

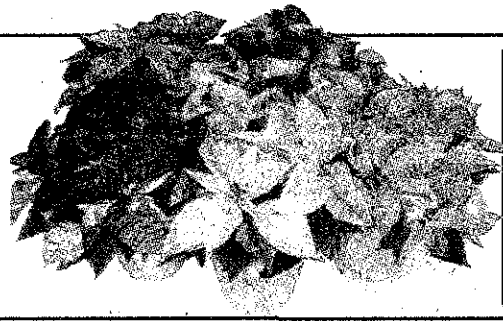
Only the real important stuff

Pure Picks yearly review
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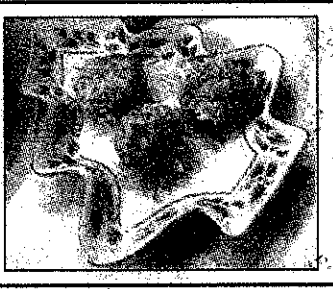
Gifts for the garden lover

AT HOME, PAGE B1



Family recipe collection goes from gift to book

TASTE - PAGE B6



THURSDAY
December 15, 2005

WESTLAND Observer

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TOM HAWLEY | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Ronaele Bowman talks about her 13 years as director of Westland Youth Assistance program. She will leave the job on Dec. 22.

Youth Assistance director lauded for work with young people

BY DARRELL CLEM
STAFF WRITER

Hundreds of Westland youths who seemed destined for trouble – possibly even jail – have made a fresh start through a program that Ronaele Bowman supervises.

"I hope that people think of me as someone who really cares about the young people of Westland," she said.

What Bowman should realize is that parents, youngsters, judges, police officers and city leaders have long thought of her as just that.

And, they are saddened to see Bowman leave her job after 13 years as the first full-time director for the city's Youth Assistance Program.

"I don't think there could have been a

better choice for that job than Ronaele Bowman," Mayor Sandra Cicirelli said.

Bowman, a 63-year-old Livonia resident, will leave her job Dec. 22 and turn the reins over to Paul Motz, her longtime deputy director.

"I most definitely think that the Youth Assistance Program and Ronaele have made a difference in Westland," Cicirelli said. "This program benefits kids and addresses the needs of the entire family."

George Riley, a Westland Fire Department retiree, started the fledgling Youth Assistance Program on a part-time basis before Bowman was hired as the first full-time director in 1992.

Since then, 2,700 troubled youths ages 7 to 16 have been referred to the program by police, courts, schools and parents for such problems as truancy, fighting, retail theft,

substance abuse and vandalism.

Bowman and her two full-time employees arrange for youngsters to attend classes that teach them to make better life choices. Youths also are paired with volunteer adult mentors for quality time ranging from sports events to a heart-to-heart talk in the park.

The program also offers classes to help parents better understand and deal with the problems their children are having.

CARING SPIRIT

"Ronaele cares so deeply for the families and for the children that are in the program," said Westland businesswoman Margaret Harlow, an original member of the Youth Assistance board of directors. "I

PLEASE SEE YOUTH, A9

District hangs on to reserves even with less revenue

BY SUE MASON
STAFF WRITER

The Wayne-Westland Community Schools will still have to tap into its reserves to meet expenses, but not as much as school officials had originally expected.

That was the message Gary Martin delivered in a budget amendment presented to the school board this month.

"It's our third year of deficit spending," said Martin, the district's deputy superintendent of administrative and business services.

The district had initially budgeted \$113.07 million in revenue and \$118.6 million in expenditures for fiscal 2005-06, but less than expected revenues and lower than expected expenses trimmed those numbers to \$112.3 million and \$116.9 million, respectively.

The drop in revenue is due in large part to declining enrollment. The district lost more than 300 students this year.

Those losses, however, are offset by a drop of \$1.6 million in expenses.

"We had a lower salary base than anticipated, but utilities we anticipate will be higher, with increases in electric and gas," Martin said.

The biggest savings was in salaries and benefits and reflects changes in health care coverage

worked out with its unions. However, the district is feeling the pinch with rising utility costs and expects to pay an additional \$735,000 this year.

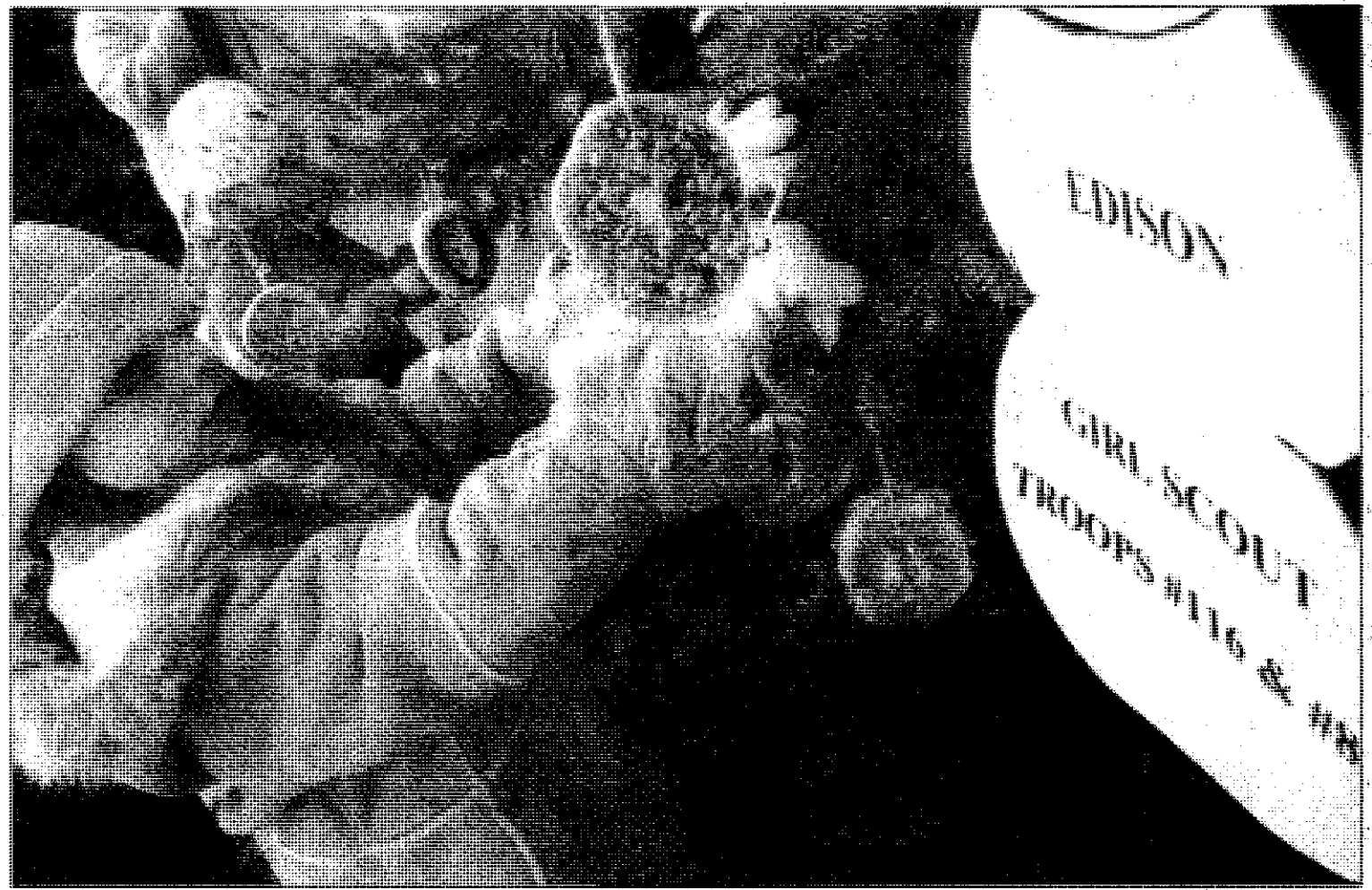
Martin also told the board that the combination of a better-than-anticipated beginning surplus and the improvements reflected in the budget amendment, the district should finish the year with \$13.1 million in equity.

Keeping a close eye on expenses has helped the district hang on to its surplus, especially during three years of no increases or rollbacks in state school aid. This year, the state increased the amount paid per student by \$175, but districts like Wayne-Westland have contended that a vast majority of that money is being eaten up by escalating health and retirement costs.

But as good as that looks, that \$13.1 million is only enough money to keep the schools open 1 1/2 months, if revenue sources disappear, according to Martin.

"Even with the positive numbers, revenue is still down \$975,000 and still represents a \$4.6 million deficit," Martin said. "And the next couple years are forecasted to be difficult."

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TOM HAWLEY | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

A holiday tradition

Six-year-old Stephanie Chapman of Edison School's Girl Scout Troop 793, hangs a homemade ornament on the pine trees behind Westland City Hall. She joined youngsters from around Westland who brought a festive air to the pine trees between Westland City Hall last week, joining Mayor Sandra Cicirelli for her annual tree decorating event. For more photographs, see page A3.

ATHENA nominees needed

BY SUE MASON
STAFF WRITER

Do you know a man or woman who has assisted women in realizing their full leadership potential?

Have they demonstrated excellence, creativity and initiative in their business or profession and contributed time and talent to help improve the quality of life for others in the community?

Then that someone could be the next Westland ATHENA Award recipient.

Nominations are currently being accepted for the award, which will be presented at the Westland ATHENA

Award Chocolate Fantasy Evening Saturday, Feb. 11.

Sponsored by the Women of Westland, State Sen. Laura Toy, R-Livonia, and Mayor Sandra Cicirelli, the Chocolate Fantasy Evening is a chocolate lover's dream come true.

This is the second year for the sweet event which honors the recipient of the ATHENA Award, and organizers are hoping that word has gotten out about the event. Last year, 240 people attended.

"We'd like to have that many, if not

PLEASE SEE ATHENA, A5

Man faces charges in vehicle thefts

BY SUE MASON
STAFF WRITER

Westland police detectives are waiting to see what a 44-year-old man told Livonia police about the theft of numerous recreational vehicles from homes, businesses and storage facilities in Westland.

The man was arrested by Livonia police last week, and following his arrest, admitted to taking the vehicles, Livonia police Lt. Greg Winn said.

The thefts happened at various times and date back to March-April, according to Westland police

PLEASE SEE THEFTS, A5

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Volume 41
Number 58



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Vigil connects grieving families

Candle-lighting honors children lost too soon

BY BRAD KADRICH
STAFF WRITER

Paul and Michelle Donnelly arrived in Plymouth from their Howell home Sunday night hoping to find something that would allow them to begin the healing process after Michelle suffered a late-term miscarriage in August.

With three children and life rambling on around them, the Donnellys felt like they hadn't been able to really grieve their fourth lost child in eight years. Paul's sister read online about The Compassionate Friends' candlelight vigil, held Sunday night in downtown Plymouth's Kellogg Park, and suggested the healing could start there.

And so it did, as the Donnelly family — Paul and Michelle, with 7-year-old Sam, 6-year-old Max and 2-year-old Ava — joined hundreds of others to remember children lost too soon.

"We really haven't grieved yet, because life keeps moving," said Michelle Donnelly, who suffered late-term miscarriages in 1997, two in 2001 and another in August 2005. "I hope this event will help us do that."

That's the idea behind the ceremony, sponsored annually by The Compassionate Friends-Livonia chapter, one of some 600 TCF chapters around the country. The ceremony included the dedication of a tree decorated with ornaments with the children's names, a candle-light vigil, a reading of the children's names, poetry and songs.

The local candle-lighting came in conjunction with the worldwide candle-lighting. The idea is that, as candles burn down in one time zone, they're lit in another, creating a 24-hour memorial.

Recognized in communities around the world, International Children's Memorial Day is already officially sanctioned by the U.S. Congress.

It's an event Pat and Paula Gibbons of Canton have attended since their son, Dan, died in an automobile accident four years ago. They were at Sunday's vigil, holding their candles and listening as the names of some 500 children were read.

"You just want to hear your



Hundreds of people turned out for the annual candlelight vigil sponsored by The Compassionate Friends-Livonia chapter, conducted Sunday evening in downtown Plymouth's Kellogg Park.



Amy Weaver of Canton remembers son Ian during Sunday's candlelight vigil.



Marcia Rodeheffer, with daughters Rachel and Morgan, honor the memory of son and brother Grant Rodeheffer. Marcia and her daughters attended Sunday's Compassionate Friends candlelight vigil with her spouse Craig and daughter Mallory. The Rodeheffer family is from Commerce Township.

child's name," Paula Gibbons said. "I've come a long way in four years, and Compassionate Friends has been a big part of my healing. Time makes things a little easier to deal with."

Pat and Paula Gibbons are like many of the hundreds gathered Sunday — repeat visitors there to give and

receive solace and comfort. It's part of what makes the group so successful at what it does.

"We get old-timers who come back for this event, even when they don't come to the meetings any more," said Gail Lafferty of Livonia, the chapter treasurer who lost her son, Max, 10 years

ago. "It doesn't surprise me, because this is so special."

For more information on The Compassionate Friends, call or e-mail Gail Lafferty, angel4gail@aol.com or (734) 981-4528.

bkadrich@hometownlife.com
(734) 459-2700

AROUND WESTLAND

New administrator

The Village of Our Savior's Manor in Westland has a new administrator.

Carrie Moon-Dupree, Presbyterian Villages of Michigan regional vice president, has named Kesha Akridge as the administrator of the senior living community made up of 49 government-subsidized apartments.

"It's a great benefit to our organization and our residents to have such continuity," said Moon-Dupree on Akridge moving from administrative assistant to the position of administrator at the village. "Kesha knows the residents and the community and will be an excellent administrator of The Village of Our Savior's Manor."

Before joining PVM, Akridge worked at Bank One as a reconciliation clerk. She earned her bachelor of arts degree in business administration at Davenport University.

A resident of Inkster, Akridge also serves as chairperson for Starfish Family Services Early Head Start Policy Council in Westland.

Presbyterian Villages of Michigan, headquartered in Southfield, is a faith-based, non-profit, multi-site system that has served seniors of all faiths since 1945.

PVM currently has more than a dozen senior living communities, including continuing care retirement communities (apartments, assisted living and skilled nursing all on one campus), subsidized senior housing and market rate senior housing.

PVM also sponsors community outreach and health ministry programs, including parish nursing, wellness programs and home health care. For more information on Presbyterian Villages of Michigan, visit its Web site at www.pvm.org.

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.

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.

NAACP meeting

The NAACP Western Wayne County Branch will have its annual *Let's Get Acquainted* meeting at 7 p.m. this evening (Dec. 15) at the Smith Chapel A.M.E. Church, 3505 Walnut St., in Inkster.

The meeting is open to those who want to become involved in or learn more about the NAACP and the local branch. Refreshments will be served after the meeting.

For more information call (734) 223-1739.

Las Vegas Party

St. Bernardine Men's Club is sponsoring a Pinochle/Euchre Card Party on Fridays, Dec. 16, Jan. 6, 13 and 27 and Feb. 3, 17 and 24, at the church, southwest corner Ann Arbor Trail and Merriman in Westland.

Participants don't need a partner to play. Snacks and soft drinks are included in the \$5 charge. Games start at 7:30 p.m.

Surplus food

The city of Westland will distribute surplus federal food 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 22, at the Dorsey Community Center, where city residents north of Michigan Avenue should pick up their food.

Residents south of Michigan Avenue always pick up their commodities on the third Monday of each month at St. James United Methodist Church, 30055 Annapolis between Henry Ruff and Middlebelt.

Seniors in Taylor Towers should call their building manager for information about their day of distribution.

Food distributed in December will include beef stew, apple juice and instant potatoes. For more information call the Dorsey Center's surplus food hotline at (734) 595-0366.

The program is administered by the Wayne County Office of Senior Services.

Share the warmth

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

Shoppers can 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, call the center's Customer Information Center at (734) 421-0291.

CORRECTION

An editorial in the Dec. 8 issue of the *Observer* should have listed the proposed high school requirements of the Michigan Merit Curriculum as follows:

- One year each for algebra I, algebra II, geometry and one additional math class.
- Four years of English language arts.
- One year each for biology, physics or chemistry, plus one additional science class.
- Three years of social science, including civics and economics.
- One year of health or physical education.
- One year of fine arts.
- Skills tests.

The state Board of Education was to discuss the proposal of the state superintendent Tuesday.

WESTLAND Observer

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Canton woman shot, killed by ex-boyfriend

BY CAROL MARSHALL
STAFF WRITER

Police investigators say there is no evidence that Gina Marie Belanger ever saw the gun that fired the four bullets into her chest. The 36-year-old woman was on her way to her Canton home Monday afternoon. As she pulled into the driveway in front of her apartment on Honeycomb Circle off Joy Road, she chatted on her cell phone with her boyfriend, who was inside waiting for her.

"I'm pulling into the driveway now," she said, according to police. "I'll see you soon."

But right after she hung up the phone, police said Belanger's former boyfriend, 43-year-old Marlin Neil Hoffman, who was hiding and waiting for her in the parking lot, shot bullets from a Glock 9 mm handgun he had purchased that morning in a Royal Oak gun store. She fell to the ground and as she looked up toward him, he shot three more bullets into her chest, police said.

POLICE SUMMONED

Neighbors who heard the gunshots called Canton police at 5:42 p.m. The former Westland resident was taken to St. Mary Mercy Hospital in Livonia, where she was pronounced dead. Less than an hour later, Hoffman turned a gun on himself, shot himself in the head, and died just before 10:30 p.m.

Linda Opal, Belanger's neighbor at the Crossings of Canton apartment complex, said she arrived home from work to find police officials working near the carport where she normally parks.

"The police were all over. There were about 10 cars, a couple of fire trucks and that big command center. They told me not to park there because it was a crime scene," Opal said.

It had been about six months since Belanger and Hoffman ended their yearlong romance, according to Canton Police Sgt. Rick Pomorski. They were both professionals - she a licensed social worker, and he a representative at Pathway Financial in Southfield. Neither of them had been in trouble with the law. There had never been any calls to the police regarding domestic violence. There is no personal protection order on file. "If she ever told anyone she was afraid of him, we haven't found that person," Pomorski said.

She had moved on with her life, according to police, and had for three or four months been seeing someone new. Hoffman had been staying briefly with his mother at her residence in Walled Lake, but he recently purchased a condominium and was in the process of moving into his new home, Pomorski said. There were no particular hard feelings, and in fact not long before the murder-suicide, the couple had got together a few times, but Belanger ended the relationship abruptly days before the murder, he added.

"(Hoffman's) mother had said that the two had recently rekindled the relationship," he said. But something had gone horribly wrong before the afternoon of Dec. 12.

According to police, Hoffman obtained a purchase permit for a handgun that morning. Before noon, he bought the gun, and by noon was in Livonia, where he stopped to see a friend.

'NOT CLEAR TO US'

"It's not clear to us why he went there at this time," Livonia Police Lt. Greg Winn said. Hoffman hadn't seen the friend in years, but had found him at his place of business, ABC Dental on Farmington between Seven Mile and Eight Mile.

He was there for nearly four hours, talking to his old friend about his bout with depression, according to Winn. Hoffman left ABC Dental at about 4 p.m., and according to police went to Canton and shot Belanger. He then returned to ABC Dental just before 6 p.m., and again spoke to his old friend. Hoffman told his friend he had a gun and wanted to shoot himself, according to Winn. The friend tried to stop him, but Hoffman walked out of the office, into a hallway, and pulled the trigger of his handgun, firing a bullet into his head.

Livonia police were called to the scene at 5:55 p.m.



Youngsters made the ornaments that decorated the trees.



Tree decorating participants like 1-year-old Paige Farrar met with Santa Claus after decorating the trees and singing carols with Mayor Sandra Cicirelli.



PHOTOS BY TOM HOFFMEYER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Eight-year old Devin Gibson of Cub Scout Pack 1526 reaches as high as he can to place an ornament on one of the pine trees in need of decorating in Westland's civic complex.

Kids dress up trees for holiday

The pine trees around Westland City Hall are dressed to the T for the holidays, thanks to school children and scout groups that gathered with Mayor Sandra Cicirelli for her annual Bringing the Holidays with the Mayor event.

There were 16 trees in need of some holiday trimmings and 15 groups up to the task, decorating the trees with their homemade ornaments. One resourceful group - Cub Scout Pack 1526 - brought a ladder to reach the higher branches of the trees.

And the decorations ranged from Santa

Clause dressed up with glitters to pine cones and bagels coated with birdseed.

The more than 400 children also joined Cicirelli in singing Christmas carols before heading inside the Bailey Recreation Center where they were treated to hot chocolate and cookies.

They also found a surprise special guest - Santa Claus - waiting to meet with them.

The tree decorating event was just one of several holiday happenings geared to youngsters in the community that's hosted by the mayor.

Students decorate trees at credit union

Students at Wayne Memorial High School have put their Christmas tree decorating skills to the test as part of a contest sponsored by the Wayne-Westland Federal Credit Union.

The credit union has 18 pine trees around its building on Wayne Road south of Cherry Hill and decided to invite students at Wayne Memorial and John Glenn High School to decorate the trees.

John Glenn declined to participate, but Wayne Memorial accepted the challenge. The 14 trees were numbered and assigned to 14 different groups of students with two-four students in each group.

All decorations are being provided by the student teams, while the credit union is sup-

plying the electricity for lights.

The students are decorating the trees in hopes of winning a \$1,000 cash prize. The winning team's class will receive a cash prize of \$2,000 for the class or school.

"Even with the frigid weather we have been having, the students decorating the trees look like they are having so much fun," said Thelma Dasho, the credit union CEO. "Many of the trees have homemade decorations with school or class themes."

Dasho admitted that seeing the students made her want to decorate a tree herself.

The winning team will be announced on Monday, Dec. 19.

The trees will be lit every night until Jan. 6.

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OE 639774

Sharing his view: McCotter praises Iraqi elections

BY JULIE BROWN
STAFF WRITER

This week's elections mean that Iraq will be a fully sovereign, popularly elected country, according to U.S. Rep. Thaddeus McCotter, R-Livonia.

"It won't be pretty, but have you been to Cook County lately?" he asked during a Tuesday appearance at the Plymouth A.M. Rotary Club.

If the U.S. troops are perceived as occupiers, the democratic Iraqi government will ask the U.S. to leave, the Republican said in response to a question from consultant Sam Kennedy.



McCotter

"I think we've achieved most that we can achieve. Things are moving in the right direction," McCotter said of the Middle East, citing elections in Egypt and other progress. He acknowledged that President George W. Bush hasn't presented his views well: "The president does not express this well."

McCotter answered a number of questions from Rotarians during the morning meeting at the Plymouth

Cultural Center. "I'm fascinated by what people in the district think is important as opposed to the District of Columbia," he said.

Accountant Bill Pratt asked about money siphoned from Michigan to other parts of the country. "We continue to lose population," McCotter said, noting the state's congressional number is down to 15 and could drop by one. "Mercifully, maybe it'll be mine," he said, drawing laughs from the audience.

He said Sens. Carl Levin and Debbie Stabenow as Democrats are in the minority party now which limits their role. "It's difficult. It's a num-

bers game."

Occupational therapist/health educator Debra Madonna asked about job prospects for Michigan's young people. McCotter, a 1983 Catholic Central High graduate, said about half his class has left the state. His son wants to be an automotive engineer, a field with an uncertain future.

"What do you tell him?" McCotter said. "Thirty years ago, you'd be very happy." The congressman said Michigan needs to study what worked for other states when their industries, such as textiles in Massachusetts, ended. "Education will be the key,"

he said, adding that other states compete for jobs as well as foreign countries.

"This is vastly different than any cyclical thing you've seen before. In the Industrial Age, Michigan was on the winning side." He criticized General Motors management for support of the Chinese government, which McCotter said oppresses its workers.

"There is no moral accountability to your fellow American citizens."

The Republican Party's as much to blame as is the Clinton administration, he added.

McCotter is opposed to the current pension bill, noting a

lot of businesses want to shed that cost. He doesn't want government Hurricane Katrina relief to be a bailout for insurance companies, and favors limiting rebuilding, not on the scale of a Taj Mahal.

Mississippi and Alabama need aid, too, he said. McCotter wants an accounting of emergency preparedness money in New Orleans.

He was introduced by Rotarian Beth Stewart, whose husband is a state representative from Plymouth.

"Thaddeus is doing a great job for us," said Beth Stewart, director of the Plymouth Historical Museum. "We appreciate his work here."

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Back Pain?

Westland, MI - According to a recently released back pain relief report, most back pain sufferers have no idea how to eliminate their pain. Some use heat, others ice. From sleeping on the floor, to pillows underneath the legs, back pain relief techniques vary. But thanks to a free report, local back pain sufferers finally know exactly what to do. To get a copy of the free "Back Pain Relief Report", call toll-free, 1-866-744-2225. (Toll-free, 24 hour recorded message)

AARP seeks volunteers

AARP Tax-Aide is looking for volunteers for tax counseling positions. AARP Tax-Aide is a free tax counseling/preparation service offered to middle and low-income taxpayers, with special attention to those age 60 and older.

AARP Tax-Aide is the nation's largest, free, volunteer-run tax counseling and preparation service.

Volunteers of all ages and backgrounds are welcome. You don't need to be an AARP member or be a retiree to volunteer (or to receive assistance from AARP Tax-Aide volunteers). You also do not need math or computer skills. All that is required is a desire to help and a cheerful disposition. Volunteers are provided training.

For more information, call toll-free (888) AARP NOW (1-888-227-7669) or visit the Web site at www.aarp.org/taxaide.

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ATHENA

FROM PAGE A1

more," said Robin Kay Cooke of WOW. "The chocolate tables were just amazing last year, and everyone got to take a box home. It was a nice send-off."

Eleven individuals were nominated for the award last year, with the honor going to Charlotte Sherman, deputy superintendent of educational services for the Wayne-Westland Community Schools.

"Char was a wonderful selection, but we had a hard time because we had so many wonderful nominees," Cooke said. "I hope some are nominated again this year."

Nominations can be made through Friday, Jan. 27. Nomination forms and/or group presentations describing the

Nomination forms and/or group presentations describing the ATHENA criteria and selection process are available by calling the Women of Westland at (734) 467-9113.

ATHENA criteria and selection process are available by calling the Women of Westland at (734) 467-9113.

This year's Chocolate Fantasy will be held at Hawthorne Valley Country Club. It will feature a strolling dinner, premium bar, entertainment by White Lace, a silent auction and program, followed by the chocolate fantasy dessert presentation.

Organizers have made two changes this year. They moved the event from mid-

March to Valentine's Day weekend and switched entertainment from a big band sound to White Lace which plays all kinds of music.

"We moved the date because we thought we might get some spin-off and get people who would like to go celebrate Valentine's Day at a really nice event," Cooke said.

Organizers also lowered ticket prices from \$190 to \$75.

"I believe we have given the award a posh setting," Cooke said. "We're trying to build it each year and hope the word gets out."

Information about the Westland ATHENA Award Chocolate Fantasy Evening also is available by calling WOW at (734) 467-9113.

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THEFTS

FROM PAGE A1

Lt. James Ridner.

"We're waiting to see what information Livonia took from him," Ridner said. "Once we do that we'll know if we need to interview him or if there's enough there to submit a request for charges in the thefts."

Winn said investigators recovered a 1957 Ford Fairlane, four snowmobiles, two trailers, boat, personal watercraft, 27-foot camper-trailer, enclosed snowmobile trailer and motorcycle from the man's Livonia home and cottage in the Kalkaska area, a town in northwestern Lower Michigan.

"It appears he took them all for personal use," Winn said. "We're still investigating to see if he took other items and either sold them or gave them away."

The suspect lives with his mother in Westland and co-owned a Livonia home with his estranged wife. That home is undergoing foreclosure proceedings.

Police recently found license plates, the snowmobile trailer and the personal watercraft at the unoccupied Livonia home on Richfield. Those findings led police to search the suspect's Kalkaska cottage, where a number of the vehicles were found.

"He used the snowmobiles last weekend (Dec. 4-5)," Winn said. "He was up there last weekend snowmobiling with his son."

Livonia police, Winn said, submitted paperwork to the Wayne County Prosecutor's office seeking receiving and concealing stolen property charges.

Like Westland, police in Kalkaska County also are looking into possible criminal charges, Winn said.

Staff Writer Dan West contributed to this story.

smason@hometownlife.com | (734) 953-2112

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 C10.

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Five circular doorbuster items: Men's & Ladies' Leather Jackets for \$99, Camel Hair Sport Coats for \$129, 25% off entire stock of Frye boots, Kids' Sweaters for 60% off, and Entire Stock of men's shirts for 60% off.

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

UPCOMING EVENTS

Breakfast with Santa Enjoy Breakfast with Santa Saturday, Dec. 17, at the Wayne Community Center, 4635 Howe, Wayne. There will be two sessions - 10-11 a.m. and 11:20 a.m. to 12:20 p.m. Breakfast includes pancakes, sausage and juice. There also will be arts and crafts, face painting and clowns. Cost is \$4 for residents and \$5 for non-residents. Children age 2 and under are free. Pictures with Santa cost \$2. Tickets are on sale at the Wayne Community Center. Call (734) 721-7400 for more information.

Christmas opera The Children's Ministry of New Hope Baptist Church will perform a free Christmas opera, FA LA LA MOO!, at 6 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 17, at the church, 33630 Michigan Ave., Wayne. The opera is the story of Jesus' birth told from the animals' perspective. For more information, call Children's Ministry Director Allyn Verbal at (734) 728-2180.

Starfish programs Starfish Family Services Great Parents, Great Start teachers help prepare children, ages 2-4 years for preschool and school in their own home. Fun, learning activities help children grow and learn and parents learn tips, too. The program is open to families in western Wayne County, if they qualify. Call (734) 595-0411, Ext. 104, for more information. Starfish also has an ongoing, free Pregnancy Support Group, offering pregnant women a chance to talk with other pregnant women, meet with a prenatal nurse, hear baby's heart beat and learn about nutrition, pain management and other topics. Groups to be held in Wayne, Westland and Inkster areas. To register, (734) 595-0411, Ext. 104.

Skating classes

The Wayne Parks and Recreation Department will offer its second winter session of home school physical education and swim program 1-3 p.m. Jan. 9-Feb. 22. Call Nathan at (734) 721-7400 for more information.

HISTORIC

Pioneer trek The Nankin Township Pioneer Trek has been designed to introduce travelers to the history of the area. Travelers will visit sites that affected the development of Westland as a community. Those who complete the trek will receive an embroidered patch. To start the trek, first visit the Westland Historical Museum and pick up a packet. The museum is at 857 N. Wayne Road and is open 1-4 p.m. Saturdays, except before a holiday. The trek is sponsored by the Westland Historical Commission and the Friends of the Westland Museum. For information, call (734) 326-1110.

Friends of Eloise The Friends of Eloise group meets 7 p.m. the third Tuesday of the month in the dining room of the Kay Beard Building, on Michigan between Middlebelt and Merriman. All are welcome. For information, call Jo Johnson, (734) 522-3918.

Friends of Museum Friends of the Westland Historical Museum meet at 7 p.m. each month except December at the Collins House, located at the museum complex, 857 N. Wayne Road. Call Jim Franklin at (734) 595-8119. Everyone is welcome.

BINGO

VFW Bingo Veterans of Foreign Wars 3323 Auxiliary has bingo 6:30 p.m. every Thursday at 1055 S. Wayne Road, Westland. There is a snack bar. The post has bingo at 1 p.m. every Sunday at the same place. Call (734) 326-3323.

Dems hold bingo The Metro Wayne Democratic Club has bingo 10:45 a.m. every Monday at the Wayne Ford Civic League, on Wayne Road south of Ford in Westland. For information, call Jan or Cliff at (734) 591-1694 or Cliff at (734) 729-8681.

St. Mel Church Bingo begins at 6:45 p.m. Fridays in St. Mel Church activities building, on Inkster Road north of Warren. Doors open at 4 p.m. Food is available.

Shamrock Bingo Bingo begins at 11 a.m. Wednesdays at the Knights of Columbus Hall, 35100 Van Born, east of Wayne Road in Wayne. Doors open at 9 a.m. Food is available. Proceeds go to charity. Call (734) 728-3020.

K of C Bingo Pope John XXIII Assembly of the Knights of Columbus Council 1536 hosts bingo games at 6:45 p.m. Thursdays. The games are in the Livonia Elks Lodge, 3117 Plymouth Road, one block east of Merriman in Livonia. Call (734) 425-2246.

Metro Wayne The Metro Wayne Democratic Club offers a bingo at the Wayne-Ford Civic League on Fridays. Doors open at 9 a.m. with bingo starting at 10:45 a.m. An all-you-can-eat breakfast buffet is available for \$3. For more information, call Cliff Johnson at (734) 729-8681.

FOR SENIORS

Friendship Center The Senior Resources Department (Friendship Center), 1119 N. Newburgh, Westland, offers a variety of programs for older adults. The Web site www.ci.westland.mi.us offers more information. Call (734) 722-7632.

Crochet & Knit A crochet and knit group meets 9:30 a.m. every Thursday at the Friendship Center on Newburgh near Marquette. Beverly Kaminski is the instructor. Participants should bring a type "G" crochet hook. Those interested can sign up at the center's front desk or call (734) 722-7632.

Visually Impaired The Visually Impaired Persons (VIPs) support group meets 12:30 p.m. every Friday at the Friendship Center, 1119 N. Newburgh, Westland. Participants share information and meet others. Those interested in joining can be scheduled on a bus route for transportation. For information, call (734) 722-7632.

Choir

The Senior Choir, under the leadership of Robert Cassidy, is open to those who like to sing. It meets 9:30 a.m. Thursdays. For information, call the Friendship Center, (734) 722-7632.

Hearing checks Every third Tuesday of each month, a representative from Personalized Hearing Care of Westland will check and clean hearing aids free, 2-3 p.m. by appointment only. Call (734) 722-7632 for more information.

Exercise Simply Jazzercise is designed for exercisers older than 40. The program provides a low to moderate workout. The exercise improves strength, flexibility, balance, posture, coordination and cardiovascular endurance. It incorporates simple dance routines with walking or jogging patterns and resistance exercises. Wear loose-fitting clothing and comfortable shoes. Light weights and an exercise mat are suggested. Classes are 10:15 a.m. Monday, 5 p.m. Wednesday, 10:15 a.m. Friday, at \$3 per person per class. Sign up at the front desk at the Westland Friendship Center or call (734) 722-7632.

Travel Group The Friendship Travel Group meets 1 p.m. the second Friday of each month (unless a large event is scheduled) in the Westland Friendship Center, 1119 N. Newburgh. Programs include celebration of birthdays, door prizes, description of new classes or programs, speakers from tour companies, overview of day/overnight trips and refreshments. Call (734) 722-7632.

Dyer Center The Wayne-Westland school district's Dyer Senior Adult Center offers activities Monday-Thursday at the center, on Marquette between Wayne and Newburgh roads. Mondays, Senior Chorus at 1:30 p.m.; Tuesdays, arts, crafts and needlework at 9:30 a.m.; Wednesdays, kitchen band, 10 a.m.; bingo at 1 p.m.; Thursdays, ceramics, arts, crafts at 9:30 a.m.

ORGANIZATIONS

Vietnam Vets The Plymouth-Canton Vietnam Veterans of America, Chapter 528, meet at 7:30 p.m. the second Monday of every month at the Plymouth VFW Post 6695, on S. Mill Street, just north of Ann Arbor Road. If you served in the U.S. military between 1964 and 1975, even if not "in country" (combat zone) you are still eligible to become a member. Visit the Web site at www.mihometown.com/oe/PlymouthCantonVVA for more information.

Friends of Library The Friends of the William P. Faust Public Library organization meets at 2

p.m. the second Tuesday of each month at the library, 6123 Central City Parkway. Call (734) 326-6123. Meetings last about one hour and are open to the public. The group also holds a book sale during regular library hours at the library.

In Harmony The Wayne Chapter of the Barbershop Harmony Society meets at 7:30 p.m. Tuesdays at Kirk of Our Savior Presbyterian Church, 36660 Cherry Hill, west of Wayne Road, Westland. Gentlemen interested in the chapter's Renaissance Chorus or who enjoy quartetting can call membership chairman Bob Wolf at (734) 421-1652, or attend a rehearsal.

Civil Air Patrol Emergency service is just one of the congressionally mandated missions of the Civil Air Patrol, which includes ground and air search-and-rescue operations. The Civil Air Patrol, which is the official U.S. Air Force auxiliary, is made up of civilian volunteers. To learn more about CAP or training as an air crew or ground team member, contact the Willow Run Composite Squadron (MI-260), Call Capt. Dane Hansen, deputy commander/recruiter, at (734) 485-3021 or visit the Web site www.members.home.net/capliberators/.

Habitat help The Western Wayne affiliate of Habitat for Humanity is seeking volunteers to help with building homes, office duties and fund-raising. No experience necessary. Training will be provided. For information, call (734) 459-7744.

Veteran's Haven Veteran's Haven operates a car, boat, camper and real estate-donation program. Donations are tax-deductible. For information, call (734) 728-0527. Food is distributed to veterans one a month throughout the month and there is a supplemental food program 9 a.m. to noon Wednesdays. The Veteran Haven's Outreach Center 4924 S. Wayne Road two blocks south of Annapolis in Wayne. Any honorably discharged Veteran that is in need or homeless and wants a better quality of life can call (734) 728-0527.

Pet-A-Pet The Pet-A-Pet animal visitation program provides pet therapy with the help of volunteers. Pets should be friendly, well-behaved and must have current vaccinations. There is a \$5 membership fee. Volunteer opportunities are available at Hope Nursing Care Center, 6:30 p.m. the third Tuesday of the month (Marie Johnson, (734) 326-1200), and Marquette House, 10:30 a.m. the second Wednesday of the month (Lorna Johnson, (734) 425-1681). There are also openings at Garden City Hospital, 3 p.m. the fourth

Thursday of the month (Stacy Suida, (734) 458-4392).

Zonta Club The Zonta Club of Northwest Wayne County, a service club to advance the status of women, meets every month on the fourth Monday at the Holiday Inn, Livonia. For more information, call Pat Harris at (734) 420-2920

Franklin PTSA The Franklin High School PTSA is seeking members. Membership is open to those who care about the schools and the community. Members need not have a student in the school. Price is \$3 for students, \$5 for adults. Checks should be made payable to Franklin PTSA and sent to 31000 Joy, Livonia MI 48150.

Tutorial program A tutoring program for students is offered at the Salvation Army Wayne-Westland Corps Community Center, 2300 Venoy in Westland. The program, 3:45-5:15 p.m. Mondays and Tuesdays, is for students 9 and older in Wayne, Westland and Romulus. For information on participating or volunteering, call Tyrone Peterson, (734) 722-3660. Tutors need to have at least a high school education.

M.O.M.S. M.O.M.S. Club of Canton/ Westland is a nonprofit support group for stay-at-home mothers.

There are weekly events, Mom's Night Out, age-oriented play groups and more. For information, call Wendy, (734) 398-6957.

FOR YOUR HEALTH

TOPS TOPS (Taking Off Pounds Sensibly) meets every Wednesday at St. John's Episcopal Church, 555 S. Wayne Road, Westland. Weigh-in is 6:30-7:15 p.m., with the meeting 7:30-8:30 p.m. For more information, call Rosalie at (734) 728-0299.

Menopause & More A Menopause & More support group for women meets 7-9 p.m. the first Wednesday of the month in Classroom 2 of the west addition of the Marian Women Center of St. Mary Mercy Hospital, 36475 Five Mile, Livonia. No registration is necessary, and the group is free of charge. For more information, call (734) 655-1100.

Support group A support group for people with chronic illness meets on Fridays every other week, at the Westside Mental Health Services, 32932 W. Warren, Suite 103, Westland. The support group is a service of Awareness Counseling Services. There is a \$10 for each meeting which will be facilitated by a professional. For more information, call (734) 513-8295 or (313) 562-2800.

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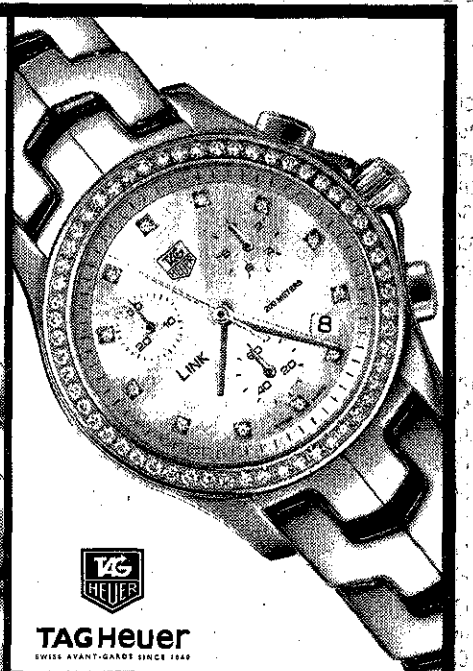
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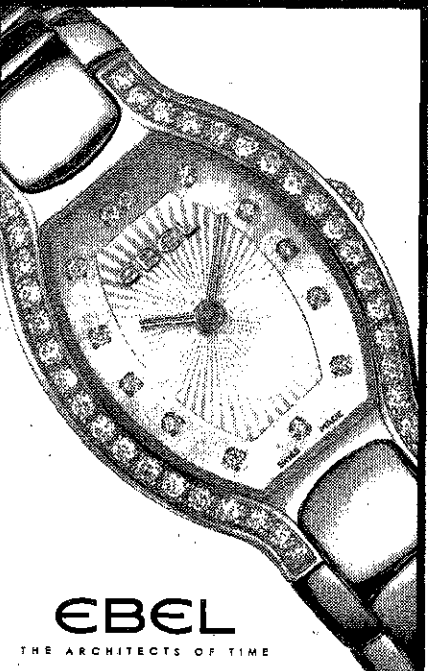
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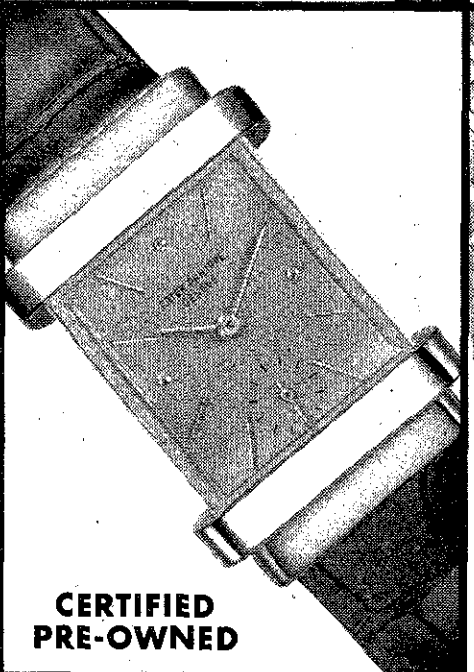
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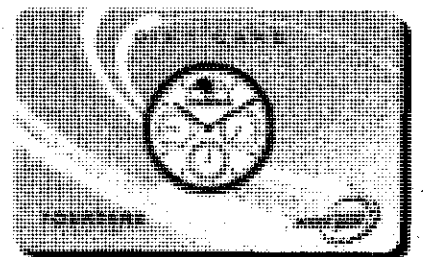
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will be received until 1:30 P.M. local time on Tuesday, January 10, 2006 at which time they will be opened and read publicly at Wayne-Westland Community School Board of Education Office, located at 36745 Marquette, Westland, Michigan 48185. Bids received after this time and date will be returned unopened.

Faxed proposals will not be accepted.

This Bid Package will consist of a separate sealed bid for the following Bid Divisions:

- 101 Site Excavation / Site Utilities
- 102 Asphalt Paving
- 103 Selective Demolition
- 104 Concrete Footings & Foundations
- 105 Concrete Flatwork
- 106 Masonry
- 107 Steel
- 108 Carpentry & General Trades
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- 110 Manufactured Wall Panel System
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- 113 Hollow Metal / Wood Doors / Finish Hardware (Supply)
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- 116 Hard Tile
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- 128 Casework
- 130 Window Treatments
- 131 Athletic Equipment
- 132 Rubber Sports Flooring
- 136 Gymnasium Bleachers
- 137 Food Service Equipment
- 138 Elevators
- 139 Cross Corridor Fire Doors
- 140 Plumbing
- 141 Fire Protection
- 142 HVAC
- 143 Electrical
- 149 Fencing
- 155 Landscaping

Bidding documents prepared by **TMP Associates, Inc.** will be available for public inspection at the office of the Construction Manager, **McCarthy & Smith, Inc.**, 24317 Indoplex Circle, Farmington Hills, MI 48335; the FW Dodge Plan Room, Southfield; the Construction Association of Michigan Plan Room, Bloomfield Hills; and the Daily Construction Reports Plan Room, Detroit.

Bidders may obtain one (1) set of bidding documents, beginning Wednesday, December 14, 2005, by contacting the Construction Manager, **McCarthy & Smith, Inc.**, at (248) 427-8400. Additional plans may be ordered and purchased directly from Dunn Blue Reprographics Technology, (248) 353-2950. Bids are to be submitted in a sealed envelope supplied by the Construction Manager, **McCarthy & Smith, Inc.** The bid division(s) being bid is/are to be identified on the outside of the envelope.

There will be a pre-bid meeting at 11:00 am on Wednesday, December 28, 2005 at the construction trailer located at Wayne Memorial High School, (3001 Fourth Street, Wayne, MI 48184). The purpose of the meeting will be to review the project sites and to answer any questions that bidders may have. **Bidders are strongly encouraged to attend.**

A sworn and notarized statement disclosing any familial relationship existing between the bidder and any member of the school board, school superintendents, or chief executive must accompany each bid. A board shall not accept a bid that does not include this statement. This statement is on the proposal execution form.

Each bid shall be accompanied by a Bid Bond in the amount of five (5) percent of the amount of the bid, payable to Wayne-Westland Community Schools, as a guarantee that if the proposal is accepted, the bidder will execute the contract and file the required bonds within ten (10) days after notice of award of contract.

If awarded a contract, the successful bidder will be required to furnish a Performance Bond and Labor and Material Payment Bond. Wayne-Westland Community Schools reserve the right to reject any or all bids received and to waive any informalities and irregularities in the bidding.

This project is to be bid at the prevailing wage rate.

Publish: December 15 and 16, 2005

OE0897404



PHOTOS BY TOM HOFFMEYER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Badria Jijo, who grew up in Baghdad and now resides in Warren, casts her vote at one of the 10 voting stations set up at the Farmington Hills Manor in Farmington Hills for the Iraqi voting.

Iraqi natives cast votes for brighter future

BY STACY JENKINS
STAFF WRITER

Jimmy Jardack fought in the Army during World War II to protect the freedom of all Americans.

On Tuesday, the Beverly Hills resident cast his ballot for democracy with visions of freedom for his native land of Iraq.

"I still have a lot of relatives there and I'm concerned for their well-being," said Jardack, in the posh lobby of the Farmington Hills Manor on Orchard Lake Road, where thousands of Iraqi expatriates are expected to vote for a new Iraqi government over a three-day, worldwide election.

The Farmington Hills voting site, heavily guarded by local, county, state and federal police agencies, is one of two polling sites for Iraqi Americans in Michigan. The other site is in Dearborn. Voting continues 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. today, Thursday, Dec. 15. An estimated 20,000 Iraqi Americans in Michigan are expected to vote, according to poll organizer Nabil Roumayah of Southfield.

Jardack, who has lived in the United States since 1938, was born in the northern Iraqi city of Mosul. His reasons for voting Tuesday were clear.

FOR DEMOCRACY

"To see that democracy prevails," he said. "Democracy is for everyone. It's important. I fought a war just to see that (here)."

There were smiling faces and even rounds of applause at the voting centers inside the banquet facility. Some paused to



Alan Karana, who was born in Baghdad and now resides in Southfield, looks over the four pages of more than 200 political parties to choose from at one of the Iraqi voting stations at the Farmington Hills Manor in Farmington Hills on Tuesday.

take photos of their friends and family as they cast their ballots. Many held up a finger tip coated in purple ink to show they had voted.

"I am very happy," exclaimed an enthusiastic Yousif Thweny of Warren. "I'm 64 years old and this is the first time in my life that I know what I am. (In Iraq) we were like animals. We had no voice. Now, we have a voice."

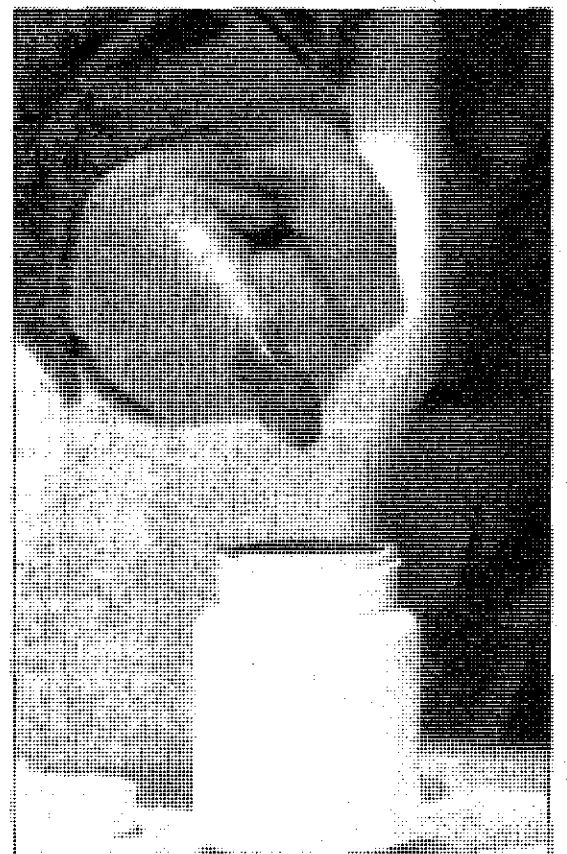
Jacob Yasso, of Detroit left Iraq 41 years ago, but voting on

Tuesday was "excellent."

"I hope for prosperity, security and democracy," he said. "I hope for one nation, under God."

Voters selected one party from a four-page ballot of more than 200 parties. A parliament will be seated by Dec. 31. Farmington Hills Clerk Kathryn Dornan, and city clerks from Troy and Birmingham took turns working the polls as "observers."

"They were looking for local



After casting their ballots, voters dip their right index finger in ink to prevent them from voting again at another voting station.

clerks to volunteer to do the observing," Dornan said, noting they are checking that the polls open and close on time and that the ballot boxes are sealed, for example.

VISIBILITY

Quite different from the violence in Iraq, the polling site in Farmington Hills was peaceful and jovial on Tuesday. Voters knew they were safe and secure at the polls.

The Farmington Hills Police Department coordinated security inside and around the perimeter of the Manor. City DPW trucks will remain lined up in the front of the building as a barricade to deter anyone from driving a vehicle into the building, said police Chief William Dwyer.

Farmington Hills officers were joined by the Michigan State Police, the Oakland County Sheriff's Department and the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms.

"We are responsible for providing a safe environment for people to go, so they don't feel threatened," Dwyer said on Tuesday.

The police presence is worthwhile, he noted.

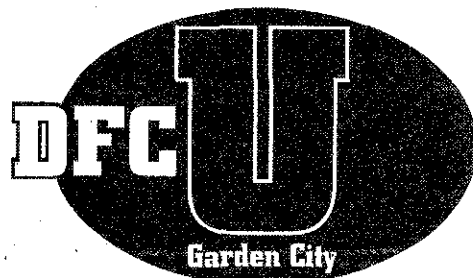
"The perception is very important. If someone wanted to make some sort of a statement or disrupt the election, we needed to prevent that," Dwyer said.

A private security company, headed up by a former FBI agent, is manning the metal detectors as voters enter the site. Police are situated throughout the building, but Dwyer said the Iraqi American coordinators at the site request the heavy presence.

"The voters were thanking the officers for their presence," Dwyer said.

The police mobile command unit remains at the Manor entrance and officers are assigned to six-hour shifts. Dwyer said organizers signed an agreement that the city would be reimbursed for the overtime.

Bomb sniffing dogs are also on hand to make perimeter and interior sweeps each morning and throughout the day. Dwyer said he did not anticipate problems.



REGISTRATION

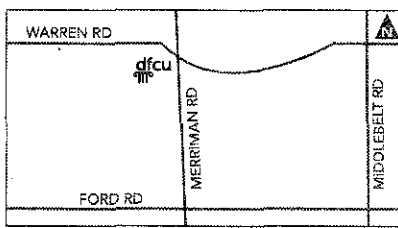
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YOUTH

FROM PAGE A1

do believe the program is making a difference. This community is very blessed to have had Ronaele in charge of the program. And the families are lucky, too."

Bowman grew up the oldest of three children born to a homemaker and a father who was president of a company that laundered workplace uniforms in blue-collar Milwaukee.

"I learned a lot of my managerial skills from him," Bowman said.

She met her husband of 37 years, Hugh, when she traveled to St. Vincent in the Caribbean while working for an organization similar to the Peace Corps. Her husband decided to attend college in Milwaukee, becoming an engineer and landing a job with Ford Motor Co. The couple moved to southeast Michigan in 1977, where they raised their adopted sons, Hugh and Bryan.

Bowman held other jobs, including being a social worker, before she took a position training youth mentors in western Wayne County - a job that ultimately set her on her career path. She came to Westland from a part-time Youth Assistance job in Garden City.

Bowman can take pride from statistics showing that 90 percent of youngsters stay out of trouble after they make it through her three-month program. She said many of them just need to improve their self-esteem and gain a sense of self-worth - issues that can otherwise lead to such problems as poor relationships and failing grades at school.

Bowman is troubled by some statistics, however. When she became Youth Assistance director, girls accounted for only 5 percent of referrals, compared to 42 percent now.

"Girls are becoming more aggressive," she said.

Her biggest disappointment in her job has been trying to help youngsters whose behavior simply doesn't change, despite efforts to help them. Still, she has received much



TOM HAWLEY | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Youth Assistance Director Ronaele Bowman

WORTH IT

"It's fulfilling to see a young person who comes into our program with a very hostile attitude blossom and have a much more positive attitude about life," Bowman said.

Bowman and her husband had earlier planned to buy a home in the South and retire, but they've postponed those plans for now. Bowman has received an offer to start a new job in January as the legislative aide to longtime Wayne County Commissioner Kay Beard.

"That's something I've always wanted to do," Bowman said, adding that she loves politics. She even ran twice, though unsuccessfully, for a seat on the Schoolcraft College Board of Trustees.

She and her husband also have been involved in an outreach program in Haiti, where

they have traveled four times to help out at a church-run mission. In her spare time, Bowman enjoys biking, traveling, fishing and visiting a cottage in northern Michigan.

Bowman commended Cicirelli, an early Youth Assistance supporter, and other city leaders for protecting the program despite tough economic times.

"Kids don't have a vote, and it's easy to cut programs that affect them," she said.

Cicirelli, for one, will fight to protect the program.

"If we can help these kids turn their lives around, that's extremely important," she said. "We don't want them to go on and get into more trouble."

"Ronaele has done a tremendous job with the program," the mayor said. "We're going to miss her."

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

Dunham's expansion brings store to Ford Road in Canton

Holiday shoppers looking for that special item for loved ones who live an active lifestyle have one more store to shop at. Dunham's Sports, a Michigan-based retailer, opened for business Monday in Canton.

The store, located at 41968 Ford Road, just west of Haggerty in the Willow Creek Shopping Center, will be tailored to the area market with a large selection of athletic and outdoor apparel, an expanded hunting and fitness department, and a large value area featuring footwear at savings of 30-50 percent off, according to Dunham's spokesman Tom Lemere.

The store will open at 8 a.m. Monday through Sunday, and have extended hours throughout the holiday season.

"Our market research indicates Canton is a vibrant and growing community and the opening of this store continues our expansion

throughout the Detroit area and the state of Michigan," said Jeff Lynn, chairman and chief executive officer of Dunham's Athleisure Corporation, which is based in Waterford.

Lynn said Dunham's prides itself on providing customers with a wide variety of top-quality, name-brand merchandise at everyday low prices.

Every store offers a full line of traditional sporting goods and athletic equipment, as well as a wide variety of active and casual sports apparel and footwear.

"We keep our customers coming back because of our continued commitment to provide the largest selections at the lowest prices," says Lynn.

Dunham's was founded in 1937 in Detroit as Dunham's Bait and Tackle and has grown to more than 130 stores in 11 Midwestern states.

Busy this holiday season and need dependable, Childcare?

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with Extended Evening Hours



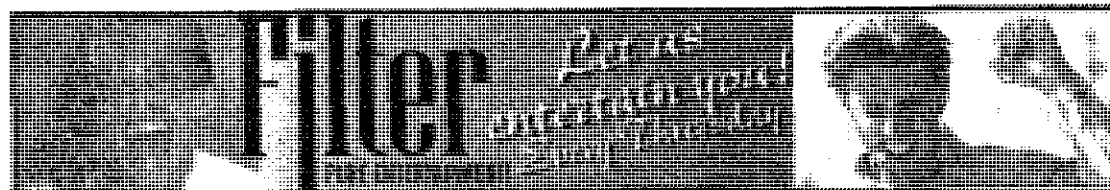
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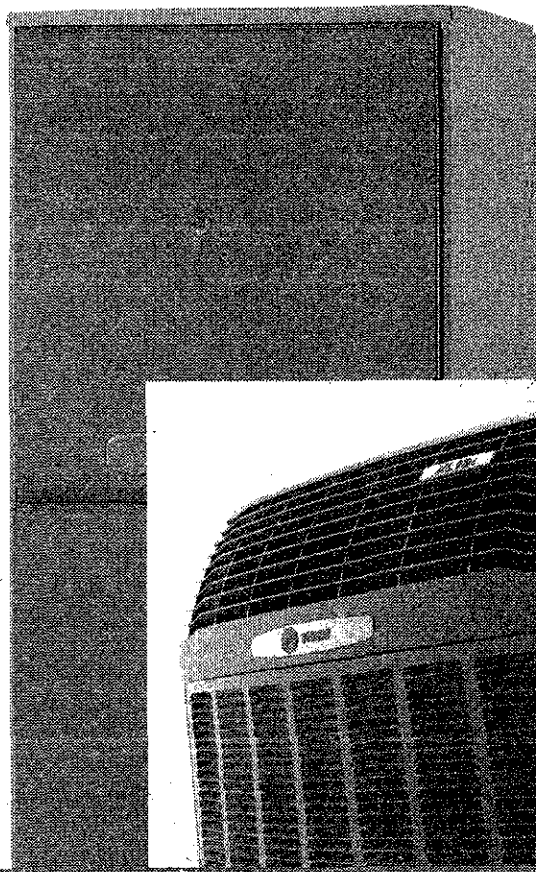
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OUR VIEWS

Madison School is 'best-kept secret'

Twenty-two months ago, the Wayne-Westland Board of Education decided to pick up where the state left off and award Golden Apples to its schools which improve state test scores by at least 60 points over three consecutive years.

This fall, the board took the program one step further by initiating the Encore Award, recognizing Golden Apple schools which again show a three-year improvement on state tests.

Now the board is making a shining example of schools that have maintained academic excellence over three years, awarding its inaugural Lighthouse School Award to Madison Elementary.

Described as one of the top performing schools in the state by Supt. Greg Baracy, the Madison staff, students and parents have plenty to be proud about.

For three consecutive years, it has left the state scores in its wake when it comes to mastery of the standardized reading, writing, mathematics and science tests. It's also had the three-year run on meeting all of the criteria of the federal No Child Left Behind act and adequate yearly progress.

Madison doesn't have the benefit of federal at-risk money. The extras it provides its students come by way of grants it's able to snag. And a very active PTA has helped to support educational opportunities, including sponsoring the annual SPARK (Science Plus Activities Reaching Kids Day) Day that introduces students to science in a fun and friendly way.

Trustee Steve Beecher may have said it best when he said Madison School is the district's "best-kept secret."

Congratulations to the Madison School family. Savor your award, but remember what school board President Frederick Weaver said: Winning it is "awesome responsibility to lead the way."

We have no doubt that the school will continue to be a beacon of excellence in a likewise excellent school district.

'Tis the season to give

Some cite the economy — in Michigan it's depressing. Others call it donor fatigue — hurricanes Katrina and Rita and a tsunami in southeast Asia presented an immediate and necessary call to action.

Call it whatever you like, but it's shaping up to be a pretty tough year for local charities who are counting on the holiday season (that period from Thanksgiving through New Year's Day) to shore up food supplies and fund coffers to address local needs.

Throughout the last year, metro Detroiters were generous — as always — in answering the call for help throughout the world and nation.

The Salvation Army Eastern Division raised more than \$3 million for tsunami relief efforts and some \$5 million for hurricane recovery programs.

Add to that donations to the American Red Cross, Habitat for Humanity and a long list of religious organizations and the money leaving southeast Michigan has been impressive.

It's time, however, to think local with that same level of compassion and commitment. The need is certainly here. Detroit was recently ranked the poorest city in the country with a poverty rate pegged at 33 percent.

While local charitable options abound for donors in the metro area, two area agencies — Gleaners Community Food Bank and the Salvation Army — are seeking help in meeting basic needs: food and shelter.

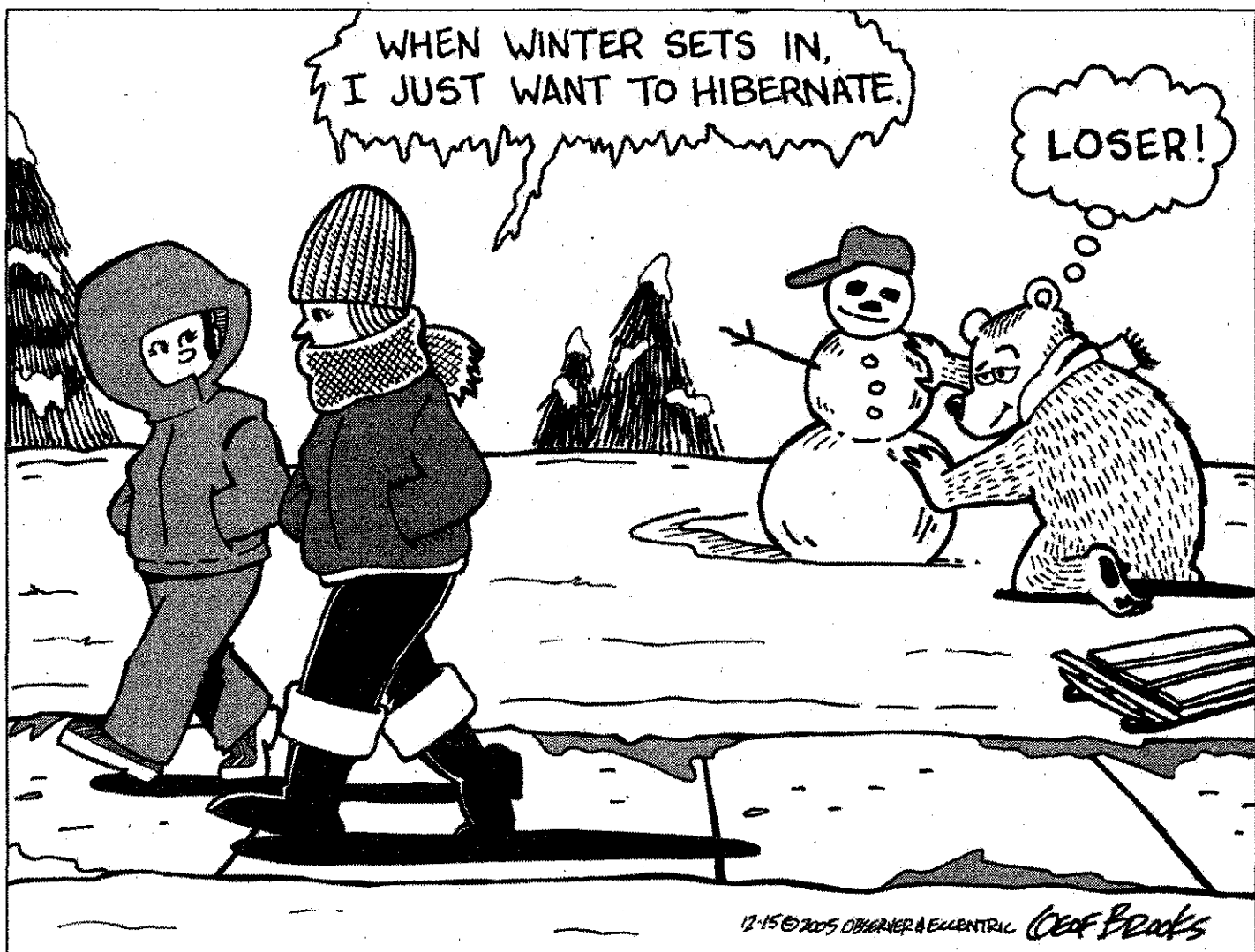
They are basic needs that most of us take for granted, but are in short supply for the working poor, unemployed, disabled, homeless and elderly populations in southeast Michigan.

Gleaners Community Food Bank urges cash donations, food drives and volunteerism. Visit the Web site at gcfb.org and find out just how much your donation is needed.

The Salvation Army uses 88 cents of every dollar received to provide an average of 13,000 direct services to people in need everyday. The Salvation Army's Red Kettle campaign, launched in November, hopes to raise \$7 million at sites throughout the tri-county area by Dec. 24. The poor, homeless and hungry are direct recipients of the Army's local relief efforts.

Visit the Salvation Army's Web site at redkettle-campaign.org to donate or find out more about the group's local mission.

Make the commitment to help those close to home this holiday season. The need is great and the time is now.



LETTERS

Incompetent administration

The tragedy along the Gulf Coast, hurricanes Katrina and Rita, again demonstrates the utter incompetence of this administration and the response of emergency services shows the depth of corruption. The inept FEMA director and equally incompetent home land security officer, pride of Mr. Bush appointments, could not manage a cross-walk.

Since taking office in 2000, Mr. Bush and his team have replaced thousands of qualified personnel with political hacks not worthy of safely walking a dog. Every one of the appointed hacks has acted in a manner that would result in termination in any other business or government workplace and some would possibly be prosecuted.

An immediate and suitable solution would be to put a moratorium on all political appointments by this administration. The Senate and House have the authority to grant an elected president the ability to start a war without just cause with a nation that may be a threat to the U.S. from outside its borders.

They also have the authority to stop all appointments by Mr. Bush for his attack on the stability of the government inside the U.S. Mr. Bush has been driving his unqualified party hacks down the neck of Americans.

The Republican Party had for years claimed outside competition would lessen the cost of government operations and improve the operations of government. But the actions of this administration, the no-bid contracts and giving away billions of dollars to corporate supporters show the true spirit of the Republican Party. There is absolutely no competition and complete incompetence of all positions within this administration.

How many more Americans will die due to the lack of competency with this administration? How long will it take for our Congress to act as it was intended, as a system of checks and balances, and to stop an executive branch which has run amok? How long will it be before that giant sucking sound of money leaving the federal treasury from noncompetitive Republican companies will be cut off?

Waiting for a shred of integrity or dignity from any Republican Party member is senseless. It will never happen until the Republicans are in the minority again.

Allan Biber
Westland

Voters, wise up

Who is going to be our next Michigan attorney general? Our present AG is Mike Cox. Our previous AG was Jennifer Granholm, now our governor. How about attorney Geoffrey Fieger? Would you like him to represent you as AG?

Fieger has stated he would represent the little guy. Cox's stated policy and proven fact — he won't represent the little guy. I cannot think of one single thing Jennifer Granholm accomplished as AG. And now as our governor, she has ridden Michigan down to 49th position in all 50 states. She may be pretty, but she has

been bad news for Michigan. Michigan voters have made some really bad choices in the past. Have we learned our lesson?

Maybe if we "stay the course," next time around we can manage to find our state in last position. You know the old saying, "Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me."

Kenneth Kemp
Farmington Hills

I blame Bush

Hopefully at some time in the future, a motion picture will show graphically what happened in the New Orleans Superdome during Hurricane Katrina. The conditions were deplorable; no sanitation, no water, and very little food. Mrs. Barbara Bush was quoted as saying, "these people are used to a hard life, therefore the conditions are what they are used to." I would point out to Mrs. Bush that they have access to toilets and water no matter how modestly they may live. German concentration camps were cleaner than the Superdome.

FEMA was well aware of the coming hurricane and did not prepare for it. There should have been transportation lined up to evacuate these poor people with no means of transportation. The government can deny it all day long, but this was a racial thing. It's the same situation that exists today in Africa, where blacks are being slaughtered and starving. Where the UN and the government hardly take notice. We spend billions in Iraq because their oil is the ultimate goal. It's all about what's in it for me. I place the blame squarely at the feet of President Bush.

Robert Leaf
Farmington Hills

Arctic drilling

It is understandable that now, in a time when the economy is only just starting to gain its momentum back and gas prices are painfully high, people want to save a few bucks on filling up their tanks. People must, however, think about at what cost they are saving their pennies and if it is worth it.

In an effort to both boost the United States supply of oil and to become less dependent on foreign oil, the Bush administration wants to drill in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR), one of the few areas remaining untouched by humans in America. The cost of this decision however is too great at too small of an outcome. The Bush administration claims that they have taken all necessary steps to ensure as little damage as possible to the wildlife at the ANWR, but the facts still remain. The porcupine caribou travel 300 to 400 miles from Canada to give birth there, and they would have great trouble doing so if it was being inhabited by humans, plus the environment would see an issue with polar bears leaving dens with their cubs still inside in order to go look for a new home. All of this for what reason?

The amount of oil drilled there would take off only a penny per barrel, and the oil won't even be ready for distribution for another decade. What's the point

then if by then the desperation for oil will grow even worse and we've used up even more of it? And, in the meantime, the United States could have been searching for alternative fuel sources and saved an entire habitat. The environment must be protected, not sacrificed.

Josh Potter
Huntington Woods

Keep up good work

Mr. Power, congratulations for expressing what needs to be said about the current state of education in the state of Michigan. As a former school board member, I can foresee the coming battle to upgrade our curriculum and bring our students into the 21st century.

When our district raised the grade-point requirements above the statewide minimum, you would think that we had targeted athletics for extinction. The fight to require 2½ credits of math, including geometry and statistics, for graduation was met with similar protest. Some of the objection came from parents and students, but most criticism came from educators.

Needless to say, the athletes are doing fine and the overwhelming majority of students have stepped up to the plate and graduated. The number of AP classes have also increased and students that a few years ago would never have tried such coursework now are proving their abilities. Such effort is not easy for the teachers or students, but like all worthy goals, it's well worth it.

As for local control, I believe that local school boards and the communities that they represent can determine how to structure the curriculum to satisfy local needs, but they must satisfy the real needs of their students. Educators in Michigan are a well-paid group of folks. They should be willing to endure whatever hardships that they must to provide a quality education for all of their students.

Keep up the fights.

Michael McCann
Redford

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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Letters to the editor
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Fax:
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E-mail:
smason@hometownlife.com

QUOTABLE

"I'm leaving relationships that I've forged for 20 years with people. I know a lot of great people here, and I will miss them."

— Tom Harris, about leaving the Westland Police Department after 19 years on the job

WESTLAND
Observer

PUBLISHED THURSDAY AND SUNDAY

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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.

New MEDC head should inject some common sense in Lansing

Acute neurosis, mental health professionals tell us, is relatively easy to diagnose. Somebody who keeps doing self-destructive things over and over again is certifiably neurotic — even though he knows perfectly well how dangerous they are. People like that may be helped by sessions on a shrink's couch.

I suspect there isn't a couch large enough to hold as many of our legislators as needed, but their pattern of self-destructive activity over the past few years certainly qualifies them for long-term therapy.

And the fallout is there for all to see.

Consider, for example, the perilous state of Michigan's economy: we're certainly facing the greatest crisis since the Great Depression.

Now reflect on the Michigan Economic Development Corp. (MEDC), the quasi-public outfit that over the years has earned the reputation as one of the country's best of its kind.

You'd think that the Legislature would be falling all over itself to provide funds to help the MEDC attract and retain jobs in Michigan. Especially now.

Far from it. Over the past five years, the general fund appropriation to the MEDC has been cut by more than 70 percent, its staffing by around 20 percent.

Its total operating budget has shriveled from \$110 million in fiscal 2000 to \$31 million six years later. Its authorized work force had fallen to 190 for 2006. But a last-minute \$3 million legislative cut in late November reduced the staff to 138.

Funding for Travel Michigan, the organization within the MEDC that promotes Michigan's tourist industry — arguably the state's second largest — has decreased by one-quarter since 2000.

Annual funding is currently \$4.9 million below average state expenses on tourist promotion. At the same time, Michigan has the lowest occupancy rate of all 50 states, meaning our tourism business has suffered directly as promotion funding has dried up.

Thick headed? Yep. Neurotic? Probably. Self-destructive? Without a doubt.

At this point, I hasten to confess bias. I've been a member of the MEDC board of directors since the early 1990s, when I was appointed by former Gov. John Engler.

I've seen the MEDC in good times (i.e. under Engler) and in today's bad times, when some Republicans in the Legislature have set out to hobble, if not kill outright, the state's main economic development organization.

You'd think that the Legislature would be falling all over itself to provide funds to help the MEDC attract and retain jobs in Michigan. Especially now.

The main culprit in all this is the so-called "caveman caucus" in the state House of Representatives, a bunch of self-described ultra-conservatives instrumental in electing Rep. Craig De Roche, R-Nov, speaker and to whom he owes allegiance and loyalty.

I've seen how effective the MEDC can be. And in recent times, I've seen how the organization, properly, has tightened up as its budget has been cut. And I've seen just how hobbled the MEDC has become in trying to help our state out of its economic jam.

So I was interested to see what would happen when I attended the board meeting last week.

There's a new CEO, Jim Epolito, a seasoned business executive. He took the Michigan Accident Fund from peanuts to a many-hundred-million-dollar operation in just a few years, and isn't afraid to tell it like it is.

Epolito recognizes that part of the problem with the Legislature is simple communications. Most lawmakers are new to their jobs and haven't the foggiest idea of what economic development is all about.

The newly adopted 21st Century Jobs Fund could be a big help. The legislation puts a lot of the authority for the program into the Michigan Strategic Fund, but it's likely the MEDC will wind up with much of the administrative responsibility for something like \$250 million in job-creating programs.

Those are focused on four key sectors of our economy: life sciences, alternative energy, homeland security and defense, and advanced automotive manufacturing and materials.

"Things are coming together right now," Epolito told me after the meeting. "For the first three months, we were playing defense. Now we can go on offense in attracting and retaining jobs."

"Our plan is simple. First, we must do everything we can to secure our manufacturing base. Second, we need to plant the seeds of jobs for the future."

Sounds sensible and insightful to me. Epolito may not be a psychiatrist, but he is just the kind of guy to inject a bunch of common sense into a neurotic political environment in Lansing.

Phil Power, a member of the board of directors of the MEDC, is a longtime observer of politics, economics and education issues in Michigan. He would be pleased to hear from readers at ppower@hcnnet.com.

Put your emergency contact information in your cell phone

Cell phones are a way of life nowadays, keeping us in contact with our world while on the go with the touch of a button.

In an emergency, firefighters and paramedics may find a patient who is unable to talk. If their cell phone is nearby, it probably contains the number of someone to call who could provide medical information about the patient.

But which number is the right one?

You might think we could simply call the number listed under "mom," but if mom is elderly and in a diminished state, she may not be the best person to call. Rarely does anyone label a contact as "husband," "wife" or "spouse" on their cell phone; they enter the person's name, along with many other name entries.

Searching for the right number through trial and error can use valuable time ... time the patient may not have. This situation can be helped by using ICE.

There is currently a lot of buzz about using ICE on cell phones. If you are not familiar with the concept, ICE is an acronym that stands for In Case of Emergency. As the name implies, using the ICE acronym as part of the information in your cell phone's internal phone book can provide a valuable list of people to contact in case of an emergency.

Suppose you are unconscious after a car crash and are unable to give information to paramedics on the scene. If you've set up contacts using the ICE designation, first responders can quickly check the contacts in your cell phone and find the appropriate number to call to get vital medical information. You can designate more than one contact by labeling them as ICE1 — Nancy, ICE2 — Steve and so on.

This is a program that started in England, and has spread to the United States via the Internet. The ability to quickly reach ICE-designated contacts proved to be a major asset during the recent bombings in London.

With more than 193 million cell phone users in the United States, the ICE program has the potential to provide quick access to emergency information for a huge portion of the country's population.

Obviously, the first step towards a workable program is getting the ICE contacts programmed into phones. ICE is a free program, and can easily be entered into any cell phone right now.

There is currently a lot of buzz about using ICE on cell phones. If you are not familiar with the concept, ICE is an acronym that stands for In Case of Emergency. As the name implies, using the ICE acronym as part of the information in your cell phone's internal phone book can provide a valuable list of people to contact in case of an emergency.

Individuals wishing to make these designations should be sure the contacts know they are being designated and should inform the contact of any pertinent medical history, current medications and drug allergies.

While the program has the potential to provide invaluable information in the treatment of emergencies, it can also be useless in some cases — for instance, if the contact has not been informed of changes to a person's medical condition, if the phone's features have been password-protected by the user, or if there's one phone found on the floor of a car with four injured occupants.

Another potential problem could be a criminal gaining access to a person's phone and using the emergency pretext to get an ICE contact to vacate the home, thereby leaving it unoccupied and open to burglary.

In addition to the ICE program, there are other means available to provide identification and medical information to emergency teams. A small card can be used by children to provide information on how to contact parents or a guardian. The card can be given to the child's school, day care center, baby sitter, grandparents, or can be inserted in the child's backpack.

A larger card can be made for the elderly, those with serious medical conditions and those who take many different medications. The card can be put into a wallet or purse, left on a kitchen counter or put on the refrigerator. A photo identification, such as a driver's license is useful, and medical insurance cards or information are also helpful.

Having this important information quickly available to first-responders can save valuable time in the event of an emergency.

Lt. Tom Klurski is a firefighter/paramedic who serves as public information officer for the Livonia Fire & Rescue.



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Award recognizes Best Friends of Rouge

BY HUGH GALLAGHER
STAFF WRITER

The Friends of the Rouge honored three Rouge River restoration volunteers Thursday with their Best Friend of the Rouge Award. The Friends recognized Edward J. Bagale, vice chancellor at the University of Michigan-Dearborn; Kurt Kuban, community editor of the *Canton Observer*; and Marjane Baker, a retired teacher at Tonda Elementary in the Plymouth-Canton School District. The award is presented in recognition of the "positive impact" that recipients have had on the Rouge River.

The awards were presented at the Friends annual membership meeting at the University of Michigan's Environmental Interpretive Center in Dearborn.

Awardees were selected from the Nonprofit Sector, Education and Volunteer At-Large.

"Without the dedication and support of our volunteers, we would not be successful in our mission to restore and protect the Rouge River" said Carolyn McCaughey, executive director of Friends of the Rouge.

Bagale is being honored for his tireless efforts in raising awareness of the Rouge River and our local environment.

"Because of Ed Bagale's leadership, perseverance and hard work, Rouge River residents have more opportunities to experience nature through projects such as the Rouge River Gateway Greenway Trail. He is a true friend of the Rouge," McCaughey said.

Bagale said when he first came to the university in 1985, he was interested in finding a way for the university to "provide value" to the community. He said the environment around the university's Dearborn campus has been a way to link the university and the communities around it.

"They say it takes a village to educate a child. It also takes a village to clean up a watershed," Bagale said. "What we've figured out in the last 25-30 years is that success breeds success. If you don't mind who gets the credit, you can energize a community."

He said the award was a way for the Friends "to say to the university through me thanks for being connected to us."

DEDICATED VOLUNTEERS

Kuban became interested in working on the Rouge while covering the annual Rouge Rescue for the *Observer*.

"I was impressed by the dedication of some of the people involved. Also, I live in Wayne, and was surprised to see the city didn't have a Rouge Rescue at the time, especially because the Lower Rouge River runs right through the entire city," Kuban said.

Kuban regularly organizes the Rouge Rescue site in Wayne, additional cleanup projects to improve the health of the river corridor and Rouge canoe trips.

"Some people look at the Rouge River and see a big sewer, others just see potential. Kurt Kuban has a vision of the Rouge River as a canoeable and fishable river right in our backyard," said Sally Petrella, public involvement coordinator for Friends of the Rouge. "Every river could use a friend like Kurt and the Rouge River is lucky to have him."

Kuban said the award is a validation for the work he's done.

"My goal is to see a day where my grandchildren (if I'm lucky enough to have some) will be able to walk down to the river and enjoy it without worrying about the pollution that lurks in the water. It seems in our day and age, wealth drives our society, but it is also important to give something back to our communities."

Baker has dedicated more than 40 years to teaching and recently retired from Tonda Elementary School in Canton in June 2005.

While at Tonda, Baker was an active participant in the Rouge Education Project. She enlightened her students about water-quality issues and taught them how to become stewards of the earth.

Baker said she became involved with environmental issues through the National Geographic Alliance, which

sponsors workshops on geographic issues for teachers. She said that she and another teacher applied to a grant from the National Geographic to buy hip boots that have been used by students to wade in the Rouge River.

"Every year the kids would say they thought it would not be exciting, but then they'd say it was their favorite field trip. They liked getting down and dirty," Baker said.

Said McCaughey: "Friends

of the Rouge is proud to honor Marjane Baker for her dedication to educating students about the important role they play in the health of the Rouge River."

While at Tonda, Baker established a natural area along the banks of Fellows Creek, a tributary of the Rouge River. With her guidance, students planted more than 1,000 trees and shrubs.

"I never expected recognition for doing what we should

be doing anyway," she said. Friends of the Rouge is always looking for volunteers to help with river restoration projects.

"The Friends of the Rouge have a multitude of programs for volunteering at the Rouge Rescue, or conducting bug hunts or frog/toad surveys, or getting involved in the Rouge Education Project, which introduces many school children to the Rouge," Kuban said.



Best Friend of Rouge Award recipients (left to right) Edward Bagale, Marjane Baker and Kurt Kuban

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