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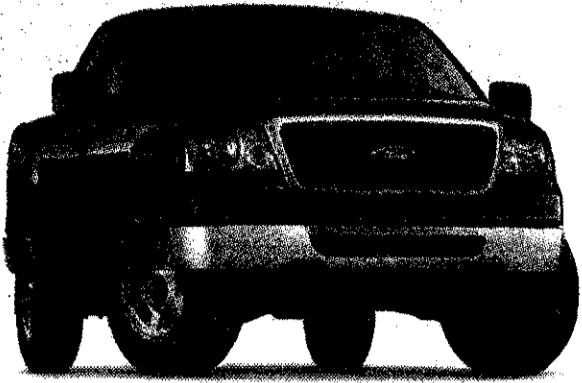




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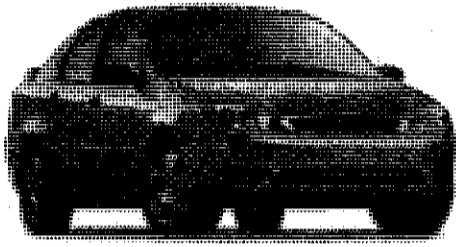
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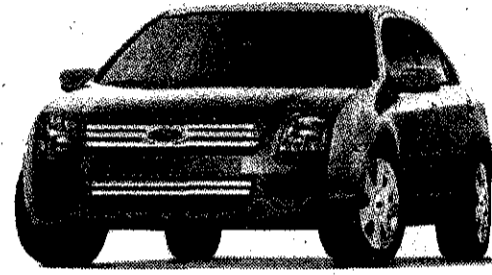
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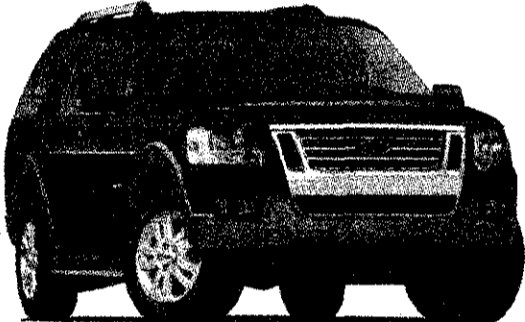
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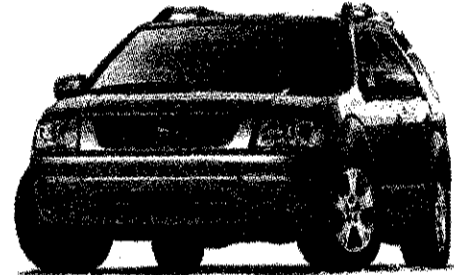
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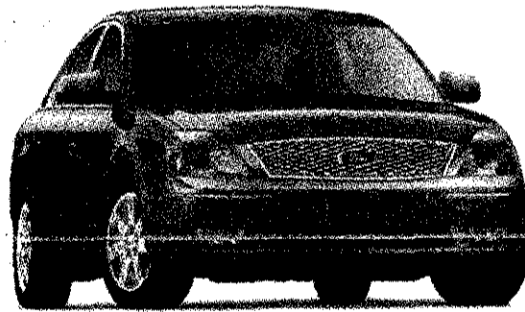
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# Area educators visit China on bridge-building mission

Knowledge is power! Most of us have heard this statement sometime in our life. Yet, it could not be more true as we enter the 21st-century "knowledge" economy where technology has knocked down walls and political boundaries like no other time in human history.

It was this quest for knowledge that led 18 metro-area educators and business officials to accept an invitation to visit China from Hanban, the executive body of the Chinese language Council International, a non-governmental and non-profit organization affiliated with the National Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China.

The goal of Hanban is "making the Chinese language and culture teaching available to the world to contribute to the formation of a world of cultural diversity and harmony."

Our delegation's goal is to continue to find ways to build bridges with Chinese educators and to secure English-speaking Chinese teachers who will come to Michigan to teach Chinese language, history and culture to our students to help prepare them for the transformational, disruptive, technological-driven global economy they will face.

As educators and business leaders, the participants of this education delegation to China believe that if Michigan wants to survive and thrive in the flattened world economy it is critical to find ways to build bridges and not dig moats with our Chinese colleagues. It was toward this end that we embarked last month on a 10-day, three-city tour of China (Beijing, Tianjin, and Xian) as the guests of the Office of Chinese Language Council International ([www.english.hanban.edu.cn](http://www.english.hanban.edu.cn)).

This was my ninth trip to China since 1989. A great elementary teacher opened my eyes to China many years ago and I have been fascinated ever since. I co-lead this delegation along with Lily Yen, COO of the Center for Management Training and Development and her husband Dr. Louis Yen. This is our second delegation in the past two years and we will continue to seek to build language, cultural and economic bridges between China and the state of Michigan.

**AREA DELEGATION**

Our delegation consisted of two former state board of education members, two local school board members, an Intermediate school board member, an Oakland County Circuit Court judge, principals from public and private schools, a superintendent, two



Tom Watkins

assistant superintendents and a representative from the Detroit Regional Chamber of Commerce.

If you concur with the statement that "knowledge is power," ask yourself how much you know about China? Did you know that China is home to 1.3 billion people, with more than 100 cities that have a population of more than 1 million people?

I wrote this while sitting in my hotel room in Beijing, the capital of the People's Republic of China, which is a city with more than 12 million people. To put that number in perspective, there are 10 million people living in the entire state of Michigan. Imagine everyone in Michigan jammed into Wayne County, plus 2 million people, and you can perhaps begin to comprehend the sheer magnitude of the humanity I could see as dawn broke in this capital city. There is so much building going on in China that the joke is that the nation's bird is the "building crane!"

Did you know that more people know or are studying English in China than there are people in the United States? Did you know that more than 300 million people, the same number of U.S. citizens, have risen from poverty in China during the last quarter of a century?

Mandarin Chinese is the most widely spoken language in the world and yet it is not offered as a language in most schools across this county. The national governments both here and in China are attempting to catch up with the reality that China has awakened and will be a superpower economically and in other ways in the 21st century.

**TEACHING MANDARIN**

The Novi school district has broken out of the pack and taken the lead in offering Mandarin Chinese at the high school level this year. John Lawrence, principal of Novi High School, said, "the world is shrinking, and it is critical that we prepare our children and students to thrive in a global economy. Knowing the Chinese culture and language is another tool that will better prepare our kids to compete in the 21st century knowledge economy."



A delegation of educators from the United States met with Chinese educators and visited Chinese schools.

Peter Dion, superintendent of Novi School District added, "currently 23 percent of our school population is Asian (Chinese, Korean, Japanese and Indian). We are proud that the Novi School board is forward-thinking and always striving to provide a world-class education to our children. Offering Mandarin Chinese is just another example of our progressive school district."

Mary Blackmon, president of the Wayne Regional Educational Service Agency

that provides educational support services to the 34 school districts in Wayne County said: "Clearly China is on the rise economically. Educationally it is our responsibility as leaders to prepare our students to be competitive in an ever-changing world."

"Meeting and hearing Chinese students from kindergarten to high school speak English was astonishing and demonstrates that we have our work to do to make sure our students are prepared to pro-

per," Blackmon said.

Northville Public Schools sent two board members — Karen Paciorek and Marilyn Price — on the trip. Both see tremendous potential in educational exchanges with China.

"Wow would be an understatement!" Paciorek said. "I was impressed by the quality of the preschool and kindergarten programs I saw and it is amazing to see such young

PLEASE SEE CHINA, A20

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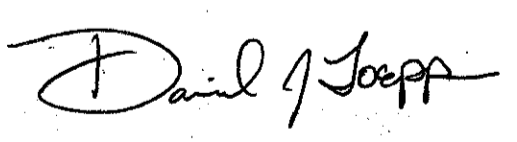
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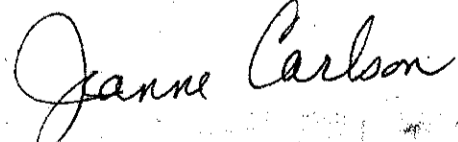
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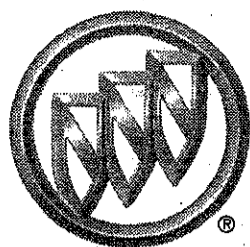
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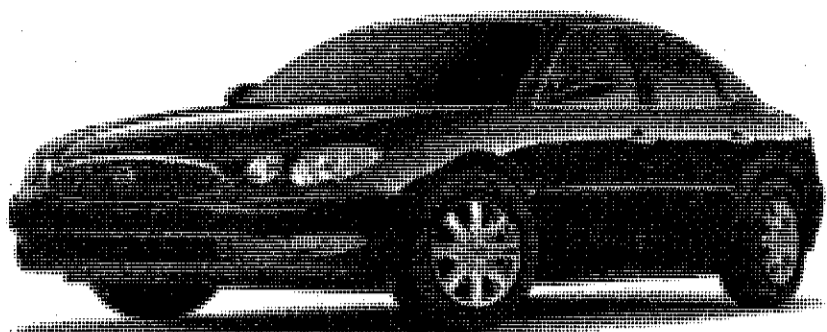


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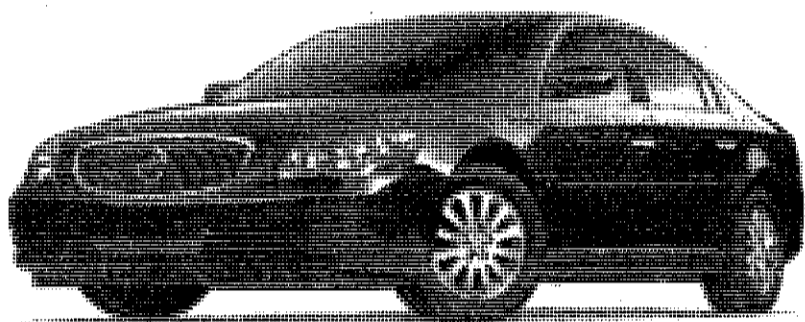
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## DONATIONS NEEDED

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■ The Salvation Army, eastern Michigan division, aided 480,000 people in the tri-county area through its annual holiday kettle program last year. Proceeds bought more than two million meals for the needy, as well as Christmas gifts for children, food baskets, personal care items and year-round aid. The Salvation Army hopes to raise \$7 million through kettles this year. Visit [www.salvationarmyemich.org](http://www.salvationarmyemich.org) to find out about volunteering as a bell ringer or to participate in the mini-kettle program, which allows individuals to collect donations at home or work, private parties and other gatherings. Other ways to donate:

Donate a child's coat or cash to the Salvation Army's Coats for Kids at the Detroit Lions-Miami Dolphins game at Ford Field on Thanksgiving Day. Or call (866) 985-COAT. Buy a toy for the Salvation Army's annual holiday toy shop. Call the eastern Michigan division in Southfield at (248) 443-5500 to find a corps near you. Donate used goods to a Salvation Army store. For pickup and store information, call (313) 965-7760. Donate money online or send a check to the

Salvation Army, Eastern Michigan Division, 16130 Northland Drive, Southfield, MI 48075.

■ Farmington Area Goodfellows helps people year-round, but will distribute toys and food for the holidays on Dec. 16. To donate cash or items, call the Goodfellows office at (248) 871-2848 before Nov. 27 and (248) 473-1360 afterward. Or visit [www.farmingtonareagoodfellows.org](http://www.farmingtonareagoodfellows.org).

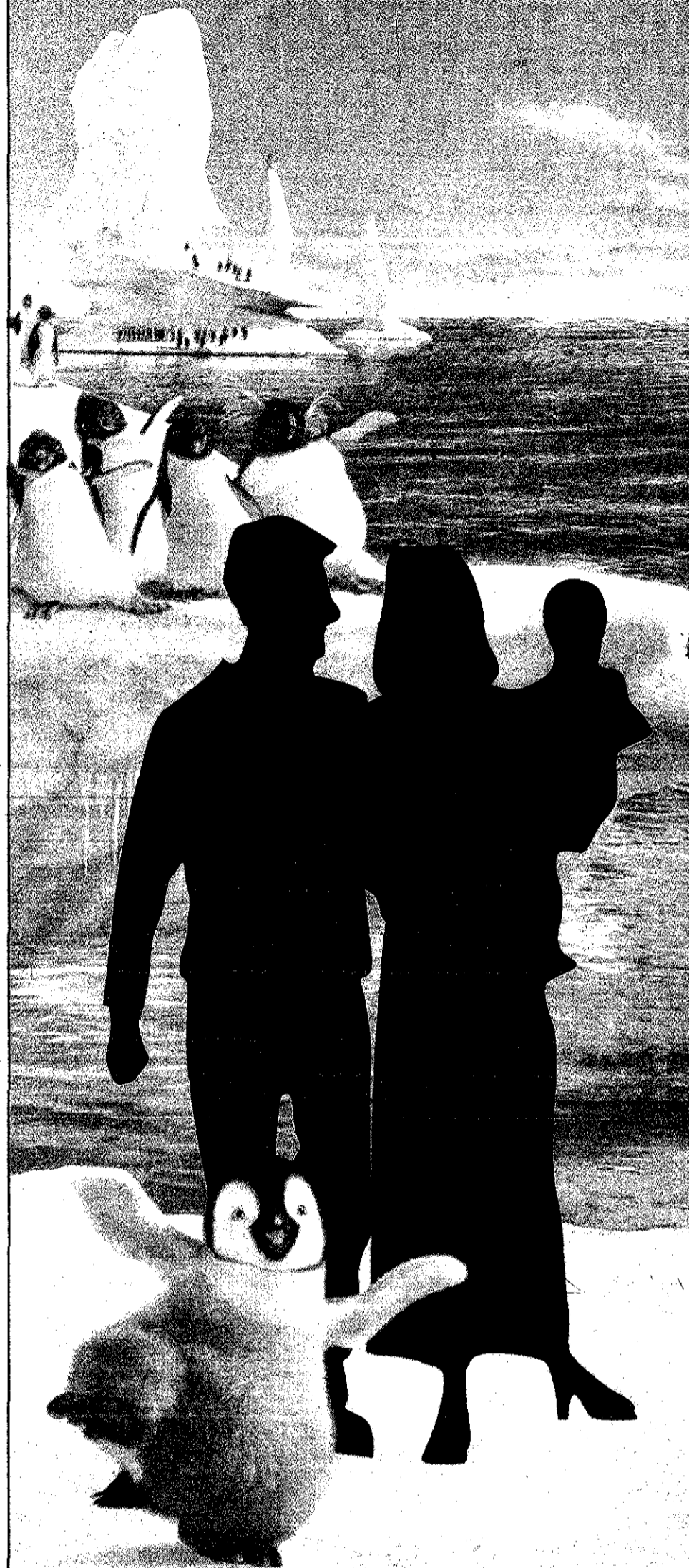
■ COTS, (Coalition on Temporary Shelter) is headquartered at 26 Peterboro, Detroit, but runs housing programs at various locations, offering emergency shelter, transitional housing and permanent, supportive housing. Check its Web site at [www.COTSdetroit.org](http://www.COTSdetroit.org) for an updated list of needs, including linens, clothing, children's items, gift certificates and toiletries. Or call Robyn Smith at (313) 831-3777.

■ Redford Interfaith Relief, located in Pearson Education Center, 19990 Beech Daly, serves senior citizens, the disabled, the working poor and families in a crisis, within the Redford area. The organization needs cash, personal care items, canned goods and volunteers. Call (313) 387-9802 or visit on the Web at [www.redfordinterfaithrelief.org](http://www.redfordinterfaithrelief.org).

■ Capuchin Soup Kitchen has two dining rooms in Detroit, maintains a pantry, clothing and household distribution center, offers substance abuse treatment as well as children's programs. Send donations to the Capuchin Soup Kitchen, 1820 Mt. Elliott, Detroit, MI 48207. Donate on the Web at [www.cskdetroit.org](http://www.cskdetroit.org) or call the development office at (313) 579-2100, Ext. 1875.

■ The THAW fund gives emergency energy assistance to low-income families, individuals and senior citizens throughout Michigan who are in danger of losing heat or electricity. Donation appeals are enclosed with some gas and electric bills. Or send a check to THAW at 1212 Griswold, 10th floor, Detroit, MI 48226. Or contribute by phone at (800) 866-THAW or online at [www.thawfund.org](http://www.thawfund.org).

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# CHINA

FROM PAGE A13

children speak both English and Chinese. Clearly the Chinese value education and see the connection between a solid education and a strong economic future."

Price, vice president of the Northville Board of Education, added, "We can be proud of the quality of the education we offer, but the Chinese are obviously driven to learn and improve. As educators, we need to understand that our children will be competing against the children of the world, and staying even is falling behind."

## EYE-OPENING TRIP

Our days began at 7 a.m. and often ended the day with lavish banquets with our Chinese hosts. The food was good, different (when is the last time you ate jellyfish, sea urchin or chicken feet?), and plentiful.

The trip also included time for shopping and touring. We took in the awe-inspiring Great Wall of China, Tiananmen Square, Forbidden City, a pagoda, the Temple of Heaven and the Terra Cotta Warriors, not to mention the eye-popping education you can take in with a walk around the block or simply using a Chinese squat toilet.

Ask yourself why, if China has the fastest-growing economy and is likely to surpass the U.S. as the largest economy in the world over the next two decades, its language, culture, history and language are not taught in more of our schools today?

The Chinese government attaches great importance to the promotion of Chinese language throughout the world. In order to enhance mutual understanding and friendship between the Chinese people and peoples of the world, the Chinese government has embarked on "efforts to promote economic and trade cooperation as well as scientific, technological and cultural exchanges between the Chinese and other countries."

China's achievements since Deng Xiaoping have opened

the country to the world and are remarkable and universally acknowledged, particularly when put in a historical perspective. Deng Xiaoping is credited with providing the political support to help remake China into the giant it is today.

Yet, while Deng set the stage, it is through the hard work and focus of the Chinese people and academic, professional, economic, cultural and scientific exchanges that China has flourished. Some Americans still harbor ill feelings toward the "communist" government that brought the horrors of the Cultural Revolution and massacre in Tiananmen Square in 1989. Yet it is my firm belief that it is through the open exchange of ideas and interaction between Chinese and western people at multiple levels that freedom and democracy will find fertile ground to flourish.

With this exchange group, we have planted seeds that will take root in both Chinese and Michigan soil that will provide a bounty of knowledge to benefit our children for centuries to come.

China is a giant that has awakened. Its educational and economic systems are on steroids and they are moving aggressively to catch up with the West. Their goal is not simply to be the cheap factory for the world, but to be the innovators, creators and entrepreneurs of the world. They know that their future is inextricably tied to the quality of the educational system.

"We all know what a tremendous impact China's manufacturing sector is having on our economy. This was a great opportunity to get a firsthand look at their education system which will ultimately have an even greater impact on the American and world economy," said Gregory Handel Sr., director of Workforce Development for the Detroit Regional Chamber of Commerce.

## KNOWLEDGE COMPETITION

Michigan will never be able to compete with China on cheap labor. However, we can and should compete with

China by making our children the best-educated students in the world. Michigan will succeed when we are exporting knowledge, creativity and innovation on the world stage. We cannot do that by thinking our past success is a predictor of future success. It is only through hard work, innovation and seeking new knowledge that we can truly prepare our children for the future.

Former state school board member and current Oakland County Circuit Court Judge Michael David Warren Jr. sums it up best when he says: "China is clearly undergoing a fundamental economic and related cultural transformation. They undoubtedly are attempting to become a new superpower."

"Unlike the other threats we currently face, we can confront this one best by engagement and building bridges. They appear to be anxious to learn from and about Americans, and to become cooperative partners. By such engagement, we can foster in China the way of life we cherish here — freedom, representative democracy, and justice. The opposite approach — building walls — will only exacerbate our differences and degrade our influence."

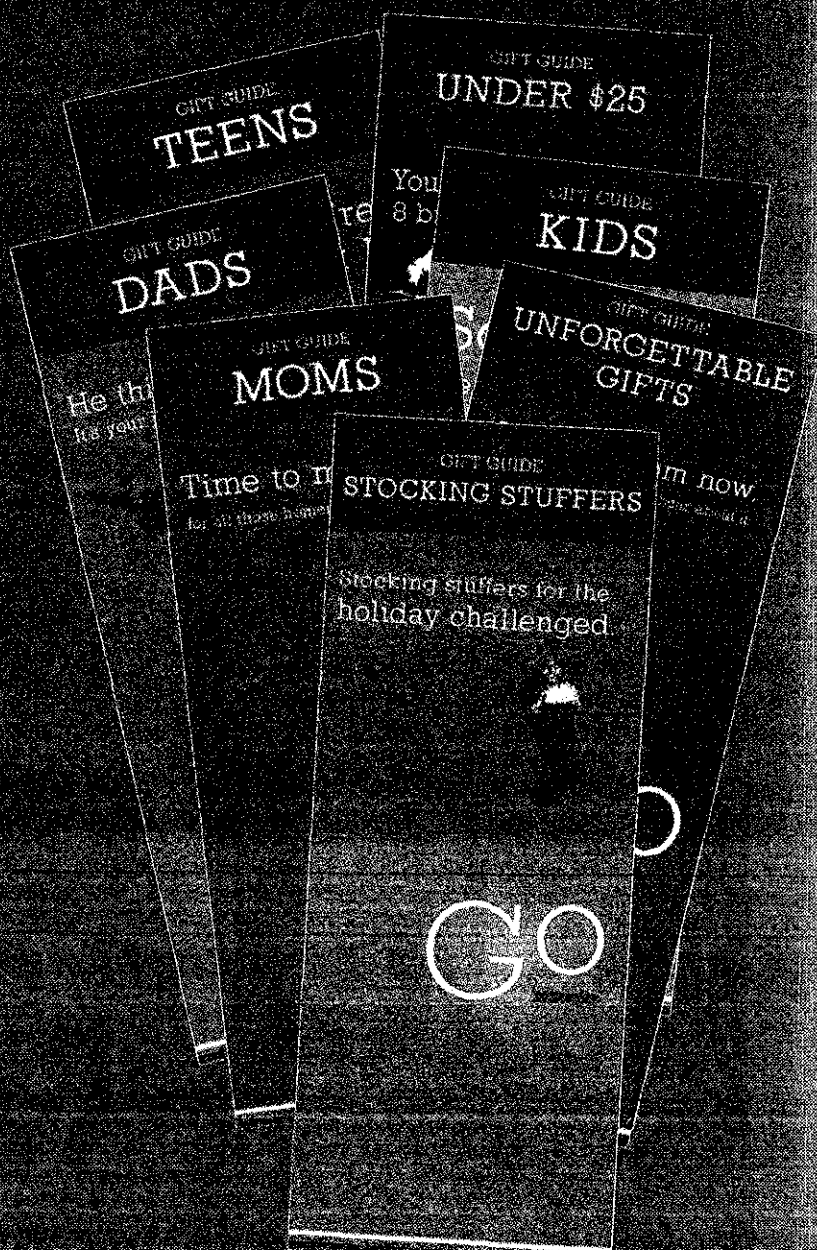
There are naysayers that fear the rise of China. I believe it is important that we engage China and the rest of Asia on an economic, cultural, scientific and educational level in ways that will benefit Michigan and America.

*The person who says it cannot be done should not interrupt the persons doing it.*  
— Chinese proverb

Go online at [www.hometownlife.com](http://www.hometownlife.com) to read Watkins' full report. Look for the second installment of the China experience next week on these same pages and online.

Tom Watkins is a business and education consultant and the former state superintendent of schools. Read his internationally recognized report: (now translated into Chinese) The New Education (R)evolution at [www.nacol.org](http://www.nacol.org).

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