

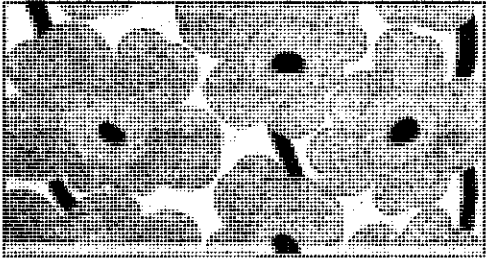
112

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Old World
elements, retro
looks hot
for 2006

AT HOME, PAGE B1



Swanky Super
Bowl parties

FILTER - INSERTED SECTION



What's your beef?
Cookbook promotes
its nutrients

TASTE - PAGE B5



THURSDAY
January 12, 2006

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The 1st

LeBlanc locks in spot in state House race

BY DARRELL CLEM
STAFF WRITER

Westland City Councilman Richard LeBlanc has become the first candidate to officially enter the 18th District state House race, but two other Democratic hopefuls confirmed that they still plan to mount campaigns.

LeBlanc announced Monday that he has filed his candidate papers with the Wayne County Election's Office, in hopes of succeeding term-limited state Rep. Glenn Anderson, D-Westland.

Councilman James Godbout and former state Rep. Vince Petitpren confirmed this week that they still intend to seek a two-year House term in Anderson's district, which includes all of Westland.

Godbout had tried to file as a candidate last summer only to learn that the county office wouldn't accept the paperwork until 2006.

"I have every intention of filing within the next week," he said Monday.

Petitpren, who served a six-year stint as state representative starting in 1965, said he will beat the deadline of May 16 to enter the race.

"I'm in no rush," Petitpren, 78, said.

LeBlanc, Godbout and Petitpren would square off in the Aug. 8 Democratic primary and face whichever candidate the Republican Party places on the general election ballot in November.

LeBlanc, 47, and Godbout, 51, are in similar positions in that either candidate would, if elected, have to step down a year early from their current four-year council term.

Already, candidates have started outlining issues and touting their endorsements.

In announcing his official candidacy, LeBlanc said, "Our citizens are facing unprecedented challenges as our economy continues to lag, with public education and our communities contending with regular funding shortfalls."

He cited other concerns - skyrocketing utility bills, costly prescription drugs and jobs being exported overseas - that

PLEASE SEE HOUSE, A4

It's a dog's world after all



PHOTOS BY TOM HAWLEY | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Award-winning Shetland sheepdog Katherine snuggles up to owner Mary Christensen. To their left are many of the ribbons that Katherine has accumulated.

Sheltie accepts invitation to national championship

BY DARRELL CLEM
STAFF WRITER

After winning dozens of ribbons and defeating hundreds of dogs in renowned competitions, Katherine - a Shetland sheepdog from Westland - is ready for her television close-up.

Katherine, 2 1/2 years old, has become so respected that she earned a coveted spot in this weekend's invitation-only Eukanuba National Championship in Tampa, Fla.

The two-day competition, sponsored by the American Kennel Club, will air at

8 p.m. Saturday and Sunday on the Discovery and Animal Planet channels.

Depending on how she fares, Katherine may get her close-up, but nearly 3,000 dogs will be competing for attention from judges.

"It will be tough," said Walt Christensen, who owns four award-winning Shetland sheepdogs with his wife, Mary.

The couple has been showing dogs for 10 years, and they breed them, too. Their four shelties - Katherine, sister

PLEASE SEE CHAMPIONSHIP, A4



Katherine takes a closer look as her picture is being taken. She will compete this weekend in a prestigious dog show in Tampa.

Teenagers agree to plea in armed robbery case

BY DARRELL CLEM
STAFF WRITER

Two local teenagers face prison after admitting they robbed an 80-year-old woman at gunpoint inside the garage of her Westland condominium.

Ajuan Hogan and Cortne Diaz, both 18, will spend 3 1/2 to 20 years in prison for a robbery that occurred about 9 p.m. Sept. 14 at Colonial Estates condominiums, authorities confirmed Monday.

Hogan, a Wayne resident, faces a formal sentencing by Wayne County Circuit Judge Patricia Fresard

on Jan. 23 after pleading guilty to charges of first-degree home invasion and armed robbery.

Diaz, a Westland resident, will be sentenced one week later after pleading guilty to armed robbery, according to the Wayne County Prosecutor's Office.

The victim was robbed of her purse after Hogan followed her into her garage and threatened her at gunpoint, police Sgt. Steve Borisch has said.

Diaz waited in a getaway van that, according to authorities, had been earlier stolen on Hiveley Street.

Westland police saw the getaway vehicle soon

after the robbery occurred and followed it to nearby Westwood Apartments.

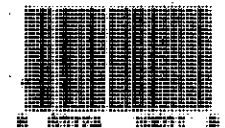
The two men fled on foot, but police Lt. James Ridener has said police officers found paper work inside the van that led them to the suspects.

Hogan and Diaz had been jailed in lieu of a \$100,000 bond each.

As part of a plea agreement, their decision to admit their guilt averted a trial and the possibility of spending life in prison.

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Coming Sunday
on the PINK page



Jennifer
Gray's
Body
Beautiful
Boot
Camps

Supporters visit state to push Alito's bid for Supreme Court

BY DAN WEST
STAFF WRITER

A longtime friend and a former intern of U.S. Court of Appeals Judge Samuel Alito Jr. were in Michigan last week to promote the Supreme Court Justice nominee, who is facing the Senate Judiciary Committee this week for confirmation hearings.

New York-based attorney David Grais, Alito's college roommate at Princeton, and New Jersey-based attorney Chris Eriksen, a law intern in Alito's office in 1994-95, spoke to a group of attorneys in Lansing and conducted interviews with Metro Detroit media during their one-day visit.

Grais and Eriksen were part of a three-day, 19-state tour by 29 of Alito's supporters who are personal friends, mentors, clerks and former colleagues. The campaign was organized by Progress for America, a tax-exempt political action group that advances conservative ideas and principals.

"We've come to learn that discussion and debate on Supreme Court nominees need to take place outside of the Beltway," said Paul Welday, a partner with a Novi-based political and public relations company that's helping Progress for America.

"Liberal opponents bash these guys and create a perception," added Welday, a former chief of staff for U.S. Rep. Joe Knollenberg, R-Bloomfield Township. "We have to present

'Judge Alito's confirmation to the Supreme Court has the potential to change the social and judicial landscape of this country for decades.'

Steven Shapiro
legal director for the American Civil Liberties Union

the nominee from the other side, push his qualifications and make it clear is not an ideological activist."

Critics argue that Alito, nominated to the nation's high court by President George W. Bush in October, is an activist conservative judge.

While working in the U.S. Solicitor General's Office in the 1980s, Alito wrote in briefs for the U.S. Supreme Court that racial and ethnic quotas should not be allowed and the Constitution does not protect a right to an abortion.

"Judge Alito's confirmation to the Supreme Court has the potential to change the social and judicial landscape of this country for decades," said Steven Shapiro, legal director for the American Civil Liberties Union.

Alito once wrote that a woman should notify her spouse before having an abortion, alarming women's rights activists. However, Grais said Alito has also ruled Pennsylvania's rules were too strict for those seeking

Medicaid-funded abortions in cases of rape, incest or serious health problems.

"He has no overall agenda," Grais said. "He comes into every case with an open mind and applies thorough research and intellect to each case. On various issues, he won't rule the same way because he carefully considers the law."

Eriksen said Alito is a polite lawyer who cuts his own grass and coaches Little League baseball teams. He added each of his parents were teachers.

"He's a walking testimony of how to be fair and polite with everyone," Eriksen said. "A lot of people in this profession can be arrogant and difficult to deal with, but it's been an absolute pleasure dealing with him."

Grais, who describes himself as apolitical, said Alito is not a right-wing ideologue. He added conservatives and liberals will appreciate some of Alito's opinions. He said Alito sees a large role for the states and small role for courts, but he has advocated for civil rights and free speech in his rulings.

While he doesn't enjoy the politicizing of judicial appointments, Grais said he doesn't want to be idle and watch the Supreme Court nominee lose this prestigious opportunity he deserves.

"It's too bad the process has become politicized," Grais said, "but the courts have brought that on themselves by getting involved in matters that should be left to the legislature."

dwest@hometownlife.com | (734) 953-2109



TOM HAWLEY | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Take down

Able Demolition of Sterling Heights has been demolishing the old Catholic Central School building in Redford, since the week of Thanksgiving. The 28-acre site will become the core of the Shamrock Village subdivision, set to begin construction later this year.

AROUND WESTLAND

King celebration

The city of Westland will sponsor its observance of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday at 9:30 a.m. Monday, Jan. 16, at the Annapolis Park Church of Christ on the city's southeast side. The public is invited.

The church is located on the southeast corner of Annapolis and Henry Ruff.

The event will include keynote speaker Benny Napoleon, former Detroit police chief. It also will include musical performers and the announcement of winners of a poster contest honoring King.

Coffee, please

State Rep. Glenn Anderson, D-Westland, announced that his legislative assistant, Mike Hill, will meet for coffee with constituents 9-10:30 a.m. Monday, Jan. 16, at the Westland Big Boy restaurant, 6360 N. Wayne at Hunter.

Anderson typically meets on the third Monday of each month with his constituents. However, his legislative assistant will sit in his place this month because Anderson will be attending the city of Westland's annual ceremony honoring Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Surplus food
The city of Westland will distribute surplus federal food 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 18, at the Dorsey Community Center for residents who live north of Michigan Avenue.

Residents south of Michigan Avenue should pick up their commodities on Monday at St. James United Methodist Church, 30055 Annapolis, between Henry Ruff and Middlebelt roads.

Senior citizens in Taylor Towers should call their building manager for their day of distribution.

Food to be distributed this month includes frozen ground beef, applesauce and pineapple

juice. For more information, call the Dorsey Center at (734) 595-0366.

Italian Feast

John Glenn High School Instrumental Music Program is holding its third annual Italian Feast at 6 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 21, at Merriman Road Baptist Church, Merriman just south of Ford, Garden City.

Enjoy an evening of authentic Italian dining, along with performances from John Glenn students who will be attending the upcoming MSBOA Solo and Ensemble District Festival. Tickets are \$15 for adults and \$8 for children ages 11 and under.

For tickets or more information, call Connie McLean at (734) 721-4465 or Penny Gierak at (734) 722-2637.

Cancer fund-raiser

The Mystiques-West Metaphysical Center at 36356 Ford, Westland, will be holding a fund-raiser 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 21, to raise money to send Family of Light member, Sue Ptak, to Houston, Texas, for a life-saving specialty cancer treatment.

The fund-raiser will include a 25 percent discount on all in-store merchandise, including author Ray Fraser's books. Fraser will be at the center to autograph purchased books.

Psychic Readings for the fund-raiser will be 10 minutes for \$10. All money received for psychic readings and merchandise sold that day, will be donated to the treatment fund. Cash donations also are welcome.

The fund-raiser will be followed by a pot luck dinner and drumming session. For more information, call Mystiques-West at (888) 367-8653.

Spaghetti dinner

The Westland Youth Athletic Association U14 Lightning softball team will hold a fund-raiser spaghetti dinner 4-7 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 29, at the AMVETS Hall, 1711 Merriman, Westland. Cost is \$7 for all you

can eat. There also will be a raffle, drawings and bake sale.

Donor drive

A bone marrow donor drive will be held 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 14, at St. Thomas a' Becket Catholic Church, 555 S. Lilley, Canton, for leukemia patient Jan Falat.

The community donor drive is being sponsored by the family of Falat, an Oakwood Healthcare System patient. She is in urgent need of a blood or marrow stem cell transplant to treat and possibly cure her fatal blood disease.

No appointment is necessary on the day of the drive, and testing consists of a simple blood draw to determine your tissue type.

Help wanted

The YWCA of Western Wayne County is looking for several new staff members and volunteers to join their team and help the youth in the community.

Several openings are available to work directly with youth through in school and after school support groups. Latch key leaders also are needed.

Support group leaders need a minimum of a bachelor's degree in social work, education or psychology. Latchkey leaders must have previous experience working with children.

For more information about job openings, volunteering, or any other programs or services offered by the YWCA of Western Wayne County, call (313) 561-4110.

Las Vegas Party

St. Bernardine Men's Club is sponsoring a Pinochle/Euchre Card Party on Fridays, Jan. 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.

CORRECTION

For the record, the under-11 Livonia Soccer Club Wings '95 Red, champs of the Michigan Youth Soccer League's Major Gold Division during the 2005 fall season, outscored their opponents 53-5 en route to an 11-1 record.

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 C6.

D
Dianne Bradley
Bradley, 55, of Livonia, died Jan. 6.

M
Claire Newell Menkel
Menkel, 87, died Jan. 8.

R
Sandy Richert
Richert, of Livonia, died Jan. 7.

T
Mufid A. Tuksal
Tuksal, 86, died Jan. 5.

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Become a friend to park

BY CONNIE WAGENSCHUTZ

This year will be very full of exciting happenings as the City of Westland celebrates its 40th birthday.

Where it is presently is the result of much hard work and how the events of the past years played out.

The Friends of Westland Historic Village Park became incorporated in 1988 for the purpose of preserving Westland's past

by collecting documents, photos and artifacts and maintaining archives and a museum.

Now plans are moving forward to further develop the site on Wayne Road just south of Marquette into a Village Park. Look at the month of December on the 2006 calendar that was mailed to every household, for pictures and more information about the Village Park.

You could be a part of and share in the pride of being involved in the development of this park by becoming a "FRIEND."

Consider how you might become physically as well as financially a part of this venture. Lots of hearts and hands are needed to accomplish this dream.

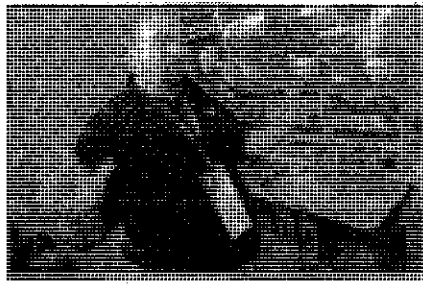
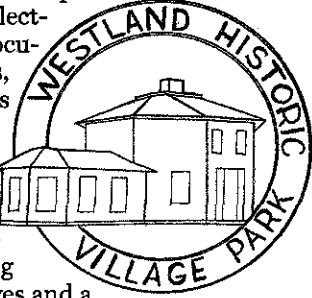
Some of the ways that you could help are as a tour guide, accessing artifacts, restoration research, maintaining the herb garden, fund-raising, exhibits, demonstrating a craft or activity, painting, carpentry and clerical.

Stop by this month on a Saturday between 1 and 4 p.m. except on holidays and check things out.

You will get excited about what you see and hear.

The Christmas decorations in the Felton Farmhouse Museum will remain up throughout January if you didn't get to see them before.

Watch for news from and about Westland's Historic Village Park next month. Call Connie Wagenschutz at (734) 522-0438 or e-mail or conwag@juno.com with questions.



Sam Hanneh of TVS Communication Solutions keeps the auto show rolling for clients who send video around the world. The Troy-based company is also offering its video troubleshooting services to the various companies featured at the Auto Show.

Firm brings auto show to the world

BY ALEX LUNDBERG
STAFF WRITER

It goes without saying that it takes a lot of people to put on an event like the North American International Auto Show. Hundreds, if not thousands of people are needed to put everything in readiness before the first car hauler pulls into the Cobo Hall lot.

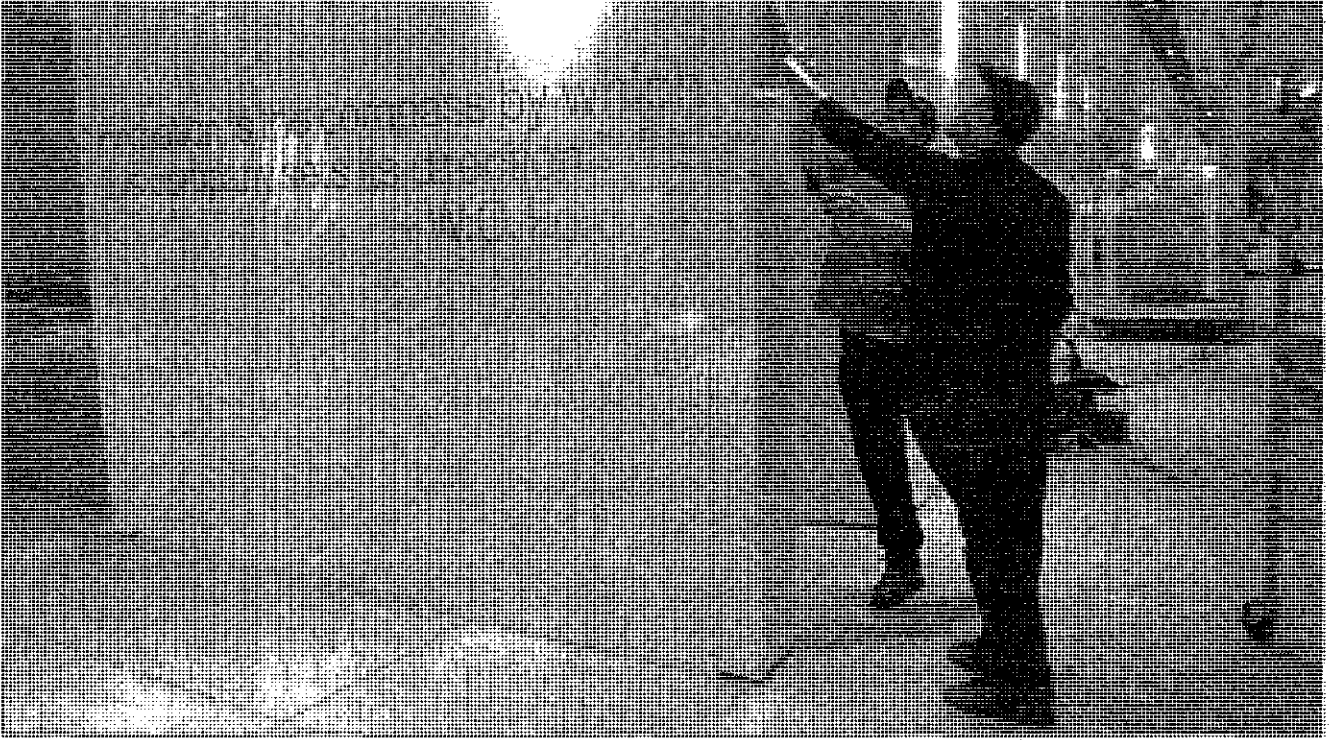
Like any large exposition, organizers need someone to run the coat check, stamp hands for re-entry and sell hot dogs. But a marquee event like NAIAS requires specialized services that can't be filled by temp agencies.

Sam Hanneh of Southfield is vice-president of production for TVS Communications Solutions of Troy. TVS runs the communications center at NAIAS this year. If you saw NBC's Today show coverage of the auto show, you saw some of his work.

Standing at a bank of telecommunications equipment comparable to a small television station at Cobo Hall, he said the benefit the company offers is ease.

"We supply media to entities all over the world," Hanneh said. "You don't have to send your own crews to the show. We are a huge cost savings."

It works like this: Broadcaster A in



PHOTOS BY BILL BRESLER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Brian Welton of Canton, a general foreman for Exhibit Works, and carpenter Brian Norder work on the Ford Motor exhibit. The display has been on the drawing board for 18 months.

Stuttgart, Germany wants to cover NAIAS for the home audience. Rather than sending a correspondent, camera crew and production designer — four transatlantic round-trip tickets plus hotel — the broadcaster can contract through TVS to get camera crews, and designers here and beam whatever they shoot back to Germany (or anywhere else in the world) in any format they want. That's one ticket and hotel bill, a difference of thousands of dollars to cover the event.

But what if the local car reporter from Seoul has a particular visual style that requires a particular producer? TVS can accommodate them as well.

"We can provide producers, but some operations have a distinct look," Hanneh said. "We're supplying NBC, Ferrari and Mercedes with editing suites so they can come up with their own content."

President and CEO of TVS, Rick Ghersi, started the company in 1990 providing studio training (off-site video conference learning) for auto dealerships. By adding elements here and there, TVS started to look more and more like a small production facility.

"We were working with suppliers, DaimlerChrysler and GM, to prepare their content for NAIAS," Ghersi said.

"It was through them that we got connected with Detroit Auto Dealer's Association and now we're running the broadcast center at the show."

Not only are they running the telecommunications backbone for the auto show, they're also providing on-site support for participating automakers' video operations. That's something other shows don't offer.

"The (physical) displays are common to every auto show," Hanneh said. "This is a traveling circus. It starts in L.A. and comes to Detroit. But Detroit is unique, we're a one stop shop for video services. The other shows don't have a service like we offer."

Vice President of Livonia-based Exhibit Works, Michael Thoresen, said a lot of planning goes into creating a display like the one they built for the Ford Motor Co. at NAIAS. They were putting this one together while the last one was going on.

"Ford took a year and a half," he said. "From the initial design strategy discussions to the design drawings to the engineering staging, shipping and installation it took about 18 months."

He said that timeline isn't uncommon for an exhibit as large and involved as the one Ford put up. The display at the 2005 show served as a

working lab, pointing out what was and wasn't working in the design with people rather than projections providing the data.

"It set the benchmarks for (this) year," Thoresen said.

It's important to note that Exhibit Works is responsible for NAIAS displays for Porsche, Mitsubishi, Kia and, all told, one-third of the automakers represented at the show.

Constant learning is part of the business. Starting in 1999, designers at Exhibit Works started training with a construction management company, learning project timeline and management principles. He said the construction of condominiums and shopping malls is very similar to what they do and has brought more control to the process and, by extension, a greater financial value to their clients.

And they've got all kinds of clients.

"We're getting more involved in retail businesses and museums," Thoresen said. "What's appropriate for auto shows is similar to museums except that we're working with preexisting themes. We create experiences. The idea is the same, we try to create the ultimate guest experience, where people won't just come once, they'll come again and tell others to come."

Gleaners honors Toy

Gleaners Community Food Bank of southeastern Michigan recently thanked state Sen. Laura M. Toy, R-Livonia, for donating 485 pounds of canned food collected at an annual charitable holiday gathering.

"Your donations enabled Gleaners Community Food Bank to provide food for hungry families and individuals this winter holiday season," wrote John Kastler, Gleaners

vice-president of program services, in a letter to Toy.

Gleaners Community Food Bank distributes items to more than 440 soup kitchens, homeless shelters, church pantries, day care centers, and other not-for-profit agencies in southeast Michigan and provides about 70,000 meals every day for hungry people.

"It is extremely important for us to help our neighbors when they are in need," Toy said.

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CHAMPIONSHIP

FROM PAGE A1

Erin, 3½, their mother Shelby, 9, and Rebel, 13 – have accumulated hundreds of ribbons and appeared in national dog publications.

"All of them are best-of-breed winners," Walt Christensen said.

Just last year, Katherine ranked in the top 15 of 700 shelties and earned a national Award of Merit during an American Shetland Sheepdog Association contest in Collinsville, Ill.

This weekend's competition in Tampa is one of the top two championships in the nation. Katherine will compete in the other one – the Westminster Dog Show in New York – next month.

Tuesday afternoon, Katherine looked like canine royalty as she sat next to Mary Christensen inside the family living room near Merriman and Ann Arbor Trail. She has won more ribbons than Erin, Shelby and Rebel.

"She looks like the prima donna, and she knows it," said Kristina, one of the Christensens' 24-year-old twin daughters and the mother of their grandson, Sean. The other daughter is Dana.

Katherine gets no special treatment in the Christensen home, though.

And, as if to dismiss any notion that she may be a snob, she decides to leave Mary Christensen's side and jump onto a love seat, where she



Katherine poses with owner Mary Christensen after winning a best-in-specialty show in Kentucky.

spends the rest of the interview resting her head on the reporter's leg.

To qualify for the Tampa competition, Katherine had to become one of the top 25 winners in the nation for her breed. She and the other shelties in the Christensen home have earned their ribbons by traveling to contests as far away as Florida and Nebraska, and to international events in Canada.

Today, Katherine and her owners will begin the journey to Tampa in a Ford van that has 92,000 miles on it after little more than three years. Dog shows are an expensive hobby. They bring mostly ribbons, little money.

Walt Christensen, a contractor who manages Web servers for General Motors Corp., and Mary, whose job is caring for and teaching the shelties, don't mind spending thousands of dollars each year for a hobby they love.

Walt Christensen grew up in Farmington; Mary in Redford. "Some people spend money on their boats or golfing," Walt Christensen said. "We spend it on our dogs."

It has paid off. All of their shelties have earned top honors in one competition or another. They start training as early as 7 weeks old at home and at such places as the Canine Training & Sports Center in Canton.



Katherine posed for professional photographer Jessica Starbuck as part of her beauty pictures taken last year.

The Christensens, married for 25 years, recoup only part of their money by breeding shelties. They've bred 50-60 dogs during the last 10 years, and their reputation has resulted in buyers as far away as Oregon.

Katherine has had one litter, but breeding has to be carefully timed so that it doesn't interfere with dog shows.

On Tuesday, Mary

Christensen said her dogs know when they are preparing to enter a contest.

"They can tell when they're going to a competition, and they know they'll have fun," she said.

Katherine will behave like a sheltie princess while she's being judged this weekend in such categories as structure and expression. She'll stand perfectly still when she should,

and prance around when the time comes.

If she earns a best-of-breed honor and gets her TV close-up, it will be during the Sunday evening show.

"She'll be very serious while she's competing," Walt Christensen said. "But when she's done, she'll be her same old goofy self."

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

Grant will help Madonna lead public Michigan history lesson

BY DAN WEST
STAFF WRITER

A \$15,000 grant will enable Madonna University to produce a lecture series and broadcast documentaries that detail key events that were influential in Michigan's history.

The Michigan Humanities Council, which provides some \$400,000 in grants for schools, museums and cultural centers, announced the

Madonna grant Friday. It will fund a university-led series of public history programs, called Three Defining Moments: Historical Legacies that Shaped Michigan's Present.

"It truly was a 'We the People' project," said Jan Fedewa, executive director of the Michigan Humanities Council. "This will share lessons with Michigan residents and help them make a connection to how these events formed our state today."

With the grant, Madonna and its affiliated campus at St. Mary's College in Orchard Lake will work with the West Bloomfield School District, West Bloomfield Cable Television, Southfield-based TV Orient and Channel 20 television (WDWB) to sponsor the three public lectures and four video programs that will air on WDWB-TV and be sold to the public on DVDs.

The subjects detailed in the programs will focus on the

roles of diverse people in Michigan. They include: The 24th Michigan Infantry of the Iron Brigade during the Civil War, the Underground Railroad in Michigan, the impact of migration of southern blacks to Michigan to work in the automotive industry and the impact of the 9/11 terrorist attacks on Arab Americans in Michigan.

"This is a great chance for our school to showcase our history department," said Ernest

Nolan, Madonna's vice president of academic administration. "We have experts here, but we don't have many opportunities to introduce them to the public."

The first lecture will take place at 7 p.m. on Jan. 26, and focus on Michigan and the Civil War era History Professor Randal Hoyer will lead the lecture at Kresge Hall on Madonna's main campus in Livonia.

"Today, we hear much about

math and science in education, but we don't hear much about history and humanities and how they relate to present-day issues," Hoyer said.

Fedewa added the details about the television productions and when they will air on Channel 20 will be announced in the spring. The other planned lectures will take place on Madonna's main campus in March and October.

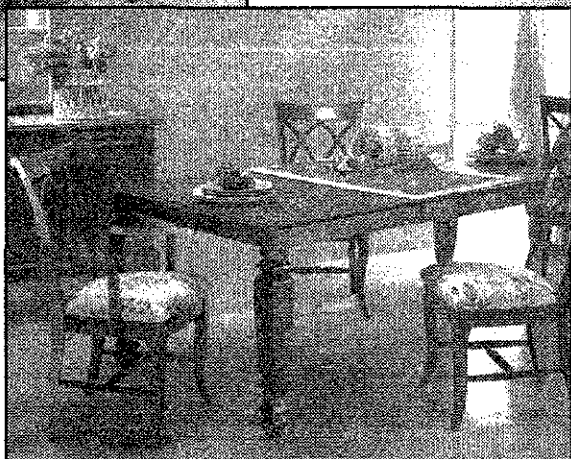
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HOUSE

FROM PAGE A1

he said "are deflating our standard of living."

LeBlanc also issued a statement saying the environment is threatened by importing trash and by "attempts to divert Michigan's most precious resource – our water."

Godbout cited education, jobs, imported trash and the state budget as among the top priorities that state legislators will need to address.

"Education is one that's key," he said, saying the state needs to prepare students for jobs other than manufacturing, such as in the life sciences and medical fields.

Godbout also named health care and regional transportation as issues that need attention.

Petitpren recalled his former efforts as a state legislator on behalf of community colleges and senior citizens – issues

that he said he would like to address again.

"When seniors get to be 75, we have to do something about their property taxes," he said. "They've been paying school taxes forever."

Petitpren vowed to work to lower property taxes, saying the state would have to make up the loss of revenue by cutting spending in other areas.

LeBlanc, a Ford Motor Co. employee and reserve police officer in Canton, is in his ninth year as a council member. He previously served on the Wayne-Westland school board and various local boards and commissions.

Godbout, an account manager for Rockwell Automation, is in his fifth year on the council. He also has served on various local boards and commissions.

Petitpren formerly chaired the 15th Congressional District Democratic Party. He taught at Wayne Memorial High School and in Eastern Michigan University's education depart-

ment.

LeBlanc touted Anderson – as the state House incumbent – as among the individuals who have endorsed his candidacy. Godbout said he, too, has individual endorsements and backing from local police unions.

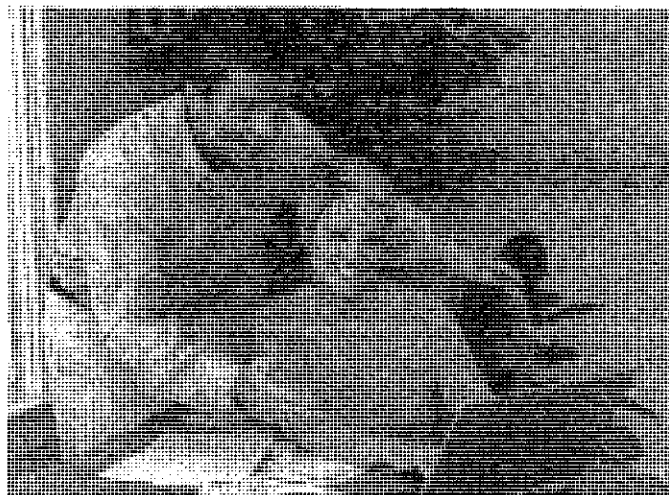
Anderson came out early in support of LeBlanc and issued a new statement this week.

"Richard is hands-down the best candidate to become the new state representative for Westland," he said. "His dedication to our community is something we share, and I am confident he will continue the level of integrity, ethical conduct and professional representation I have worked hard to provide to our residents."

Neither Godbout nor Petitpren took direct aim at Anderson for his endorsement of LeBlanc. Godbout noted that he, too, has had a working relationship with Anderson as Anderson's former campaign treasurer.

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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

Winterfest
The City of Wayne Parks and Recreation Department will present Super Winterfest 2006 Jan. 26-28 at the Wayne Community Center, 4635 Howe, Wayne. Activities include, but are not limited to, a talent show, aquatic carnival, super ice skating spectacular, super breakfast with Beauty and the Beast, Northpole Classics Golf Tournament, 19th annual Kiddie Karnival featuring "Paws" the Detroit Tigers Mascot, Texas Hold 'Em Tournament, Winterfest Island Get Away Souper Bowl Party, Casino Night and #91 Jerry Ball Memorial Hockey Game. For information, call Jeff Rutter at (734) 721-7400.

Dinner theater
The City of Wayne and Stage Door Present "St. Humphrey's Disco Ball," an interactive comedy dinner theatre, Friday, Jan. 27, at the Wayne Community Center, 4635 Howe, Wayne. Cost is \$35 and includes the comedy performance, dinner and open bar. Doors open at 6 p.m. Call Colleen Meyer at (734) 721-7400 for more information.

ORGANIZATIONS

Vietnam Vets
The Plymouth-Canton Vietnam Veterans of America, Chapter 52B, 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 quaterning 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 once 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.

Tutoring 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. Call (734) 513-8295 or (313) 562-2800.

AIM
Anxiety or panic attacks? AIM (Agoraphobics In Motion) meets at 7:30 p.m. Thursdays at Faith Lutheran Church, 30000 Five Mile, between Middlebelt and Merriman in Livonia. AIM is a support group for those working on recovery from anxiety disorder or phobias. Call (248) 547-0400.

Angela Hospice
As part of its service to the community, Angela Hospice offers a variety of grief support groups free-of-charge to community residents. The groups are held at the Angela Hospice Care Center at

14100 Newburgh Road, Livonia, and are led by bereavement professionals and trained volunteers who aim to provide useful coping strategies and tools to facilitate the healing process.

■ **General Grief Support Group** - Open to all losses. Meets at 1 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. the second and fourth Tuesday of each month.

■ **Loss of a Spouse Support Group** - Meets 6:30-8 p.m. the first Tuesday of each month, beginning in February.

■ **Women's Grief Support Group** - Held each spring and fall. Call (734)953-6012 for dates and times.

■ **Heartstrings: Parents Who Have Lost a Child** - Meets 6:30-8 p.m. the first Thursday of each month. Call to register at (734) 464-2683.

■ **Grief Support Quilter's Group** - A new Grief Support Quilter's Group is looking for community members interested in

making a quilt in memory of a loved one. No quilting or sewing experience is necessary. Dates and times to be determined. Call (734) 953-6012.

■ **Groups by Appointment - Loss of an Adult Child, Men in Grief.** Call (734) 953-6012 for more information.


■ **Programs for Children-** Reservations required for all children's programs. Register by calling (734) 464-2683.

■ **Children's Grief Support Group** - For ages 6-8 and 9-12. Meets winter, spring and fall 5-6 p.m. Thursdays for eight consecutive (April 6-June 1, Sept. 14-Nov. 2).

■ **Children's Spring Workshop** - 5-7 p.m. Thursday, May 4. Angela Hospice also provides one-on-one grief support. For more information about Angela Hospice's grief support services, or to register for a group, call Joan Lee at (734) 953-6012.

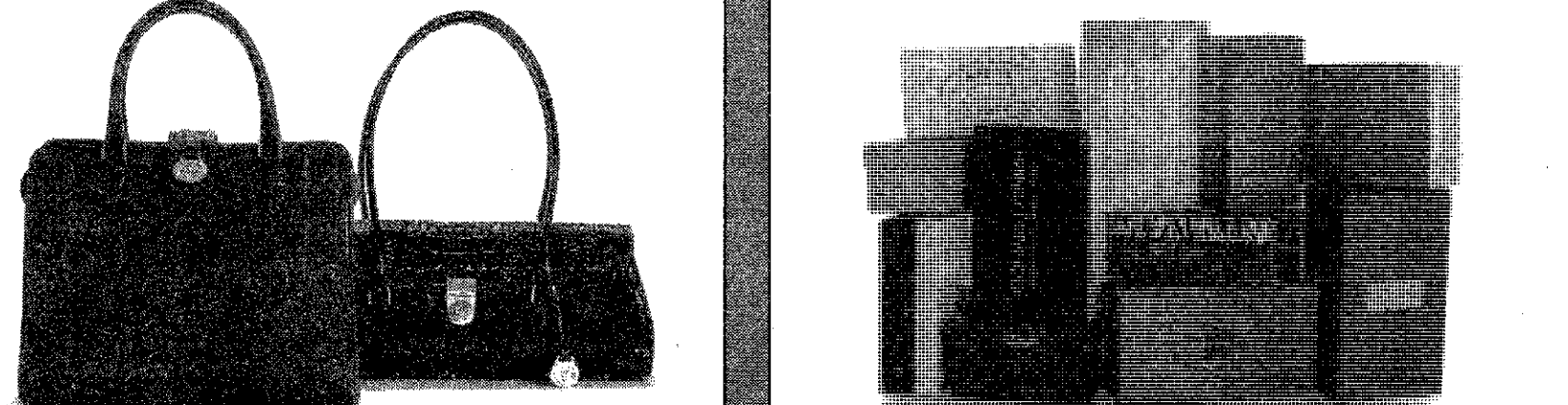
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OUR VIEWS

When it snows, grab your shovel

We seem to be blessed with a lack of snow but, this being Michigan, that could change before the ink is dry on this page. But now is as good a time as any to broach the subject of winter etiquette. You know, shoveling walks and observing the rules when the city declares a snow emergency.

We bring this up now after what we saw during the last snowfall before the holidays: a pedestrian walking in the curbside lane of a five-lane highway because of deep snow banks and unshoveled walks.

If you own or rent property, it's your responsibility to clear the walks in front of your home and/or business. Waiting for divine intervention — a warming trend — is an invitation for problems when someone slips and gets hurt.

The easiest way to avoid problems is to clear the walks as quickly as possible. We can understand homeowners who work and leave the shoveling until they get home, but we think businesses would want to keep their walks clear for their customers. If you need to dig out to get to work in the morning, take the extra few minutes to do the walks.

The mail gets through in snow, sleet and rain, but it's easier to accomplish with clear walks. And it's a lot easier for students to get to school when they can see the cement beneath their feet.

If you live on a corner, don't forget the walkway along your side yard and the approaches to the street. The pedestrian we saw was in the road because he didn't want to scramble through knee-deep snow piles at the street accesses.

Many communities like Westland declare snow emergencies to clear the streets so snow plows can do their job. There's nothing more frustrating for people who find themselves digging out an extra four feet of driveway because the plow had to swerve away from the curb to avoid their neighbor's vehicle.

So when the next snowfall arrives, remember the winter's Golden Rule: Clear the walks, clear the streets, so to make for happy feet.

Invest in education for a better future

The new year is a time to make changes for the better. Many of us resolve to improve our bodies, vowing to stop smoking, start exercising and eat less.

We all know the benefits of good health habits — less illness, more energy, a longer life.

But what about the benefits of improving our minds?

Going back to school to finish a degree, earn an advanced degree or expand our knowledge has both physical and financial benefits.

Those who exercise their minds maintain their mental sharpness — even as they age.

They also get an edge when competing for jobs and promotions in the workplace, and make more money than their co-workers with less education.

According to Princeton economics professor Alan B. Krueger, an extra year of education raises an individual's earning about 10 percent. For someone earning the national median household income of \$42,000, that equates to \$4,200. Over the course of a career, that amount can multiply into several hundred thousand dollars.

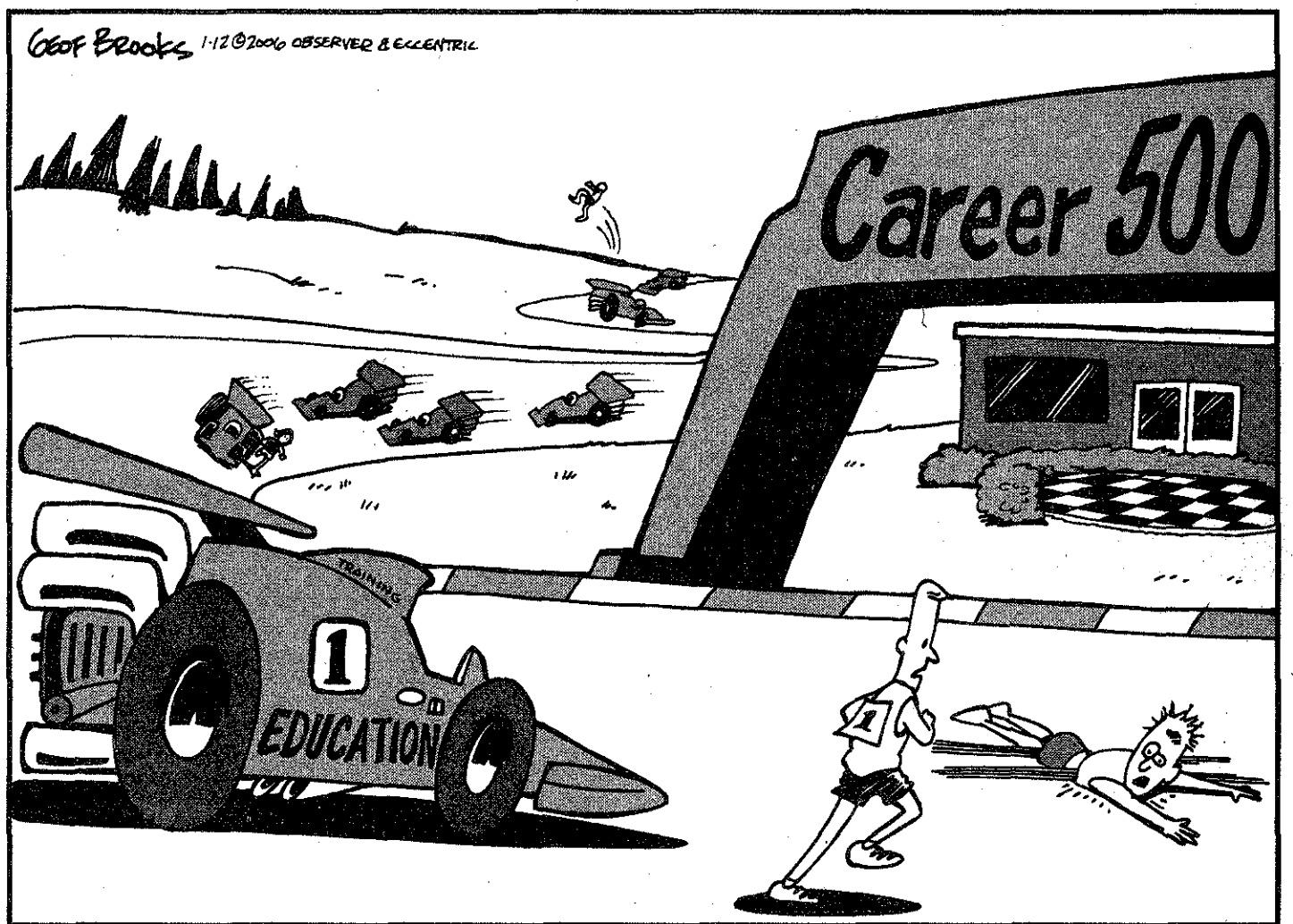
In Michigan — where high-paying manufacturing jobs are disappearing — only one in five adults has a college degree. The national average is one in four.

In September 2004, Gov. Jennifer Granholm set a goal of doubling the number of college graduates in 10 years. She recognizes that education benefits not only the individual, but the state economy. States with the most educated workforce have the healthiest economies and the lowest unemployment rates.

Michigan is still struggling economically.

But workers with college educations increase their chances of getting and keeping jobs.

The mail gets through in snow, sleet and rain, but it's easier to accomplish with clear walks. And it's a lot easier for students to get to school when they can see the cement beneath their feet.



"You're not going to run this on foot, are you?!"

Wonderful affirmation

I am writing in response to your recent article, "Driver appreciates couple's act of kindness." My name is John. Jennifer and I are the folks who helped Diane that night. My neighbor Marge brought your article to our attention.

When we saw Diane in need of assistance, it felt very natural for us to help. Doing so did not inconvenience us in any real way. While Jen went to get the jumper cables (less than one mile away), Diane and I talked. I told her about the recent death of Jen's parents, and she gave her sincere condolences in return. She then asked me why we were helping her. I replied, "Well, why else are we here?" By this, I meant, "Why else are we here on this earth, in this great country of ours, if not to help each other?"

Jen and I are happiest when serving in roles where we may be of use to others. We do not view these as "random acts of kindness." We recognize that we have benefited from the work of many others who came before us, which has allowed us the comforts and wisdom that we enjoy today.

After recognition of our parents, we are indebted to our nation's founding fathers, the sacrifices made by our military men and women, and all those who have created solutions to improve our society, or our understanding of the world we live in.

To be born into this great land of ours is to receive a wonderful gift. This gift should be received with a sense of gratitude and indebtedness; not a sense of entitlement. Once this debt is recognized, there is only one way to repay it: Serve to improve the lives of those around you, and serve to improve the lives of those who will come after you.

I sincerely appreciate Diane's effort in contacting you. Publication of your article provided Jen and I great comfort amidst our hardships surrounding Richard and Claire's death. This was a wonderful affirmation in our time of need. I thank Diane for this gift, which certainly overshadows our help to her. I also appreciate the fact that a local newspaper, and local reporters such as yourself, add to our understanding and appreciation of the world around us.

John Pomann
Westland

Why doubt staff now?

Thank you for the (Dec. 22, 2005,) article, I am pleased that it has finally been mentioned how some people are being harassed. I grew up in Westland, attended Livonia schools, owned a house in Livonia for nine years, then bought the house in which I grew up in Westland.

I have been very active in the three schools my two daughters have attended, PTA president, chairperson on many committees and currently reflections chair for Livonia PTSA Council. I and many people have been hurt by the many comments that have been made regarding "Those people in Westland" and regarding Cooper Elementary and Franklin High School. I have been

LETTERS

watching the meetings from home and reading the articles.

It has been hard to see how some parents are treating other people that do not agree with them. People are being harassed and bullied. Livonia and Westland residents in Livonia School District who pay Livonia school taxes are both strong communities and have so much to offer for their children.

The Livonia school board has been constantly under fire by a certain group of people and now they want a recall when only 6 percent of the district votes in the school board election. How many of these people asking for a recall vote for school board? There are members of the school board who have been on for over 10 years but now deserve a recall?

I just hope and pray that everyone can work together on this and make this as easy as possible for all the students. Livonia School District has always been known to people as a school district I want my child to attend and a lot of this is for the dedicated staff at all the schools and buildings. This staff will continue to be dedicated and will continue to do what is best for each student. Why doubt them now?

Cathy Reinke
Westland

Children learn by example

I have taught first and second grade at Cooper Elementary for 10 years. Currently, my first-grade students are a diverse group of children. I am proud to be an educator at Cooper and I am passionate about the welfare and learning of my students. I am also protective and consider myself an advocate for my students. Cooper has many dedicated and hard-working teachers who daily raise the bar and expect Cooper students to be successful learners.

Recently, there seems to be a group who is fearful, negative and sometimes outright contemptuous toward Cooper Elementary. This is disheartening. I would like to clarify some misinformation and provide reassurance that the teachers at Cooper are competent, dedicated and involved. Likewise, there are many involved parents at Cooper — both in the PTA and as classroom volunteers.

Although Cooper is located in Westland, it is a part of the LPS system whose students are taught by LPS educators. The "old" Cooper has been razed and new construction will be welcomed. However, in the 10 years I have taught "across the street" at Cooper (formerly Whittier), there have been at least six Cooper teachers who have been pregnant and have delivered healthy, beautiful babies. Our teachers are healthy, our students are healthy and our community is healthy.

I work hard in my classroom every day to teach and model to the youngest of our children to be respectful, considerate and, yes, sometimes, it necessitates to be tolerant of one another. Never, however, would I allow anyone or a group of my students to boo and mock other students in the classroom

who might be sharing an idea or an opinion. I would not allow them to interrupt when another is speaking. And if they did, I would remind them that "It is that child's turn to talk and our turn to listen."

Children learn by example. Children watch and listen more than adults realize. There are many days when I see a child positively demonstrating a teacher's mannerisms, quotes and even teaching style. Moments that give me a reason to smile.

Cathlene Hedden
Livonia

Media is one-sided

I read Kurt Kuban's column regarding his feelings on the media's role and a soldier's parent's negative perception of the media. I had to laugh. His comments only justify the views of the soldier's parents.

Let me explain. You go on to give a list of negative things about the current administration. You do so because you feel it is your duty to do so.

Fine. However, you state these things as fact without even a hint that there are other details about these issues or that there could even be a rational opposing view on them. We see this over and over. And therein lies the problem — 90 percent of the time when you feel the need to do your "duty" it's to report negative things.

It seems in the eyes of the soldier's parents, and many others including myself, that you don't seem to feel the same "duty" to report details that might shed positive light on things you personally disagree with. Might I suggest the media's supposed unbiased reporting is what has "failed the test of truth."

I remember how often the media felt the need to do its "duty" with Ronald Reagan and how wrong he was about the Cold War. The Berlin Wall fell and millions were freed. The majority of the media looked like fools. Some things never change.

Rick Kennedy
Livonia

SHARE YOUR OPINIONS

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

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QUOTABLE

"It's going to be hard to top last year's program, but I think we'll have another program that's equal to that program."

— Mayor Sandra Cicirelli, about plans for the city's annual Martin Luther King Jr. Day observance

WESTLAND
Observer

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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.

Auto Show is big news for region's economy

The show starts this Saturday and it's an important show for our region. I am not referring to the Super Bowl, that's coming in 25 days. I am referring to the 2006 North American International Auto Show. Each year it's an important event for Detroit but this year it takes on even greater importance.

Why? In case you have missed it, the Big Three - Ford, General Motors and to a lesser extent DaimlerChrysler - are reeling with their North American operations. They are not making any money and in GM's case recording large significant losses. The word bankruptcy, vehemently denied by GM's executives, keeps cropping up in conversation. They are attacking their cost structure with a vengeance but when all is said and done, after costs are in line, it's product and quality that counts. If the consumer doesn't buy the product and if it is not quality, costs don't mean a thing. This year's show is about product.

Believe me, it's there, not only from the domestic automakers but the imports as well. Outstanding product, better fuel economy and excellent quality. The argument has been made

that the domestics did not have the product consumers will buy. They have heard the message and responded. You will see it in production vehicles as well as the concepts on display.

Here are some of the new product and concept vehicles that made an impression on me.

General Motors is introducing the 2007 Cadillac Escalade which will be on sale in the first quarter of 2006. It's a full size SUV with a new V-8 engine, new interior styling and a unique instrument panel featuring gauges that are continuously white-LED backlight. The Escalade ESV is comparable but 21 inches longer so it has more seating room as well as cargo room. It goes on sale this summer.

Buick is showing its Enclave crossover 2008 concept vehicle. Crossovers harken back to the station wagons of old but are much better. They have the comfort of a car ride and the space of an SUV. They are more fuel efficient. The Enclave is a roomy six-passenger vehicle with an innovative sunroof that extends almost the entire length of the vehicle.

In the muscle segment, GM introduced a retooled Camaro concept vehicle. How many of us in my age bracket remember the old Camaro? I had one and enjoyed it. Now GM is bringing it back as a concept vehicle.

Not to be ignored in the hybrid vehicle seg-

ment, GM introduced the 2007 Saturn Vue Green Line and the 2008 Chevrolet Tahoe. The surprise was the very competitive pricing of the Saturn Hybrid, less than \$23,000.

Ford is also aggressive in its product announcements. Lincoln introduced the MKX, described as a luxury crossover vehicle and a new luxury sedan the Lincoln MKS. These are two very impressive vehicles. The MKX has some very excellent features such as a panoramic sun roof, heated as well as cooled seats and adaptive front head lights. The crossover segment will be very competitive and this vehicle should do well. The MKX in the luxury sedan segment will go head to head with Cadillac and the imports such as Lexus, BMW and Mercedes. These vehicles are not standing still so the stakes for success remain high.

Ford introduced its crossover vehicle, the Edge. It has some of the same features as the Lincoln such as the panoramic sun roof but not all the luxury of a Lincoln.

What's interesting is that General Motors has introduced many new SUVs; Ford is projected that in 2006 the crossover vehicles, CUV, will out sell SUVs. CUVs sold more than two million vehicles in 2005. For Detroit's sake let's hope that both Ford and General Motors are correct and that many SUVs and CUVs are sold.

Chrysler introduced the Imperial concept. It is building off of the success of the Chrysler 300M. It's very impressive. Introduced as a concept was the Challenger. As with General Motors, Chrysler is reaching back into its successful past for its concept vehicles updating them with style, performance and fuel efficiency as appropriate.

Jeep introduced its all new 2007 Jeep Compass, a SUV that has performance, styling, SUV functions and fuel economy at the price of a small SUV. It's built on the concept SUV, the Jeep Compass. It will be available this fall.

In my opinion, Detroit has gotten the message and has product that should meet the public's desires because product and quality make a car company successful. Certainly costs have to be in line but product is the answer.

I highly recommend a visit to this year's auto show and be prepared to be dazzled. The show begins Saturday and ends Sunday, Jan. 22. The price for adults is \$12, seniors is \$6; ages 7-12, \$5; children 6 and under are free.

It's a great event at a reasonable price to take the whole family. Enjoy.

Richard Aginian is president and publisher of the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers. He welcomes your comments via e-mail at raginian@hometownlife.com.

LETTERS

America needs change

When I read stories about the soldiers who've died in Iraq, I'm overcome with sadness and empathy for the families. The Blumbergs have suffered a terrible loss. I have three young sons and I can't imagine the personal devastation of losing one of them.

When I think of the tremendous loss of life in the Iraq war, I think of my boys first. How would I feel if one of them died fighting in Iraq? Would I think losing the life of my son was worth it? Sadly, the answer is no.

All of the evidence is in. Iraq posed no threat to the United States, its allies, or even Iraq's neighbors, and the U.N. weapons inspections were proving it. Instead, our leaders rushed us into war in Iraq.

The awful truth is that more American boys and many more Iraqis will die for this pre-emptive war that didn't need to happen. We need to hold leaders accountable for this, including Michigan's 11th District House Rep. Thaddeus McCotter.

November 2006 represents an important opportunity for change. People should remember the debacle of Iraq and the suffering of people like the Blumbergs when they decide whether Thaddeus McCotter deserves another term in Congress.

Matt Haran
Canton

Good journalists are rare

After having read Kurt Kuban's column regarding his interview with the Blumberg family, I am compelled to write in rebuttal. Our son played soccer for several years with Trevor and we were well-acquainted with Terry.

The Blumbergs are a virtuous and humble people. They are of that stock that has supported America through the generations and is slowly ebbing. Trevor has given what Abraham Lincoln called "that last full measure of devotion" to his country. He is a man among men, however young.

Sadly, the people who are flourishing in our nation today are those who believe that their opinions are as worthy as the next man's regardless of how ill-informed those opinions may be. I am fond of referring to modern Americans as Formica Folks, for I believe we are willing to think no more deeply than the surface of any subject.

The media is generally populated by such people and suffers a deficit of scholars in the humanities who could bring an informed perspective. That quality of journalist is rare, indeed, who can see the story of man and apprehend it in the context of human nature and the history of man.

The Observer Newspapers are softball

publications with only a veneer to offer between the advertisements. There is no serious study apparent in its pages. There is not likely to ever be any there.

Your praise of the free press is unpersuasive. Freedom is a splendid blessing if rightly used and a tragedy if turned to license.

Greg Stachura
Canton

Some unanswered questions

This is an open letter to Congressman Thaddeus McCotter. I have written your office on three different occasions with the same questions (July 11, July 24 and Sept. 25). The questions have never been responded to, while others I have written have received a response when your office agreed.

Please respond to these questions as I feel many will be interested in the answers:

What are you doing about Osama Bin Laden - why isn't he mentioned anymore? Isn't he the reason we sent troops overseas in the first place? What are you doing about the irresponsible spending of this administration and its Congressional supporters?

Why has Halliburton received sole source contracts through the government, when there were other eligible bidders? This also is still the case - even in New Orleans. Why has Halliburton been forgiven for a \$65 million "accounting mistake?" This \$65 million alone could be used for many other needed programs. Why has Dick Cheney and his previous cohorts of Halliburton not been prosecuted for Halliburton being registered in the Cayman Islands and not paying taxes in this country?

What are you doing about the ever-increasing profits of George W. Bush's friends - the oil companies? Why is this administration giving tax cuts to the wealthy when we are in record-breaking financial deficit? How can Congress, once again, vote themselves a raise when we are in a huge deficit? How can we repeal the law that allows Congress to vote themselves raises? Especially in this terrible economy!

We cannot live in a vacuum. This world is too small now due to technology and transportation and weaponry. How are we moving toward working "with" the world instead of being isolationists in environmental and war issues?

An additional question - how can this administration and its Republican leadership tell veterans they "support the troops," while they reduce their benefits and pay? Veterans weren't given time to testify before Congress this term as they usually are - is this because Congress did not want to answer to this?

Anne Marie Graham-Hudak
Canton

Who do you think you're talking to?

Mark Savitskie is very definitely a numbers man, which is a very good thing when it comes to doing taxes and mortgages.

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McCotter supports review of all House GOP leadership

BY HUGH GALLAGHER
STAFF WRITER

U.S. Rep. Thaddeus McCotter, R-Livonia, is asking that Republicans in Congress hold a vote on the party's leadership slate from the Speaker on down in the wake of scandals involving lobbyist Jack Abramoff and former House Majority Leader Tom DeLay of Texas.

On Tuesday, he said that Speaker Dennis Hastert of Illinois was supporting a vote only on DeLay's majority leader position. DeLay had temporarily stepped down from the position following his indictment on several charges in Texas. On Saturday, he announced that he would not attempt to regain his position.

A story in the Sunday *Los Angeles Times* quotes McCotter as calling for a "potential housecleaning" and a full disclosure of GOP leaders' relationships with lobbyists.

"It's fundamental for the conference of Republican leaders to open it up," McCotter said Tuesday.

Lobbyist Jack Abramoff has pleaded guilty to conspiracy, tax evasion and mail fraud in connection with his lobbying activities for several American Indian tribes in support of casinos. He has agreed to cooperate with the FBI about contributions to many members of Congress, on both sides of the aisle but predominantly Republicans. Abramoff was a close associate of DeLay, who is facing criminal charges of money laundering in Texas unrelated to the Abramoff scandal.

CANDIDATE CONCERNS

Tony Trupiano, a candidate for the Democratic nomination in the 11th Congressional District, said he is concerned that McCotter has refused to return campaign money from DeLay and former Rep. Randy "Duke" Cunningham, who pleaded guilty recently to accepting \$2.4 million in bribes in exchange for legislative favors.

"I'm sending Thad a letter today about accountability," Trupiano said Tuesday. "He's clamoring for top to bottom



housecleaning in the House but this has been going on for more than a year."

McCotter said he accepted campaign money from DeLay and Cunningham political action committees as he accepted other campaign contributions "to inform voters of his position on the issues." His office said that "should an investigation uncover said monies were obtained illegally, the Congressman has stated numerous times publicly he will return the funds."

McCotter's office said he received at total of \$20,000 from DeLay's ArmPAC ending in 2003. In 2002 he received \$5,000 from Cunningham's PAC.

MEMBERS RESPONSIBLE

McCotter said individual House members are responsible for contributions to their campaigns.

He said that just because a member of Congress received a contribution from a question-

able source doesn't mean there was a "quid pro quo" favor. He mentioned Michigan Democrats Dale Kildee and John Dingell as honorable members who had received money from an Indian tribe represented by Abramoff. Both declined to return the money because they said the contributions weren't connected to Abramoff.

McCotter said congressional members had to be especially careful of accepting gifts from lobbyists such as free travel and other perks not available to ordinary citizens.

"The question for lobbyists is have you deprived the public of an honest representative," he said. "If I wasn't in office, would anyone take me to Scotland to golf?"

McCotter said he would consider new legislation concerning lobbying but that there are already laws that cover the illegal actions of House members. "Bribery is still illegal," he said. "As a realist you can pass

all the laws you want and still have people who break those laws."

He said the image of Cunningham resigning in disgrace "should be embedded in every member's mind and is a better deterrent than laws."

He added, though, that House ethics rules need to be changed to include stiffer penalties.

Trupiano said he "would love to see public funding of campaigns" but doubted that it would ever be passed. He said lobbying reform hasn't gone far enough, but he said it isn't always easy to mark the line between contributors who agree with a candidate and those who want to influence the candidate.

"I'm a big labor guy, labor will support Tony Trupiano," he said. "We're on the same page on issues. Does that mean they have special access to me, I would hope not."

He said Democrats and Republicans both have problems with questionable contributions.

SUPPORTS BOEHNER

Trupiano called for the Republicans to have a "transparent" leadership contest.

The other announced candidate for the Democratic nomination in the 11th District, Ray Raczkowski, said he is disturbed by the situation in Congress. He said laws govern-

ing lobbyists should be reviewed by an independent group similar to the 9/11 commission. He said the Republicans in Congress should "have been keeping better track" of their leadership.

Despite his differences with Hastert about a vote on all House positions, McCotter said Hastert is a good Speaker and would easily win reaffirmation by the GOP majority.

"I think the strength of Speaker Hastert is that he is not an ego-driven man," he said. "As a former wrestling coach, his job is to get the best out of the team. He's been maligned since he began and we've been a strong team."

McCotter said he is supporting Ohio Rep. John Boehner for House majority leader in his contest with Missouri Rep. Roy Blunt, who has been serving as majority leader since DeLay stepped down in October.

McCotter said he was impressed by the way Boehner was able to push through a year-end pension bill by getting support from business leaders and the UAW.

"He was able to work both sides and we need people who can do that," he said.

He said he is supporting his fellow Michigan Rep. Mike Rogers of Brighton for the majority whip position.

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Southeast Michigan grows at a slow 1.7 percent

The U.S. Census Bureau released new population estimates for all 50 states, Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia at the end of 2005.

Michigan's estimated population for July 2005 is 10,120,860, which is 0.2 percent higher than the newly

revised 2004 figure of 10,104,206. Since the 2000 Census, Michigan's estimated population has increased by 1.8 percent, or 182,380 people.

The seven-county region of Southeast Michigan closes 2005 with an estimated pop-

ulation of 4,916,852 according to figures released by SEMCOG, the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments.

This new estimate represents a 1.7 percent increase in population (or an average of 40 persons per day) since the 2000 census.

The population growth rate of Southeast Michigan is estimated to be less than one-third of the nation's growth rate.

The region's fastest growing county, in percentage terms, since the 2000 census is Livingston County. During that time, it grew 17.7 percent, from a population of 156,951 in 2000 to a current estimated population of 184,677.

The county gaining the greatest number of people is Macomb County, which added 46,502 residents since the 2000 census.

Wayne County's population has declined since 2000, from 2,061,162 to 2,004,541 in 2005.

Among Southeast Michigan communities, Macomb Township grew the most since the 2000 census, adding more than 21,000 people and ending 2005 with an estimated population of 71,881 (Macomb Township's population in the 1990 census was 22,714.)

The number of households in Southeast Michigan has grown 4 percent since the 2000 census, more than twice as fast as population.

Households are growing at a faster rate than the population primarily because of the aging population and the increasing percentage of one- and two-person households.

In southeast Michigan, there are an estimated 2.52 persons per household at the close of 2005. Livingston County has the highest persons per household at 2.72; Washtenaw County, at 2.36 is the lowest. These numbers are all slightly lower than in 2004.

According to the new census data, the nation's fastest-growing states (in percentage terms) have been Nevada, Arizona, Florida, Georgia and Utah.

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