



### Pa. transplants whoop it up for their team

LOCAL NEWS - PAGE 3

### Joe Montana recalls Notre Dame days

SPORTS - SECTION B

### Locals help salute Detroit

COMMUNITY LIFE - SECTION C



E-mail us your Super Bowl XL party photos. Please send jpegs to photos@oe.homecomm.net.

SUNDAY  
February 5, 2006

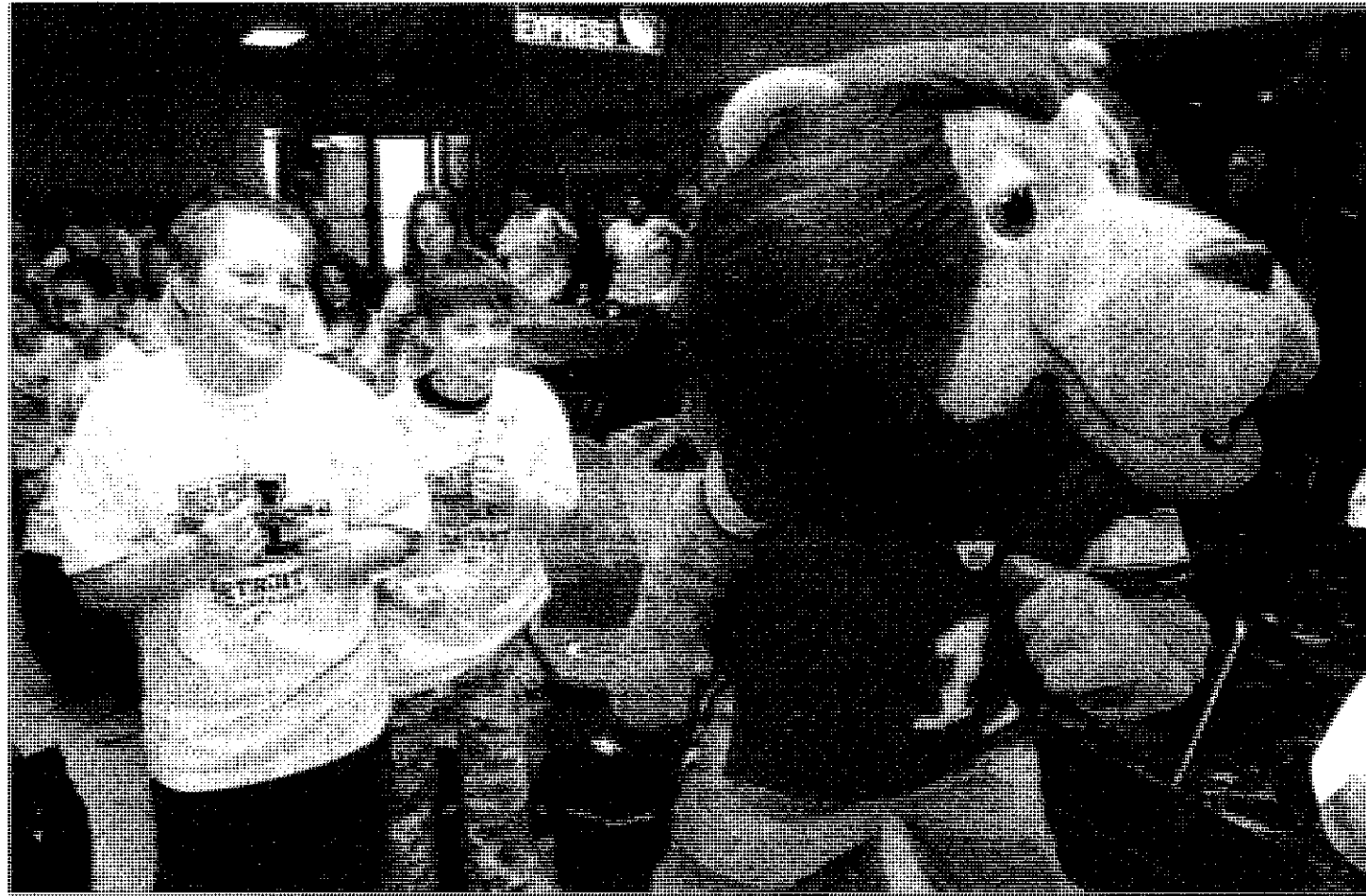
# WESTLAND Observer

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Warming up with the Chicken Dance, Madison fifth-graders Steven Storm (left) and Henry Pavlich dance with Roary, the Detroit Lions mascot as part of the NFL Experience Friday at Canton's Super Bowl.

## And the winner is ... Seahawks best Steelers in shop's Cookie Bowl

BY DARRELL CLEM  
STAFF WRITER

Long before today's Super Bowl XL kickoff in Detroit, the Seattle Seahawks had taken a decisive lead over the Pittsburgh Steelers.

The credit - or blame - goes to Mary Denning's Cake Shoppe in Westland.

Amid the Super Bowl hoopla, the cake shop started selling butter cookies decorated with the logos and colors of the Seahawks and Steelers.

"We're keeping track to see which cookie sells the most," Denning said.

The score as of Friday afternoon: Seattle, 30, Pittsburgh, 15.

There wasn't enough sugar in the cake shop to cover up the sour competition between true fans of Seattle and Pittsburgh. Still, Police Chief Daniel Pfannes said it didn't appear that Denning, a Garden City resident, had incited any riots.

"Up until this point, we thought we had things under control. We're just hoping that the activities at the cake shop

don't spur any unrest," Pfannes said.

Then, Pfannes, of all people, issued a statement that had the potential to create trouble. "Go Pittsburgh," he said.

To be fair to Denning, she was selling the cookies of both teams at \$1.50 each. She also tried to distance herself from the rivalry by saying, "I'm not much of a football fan."

Pfannes admitted being surprised that working-class Westland would side with trendy Seattle over blue-collar Pittsburgh.

"If you'd have asked me, I would have said that Westland would go for Pittsburgh," he said. "Pittsburgh is an all-American town in a region that I think we identify with. It's similar to us."

It was unclear whether Pittsburgh would mount a comeback with Saturday's cookie sales. But anyone hoping to change the course of Super Bowl history by buying up cookies today - game day - is out of luck.

The cake shop is closed.  
dclem@hometownlife.com | (734) 953-2110

## NFL puts super in kids' experience

BY SUE MASON  
STAFF WRITER

Keonte Mitchell woke up Friday morning and was excited. After a roller coaster week, his fifth-grade class was going bowling.

Not just any kind of bowling, but bowling with the likes of Denver Broncos defensive tackle Luther Elliss and NFL Hall of Famer Jim Taylor of the very first Super Bowl champion Green Bay Packers.

Eight days after finding out his fifth-grade class would be treated to an NFL experience, he was more than ready for it to happen.

"I woke up excited," said Keonte. "I've been bowling before and I do pretty good, but I've never been bowling like this."

Further down the lanes at Super Bowl XL lanes in Canton, Kameron Caldwell was taking aim on the pins. A quick approach and release and his ball was burling down the lane on its way to a strike, his first of the day.

"Kameron loves to bowl," said his mother Andrea. "He bowls every week on a league at Wayne Bowl."

It was Andrea's friend, a member of the Super Bowl XL Host Committee, who arranged for the NFL Experience that went from being for Kameron and his 30 classmates

at Madison Elementary to one with youngsters from the Detroit Public Schools.

"I was ecstatic, he was ecstatic," said Andrea of the opportunity to bowl with the likes of Elliss, T.J. Duckett of the Atlanta Falcons and Tyrone Wheatley of the Oakland Raiders.

"This is about what we do in the NFL," said Elliss. "This is about giving back to the kids, encouraging them to keep focused and stay in school so they can be able to do what we do someday."

"I've been doing this ever since I retired 40 years ago," added Taylor. "It's really a delight, it's a pleasure to be a part of this."

In addition to the NFL members, there

PLEASE SEE SUPER, A6



TOM HAWLEY | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

It's not a scientific process, but Mary Denning of Westland has been keeping track of how many of her Seattle Seahawks and Pittsburgh Steelers cookies have been sold. If sales are any indication, the Steelers may need some of her cookies to cheer up.

## City builds surplus in tough times

BY DARRELL CLEM  
STAFF WRITER

Despite tough economic times and rising costs for everything from gasoline to employee health care, Westland's city budget continues to improve.

A new audit by an outside firm, Plante Moran, showed that the city's \$55-million general fund had a \$2.3 million surplus - a one-year increase of nearly \$1 million.

"We feel great about that," Mayor Sandra Cicirelli said, after an audit session Monday with Plante Moran and the Westland City Council. "We've worked hard to get the fund balance to where it is."

The budget has remarkably endured state revenue cuts and ris-

ing expenses. The latest \$2.3 million surplus of June 30, 2005, compared to \$1.3 million in 2004 and \$397,403 in 2003.

The city brought in more revenues from taxes related to garbage disposal and the police and fire retirement fund. Cicirelli's administration also saved money by holding off on filling some job vacancies, such as that of economic development director.

Moreover, the city planned ahead for rising gasoline costs, reduced its phone-service expenses and pooled with other communities on certain purchases, Cicirelli said.

Plante Moran applauded such efforts but warned that officials should remain guarded.

"The city has worked hard to

reduce costs by not filling vacant personnel positions, monitoring some costs and delaying other costs," Plante Moran auditor Michael Swartz said in a report. "The effort will need to continue for the foreseeable future."

Cicirelli agreed that rising costs and uncertainty about state revenue will continue to pose potential problems.

"I don't see things getting much better in the near future," she said, "so we need to continue to be cautious."

Brian Camiller, a certified public accountant for Plante Moran, praised the city for boosting its general fund surplus by nearly \$2

PLEASE SEE AUDIT, A4

## Benefit honors late Suess

BY DARRELL CLEM  
STAFF WRITER

In honor of a cancer-stricken, 29-year-old Westland man, local women involved in a health-and-wellness company have planned a fund-raiser.

Duane Suess, reeling from head and neck cancer, died Saturday at the Karmanos Cancer Institute where he was in hospice. A married father of two, Suess' story has been detailed in earlier stories in the Observer.

Suess' condition had deteriorated recently, and he and his family will be honored with a fund-raiser organized by Arbonne International area manager Wendi Sparks and district manager Kelly Salter.

For \$50, the fund-raiser will include a manicure, a facial, a massage and a make-over by professionals. The event

is scheduled for noon to 2 p.m. and from 3-5 p.m. on Sunday, Feb. 19, at a Garden City Hospital sports rehabilitation center, 35550 Central City Parkway west of Wayne Road.

All proceeds will go to the Rosemary Hockney Memorial Foundation, which helps families dealing with cancer.

"The proceeds will be in honor of the Suess family, but will be directed to the Rosemary Hockney Memorial Foundation, which has helped the Suess family," Sparks said.

Organizers have sold 16 of the 32 appointments available for the event. To sign up or for more information, call Sparks at (734) 560-4786 or Salter at (734) 891-0219.

Companies who want to donate or provide services for the fund-raiser also may call.

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**Coming Thursday in Filter**

Jeff Daniels makes his feelings known in his new play, 'Guest Artist'



TOM HOFFMEYER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Wayne Lavelle, formerly of Wayne, broadcasts from radio row for KORL AM690 out of Hawaii while covering his 29th Super Bowl.

## Hawaii radio host recalls youth in Detroit

BY DAN WEST  
STAFF WRITER

Sports radio show host Wayne Lavelle has been a long way from his home in Hawaii over the past week, but covering the Super Bowl gave him a chance to spend time just miles from where he grew up.

Known as "Super Bowl Wayne," he is set to be at Ford Field for today's NFL title game between the Pittsburgh Steelers and Seattle Seahawks. For Lavelle, it's his 29th trip to see the Super Bowl.

"I went to the first two years in Los Angeles when they were giving tickets away," Lavelle said. "Then later, I've gone to the Super Bowl town without a ticket, without a place to stay, but I went there to party and somehow ended up with a ticket to the game."

The 60-year-old Lavelle was born in Highland Park, but later moved to Wayne where he attended old Wayne High School for his 10th-grade year. Family issues moved Lavelle to relocate to California where he completed high school and studied law and television and radio at various colleges.

His past jobs included work in law, sales and as a machinist for an airline, but he's always been a huge sports fan. He moved to Hawaii 20 years ago because it was too cold for him in San Francisco. Since 1998, he has co-hosted a morning radio program on KORL-AM (690 AM).

"Super Bowl Wayne" is a hyperactive free spirit who brings an energetic, raspy voice to his radio show that airs from 5-6 a.m. to wake up his Honolulu audience. He looks a bit like Hall of Fame

quarterback Terry Bradshaw, but Lavelle uses his receding gray hair for a long braid down his back.

"I like the excitement of being myself and being able to express my enthusiasm on the radio," Lavelle said. "I get some stuff wrong, but I have a good partner who laughs it off and helps me out."

He was on Radio Row at the Renaissance Center last week with other radio personalities from across the country, while his partner was stationed at the KORL's home studio.

Lavelle's lively personality is known among the throng of media in Detroit for the Super Bowl. He shakes hands with just about everyone he meets and hands out boxes a toffee- and chocolate-covered macadamia nuts to guests on his radio show, which on Friday included Hall of Fame defensive back Ronnie Lott.

Lavelle had to adjust to a five-hour time change and 40-degree temperature difference, but he said he's enjoyed his 10-day stay. He has been staying at a Livonia hotel, located in an area that he remembers as a "cow pasture" when he was a boy.

This is the first visit to his native area since attending the 1982 Super Bowl at the Pontiac Silverdome.

"It was tough for the media during the last Super Bowl in Detroit with the winter storm and traffic problems," Lavelle said. "This year it has been different. It's cold for me, but people have warmed up to the media here. They are saying 'good morning' to everyone and making everyone feel welcome."

"The world is watching and Detroit is showing how much it wants to be a premier winter destination." dwest@hometownlife.com | (734) 953-2109

### AROUND WESTLAND

#### Chili cook-off

The Westland Democratic Club will hold a chili cook-off fund-raiser 6-9 p.m. Friday, Feb. 10, at the Harris-Kehrer VFW Post 3323 in Westland. There's a \$10 fee to enter the contest and cooks are asked to bring a crockpot of their chili for judging. There's also a \$10 charge to taste the chilis and vote for the best one. Beverages and dessert are included in the charge.

People who attend are asked to please bring a donation of a personal care item for our local veterans hospital patients. Suggested items included men's white socks, liquid soap (alcohol free), disposable razors or toothbrushes and toothpaste. For more information, call Nan Melke at (734) 674-7327. The hall is at 1055 S. Wayne Road, between Cherry Hill and Palmer.

#### Advocacy group

The Wayne-Westland Alliance for the Mentally Ill, a self-help and advocacy group, meets at 7 p.m. the first and third Thursday of the month at St. John's Episcopal Church, 555 S. Wayne Road, at Bayview, Westland. For more information, call (734) 362-8825.

#### Cropping fund-raiser

A scrapbook fund-raiser, Croppin' for the Edison Eagles, will be held 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 11, in the gymnasium of St. Matthew Lutheran School and Church, 5885 Venoy, Westland. The cost is \$35 and includes a light breakfast, lunch, dinner, snacks and beverages, scrapbooking and stamping vendors, raffles and much more.

Call Kelly Salter at (734) 891-0219 or e-mail kelly@bell-creek.org for more information or to register.

#### Charity bowling

The Westland Chamber of Commerce will hold 2006 Winterfest charity bowling event 1-5 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 25, at Westland Bowl, 5940 N. Wayne Road. Partial proceeds benefit the Joseph F. Benyo Scholarship Fund.

Registration is at 12:30 p.m. with the tournament starting at 1 p.m. Four-person teams will bowl, alternating every fourth frame. Cost is \$120 per team or \$30 per person. Price includes bowling, two well drinks and dinner buffet after the tournament at Marvaso's

Italian Grille, 6569 N. Wayne Road. Call the chamber at (734) 326-7222.

#### Room rentals

Looking for more office space? Planning a party? Having a meeting? Look no further than the YWCA of Western Wayne County. If you or someone you know is looking to start or expand a business, the YWCA has office space available for rent. There also is room to have meetings for any organization.

The YWCA is available for birthday parties, wedding or baby showers, luncheons, or any other celebration. Kitchen facilities also are available. It also has accommodations for dance and aerobics classes.

Evening and weekend times are available. Call the YWCA of Western Wayne County at (313) 561-4110, Ext. 18. The YWCA is at 26279 Michigan Ave., Inkster.

#### Las Vegas Party

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

#### Singers needed

Do you like singing religious music, Kirk of Our Savior on Cherry Hill west of Wayne Road, Westland, is looking for singers for its adult (ages 13 and up) traditional choir. All Christian faiths and all voice ranges are welcome.

Rehearsals are at 7 p.m. Thursdays. For more information, call Tim at (734) 718-8733 or the church at (734) 728-1088.

#### Car donations

People with a car to donate can give it to Veterans Haven. The organization is accepting cars, running or not running, that are given to veterans to provide them with transportation to work, school of medical needs. To date, the agency has given away more than 250 vehicles and three fully furnished mobile homes to needy veterans. To donate, call Veterans Haven at (734) 728-0527 or go to vetshaveninfo.org on the Internet.

### CORRECTION

School board candidates need to file a nominating petition or pay a \$100 fee at their city or township clerk's office, not the Wayne County Clerk's office.

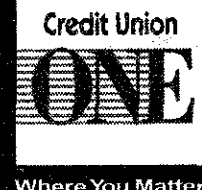
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PHOTOS BY TOM HAWLEY | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Sandy Kopcak has brought a few of her family's Pittsburgh Steelers' memorabilia for today's Super Bowl game.

## Welcome to Steelers' country

### Pennsylvania transplants whoop it up for their Super Bowl team

BY SUE MASON  
STAFF WRITER

Sandy Kopcak hadn't heard any horns honking, so she doctored up her handmade "Honk if you're for the Steelers" fan sign.

It's just part of the decorations the Westland resident has put up inside and outside her Westland home since the Steelers earned a spot in today's Super Bowl.

She and her family are rooting for them not just because of Jerome Bettis, they're rooting for them because of their roots. Sandy and her husband Bill grew up in the Pittsburgh area and even though they left their home state almost 40 years ago, they're still Steelers fans.

"We've always been true to the Steelers," said Kopcak. "Even when we moved to Detroit 26 years ago."

That's why their home is decked out in some of the memorabilia that was collected during trips back to Pennsylvania to visit relatives like the one who lived on the campus of St. Vincent College where the Steelers held their training camps.

"The players would come for lunch," said son Jason, a Bloomfield resident. "We'd get to go over there. I can remember shaking hands with Terry Bradshaw, Franco Harris and Lynn Swan."

Only a small portion of the collection is out for Super Bowl XL. The towels, of course, two empty Terry Bradshaw Peanut Butter jars marketed by the Terry Bradshaw Peanut Butter Co., and two equally empty Iron Rock Beer cans emblazoned with images of the Steelers' Hall of Famers and the 1980 Team of the Decade.

The towels and peanut butter were purchased by Bill's late mother Angeline Kopcak, other pieces by Bill and Sandy's sons.

"We grew up going back there five to six times a year," said Jason. "They sold it in the stores."

"We used to have Steelers shirts, but the kids wore them so much that they wore out," Sandy said. "We used to have so much more."

Sandy was born and raised in McKeesport, Pa., her husband grew up in Herminie, just 20 minutes from Latrobe and St. Vincent College.

They left their state shortly after they married. They spent two years in Cleveland and then moved to Romulus where they lived for 14 years. They've lived in Westland for 26 years.

While they have grown up as "die-hard Steelers fans," Jason admits that when in



Sandy Kopcak would love to get a photograph of Terry Bradshaw holding up a jar of his peanut butter on his FOX sports show like the two the family has. Their collection also includes special Iron Rock Beer cans, an original Terrible Towel and Steelers pins.

Detroit he roots for Detroit and if it's a Pittsburgh game, it's Pittsburgh he pulls for. "But if it's Detroit and Pittsburgh, I root for Detroit because my roots are here," he said.

Sandy isn't surprised at Detroit embracing her beloved Steelers. There actually are a lot of former Pittsburgh residents living in the metropolitan area, due in part to Kelsey Hayes closing its McKeesport plant and transferring the work and a lot of its employees to this area.

And having Jerome Bettis grow up here has given Detroiters something to brag about, she said.

"You know they're a Steelers fan when you hear Dan Marino's name and they say yippee," said Sandy. "He's from Pittsburgh."

Marino isn't the only football great to come out of the Keystone State. Sandy has yipees for San Francisco's Joe Montana who's from New Eagle and New York Jets quarterback Joe Namath who's from Beaver Falls.

Sandy's been using a marker to fatten the letters on her homemade sign so people will see it and honk.

She may even wave a Terrible Towel during today's game. Plans were to get tickets to a Super Bowl party at a local bar and celebrate. Jason had a line on going to the game with a friend.

Either way the Kopcaks will be rooting for the Steelers. Sandy also will be collecting Super Bowl stuff. Instead of the relatives in Pennsylvania collecting items for them, the Kopcaks will be getting it to send back home.

"Newspapers, anything ... they want us to send it to them," she said. "If they win, you bet I'm going to buy stuff to bring back home."

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

## 6 women are nominated for ATHENA Award

Six of Westland's most influential individuals will have to wait until Saturday evening to find out who will be the 2006 Westland ATHENA Award winner.

The announcement will be made at the second annual Westland ATHENA Award Chocolate Fantasy Ball, sponsored by the Women of Westland, State Sen. Laura Toy, R-Livonia, and Mayor Sandra Cicirelli.

The ball will be at the New Hawthorne Valley Country Club, 7300 Merriman. Westland, and will feature will feature a strolling dinner, live music, silent auction and lots of chocolate.

But the highlight of the evening will be the award presentation which recognizes and man or woman for their business excellence, their efforts toward improving the quality of life in the community and for their dedication to assisting women in realizing their full leadership potential.

Nominated for the honor are:

■ Joan Carr, well-known for her volunteer work with the Wayne-Westland Community Schools' Family Resource Center. She was nominated by Wendy Lyon, who described Carr as "a leader in volunteerism in the community." She

may be best known for the award-winning Red Wagon Literacy Project in which volunteers collect and distribute books to youngsters throughout the Norwayne Area during the summer.

■ Ronaele Bowman, the recently retired director of the Westland Youth Assistance Program. She was nominated by Diane Deim who has been a Youth Assistance volunteer mentor for 11 years who wrote that the program under the direction of Bowman "has gained many skills which can be utilized to care for the youth of Westland, the youth of various cities - the youth which is our future."

■ Mary Browe, supervisor of the Wayne-Westland Community Schools' Dyer Senior Center. She was nominated by Gloria Pluta, treasurer of the center's seniors program. Pluta wrote that Browe has incorporated "community service in her personal as well as professional life," citing her work with Wayne Youth Services and the development of service programs the have seniors mentoring students in reading and history.

■ Linda DeVore, a dietitian and diabetes educator who works at Henry Ford Dialysis and Garden City Hospital. She was nominated by Mary Dibble

and Laurie Schroeder for her commitment to the community and her involvement in the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer 3-Day Walk and Relay for Life.

■ Marsha Bianconi, the executive director of the Conference of Western Wayne. She was nominated by Westland Mayor Sandra Cicirelli who praised her for her "ability to transform goals and objectives into workable successful programs and services" while being mindful of their effect on women and the community.

■ Diane Browning, assistant librarian at Eastern Michigan University and service unit manager for the Girl Scouts of Huron Valley.

She was nominated by Allison Ashley who wrote that Browning "trains, supervises, mentors and coaches student assistant librarians."

Tickets for the Chocolate Fantasy Ball are \$75 per person and include cocktails at 6 p.m., followed by a strolling dinner at 6:30 p.m., award presentation 7:30 p.m. and dancing to the music of White Lace.

Tickets are available at Mary Denning's Cake Shoppe on Wayne Road north of Cowan - (734) 261-3680 - or through the mayor's office at Westland City Hall - (734) 467-3200.

## Morgan says she's seeking re-election

Trustee Joanne Morgan is campaigning to keep her seat on the Livonia Public Schools Board of Education.

After 10 years on the school board, Morgan debated whether she wished to continue. On Monday, she made it official and announced - during a regular board meeting - she would indeed run for re-election this May.

"This board is one of the finest boards I have ever served on," she said. "It's one of the finest in the history of our district." Morgan noted that every

member of the board is certified by the Michigan Association of School Boards.

Her position is the only four-year term is up for election this year. That term ends June 30, 2006. However, a group opposed to the district's Legacy Initiative, a cost-cutting/restructuring plan, is planning to initiate a recall effort against five other board members who supported the plan later this month.

Morgan said she received a letter of support from an 18-year-old Franklin senior who

remembered her from his days at Cleveland Elementary School, where Morgan began volunteering when her son entered kindergarten.

"Just being in a school building, you never know who's life you touch," she said.

As a school board trustee, she said, "I do make a difference for children."

The filing deadline to vie for a school board seat is Feb. 7.

"It will be up to the voters in the community to decide how this turns out," she said.

By Stephanie A. Casola



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INFORMATION CENTRAL

With the New Year, even the laziest of us can feel a renewed resolve to tackle the things we've put off - or the pounds we've put on.

To the diet-minded among us, it should come as no surprise that the first week of January is Diet Resolution Week and National Lose Weight/Feel Great Week.

But come February, you can find your resolve as empty as yesterday's can of Pringles. Might we suggest a walk ... to the Library? We have an armload of materials to help you keep your New Year's resolution through February and beyond.

Listen to the American Heart Association's advice in the *No-Fad Diet* (613.25 Ame): "You already know that if you take in fewer calories than you expend, you will lose weight ... But as you reduce calories, you also need to pay attention to the essentials of good nutrition. Remember: Quality first, then quantity."

The authors recommend a combination of thinking smart, eating well and moving more ("... to keep off the pounds for good, you have to get moving and keep moving.").

You might take a look at the American Dietetic Association's *Complete Food and Nutrition Guide* (613.2 Ame), or Tersilia D'Elgin's *What Should I Eat: A Complete Guide to the New Food Pyramid* (613.2 Del) when planning what you'll eat.

And Corinne Netzer's *Complete Book of Food Counts* (REF 613.28 Net 2003) or BOWES and Church's *Food Values of Portions Commonly Used* (REF 613.28 Pen) are standard references for nutritionists and dietitians.

If you're thinking about trying a popular diet - *South Beach* (613.25 Aga), *Atkins* (613.2 Atk), *The Zone* (613.25 Sea), *ChangeOne* (613.25 Has) - consider reading up on it first.

Try the American Academy of Family Physicians' *Familydoctor.org*, which publishes a fact sheet on fad diets at <http://familydoctor.org/784.xml>. Or take a look at our *Encyclopedia of Diet Fads* (REF 613.25 Bii) to get some background information on your diet of choice.

A sensible weight-loss plan includes moderate physical activity, which can range from walking (try *Walkaerobics*, 613.71 Mir on DVD) or running (we own the *New York Road Runners' Complete Book of Running and Fitness*, 613.717 Aye), to yoga (*Yoga Journal* offers yoga basics, 613.704 Car) or Pilates (Karrie Adamany and Daniel Loigerot have published *The Pilates Edge: An Athlete's Guide to Strength and Performance*, 613.71 Ada), to some form of resistance training (perhaps Brian Cook and Gordon Stewart's *Strength Basics*, 613.71 Coo).

The library also carries an extensive selection of exercise videos and DVDs from Denise Austin, Leslie Sansone, Kathy Smith, Rodney Yee, and, yes, Richard Simmons.

If all your other defenses fail, remember the library before you unwrap that Snickers.

Call the Reference Desk at (734) 326-6123. We'll talk you down and make sure you keep your resolution this year.

**Teen Valentine Candy Raffle:** Feb. 1-14.

Can you guess how many candies are in the jar in the Young Adult area? Fill out the ballot completely and put it in the box. Closest guess wins all the candy and a \$25 gift certificate to Westland Shopping Center. Open to grades 6-12.

**Adult Book Club:** 7 p.m. Feb. 21.

This month's book is *The Secret Life of Bees* by Sue Monk Kidd. Please read the book before the meeting. All are welcome.

**Microsoft Word for Beginners:** 2 p.m. Feb. 11.

Learn the basics of Microsoft Word, a word processing program that lets users create a variety of documents, including letters and resumes.

**Internet 101:** 10:30 a.m. Feb. 11. What the Internet is and how to get there.

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

# Turning lives around

## Growth Works students spin inspirational stories

BY JULIE BROWN  
STAFF WRITER

Kristen Persh of Westland came to Growth Works with an Alcoholics Anonymous schedule, and a determination to turn her life around. She was praised for her efforts to help other young women at Growth Works, which offers services in such areas as chemical dependency.

"I would first like to thank all of you," Persh said Feb. 2 during the Plymouth-based agency's 16th annual recognition award dinner. "I've come really far. My sobriety is thanks to half the people in this audience."

"I was very selfish when I first got into Growth Works. My dad couldn't even handle me," she added.

Persh said she's glad to be a part of the program, and can now look people squarely in the eye without judgment of self or others.

Another youth praised that evening at Fox Hills Golf & Banquet Center is Danny Daniels of Plymouth, who now carries a 3.89 grade-point average and is looking forward to graduation. He's a certified EMT with plans to attend nursing school.

"I'm just absolutely blessed," Daniels told the audience. "I've been surrounded by people that I love and care about. If it wasn't for Growth Works, I wouldn't be here today."

He also praised his mom and friends, noting his mom deserved an award.

Canton residents Twila Murphy and Cynthia Whisler were recognized for their efforts in recovery, with both soon to mark one year clean and sober. The women have received help in the Adult Intensive Outpatient Program.

Another honoree is Sgt. John Hoak, who's been with the Westland Police Department more than 18 years. "It's always nice to receive recognition," Hoak said. He said Growth Works, under the leadership of Executive Director Dale Yagiela,



BILL BRESLER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

The Growth Works dinner drew a number of young people, including Kenneth Kolver, John Maus, Brandon Lampley, Justin Marion, Danny Daniels, Stacey Hewitt, James Cobb and Stephen Grossman.

has done so much for so long with so little.

"It's quite obvious what the program accomplishes," Hoak added.

Other honorees are:

■ Stacey Hewitt of Livonia, who has overcome chemical dependency and school issues.

■ James Cobb of Sumpter Township, recognized as part of the Western Wayne Care Management Organization and for attending Schoolcraft College.

■ Kevin Vardiman of Canton for the Youth Assistance Program, who helps now to run Growth Works groups. "I don't exactly know what to say," said Vardiman, who thanked Growth Works, his mom, stepfather and sister.

■ Tom Doetsch, for work as family court referee and advocate for youth and family. "Tonight it's nice to see the end product," said Doetsch, who hoped he wasn't too mean to the

young people who appeared before him.

■ Al Wilkerson, a Romulus Community Schools administrator who works with students who have difficulty in a traditional school setting. Wilkerson, who will retire this June, was praised for focusing on young people's strengths. "Sometimes students just need another chance," he said.

■ GED through Schoolcraft College recipients Aaron Dugger-Barnett of Redford and John Maus of Redford. Dugger-Barnett thanked God, his mom and Growth Works. Maus said, "I just want to thank everyone that's involved in the juvenile court system," thanking Growth Works and his mom.

Honored for attending Schoolcraft were Joe Ross of Taylor, Stephen Grossman of South Lyon, Brandon Lampley of Westland and James Cobb.

Yagiela, the agency executive director, outlined services

including Youth Assistance which offers early intervention for young people referred by district courts, schools and others. It does a lot of work with parents. Chemical Dependency is one of the largest programs in Michigan, serving more than 400 young people last year. There's a Canton-based Adult Intensive Outpatient Program.

School-based programs in Inkster and South Redford offer in-school suspension, truancy help, social workers and more. The CMO started in 2000 and assists young people convicted of felonies and those placed on probation.

"Every year we do this, we get a bigger crowd," said Yagiela, who was teased a bit for giving his wife the wrong location for the dinner.

"Everybody in this room contributes to that in one way or another," Yagiela said of the young people and adults helped through Growth Works.

Cheer for the hometown read today's Sports section

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## AUDIT

FROM PAGE A1

milliou during the last two years.

"That's fantastic," he said. "The two-year turnaround is great, but we're definitely not out of the woods yet."

Plante Moran indicated that some financial controls need tightening.

Some entities, such as the Downtown Development Authority, lacked written contracts for such services as landscaping. And the audit cited a "lack of internal controls" for the Mike Modano Ice Arena's figure-skating program.

"A proper audit trail for these programs does not exist," Swartz wrote in his report to city officials.

Auditors have offered to work with the new arena manager, Joe Burton, to tighten financial practices.

Council President William Wild indicated that, in a future audit, he'd like Plante Moran to examine more closely the financial situation with the city's golf course.

"That's something I'd like to see at some point in time," Wild said.

Meanwhile, Swartz's report showed how the city has steadily lost ground with state-shared revenue in recent years.

Westland received \$10.5 million in state-shared revenues in 2001 - an amount that had dipped to \$8.8 million by 2005. The cuts came as state officials grappled with their own budget crisis.

Local officials aren't expecting any new round of state cuts, but Cicirelli said local officials need to remain on guard.

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# Westland man heads for prison after plea

BY DARRELL CLEM  
STAFF WRITER

A serial robber who held up two Westland businesses at gunpoint will spend at least 11 years in prison.

Jonathan David Pentz, 28, has started serving his sentence for robbing the Radio Shack on Ford Road, west of Wayne, and the Game Crazy store at Michigan Avenue and Merriman.

He is serving time after ear-

lier pleading guilty to a series of armed robberies in Westland and other communities.

Pentz had pleaded guilty late last year in Wayne County Circuit Court to multiple counts of armed robbery, felony firearms and being a felon with a gun.

Pentz, who lived at Willow Creek Apartments, could have faced penalties ranging up to life in prison, if his case had gone to trial and ended with a

conviction.

By pleading guilty, he agreed to a sentence of nine to 20 years in prison for armed robbery. Before he starts serving that time, however, he will have to do two years for felony firearms charges.

Pentz robbed the Game Crazy store on June 13 and the Radio Shack on June 19, Father's Day.

A Radio Shack worker reported that Pentz told him, "No disrespect, and sorry

about Father's Day."

An employee of Game Crazy told police that Pentz asked for two Xbox games from a shelf before revealing a gun and announcing, "There's been a change in the transaction."

Pentz returned to prison after being paroled in August 2002. He had served about two years in prison for third-degree criminal sexual conduct in Oakland County.

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

## FOR THE 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 C4.

**B**  
**John Michael Breen**  
Breen, 81, died Jan. 28.

**C**  
**Dora M. Cairns**  
Cairns, 91, of Oxford, formerly of Farmington Hills, died Jan. 26.

**D**  
**Pauline DeNise**  
DeNise, 86, of Rochester Hills, died Jan. 29.

**G**  
**Evelyn M. Gilhooly**  
Gilhooly, 100, died Feb. 2.

**H**  
**Emma Ruth Hedeman**  
Hedeman, 95, formerly of Clarkston, died Jan. 25.

**Nancy Hildebrandt**  
Hildebrandt, 73, of Bloomfield Hills, died.

**L**  
**Peter J. Loch**  
Loch, 77, of Bloomfield Hills, died Feb. 1.

**Shirley M. Long**  
Long, 74, of Livonia, died Feb. 1.

**M**  
**Lillian Manski**  
Manski, 95, of Troy, died Jan. 27.

**William "Mike" McNeil**  
McNeil, 54, of Romulus, died Jan. 30.

**J. Edward Michalak**  
Michalak, 48, of Auburn Hills, died Jan. 26.

**James D. "Don" Mix**  
Mix, 82, formerly of Canton and Westland, died Jan. 28.

**Delores L. Moyle**  
Moyle, 79, of Livonia, died Jan. 24.

**P**  
**Donald F. Pierce**  
Pierce, 90, of Rochester Hills, died Jan. 26.

**Anthony Pietrzak**  
Pietrzak, of Livonia, died Jan. 11.

**R**  
**Jane L. Ruthenberg**  
Ruthenberg, 85, of Birmingham, died Jan. 31.

**S**  
**Lawrence Stock**  
Stock, 74, of Fort Lauderdale, formerly of Farmington, died Jan. 14.

**Cheryl St. Onge**  
St. Onge, 51, of Auburn Hills, died Jan. 27.

**T**  
**Vic V. Tomei**  
Tomei, 57, of Plymouth, died Jan. 29.

**W**  
**Ralph Wallot Jr.**  
Wallot, 49, of Waterford, died Jan. 28.

**Robert "Bob" Warren**  
Warren, 56, died Jan. 29.

**Z**  
**Mary M. Zumwalt**  
Zumwalt, 84, of Rochester Hills, died Jan. 29.

## COMMUNITY CALENDAR

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.homecomm.net. For more information, call (734) 953-2112.

### UPCOMING EVENTS

#### Rabbit adoptions

The Great Lakes Rabbit Sanctuary will hold an adoption event from noon to 5 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 11, at Specialty Pet Supplies, 1449 Ann Arbor Road, in Plymouth. The event is being held in recognition of Adopt-A-Rabbit Month and will include pet tarot card readings, pet photographs, as well as magic and balloons by Christian the Clown. In addition, volunteers will be on hand to help answer questions related to rabbit care, health, temperament and adoption. Rabbits available for adoption may be viewed at petfinder.com and adoptions also can be made through an adoption coordinator at adoptions@rabbitsanctuary.org. Great Lakes Rabbit Sanctuary is a nonprofit group that provides a safe haven for abandoned, abused and neglected domestic rabbits with the goal of rehabilitating them and adopting them to loving homes. Check out the Great Lakes Rabbit Sanctuary Web site at www.rabbitsanctuary.org or call (734) 461-1726.

#### Open House

St. Mary Catholic School will have an open house/cultural fair 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 26, at the school, 34516 Michigan Ave., Wayne. There will be guided tours, general information, registration details and scholarship information and applications available for families interested in future enrollment. The cultural fair will guests a chance to experience the culture of countries from around the world as presented by St. Mary students. Teachers and staff also will be on hand to answer questions. For more information, call (734) 721-1240.

#### Open House

St. Michael Lutheran School, 3003 Hannan, Wayne, has two open houses planned for February for parents interested in enrolling in the preschool and/or school. The preschool open house is 5:30-7:30 p.m. Monday, Feb. 6, while the school open house and registration will be 5:30-7:30 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 23. For more information, call (734) 728-3315.

#### Eating Disorders

Get help, get real information and real expectations, at an eating disorder support group which meets 7-8:30 p.m. Wednesday in the auditorium of Garden City Hospital, 6245 Inkster Road, Garden City. All meetings are closed - for people of all ages with eating disorders and are free of charge. Family and friends support is on the second Wednesday of the

month while parents support is on the fourth Wednesday of the month. For more information, call Darlene at (734) 324-3089.

### BINGO

#### VFW Bingo

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

#### Dams hold bingo

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

#### St. Mel Church

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

#### Shamrock Bingo

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

#### K of C Bingo

Pope John XXIII Assembly of the Knights of Columbus Council 1536 hosts bingo games at 6:45 p.m. Thursdays. The games are in the

Livonia Elks Lodge, 3117 Plymouth Road, one block east of Merriman in Livonia. Call (734) 425-2246.

#### Metro Wayne

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

### FOR SENIORS

#### Friendship Center

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

#### Crochet & Knit

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

#### Visually Impaired

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

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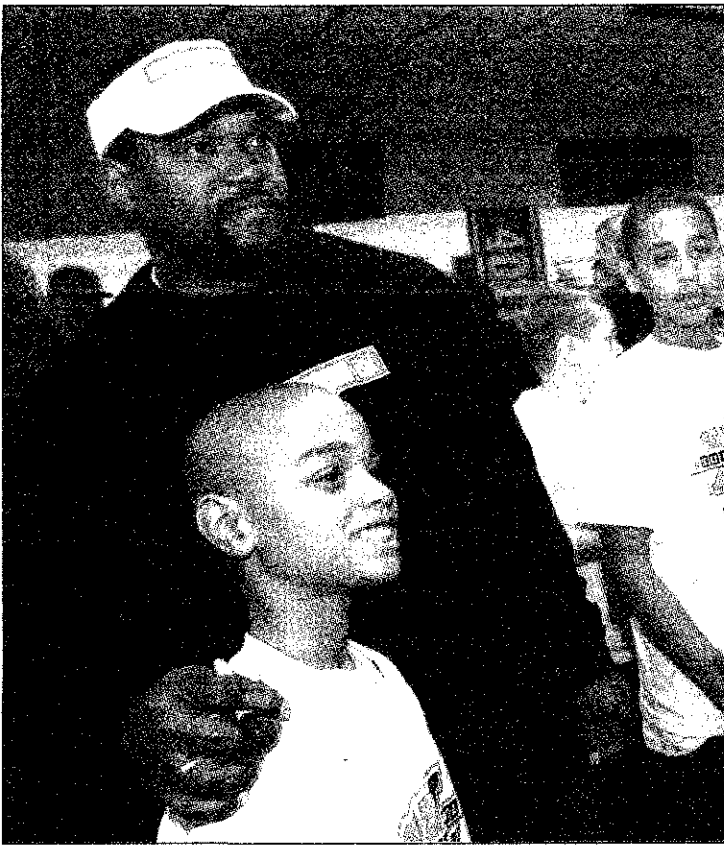
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Kameron Caldwell has reason to smile. That's Tyrone Wheatley he's standing with for a snapshot.

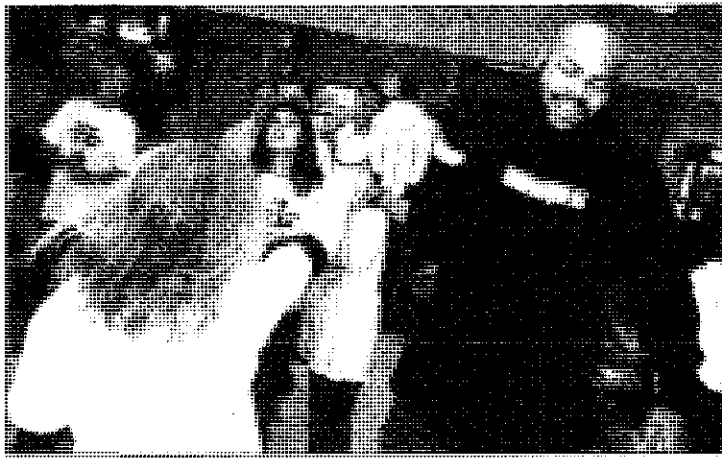


Christian Phillips (left) grimaces as classmates Hailey King (from left), Trudi Brothers and Samantha Richter sign his NFL Super Bowl T-shirt.

PHOTOS BY TOM HAWLEY | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER



Austin St. Peter (left) stretches out with pro bowler Norm Duke of Orlando, Fla.



Claire Truskowski high fives it with T.J. Duckett of the Atlanta Falcons.

**SUPER**

FROM PAGE A1

were plenty of professional bowlers there to show the students how to warm-up, stretch and bowl.

Leading the group was Norm Duke, who has amassed 23 Pro Bowling Association championships. Joining him were Danny Wiseman, an 11-time PBA champion, Diandra Asbaty, the U.S. amateur champion, Carolyn Dorin Ballard, a 20-time Professional Women's Bowling Association champion, and Kim Terrell, a nine-time PWBA champion and coach of the USA Junior team.

Mike Carroll, president of the U.S. Bowling Congress, had praise for organizers of the bowling clinic, calling it a "yeoman's task to pull it together." It took a month to organize, according to Nick Nicolosi of the NFL Charity Bowling Classic which was at the Super Bowl lanes Saturday.

"We had all these celebrities in town and the pro bowlers, so we decided to get the kids involved and have some fun," said Nicolosi.

In addition to the NFL players, Nicolosi had members of the Detroit Lions and their mascot Roary there as well as actress Sandra Taylor who appeared in the two *Princess Diaries* movies.

"The money raised from the

'We had all these celebrities in town and the pro bowlers, so we decided to get the kids involved and have some fun.'

Nick Nicolosi

classic stays here in Detroit and goes to the construction of the Youth Education Town, a center for at risk kids and a legacy the NFL leaves Detroit for hosting the Super bowl," he said.

In fact, the bowling clinic was part of several activities that took place in Detroit related to Youth Education Town.

Legacies and the like was of know concern to the students who munched on hot dogs and french fries, made sure they wiped their hands on their bowling towels before grabbing their balls and had a good time signing each other's Super Bowl T-shirts and posing for pictures with the players.

"This is really fun, especially that we got to meet some superstars," said Bobby Mason of Westland. "I was nervous this morning that there'd be no Steelers here, but I'm OK about that now."

His friend Kyle McClung had a different spin: "It's better than being in school."

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## Challengers backing away from running against Ficano

Bob Ficano isn't ready to take a victory lap just yet.

"That's way too premature. It's only January," he said in an interview Monday. But with a campaign chest that he estimates at between \$1 million and \$1.5 million and potential opponents dropping by the wayside, things are looking good for the first term Wayne County executive's re-election in November.

"We've been in the mode of running hard and hoping for the best, prepare for the worst and hope for the best," he said. "If no challenger emerges, it will make everyone's summer easier, but we don't take it lightly."

Of course in Wayne County, it's the summer campaign and the Aug. 8 primary election that matters because Democrats hold a daunting electoral majority.



Name  
Last name

Four years ago, when Ed McNamara chose not to run again after 16 years as county executive, a train of hopefuls lined up - former Detroit Police Chief Benny Napoleon was regarded by many as the front runner with County Commission Chair Ricardo Solomon, Detroit City Councilwoman Sharon McPhail and Wayne County Sheriff Bob Ficano of Livonia the other serious candidates.

Ficano won handily and seems to have built a solid political base, though not without drawing criticism, particularly from allies of McNamara. Ficano and McNamara often sparred when Ficano was sheriff and Ficano only won McNamara's support at the midnight hour four years ago.

Two potential candidates were urged to take on Ficano but have backed away.

County Commissioner Phil Cavanagh of Redford cited family obligations. "My girls are teenagers in high school and I want to be part of their lives," he said Tuesday. "Being the county executive is a full-time commitment. I'm happy in my county commission seat and believe I'm making a difference."

Cavanagh said he doesn't see anyone in a position to challenge Ficano for the nomination.

"Money is a big thing, name recognition is huge. Mr. Ficano was sheriff for almost 20 years and now he's CEO."

Sheriff Warren Evans, who has regularly tussled with Ficano over budget allocations, was also strongly urged to take on the CEO. Evans has a long association with McNamara.

"It's true that I am not running for that job or against him," Evans said Wednesday. "It would be bad for the county and too confusing."

Of course in Wayne County, it's the summer campaign and the Aug. 8 primary election that matters because Democrats hold a daunting electoral majority.

Instead Evans is weighing the possibility of seeking the Democratic nomination for attorney general at the party's fall convention.

"I've been looking at the job as a law enforcement job," he said. "I think there are opportunities there. Given the people in the race now (state Rep. Alexander Lipsey of Kalamazoo and former district Judge Scott Bowen of Grand Rapids) I'm at least as qualified."

Evans said his relations with Ficano are "amicable" and that they've been working on their differences.

Cavanagh said Ficano has spent "a lot of time battling" the commission on major issues.

"For instance the land bank. That could have been his signature program, instead it was voted down by the commission," Cavanagh said.

He also criticized the handling of lawsuits involving the Pinnacle Aeropark project and the county building.

"Energy and resources could have been expended on other things," he said.

But Ficano stands by his record.

"We came in and wanted to make sure we secured fiscal integrity. We cut pay by 14 percent, denied merit raises," he said. "We're the largest municipality to increase our bond rating."

He said he's also done a lot to build relations in western Wayne County.

"We see what their needs are - roads, parks, whatever and meet those," he said.

He also rejected criticism that he hadn't done enough to promote development in the county.

"We wanted to make sure we had the right development director in place and Dr. (Mulugetta) Birru is that person," he said.

He cites efforts to build international relations, pointing to his trip last year to China that resulted in a deal to bring a Century Automotive research center (and 200 jobs) to Canton. He also pointed to the recent design "charrette" that gathered urban design experts together to provide "visions" for developing an "aerotropolis" linking Metro and Willow Run airports and Ann Arbor and Detroit.

By this time four years ago, several candidates were running hard. For now, it looks like the CEO might stroll back into office.

Hugh Gallagher is the managing editor of the Observer Newspapers. He can be reached by phone at (734) 953-2149, by e-mail at hgallagher@oe.homecomm.net or by fax at (734) 591-7219.

## Super Bowl offers chance to see Detroit in a new light

Super Bowl XL, Jimmy Kimmel, Motown Winter Blast, the sighting of every known star or celebrity you've ever heard of - you probably have had your fill of the activities, hoopla and events of the past couple of weeks. As my Armenian grandmother used to say, "Amam, enough already." However, if you didn't take in any of the activities, you missed out not only on a wonderful experience, but a chance to see the fantastic job the Super Bowl Host Committee and the city of Detroit have done. It's also an opportunity to see the changes in downtown Detroit.

You are reading this column early Sunday morning, so there is still some time to take part of the activities, even if you don't have a ticket to any of the parties or the game itself. I encourage you to do so. You might even get lucky and snag a ticket to the Super Bowl.

Start with Motown Winter Blast. It's open until 1 p.m. today. Winter Blast is an event for the whole family, not just adults, but kids, too. What is Winter Blast all about - is it just a celebration of



Richard Aginian

winter in Michigan or is it more than that? I found it to be a celebration of winter with a little bit of Hawaii, compliments of Motorola, thrown in.

Winter Blast has many different activities that are either free or for a small charge. Start with free ice skating provided by Ford Motor Co. if you have your own skates. If not, skate rental is \$3 per person. The ice rink is 64 feet by 200 feet, slightly larger than the well-known rink at Rockefeller Center in New York City. You can skip this part today if you are pressed for time because the ice skating continues after Winter Blast closes.

Move over to the 200-foot snow slide and be prepared for a short but exhilarating ride down a man-made hill. It has a small \$2 per ride charge.

If you want to forget winter for a short while, walk over to the Motorola tent. Here you can see AVP beach volleyball being played and surfing, all inside a tent. Motorola has brought a Flowrider wave machine with professional surfers to Winter Blast. Who would have thought? You can also sip mai-tais, alcohol-free. Close your eyes and dream that for a moment you are in Hawaii. Motorola also has a display of all its new cell phones.

After experiencing Hawaii, how about a ride on a Model T? Ford is providing free rides on a replica Model T car. As you walk over to the Model T rides, don't forget to view the automobiles that Ford has on display.

My travels have not taken me to the city in several months, so I was very pleasantly surprised to see all the changes that have taken place.

By now you're probably hungry after all the activity of the morning. The Chrysler Jeep Dodge Taste of Detroit is the place to go. It spans three tents featuring food from 40 metro area restaurants, marshmallow roasting, warming stations and music. Restaurants such as Seldom Blues, The Palm, LaShish and Agave are just a few present. There is a charge.

On your way out, stop and admire The General Motors Ice Garden. Here there are 32 seven-foot ice sculptures representing each NFL team's logo. There is also a Detroit marketplace which is a shopping area featuring local artists and vendors such as Detroit retro-Rags, unique retro apparel, or Pop Art handbags, chic handbags, scarves and mittens.

DTE Energy Comfort Zone has both cold and hot beverages provided by Big Boy to quench your thirst or just warm you up. You can also purchase official Super Bowl souvenirs.

As you walk around Winter Blast, take a look at the fine automobiles that Ford, Chrysler and General Motors have on display. It's an easy way to shop for a new vehicle; view it at Winter Blast and stop at your local dealer Monday to make your purchase.

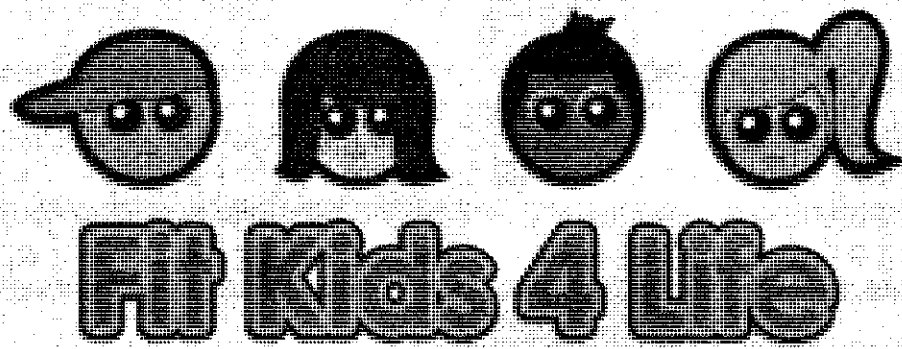
An additional treat in going to Winter Blast is to see all the changes happening in downtown Detroit. My travels have not taken me to the city in several months, so I was very pleasantly surprised to see all the changes that have taken place. There is a lot of new construction, both office buildings and buildings being converted into lofts. There is new retail - not a lot, but it's there - and new restaurants have opened up. From reports of others, the food is very good with price points from moderate to expensive. Certainly some of the older established restaurants are still there such as Opus One and Roma Café in Eastern Market.

The city is clean and well-lit at night. Give everyone credit for the changes made, the politicians and the private sector.

I had the opportunity to hear Peter King, *Sports Illustrated* senior writer, the other night say, "We love Detroit. It's all good."

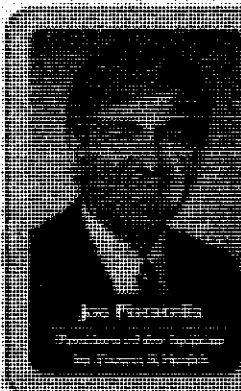
My challenge to all is to keep the momentum moving forward. It's important to our region that we have a vibrant and healthy city of Detroit.

Richard Aginian is president and publisher of the *Observer & Eccentric Newspapers*.



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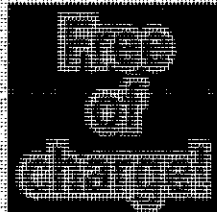
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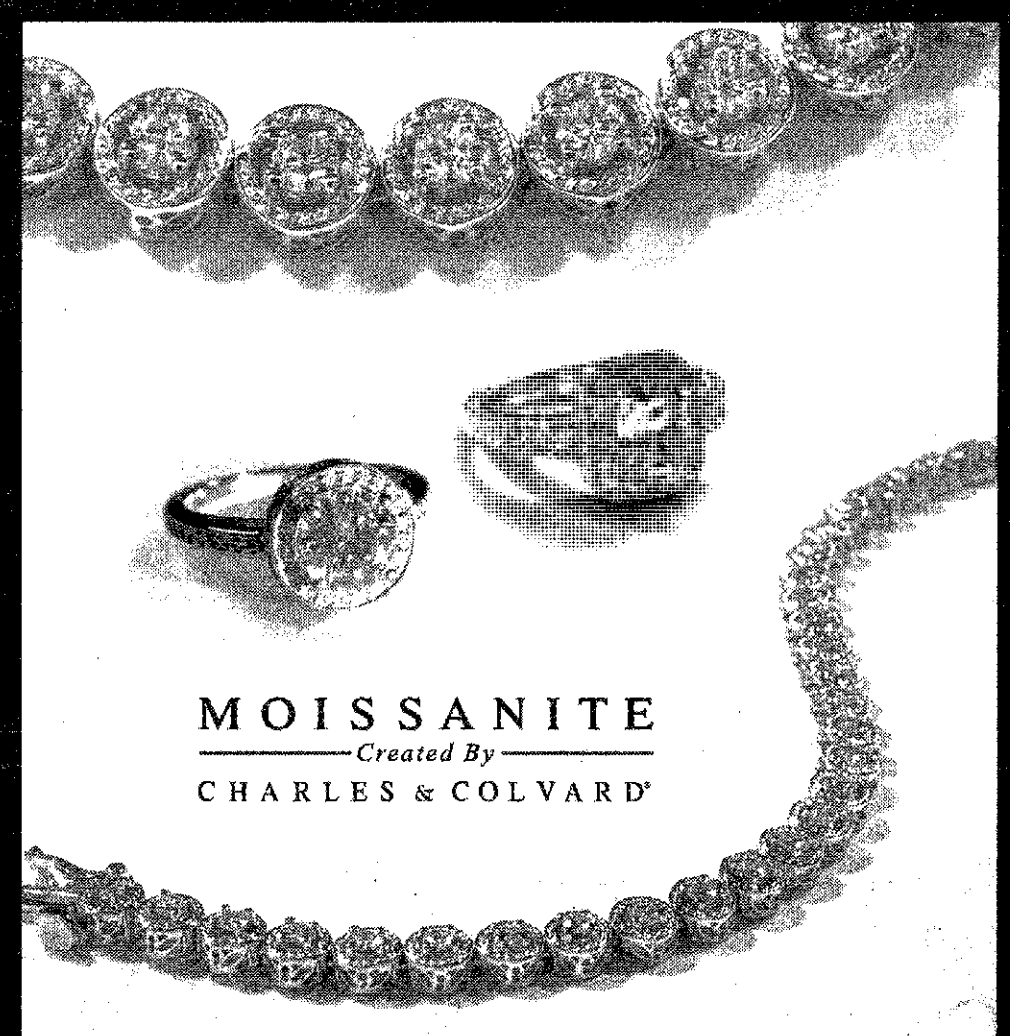
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# City, Oakland oceans apart on water department issues

BY ALEX LUNDBERG  
STAFF WRITER

To hear Oakland County Drain Commissioner John McCulloch and Detroit Water and Sewerage Department Director Victor Mercado talk about water issues in southeast Michigan, you'd think they were talking about water issues on different planets.

According to McCulloch, the DWSD is a mismanaged, opaque operation run in a way that is denying suburban communities a voice in how their water is delivered and their wastewater is taken away.

According to Mercado, DWSD is providing the services it's contracted to provide, within state and federal guidelines, in full view of public oversight at a price competitive with other cities of its size.

The third player in the drama, U.S. District Court Judge John Feikens, ruled earlier this year that Detroit can be the only owner and operator of the DWSD, shooting down McCulloch's bid for a regional authority. At the same time, he said the city and its customers need to have a closer, more collegial relationship.

McCulloch said after 28 years of judicial oversight, it's clear that the program is not working and there needs to be a new hand on the rudder at DWSD.

"There's mismanagement of the water system and problems with operational efficiency in the area of costs," he said. "Major programs have been deferred and critical capital improvements have not been done on a system with a 100-year-old infrastructure."

He said rate-setting assumptions for the DWSD are very complex where ones used by other cities are straightforward.

Mercado said the city keeps full information about water rates, and how those rates are



Director of the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department Victor Mercado said the idea of a suburban consortium governing the water system while Detroit retains ownership is absurd.

arrived at, on its Web site and holds open meetings in wholesale customer communities. On the whole, he said Detroiters and residents of communities contracting water services from the city are getting good value for their dollar.

Mercado said the DWSD has kept the cost of its services down in the four years he's been on the job. The total budget for the system was \$345.2 million in 2002-03 and \$349.3 million this year, an increase of only 1.2 percent. He chalked the low increase up to operations, curtailing overtime through better management and moving resources to where

they're needed. The number of employees has been cut from 3,200 to 2,600.

Still, security and water quality have not been compromised.

"We meet or exceed safe water standards," Mercado said. "We have five plants, one is brand new. Does everyone have problems with pipes in their cities? Yes. All seasonal cities have issues with their water mains."

The rise in the operations and maintenance costs have mostly been capital improvements. Acting in the wake of the 2003 blackout, Mercado said new auxiliary power systems have been added to

pumping stations that will provide a pumping capacity of 800 million gallons per day in the event of another total blackout.

Another outcome of the blackout was the creation of the city's 800 MHz radio system, which allows police, fire and other essential services to coordinate their communications. Mercado said the system is the primary communications for DWSD.

McCulloch has protested the water department's share of the cost, saying it is "way out of line" with the benefits the system gets from it, a point challenged by Mercado.

"Detroit is 100 square miles, the DWSD system is 1,000 square miles," Mercado said. "DWSD paid for the towers, generators, licensing and software. It was \$45 million from us and the rest came from other city departments. It was about \$126 million altogether."

McCulloch said there needs to be a regional authority to run the DWSD and set its rates for the entire southeast Michigan region. He was thinking something along the lines of the authority in Boston.

"A core group of representatives that will increase to include new customers and an advisory board," he said. "There are 125 communities (customers) of DWSD; not all would be on the core board, but they could be on the advisory board."

As to claims that the city can own the system while a regional board controls it, Mercado said no one would accept that in their homes, so why should the city relinquish control over its water system?

"(The city) would have all of the financial responsibilities, but someone else is going to say how we're going to spend money?"

Mercado said. "Like the judge said, that's against the Michigan Constitution. You have to remember that in the '50s, Detroit was forced to put mains in the suburbs and the city is responsible for those bonds."

McCulloch said customer communities are already

responsible for the bonds through the rates they pay for service. Money, he said, will eventually drive every decision in Detroit.

"The city is going to get to a point when it has to consider selling the system to solve other issues," he said. "(An agreement on DWSD) could be a model for other regional issues like transportation and Cobo Hall."



Oakland County Drain Commissioner John McCulloch says judicial oversight of the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department does not work and it's time for customer communities to have an active voice in the direction the department takes.

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