARGA
STAFF WRITER

Four Livonia Public School officials, who serve on the Demographics Committee, sat down Friday night in an unusual, back-and-forth roundtable talk with 10 residents who oppose the Legacy Initiative.

The forum was set up for the committee to answer some parent questions on the controversial plan. It lasted more than an hour and a half and will be cablecast through this weekend and Monday, according to Supt. Randy Liepa. Also shown will be a video presenting the Legacy plan and other previous meetings board hearings, he said.

They will air on the district's cable Channel 15 on Bright House Networks and Wide Open West, Channel 19 on Comcast.

Many questions focused on issues parents felt hadn't been sufficiently answered at previous meetings.

Joe Di Domenico asked about

the survey results that showed 65 percent of the community didn't want to change grade configurations. "That is a very important finding. How can you ignore that?"

"First of all," answered Liepa, "we didn't ignore it." He explained that the survey question was one of several criteria examined; another was that staff say sixth-graders have unique needs that aren't being met in the current K-6 system.

What you're saying, Di Domenico said, is "you guys know more about how to raise our children than we do."

Andrea Oquist, Taylor principal, said the two-thirds support for not changing grade configurations wasn't surprising, since "people are very satisfied with Livonia Public Schools."

Why not consider keeping the K-6 schools, but closing some buildings, asked Cheryl Hujdzik.

Along with the educational benefits, committee members said the K-4 model met another priority of the community based

on surveys: Keeping school communities together, rather than all the boundary changes needed in a K-6 plan.

No matter what the plan, Liepa said, some people will be unhappy. Ignacio Salazar asked why the committee didn't do the plan in stages, "little by little, to see if it works?"

Other districts didn't phase in these changes, Liepa said. "I'm not sure how we could do this in phases," he added, noting that the committee looked at doing it now and moving the district forward.

Along with opponents, Oquist noted that the district had also heard from many parents and staff who support the K-4 plan.

Surveys show protecting class sizes should be the biggest priority in the district, Liepa said.

Other questions also focused on timely busing, use of safeties, plans for actually dealing with transitions and use of experts by the committee.

The board is scheduled to vote on the Legacy Initiative when it meets at 7 p.m. Monday, Dec. 5, at Churchill High School.

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FRI/SAT LS 11:15, 11:45

IN THE MIX (PG-13)
11:00, 1:05, 3:10, 5:15, 7:20, 9:25
FRI/SAT LS 11:30

PRIDE AND PREJUDICE (PG)
11:00, 1:40, 4:20, 7:00, 9:40

JUST FRIENDS (PG-13)
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FRI/SAT LS 11:50

CHICKEN LITTLE (G)
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Every picture tells a story

Artist's murals capture character of restaurateur's native Italy

BY SUE MASON
STAFF WRITER

Domenic Porco decided to invite a few friends to lunch Friday. He served them food that's the hallmark of his Amantea Restaurant and let them watch as he ripped sheets of paper from the dining room wall.

No, he wasn't remodeling. He was unveiling four large murals, depicting his hometown of Amantea, Italy, done by Plymouth artist Charlotte Moore-Viculin.

Years in the making, the four almost 4-by-8-foot murals depict the Mediterranean town from the old castle and Porco's boyhood home to the hotel and seaside dance pavilion.

"Charlotte started with a concept, then my wife and I took a trip to Italy," Porco said. "We showed her the pictures and she said that complicated things. She got so excited and took the pictures."

The murals were a lengthy project for Moore-Viculin. Known for her portraits in oil and murals done in homes, she worked around the many club meetings and funeral luncheons held at the restaurant and her work at the Plymouth studio.

"If I had known I would have done the murals on canvas in the studio and then mounted them to the walls," she said. "I worked on them a long time."

Instead, she drew an outline of the murals on the walls then made changes. The murals, however, turned out to be more extensive than the drawings.

"I incorporated several scenes into each mural, I took exact buildings from the photos, but I picked the most interesting ones," she said. "I decided to make them more complicated."

The murals give the illusion of looking at the city from a second-or third-story balcony. French doors stand partially open as if to let in the warm sea breezes. Dowels and screws painted an antique bronze give dimension to the door "hinges."

The first mural shows the old castle that sits on the hill above the town, while the second panel includes the home where Porco was born and the church on the piazza where he was baptized.

The third mural is dominated by the beach and the fourth panel includes a familiar face, that of Porco who is seen looking out over the town toward the sea. Moore-Viculin had Porco stand at a counter at the edge of the room and with-



PHOTOS BY BILL BRESLER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Artist Charlotte Moore-Viculin points out the boyhood home of Domenic Porco in the town of Amantea, Italy. She recreated the seaside town in a series of four murals in the dining room of Porco's Amantea Restaurant which were unveiled Friday during a luncheon ceremony.

in a few feet of where she was working.

"I'd stand one side of the counter and she would keep telling me to look up," Porco said.

But it is Moore-Viculin's attention to detail that makes the murals astounding. The beach scene includes many different color umbrellas, all painstakingly painted to show a texture and patterns, done with brushes she got from Italy.

"It was fun doing the umbrellas," she said. "Not only are they different colors, they're all different designs."

The hotel in the fourth mural faces away from the idyllic town square and has a hotel sign on the roof, backwards because it faces onto the road that curves around in front of it.

Moore-Viculin isn't a stranger to the restaurant on Warren just east of Venoy. She and her husband dine there regularly, and Porco had hired her to refurbish the paintings on the walls in the second dining room.

She said she had been thinking about what she could do with the arched openings for six or seven years when she learned from manager Scott May that Porco was thinking of replacing the aging

damask covering with wallpaper.

Her idea was having the open doors and she was going to do them half way down the wall until she saw the Porcos' vacation photos.

"That's when I started to do a full length mural," said Moore-Viculin. "It's much more exciting to the doors all the way."

She usually uses oils, but chose an acrylic mural paint with a protective coating for her work at the restaurant. She spent the days before the unveiling applying a protective liquid plastic to cover them while Porco weighed how far away he could place tables to protect them.

"It's the first work I've ever done in a public place, I've done a lot in people's homes," said Moore-Viculin. "It's just very exciting because there was so much reference material."

Porco is pleased with the finished product. The scenes "really reflect Amantea city and Italy," which he left with his family in 1956 to come to the United States.

And her portrait of him ...
"When my daughter saw it she said, 'That's my dad,'" he said.

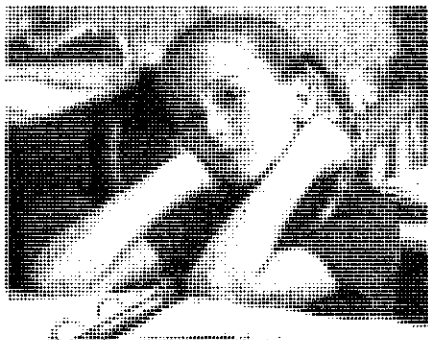


Moore-Viculin applies the first three coats of a liquid plastic over the surface to protect the murals.



Restaurant owner Domenic Porco commissioned Charlotte Moore-Viculin to paint murals of the Italian village of Amantea, his birthplace.

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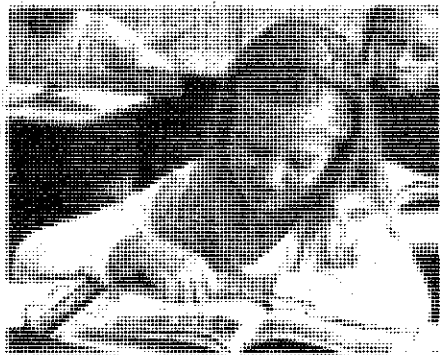


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Awards honor officers', civilians' efforts

BY DARRELL CLEM
STAFF WRITER

Westland's worst massacre - a grisly party store murder spree that killed four people and injured two - was remembered Thursday as police officials honored the crime-solving efforts of officers and civilians.

From the 911 call made by wounded store clerk Conrad Hasper to the 2004 murder conviction won by prosecutor Christine Kowal, those who helped ensure justice following the Sept. 11, 2003, killings at Neil's Party Store received awards for their efforts.

During a Westland Police Department ceremony, Assistant Wayne County Prosecutor Christine Kowal was honored for winning a first-degree murder conviction against Leslie Gordon, who helped triggerman Michael Schofield during the botched robbery. Schofield killed himself.

"Christine Kowal is truly the most hard-working, tireless and compassionate prosecutor that I have ever met," police Sgt. David Heater said. "She was the voice for the victims."

The party store massacre was one of many investigations mentioned Thursday as police officials gave out a variety of awards ranging from civilian citations to Officer of the Year Kenneth Percin.

Hasper, wounded party store customer Fuad Abuali and witnesses Kenneth Bowles and Kathleen Greenfield won awards for their efforts related to the party store case, along with Heater; Westland Sgts. Steve Borisch, Michael Willard, John Buresh, James Dexter, Jeff Trzybinski and Scott Murray; Westland Officers Matthew Price, Joe Bobby, Plymouth Township Officer Scott Linton, and Southfield Officer Patrick Theriault; Michigan State Police Troopers Jack Taff and

David Liggins; and dispatchers Dale Massa, Tondria Fairweather and Angela Clark.

In another gruesome murder, a Westland man was found tied up, slashed and bludgeoned on Feb. 6, 2004, in the basement of his home on Hanover, on the city's southeast side.

Those honored for their work on the case included Sgts. James Dexter, Tom Harris, John Buresh, Michael Willard, John Stone, Timothy Abramski and Scott Murray; retired Lt. Steve Kaufman, and Officers Joe Bobby, Darin Keir, David Dinsmore, Brian Miller, Richard Kummert and Richard Novakowski.

Yet another murder - the 7-year-old case of missing Garden City man William "Billy" Paul - was solved in the summer of 2004 after an informant told authorities that Westland resident James Oehler had killed Paul and buried him in his back yard.

Honored for their work on the case were Westland Sgt. Steve Borisch; state police officers David Yount and Charles Morden, along with police dog Storm; and forensic scientists Tara Reinholz, Guy Nutter and Danielle Albert.

In other investigations: Dispatcher Stensen Klim received an award for helping to save a baby's life by telling a caller how to perform CPR.

Westland Officers Jeff Kavanaugh, Julie Alsip and Robert Kenyon won honors for solving an August 2004 home invasion in the 8000 block of Newburgh.

Westland Sgt. Jeff Trzybinski, Officer Matthew Price, Garden City Lt. Robert Muery and Wayne Officer Tom Warren won awards for their investigation of a man stealing automotive engines and selling them in western Wayne County.

Westland Sgt. Scott Murray and Officers Richard Kummert and Richard

Novakowski received awards for helping to bust a cocaine dealer selling drugs in Westland, Flint and other areas this year.

Officer Jeff Kavanaugh was honored for his work in capturing a robbery suspect who fled into a wooded area near the Westland police station.

Sgt. Steven Borisch and Officer Kevin Swope won awards for solving a robbery that occurred in September when an 80-year-old woman was robbed after driving her car into the garage of her condominium on Newburgh.

Lt. Mark Engstrom, Sgt. Scott Murray and Officers Richard Kummert and Richard Novakowski received awards for an investigation of Westland residents selling drugs out of a Canton motel.

Sgt. Robert Swope and Officer Jon Torolski were honored for helping to solve a series of bank robberies from Westland to Ann Arbor.

Wayne Officer Finley Carter and civilian Craig Kile won awards for helping to capture a suspect who had fled from police in a car and then on foot.

Honored for solving a rash of home invasions in Westland and Livonia were Westland Sgts. Steve Borisch, Tom Harris, John Hoak and Michael Willard; Livonia Detectives Martin Donnelly, Ron Selleck, Ron McPhee and James Green; and Livonia Officers Larry Nehasil and John Walker.

Civilians Ronald Bond, Michael Hufstetler and Torey Kaigler won awards for helping to stop a burglary in progress in which a man was stealing cigarettes and lottery tickets from a store.

Officer Jeff Kavanaugh was honored for helping to capture a suspect who broke into own wife's vehicle while Kavanaugh was at home. He won a separate award for

catching a robbery suspect who fled from Westland District Court.

Sgt. Tom Harris and Officers Ed Price and Richard Kummert received honors for getting an assault rifle-toting criminal off the streets within hours of a robbery and shooting incident.

Officer Patrick Griffin was honored for helping to solve a break-in earlier this year at Norm's Market on Wayne Road.

Officers Mark Mills, Robert Wilkie, Norman Brooks and Stephen Bird won awards for returning to prison a former inmate who was involved in a garage break-in.

Retired Lt. Steve Kaufman, Sgt. Scott Murray and Officers Richard Kummert and Richard Novakowski won awards for a case involving cocaine being brought from Detroit to Westland.

Retired Dearborn Heights Capt. Dave Seipenko was honored for aiding in a traffic stop-related criminal arrest.

Honored for an investigation into several drive-by shootings of a north-end home were Deputy Chief Gary Sikorski; Lts. James Ridener and Steve Kaufman; Sgts. Chris Benson, Steve Borisch, David Heater, Tim Abramski, Jeff Trzybinski and Scott Murray; Officers Richard Kummert, Richard Novakowski, Harlan Epperson and Tom Warren (of Wayne Police).

Civilians who received citations for their help on a variety of cases included Kristy Cyr, Robert Waarala, Joseph Namyslowski, David Spada, Jill Freeland, Christopher Araj, Adam Leichtweis and Jan and Tom Balian.

Other department citations for various cases went to Officers John Donahue, David Zucchetto, James Starks, Matthew Price, Robert Fruit and Stephen Vidauri.

Other citations for their help on a variety of cases included Kristy Cyr, Robert Waarala, Joseph Namyslowski, David Spada, Jill Freeland, Christopher Araj, Adam Leichtweis and Jan and Tom Balian.

OFFICER

FROM PAGE A1

police officer is simple, yet revealing of his success.

"It's fun catching the bad guys," he said.

Percin joined the Westland police force on Sept. 11, 1992. He has an almost uncanny skill for catching drunken drivers, and those who appreciate his efforts have taken notice.

Mothers Against Drunk Drivers named Percin as MADD Officer of the Year in 1999, 2002, 2003 and 2004. Even though this year hasn't ended, he already has caught 91 drunken drivers, compared to 65 last year.

In other achievements, Percin last spring arrested a graffiti vandal who had committed 25 crimes amounting to more than \$10,000 in damage. The suspect not only spent time in jail, but also had to make restitution to his victims

and participate in a public service cable-TV show explaining the pitfalls of such crimes.

"The arrest of this person and the creative sentencing that followed had an effect on the number of graffiti incidents that occurred during the remainder of the summer," Pfannes said.

Last March, Percin uncovered evidence linking a gunman to a tanning salon robbery.

"The investigation that was conducted by Percin resulted in the seizure of criminal evidence and in establishing the identity of the perpetrator," Pfannes said. "After a standoff with the police in downtown Detroit, this dangerous individual was taken into custody and jailed."

For his efforts, Percin received a standing ovation Thursday after receiving his award.

dclcm@hometownlife.com | (734) 953-2110

CARJACKING

FROM PAGE A1

a 1998 Malibu that pulled up behind the BMW. Silvia is accused of remaining with Donald in the Malibu.

Young was arrested after the chase ended, police said, and Thomas ran but was later captured at his Detroit home. Authorities said they caught Silvia and Donald when they drove back into Westland to look for their friends.

No shots were fired and no injuries reported during the

carjacking. All four teens could face penalties ranging up to life in prison, if convicted on charges of carjacking, armed robbery and felony firearms.

Not-guilty pleas have been placed on record for the teens as they await the newly scheduled Dec. 16 hearing.

All four teens remained jailed on Thursday. Young and Thomas would have to post \$5,000 toward a \$50,000 bond for their release; Silvia and Donald, \$7,500 toward a \$75,000 bond.

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YWCA's wish list is for people it serves

The YWCA of Western Wayne County is making a list and checking it twice. It's its Holiday Wish List to help the many people it serves throughout the year.

"This Holiday Wish List will give members of the communities the YWCA serves a chance to help their less fortunate neighbors this holiday season," said Karen Murphy, YWCA chief executive officer.

Donations can be designated to send a child camp for the summer, for the after school programs, or for any of the other programs offered by the YWCA.

Many programs need art and craft supplies, computers, sports equipment, bus services for field trips, and new books. New or like-new women's business clothes are needed for the Corporate Women's program, which helps women re-enter the

workforce with clothing for interviews and resume help.

Volunteers are needed to help out with all programs. Mentors are needed to help the boys and girls enrolled in YWCA programs. The YWCA already has families in need of extra assistance this holiday season.

Individuals or organizations can sponsor them and help their children. The YWCA through its preschool, youth and family programs serves more than 700 families living in Westland, Garden City, Livonia, Plymouth, Canton, Belleville, Dearborn, Dearborn Heights, Inkster, Northville, Romulus, Taylor, Wayne and Van Buren Township.

For more ideas on how to help the families and children the YWCA serves, call the YWCA at (313) 561-4110.

CHRISTMAS WITH YOUR PETS



Your pets already think they're the stars of the family... now let them see it in print. Place your pets photo on a special page designed just for them. This page will run in our papers on December 25.

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HOW TO REACH US

Susan Rosiek
Executive Editor
(734) 953-2100
srosiek@hometownlife.com

Frank Cibor
Retail Sales Manager
(734) 953-2177
fcibor@hometownlife.com

Hugh Gallagher
Managing Editor
(734) 953-2149
hgallagher@hometownlife.com

Sue Mason
Community Editor
(734) 953-2112
smason@hometownlife.com

Newsroom (734) 953-2104 **Fax** (734) 591-7279
Sports Nightline (734) 953-2104
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INFORMATION CENTRAL

For those of you who have used our computers before to research your family tree, you may have noticed a couple of changes over the last few months.

Let's look at the changes, and see if they'll affect your searching:

For years, the State of Michigan wanted to purchase the use of a genealogical database for the residents of the State of Michigan to use. Due to the great expense of many of these databases (some of which can cost up to \$600 a year for a single account), it had not been possible.

A local database corporation, Gale Research (now Thompson Gale) purchased one of the largest commercial databases, Ancestry Plus, which also had purchased RootsWeb, the largest free genealogical database on the Web. Gale then arranged with the Library of Michigan to allow Michigan residents to search Ancestry Plus within their local library.

Some time later, Gale was purchased by another corporation, creating Thompson Gale. Assets were bought, sold, reorganized and so on, and earlier this year, Thompson Gale sold Ancestry to a company called ProQuest, which owns the other large "pay-to-play" database, HeritageQuest.

What does this mean for you? You can still access the same database, now renamed simply Ancestry, the same as before, through your local library. The "interface" or what the database looks like, is a little different, but the same information is there, simply reorganized.

Ancestry, though, is not your only online source for directories and other information. NARA (the National Archives and Records Administration) has a superb Web site, through which you can order veteran's military records, view online exhibits and more. You can access NARA at www.archives.gov.

The state of Michigan, too, has its catalog online, at www.michigan.gov/hal. While you won't be able to access information directly, you can ascertain if the Library of Michigan has older copies of important local newspapers, for example.

Finally, the two big universities in the area, University of Michigan, and Michigan State also have their catalogs online, at umich.edu/lib_resources.html and magic.msu.edu respectively.

Again, while you won't access, say, marriage records directly, both of these institutions may have books or journals with useful information. If you have questions about these databases, or any part of your genealogical search, feel free to call the library at (734) 326-6123.

Internet 101: 10:30 a.m. Dec. 6. For the very beginner -11 what the internet is and how to get there. No registration or fee required.

How 2 Kids - Stamping: 1:30 p.m. Dec. 10.

Learn stamping techniques to make fun, creative cards and gift bags to give to friends and family during this 1 1/2 hour program. Ages 8 and up are welcome. Registration required.

Keepsake Handprint Poem: 10:30 a.m. Dec. 10.

Children ages 2-7 with a parent will make a cherished gift for someone special. Registration required.

Gifts for Giving: 1 and 2 p.m. Dec. 11.

Join us for our 5th annual Gifts for Giving Program. Make some great gifts with materials provided for free. Open to sixth-12th graders. Registration required.

Winter Holiday Beginning Bookies: 2 p.m. Dec. 11.

Have fun exploring winter stories just for you. Enjoy doing a wintertime book-related craft. Registration required. Kindergarten-second grade.

The William P. Faust Public Library is at 6123 Central City Parkway, Westland. For more information, call (734) 326-6123.

Library Friends enhance children's area

BY JULIE BROWN
STAFF WRITER

The Westland library's a comfortable place for kids to spend a snowy day. Thanks to the Friends group, it's even more comfortable.

"They are very generous to us," said Lisa Hausman, children's librarian at the William P. Faust Public Library of Westland. The Friends recently provided \$25,000 for furnishings for the children's department.

"They've given a great workspace for these kids to enjoy their time," said Hausman, adding that a Friends used

The Literacy Center has furnishings with impressive laser-cut designs. That center's geared to preschool and early elementary children, and includes computer games that kids can play alone or with parents.

book sale continues noon to 5 p.m. today, Sunday, at the library on Central City Parkway between Warren and Ford.

The purchase includes computer carrels with benches to seat two. "We already had the computers that went along with them," she said. The section for grade schoolers now has two new comfortable chairs with a side table and new study tables.

The Literacy Center has furnishings with impressive laser-cut designs. That center's geared to preschool and early elementary children, and includes computer games that kids can play alone or with parents.

"We're trying to make it a cozy place for investigative learning," Hausman said. One dad this past week brought

along his laptop and got work done while his son was at the library.

"The kids really enjoy this," she said of the new furnishings which provide individual space and greater privacy while families work on the computers. There are six computer work stations in the children's area.

"I've even seen three kids crunched up together" on the new benches, she added.

"They are enhancing the continued needs of how we're serving the kids," said John Patane, library director, of the Friends group. "We're just very pleased that they made that donation."

HOLIDAY STORE HOURS: OPEN TODAY 11:00 AM TO 8:00 PM; TOMORROW 9:00 AM TO 10:00 PM.

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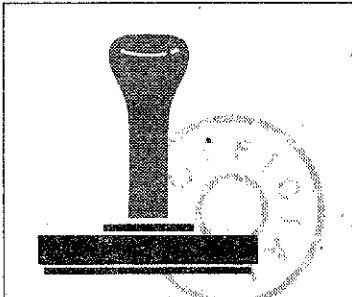
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Filter
DINE & ENTERTAINMENT

FOR THE RECORD

- B**
Harold E. Brear
 Brear, 90, died Nov. 30.
Mary Ann Bricker
 Bricker, 55, formerly of Bloomfield Village, died Nov. 27.
- C**
Jack H. Carr
 Carr, 98, died Nov. 29.
Linda Cothran
 Cothran, 58, of Livonia, died Nov. 27.
- D**
Nicholas R. Diana
 Diana, 24, died Nov. 25.
- E**
Rev. Steven M. Eggers
 Eggers, 50, died Dec. 2.
- H**
Florence V. Hulburt
 Hulburt, 88, of Clarkston, died Nov. 30.
- K**
Elizabeth Knapp
 Knapp, 94, of Canton, died Nov. 26.
Peter Kokenakes
 Kokenakes, 85, of Livonia, died Nov. 30.
- L**
Dorothy L. Lent
 Lent, 91, died Nov. 25.
- M**
Nancy H. Morrison
 Morrison, of Birmingham, died Nov. 26.
- N**
Ruth E. Nail
 Nail, 90, of Farmington Hills, died Nov. 23.
- O**
Joseph L. O'Connor
 O'Connor, 82, died Nov. 23.



For the Record appears in every edition of the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers. Complete paid obituaries can be found inside today's newspaper in Passages on page C4.

- Mary Ann Opalinski**
 Opalinski, 83, died Nov. 21.
- P**
Marcy M. Pagnani
 Pagnani, 88, of Farmington, died Nov. 17.
Carol Lynn Patterson
 Patterson, of Canton, died Nov. 16.
Patrick A. Porta
 Porta, 70, of Wayne, died Nov. 16.
- R**
Anthony "George" Retsel Jr.
 Retsel, of Waterford, died Dec. 2.
Lillian L.J. Rinman
 Rinman, 79, of Warren died Nov. 24.
- V**
Brent C. Verrot
 Verrot, 46, died Nov. 19.
- W**
Harriet Haynes Robison Weaver
 Weaver, 80, formerly of Birmingham, died Nov. 23.

Christmas play

Come experience the magic of Charles Dickens as Inspire Theatre presents a Christmas musical where stingy, mean-spirited Ebenezer Scrooge encounters his past, his present and then his future.

Feel the sadness, the regret and then the ultimate joy as Scrooge travels the journey that eventually transforms his lonely life into that of a brand-new man who learns the true meaning of Christmas.

Performances are at 7:30 p.m. Dec. 8, 9 and 10, and 3 p.m. Dec. 11, at Dearborn Evangelical Covenant Church, 18575 Outer Drive, between Ford and Cherry Hill, Dearborn.

Tickets are \$10 with a portion of each ticket going to local charities. For information or tickets, call Len Fisher at (734) 751-7057.

Christmas dinner

Gethsemane Missionary Baptist Church is inviting the community to a complementary Christmas dinner 3-7 p.m. Christmas Eve, Dec. 24, at the church 29066 Eton St., Westland.

Reservations can be made by calling (734) 721-2557 by Dec. 14. Transportation also is available upon request.

Retiree reunion

A Christmas party for former employees and retirees of Wayne County General Hospital

AROUND WESTLAND

will be held 5-9 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 6, at the Golden Corral buffet restaurant on Warren Road east of Newburgh. A private room has been reserved. For more information, call Patricia Ibbotson at (313) 561-0177.

Singers needed

Do you like singing Christmas and religious music? Kirk of Our Savior on Cherry Hill west of Wayne Road, Westland, is looking for singers for its adult (ages 13 and up) traditional choir for the Christmas season and beyond. All Christian faiths and all voice ranges are welcome. Rehearsals are at 7 p.m. Thursdays. For more information, call Tim at (734) 718-8733 or the church at (734) 728-1088.

Senior dinner dance

The Wayne Ford Civic League is hosting a senior dinner dance noon Sunday, Dec. 18, at the hall, 1645 N. Wayne Road. There will be a full buffet dinner, beer, wine, coffee and pop and dancing to the music from Solitaire.

Participants must be 60 years or older to attend. Tickets are \$8 for league members and \$10 for non-members. Memberships are on sale year round and are only \$5 for seniors. Tickets are available at the door. Call (734) 728-5010 for more information.

Christmas concert

The Westland Community Foundation will sponsor a holiday reception featuring the Glenn Singers from John Glenn High School 6-8 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 7, in the school's media center. The school is on Marquette west of Wayne Road.

Refreshments and hors d'oeuvres will be served. Those attending are asked to bring an unwrapped toy that will be given to The Salvation Army for children in need at Christmastime.

Please call (734) 595-7727 for a reservation.

Recycling guide

Looking for copies of the Michigan's Natural Resources and Environment: A Citizen's Guide?

You can find them in the office of state Sen. Laura M. Toy,

R-Livonia.

While the Legislature continues to address issues such as the importation of foreign waste and out-of-state trash and invasive species attacking our Great Lakes, there are things that every Michigan resident can do to help protect the state's environment.

The booklet contains information on nine natural resource topics and seven environmental topics, discussing the benefits, impacts and tips for what residents can do to enjoy and help protect Michigan's environment.

Residents of the 6th Senate District can contact Toy's office at (517) 373-1707 to obtain a free copy of Michigan's Natural Resources and Environment: A Citizen's Guide.

Share the warmth

Westland Shopping Center and Cotton Incorporated, the marketing and research company representing upland cotton, are sponsoring the Share the Warmth program which offers shoppers the opportunity to help comfort those affected by this year's hurricanes.

Shoppers need to present receipts from cotton merchandise purchases totaling \$150 or more to the Westland Shopping Center Customer Information Center between now and Dec. 23, and a new cotton blanket will be donated to the Salvation Army on the participating shopper's behalf. The cotton blankets will be distributed to those affected by the hurricanes.

For more information about Share the Warmth at Westland Shopping Center, call the Customer Information Center at (734) 421-0291.

Holiday party

Westland senior citizens are invited to the Holiday Extravaganza, a Christmas party, at the Westland senior Friendship Center, Thursday, Dec. 15.

Doors will open at 11:30 a.m., with the "fabulous feast" will be served at noon. There will be a chance to have pictures taken with Santa and Mrs. Claus, dancing to the music of the Tommie James Trio and gifts galore.

Tickets cost \$8 for members

and \$10 for guests. They're available at the Friendship center, 1119 N. Newburgh, Westland.

New Year's Eve

Tickets are now on sale for the Ushers Club's annual New Year's Eve dinner dance at Ss. Simon and Jude Church, 32500 Palmer, Westland. Tickets cost \$20 each and include reserved seating, party favors, snacks, mixers, beer, a three-meat buffet with side items, dancing to the music of The Goldtones and pizza shortly after midnight.

Tickets are limited and none will be sold after Dec. 27. To order them, call Sharlene or Curt Frizzell at (734) 425-6819.

Car donation

People with a car to donate can give it to Veterans Haven. The organization is accepting cars, running or not running, that are given to veterans to provide them with transportation to work, school of medical needs.

To date, the agency has given away more than 250 vehicles and three fully furnished mobile homes to needy veterans. To donate, call Veterans Haven at (734) 728-0527 or go to vetshaveninfo.org on the Internet.

Remembrance service

The R.G. & G.R. Harris Funeral Homes and Cremation Services of Livonia and Garden City will host their 14th annual Service of Remembrance on Dec. 5 and Dec. 6 for those families who have lost a loved one in this past year. At the service, family members will be invited to place an angel with their loved one's name on a tree where it will remain until after Jan. 1, 2006.

Helpful hints on surviving the holidays after a loss will be offered and refreshments will be offered after the service.

The service at the R.G. & G.R. Harris Funeral Home - Livonia Chapel, 15451 Farmington Road (just north of Five Mile), will be held at 7:30 p.m. on Monday, Dec. 5. Call (734) 422-6720 for details. The service at the R.G. & G.R. Harris Funeral Home - Garden City Chapel, 31551 Ford Road (just west of Merriman), will be at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 6. (734) 425-9200.

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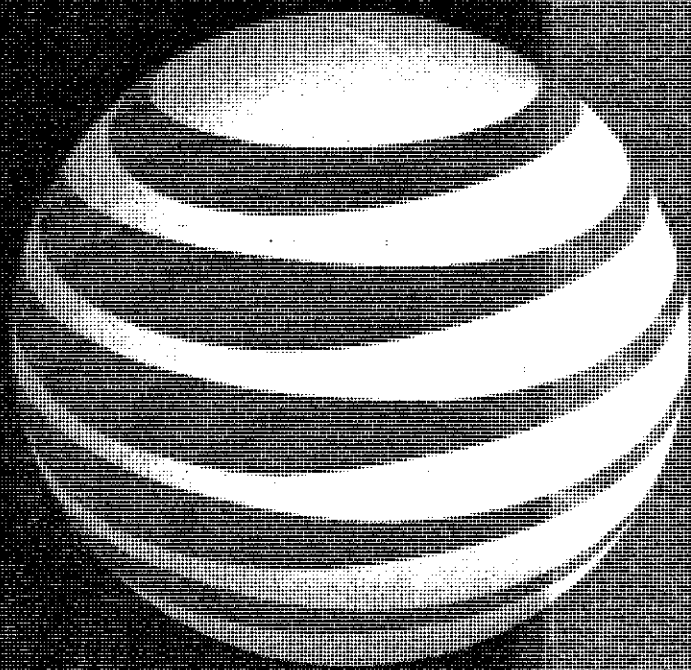
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Animal cops

Animal Planet's reluctant 'stars' to visit pet store

BY CAROL MARSHALL
STAFF WRITER

It wasn't too long ago that Mark Ramos was "the dog catcher." As an investigator for the Michigan Humane Society, for nine years, he's gone out on the streets of the Detroit area to look into hundreds of animal abuse cases every year. But Ramos has for the past three years enjoyed - and been baffled by - celebrity status, since he's become well-known to fans of The Animal Planet's *Animal Cops: Detroit*.

Now, everywhere he goes, he's asked to sign autographs

and talk about his experiences on the popular television show. Saturday he'll be on hand at a pet store in Canton to do just that.

"People tell me I'm a star, but I just don't believe that," Ramos said.

Ramos and his partner and costar Debby MacDonald will talk about their recent visit to New Orleans as part of the Humane Society's animal rescue efforts after the Gulf Coast hurricanes.

For several weeks, the team joined the national and international relief efforts, searching the areas by foot and by boat, in the hope of rescuing

lost, stray, and injured animals. Distributing food and water, providing medical care and comfort to pets in temporary shelters, MacDonald, Ramos and the rest of the team managed to save hundreds of pets and reunite a large number with their human companions.

"It's a fund raiser for the Michigan Humane Society," said Ted Linden, store manager at Pet Supplies Plus in Canton. "People are really excited to hear that the Animal Cops are coming here."

Linden, of Garden City, has watched the show and likes it.

"Basically if you're an animal lover, you'll like the show. And you can relate a little bit more to it when you see animals in Detroit being rescued," he said. "The idea



Mark Ramos, who has gained celebrity status as an investigator on The Animal Planet's 'Animal Cops: Detroit,' will visit Canton and discuss a recent trip to New Orleans as part of the Humane Society's animal rescue efforts after the Gulf Coast hurricanes.

behind the show is that the officers answer calls from locals who report animals that appear to be neglected or abused. They go into all sorts of situations, like the episode where they were investigating the drug dealers with alligators in the basement, or the show where they broke up dog fighting rings."

Each year, the MHS Cruelty Investigation Department handles an average of 4,000 cruelty cases revolving around dog fighting, pets exposed to the elements and animal neglect in the cities of Detroit, Hamtramck and Highland Park.

Working in collaboration with the Detroit Police, the investigators track down the offenders and bring them to justice.

"We've really worked hard to cultivate that relationship with the police department," Ramos said. "What they've come to realize is that most of the time, if there is animal abuse going on, there is other crime going on. If someone is cruel to an animal, chances are he's also abusing a person in the house. Other kinds of abuse are also associated with other illegal activities like drugs."

This time of year, most of the abuse reports deal with animals left out in the ele-



Michigan Humane Society investigator Debby MacDonald, who is also one of the stars of The Animal Planet's 'Animal Cops: Detroit,' will be signing autographs at the Canton Pet Supplies 'Plus' store, from noon to 2 p.m. on Dec. 10.

ments. And even though the investigation unit responds to some 4,000 calls per year, only about 50 tickets per year are written.

"What we really focus on is education. A lot of people don't realize how dangerous it is to leave their animals out with no protection," Ramos said.

Michigan Humane Society volunteers will be selling official Animal Cops T-shirts and sweatshirts at the store in conjunction with MacDonald's and Ramos' visit. The shirts are priced

from \$10-\$26. Autographed Animal Cops photos will also be on sale for \$5. Proceeds go directly to the Michigan Humane Society.

The Animal Cops will appear at the Canton Pet Supplies "Plus" store, located 43665 Ford Road, Dec. 10, from noon to 2 p.m. For more information, call the store at (734) 981-9191. For more information on the MHS, visit www.michiganhumane.org.

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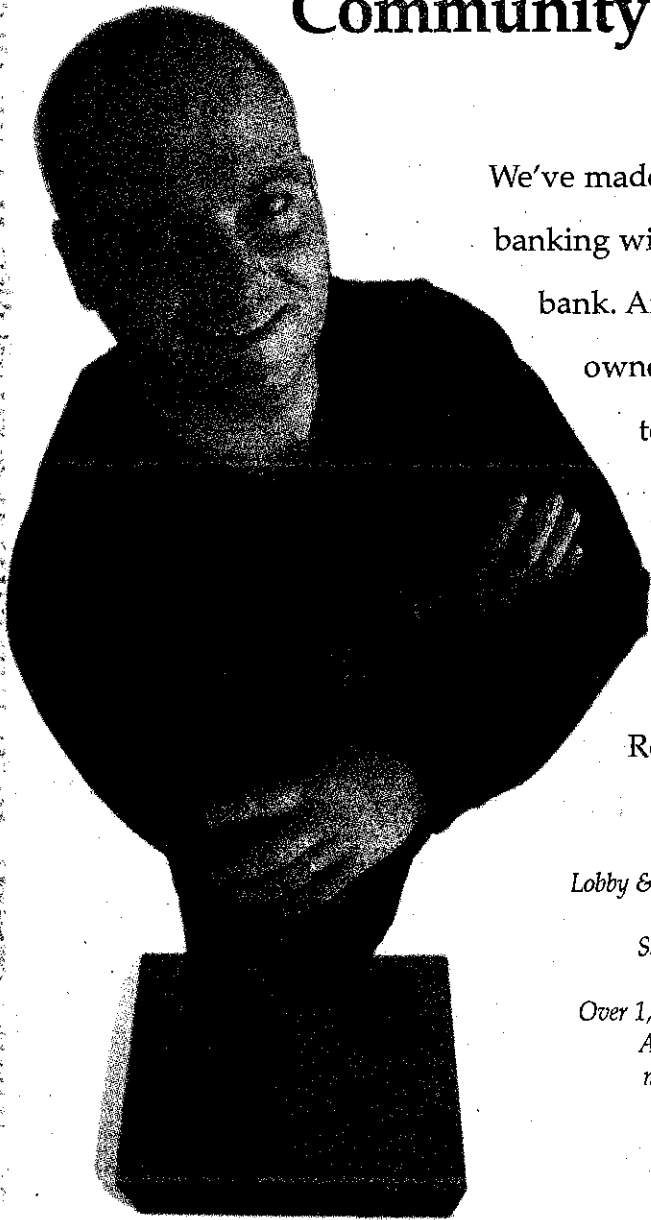
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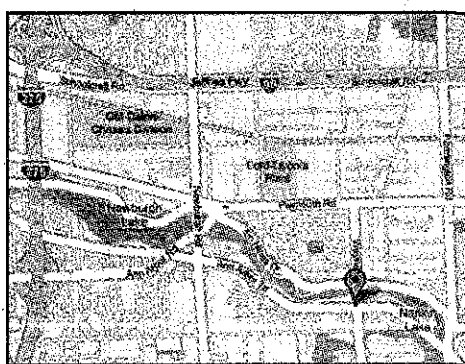


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Time's not right for Legacy plan

The Livonia Board of Education is expected to vote Monday on the Legacy Initiative, but it doesn't need to.

School board members had said they'd decide on this controversial K-4, 5-6 proposal by the end of this month. However, the district's self-imposed deadline still hasn't provided the community enough time to understand this plan, explain its opposition and explore other options. Just as important, there hasn't been enough time for the district to fully flesh out details on how it could work to close some schools but keep the K-6 model — something that two-thirds of residents surveyed supported and something many now say they prefer.

Yes, the community has had several opportunities to present their views and many have. And we do commend the board for offering those lengthy hearings and selecting large gathering sites. However, the board has created some of its own problems by having its members participate in the Demographics Committee, which deliberated and came up with this plan.

We'll take the word of board members that they never had a quorum of four people at any demographics committee meetings, which would have violated the Open Meetings Act. If there are no sign-in sheets or attendance records of those meetings — and officials say they don't exist — it seems no actual violation can be proven, or disproven.

Still, it's certainly appropriate to ask, in hindsight, whether putting any board members on this committee was in the best interest of either the board or the district. They worked on the plan and, it seems, certainly have an investment in the plan now that it's going to them for a vote.

While board members have had months to learn about the plan, the Livonia schools community has only had six weeks to try to get a handle on this proposal and many, many people still have legitimate questions.

They want to know why selling currently vacant land isn't a temporary solution to allow time for things to be worked out. What happens to closed school buildings and could some of that land also be sold? How will those upper elementary schools handle the expected volume of students? Do the added busing costs — in staff and equipment, and in time spent by kids — make sense for the limited amount saved? How much will unspecified moving costs and other one-time expenses cut into, anticipated savings?

The school district is certainly at a crossroads with its community, and this plan has divided many in this town. We haven't heard a lot of community support for this K-4 model. Maybe that would change with a better understanding — by the rest of the community — for keeping the K-6 model while closing some schools. But that would take time.

The district needs to do something. However, in the face of declining student numbers, it needs the community's support to make such a massive change work and that support just doesn't seem to be there. The time isn't right to approve this plan.

Racism, classism: Root causes

I have followed the stories concerning the Wonderland Mall rehabilitation and the Legacy Initiative in the *Observer* with great interest. Your coverage seems comprehensive, yet in one critical area, it falls flat.

The real reason why so many people are opposed to both plans is simple and ugly: racism and classism. This should come as no surprise considering this city was born out of racism, reached its current predicament due to racism, and will collapse eventually — unless we do something about it now — because of racism.

The good citizens of Livonia who are outspoken in their opposition to these changes are hiding behind buzz words and transparent justifications: "45 minute bus rides," "concerns about five-six schools," "inconvenience" and "inadequate savings" are all smoke and mirrors. The real concerns are clear — they simply don't want their children schooled with people of color or with people from lower socio-economic classes. Or as they are more often referred to by some of our citizens: "the apartment people," "transients," or my personal favorite — "southsiders."

I suspect the city council and the school board, in their hearts, both agree with me. But, being political animals they decided to dance around the issue to avoid as much controversy as possible.

The board knows the district is slowly dying. They know that the downward enrollment trends will not be reversed by building field houses and computer labs even though that was their pitch. We are trapped in a situation that simply isn't conducive for new, young families with lots of kids. Affordable starter housing isn't available here and it won't be unless the market takes a serious dive. So, instead of opting for the one solution that would cure the dilemma — opening our boundaries for students outside of the district — they created a band-aid, a temporary fix.

Why the board shies away from the only realistic solution is obvious, although ironic. Don't they realize that this opportunity to open our boundaries was given to us by our former governor Republican John Engler? The man who earned a huge majority of the

votes here in Livonia every time he ran? The voters asked for this option, they hustled for it, they reveled in his victories and his reforms. Why not give to them what they asked for? Oh, never mind. We all know why.

Hal Downs
Livonia

An apology and a question

I wish to apologize to the LPS Foundation, its board members and most importantly to the contributors into this foundation for comments I made at the Nov. 28 school board meeting. In my zeal to find a skeleton in the school board's closet, I am now pleased to say that I found a diamond in the rough. This foundation deserves our applause and support.

My questions regarding how fourth (grade) to fifth transitions will be done and how to reduce the 5-6 school sizes remain unanswered. It is my hope our school board is not also apologizing to the community for actions based on its poor information.

Bill Williamson
Livonia

Stick to facts of plan

I am responding to Cathy Klockner and several other opponents of the Legacy Initiative who have written letters recently. While I agree with some of the points that have been made in opposition to the proposal, I think we need to look at the positives and stop allowing our emotions to rule our heads.

Regarding busing: I find it interesting that Ms. Klockner and others have multiplied a maximum one-way bus ride of 45 minutes by 2 and arrived at a two-hour bus ride for our children. Unless some new math with which I am unfamiliar is being used, that estimate inflates the maximum time by 33 percent. In addition, calling this a "two-hour bus ride" implies that the children are on a bus for that length of time successively rather than for two separate rides.

Ms. Klockner also mentions that the fifth- and sixth-graders being bused "halfway across our city" are 9- and 10-year-olds. Since the Livonia Public Schools generally discourages double promotions and many parents choose to delay their children's start in kindergarten, these ages are understated. My

older daughter started kindergarten as a 4-year-old (with a September birthday) and, not only is she one of the younger children in her class, but even she was barely still 9 when she started fifth grade. Most of the fifth- and sixth-graders start the year as 10- and 11-year-olds and (barring special circumstances) all of them are at least 12 when they complete sixth grade.

Parents, please remember the facts when responding to the Legacy Initiative proposal. We need to separate our emotions and gut reactions from the stark reality of declining enrollment and funding and offer sound, specific alternatives to address the issues. Our kids deserve the best school system we can afford. Let's work together to create a plan we can all get behind.

Karen Brehob MacKenzie
Livonia

'Bubble' kids aren't just numbers

In life, everything seems to be assigned a number. We have numbers for our driver's licenses, insurance cards, credit cards, video memberships and bank accounts. The list goes on and on. But I am saddened to see that my daughter, at age 9, has just become another number to the Livonia Board of Education.

As a fourth-grader, my daughter is one of the "bubble" children, the large group of students whose enrollment exceeds other grades in Livonia. Over these past weeks, as the Legacy Initiative has been communicated to the public, I have been appalled at learning how my young daughter will be sacrificed if this plan is approved.

According to your *Observer* article Thursday, a personnel director from LPS said at Monday's meeting that "the first year or two might be tight — particularly in upper elementary or middle schools." It is comments such as this that have led me to believe that my daughter and all current fourth- and fifth-grade students will be the children hardest hit by this plan.

Children are not just numbers. So here is my message to the Board of Education: Before you approve a plan this drastic, every attempt at cutting costs elsewhere must be made and must be communicated to the public. Is anyone looking at the group health care legislation that could save the district money?

Let's think outside the box.

These fourth-grade students are human beings! They are not just a large number or "bubble" that will "even out" over the next few years. Don't just consider what will be best for future years, do what is best for our fourth-graders now! Don't let them get lost in the shuffle. They are important and they should not be a sacrifice in this flawed plan!

My daughter is not just a number. She is a little girl who loves to dance, play with her friends, read and laugh. She loves turtles, cartoons and her family. And she loves her school. Please don't take that away from her!

Annette Kubeshesky
Livonia

Fast food feeds epidemic for kids

Today's children are overwhelmed with choices from countless fast food chains and unfortunately, it shows. According to the American Heart Association's statistical sourcebook on obesity, in the United States, approximately 30 percent of children ages 6-11 are considered overweight.

There's no doubt in my mind that fast food is one of the major contributors to this epidemic.

Between 1970 and 1980, the number of fast-food outlets in the United States increased from about 30,000 to 140,000 and sales increased by about 300 percent.

Being a mother of four boys I feel that it's my duty to protect my children from an unhealthy future. So I've committed to a couple of simple household rules that I feel will make a long-term impact. Trips to fast-food restaurants are a rare occasion and soda-pop is a treat rather than a daily beverage. It may not seem like much but it cuts down on a lot of fat and sugar in their diets.

I think it's important to let children know that choosing good food will make them feel better and live longer. What's the old saying? You are what you eat. Children today are living proof of that.

It's also important to remember that children learn by example. Parents need to show off their own good choices which, in the long-run, will serve a dual purpose — good health for parents and children.

Shari Davidok
Livonia

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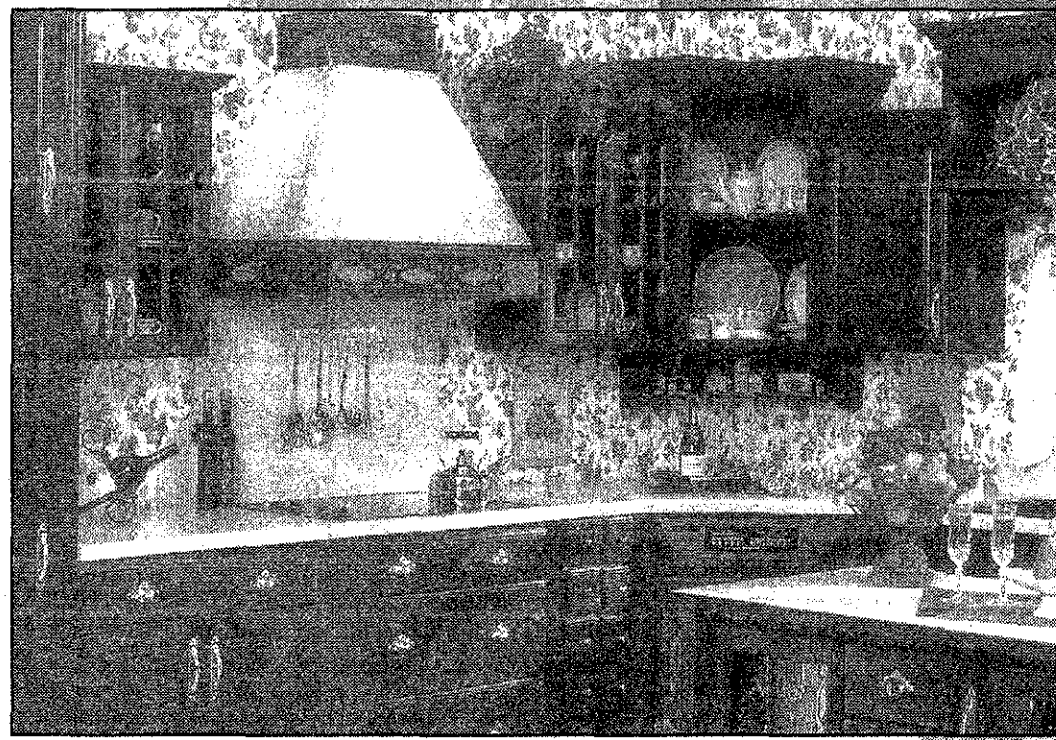
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Kilpatrick tells journalists it's time to come together

BY ALEX LUNDBERG
STAFF WRITER

Detroit Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick said residents of the entire region are going to have to shelve their differences and come together if southeast Michigan is going to thrive as a vibrant urban area in the coming decades.

Kilpatrick, fresh from what many considered a surprise victory in his bid for re-election last month, was the keynote speaker at the annual *Observer & Eccentric* Journalist of the Year breakfast.

In her introduction, *Observer & Eccentric Newspapers*' Executive Editor Susan Rosiek said Kilpatrick has had a far-reaching career since leaving college, working as a teacher and being elected to the state House of Representatives before becoming the youngest mayor in Detroit's history.

"In that editorial endorsement of Aug. 10, 2001, the *Detroit Free Press* called Kwame Kilpatrick the candidate of potential," Rosiek said. "... a lot has happened since that editorial was written and once again as many believe we find ourselves, city and suburbs, at odds."

Kilpatrick said the city of Detroit stands at a crossroads, poised for a sea change in how it and the state has to look at what they do and who they are.

"We've been inextricably entwined in the manufacturing industry. All of us here have had relatives working in that indus-



BILL BRESLER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Detroit Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick was the keynote speaker at the *Observer & Eccentric* Newspapers' Journalist of the Year breakfast at the Townsend Hotel in Birmingham.

try," he said. "But that's gone forever. Analysts have been saying for the past 50 years that we're in a cyclical downturn. We have to start talking about how we're going to live for the next 50 years."

One of the problems with moving ahead, Kilpatrick said, is that the region has been conning itself into believing there isn't a race problem.

"Everybody wants everybody else to get along," Kilpatrick said.

"We need a project, one that's more important than a good feeling."

He said it's time for everyone on both sides of Eight Mile to acknowledge that race is an issue. When times are good - such as

during the 1990s - he said the problem masks itself. When things aren't going so well, the mask drops.

"When the economy is going to hell the old emotions come out," Kilpatrick said.

MEET THE MAYOR

- Kwame M. Kilpatrick, 35 B.S., political science, Florida A&M University
- Juris doctor, Detroit College of Law
- Former middle school teacher; member, Michigan House of Representatives
- Wife: Carlita, three sons.

Illustrating the point about how people don't have to like each other to work together, he referenced a trip he took to Israel a few years ago. The delegation met with Israelis and Palestinians during the visit and neither group bothered to hide their antipathy toward each other. But, Kilpatrick said, both realized that tourism was their No. 1 industry and resolved to work together.

O&E President and Publisher Richard Aginian advised the mayor to sell assets like the Detroit Zoo, Cobo Hall and the city lighting system to help the city's growing budget deficit.

Kilpatrick said it wasn't as easy as that.

"In order to sell something like lighting you need a buyer," he

said. "No one wants to buy that. It costs the city \$10 million a year for lighting but we're getting it at wholesale cost. If we sell it to someone we'll be paying retail."

While absolutely no one wants to purchase Cobo, he said the offers that have come in for the Detroit Zoo property so far are too low for the value of the land and, not surprisingly, include plans more lucrative than a public zoo.

The only echo of the contentious and sometimes bruising race for the mayor's office surfaced when the mayor was asked if he was willing to apologize for a statement he made during the first mayoral debate about the use rate of drugs like ecstasy and acid in the Birmingham and Bloomfield Hills school districts.

Kilpatrick said there was no reason to apologize since the statement was true. He explained his comment was the result of being incensed by his opponent's mention of character education and felt the need to respond.

"It was not my intent to dog kids but to point out that all kids need help," he said. "In Detroit, kids do a lot of 'X.' There are messed up kids in Detroit, but there are also messed up kids in Birmingham too."

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