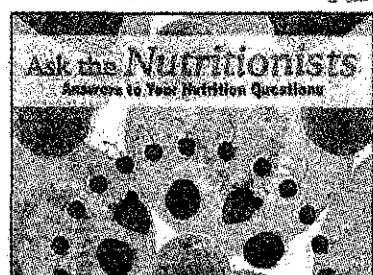




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# WESTLAND Observer

**SUNDAY**  
February 12, 2006

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## Council split over plan to develop hospital site

BY DARRELL CLEM  
STAFF WRITER

A proposal to build 148 new homes near Merriman and Palmer could be a boon for a site where redevelopment has remained elusive, city leaders say.

But a preliminary plan to build 52 single-family homes and 96 condominiums has left Westland City Council members divided.

Known as Oakmonte, the new neighborhood would be built southeast of Merriman and Palmer on the former Wayne County General Hospital site.

"This, by far, is the most viable plan we've seen for this site," Councilman James Godbout said Monday during talks between city officials, developers and builders.

Still, some council members view the proposal as premature, saying they have deep concerns that should be addressed before any plans move forward.

The new homes would be built near the Walter P. Reuther Psychiatric Hospital and an Oakwood Hospital office building.

On Monday, a divided council voted 4-3 to approve preliminary plans for Oakmonte. Opponents refused to support the proposal until developers answer their concerns that fire trucks should have easier access and that some streets should be bigger for the condo portion of the project, which includes eight buildings with 12 residences each.

Some opponents also questioned whether the development would be appropriate in close proximity to the medical facilities.

"This has got to be thought through," Councilwoman Cheryl Graunstadt said.

Attorney Bryan Amann appeared before city leaders Monday with representatives from Agree Realty Co. and Hometowne Building Co.

"This is a very tough site (for redevelopment)," he said, but added that he believes the latest proposal is workable.

Preliminary plans moved forward amid support from Godbout and three of his council colleagues - Michael Kehrer, Charles Pickering and President William Wild. They overcame opposition from Graunstadt and Councilmen Richard LeBlanc and Robert Stottlemeyer.

Developers and builders still have to resolve issues, such as fire truck access, soil testing and condominium garbage-disposal sites, before the plan will be considered for final approval.

"If you make it right, I'll vote for it," Stottlemeyer told Oakmonte representatives Monday, adding later, "I don't think we should go any further until we get this all worked out."

But a council majority chose to give preliminary approval to Oakmonte officials, saying they still could thwart the development unless their concerns are addressed.

Officials indicated that single-family, mostly brick homes would start around \$200,000 and that condos would begin at \$135,000.

"I personally think it's in the best interest of the city to develop this site," Wild said.

Amann indicated that Oakmonte officials will return to the council for final approval after they have addressed concerns cited by city leaders. It wasn't clear when that would be.

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PHOTOS BY TOM HAWLEY | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Marshall Middle School eighth-grader Caitlin Moreno receives an American Heritage Dictionary from Earle Chorbagan after winning the middle school spelling bee. Looking on are her parents, Gonzalo Moreno and Sharon Mink.

## Winter weather doesn't stop work on summer festival

BY DARRELL CLEM  
STAFF WRITER

Despite the February chill, plans are moving ahead for a Westland summer party that organizers hope will be a crowd-luring success.

Westland Summer Festival planners are ambitiously aiming to make this year's event the best yet, particularly since it will come as the city celebrates its 40th birthday.

"With this being the anniversary year, we'll try to make it the biggest festival ever," Parks and Recreation Director Robert Kosowski said.

Kosowski serves as a liaison between Mayor Sandra Cicirelli's administration and a festival committee, chaired by former Councilman Kenneth Mehl.

The festival will start on Thursday, June 29, and culminate with a Fourth of July fireworks display over Thomas H. Brown Central City Park.

The festival will include its typical fare - a parade, a beauty pageant, carnival rides, arts and crafts, food, and likely thousands of people mingling around the park and the government complex on Ford Road east of Newburgh.

But Mehl indicated that festival planners will likely unveil a couple of surprises to heighten interest in this year's festival.

"We're working on a couple of ideas," he said.

Mehl has issued a preliminary report on the festival, partly to alert those interested in getting

PLEASE SEE FESTIVAL, A6

## F-a-t-i-g-u-e-s to a-p-p-r-o-b-a-t-i-o-n

Students show mastery of words at annual spelling bee

BY SUE MASON  
STAFF WRITER

Protectorate, noncombatant, mercurial, brigadier.

Big words to say, big words to spell. Big words that were stumbling blocks along the way to crowning the 2006 Wayne-Westland Elementary Spelling Bee champions.

It was a contest between fifth-graders Laura Darnell of Madison Elementary in Westland and Abhishek Roy of Walker-Winter Elementary in Canton. It ended when Darnell correctly spelled approbation and won the elementary spelling bee and Caitlin Moreno, a student at Marshall Middle School in Westland, claimed the middle school title.

"I guess my dad has to give me 20 bucks now," said Darnell, holding the American Heritage Dictionary she received as the contest winner. "He said he'd give me \$10 for



Laura Darnell, a fifth-grader at Madison Elementary, spells her final word - approbation - correctly to win Wayne-Westland's 26th annual Earle Chorbagan Elementary Spelling Bee.

PLEASE SEE SPELLING, A3

## Collision shop targeted for break-in, vandalism

BY JULIE BROWN  
STAFF WRITER

A break-in with property destruction late Wednesday or early Thursday at A.C.E. Collision on Ford was reported to Westland police.

"Basically, they ransacked several cars and stole several stereos," said owner Todd Blevins, whose business is between Farmington and Venoy roads. "They were just malicious."

Blevins had about 40 vehicles parked outside the business, which has a privacy fence. Some 20 vehicles were damaged. Trunks were jimmied, and personal belongings taken.

"They didn't get into my building," he said. "I've got alarms on the building."

He said Westland police are good about patrolling the area, but his privacy fence obstructs the view and gives criminals privacy in which to work.

"This is the third time this has happened in the last two years," he said Thursday. He carries insurance, but with deductibles, it's often not worth filing a claim. Blevins estimates last week's crime will cost him \$5,000-\$10,000 out of pocket.

Those with information are asked to call the Westland Police Department at (734) 722-9600.

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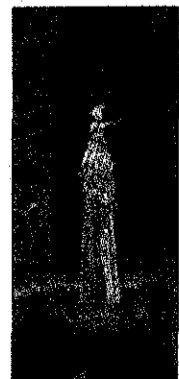
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BILL BRESLER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

## A landmark falls

Construction crews recently began tearing down Center Stage, a longtime fixture on Ford Road, just east of I-275. In its heyday, the venue hosted such acts as The Police, Rodney Dangerfield, The Allman Brothers Band and Grand Funk Railroad. A new 11,200-square-foot strip mall will be erected on the 4-acre site. Starbucks will occupy part of the building. Construction is expected to begin sometime this spring.

## Board race now 1-on-1

One of three candidates for Livonia Public Schools Board of Education has withdrawn from the race. Joe C. Joseph took advantage of Friday's final deadline to remove his name from the May 2 school election ballot. The election will fill one board vacancy, for the next four years. Joseph, a Livonia resident and member of the grassroots group Citizens for Livonia's Future, said he believed it was in the best interest of that group if he stepped down. "I got into this because I'm not happy with the change," he said, referring to the district's Legacy Initiative. The plan is a cost-savings effort which requires the closing of schools and restructuring of grades within buildings.

"I'm still doing my part," Joseph said. "We're going to go forward and accomplish what we want." The group is currently seeking a lawsuit against the school board for the way it handled and passed the Legacy plan. Citizens for Livonia's Future are also looking for support to unseat five trustees in a recall election. Joseph said he withdrew because he didn't want to "split the vote" for candidate Steve King, who is vying against incumbent Joanne Morgan, who has 10 years of experience on the board. "Right now, that would defeat our purpose," Joseph said.

By Stephanie A. Casola

# Parents still question, board still defends Legacy

BY STEPHANIE ANGELYN CASOLA  
STAFF WRITER

Just the thought of the changes set to take place under Livonia Public Schools' Legacy Initiative are enough to bring Cathy Klockner to tears. A Livonia parent, Klockner shared an emotional plea with the school board and community last week, one of several opponents who spoke. In reply, board members defended their decision. "I have had enough of the Legacy proposal to last me a lifetime," said Klockner. She asked whether the concerns raised by hundreds of community members regarding the closing and restructuring of district schools made any impact. "How can you continue to push the Legacy proposal down our throats?" Members of Citizens for Livonia's Future, a group opposing the plan, have stated that they felt left out of the

## LIVONIA SCHOOLS

decision-making process, and rushed by the plan, which was passed in December by the school board. In response, trustee Joanne Morgan said it is "all really about student achievement." She asked that the community work together. "It is sad to see there are so many people still struggling," Morgan said, of the Legacy plan. Klockner said hearing regular updates and receiving transition information regarding the plan is heart-breaking. She asked the board to reconsider its decision and work with the community to find a better plan. "Do not make us go through a lawsuit and recall," she said. "We love our schools. We love our community. We do not want this." Klockner said she received support from other parents

who shared her sentiments, in the form of phone calls and e-mail letters immediately following her address before the school board Monday. District officials recently received a letter, penned by Southfield Attorney Mayer Morganroth on behalf of the Citizens for Livonia's Future, asking that they "cease and desist all activities relating to the Legacy Initiative." Despite the request, board trustees approved the purchase of 20 new school buses and seven replacement buses, all to fulfill the extended transportation requirements of the Legacy plan. The district has established its own transition team, as have individual school buildings, to plan for the changes due next fall. New building principals were announced last week for the new configuration. And administrators are working on staff placements. Board members including Lynda Scheel and Kevin

Whitehead reiterated their support for the Legacy plan, and its attempt to save dwindling school dollars. "We have to maintain a focus on student learning," said Whitehead. "We take student learning very seriously. We may have differing opinions but I will never ridicule anyone for having an opinion different than mine." He was responding to comments coming from community members throughout Monday's meeting who vocally opposed Legacy-related issues. Scheel said she too stands by her decision to support the Legacy Initiative. She commended those community members who have joined transition team efforts. "Stay involved, and get to know what's going on in the schools," she said. Scheel said she believed people "were not paying attention" to the severe funding crisis that faces public education. scasola@hometownlife.com | (734) 953-2054

# Ex-trustee asks for community vote

BY STEPHANIE ANGELYN CASOLA  
STAFF WRITER

Former trustee Larry Naser calls it nothing less than a civil war. Naser, a Westland resident, spoke out Monday about the dissent and division that has emerged within the Livonia Public School community, since the passage of the Legacy Initiative. He urged the board members to reconsider, and put the issue to a vote. "I believe this is a viable, fair end to this," said Naser. "I believe this will bring people back into the fold." He suggested this contentious matter should be added onto the May ballot to allow district residents to vote whether they would prefer a K-6 elementary structure, or

a K-4 lower elementary structure for the coming year. Board president Dan Lessard agreed "the community needs to get back together." But he disagreed that a vote on this issue was a feasible possibility. "We live in a representative democracy," said Lessard. He said officials are elected to represent the people, to approach such issues in an expeditious manner. Not every issue can be placed up for a vote he said, "what would be next?" In addition, Lessard has concerns about the cost of an election. He estimated such a move would cost \$30,000 to \$40,000, and added "that's probably what it costs us to keep a parapero in a kindergarten room."

It would cut into education expenses, he said. Naser said he still supports, and has long supported, the closing of at least six schools. Lessard agreed that several years ago Naser's proposals to close schools were "basically on target." Though a newer member of the board, Cynthia Markarian has spent considerable time on the issue of school closings and finances. She said the recent divide in the community has caused distress for her as well. Markarian said: "I did not want to close schools year after year after year and the Legacy Initiative offers LPS flexibility to meet the ever-changing demographics of our community, to contract and expand as necessary." Because Naser has seen

staunch school supporters turn against the district, he said something must be done to remedy the situation. "We must keep the fabric of our community together." Livonia resident Eileen McDonnell, backed Naser's sentiments. "I understand our school district does need to cut back," said McDonnell. "I really think we need to compromise." Lessard said he's heard the concerns and he spends considerable time trying to come up with a way to bring the community together. Still, he believes the Legacy plan is what's best for kids, and he said staff members he's spoken with are excited about it, too. scasola@hometownlife.com | (734) 953-2054

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**ANNUAL SPELLING BEE: WHO COMPETED IN IT**

Receiving certificates for participating in the spelling bees were:

- Edison Elementary - Jonathan Schiacht, winner, and Anthony Claxon, runner-up.
- Elliott Elementary - Marcus Allen Jr., Winner, and Shalonda Hill, runner-up.
- P.D. Graham Elementary - Jamison Vincent, winner, and Nicholas Schurig, runner-up.
- Hamilton Elementary - Drew Pennington, winner, and Abigail Sneddon, runner-up.
- Hicks Elementary - Shakim Harris, winner, and Rebecca Garza, runner-up.
- Hoover Elementary - Sam Herber, winner, Ty Weatherwax, runner-up.
- Jefferson-Barns Elementary - Savannah Walker, winner, and Charles Oatten II, runner-up.
- Kettering Elementary - Taylor Grondy, winner, and Madyzin Gehr, runner-up.
- Lincoln Elementary - Justin Spears, winner, and Jaeda Ewings, runner-up.
- Madison Elementary - Laura Darnell, winner, and Jalyn Bulls, runner-up.
- Patchin Elementary - Jazelle Straka-Braxton, winner, and Elise Lefebvre, runner-up.
- Roosevelt-McGrath Elementary - Aric Voll, winner, and Mary Porta, runner-up.
- Schweitzer Elementary - Hayden Smith, winner, and Chelsea Roach, runner-up.
- Taft-Galloway Elementary - James Walkup, winner, and Nicholas Kiesznowski, runner-up.
- Vandenberg Elementary - Sage Parker, winner, and Saleaha Davis, runner-up.
- Walker-Winter Elementary - Abhishek Roy, winner, and Kevin McFadden, runner-up.
- Wildwood Elementary - Chase Burford, winner, and Jared Peterson, runner-up.
- Adams Middle School - David Schutler, winner, and David Petosky, runner-up, sixth-grade; Chelsea Morneau, winner, and Brandon Dombrowski, runner-up, seventh-grade; Stephen McNamara, winner and Brandie Jones, runner-up, for eighth-grade.
- Franklin Middle School - Derrick Lipke, winner, and Kaylie Knizewski and Trevor Lossos, runners-up, sixth-grade; William Cain, winner, and Jordyn Karpinski, runner-up, seventh-grade; and Jacob Hurst, winner, and Alaina Butner, runner-up, eighth-grade.
- Marshall Middle School - Te Lur Kykendall, winner, and Andrew Roberts, sixth-grade; Ernestine Carlos, winner, and Christopher Wimer, runner-up, seventh-grade; and Caitlin Moreno, winner, and Nicole Konwinski, runner-up, eighth-grade.
- Stevenson Middle School - Mitchell Leinbach, winner, and Matt Snyder, runner-up, sixth-grade; Shane Anderson, winner, and Nick Montagano, runner-up, seventh-grade; and Andrew Janos, winner, and Chelsea Bechtel, runner-up, eighth-grade.

**SPELLING**

FROM PAGE A1

second place, \$5 for third place and \$20 for first place."

"It was a nail biter for me," said her mother Marlene.

This was the 26th year the district has sponsored the Earle Chorbagian spelling bee. It was the brainchild of Chorbagian, at the time an assistant principal at Adams, and the school's media specialist, Edrhe Truesdell Smith, who proposed it after a nationwide spelling bee was discontinued in the 1970s.

Up until last year, youngsters in the fifth-eighth grades competed in the districtwide contest. Now there is a spelling bee for fifth-graders and one for sixth-, seventh- and eighth-graders.

Twelve sixth-, seventh- and eighth-graders from Adams, Marshall, Franklin and Stevenson middle schools competed in the contest.

Chorbagian, who has been retired from the school district for more than 20 years, was at Adams Middle School Thursday to present the awards to Darnell and Moreno.

**FINDING THE WINNER**

In the elementary competition, it took just seven rounds to get to the final three - Darnell and Roy, who were their respective school champions, and Chelsea Roach who, as runner-up, filled in for an ailing Hayden Smith, the Schweitzer Elementary spelling champion.

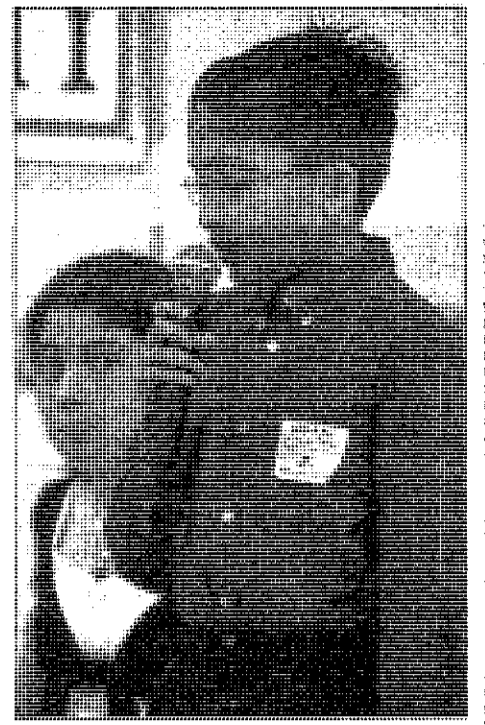
By the 11th round, just Darnell and Roy were left to spell word after word, round after round until he misspelled metabolize and she followed the correct spelling of billiards with approbation.

It looked as if Roy had the contest wrapped up when he broke into a grin on hearing his word fatigues in the 13th round, but a missing letter I kept Darnell's hopes of winning alive.

Both Darnell and her mother credit her interest in reading



Robin Roach (right) heaves a sigh or relief as her daughter Chelsea, a fifth-grader at Schweitzer Elementary, spelled her word correctly. Beside her is Schweitzer Principal Diane Nichols.



Winter-Walker fifth-grader Abhishek Roy attempts to spell a word as Laura Darnell, fifth-grader at Madison Elementary, watches.



Sheila Parker hugs her daughter Sage, a fifth-grader at Vandenberg Elementary, after she missed her word in the annual spelling bee.

for her spelling abilities. She only spent a few days a week preparing for the spelling bee. And winning the competition makes up for a less-than-perfect grade in spelling.

"She got a B, it was her first one ever," said her mother. "She always gets As."

Principal Sue Keily had to check with fifth-grade teachers Rene Love and Madeline Sommerman before proclaim-

ing Darnell as the first Madison student to ever win the spelling bee. To celebrate, she plans on taking Darnell out to eat.

"We're going to Red Robin," she said. "This is so exciting."

**FAMILIAR PLACE**

Winning a spelling bee is nothing new to Moreno. She was a fifth-grade winner while at Hamilton Elementary. She cemented her win by

correctly spelling recitalist and then the word fatigues, besting Jacob Hurst, an eighth-grader at Franklin Middle School.

"This very cool, very exciting," said Moreno who wasn't that keen on winning because of all the attention it would attract.

"She's very humble," said her mother Sharon Mink. "I told her to try and I'd buy her a CD, but I know we'll walk into the store and she'll say, 'How about a book?'"

Moreno and Hurst went head-to-head for six rounds, four of which neither one missed a word, but the door to victory opened for Moreno in the 13th round when Jacob misspelled illegible.

Like Darnell, Moreno is an avid reader and actually devoted her spare time to poring over the words in the book, *The Lightning Thief*, rather than in a dictionary.

She enjoys reading the works of Edgar Allen Poe, and even borrowed a book by the author from her teacher when she was in the sixth grade.

"On her Christmas list, the first thing she wrote was five or six book titles," Mink said.

Moreno admits that initially she was nervous, but by the fifth round she settled down. By that time, there were only four students left in the competition.

Moreno was calm and collected, but mom was the nervous wreck

"I'm so excited now, but my stomach was in knots and my hands were tight when she was spelling," said Mink.

And her father, Gonzalo Moreno, had his own way of helping his daughter spell.

"I tried to think the words to her telepathically," he said. Chorbagian was there to present the dictionaries and traveling plaques to the two winners and took time to praise the school district as well as the students.

"I want to congratulate the district for continuing a program that promotes language arts skills," he said. "Nice way to go Wayne-Westland."

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## Michigan seen as bellwether for '08 presidential contest

A carpetbagging, conservative columnist has pushed his snooty nose into the Michigan gubernatorial race. Thursday, *Washington Post* columnist George Will wrote a puff piece in praise of Dick DeVos, "a gentlemanly businessman from Grand Rapids," the sure-bet Republican candidate for governor.

Will condescends to praise Democrat incumbent Jennifer Granholm with a sneering quote from DeVos, "She's a really nice person." He might have added "and good-looking, too." But while Will acknowledges the decline in Michigan's base auto industry, he puts the burden of Michigan's economic woes on Granholm's "recognizably liberal recovery plan."

Will takes his shot at the Single Business Tax without offering an alternate revenue stream.

Will sees Michigan as a bellwether for the 2008 presidential election, with Republicans the stalwarts for free trade and Democrats as backsliding economic protectionists. In his effort to make the tax-slashing DeVos warm and fuzzy, Will

concludes his column by saying that Michigan residents are leaving the state at the highest rate since the early '80s. Will writes, "DeVos tells audiences, 'I don't want to have to get on a plane to visit my grandchildren.' He wants them to have to go to Lansing to visit grandpa." Aw!

Will never mentions that Granholm has had to deal with a Republican Legislature with only two goals — cut taxes and make Granholm look bad at every opportunity. Will also doesn't mention that Granholm was left with a huge deficit by her predecessor, Republican Gov. John Engler.

At a recent meeting of the Suburban Republican Women's Club in Livonia, a DeVos flack used the "S" word to describe Granholm's programs. He said it was time to get rid of these "socialist" programs and Dick DeVos was just the person to do it. Of course, no self-respecting socialist party would want Jennifer Granholm as a member and that sort of cheap rhetoric might sound sweet to the choir, but is unproductive in any serious discussion of the state's problems.

Many Democrats would argue that Granholm has been too conservative, too willing to work with the Republican Legislature and not forceful enough at using the bully pulpit to take her vision for the state to the people.

Thursday, Granholm presented her 2007 budget with shocking suggestions that the state needs to close tax loopholes and meet its

**The carpetbagging columnist Will suggests that Michigan's gubernatorial contest might be a civil debate over economic differences that will push aside the more viscerally divisive social issues because she's admittedly 'nice' and he's a 'gentleman.'**

obligations to public schools and to the state's most vulnerable residents.

On Wednesday, Oakland County Executive L. Brooks Patterson got on the long train in opposition to the Single Business Tax by proposing a ballot initiative to repeal the SBT. He has the support of the current short-term Speaker of the House Craig DeRoche. The initiative would not include an alternative revenue source. Patterson and DeRoche would argue that just eliminating the SBT will create a plethora of businesses queuing up to make their home in Michigan, which would bring revenue to the state without raising taxes.

Granholm has also proposed eliminating the detested SBT over time, but not without some compensating revenue source for an already strained state government with legitimate expenses, especially in light of a federal government that has pushed more programs down to the state level.

The carpetbagging columnist Will suggests that Michigan's gubernatorial contest might be a civil debate over economic differences that will push aside the more viscerally divisive social issues because she's admittedly "nice" and he's a "gentleman."

For that to happen, it would serve Grandpa DeVos better to tell his associates to steer clear of words like socialist.

But there is a good debate here on honest differences about how to reignite Michigan's economy (without forgetting, of course, that DeVos and Granholm do have strong differences on social issues). Granholm sees the state as a strategic player in economic development. DeVos sees economic development as essentially a private matter that will benefit the state by providing jobs and tax revenue without increasing the tax rate. In fact, the most important thing the state can do is reduce the tax burden on businesses. Both believe that diversifying Michigan's economic base is essential.

We want to hear more.

**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) 591-7279.

## Not all superheroes wear capes, masks — or have special powers

School board campaigns are about to begin.

Fire up the Bat Signal. I'm only half kidding. More and more, as I look back over the various school boards I've covered and the various issues they've faced, it seems the men and women who serve could all use a set of superhero skills.

Certainly this year's school boards have their work cut out for them in trying to grapple with the cost of operations in an economy in which state aid is stifled. That is a tall order even for Superman himself.

But whatever issues are at hand, school board members need a thick skin — kind of like the Hulk's, but without his anger. They can't be too sensitive to the vilification that comes when they try to eliminate or consolidate programs or, worse yet, try to close or consolidate schools. Just ask the folks in Livonia about that last one.

They also need a cool, analytical mind, kind of like Batman, in pouring over budget details, trying to determine which programs and services are truly essential and which aren't.

Wonder Woman's truth-inducing golden lariat would be helpful, too, especially in dealing with student discipline hearings. It shouldn't come as a surprise that teenagers don't always tell the truth, even if confronted with the facts.

Having super speed, like The Flash, would make it easy to get around to all the district's plays, sporting events and other after school activities.

Endless stamina and 24/7 commitment, like Spider-Man's, would also come in handy for the long, and many, meetings board members attend, not to mention the countless after-hours phone calls they receive.

**More seriously, school board members must also come to grips with the fact that all their power and good intentions can't solve such pressing special issues as drug abuse, child abuse, racial prejudice and poverty, as the minor heroes Green Lantern and Green Arrow learned in a series of still-controversial comics from the 1970s.**

More seriously, school board members must also come to grips with the fact that all their power and good intentions can't solve such pressing special issues as drug abuse, child abuse, racial prejudice and poverty, as the minor heroes Green Lantern and Green Arrow learned in a series of still-controversial comics from the 1970s.

Unlike comic book characters, effective school board members can't have a secret identity, they must be open and available to the public.

It's a lot to expect from anyone. Nor should we expect all of it from any of the men and women who submitted their names by Tuesday's filing deadline.

After all, these won't people who can't outrun a speeding bullet, stop locomotives in their tracks or leap over tall buildings — or even portable classrooms.

But we can expect that they will be people who will serve with courage and community spirit without receiving a dime for their services.

Kind of like a superhero.

**Wayne Peal** is editor of the *Southfield Eccentric*. You can write him at 805 E. Maple, Birmingham, MI 48009, send him an e-mail at wpeal@hometownlife.net or send him a fax at (248) 644-1314.



Hugh Gallagher



Wayne Peal

Cheer for the hometown, read today's SPORTS section





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PHOTOS BY TOM HAWLEY | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Johnson Elementary fourth-grader Tanisha Miti holds up the fruit and vegetable sculpture she assembled as part of the Healthy Me program Monday afternoon.

# Johnson students focus on healthy habits

BY STEPHANIE ANGELYN CASOLA  
STAFF WRITER

Johnson Elementary students learned to play with their food this week — as part of the school's Healthy Me program.

The schoolwide project kicked off Monday as special teachers incorporated health and nutrition tips with their usual activities.

Students created edible food sculptures out of fruits and vegetables in art class, sang songs about healthy foods in music, and relay-raced from one end of the gymnasium to the other to create a healthy food plate.

And that was just the beginning of a week devoted to healthy living. The school also hosted raffles and trivia competitions related to the theme "Healthy Me."

Lunice Clay, elementary student assistance program provider, said this was the first year of the program.

She worked with children to discuss everything from nutrition to the importance of sleep and playtime. Students were exposed to new fruits and vegetables each day — with a healthy snack.

Because the specials classes hosted Healthy Me activities, student's daily schedules were not disrupted, said Clay. She

said she hopes the students will learn that healthy eating and exercise is "a positive thing," and that they might be more willing to try new foods.

"I think the more children are immersed in an idea, the more they truly pick up," Clay said.

Johnson staff members worked with employees at St. Mary Mercy Hospital and Madonna University in Livonia, as part of their dedication to the Michigan Surgeon General's Step Up to Health initiative. The Johnson Elementary School Health Team developed the Healthy Me activities to coincide with an ongoing effort to

promote healthful choices in nutrition and exercise.

Cheryl Grougan, a nurse and community outreach health educator at St. Mary Mercy Hospital, was on hand Monday to assist with the activities. "As you can see, the kids are enjoying themselves," she said.

She said it's also important for Madonna University students to see how schools, hospitals and universities can interact "to improve the welfare of the community."

But for the students, it all came down to taste. Ashley Sutton, a fourth-grader, said she'd never eaten craisins before she tried them during



Christine Lakatos, Johnson Elementary art teacher, shows examples of fruit and vegetable sculptures before students attempt to make them.

art class — while making an edible sculpture. "I think it's good for kids because it's a chance to do fun stuff but to stay healthy," she said of the program.

Her classmates Elaine Carlsen and Juhi Deshmukh agreed they'd never done activities in school which were like the Healthy Me-inspired class assignments they were given on Monday.

"You shouldn't just have junk, and you should eat

healthy things," said Alyssa Keeling, also a fourth grade student. "You should learn to eat stuff, even if you don't like it."

The event was funded and supported by Johnson's PTA. Donations of fruits and vegetables were provided by Westborn Market in Livonia. Costco in Livonia also contributed to the project.

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# Benefit at Applebee's aids domestic violence victims

BY JULIE BROWN  
STAFF WRITER

Applebee's Neighborhood Grill & Bar in Westland will have a Dine To Donate fundraiser every Tuesday in February for the nonprofit Above Water.

Above Water assists victims of domestic violence, said executive director and founder Kim M. Holt-Mays of Westland. This Tuesday, Feb. 14, Detroit jazz band Swinging Marvin with Brooke Ratliff on vocals will perform at Applebee's, 36475 Warren in Westland.

"That's going to be really great," Holt-Mays said of the vocalist. "She's a great person." The band will play 6-8 p.m.

Fund-raising hours at the restaurant are 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. The benefit will continue each Tuesday in February at the Westland restaurant, Holt-

Mays said, then move in March to the Applebee's on Ford Road in Canton.

She founded the nonprofit, then in Redford, in 1999. It's now based at Merriman and Plymouth roads in Livonia and can be reached at (734) 716-9473. She refers victims to such shelters as First Step and others.

Above Water has a resource center offering support groups and help with jobs. Medical help is another area, and proceeds from the Applebee's fund raising will go to that. She has a group of health care professionals she plans to work with to meet health needs of domestic violence victims.

Holt-Mays approached Shelly Smith, general manager of the Westland Applebee's, about fund raising there. She's found Applebee's to be helpful and appreciates that.

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