

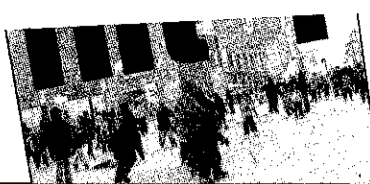


**Plan-ahead options
to ring in 2006**

TASTE, PAGE B7

Ice-scap
Glide beside the ci
skyline at Campus
Martius Park

FILTER - INSERTED SECTION



**The art of
furniture making**

AT HOME, PAGE B1

THURSDAY
December 29, 2005

WESTLAND Observer

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Take me!

Shelter helps
pair up pets
and families

BY JULIE BROWN
STAFF WRITER

Is your home lacking that certain someone - a loving dog or cat, for example?

The Michigan Humane Society has the answer.

Christina Cannon of Westland knows that and brought her niece to the Berman Center for Animal Care in her hometown last week. They were accompanied by the family's teacup poodle.

"We're checking out a couple puppies," Cannon said while cuddling one of the dogs available for adoption. "Our back yard is so big. Frost's by himself."

The poodle needs a buddy. "The week between Christmas and New Year's is an excellent time" to visit, said Marcy Sieggreen, shelter manager for the Westland facility. "You have time to look around."

Kids are off school, she said, and all members of the family can warm up to the newest member. The Humane Society's shelters - it also operates one in Detroit and one in Rochester Hills - are open today and Friday this week, but will be closed Saturday and Sunday for New Year's.

"If you rush into a decision, it's not always the best decision," said Sieggreen, who agreed animals under the Christmas tree, although cute, aren't the best idea.

PLEASE SEE **HUMANE, A4**



BILL BRESLER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

A lab/Australian shepherd mix puppy puts his best paw forward while meeting his potential owners. Sakina Phifer, 7, watches the puppy that staffer Krista Donohoo brought for her and her aunt Christina Cannon to meet. All three are Westland residents.

Vote nears on trash contract

BY DARRELL CLEM
STAFF WRITER

Westland's longtime trash hauler - under fire earlier this year for late pickup - has become the lowest of three bidders for a new, five-year contract.

A decision to keep Inkster-based Midwest Sanitation, historically known as Painter & Ruthenberg, would save the city hundreds of thousands of dollars a year, Mayor Sandra Cicirelli said.

Midwest has priced its services at \$5.90 for each stop its workers make, compared to \$6.61 for Republic and \$7.12 for Waste Management, Cicirelli said.

Westland has nearly 28,000 stops on its garbage routes.

When considering all terms of the contract bids, Midwest would cost the city \$238,000 a year less than Republic and \$409,000 less than Waste Management, Cicirelli said.

"There's a big difference in cost," she said. A trash-hauler vote is expected in January by the seven-member Westland City Council, which will consider a still-pending recommendation from a committee that includes Cicirelli, Public Services Director Tom Wilson and council members James Godbout, Charles Pickering and William Wild.

"I thought the bids came back about how we expected them to, based on what we've seen in other communities," Wild said.

The bids reflect the same level of services offered by all three trash-hauling companies, city officials said.

In its vote, the council will have to weigh bids with which company they believe can provide the best services.

Midwest, or P&R, came under heavy fire earlier this year from residents who complained of late pickup, rude workers and garbage trucks that leaked fuel. However, Cicirelli confirmed that most complaints have subsided.

Whichever company is chosen, Cicirelli said, the city is expected to demand that all garbage trucks used in Westland be no more than 5 years old.

Moreover, she said the city will likely stiffen the penalties that it can impose if the next trash hauler fails to abide by the new contract.

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

Violent incidents mar holiday for some

BY DARRELL CLEM
STAFF WRITER

With separate incidents involving an attempted murder, an armed robbery and a stabbing, Christmas Eve turned violent in some Westland neighborhoods.

The attempted murder happened about 6:30 p.m. Saturday during a domestic dispute that escalated with a 56-year-old woman trying to drive over her husband with

a minivan, police Sgt. Steve Borisch said.

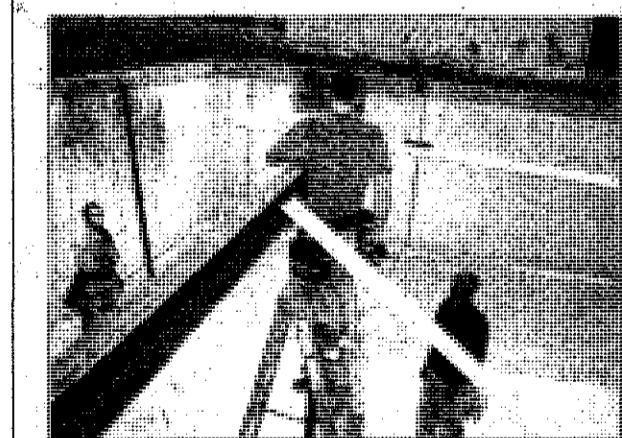
The argument started after the couple got drunk and began arguing inside their residence on Newwaygo, near Venoy and Palmer in the city's Norwayne neighborhood, according to police.

The husband allegedly threw a liquor bottle through a television screen, prompting the wife to get a handgun, chase him outside and follow him in a minivan as he walked away, Borisch said.

The wife is accused of veering the vehicle toward the husband, who jumped a fence to get away, the detective said. The dispute spilled onto other streets, such as Dorsey and Grand Traverse, and the woman alternately crashed through a fence and struck a building as she pursued the victim, Borisch said.

The husband escaped injury, and the wife is facing multiple charges including attempt-

PLEASE SEE **VIOLENCE, A2**



The real thing

Wayne-Westland students learn from the real-life, home-building experiences they get from a Construction Technology program at the William D. Ford Career Technical Center. "It's as real life as you can imagine," said Ginny Kowalski, the center's principal. For more on the program, see today's Real Estate section, page F1.

Moot Court plays out in Churchill High law class

BY STEPHANIE ANGELYN CASOLA
STAFF WRITER

Court was in session last week at Churchill High School - Moot Supreme Court that is.

For the past five years, Law & Justice teacher Ellen Betel has required her classes to participate in the activity, which is based on actual appellate cases. Prior to the holiday break, on Dec. 19-20, her students delved into this "hands-on learning project" which served as half of their final exam grade for the semester.

This year Betel's project was particularly timely. The students prepared a case that is currently on the Supreme Court docket, set for Jan. 9.

She said the project is "experiential" and requires critical thinking of her students. In addition, it incorporates all that the stu-

dents have learned throughout the semester.

"It brings a variety of skills together for them, and I love watching them," said Betel.

Students were placed into groups representing either side of the case of Booker T. Hudson Jr. vs. The State of Michigan. Those representing the interests of the petitioner - Booker T. Hudson - included the CATO Institute and the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers.

Those representing the interests of the respondent included Michigan or the Department of Justice, Wayne County Prosecutor's Office, the National Association of Police Organizations, and the Criminal Justice Legal Foundation.

The students were required to investigate the issue by researching and planning their cases. They received handouts to lead them in the right direction.

Some of Betel's students were placed on the school's version of a Supreme Court, as was Jeffrey Comiskey, a prosecuting attorney with Wayne County.

Comiskey had spoken to Betel's class before and agreed to participate and serve as a resource to students during the court project. "Our office encourages us to do these things," he said. Comiskey said he was impressed by the level of sophistication he encountered with students at the high school.

Nieri Avanesian and Tiffany Pao portrayed justices during their class - one of three that participated in the activity.

Pao said justices prepared by "familiarizing ourselves with the background of the various groups." And Avanesian said it was important to have background on other

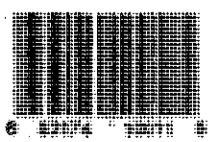
PLEASE SEE **COURT, A4**

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Coming Sunday in Observer Life

Schoolcraft
programs
meet growing
health care
demand





Santa spreads Christmas cheer throughout downtown Birmingham.

It's show-ho-ho-ho time for Santa

BY REBECCA JONES
STAFF WRITER

It's time for Santa to trim his beard.

He usually cuts it down to about an inch right after Christmas. Otherwise, he said, "I tend to grow right past Santa into ZZ Top."

Confident in his elves' ability to run the North Pole, this Westland-based Santa had more time this year to mingle in downtown Birmingham.

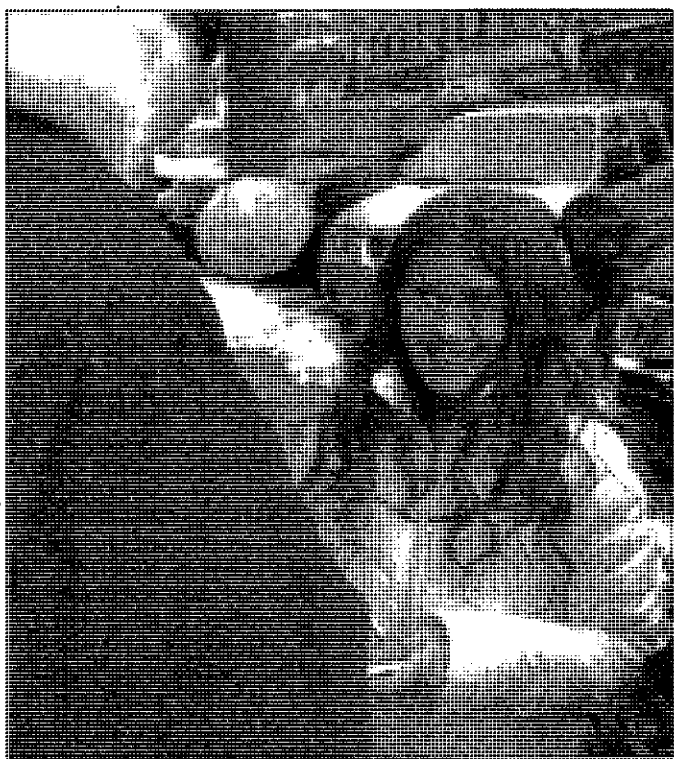
The hour before his Friday shifts at Santa House, he walked the streets shaking hands and handing out his card that reads, "You met Santa!"

Before heading out, Santa checks his mail and turns on the fireplace heater.

For this particularly cold day, he chose to wear a hat instead of the wreath that tops his favorite Victorian-inspired costume. He bought his boots at the Michigan Renaissance Festival.

He practices some ho-ho-hos, and few resist the urge to wave.

"Never pass a chance to walk into a toy store," he said, heading in to Adventures in Toys. He sees a boy and girl he recognizes. "You've grown since last year, haven't you. You got a hair cut too."



Zoe Schubot takes Santa's card.

The kids look as scared as they do surprised, but they take his card.

"The kids have been very good this year. I haven't seen a single child that I would call bad," Santa confides. "A number of children are afraid. They made mistakes, but we talk about it. I tell them because they're sorry and they mean it, that shows they're good." That soothed

one 6-year-old's worries two years back. It seems the boy snuck out of the house wearing layers of T-shirts to confess that although he had said he was good, he actually broke his dad's CD player. Santa told him he was more concerned about the child's safety.

"I like the idea that he does all of this and brings everyone presents out of the

goodness of his heart," said Zack Staat, 10, who met Santa outside the Palladium Theater after watching *Chronicles of Narnia* with friends Tharron and Remy Combs.

Santa keeps a summer cottage in Westland — one of many we're told. He doesn't need to stop into Fidelity Bank. They already know him. "I have my 401(k) with Fidelity."

He might have passed the cigar store, except that Yvonne Hare, who was washing the windows, beckoned. She used her cell phone to take a picture. Her kids are never going to believe she met Santa, she said. He sends letters sometimes, telling them to behave.

Outside, a man in his 20s interrupts his cell phone conversation. "Santa, bring me an iMac."

"It's interesting," Santa said. "I get asked for computers a lot. More than half of them are Macintosh."

Two Orthodox Jewish men are waiting behind him by a crosswalk. He turns and wishes them a Happy Hanukkah. Some Jewish children visit Santa House and talk about Hanukkah, he said. "It brings me more joy than I can possibly explain."

Reward offered in vehicle explosion

BY DAVE VARGA
STAFF WRITER

A reward of up to \$5,000 is being offered in the aftermath of an explosion that wrecked a car and rocked a south Livonia neighborhood in the wee hours of Tuesday, Dec. 27.

Nobody was hurt in the blast that happened on Danzig Street just north of Joy Road, according to Livonia Police detective Sgt. Greg Perttunen.

The federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives joined the investigation at the request of the Livonia Police Department, according to Vera Fedorak, public information officer at the ATF.

ATF agents investigated at the scene and collected debris for laboratory analysis, to determine the type of explosive used. As for a possible cause or whether a bomb was involved, Fedorak said, "Until we know for sure, we don't speculate." A 17-year-old woman had

been driving the car and it was parked in front of her house, Fedorak confirmed.

A neighbor who lives about a half-dozen houses from the explosion said he and his wife were watching a movie on their television just after midnight Monday. "We heard a loud bang on the side of our house," said Carl Mattson, describing the sound as someone banging a hand hard on their vinyl siding outside.

Although he didn't see any damage at his house, Mattson said, "It was really a loud bang."

Fedorak said no other damage was reported.

The neighborhood is a few blocks east of Franklin High School.

Anyone with information is requested to call the ATF Hotline at 1-888-283-2662 or the Livonia police at (734) 466-2470. The reward of up to \$5,000 is offered for information that leads to an arrest and conviction of the person or persons responsible.

District plan's seismic shift divides community

BY STEPHANIE ANGELINI CASOLA
STAFF WRITER

Within Livonia Public Schools, 2005 will be remembered as the year that drastically altered the city's neighborhood schools.

On Oct. 20, members of the demographics committee at every school simultaneously unveiled The Legacy Initiative — a plan to close school buildings, merge school communities, reconfigure grade levels, reinstate programming lost to budget cuts and ultimately save \$1.5 to \$2 million a year for the next five years.

Supt. Randy Liepa lauded the Legacy plan for keeping elementary communities together and bringing back once-cut programs like physical education, art and music. Once students enter fifth grade, they continue through the school system with the same classmates. "That literally is their graduating class," Liepa said.

The initial reaction by parents could be described as shock. Some shed tears over the thought that their children would no longer attend a neighborhood school. Distance and the increase in busing posed a

common concern, as did the addition of a transition to an upper elementary building with anticipated populations of more than 900.

The plan drew thousands of comments in the way of postcards and e-mails. Those opposing the plan organized into Citizens for Livonia's Future and held community meetings, rallies and even sold lawn signs against the Legacy plan. Supporters were not as outspoken. More than 600 people attended the public hearing held at Churchill High School, which was also televised on LPS TV.

On Dec. 5, the board voted 6-1 to support The Legacy Initiative. Since then, members of Citizens for Livonia's Future are attempting to recall board members, with the exceptions of Tom Bailey who voted against the plan, and Joanne Morgan, whose position is up for election in 2006. The district remains in a state of rebuilding.

Trustee Rob Freeman called for the community and district to work together in light of the coming changes. "We need to support each other," he said. "We need to do what's best for our kids."

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WESTLAND Observer

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VIOLENCE

FROM PAGE A1

ed murder, felony firearms, being a felon in possession of a gun, resisting and assaulting police officers, driving drunk, malicious destruction of property, and driving with a suspended license, according to Westland District Court records.

Authorities said it's not the first time the couple has had

violent disputes.

Less than four hours later, a dispute between two brothers on Lancashire, near Hunter and Farmington, ended with one brother, 47, stabbing the other, 50, with a pair of scissors, police Sgt. Michael Willard said.

The victim, stabbed twice in the chest and stomach area, was treated and released at Oakwood Hospital/Annapolis Center in Wayne. The incident escalated with the victim pushing the assailant in the kitchen,

Willard said.

Early on Christmas Eve, a female worker at the Burger King on Wayne Road, north of Cherry Hill, told police that she was robbed just before 3 a.m. at the drive-through window, Willard said.

The worker reported that a man walked up to the window, pointed a handgun at her and ordered her to empty a cash register drawer. She put money in a bag and handed it to him, Willard said.

Before he fled, the robber

told the employee not to look at him or he would kill her, according to police.

The employee described the bandit as a black male, 5-foot-10, 160-170 pounds, 20 to 25 years old, wearing a dark blue down-filled coat and carrying a blue, semiautomatic handgun.

Anyone with information about the robbery is urged to call the Westland Police Department at (734) 721-6311 or (734) 722-9600.

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FRI/SAT LS 11:00, 11:45
TUE-TH 1:00, 1:30, 3:30, 4:15, 6:00, 6:45, 8:30, 9:15

THE PRODUCERS (PG-13)
FRI-MON 11:00, 1:45, 4:30, 7:15, 10:00
TUE-TH 1:45, 4:30, 7:15, 10:00

CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN 2 (PG)
FRI-MON 11:30, 12:00, 2:00, 2:30, 4:30, 5:00, 7:00, 7:30, 9:30, 10:00
FRI/SAT LS 12:00
TUE-TH 12:00, 2:00, 2:30, 4:30, 5:00, 7:00, 7:30, 9:30, 10:00

YOURS, MINE AND OURS (PG)
FRI-MON 11:25, 1:25, 3:25, 5:25, 7:25
TUE-TH 1:25, 3:25, 5:25, 7:25

PRIDE AND PREJUDICE (PG)
DAILY 7:05, 9:45

CHICKEN LITTLE (G)
FRI-MON 11:15, 1:15, 3:15, 5:15
TUE 1:15, 3:15, 5:15

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Read Filter every Thursday

Please recycle this newspaper

Wayne-Westland staffers make Christmas merry for families

The staff of the Wayne-Westland Community Schools' Physical and Other Health Impairments (POHI) outreach program made the holidays brighter for the families of developmentally impaired children with a donation to Oakwood Healthcare System's Program for Exceptional Families.

The POHI staff collected and donated toys for the children to the program, which is funded by the Oakwood Foundation. The program is a comprehensive, coordinated family-centered service for children with developmental disabilities, acquired disabilities and chronic, complex disorders.

Dr. Susan Youngs, who specializes in pediatrics and physical rehabilitation medicine, launched the OHS Program for Exceptional Families in 1999, to reach out to families of severely disabled children and assist them with medical, social, psychological and community integration issues.

The Wayne-Westland POHI staff donated toys in a most creative way. Every member of



The staff of the Wayne-Westland Community Schools' Physical and Other Health Impairments outreach program shows off the toys they donated to Oakwood Healthcare System's Program for Exceptional Families.

the staff purchased a toy to be donated in the name of a colleague. Each gift had to reflect the "personality, talent or passions" of the person in whose name it was given, according to Nancy Zakar, physical therapist for the POHI program.

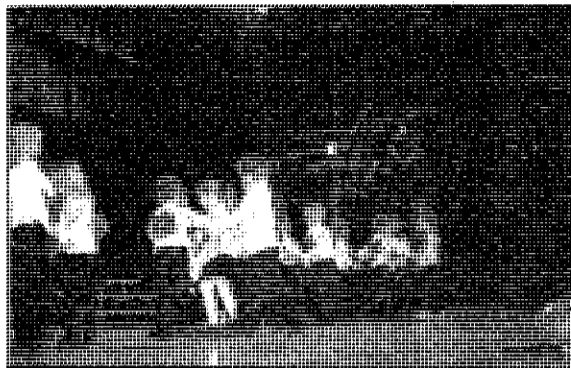
"We really had a great time and knowing that they went to Susan Youngs' program made it even more rewarding," Zakar said.

For more information about Oakwood's Program for Exceptional Families call (313) 294-1510 or visit the Oakwood Web site at www.oakwood.org.



Christmas tradition

Members of Schweitzer Elementary teacher Anne McKolay's kindergarten class wait backstage at the Stockmeyer Performing Arts Center at Wayne Memorial High School for their turn to perform in her annual Christmas pageant. The program celebrates Hanukkah, Christmas and Kwanzaa and includes youngsters singing and dancing to the 'Dreidel Song.'



INFORMATION CENTRAL

4According to *Funk and Wagnall's New Encyclopedia*, jazz is a "type of music developed by black Americans about 1900 and possessing an identifiable history and describable stylistic evolution."

In other words, jazz is one of the few "truly American" genres of music. The renowned documentary maker Ken Burns created a wonderful 10-episode miniseries, simply titled *Jazz*, which explores the evolution of this unique sound. The library owns both a VHS and DVD version of this epic.

We also have books on jazz itself, such as *The History of Jazz* by Stuart Kallen or *The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz*, as well as biographies of several famous jazz performers, such as Jelly Roll Morton, Miles Davis, John Coltrane and Ella Fitzgerald.

We also have books on related

forms of music, such as *Motown: Motown: Music, Money, Sex and Power* by Gerald Posner, *Motown: The Golden Years* by Bill Dahl, and more.

If you'd like to experience such music live, you can do that too. The library is pleased to present jazz/Latin/Motown singer Brooke Ratliff, accompanied by pianist Stefan Kukurugya, at 2 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 14.

Brooke has appeared in many local venues, and has recorded several CDs, which will be available for purchase. This free concert should be a perfect cure for the post-holiday/general winter blues!

For further details, please contact the library at (734) 326-6123, or check out our Web site at <http://www.westland.lib.mi.us>.

Internet 101: 7 p.m. Jan. 4.

For the very beginner. What the Internet is and how to get there. **Hot Jazz with Brooke Ratliff:** 2 p.m. Jan. 14.

Join us as we present local recording artist Brook Ratliff with Stefan Kukurugya. Brooke has performed in a variety of venues throughout the Detroit area.

Snowman Tic-tac-toe: 2 p.m. Jan. 3.

Ages 3-6. Make and play a tic-tac-toe game. Registration required.

Thank You Note Cards: 2 p.m. Jan. 3.

Ages 7 years and older. Children can make a colorful note card and write a message.

Make It Take It Craft: 2 p.m. Jan. 4.

All ages are welcome, under age 6 must be accompanied by an adult.

Family Game Day: 2 p.m. Jan. 5. Bring your family and play one of our many games together.

Snowman Pin Craft: 2 p.m. Jan. 6. Ages 9 and up. Make a pin for yourself or someone special. Registration required.

Fifth-Sixth-Grade Grade Book Club: 7 p.m. Jan. 10.

This month's book is *Snow Treasure* by Marie McSwigan. Stop by the children's desk to register and get a copy of the book.

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

Gault gets a Golden Apple

Marge Gault, an involved volunteer and PTSA president at Franklin High School, earned the most recent Golden Apple Award from Livonia Public Schools.

Gault has been involved in PTA leadership at the elementary, middle and high school levels. She has volunteered for numerous activities, from teacher appreciation luncheons to the Senior All Night Party to athletic concessions.

For her dedication, energetic personality and ability to "go the extra mile," she was nominated for the award by secretaries at the high school.

Principal Dan Willenborg supported the nomination.

"I simply could not imagine someone who could or would devote so much of their life to the betterment of Franklin High School," he wrote. "We are most fortunate to have Marge among the ranks of the Patriots."

Gault teared up upon receiving her golden apple pin and award on Dec. 19. "I'm surprised and honored," she said. "I am a firm believer in helping our children. I think every student needs an adult. I see a lot of kids that really need us. They need us every day."

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<p>Stuffed Pork Roast w/our Homemade Stuffing.....\$3.98 lb.</p>	<p>Happy New Year From Byrd's! 33066 W. Seven Mile Livonia 248-478-8680</p>	<p>Jones or Stewarts Soda \$3.49 4 pack</p>	<p>Come into Joes... for a wide selection of fresh fruits and vegetables. Joe's also offers a variety of domestic and imported wines. Come in and see our Cellared Wine Selection. Our Wine Consultant Frank will be happy to assist you.</p>

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HUMANE

FROM PAGE A1

"Also, there's so much stress that goes with Christmas," MHS spokeswoman Amy Popp said. Some families put a stuffed animal under the tree, to be replaced with a live one after the holiday.

"We still have a huge variety

of animals," said Sieggreen. "We always have rabbits, guinea pigs, hamsters, gerbils. The shelters get birds, too.

A walk through the dog and cat areas reveals a number of pets in need of good homes. Sieggreen recommends that those adopting dogs think of the breed which will best suit the family. Looks are appealing, but breed and tempera-

ment matter, too. Shelter staff and volunteers can help with that.

"We usually try not to put too many restrictions on animals," Sieggreen said.

The MHS Pet Education Center can help with behavior training, Popp added.

"It's also a really great opportunity for you to bond with your new animal," she said.

The staff and volunteers make it as comfortable for the animals as possible during the holidays and all year. There are toys to play with and volunteers to walk the dogs. It's comforting to know the animals aren't on the streets or in other bad situations.

"It'd be nice if they all had

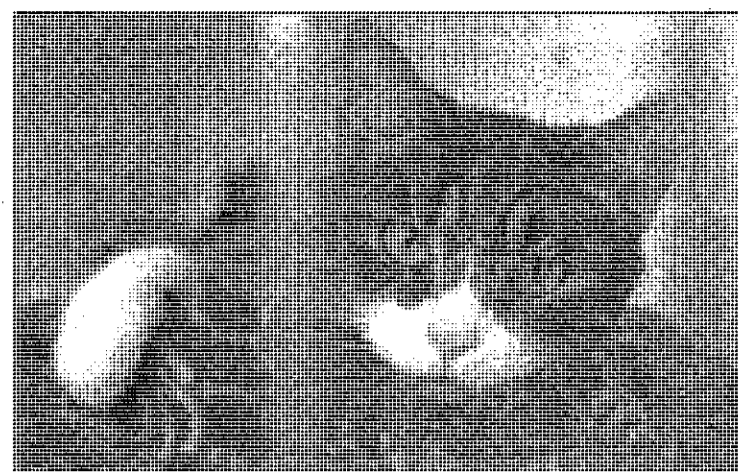
homes," Ferndale resident Sieggreen said.

The volume of animals coming in fluctuates, but there are always plenty in need of loving homes.

"We get a lot of surrenders" in January, said Popp, a Warren resident.

There's no set time for animals to stay at the shelter, Sieggreen explained. They may be transferred to another shelter or group, and the MHS uses petfinder.com and its own Web site, michiganhumane.org, to help place animals.

The Berman Center for Animal Care is on Newburgh just south of Marquette in Westland. It can be



BILL BRESLER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Gilda the cat looks through the bars of her cage at the visitors.

reached at (734) 721-7300. The Detroit 3400 and the Rochester Hills shelter can be reached at (313) 872-3400 and (248) 852-7420.



**CITY OF GARDEN CITY
FINAL PROPOSED
PROJECT STATEMENT
CDBG ALLOCATION
PROGRAM YEAR 2006**

Pursuant to federal guidelines, on December 19, 2005, subsequent to a Public Hearing, the City Council of the City of Garden City resolved to propose the following projects for funding by the Community Development Block Grant Program (Program Year 2006).

OBJECTIVES:

- A) To provide the benefits of using CDBG funding directly to persons of low to moderate income and/or areas where 51% of the residents are of low to moderate income.
- B) To reduce negative environmental impacts.
- C) To maintain a high level of performance in the management of CDBG and non-federally funded programs, while offsetting administrative costs to the General Fund.
- D) To improve public facilities.

ESTIMATED ALLOCATION POTENTIAL PROJECTS

\$94,900	City-wide Housing Rehabilitation
\$21,900	Public Service Activity (Funding for Senior Center Coordinator; 15% of Total Allocation)
\$14,600	CDBG Administration (10% of Total Allocation)
\$14,600	Planning (10% of Total Allocation)
\$146,000	Total Proposed Allocation (Estimate)

10% of all Lien Repayments go toward administration costs of the housing rehab program, and overall cost of administration of the CDBG program. 15% of all Lien Repayments will go toward the cost of the Public Service Activity; Senior Center Coordinator's Salary.

The Following Items are contingent upon the availability of funds and may vary depending upon:

1. The availability of County-wide funds.
 2. The re-payment of previous housing rehabilitation loans through lien captures.
- \$50,000 Estimated Additional Housing Rehabilitation Funds from Wayne County.
- \$5,000 Program Income/Revolving Fund
- \$201,000 Possible Total Allocation (Estimate)**

Published: December 25, 29 & January 1, 2006

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FROM PAGE A1

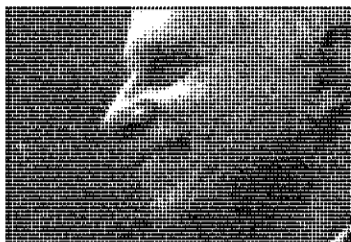
related cases and she enjoyed the fact that they were hearing an appellate case, which is "totally different" than the civil and criminal trials they completed for a previous class project.

Betel said students were chosen for specific roles, taking into account those students who would not hesitate to ask questions of their peers.

She said the activity encourages students to think outside the box.

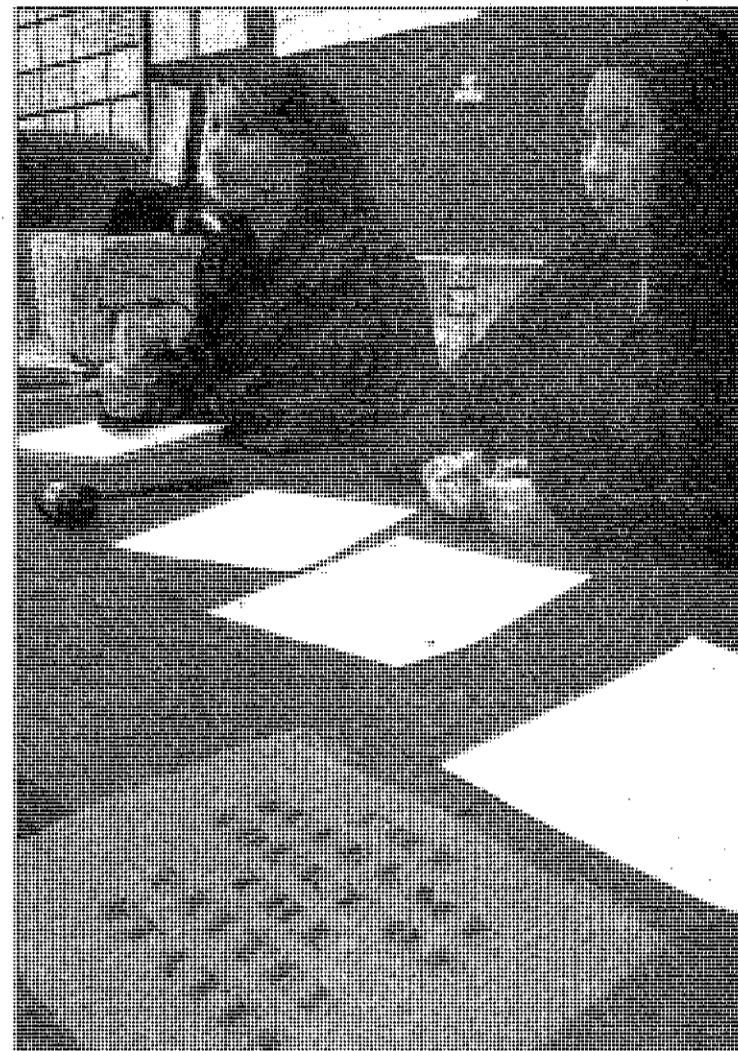
Amie Musser received the role of Wayne County

Churchill junior Amie Musser (center) portrayed Wayne County Prosecutor Kym Worthy, while her colleagues Amanda Sundberg (left) and Drew Randall discuss their side of a case.



Jeffrey Caminsky of the Wayne County Prosecutor's Office listens and responds to students.

Prosecutor Kym Worthy. She said she asked Comiskey a lot of questions about the case and spent a lot of time researching in the library. Betel said she'll evaluate all of her students on their performance, following the break. scasola@hometownlife.com | (734) 953-2054



PHOTOS BY TOM HAWLEY | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Churchill students Nieri Avanesian (left) and Tiffany Pao portrayed Supreme Court justices in one of Ellen Betel's Law & Justice classes.

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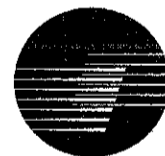
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New law would track pedophiles for life

BY ALEX LUNDBERG
STAFF WRITER

An Oakland County lawmaker has drafted legislation to put tracking devices on every child sexual predator released from prison, echoing Florida's actions in creating "Jessica's Law."

Jessica Lunsford, a 9-year-old Florida girl, was killed in March by a registered sex offender living in her neighborhood. The resulting law imposed tough new sentences as well as created a lifetime satellite tracking provision to keep offenders under perpetual surveillance.

The new law, to be introduced early next year by state Rep. David Law, R-Commerce, would put child sexual predators under continuous surveillance via GPS satellite.

"Children face many risks," he said. "They deserve to live in a world free from the fear of predators and rapists."

The law would affect anyone convicted of first- or second-degree criminal sexual conduct against a child 13 years old or younger. The offender would be fitted with an electronic tether, with a real-time tracking system, for the rest of their lives.

The law provides for the maintenance of the tracking units as well. If the units are removed or damaged, or if

the state is not informed of their damaging, prosecutors could pursue it as a two-year felony crime.

"It will primarily work as a deterrent," Law said. "We will be able to monitor them constantly and even be able to tell when the units are removed."

The units and tracking would, ideally, be paid for by the offenders themselves. The state, he said, would pick up the bill if the offender couldn't. Florida, the first to pass such a law, has set aside \$3.9 million for the program.

The reasons for the law, proponents say, are rooted in the nature of child sexual abuse.

"There is an extremely high rate of recidivism (among child sexual predators)," Law said. "Time is also a factor, because 74 percent of abducted children are dead within the first three hours of going missing."

The statewide sex offender registry has been some help, he said, but it falls short because compliance is more or less voluntary. He said 24 percent of people on the registry are not where they are supposed to be.

Oakland County Sheriff Michael Bouchard said when you consider that the average pedophile has as many as 100 victims throughout

his life, a measure like Law's is vitally important. The issue of the rights of the convicted to serve their time and only their time, has to be viewed through a different lens.

"When can they move on with their lives? When the child can move on with the hurt that's caused by the abuse," Bouchard said. "This law will help the most vulnerable against the most violent."

Oakland County Prosecutor David Gorcyca said the regular conventions of crime and punishment don't apply to pedophiles.

"Pedophiles cannot be truly trusted or truly rehabilitated," he said. "Anytime there's a new law passed to protect children, my office will move to enforce it."

American Civil Liberties Union Legislative Director Shelly Weisberg said a lot of states are looking at similar legislation. The problem, she said, is that real-time satellite tracking has its limits.

"It's a false safety net," she said. "You can know where these people are, but you can't know what they're doing."

She said a saving grace of the law was that it targeted the most egregious offenders rather than taking a page from the sex offender registry, which she called overly broad.

Cost for airlines reduced at Metro Airport

Airlines serving Detroit Metropolitan Wayne County Airport (DTW) will find \$10.7 million in their holiday stockings, in year-end residual credits and refunds, according to the Wayne County Airport Authority (WCAA).

The fiscal year 2005 books are now closed for DTW and for the first time since FY 2000, the airlines contributed less than half (49.3 percent) of the cost of operating and maintaining the airport. Other operating revenue came from parking and car rental proceeds, along with airport shops, restaurants, vending machines, and other concessions and services. The Airport Authority's fiscal year runs from Oct. 1 to Sept. 30.

"Airport management has made it a top priority to generate more and more non-airline revenue," said WCAA CEO Lester Robinson. "When we lower the airlines' costs for operating in Detroit, it encourages the struggling legacy carriers maintain service here. It also attracts low-fare carriers which are looking for a good market with lower costs. The result is more choices and better value in air service for our customers."

"Additional good news is that

'Additional good news is that the airport maintains a healthy cash balance of approximately \$87 million ...'

Lester Robinson
CEO WCAA

the airport maintains a healthy cash balance of approximately \$87 million - equal to 184 days of operating cash - to temporarily withstand a possible crisis," added Robinson.

Operating and non-operating expenses for the year totaled \$215,230,000.

Costs to the airlines were reduced by nearly \$14 million compared to FY 2004. The

final cost per enplaned passenger (CPEP) was \$5.76 which was \$1.08 below budget. FY 2004's final cost per enplaned passenger was \$6.87. DTW's CPEP, which compares favorably with other major hub airports, (see attached chart) has declined every year since FY 2002.

WCAA's strong financial performance greatly reduces the Authority's exposure in airline bankruptcy filings as some of the surplus due airlines can be applied against some airline Chapter 11 pre-petition debt.

The 404-room Westin Hotel at the McNamara Terminal also showed financial improvement in FY 2005, as revenue increased 17.6 percent over 2004, while expenses increased only 10.2 percent creating a positive cash flow of \$900,000.

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Fresh Food Ideas

OUR VIEWS

Stiffer penalties are just one reason not to drink and drive

The statistics are sobering. Last year, 430 Michigan residents lost their lives to a person driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Nationally, 16,694 people in 2004 had their lives snuffed out prematurely at the hands of an impaired driver. What makes these deaths even more tragic is they did not have to happen. Unlike most accidents, they could have been prevented if the person behind the wheel did not drink and drive.

It's that simple. And yet, more than 55,000 Michigan residents last year failed to heed that message, and found themselves in the back of a police squad car, arrested for driving under the influence.

For the most part, they were the lucky ones. They were stopped and taken off the road before they could ruin their lives, and those of their potential victims.

For years, Mothers Against Drunk Driving has worked to educate the public about the dangers of drinking and driving; provided aid and comfort to families who lost a loved one to a drunken driver; and worked with local law enforcement with its annual Red Ribbon campaign.

MADD's message takes on added importance during the holidays, when people are more likely to drink and drive. But just as the organization steps up its campaign, so does local law enforcement.

Additional and targeted patrols are planned through Jan. 2 by Michigan State Police, county sheriff's departments and local police agencies. And those finding themselves in the back of a patrol car face increased fines and penalties, and the real possibility of jail time.

The state of Michigan has stiffened its penalties for drunken driving in the past few years, and lowered the threshold of legal blood-alcohol levels from 0.10 to 0.08.

The lower limit, combined with mandatory jail time and seizure of the vehicle for a second offense, should give all of us extra incentive not to drink and drive.

Enjoy the holidays, but enjoy them responsibly. If you drink, then don't drive. It is a simple lesson that when not followed can have expensive — and tragic — consequences.

Let 2006 be the year we solve problems

In just a couple of days, we will ring in a new year, and put 2005 in our rearview mirror. There probably aren't many people, especially in our area, who are sorry to see this year go. It has been a tumultuous time, with war and layoffs dominating much of the news.

One of the great things about the dawning of a new year is the fact it always brings a fresh dose of hope and promise. And in America, the promise of a better tomorrow has always been our guiding light.

For sure, if there has ever been a time when we needed hope and promise, it is now. We have many challenges in front of us to tackle.

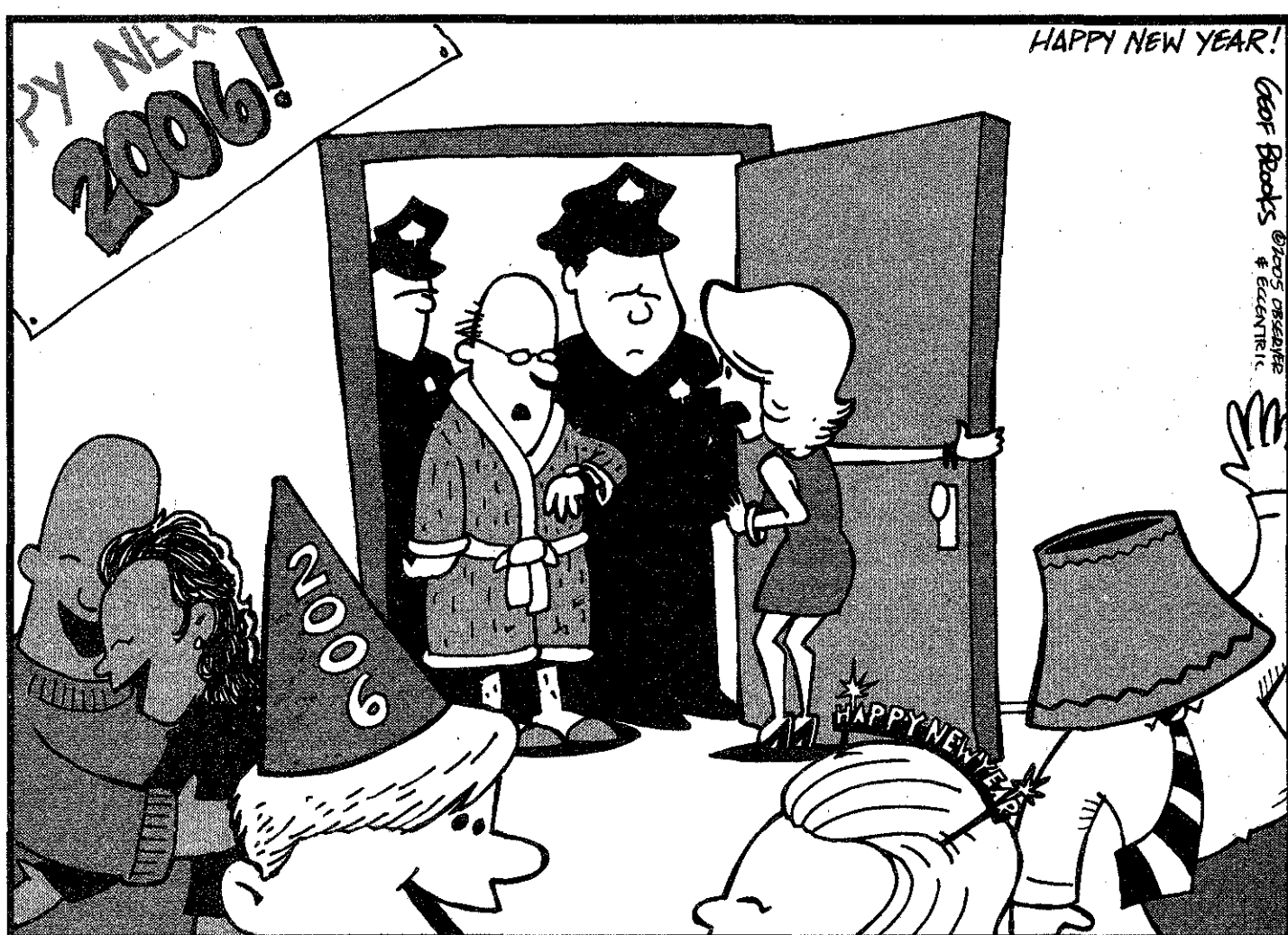
First and foremost, we need to figure out how to solve the war in Iraq. The war has consumed billions of dollars, divided an American public and, most importantly, has claimed more than 2,000 American soldiers and the lives of countless Iraqis.

At a more local level, we need to figure out how to turn around our sluggish economy here in Michigan. Unfortunately, Gov. Jennifer Granholm was recently quoted as saying the state's economy is more likely to get better in 2007 or 2008 than it is in 2006. The problem is even more acute in southeast Michigan, where so many of our residents are tied one way or another to the floundering auto industry, which is undergoing unprecedented changes.

Let's hope 2006 will be the year our government officials realize that solving these problems is more important than the partisan bickering that has dominated both Washington and Lansing in recent years. Hopefully, they will remember that leaders need to show leadership, be innovative and come up with ideas that will move America and Michigan forward.

If there was anything about 2005 that was inspiring and noteworthy, it was the efforts that our communities and nation made to aid the victims of the hurricanes that battered the Gulf Coast and its people. We even came together to help the victims of a tsunami that wreaked havoc on the other side of the planet. Whether we simply donated money or held bake sales as fund-raisers, we showed our best and should be proud.

Perhaps in 2006, we will build off of that cooperation and collective spirit to solve some of our other problems.



"My New Year's resolution is to be more tolerant, but it doesn't start for another forty minutes."

Insurance isn't gift

It's a difficult time. We are regularly bombarded with stories about how various corporate or public organizations are finding it necessary to cut back or eliminate employee "health benefits." It's kinda as if these were gifts to the employees, and we sorta need to take them back so that we can keep on employing everybody.

Now, I am old enough to have been involved in the negotiations that brought "health insurance" to one group of employees, and it wasn't a gift. No one sent out a notice that said, "Hey we decided to give all you wonderful workers health insurance."

Health insurance premiums were negotiated in lieu of pay. The insurance came to us instead of, or as part of, a pay raise. So when folks say they need to take it back, they are trying to take something a lot of people struggled, sometimes for years, to get and it wasn't a benefit, it was part of our pay for our hours and days of work.

I don't want to drive any company out of business, but there are a lot of folks without health care and too many kids going to bed hungry, and someone is buying those \$250,000 houses, and you don't have to be terribly bright to see that things are out of balance and the working people don't need to be lied to about how they got what little financial security they have managed to keep.

Jim Cook
Westland

Jerusalem position arrogant

In the talk of Israeli Consul General Barukh Binah to the Detroit media in the story published Dec. 4, numerous points deserve comment. Perhaps one of the most telling is his comment that all Israeli parties agree on preserving a united Jerusalem as the capital of Israel.

It is noteworthy to mention that East Jerusalem is illegally occupied by Israel in the eyes of the UN and international law. Therefore, this tells the Palestinians simply that no matter who they want to talk to on the Israeli side, the Israeli side will remain adamant and arrogant about its continuing the illegal occupation.

Exactly how is this to contribute to peace?

Rifat Audeh
London, Ontario

Gaza a prison

I find it utterly disgusting that the Israeli consul general fed the American media yet another dose of preentious propaganda along with his deliciously calculated wining and dining during his visit here in Detroit. Barukh Binah made Israel out to be a remarkable victim, yet once again, who seeks constant security, validation and approval from the rest of the world, while it pretends to seek economic, social and humanitarian justice in the region.

One of the things he failed to demonstrate was that Israel is not truly seeking a justified, honest and peaceful two state solution in the Mideast conflict. Instead, it is creating, in Gaza, the largest open

LETTERS

air prison the world has ever seen. I suggest that while Binah makes the claim that Israelis are very welcoming people and that Israel has so much to offer as a tourist attraction, that he allows tourists to take bus trips through Gaza and all of the occupied territories, which are still occupied by the way, to see for themselves what truths really lie underneath the deceit they are feeding the public. The tourists should make sure to ask the Israeli airport personal what the best route into Palestine should be on their way into the country ... I'm sure the hospitality will shine right through.

Joanne Manna
Dearborn

Attack unjustified

In her article ("U.S. policy in the Middle East inconsistent with our ideals," *Observer*, Dec. 11), Terry Ahwal condemns the United States as a nation that attacks innocent people while supporting bullies and tyrants.

She accuses U.S. soldiers of being cowardly teenagers who humiliate people. She accuses the United States of conducting raids to capture terrorists whom she prefers to call insurgents. She accuses the United States of supporting oppressive and destructive regimes. She accuses the United States of disenfranchising peoples in Iraq as they move toward elected constitutional government.

I think Terry Ahwal holds the United States in such contempt, that she uses faulty logic to attack us.

In case Ahwal has forgotten, terrorist bullies and tyrants from the Middle East attacked the United States on 9/11. We were attacked on several previous occasions by terrorists and bullies from the Middle East, including the Khobar tower bombing (1996), the U.S.S. Cole attack (2000), the first World Trade Center bombing (1993).

In 2002, the United States attacked the murderous tyrannical Taliban terrorist bullies in Afghanistan, killing many and putting the rest on the run. It was determined that the 9/11 al-Qaeda terrorists had ties to the terrorist bully tyrannical Taliban regime.

It was subsequently determined the murderous bully and terrorizer of his own people, Saddam Hussein, presented a potential threat to the rest of the world, and to the United States. There was credible evidence Hussein had given sanctuary to al-Qaeda and Palestinian terrorists including Abu Abbas, a Palestinian terrorist hijacker of the cruise ship Achille Lauro (1985).

To show the world just how brave he was, Abbas murdered an old American man in a wheelchair, who happened to be Jewish, and threw his body overboard. Saddam Hussein also maintained a terror training facility named Salman Pak, where terrorists in training could practice taking over jet airliners utilizing actual planes. Interestingly enough, the 9/11 terrorists utilized aircraft that they had hijacked to murder almost 3,000 of us. It has been established that Hussein aided and abetted terror by paying \$25,000 to \$30,000 to the families of homicide bombers.

We attacked and took out the tyrannical terrorist bully and his raping, murdering sons and their regime. In the process, we have discovered mass graves of thousands of Iraqi people murdered by the Hussein regime. Perhaps in Ahwal's world, these people, including women and babies, were bullies and tyrants that had to be disposed of by Hussein.

We have worked hard to establish a constitutional government in Iraq. We did not, as Ahwal asserts, disenfranchise anyone except perhaps a few terrorists. People who chose not to participate in the two free elections that have taken place in Iraq did so of their own free will and in an effort to undermine the democratic process. Interestingly enough, they are now involved in the upcoming election process to finalize representative government.

It is hard to determine which of her attacks on our country and people is most egregious, but her personal attack on our soldiers as nervous, cowardly ("fearful") teenagers is most reprehensible. These young soldiers have acquitted themselves most honorably in the face of constant cowardly terror bombing attacks by terrorists who have flooded in to Iraq from terror-supporting Middle Eastern nations like Iran, Saudi Arabia and Syria.

Those nations and others in the Middle East have a vested interest in preventing the establishment of a democratic Iraq. Such establishment bodes ill for the future their own tyrannical terrorist regimes and they and Ahwal know it.

I think it is wonderful Ahwal can live in our free country. Here she is afforded the Constitutional free speech protection of the First Amendment. She can spew any unjust accusations about our country that she chooses and see them published. I wonder if she would be able to live for very long in many of the terror-supporting countries in the Middle East and attack those governments with impunity. I also question whether she is capable of understanding that the ideals of democratic government often don't come easily and require constant attention and support to flourish.

Mark F. Tooze
Plymouth

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

QUOTABLE

"The main thing is that these kids get to see police officers in a different light than we're usually seen. It's more like we're their friends."

— Westland Police Officer Burke Lang, about Meijer's recent "Shop With A Hero" program

Does hunting have a place in suburb's future?

Like some of the deer he has hunted since the age of 14, David Blendea now finds himself in the crosshairs.

The 44-year-old journeyman bricklayer is smack dab in the middle of the public debate about the future of hunting in Canton. It's certainly not where he wanted to be, but something he was thrust into last month while hunting his property — a 10-acre parcel of thick woods on Newton Road, just east of Beck along the Rouge River.

Blendea's neighbor, Patricia Pellerito, called us at the *Observer* and complained that a bunch of "yahoos" were hunting in the woods behind her home during the firearms season, which took place in late November. She said she was fed up with all the gunshots and even told us that one of the hunter's bullets pierced her home.

The story caught Blendea by surprise. Although Pellerito never named him, she was certainly talking about him and one other buddy, who Blendea let hunt his property this year. Who else could it be, Blendea said, because he doesn't let anyone else hunt on his property or on the adjoining 12 acres of woods and wetlands he has access to.

Blendea was offended by Pellerito's charges for a couple of reasons. First, he said he is a "safety first" hunter. He uses a muzzleloader, and only shoots in his designated shooting lane. In addition, he hunts from an elevated blind, which means he shoots down toward the ground, so any missed shots won't go flying off his property. The other reason Blendea was offended by Pellerito's charges is that they would probably help sway a divided public that hunting shouldn't be legal in Canton.

In addition to calling us, Pellerito also called the police, who shall we say "visited" Blendea on at least two occasions. It's understandable that the police would come out the first time, after Pellerito called to report shots being fired, but once they determined Blendea and his friend were hunting legally, which they did, they should have left him alone. It is illegal in Michigan to interfere with a hunter who is in the field, which is where they were confronted on both occasions.

Pellerito later told the *Observer* that she heard only five shots all week — certainly not a war zone. She also said she wasn't sure a hunter actually shot her home. It could have been anyone, she said.

The case has certainly heightened the argument about hunting's future in Canton. Despite the pleas from Canton Township officials, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, which regulates hunting throughout the state, has refused to ban hunting in

Canton. The main argument is that hunting is the only way to control animal populations, especially when they become a problem (i.e. Canada geese, varmints and, yes, deer).

Blendea argues that without hunters like him, the deer population in Canton will grow and eventually become a problem. In fact, he says a buddy of his was riding a motorcycle on Beck Road after leaving his house earlier this year, when a deer came crashing right into him. His girlfriend was on the back and had to be taken to the hospital, where she was admitted to the intensive care unit.

According to statistics put out by the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments, there were 6,641 vehicle-deer crashes in southeast Michigan in 2004, and more than 62,000 statewide. According to the statistics, there were about 75 vehicle-deer crashes in Canton over a two-year period (2003-04).

Pellerito also questioned why Blendea doesn't go "up north" to hunt like a "real hunter." Unfortunately, the problem with this argument is there aren't many deer left in northern Michigan. According to the DNR, more than half of the deer population in Michigan lives in the southern tier of the state, where there is precious little public hunting land. So, in reality, Blendea is one of the fortunate few who have the ability to hunt down here. Personally, as a hunter myself, I'm a little jealous.

This story has proved one thing to me: hunting is a divisive issue, not unlike abortion, drawing passionate pleas from both sides. We asked our readers what they thought about the issue, if they thought hunting should be banned in Canton, and the answers were very much either pro-hunting or anti-hunting. In one case, a husband and wife sent me e-mails. The wife thinks hunting should be banned in Canton, while her husband thinks it absolutely should still be allowed.

Let's face it, nobody really wants to hear gunshots so close to their home. So it is understandable that Pellerito would be upset when she heard the shots coming from Blendea's property. But it must be remembered that she is the one who purchased a home next to a woodlot in the "country." It was probably one of the main reasons she was attracted to the home in the first place.

Is it fair for Blendea to lose his rights because someone decided to build a home next to his property? It kind of reminds me of the people who move next to a farm, then complain about the smell.

Hopefully, there is a compromise somewhere in this story. They say it takes all kinds to make up a village. Hunters must fit in there somewhere.

Kurt Kuban is community editor of the *Canton Observer*. He welcomes your comments at (734) 459-2700 or kkuban@hometownlife.com.



Kurt Kuban

Readers' responses were more diverse than ornaments

I wrote a column a couple of weeks ago about searching for a Christmas ornament to honor a little girl in Senegal, Africa. My fiancé Robin and I sponsor Ndeye, 6, through the Christian Children's Fund, and we wanted an ornament that represented her for our first tree.

We went to Bronner's Christmas Wonderland in Frankenmuth to look for the ornament. After initial frustration, we eventually found what we were looking for in Bronner's section of decorations from around the world. I was disturbed that I couldn't find people of color on other ornaments and pointed that out to Bronners. A store official explained that Bronner's made a strong effort to offer diverse ornaments but that they weren't readily available in the marketplace.

The column first appeared on Sunday, Dec. 4, and letters, e-mails and telephone calls started coming in the following Monday. The original column was roughly 900 words, and the first e-mail from a woman in Rochester contained over 1,000 words of sincere criticism.

Any journalist who writes columns expects and welcomes criticism, so I read the line-by-line critique carefully. It seemed the reader was frustrated with the politics of Christmas.

"What about the Asian population?" she asked. "Many are Christians, yet how many Chinese angels do you see? Chinese Santas? Even worse, what about the fact that the word Christmas is becoming politically incorrect? Will Bronner's have to change its advertising to say it is the holiday store? It gets to be a little ridiculous."

The reader made some good points in her letter. I had found a black ornament so what was the fuss?

Four more e-mails came in that day. "Since there is a vast need for these ornaments why not start your own business and fill that need?" asked a reader from Troy.

A great idea if only I had an extra \$100,000 in a hole in the backyard. Unfortunately, the vast majority of people who drive rusty cars don't have that much subterranean cash stashed and my ride is rusty.

The reader later said: "I'm just sick of everyone always finding something to complain about in this country but never doing anything to solve the problem themselves."

A few more letters came in suggesting I take the entrepreneurial way out, then a nice elderly woman from Southfield called to thank me personally for writing the column.

She said it brought her back to the 1950s when she couldn't find a black doll for her daughter. It took years and a lot of tears, but the woman

finally found such a doll and gave it to her daughter.

"I thought we would have come further by now," she said.

Another reader said my original column represented a common theme that there is a conspiracy of sorts by the majority against minorities in this country. He said Christmas as represented by Bronner's is a historically white activity, and that most of the traditions originated in Europe among people of homogeneous white stock.

I didn't have the heart to break to him, but the vast majority of scientists believe humanity began in Africa — probably not a popular notion with Mr. Homogeneous but then again he probably doesn't own a copy of Charles Darwin's *Origin of the Species* either.

I'm not an expert on evolution, religion or the origins of Santa Claus but my original column wasn't about any of those things.

It was actually about hoping for a day when Christmas is celebrated in a more inclusive way. Many readers didn't get that and it's too bad. A handful of people who wrote in did get it though.

"I guess to truly understand you have to walk in someone else's shoes," said a caller from Plymouth. "Thanks for writing what you did."

A man in Rochester Hills said his entire tree is decorated with ornaments depicting people of color that he and his wife have collected for much of their 18-year marriage. He sent me an electronic photo album to prove the point and said some of the ornaments were purchased at popular area department stores.

The most hopeful response came from another Plymouth reader who had spent hours rummaging through his attic before calling me. The man said his wife once sold hand-crafted Christmas decorations and offered a diverse selection. His wife had passed away, and he wanted me to have the decorations with black children on them. I thanked him but declined. The offer stands to anyone who can't find a diverse ornament.

"I'll keep them out in case you find someone who wants them," he said.

More e-mails came in Thursday, the last of which concluded as follows:

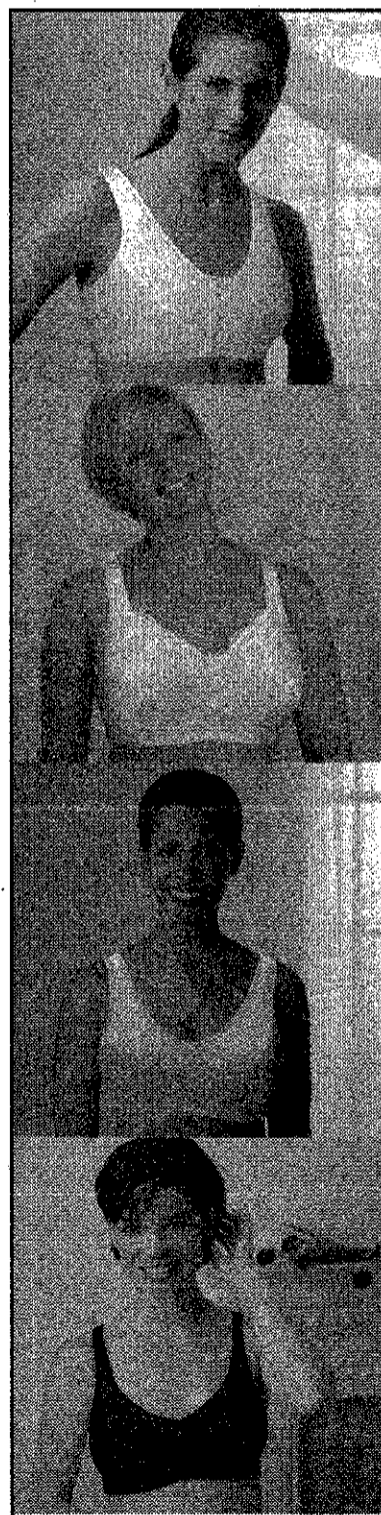
"I'm very tired of people excluding Christmas and other Christian holidays, saying it's not politically correct. Well, everyone has a right to celebrate any holiday they wish, so instead of trying to hush up Christmas, promote the holiday you like to celebrate — duh! It is not that hard of a concept. Celebrate diversity not bigotry. Multicultural/multiracial does not mean exclude the whites or Christians!"

All I can say is amen to that.

Larry Ruehlen is the editor of the *West Bloomfield Eccentric*. He can be reached by phone at (248) 901-2556 or by e-mail at lruehlen@hometownlife.com.



Larry Ruehlen



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