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Observer

SUNDAY
December 24, 2006

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Need grows in midst of affluence

BY BRAD KADRICH
STAFF WRITER

Many neighborhoods in western Wayne County have a reputation for being affluent, well-off communities where things like hopelessness, homelessness and need are abstract concepts, ills that afflict "other" places.

Bill Moritz knows better. Moritz, social services director for the Plymouth Salvation Army, which serves Plymouth, Canton, Northville and Belleville, knows the commu-

nity has its share of needy people, because he's one of the ones on the front-lines trying to help them.

"When you look around, (the need) surprises you a little," Moritz said. "A lot of the people that need help had a spouse making a good income last year who got laid off, and now they're working just to pay their mortgage."

Moritz points to an easy target - the economy - as the cause for the increase in need. The Plymouth-Canton area is replete with auto-related com-

panies, many of whom have had to cut the number of workers.

It's a recipe for need, according to Moritz.

LAYOFFS COMMON

"Layoffs have been terrible," he said. "Half of these are auto-related. The auto industry struggles, and it trickles down."

The need has shown up largely in the Plymouth Salvation Army's Adopt A Family and toy shop programs. More than 180 families were adopted, compared to 128 last year.

A year ago, 80 families took advantage of the Toy Shop program, which allows those in need to come in and pick out toys for their children for Christmas. This year, that number more than doubled to some 170.

While it bothers parents to have to get help providing for their children, the Salvation Army programs are there for that express purpose.

"They hate it; I can see it on their faces," Moritz said of par-

PLEASE SEE IN NEED, A8



BILL BRESLER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Morgan Bartos and Lisa Hursin decide it's time to price the items in their cart. The kids were part of a group buying toys to donate to the Plymouth Salvation Army.



PHOTOS BY TOM HAWLEY | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

There's no mistaking who it is when you see the fur-trimmed red hat and suit. It's Santa Claus, pure and simple.

Santa Claus tells all

Jolly old elf shares secrets of his trade

BY SUE MASON
STAFF WRITER

Let's face it. He is the most sought after person in the world. An icon who has been immortalized in prose and poetry, splashed across the silver screen and had way too many songs written about him.

He doesn't mind the paparazzi who take photographs of him wherever he goes. He takes no offense to having a poet refer to his physique as a bowl full of jelly or call him a Jolly Old Elf.

He gives actor Tim Allen two thumbs up for his portrayal of him, but rejects Billy Bob Thornton's work as "outrageous."

That may be the harshest word heard from the man who captures the hearts of young and old alike a Christmas time. There's no room for naughty in Santa Claus's vocabulary.

That's good news for those kids who are wondering if they'll find a lump of coal under the tree on Christmas morning.

"Actually, there's no naughty kids, all children are good as far as I'm concerned," said Santa. "They all receive presents."

Happily ensconced in a sleigh at Westland Shopping Center last week, Santa took time to talk about his busy



PLEASE SEE SANTA, A8 Jack Kujawski, 4, of Canton has a request - and a smile - for Santa.

A not so merry Christmas

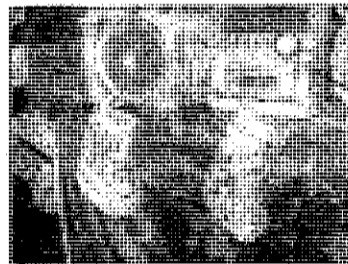
Military families have a difficult time finding joy

BY KURT KUBAN
STAFF WRITER

Although Kay Caccamo will visit with family members this Christmas weekend, she won't be exchanging any gifts. She is putting that off a few months, postponing it until her husband, a U.S. Marine, returns home from his current tour fighting in Iraq.

She is married to Todd Caccamo, the Canton Township trustee who re-enlisted in the Marines earlier this year to help America's cause in Iraq. It will be the couple's first Christmas away from each other after four years of marriage. Once he returns home, she says she is going to throw him a delayed Christmas party. In fact, a party for all the holidays he missed.

"He will get some Halloween candy, some turkey for Thanksgiving and some presents for Christmas," said Caccamo, who is also going to deliver the couple's first child,



U.S. Marine Todd Caccamo of Canton says the troops in Iraq do what they can to conjure up the Christmas spirit. He has hung up some stockings in his barracks.

a boy she is scheduled to deliver at the end of February - about two months before her husband is due home.

Caccamo says this Christmas just hasn't been the same knowing her husband is risking his life for a cause he believes in. She has tried to keep herself busy, so she doesn't have to think about Christmas too much. But she admits there have been times she has been reminded.

PLEASE SEE MILITARY, A7

Garden City police unravel national identity theft case

BY LEANNE ROGERS
STAFF WRITER

About 80 identity theft victims and evidence of more than \$400,000 in fraudulent charges have been uncovered as the results of search warrants recently executed at two homes in Detroit by the Garden City police.

With victims being identified from across the country,

Garden City police have turned the case over to the Secret Service and U.S. Postal Service inspectors.

"Once we became aware of the depth and breadth of the investigation with victims all across the United States, we asked for assistance from the Secret Service," said Deputy Chief Robert Muery. "They

PLEASE SEE IDENTITY, A8

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18-year-old man slashed on arm as trio robs him

An 18-year-old Westland man told police he was slashed with a knife or box cutter after three men approached him and robbed him at 7:45 p.m. Wednesday in Westland.

The victim, who was treated at a hospital for a wound to his right forearm, told police the incident happened on Hazelwood near Linville.

According to police reports, the man was riding his bicycle when he noticed three men near a parked van, and one of them approached him on foot.

The suspect pushed the teenager off his bicycle, pulled a knife or box cutter and placed it to the victim's neck while two other men went through his pants pockets and took \$20, police said.

The victim told police he was slashed on the arm and robbed of his bicycle during the incident, and he ran from the scene. A passerby in a car gave him a ride to Oakwood Hospital-Annapolis in Wayne, where he was treated for his injury.

One suspect was described as a white male, 22-25 years old, 5-foot-10 to 6 feet tall, 200-225 pounds with a goatee and sideburns. He wore a black jacket and a black knit cap.

A second suspect was described as a white male, 18-20, 5-foot-8 to 5-foot-10, 150-170 pounds. He wore a black

CRIME WATCH
jacket with a hood.
A third suspect was described merely as a white male 20-23 years old.

Knifepoint theft
A man who walked from the Westland Meijer store with a \$700 television threatened store personnel with a knife after they followed him out and tried to apprehend him, according to police reports.

The incident happened just before 10 p.m. Wednesday outside the Meijer store at Warren and Newburgh.

A loss prevention employee told police she followed the man from the store after she saw him leave with the television. She and another employee confronted the suspect, who warned them that he had a knife, police said.

The employees backed away and the man fled, but police responded quickly and caught the man nearby. He was arrested after the workers identified the 47-year-old Detroit man as the suspect.

Vandals hit Churchill
Vandals got onto the roof and smashed out windows at Churchill High School over the weekend of Dec. 15-18, according to Livonia police reports.

Police found three sets of footprints on the moist surface of the roof. Some type of blunt force such as a kick broke out an upper window on the east side of the cafeteria. On the ground level, a large pane of glass was smashed near the southeast doors of the school, nearest the pool.

Total damage was estimated at \$800.

Jewelry, coins swiped
A homeowner on Wadsworth Street reported having \$5,000 worth of jewelry and \$150 in coins stolen during a home break-in Wednesday.

The intruder pulled out a window screen and pushed up on a latched double-hung vinyl window until the latch broke. From there, the thief reached inside to unlock the door.

Stolen was a wooden jewelry box with rings, necklaces and charms. The plastic jar of coins had recently been counted, the homeowner told police.

The homeowner said a neighbor saw a man with a Pontiac Grand Am in the driveway about 2 p.m.

Pop can swindle
Meijer security staff apprehended a man who was dumping out for-sale pop cans and putting the empty ones into the returnable machine Wednesday evening at the store on

Middlebelt in Livonia.
When he was caught, the Detroit man, 44, was found to have \$45 worth of store items - wine, candy, water and corn - concealed in his clothes. Police arrested the man.

Indecent exposure
A 31-year-old Westland woman was arrested on an indecent exposure charge in Redford Township Monday after a Redford woman accused her of soliciting sex and flashing her breasts.

An officer responding to the area of Seven Mile and Woodworth Street about 6 p.m. found the suspect on Woodworth, a police report said. When he exited his car, the report said, the woman immediately said she was not a prostitute, but had had a fight with her boyfriend, who had put her out of their car.

But the complainant showed up and told the officer she had been driving when the woman pedestrian turned toward her and lifted her sweater. When she stopped to tell the flasher she was disgusted with the behavior, the flasher ran toward her car and asked if she wanted sex, then said, "Oh, you're a woman," the complainant said.

The complainant's 12-year-old son was in her car, the police report said.
Police found the suspect was

wanted on three outstanding warrants.
Burglary

A 26-year-old woman was startled by a burglary as she readied herself for work at her house on Wormer Street in Redford Monday morning, she told police.

The victim was not hurt. Cash and a laptop computer were reported stolen.

She told police she was in the bathroom about 6:30 a.m. when she heard someone in the kitchen. She walked to the kitchen to see a male running out of through a rear doorway, she said.

The cash and laptop had been left on the kitchen table, the victim said. She said she had left the doorway slightly open.

Drunken driving
Farmington Hills police arrested a 37-year-old Southfield man for drunken driving at about 12:45 a.m., Dec. 18 in the area of 12 Mile and Middlebelt. Police observed the man drive through a gas station parking lot at a high rate of speed and accelerate onto 12 Mile. The man was pulled over near the Madison Apartments and told police he was returning from a company holiday party. He refused to take a preliminary breath test.

Police probe shooting death

The shooting death of Detroit man on Wednesday left police investigating the second Redford homicide within a month.

Officers were called to the Coach & Lantern Motel shortly before 2 p.m. Wednesday on a report of a man down, police said. The 46-year-old, who had been shot, was taken to Botsford General Hospital in Farmington Hills, where he died from his injuries a short time later, according to a police press release.

Capt. Craig Brueck, the department's chief of detectives, said details on the incident were being withheld, but that more information would be released later. The Coach & Lantern is on Grand River near Seven Mile.
Redford's last homicide occurred in November. Ricky Arquette, 32, of Garden City, died Nov. 28 as a result of injuries suffered during a beating in Redford eight days earlier. Five men have been charged in his death, four of them with first-degree murder.

- By Matt Jachman

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Former student arrested at ITT after barricading himself in car

Canton police officers made the decision to forcibly remove a barricaded man they say was suicidal Wednesday evening at the ITT Institute located at Haggerty and Palmer roads in Canton.

Officers were dispatched to the location around 6:30 p.m. after receiving a call that a former student of the institute had driven his vehicle onto the steps leading into the Institute.

According to Canton Detective Rick Pomorski, when officers arrived and approached the man, who is an Ann Arbor resident, he displayed a knife and began to threaten harm to the officers. A perimeter was set up around the vehicle and telephone contact with the subject was established.

"When officers approached him, he pulled out the knife, took an unknown number of pills from a bottle, and pulled a blanket over his head, and then just sat in his car," Pomorski said.

The police department's tactical unit was called to the scene while efforts to have the subject exit his vehicle continued. Pomorski said the decision was made to remove the man from the car for his own safety.

At 8:54 p.m. the tactical unit, using diversionary tactics, entered the vehicle and took the subject into custody without further incident. The subject was transported to psychi-

atric evaluation center in Wayne, where Pomorski said he would be held for at least 72 hours.

As of Thursday, Pomorski said he was unsure if any criminal charges would be sought against the man.

Pomorski said the man had been a student at the ITT Institute and had applied for a job at the institute, which he didn't get. Canton Police took a complaint from the Institute director on Dec. 19 regarding telephone harassment from the subject. Officers at that time spoke with the subject by telephone at his residence in Ann Arbor and he agreed to stop calling the institute.

Pistons tickets

Looking for a family-pleasing Christmas gift?

The Garden City High School Sports Boosters have the answer - tickets to see the Detroit Pistons take on the Boston Celtics at 7:30 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 13, at the Palace of Auburn Hills.

This is the third year that Judy Nichols and Sue Pichla have presented the Game Day fund-raiser. In the past, it benefited the sports and intramural programs at Garden City Middle School, but this year proceeds will go for high school athletics.

The last two years have been sellouts. This year, however, sales have been slow and with just two weeks left before the

Christmas break, Nichols is concerned. She still has 100 tickets available.

Regularly \$40, they're on sale for \$37. That includes the game as well as a free Pistons fleece blanket with every ticket purchased.

And there will be plenty of Kodak moments when ticket holders get to spend an hour on the Pistons' parquet, shooting hoops, after the game. Stand at the same free throw line as Rip Hamilton and try sinking a three-pointer like Mr. Big Shot, Chauncey Billups.

Sound like a good present? Then don't delay. Call Nichols at (734) 513-6760 or Pichla at (734) 421-2934 to order tickets.

Blood drive

Contours Express is stepping in to help the American Red Cross by holding a blood drive 2-7 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 9, at its gym at 31509 Cherry Hill at Merriman, Westland.

The fitness gym is hoping to get a "generous showing" of people willing to roll up their sleeves and donate to the Red Cross.

This is the second time it has hosted a blood drive in connection with a holiday. One held in July, "exceeded The Red Cross' expectations for much needed blood," according to Mary Ellis, Contours owner/trainer.

Anyone who wants to schedule an appointment to donate blood is urged to call (734) 326-SLIM (7546).

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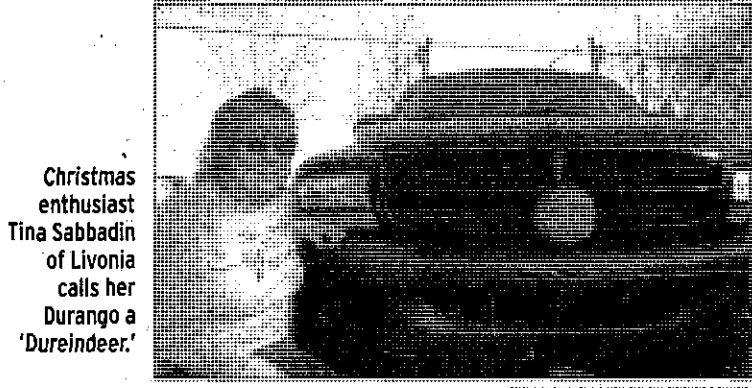
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Christmas enthusiast Tina Sabbadin of Livonia calls her Durango a 'Dureindeer.'

New trend? Decorating vehicles for Christmas

BY REBECCA JONES
STAFF WRITER

It's not just for Santa's sleigh anymore. Rudolph's red nose helps guide Tina Sabbadin's Dodge Durango around town too.

Antlers attach to the windows where a flag might go, and a poofy red ball, the nose, is wired to the grill. This time of year, Sabbadin calls her vehicle a Dureindeer.

The costume kit is new, but Sabbadin's Christmas spirit goes back a long way.

"My mom and grandma taught me to decorate. I guess I carry that to my vehicle too," Sabbadin said, surrounded by dozens of Santa Bears in her Livonia home.

A Christmas penguin dances atop the antenna of her Mercury Mountaineer.

"I've gotten a lot of looks" from fellow drivers, Sabbadin said. "This guy started cracking up. That made my day. I love Christmas."

Although still relatively new, Christmas car decorations could become the new trend, according to an expert in consumer behavior.

University of Detroit-Mercy professor Michael Bernacchi has also seen automobiles decorated with menorahs and others with Christmas lights.

"It brings kind of a smile to my face," he said.

"I think it has some chance of being a real viable trend," Bernacchi added. "Our vehicle is the most visible accouterment we have besides our being... It would seem to me

as time goes on that this will increase, the whole idea of expressing yourself through your vehicle."

Some drivers weave ever-green roping around vehicle luggage racks or string twinkling lights outside the vehicle, connected to a battery pack or the cigarette lighter.

The reindeer costume kit that Sabbadin bought was sold in stores for the first time this year.

"It's a novelty thing. It's something different," said Andy Marcus, one of the owners of Mystic Industries. The Wakefield, Mass., company also makes car costumes for Halloween and Easter.

"Either you love it or you hate it," Marcus said. "If you're into Christmas, that's great."

Marcus does not decorate his vehicle. Shayna Fields-Clark, a junior at Detroit's Renaissance High School, made her own reindeer car costume, using magnets to attach antlers to her 2006 Malibu. She bought a red cushion at a crafts store for the nose.

Her mother drove the Malibu to Livonia Mall to do some Christmas shopping.

"This is my first car, and I decided to decorate it because it's Christmas," the 16-year-old said. "People are always trying to stop me. People are beeping their horns and waving, especially the little kids."

Fields-Clark was inspired by a friend who used lights to decorate his van. "I think I want to compete with him. He has a Christmas tree, with a stand, that keeps falling."

Santa's helpers

Salvation Army volunteers help provide toys for needy children

BY LEANNE ROGERS
STAFF WRITER

There weren't any elves in sight, but Santa Claus had plenty of helpers last week at the annual Toy Shop sponsored by the Salvation Army Dearborn Heights Citadel.

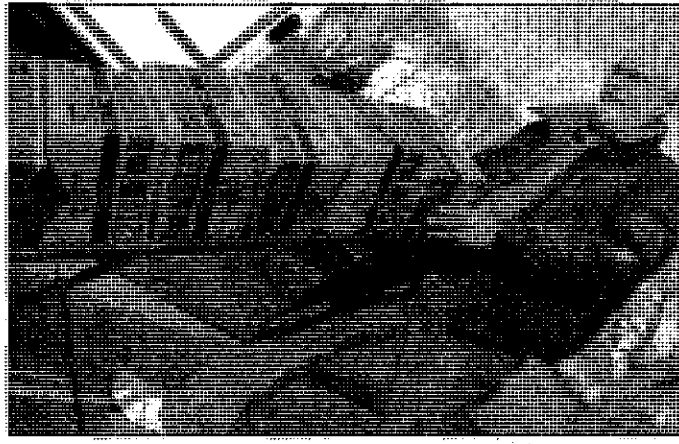
Volunteers, mainly members of the citadel's congregation, were putting up displays of toys that would be available to financially strapped parents as Christmas gifts for their children. Over two days, the Toy Shop was expected to serve 600 families.

"It's pretty busy but it's fun. It's really a wonderful Christian community effort," Capt. Christine Merritt said. "We get a great response from everyone."

Set up in the church gym, the Toy Shop displays the toys by age and gender. Parents are escorted by volunteers - a large number of Ford Motor Co. workers were scheduled to help each day - as they select one toy for each child up to 14 years old, along with a stocking stuffer. Winter coats also are provided when available.

The toys are donated through a variety of Dearborn Heights businesses, Toys for Tots, individuals and other sources or purchased using cash contributions. Applications are submitted in October, including proof of income and residency - participants must live in the area served by the Dearborn Heights citadel which includes Dearborn Heights, Dearborn, Garden City, Livonia and Redford.

"We have about the same number of requests as the prior year but the circumstances are different," said



Volunteer Don Hanton of Farmington wheels in a load of toy into the Dearborn Heights Salvation Army for their toy shop distribution.



Ruth Jolly of Livonia unpacks toys for the toy shop at the Dearborn Heights Salvation Army.

Merritt. "Both parents are unemployed, laid off or not being called back to work. It's not just single parent families."

Congregation and band member Pat Prouty of Taylor was lending a hand at the Toy Shop for about the fifth year.

"It's one thing I can do during the week. They don't always have a lot of help during the week. I'm nearly retired," said Prouty, who

works on-call as a music department librarian at Schoolcraft College. "We've got it pretty well down to a system that works."

Until she helped out with office work at the Salvation Army, Prouty said she had no idea how difficult a financial situation there is for some people.

"So many people would come in at the ends of their rope - if there was a choice between paying the utility



Josh Hanink of Garden City helps out with setting up the toy shop.

and buying the kids a toy (for Christmas)," she said. "I can't tell you how many people can't thank us enough. Christmas is really about the kids, so I feel this is worthwhile."

Prouty and her late husband came to the Salvationist Church through fellow volunteers Holly and Chuck McDougall of Garden City, also church and band members.

"I went to the Plymouth Corps with a friend - I think I was in first grade and went to Sunday school there," said Holly McDougall, whose father and four daughters are also active in the church. "I liked the people. There are so many activities and the Christian fellowship is just wonderful."

Agreeing, Prouty said the Salvationists try to get back to the original concept of Christian giving and charity.

"We try not to turn anyone away. A lot of people need a little boost - usually it's short term," said Prouty. "Jesus said to love your neighbor as you love yourself. We're just doing what Jesus said."

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Words of wisdom: Graduating students need focused job search

BY JULIE BROWN
STAFF WRITER

Some college seniors and graduate students are graduating this month, others in the spring. Those who work in university career services urge them to hit the ground running when it comes to a job search. In fact, that search should ideally begin before *Pomp and Circumstance* sounds and students receive their diplomas.

Chris Brant, career services director at Madonna

University in Livonia, urges job-seekers to maintain a positive attitude. It can be discouraging to look for work in a tough economy, she acknowledges, but you don't want to express your frustration in job interviews.

"They pick up on that real quickly and I think that hurts a lot of people," Brant said. "They hear all this bad news on the news, that the job market's bad. It really hurts them when they go to interview" if that shows.

Don't bad-mouth a former

employer, Brant said.

"It's hard for them to get past that. It's understandable, but it's not going to help you." Attitude has always mattered in job hunting, she said, but with so many looking it's even more important now.

Some people are job hunting who thought they wouldn't need to, she noted. For graduating students, there's a lot of competition and it's time to get your resume together "and start thinking about where you want to apply."

Bob Thomas, director of career services at Oakland University in Rochester Hills, says it's good for students to start looking for work now. "I tell them to plan a year ahead of time," he said. Thomas recommends that students use their career service department for such things as career fairs and on-campus recruiting.

Often, graduates will need to start at entry level, Brant said, but not stay there forever. "It's a steppingstone for them." Brant urges students and recent grads to go online to company Web sites to see what positions are posted and how they'd fit those positions.

Thomas said students and recent grads may need to diversify their employment objective in terms of type of employer and location. "And of course that is especially true of those who are having difficulty," such as teachers, who may need to move out of state to work.

It's vital to know who's hiring and what qualities they seek, Brant added. Some job-seekers approach the task "without them really thinking about what kind of job they would like and what they would be good at."

In addition to company Web sites with job listings, there are a number of good job posting Web sites and those offering advice on careers, Brant said. She said checking those for resume advice is good, as is having other people look at your resume. You can sort

through what they say to see what works for you.

Brant urges job-seekers of all ages to tell everyone they know they're looking. Those personal contacts are often the key to finding work. "People have a lot more contacts than they think," she said. "Networking is just making connections with other people."

Thomas agreed: "Networking is an important part of the process. Many of the jobs are filled through the networking process."

He encourages students to do an internship or co-op work which will make them more employable. "Based on their experience, they can do a much better interview," Thomas said.

The Michigan economy's not the strongest right now. "I do see people get hired," she said. "It really depends on what their field is." Nursing graduates do well, while those with business degrees find it tougher and may need to relocate. Education grads often start as substitute teachers and can become full time as they become known to school districts.

Thomas said 90 percent of OU graduates are working, mostly in their field, six months after graduation. The percentage varies by field. "The vast majority will be in their field at some level," he said.

Thomas noted that job applicants need a good portfolio of work with cover letters and resumes for each position. Liberal arts grads need to be able to define and discuss their background and skills, he added.

Troubles in the auto industry are a big factor in the local economy, especially for those in engineering, he said. Computer science is a little more flexible, as those staffers are needed in all industries.

Brant agreed it's fine to take a job at a store or restaurant if you need to support yourself, noting that shows a good work ethic. "You had some responsibilities and you took care of those."



Ed Wright, Plymouth-Canton Observer sports editor, receives the Journalist of the Year award from General Manager Peter Neill.

Sports editor Wright named Journalist of Year

Ed Wright was surprised to be chosen as Journalist of the Year for the *Observer & Eccentric Newspapers*.

"It's such a nice honor, especially because there are so many outstanding journalists at the company," said Wright, sports editor for the *Plymouth and Canton Observers*. Wright was nominated for the annual award by Brad Kadrich, Plymouth community editor, and Kurt Kuban, Canton community editor.

"I feel fortunate to be able to make a living at a job I love, covering sports," Wright added.

Wright, 44, of Canton is a graduate of Central Michigan University where he earned a bachelor's degree in journalism. He joined the *O&E* in 2004 after freelancing for the newspapers.

Wright is married to Laura and they have three sons: Erik, 16, Brandon, 13, and Ben, 5.

"Ed is very much deserving of this award," said Kuban.

"There is no question that he has improved the Plymouth-Canton sports section, and made it more enjoyable for our readers. Ed is the kind of journalist that likes to dig deeper than the headlines, in an effort to tell the whole story. His feature stories about local athletes are a real joy to read, and are proof of his commitment to the local sports community. We are very lucky to have him."

Other *O&E* nominees for Journalist of the Year this year were Marty Budner, Mary Klemic and Ken Abramczyk. Wright was lauded during a Dec. 14 breakfast at the Townsend Hotel at which Oakland County Executive L. Brooks Patterson and Wayne County Executive Robert Ficano spoke.

"It's definitely a team effort," Wright said of publishing the newspapers. "Although I got the award, there are a lot of people deserving of it."

- By Julie Brown

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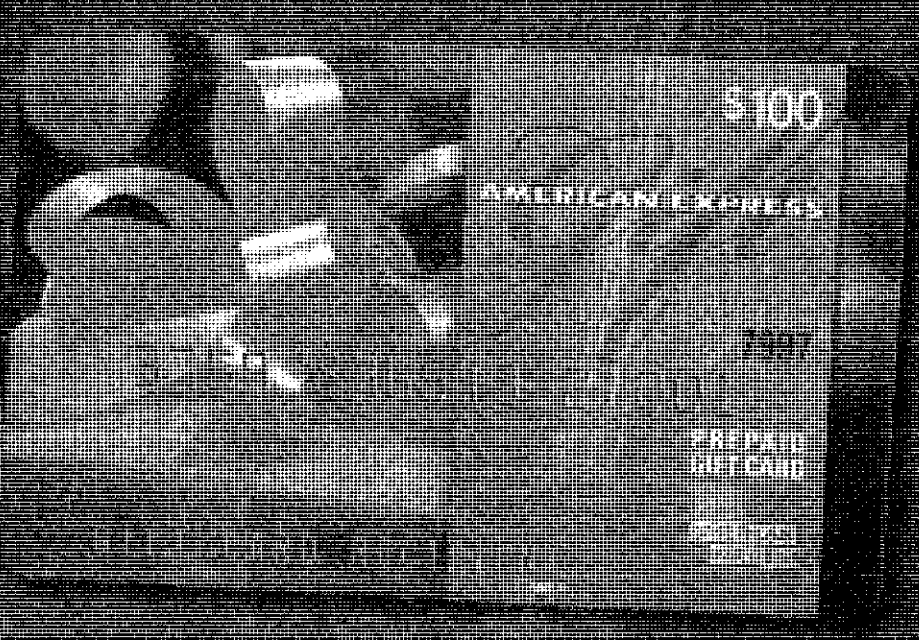
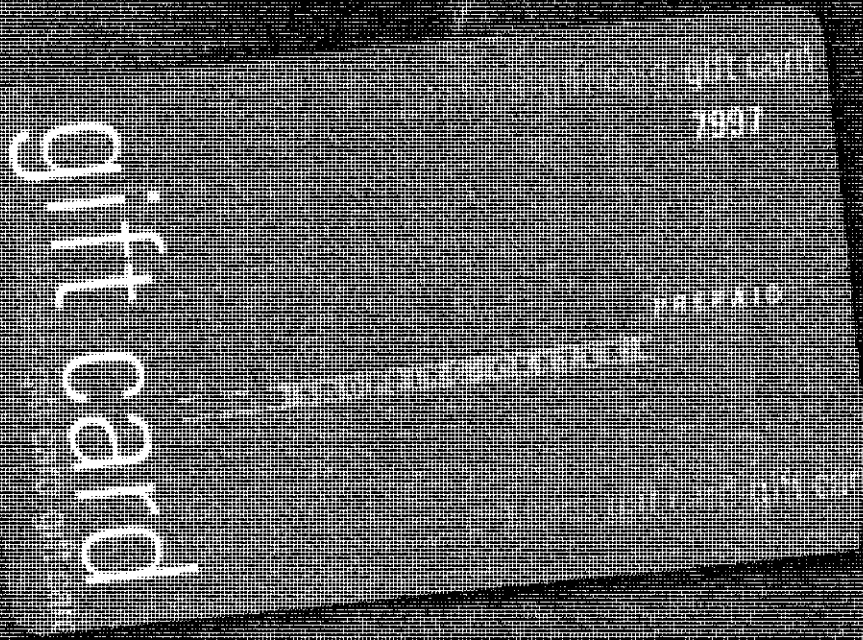
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Fire victims will get to spend Christmas together after all

BY TIFFANY L. PARKS
STAFF WRITER

A Canton couple may get to spend Christmas in a place of their own after all.

Matthew Trevarthen, 22, and his girlfriend, Deanna Manasco, 19, are residents of Canton Crossing apartments. Their unit was inside the building that caught fire last week.

The two, who said they were initially frustrated with how their landlord handled the situation, were recently offered a

different apartment in the complex.

"I'm happy we're getting a new place but I wish it would've been handled sooner," Trevarthen said. "I don't know if they were prepared for something like this."

After the fire, Trevarthen began staying at his parents' Canton home, while Manasco, along with their 8-month-old beagle, Chase, went to her parents' Northville residence.

"I just wanted us to be together for Christmas," Manasco said.

The two had recently bought a Christmas tree and decorated it with blue ornaments. Their ground-level unit, which has a bedroom and a den, wasn't affected by the flames but does have water and smoke damage.

The fire is believed to have started on a second-floor balcony. It caused \$1 million in damage.

Canton Fire Chief Michael Rorabacher said the blaze appeared to be an accident.

Trevarthen and Manasco had lived in their apartment since

August.

"They should've put us in a hotel," Trevarthen said, adding that the complex's first accommodation offer was unacceptable. "They said they could put us in a two-bedroom but would charge us more because it was a bigger unit. Deanna's a full-time student — we can't afford any more rent."

Representatives from the Dolben Co., a Massachusetts-based group that manages Canton Crossing, couldn't be reached for comment.

The complex, located off of Joy Road near I-275, has now offered the couple a two-bedroom apartment at their previous rent rate.

"I'm disturbed at how this has happened but I feel bad for the people who lost everything," Manasco said.

The two, who are hoping to salvage their futon mattresses, didn't have renter's insurance.

"It's crazy because we were just talking about it the week before (the fire)," Trevarthen said.

Apartment management hasn't decided whether to reimburse the couple a portion of December's rent.

"We want our money back," Trevarthen said. "Everyone thinks they are handling it marvelously, but the tenants that live in the building are having a horrible holiday season. None of the employees seem to know anything about what is being done so I think the problem goes higher up in the company."

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Thousands sought to join hands along Woodward

BY GREG KOWALSKI
STAFF WRITER

Imagine a line of people stretching hand-in-hand from the Detroit River to Pontiac.

That sight is planned to become reality on Sunday, Sept. 2, 2007, as the Hands Along Woodward event is held as part of the 200th birthday celebration for Woodward Avenue.

That day will open with a "Blessing of the Byway," with churches along the 27-mile route taking part in a joint blessing ceremony, just before an estimated 90,000 people hold hands to symbolically link all the communities along Woodward.

"The Hands Along Woodward is our signature event," said Heather Carmona,

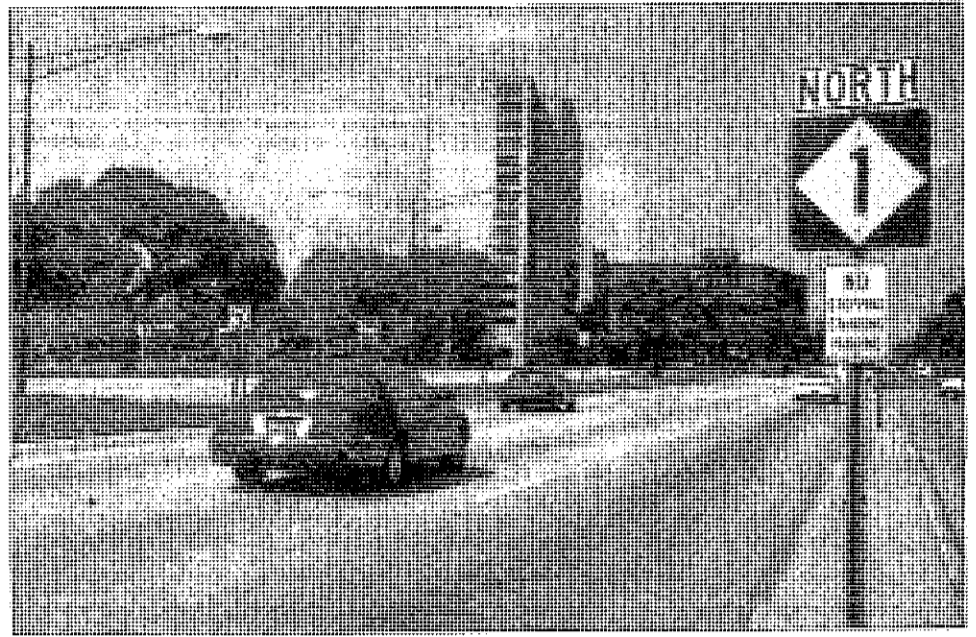
executive director of the Association, familiarly known as WA3.

WA3 is spearheading the big birthday bash being planned for Woodward.

Carmona led a discussion of about 30 community representatives Monday morning at the Huntington Woods recreation center. The meeting was held to plan events for the 200th birthday. Activities will be focused on the week of Aug. 27, using the Woodward Avenue Dream Cruise on Aug. 18 as a lead-in for the official celebration. An announcement of events is planned for mid-July, around the 200th day of the year.

Activities planned include creating a Business Birthday Kit, with a poster and anniversary logo among other items. Also planned is a "Traveling Birthday Party" featuring a character representing Augustus Woodward, the man who created Woodward Avenue.

"Woodward is a very historic street," said Ron Gillham, mayor of Huntington Woods. He said it should be promoted and recognized for its significance.



Woodward in Birmingham facing north.

JERRY ZOLYNSKY/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

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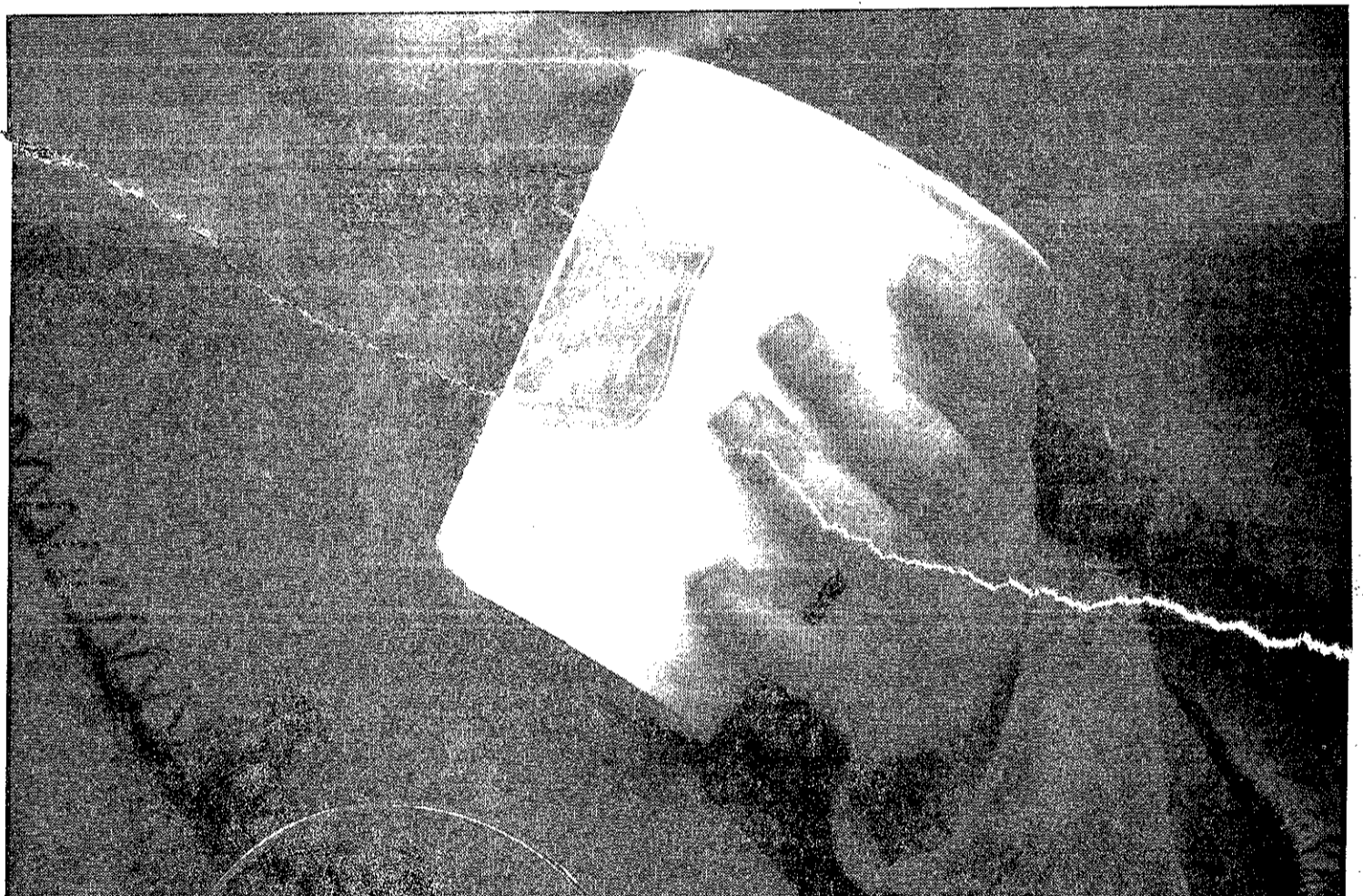
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MILITARY

FROM PAGE A1

"When I see couples shopping together, it is hard. It gets a little overwhelming," she said.

Kay Caccamo, like other people in the metro area with family members deployed in Iraq or Afghanistan, is learning the holidays aren't quite the same with a loved one far away in a war zone.

Pat and Penny Monti are in a slightly different situation, though no less trying. In their case it isn't a spouse fighting in the war, it is a son. Earlier this year, Justin Monti, 24, was called up for active duty with the Marines, just one semester before graduating from Cleary University. His battalion left for Iraq in late September. It will be the first time he won't be home for Christmas.

Making matters worse, according to Pat Monti, a commander with the Farmington Hills police, his son is currently in Fallujah, where the Marines have been taking some casualties. But he is consoled by the fact that when he has spoken to his son, his spirits are high. Plus, he says the soldiers have been receiving plenty of packages from back home, a reminder that they are not forgotten.

The Montis planned to have a Christmas gathering, just like they do every year. Their other two children will be there, as will extended family. They plan to make a big banner that reads "Merry Christmas, Justin" and send it to him. Still, it won't be the same, according to Penny Monti.

"There is a spot missing. This is a sad Christmas," she said.

Dan Shoemaker of Redford knows just how the Montis feel. His son, Scott Shoemaker, was part of the initial invasion of Iraq with the Army's 101st Airborne, which caused him to miss a couple Christmases back home. Fortunately, his son is now out of the service, but Shoemaker says those were the worst holidays.

"In our case, we just didn't

think about Christmas or the holidays. In some ways, they were sort of intrusive," said Shoemaker, a faculty member at the University of Detroit Mercy. "You sort of say to yourself this holiday really isn't a holiday, and put it off until the next year."

Spending the holidays away from family is no more fun for the soldiers deployed overseas, according to Todd Caccamo. He says he and his fellow soldiers have tried to conjure up some Christmas spirit, despite where they are. They have put up a few decorations in their

barracks, and they play Christmas carols when they can.

Lance Cpl. Mark Varney, a Canton resident who is in Caccamo's unit, says he plans to watch the movie, *A Christmas Story*, which is a Christmas Day tradition for him. He will also be getting an unusual gift.

"Where I used to get clothes for Christmas presents, this year I'll be getting a new flak jacket. I am sure my mother never thought of buying me that before," Varney wrote in an e-mail.

Despite the fact he won't be with his family during holidays, Varney feels proud that what he is doing - the sacrifice he is paying - helps ensure that families all over America will be able to come together and celebrate Christmas.

"I know this sounds kind of corny, but I can take solace in the fact that we are fighting so that little kids back home can wake up on Christmas morning with smiles on their faces to see what Santa brought them," he wrote in the e-mail.

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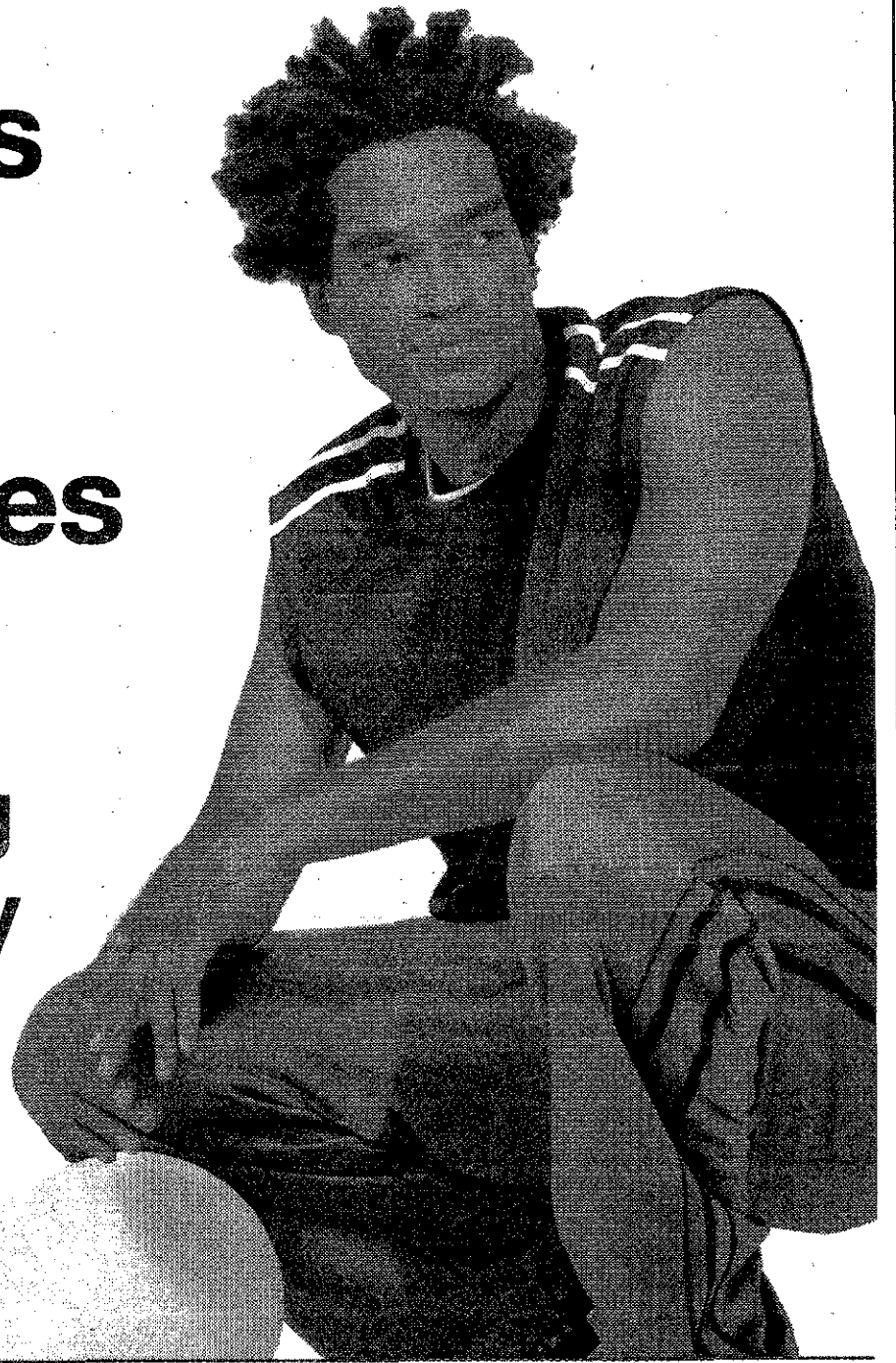
Kay Caccamo of Canton, who is seven months pregnant, isn't really in the Christmas spirit this year. Her husband is currently in Iraq with the Marines.

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FRI/SAT 11:00, 1:45, 4:30, 7:15, 10:00
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MON 4:30, 7:15, 10:00
NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM (PG)
FRI/SAT 11:10, 1:35, 4:00, 7:05, 9:25
FRI/SAT LS 11:45 SUN 11:10, 1:35, 4:00
MON 4:00, 7:05, 9:25
ROCKY BALBOA (PG)
FRI/SAT 12:45, 3:00, 5:15, 7:30, 9:45
FRI/SAT LS 12:00 SUN 12:45, 3:00, 5:15
MON 5:15, 7:30, 9:45
ERAGON (PG)
FRI/SAT 12:40, 2:50, 5:00, 7:10, 9:30
FRI/SAT LS 11:40 SUN 12:40, 2:50, 5:00
MON 5:00, 7:10, 9:30
CHARLOTTE'S WEB (G)
FRI/SAT 11:00, 1:10, 3:20, 5:30, 7:40,
9:45 FRI/SAT LS 11:50
SUN 11:00, 1:10, 3:20, 5:30
MON 5:30, 7:40, 9:45
THE PURSUIT OF HAPPYNESS (PG-13)
FRI/SAT 11:20, 1:50, 4:20, 6:50, 9:20
FRI/SAT LS 11:50 SUN 11:20, 1:50, 4:20
MON 4:20, 6:50, 9:20
THE PT (R) FRI/SAT/MON 9:05
UNACCOMPANIED MINORS (PG)
FRI-SUN 11:30 AM
HAPPY FEET (PG)
FRI/SAT 2:00, 4:20, 6:40 SUN 2:00, 4:20
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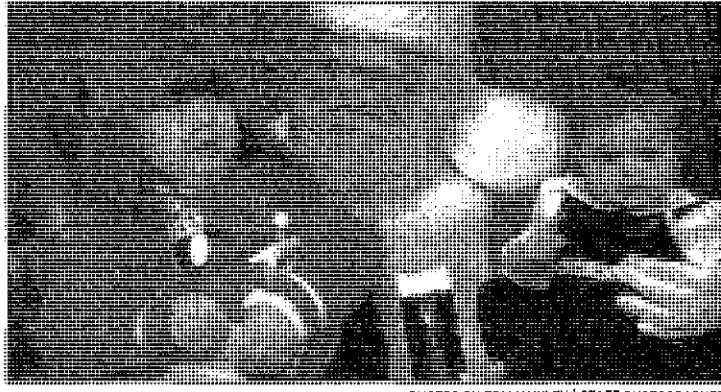
FROM PAGE A1

lifestyle, everything from his favorite cookie - chocolate chip - to what he does in the off-season - look for him wearing a red T-shirt, red shorts and red shoes, walking around with Mrs. Claus in Arizona and Florida.

LUMP OF COAL

According to Santa, the lump of coal started with St. Nicholas hundreds of years ago. Youngsters would put out their shoes for gifts; if they got coal, it meant they had been bad. "It's still a tradition in old Germany, but it's not really what I do," said Santa. "I have a few lumps in my sack, but those are surprise presents." For youngsters like 9-year-old Brad Keogh, the question is how Santa makes it around the world in one evening. The answer is simple - a watch that can make time stop

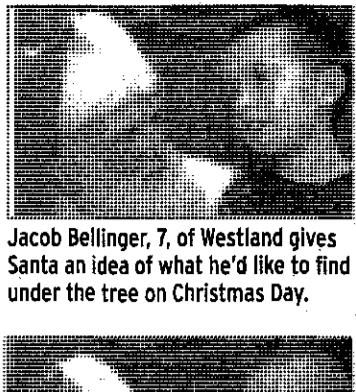
so "I make it across the United States in two-ten-thousandths of a second," said Santa. Of course, there's more magic involved. Fireplaces expand to let him get down into a house, and he carries a special set of brass keys to open doors of homes without them. He's mum about how many glasses of milk and cookies he consumes along the way and asks children to leave him cheese, too, for extra energy. They "might even get a better present," if they do, he said. But he also cautions parents about his snacks. "They shouldn't eat my cookies and leave a trail of crumbs to the bedroom to make it look like I've been there," said Santa, sounding offended by the parental ruse. **SANTA'S DIGS** His North Pole complex includes Santa's Castle - a very comfy three-bedroom log home with a big kitchen, something Mrs. Claus needs for all the cookies and candy



Allison Quick, 3, and her sister Ashley, 1, wait to have their picture taken with Santa.

canes she makes. The elves - there are 485, according to Santa - live in dormitories that they take care of themselves, although Mrs. Claus does make sure they eat well. Some are Mrs. Elves, some are little elves. There are inventive elves like Albert, "who's a genius with a computer and does the modern stage of technology," and ones named Curtis and Herbie. They work eight-hour shifts

and have time to play, enjoying sledding, ice skating and tobogganing. "I don't push them, I don't press them," Santa said. "I try to keep them very happy." With good reason, when you consider Santa uses words like million and zillion when talking about a toy production schedule that goes on year-round. Santa commutes between the North Pole and various locations where he sits down to



Jacob Bellingher, 7, of Westland gives Santa an idea of what he'd like to find under the tree on Christmas Day.

Not wanting to leave it to chance, Shane Delaney 8, of Redford tells what he wants for Christmas while Santa was visiting at Westland Shopping Center. listen to youngster's wishes. He has a mail box he takes each day to collect letters from his young admirers and takes it back to the North Pole each

night. "I get zillions of letters," he said. "I have elves in the mail room who help, and I answer as many as I can. Mrs. Claus helps, too." When he's not busy with the Christmas gig, he likes to kick back and read, especially authors who write about him. His favorites are Clement Moore, author of *A Visit from St. Nick*, and the writer who did *The New York Sun* editorial, *Yes, Virginia, There Is a Santa Claus*. "If it wasn't for her question and his answer, I don't think people in the world would understand who Santa Claus is," he said. But the world does know who he is and his busiest time just hours away. For all who will wonder if they will hear the jingle of his sleigh bells or look for reindeer footprints in the snow, he has a message: "Have a joyous and merry Christmas and a wonderful New Year." smason@hometownlife.com | (734) 953-2112

IDENTITY

FROM PAGE A1

will take the lead role in the investigation and seek the criminal charges." The investigation began in September after a Garden City man filed a complaint that someone fraudulently used his personal information to get \$13,000 credit. "The officers identified two locations in Detroit that

played an integral role in the identity theft - the addresses were serving as receiving points for the victim's hijacked credit accounts," said Muery. "We executed the search warrants simultaneously at the houses and found evidence of a large scale identity theft ring." Two Detroit men were taken into custody - one was held on warrants from an unrelated identity fraud case and the other, a student at Michigan State University,

was released pending further investigation. Police were able to identify two sources for personal data of about 80 people, Muery said - business records from a Dearborn cellular telephone distributor and a military roster. "We have no idea how they got the information. The stories of the suspects didn't shed any light on that," said Muery. It was also unclear if the two suspects were living at the homes, he said, although they apparently were periodically staying at the addresses.

Executing the search warrants, officers seized thousands of dollars worth of merchandise obtained using the fraudulently obtained credit. "They had ordered a computer and a big screen television that were being used at the home," said Muery. "Other items were pawned and redistributed." Part of the reason this case came to light, he said, was that airline tickets to Florida were charged on a fraudulent account. The suspects were going to Florida, he said, to pick up a 2000 Chevrolet

Malibu purchased over the Internet through PayPal. "We seized four vehicles, including one that had just been reported stolen from a dealership in Monroe," said Muery. "We seized Xboxes, televisions, stereo equipment, computers and jewelry - so much merchandise that we haven't been able to put a value on it." Reviewing the identities that had been stolen, police found that a Garden City woman was among the victims. "We discovered as we called her that she didn't know she

had been victimized until she checked her credit report online," said Muery. "She found one account she hadn't opened and attempts to open other accounts." That woman's case highlights the need for regular checks of your credit report, Muery said, who recommends using www.annualcreditreport.com. That site provides a free credit report annually, he said, adding consumers should be alert for similar sites that charge a fee for that service. frogers@hometownlife.com | (734) 459-2103

City of Plymouth, Michigan Public Notice of Determined Uses of 2007 Community Development Block Grant Funds. Pursuant to Federal guidelines, the City of Plymouth, during the public hearing process on December 4, 2006 determined the following projects and respective funding levels for the 2007-08 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program:

1. Senior Transportation Services	\$58,500
2. Grant Administration	\$ 6,500
TOTAL	\$65,000

Linda J. Langmessaer, CMC City Clerk
Publish: December 24, 2006

IN NEED

FROM PAGE A1

ents using the system. "They hate to say 'I can't afford to buy my kids gifts.'" It's not just holiday help many of these families seek, though. For some, need exists year-round, and the Salvation Army is one way to get help. The Wayne-Westland Salvation Army, which services Wayne, Westland, Inkster, Romulus and New Boston, has also seen an increase in need. A year ago, some 500 families sought assistance. That number grew to 670 this year. The area was hit late in the

year by the closure of two Denny's restaurants. While that might seem inconsequential, it hit the Wayne-Westland corps in sort of a double-whammy. "We lost locations for kettles and our Angel Trees," said Capt. Malinda O'Neil, the corps pastor. "Many of those employees are now in need." Like Moritz, O'Neil points to the economy. Her corps services a lower-income area to begin with, and employees in various fields were also affected this year not only by auto layoffs, but by a couple of union strikes. Not only did members of those unions go on strike, but workers in other fields couldn't get to work because they didn't want to cross picket lines, O'Neil said. That need, she said, will only grow as winter moves on. Although early winter has benefited from balmer-than-normal temperatures, this is

Michigan, so that won't last. **PEOPLE IN NEED** "People are in need here 12 months out of the year," O'Neil said. "It's a low-income area, and come January and February people are going to have high energy bills, and many times they can't pay a \$300-\$400 gas bill every month." Salvation Army officials around the area are noticing a disturbing trend, though it doesn't really surprise anyone. People who helped out a year ago, either by donations or adopting a family, now are among those who need assistance. "People who have come in this year have said, 'Last year, I donated, this year, I'm in need,'" O'Neil said. "People are having their hours cut, or getting laid off. Right now we're trying to meet the needs at Christmas, and then money we have left will meet utility

or food pantry requests." So where does the help come from? The Salvation Army depends largely on the generosity of the people in the community. For instance, in Plymouth-Canton, the Red Kettle Campaign goal is \$155,000, money that will fund Salvation Army programs throughout the year. The rest of the help comes from businesses or families who simply want to help. For instance, Nativity of the Virgin Mary church in Plymouth adopted 10 families. "The community really steps up," Moritz said. "We couldn't do it without them. We could for one year, but then we'd be broke. During the season, people just stop by and drop stuff off, they don't want a receipt, they don't want anything. They just want to help. It amazes me." bkadrich@hometownlife.com | (734) 459-2700

NOTICE OF PUBLIC SALE OF PERSONAL PROPERTY
Notice is hereby given that pursuant to Section 4 of the Self Storage Facility Act, State of Michigan, **PS Orangeo, Inc. and/or Shurgard TRS, Inc.** will sell at public auction by competitive bidding. Sales are cash only. Removal within 24 hrs., for sale and storage unit in which rent and fees are past due.
On the premises where said property has been stored and which are located at Public Storage, 36001 Warren Ave., Westland, MI 48186 (734) 729-7095, on 1/2/2007 at 10:30 am.
Personal property described below in the matter of:
1268-Rutherford Renovations: Contractor supplies and tools
5160-Ibony Davis: lamp, microwave, couch
4078-Jennifer Andrew: Totes, refrigerator, boxes
3170-Joanna Hannum: Boxes, toys, baby crib
3110-James Craft: Curio, dresser, fan
3030-Don Fields: Snow blower, couch, freezer
3018-Mattie Card: TV, vacuum, chairs
1118-Cliff Gibson: Stereo, suitcase, clothing
On the premises where said property has been stored and which are located at Public Storage, 41877 Joy Rd., Canton, MI 48187 (734) 254-0243 on 1/2/2007 at 11:00 AM
Personal property described below in the matter of:
1016-Joshua Busa: Stereo, TV, couch
Publish: December 17 and 24, 2006

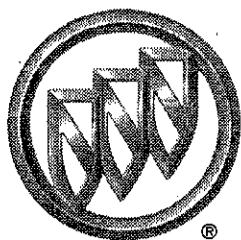
CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF REDFORD PUBLIC NOTICE MINUTES OF TOWNSHIP BOARD MEETINGS FOR THE MONTH OF NOVEMBER, 2006
NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the approved minutes for Meetings of the Township Board of the Charter Township of Redford for the month of November, 2006, are posted at the following public places within the Township:
Community Center, 12121 Hemingway
Library, 25320 Six Mile Road
Department of Public Services, 12200 Beech Daly
Police Department, 28833 Elsinore
Town Hall, 15145 Beech Daly
Approved minutes may also be viewed on-line at <http://www.redfordtwp.com>
GARTH J. CHRISTIE, Clerk
Charter Township of Redford
Publish: December 24, 2006

CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF CANTON ACCESS TO PUBLIC MEETINGS
The Charter Township of Canton will provide necessary reasonable auxiliary aids and services, such as signers for the hearing impaired and audio tapes of printed materials being considered at the meeting, to individuals with disabilities at the meeting/hearing upon two weeks notice to the Charter Township of Canton. Individuals with disabilities requiring auxiliary aids or services should contact the Charter Township of Canton by writing or calling the following:
David Medley, ADA Coordinator
Charter Township of Canton, 1150 S. Canton Center Road
Canton, MI 48188
(734) 394-5260
Publish: December 24, 2006

ORDER FOR SERVICE BY PUBLICATION/POSTING AND NOTICE OF ACTION
STATE OF MICHIGAN JUDICIAL DISTRICT 3rd JUDICIAL CIRCUIT CASE NO. 06-629697-CH
CAYMC, Two Woodward Avenue, Detroit, MI 48226-3413 313-224-5255
National City Bank of Pennsylvania v Ruby Wallace
c/o Lefkofsky & Gorosh, PC 15620 Normandy
31500 Northwestern Highway, Suite 105 Detroit, MI 48228
Farmington Hills, MI 48334
Jason M. Milstone (P53769) and All Interested Parties
Lefkofsky & Gorosh, PC
31500 Northwestern Highway, Suite 105 Farmington Hills, MI 48334
248-855-5508
TO: Ruby Mae Wallace and All Interested Parties
IT IS ORDERED:
You are being sued by plaintiff in this court to obtain quiet title to real property located at 15620 Normandy, Detroit, MI 48228. You must file your answer or take other action permitted by law in this court at the court address above on or before 28 days from last date of publication. If you fail to do so, a default judgment may be entered against you for the relief demanded in the complaint filed in this case.
A copy of this order shall be published once each week in The Eccentric Newspaper, three consecutive weeks, and proof of publication shall be filed in this court.
A copy of this order shall be sent to Ruby Mae Wallace at the last known address by registered mail, return receipt requested, before the date of the last publication, and the affidavit of mailing shall be filed with this court.
Date: Dec 06, 2006 A TRUE COPY HON. SUSAN D. BORMAN
CATHY M. GARRETT
WAYNE COUNTY CLERK
By: P. SMITH
Publish: December 24, 31 & January 7, 2007

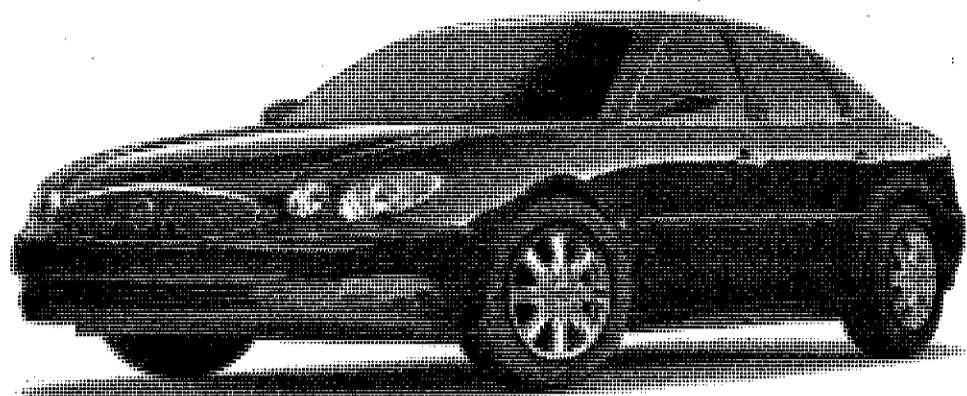
NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING
The Planning Commission of the Charter Township of Redford has scheduled a public hearing for Thursday, January 4, 2007 at 7:00 p.m. in the Redford Township Hall Board Room, 15145 Beech Daly Road, to consider the following:
A request from Jamal Beydoun to rezone the following from C-1 Local Business to C-2 General Commercial:
Lots 639 to 650, NEW DETROIT SUBDIVISION, ACCORDING TO THE PLAT RECORDED IN LIBER 61 OF PLATS, PAGE 85 WAYNE COUNTY RECORDS.
Property more commonly known as: 27131 Plymouth Rd.
THE LAW REQUIRES THAT OWNERS AND OCCUPANTS OF PROPERTY LOCATED WITHIN 900 FEET OF THIS PROPERTY BE NOTIFIED OF THIS REQUEST IN WRITING. THIS IS YOUR NOTIFICATION.
The public is invited to attend. Those unable to attend may send their written comments to the attention of the Planning Commission, 12200 Beech Daly Rd., Redford, MI 48239. No written comments will be received later than 4:30 p.m., January 4, 2007. Please refer to Map No. 4-08 in all correspondence. No comments will be accepted over the telephone.
It is further given that a copy of the plan may be examined at the Public Services building, 12200 Beech Daly Rd., from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. Phone (313) 387-2680.
Joseph H. Landry, Chairman
Planning Commission
Charter Township of Redford
The Charter Township of Redford, Township (P.C., ZBA, Board of Trustees, etc) will provide necessary reasonable auxiliary aids and services, such as signers for the hearing impaired and audio tapes of printed materials being considered at the meeting, to individuals with disabilities at the meeting or public hearing, upon seven (7) days notice to the (P.C. ZBA, Board of Trustees, etc). Further, individuals with disabilities requiring auxiliary aids or services should contact the Township Clerk by writing to 15145 Five Mile Road, Redford, MI 48239, or by calling (313) 387-2750.
Publish: December 24 and December 28, 2006

SOUTH REDFORD SCHOOL DISTRICT ADVERTISEMENT FOR BIDS
PROJECT: 06-SRSD-SEC-01, Video Surveillance System, South Redford School District, District-wide
OWNER: South Redford School District (the "Owner")
26141 Schoolcraft Road
Redford, MI 48239
DESIGNER: Wright & Hunter, Inc.
David A. Elva
330 Hamilton, Suite 200
Birmingham, Michigan 48009
Phone: 248 594-5850
Fax: 248 594-5851
BID DUE DATE: Until 3:00 PM EST on January 23, 2007 the Owner will receive sealed Bids for the work at set forth in the Bid specifications and proposal forms ("RFB documents") at:
TERESA DAVIS
VIDEO SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM 06-SRSD-SEC-01
SOUTH REDFORD SCHOOL DISTRICT
26141 SCHOOLCRAFT ROAD
REDFORD, MI 48239
Bids will be publicly opened and read aloud at this time. Bids received after the above date and time will not be accepted. Bids that do not include the following will not be accepted:
1. A sworn and notarized statement disclosing any familial relationship between the Owner and the bidder as defined in Michigan Public Act No. 232 of 2004.
RFB documents can be obtained at Wright & Hunter, 330 Hamilton, Suite 200, Birmingham, Michigan, 48009 during regular business hours Monday thru Friday.
Bidding details may be obtained electronically at HYPERLINK "<http://www.wrightandhunter.com>" Vendor Zone. RFB documents will be available on disk for pick-up at the Wright & Hunter offices once a contractor has registered on the Vendor Zone at this site.
Should it be required that documents be sent by mail or private carrier, a \$50.00 non-refundable cashier's check will be required before the documents are sent out. The cashier's check should be made out to Wright & Hunter, Inc. and be accompanied by a written request.
A mandatory bidders' meeting is scheduled for January 11, 2007 at 9:00PM EDT at the Jan W. Jacobs Administration Building, 26141 Schoolcraft Rd, Redford, MI 48239. All contractors are required to attend. Bids will not be accepted from contractors who do not attend the mandatory bidders' meeting.
Publish: December 24, 2006



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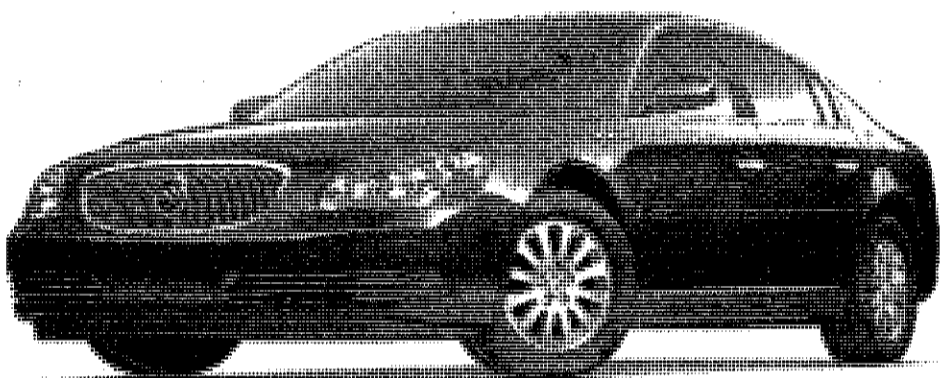
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2007 BUICK LUCERNE® CX

Qualified GM employees and eligible family members:
Low Mileage Lease

\$259/month for 27 months

\$1,679 due at signing after all offers*

No security deposit required.

Mileage charge of \$.25/mile over 22,500 miles.
Tax, title, license and dealer fees extra.



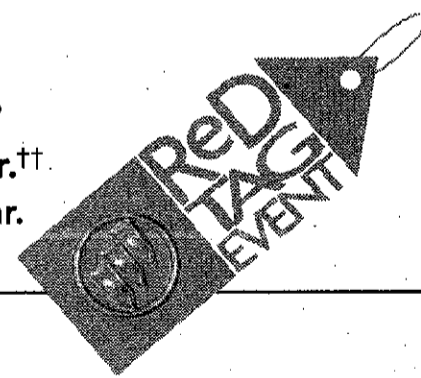
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† Turn-by-Turn not available in certain markets. Call 1-888-466-7827 for system limitations and details.

†† Tax, title and license are extra. Take delivery by 1/2/07. See dealer for details.

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SPORTS

L10 A11 (*)

Sunday, December 24, 2006

The Observer & Eccentric Newspapers

www.hometownlife.com

Tim Smith, editor . (734) 953-2106 . tsmith@hometownlife.com

Overtime verdict

Wayne earns 71-67 comeback win vs. Glenn

BY RICHARD L. SHOOK
SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

The "Getting To Know You" phase of the high school basketball season is just about over.

From year to year teams in all the sports typically go through a time of adjusting to a new season with new teammates – and, occasionally, new coaches.

It takes time to learn who can do what to whom, what plays work at crunch time and just what the coach expects at each step of the game.

Coach Wayne Woodard felt his Wayne Memorial team "grew up" Thursday night in coming from a nine-point half-time deficit to grab a 71-67 overtime victory from host Westland John Glenn in a Western Lakes Activities Association crossover game.

New coach Dan Young of the Rockets, on the other hand, understandably feels there's some adjusting still going on for Glenn.

"It's December," he said. "We've been together less than a month. We'll get better."

"This was big for us," Woodard said after the Zebras won their second in a row in a 2-3 season. "We learned how to win Tuesday. Until you do it, it's a struggle."

A rebound basket with 28 seconds left in regulation by Earl Hardison off a missed shot tied the score at 63 and both teams missed a shot that could have avoided overtime.

The Rockets missed the first shot of the extra period and the Zebras missed three cracks on one possession before Martez Abney broke the tie off a steal and a short shot in the paint.

John Hill followed a second straight Glenn turnover with a free throw for a 66-63 lead, but both teams struggled to

score against high-intensity defense.

It was 68-65 with 1:46 left and it was still 68-65 with less than a minute to play.

Robert Woodson finally made it a two-possession game with a pair of free throws with 33 seconds to play and added another with one second left, two seconds after Rob Jones rebounded in a missed shot to make it 70-67.

"I'm proud of our guys and their effort," Young said. "They do what we ask. But we've got to get better defensively and we've got to get better taking care of the ball. We played very good defense the first half, but we allowed them to get in the lane more in the second and they were able to do some things."

"And in the second half we were dribbling a lot and not moving the ball as much. We were stagnant. They were able to get some run-outs and get back into the game."

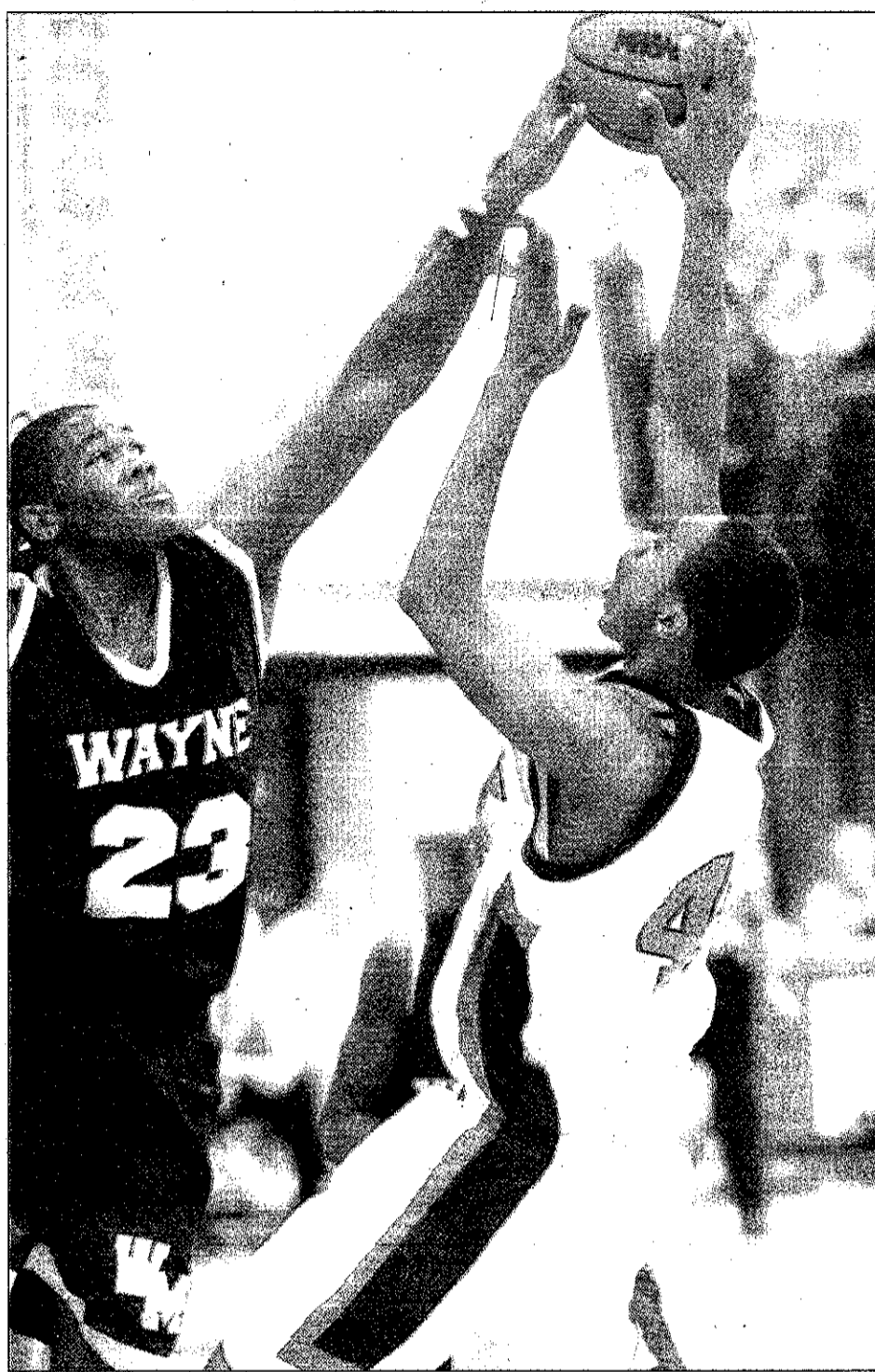
The Zebras shaved the deficit to 34-30 and were finally able to take their first lead since early in the game when Hill made a layup with 3:37 left in the third quarter to make it 40-39. The Rockets closed on a 12-5 run to take a 51-45 lead into the fourth quarter.

Woodard told his team to sharpen up its defense and finish its plays better and more aggressively.

"We got down early in the first quarter but came back. Then they made another run and we just looked down," he said. "I said, 'Why are you down?' It's just the first half. And this is the city championship."

The Zebras responded with far more confidence attacking the basket in the second half.

"Last year we couldn't get by it when the other teams made a run on us," Woodard said. "This was big for us."



TOM HAWLEY | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Wayne Memorial's John Hill (left) blocks John Glenn's Earl Hardison shot during first-half action Thursday night.

PLEASE SEE OT VERDICT, A11

U-M Club soccer team best in nation

BY BRAD EMONS
STAFF WRITER

Even though the Michigan football team missed out on a berth in the BCS title game, the U-M Club men's soccer team recently returned home with a national championship.

After losing its Group match opener to the University of North Carolina, 3-0, U-M reeled off five straight victories to earn the 2006 NIRSA Men's College Club National Championship in Tucson, Ariz. capped by a 1-0 triumph Nov. 18 in the final over Illinois.

"Things finally came together this

season at the end because of the work we put into starting at tryouts," said sixth-year U-M coach Jeff Shuk, who lives in Redford. "Having a complete staff of three coaches for the first time was huge."

Shuk, former varsity boys coach at Redford Union and Birmingham Seaholm, was assisted this season by Livonia Churchill girls varsity coach Dave Hebestreit, a recent heart transplant recipient, and former Churchill standout Eric Scott.

"Instead of picking our 24 best players at tryouts, we picked the 24 players that made the best team, players who

filled roles, big or small, which paid off in Arizona," said Shuk, who played with Hebestreit at Schoolcraft College before going on to Aquinas College.

A total of 240 teams competed throughout the year to go to the nationals. Michigan went 1-1 in the regional, losing 1-0 to Ohio University, but the Wolverines had already locked up a berth in the 24-team field by finishing the regular season at 10-1-1.

After starting out with a loss to UNC, the U-M Club team regrouped in the tournament with victories over

PLEASE SEE U-M CLUB, A11

Spartan cagers roll

BY TIM SMITH
STAFF WRITER

Durrell Summers keeps on scoring bundles of points and Redford Covenant keeps on winning games.

With senior wing guard Summers pouring in 28 points (along with 10 rebounds), the Spartans rolled to a 62-38 victory Tuesday night over host Allen Park Inter-City Baptist.

The win improved Covenant's record to 4-1 while Inter-City Baptist dropped to 3-2.

The Spartans stormed out to a 21-6 lead after one quarter and outscored the Chargers 13-5 in the second to build an insurmountable 34-11 halftime margin.

Also playing an excellent game for Covenant was senior center Stephen Chester, who tallied a double-double with 13 points and 12 rebounds. Contributing six points was sophomore Jamonne Chester.

Nick Packwood scored 11 points for Inter-City Baptist.

Covenant's next action is 7:30 p.m. Friday at home, against Oak Park Academy.

Next week, the Spartans will participate in a couple of holiday tournaments. They will square off against Detroit Country Day at 7:20 p.m. Wednesday at the "Roundball Classic," slated for Oakland University in Rochester Hills.

Then, Covenant is scheduled to compete 8 p.m. Friday, Dec. 29, at the Meijer Holiday Hoops Invitational, at Michigan State University's Breslin Center.

Covenant will meet Cedar Springs in that contest.

tsmith@hometownlife.com | (734) 953-2106

Canton matmen take 13-1 record into holiday break

BY ED WRIGHT
STAFF WRITER

Several members of Canton's wrestling team passed out pins for the holidays Wednesday night.

The recipients no doubt would have preferred gift certificates.

The state-ranked Chiefs pinned nine foes in their decisive victories over Monroe (45-27) and Belleville (40-22) at a quad meet held in the Salem gymnasium. The double-header sweep improved coach Casey Randolph's No. 9-ranked Division 1 team to 13-1.

"The biggest thing tonight was that I saw a lot of improvement since our tournament on Saturday," said Randolph. "On Saturday, I was a little frustrated with how we wrestled overall, but tonight we were much better. We attacked better on our feet and we were more aggressive."

Leading the pin parade for the Chiefs was senior heavyweight Donnie Laramie who dropped Monroe's Chris Bonnia in 30 seconds before taking down Belleville's Jacob Sweeney in 2:18.

PLEASE SEE WRESTLING, A11



BILL BRESLER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Canton's 160-pounder Kiel Price gets the upper-hand against Monroe's Matt Pitcher Wednesday night in a quad meet at Salem. Price won handily, 17-0.

Sidelines

Salem wrestling team get-together

Former Salem wrestlers, their family and friends are invited to a get-together 8 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 28, at the Plymouth Elks Club, which is located on Ann Arbor Road, just east of Lilley.

The Rocks will be hosting a varsity team tournament earlier in the day in the Salem gymnasium. The first matches are set to begin at 9 a.m.

Five for WSU Hall

Canton resident and former Garden City East football star Keith Anleitner leads a class of five to be welcomed into Wayne State University's Athletic Hall of Fame in early February.

Anleitner went on after high school to excel with Wayne State's football team during the 1970s, at that time called the Tartars. Other 2007 inductees include baseball players Naif Baidoon and Michael Newsted and softball player Jennifer (Smith) DenDooven while former WSU basketball player and announcer Cliff Russell will receive the Hall of Fame Honor Award.

The official induction ceremony is Saturday, Feb. 3, at historic St. Andrew's on the Wayne State campus in Detroit. A reception is slated for 11:30 a.m., followed by lunch and the program.

GC alumni hoops

The annual Garden City varsity boys basketball Alumni Game is scheduled for Wednesday, Dec. 27, at the high school.

Players from the 1980s will compete in a 6:30 p.m. game with more-recent Cougars (1990s to the present) invited for a 7:30 p.m. contest.

Those who would like to play are asked to call Cougars head coach Greg Williamson at (734) 762-8350.

Holiday shootout

Suburban Ice-Farmington Hills will be the site of the Mission Hockey Holiday 3-on-3 Shootout for "B" level mini mite, mite, squirt and pee wee teams 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 30.

The tournament features a three-game guarantee, with games consisting of two 10-minute running time periods. Teams will play one game per hour and the top two teams in each division will play for the championship.

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U-M CLUB

FROM PAGE A10

Colorado State (1-0), Missouri (3-0), Indiana (2-0) and host Arizona (1-0) before capturing the title on a goal by junior Brent Medema of Portage.

"It's a fitting way for our seniors to leave after years of hard work," Medema said. "We talked for a long time about how good we were that that we should win the nationals. We finally decided to show everyone else, too."

U-M goalkeeper Alex Lubyansky posted 11 shutouts this year while giving up only eight goals in 15 goals, including three in a regular season loss.

The Ukraine native is expected to receive a tryout next month with the well-known Dynamo Kiev professional European club team.

"I couldn't have scripted a better storybook ending to my career at Michigan," Lubyansky said. "To win this championship under the Arizona lights, with all my best friends, against our biggest rivals, is the greatest memory I take with me from Michigan."

Other members of the U-M Club team included:

Seniors - Aaron Swick, Westerville, Ohio; Scott Cottrell, Kalamazoo; Akin Oni-Orisan, Ypsilanti; Jeremy Schwartz, Greenrae, Conn.;

Juniors - Ben Beatty, Madison, Wis.; Gari Martinovski, Dearborn Heights; Jon Tshiamala, East Lansing; Cyrus Shabrang, Midland; Jon LaCross, East Lansing; Jeff Jackson, Portage; Hugh Churchill, Troy; Ben Crotte, Portage; Jason Riley, Ann Arbor; Justin Aramaki, Ann Arbor; Brad Murphy, Brighton; Tom Huls, Plymouth;

Sophomores - Tom McCurdy, Portage; Joey Perosky, Sterling Heights; Freshmen - Kegan Lovelace, Plainwell; Ike Odum, Ann Arbor; Miles Jackson, Washington, D.C.; Matt Staton, Ann Arbor.

"After having such a successful regular season, it was a bit of a downer to lose at the regionals," Hebestreit said. "After the shocking, last-second loss, the team came together, refocused, and did exactly what they talked about ... win a national championship."

"It was great to see the men focus on something and accomplish it. This team, although a club team, has the ability to compete with any varsity team in the state."

OT VERDICT

FROM PAGE A10

Glenn came out crisp and decisive, moving the ball on offense and playing strong man-to-man defense that didn't give Wayne many good looks at the basket.

The Rockets rolled to an 8-2 lead before the Zebras whittled it down to 12-11 at the end of the quarter. A 12-8 surge gave Glenn a 24-19 lead 3:38 from halftime and Young's team padded it out to 34-25 at the half.

Six players scored for Wayne but four were in double figures and Antonio Jones had nine. Hill led all scorers with 18 points, Woodson added 17, Mike Lee scored 15 and Abney

reached 10. Glenn got points from nine players, five of whom reached double figures. Stefan Marken hit 13, Jones scored 12, Keshawn Martin and Hardison reached 11 each and Jackie Wilson got 10.

"The game means everything," Young said, "but as far as the league standings are concerned, it means nothing."

"It means a great deal going into Christmas break," Woodard said. "The loser has to regroup."

The two teams don't return to action until after the holiday break.

Glenn and Wayne will play again on Tuesday, Jan. 9 with the Rockets at defending WLAA champ Northville, while the Zebras host Livonia Stevenson.

Rocks fall in double-dual meet

BY ED WRIGHT STAFF WRITER

Class was in session for the young and improving Salem wrestling team during a quad meet held in the Rocks' gymnasium Wednesday night.

The Rocks learned some tough lessons with losses to Belleville (47-21) and Monroe (56-21), but they're lessons coach Greg Woochuk is confident will help them when final exam time comes in February and March.

"Our first-year sophomores are starting to realize what it takes to become winners," said Woochuk. "They have the talent, but now they have to put in the time and effort. They're just a step or two behind right now, so they're going to have to start working that much harder."

"We wrestled against two tough teams tonight. But we're going to have to beat teams like this to get to where we want to be at the end of the season."

Among the Rocks who were teaching their opponents lessons was junior 152-pounder Jeremy Epley, who defeated Belleville's Brandon Chapple, 6-2, before pinning Monroe's Aaron Maluche in 3:48.

Woochuk also pointed to 112-pound Kevin Bennett's pin over Monroe's Josh Lewis and Greg Taylor's victory over Monroe's Matt Pitchers as the



Salem's Jeremy Epley registered a hard-fought 6-2 victory over Belleville's Brandon Chapple to improve his record to 12-2 at 152 pounds.

night's highlights. "Jeremy's wrestling well," said Woochuk, referring to his junior captain's 12-2 record. "He's doing what he's supposed to be doing. Kevin Bennett really stepped up at 112; he really went after the guy. And Greg Taylor kept himself in the match by going after the guy."

Nick Steiger registered an impressive 13-8 over Monroe's Sean Turner at 125 to give the Rocks an early 3-0 lead. The Trojans took command, however, by winning the next four matches to secure a 21-3 edge.

Joining Epley in the victory circle against Belleville were

Steiger, a 5-0 winner over Tommy Kozak; 140-pound Kevin Hayter, who earned a thrilling 13-12 win over Brian Augsburger; and Hussein Ajami, who pinned Karre Cigan in 3:17 in the 215-pound battle.

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WRESTLING

FROM PAGE A10

"Donnie's second match was frustrating for him because the kid was kind of running and just trying not to get pinned," said Randolph. "The way I look at it is when you go out there, you wrestle. If you get beat, you get beat."

Senior captain Corey Phillips also had a strong night for Canton as he pinned Monroe's

Dave Taylor in 4:42 before disposing of Belleville's Steve Coak, 18-9.

Phillips is ranked fifth in the state at 140 pounds in the latest rankings distributed by the Michigan Wrestling Association.

"Corey looked good," said Randolph. "The Belleville kid is one of the best wrestlers he'll face. Corey started a little slow (he trailed 4-2 at one point), but he began to dominate about halfway through. He did whatever he wanted late in the

match." Randolph also praised the efforts of Steve Cox, who pinned Monroe's Sean Turner in 1:16, and Brent Winekoff, who took down Belleville's Robert Chapman at the 3:12 mark.

"Monroe and Belleville are both good teams and they were both good matches," said Randolph. "Any time you can beat a team like Belleville by 18 points, that's a good win because they have a very, very good program."

Also notching pins for the Chiefs were Brian Brubaker (171), Adam Powers (189), Donnie Watkins (103) and Carl Lucke (112).

The Monroe match was tied at 27-all before the Chiefs won the final three showdowns at heavyweight, 103 and 112 with falls.

Belleville trailed just 22-19 after nine matches before the Chiefs pulled away by winning four of the final five duals.

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THE WEEK AHEAD

BOYS BASKETBALL
Wednesday, Dec. 27
Red. Covenant vs. Country Day at Oakland Univ., 7:20 p.m.
Friday, Dec. 29
Red. Covenant vs. Cedar Springs at MSU Breslin Center, 8 p.m.
Tuesday, Jan. 2
Red. Covenant at A.A. Greenhills, 7:30 p.m.
Thursday, Jan. 4
Taylor Light & Life at Huron Valley, 7 p.m.
Friday, Jan. 5
M.H. Madison at Clarenceville, 7 p.m.
Thursday, Jan. 11
Northville at Churchill, 7 p.m.
Friday, Jan. 12
Franklin at Stevenson, 7 p.m.
PREP HOCKEY
Friday, Dec. 29
Franklin vs. Churchill at Edgar Arena, 6 p.m.
Thursday, Jan. 4
Royal Oak vs. Redford Unified at Redford Arena, 7:15 p.m.
Ladywood vs. G.P. South at Detroit City Arena, 7:30 p.m.
(Pioneer Tourney at A.A. Ice Cube)
Churchill vs. Milford, 5 p.m.
Birm. Unified vs. A.A. Pioneer, 7:30 p.m.
Friday, Jan. 5
Pioneer Tourney at Ice Cube, 5 & 7:30 p.m.
Franklin vs. Farmington at Edgar Arena, 6 p.m.
Saturday, Jan. 6
Stevenson vs. W.L. Central at Lakeland Ice Arena, 3:30 p.m.
Redford Unified at Troy, 6:15 p.m.
Ladywood vs. G.P. North at Arctic Pond, 6:30 p.m.
GIRLS VOLLEYBALL
Wednesday, Jan. 3
Franklin at A.A. Pioneer, 7 p.m.
Thursday, Jan. 4
Ply. Christian at Clarenceville, 6:30 p.m.
Light & Life at Luth. Westland, 6:30 p.m.

Saturday, Jan. 6
Macomb CC Tournament, 8 a.m.
Clawson Tournament, 8 a.m.
Grand Valley Invitational, 8 a.m.
W.L. Central Invitational, 9 a.m.
PREP WRESTLING
Thursday, Dec. 28
Salem Invitational, 9 a.m.
Saturday, Dec. 30
Oxford Invitational, 9:30 a.m.
Thursday, Jan. 4
Churchill at Salem, 6:30 p.m.
Wayne at Franklin, 6:30 p.m.
Stevenson at John Glenn, 6:30 p.m.
Saturday, Jan. 6
Fordson Invitational, 8:45 a.m.
Wyandotte Invitational, 9:30 a.m.
South Lyon Invitational, 10 a.m.
Troy Invitational, 10 a.m.
BOYS SWIMMING
Thursday, Jan. 4
U-D Jesuit, Saline at Stevenson, 7 p.m.
Saturday, Jan. 6
W. Bloomfield Invitational, 9 a.m.
W.L. Northern Invitational, 1 p.m.
GIRLS GYMNASTICS
Wednesday, Jan. 3
Liv. Red-Blue at Hartland vs. Milford-Lakeland, 7 p.m.
PREP BOWLING
Friday, Jan. 5
Clarenceville vs. Farmington-Harrison.
Ladywood vs. N. Farmington at Thunderbird Lanes, 3:30 p.m.
Saturday, Jan. 6
Ladywood Holiday Tournament at Westland's Oak Lanes, 10 a.m.
GIRLS COMPETITIVE CHEER
Saturday, Jan. 6
Berkeley Invitational, TBA.
MEN'S COLLEGE BASKETBALL
Tuesday, Jan. 2
S'craft at Scottsdale CC (Ariz.), 5 p.m.

Wednesday, Jan. 3
Davenport at Madonna, 7:30 p.m.
S'craft at Scottsdale CC (Ariz.), TBA.
Thursday, Jan. 4
S'craft at Scottsdale CC (Ariz.), TBA.
Saturday, Jan. 6
Indiana Tech at Madonna, 3 p.m.
Schoolcraft at Henry Ford CC, 3 p.m.
WOMEN'S COLLEGE BASKETBALL
Friday, Dec. 29
(Univ. Nevada-Las Vegas Tournament)
Madonna vs. S. Dakota Tech, 10 a.m.
Saturday, Dec. 30
Madonna vs. Campbellsville (Ky.), 2 p.m.
Wednesday, Jan. 3
Davenport at Madonna, 5:30 p.m.
Saturday, Jan. 6
Madonna at Indiana Tech, 1 p.m.
Schoolcraft at Henry Ford CC, 1 p.m.
ONTARIO HOCKEY LEAGUE
Thursday, Dec. 28
Whalers vs. Windsor Spitfires at Compuware Arena, 2 p.m.
Saturday, Dec. 30
Whalers vs. Guelph Storm at Compuware Arena, 7:05 p.m.
Monday, Jan. 1
Whalers at Owen Sound, 2 p.m.
Friday, Jan. 5
Whalers at London Knights, 7:30 p.m.
Saturday, Jan. 6
Whalers vs. Saginaw Spirit at Compuware Arena, 7:05 p.m.
Sunday, Jan. 7
Whalers at Windsor Spitfires, 2 p.m.
MAJOR INDOOR SOCCER LEAGUE
Friday, Dec. 29
Ignition at California Cougars, 10 p.m.
Friday, Jan. 5
Det. Ignition vs. Chicago Storm at Compuware Arena, 7:35 p.m.
Saturday, Jan. 6
Ignition at Baltimore Blast, 7:35 p.m.
TBA - time to be announced.

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New movie 'The Nativity Story' presents true image of times

The power of Mary was alive two thousand years ago and is still alive today. The Nativity Story, starring Keisha Castle-Hughes, opened in movie theaters throughout the United States recently.

Prior to the opening, I hosted a small conference with leaders from the Evangelical, Catholic and Orthodox Churches along with Imam Mardini and David Crumm, religious writer for the Detroit Free Press where we all presented the traditions of our faith.

The movie itself was a strikingly true image of 1st century Palestine which was occupied by the Romans and controlled by the religious authority of the Herodian family in which Herod the Great and his son, Herod Antypas were the ruling king and heir to the throne.

The content of the movie was very close to church tradition which is expressed in the Gospel of St. Luke. Mary was young and her relationship with her cousin Elizabeth was a living symbol of what a loving relative should be; helping a family member going through a hard time, a family member with important questions but finding no simple answer.

The portrayal of the journey of Mary and Joseph invites the audience to join them on their most difficult and dangerous trip as they made their way through mountains and rivers, enduring weather, lacking food, security, and safety. In comparison, this same trip from Nazareth to Bethlehem, today, would be impossible due to the huge wall erected by the government of Israel.

However, it is against this background that the message of God has reached man. Through this virginal birth, we are challenged to call out to all mankind that peace is at hand. Peace comes to all those whom the angels call, to those of good will, and to all mankind regardless of religious background.

Mary can be a uniting force, a reminder that the Child born of her; the Messiah, Jesus the Lord, has come, not only to certain Christians, but sent by God to all

The audience must remember that this is a movie, made in Hollywood, with imperfect actors and directors. We need to be reminded that religious and moral values spring out from the hearts of every church community and not from television or the media.

mankind. It is an invitation, not a coercing call. So, we must treasure the respect and love we hold for each other. But, we must also be careful within the boundary of our relationships to not discredit each other's point of view.

The Christian church has two schools of thought; one holds the church traditions and the other holds the Scripture only. You might be surprised that the Holy Quran, the Muslim Scriptures, speaks of the Virgin Mary more than the Christian Scriptures. My own church has volumes of books with descriptions of Mary, the Theotokos (Mother of God). She is known as "the mother of the Lamb", "the Shepherd", "the restoration of the fallen Adam", "the faith of those who pray in silence" and "the heavenly ladder".

This is what I hold and treasure, but this may not be the views of my neighbors. All points of view must be heard, but not imposed or violated.

The audience must remember that this is a movie, made in Hollywood, with imperfect actors and directors. We need to be reminded that religious and moral values spring out from the hearts of every church community and not from television or the media.

I hope and pray that those who see the movie will see in it a God who has struggled for thousands of years to call on His creation to reflect on the purpose of why they were created; to love God from their heart, soul, and mind. But this prayer is to no avail if you forget your neighbor.

The Rev. George H. Shalhoub is the pastor of St. Mary Antiochian Orthodox Basilica in Livonia.



The Rev. George H. Shalhoub

Memories of a 'small town' Christmas live on today

It was Christmas time, 1966. A little girl was dropped off in downtown Plymouth to shop by herself. "Town," to her little mind was a big deal; and she opened the shiny glass doors that led into the big store on Main Street — the S.S. Kresge Five and Dime. Across the creaky wooden floors she walked, wide-eyed with wonder at all the notions and goods for sale, looking for the perfect Christmas gift for her mom. Her pocketbook was filled with nearly four dollars!

She smelled a delicious scent as she meandered past the soda fountain lined with people sitting on shiny, chrome stools with red seats, drinking Coca-Cola and milkshakes and munching on freshly cooked fries and burgers. Through the activity and the crisp excitement of Christmas she saw it: a pretty little box containing bubble bath, housed in a champagne bottle with foil at the neck.

The bottle was nestled between two champagne glasses, and each glass held two perfect plastic orchids, purple ones. "Beautiful," she mused, "The perfect gift for my mom."

To the checkout counter she went, and proudly paid a lady with a turquoise smock. She had 37 cents left, "Enough to buy candy for a whole month!" Then she went to meet her mom in the rear of the Kresge store. Through the shiny glass doors she went. Then she stopped. She eyed the huge, wide wooden stairway that led to the parking lot.

Cautiously, her small hand took hold of the big wooden handrail, and she began to make her way down the steps, placing each little foot carefully down, step by step. Then it happened, her worst fear. Down she tumbled, down, down, down, one hard step after another, until she landed at the bottom of the tall stairs. She heard the crash of broken glass and smelled the sweet scent of bubble bath.

With tears in her eyes, she lifted herself from the floor. She knew she had broken her precious cargo. Liquid seeped into paper as the contents filled the bag, and sadness filled her heart. Broken glass and bubbles sparkled and twinkled upon the floor. She had broken her mother's gift, and made an awful mess. Her heart sank as she heard the doors above her open. Then out came a lady in a turquoise smock. With a sweep of her hand, the Kresge lady scooped the little girl up and put the mess into a bag. She wiped away the tears, and said, "You wait here, I'll be right back."

The little girl heard the door open again, and the click of heels on the big wooden stairway. She looked way up to the top of the mountainous stairway. Down the stairway the lady came, carrying a box filled with sweet bubble bath in a champagne bottle with two champagne glasses, and two perfect plastic orchids, purple ones.

"Merry Christmas, honey," the lady said placing the precious cargo in a bag, and into the girl's

trembling little hands. And a Merry Christmas it was indeed, in a small town way.

This nostalgia isn't limited only to Plymouth — it's in the hearts and memories of those of us lucky enough to be raised in a small town. In towns like Farmington and other communities, there are still small businesses, operated by real people trying very hard to keep their doors open in Michigan's poor economy, threatened by mega-retailers with prices they can't even begin to compete with.

"For lease" is a sign too often seen. Many doors have closed because small businesses simply cannot afford to operate in today's world — unless local people make an effort to shop locally. If only people realized how important their individual purchases are to the small business owner. Sometimes these businesses are just one customer away from closing their doors, and ultimately limiting the overall selection we have as consumers.

Years ago, people didn't go to corporate-owned mega-malls to spend exorbitant amounts of money on Christmas gifts. In those days, we went into the hub of the community where we lived, and we made our purchases right there.

There is no better time than now to simplify our holidays, and to be grateful for our blessings. At a time when so many across the world have suffered war-torn lives and natural catastrophes, this holiday season is a particularly powerful time to appreciate our blessings and to be grateful for what we do have. It's a time when most people want to spend less time shopping and more time with family, friends and loved ones.

I walked down Main Street in Plymouth recently. Wiltse's is still there, and even Pete's Shoe Repair has survived the years. But the Mayflower is gone, and the Penn Theatre sits like a ghost overlooking Kellogg Park. The space that once was Kresge's is now filled with fancy Italian "eateries." The walkway between the stores remains, leading to the same parking lot, now multi-story. And, strangely enough, the stairway that led from Kresge's to the parking lot is still there, too.

I stood there looking at the stairway, the shiny glass doors and the wooden handrail. I walked inside and thought about Christmas, and the kindness of strangers that often comes at a time when you really need a hand. I thought about the joy of giving a special gift to someone you love. After all, that's what Christmas is really all about.

As I turned and began to walk away, sunlight from the west shone in through the window, and caught a tiny piece of glass on the floor. For a brief moment it sparkled and twinkled. I remembered the story of that little girl who fell down those stairs, and broke her mommy's Christmas present. How could I forget — that little girl was me.

Cindy Gray is a free-lance writer, handwriting analyst, and yoga teacher. She works in the clerk's office at the city of Farmington Hills.



Cindy Gray

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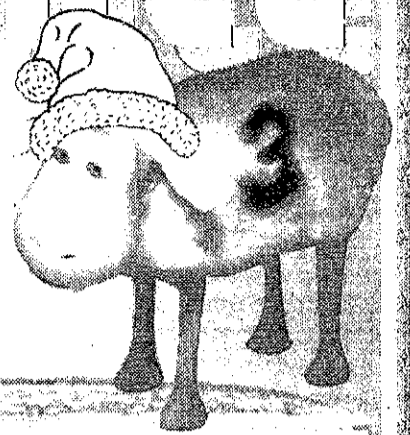
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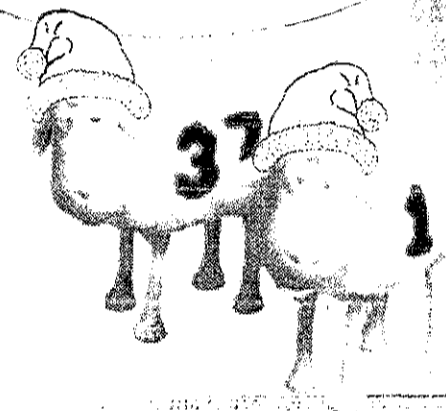
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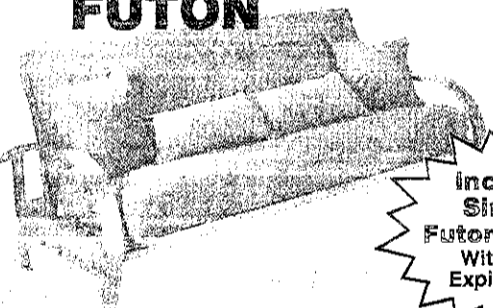
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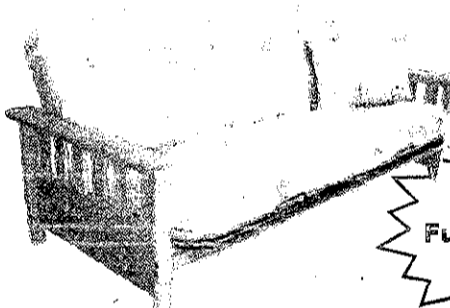
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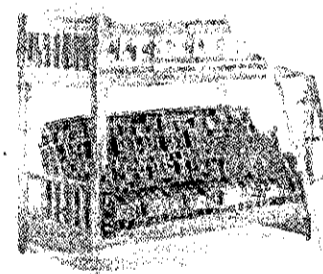
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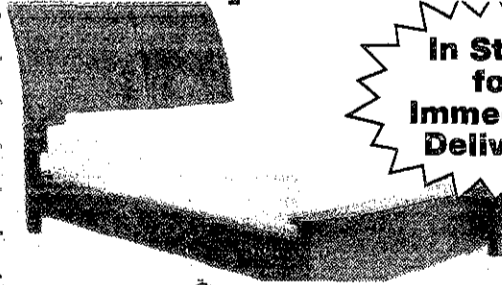
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