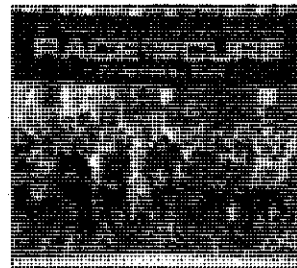


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TOM HAWLEY | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Fire on Ice Cafe owner Randy Hermiz is getting help at his new business from his sisters Helen (left) and Mary.

Cafe offers food in nice atmosphere

BY LEANNE ROGERS
OBSERVER STAFF WRITER

Since opening his Fire on Ice Cafe a month ago, owner Randy Hermiz concedes that business has been slow — but he sees a positive trend.

"We get a lot of repeat customers, that tells me we're doing a good job," Hermiz said. "I tell people to let me know if the food isn't good and I'll sell the place."

I'm very confident in what we make."

Located on the north side of Warren just east of Merriman, Fire on Ice Cafe specializes in panini sandwiches, but the menu also includes cooked-to-order hamburgers, french fries, salads, smoothies, coffees and bagels.

"We're a Panera and Starbucks combination. It's a place for something to eat, but

not fast food," Hermiz said. "We have nice mood music, a nice atmosphere. This is more specialized. I'm not looking to be a jack of all trades and master of none."

The restaurant is located in the space formerly occupied by Mary Ann's Polish Kitchen, but no traces of that business remain.

"It's all new, from ceiling to floor. It took a lot of money and hard work to change this place. I built the cabinets, painted the ceiling — my hands were on everything," Hermiz said. "I didn't want it to be what it was before. The appliances are all new. The most expensive thing you can't see is the new ventilation system."

The most popular sandwich has been the Mediterranean panini sandwich which has

Please see **CAFE, A2**



The recently opened Fire on Ice Cafe is located on the north side of Warren just east of Merriman near Bob's of Canton-Westland.

Gas prices put dent in FISH dial-a-ride service

BY LEANNE ROGERS
OBSERVER STAFF WRITER

A local group that provides free rides to medical and other appointments for the seniors and handicapped residents needs help, but soaring gas prices are putting a crimp into

their efforts.

Serving residents of Garden City, Westland and Livonia, FISH Dial-A-Ride of Western Wayne County has 12 volunteer drivers but actually needs another 15 volunteers.

"The price of gas is making it hard — the drivers pay for

their own gas and use their own vehicles. There is no reimbursement for mileage," said Gary Simon. "We probably get 15 requests a week from people who are unable to drive and have no alternative transportation."

Volunteer drivers can specify

days, times and areas they're willing to drive. FISH Dial-A-Ride transports to a wide area — north to Maple, west to Ann Arbor and east just past Woodward to the Detroit Medical Center.

Please see **GAS, A2**

Good marks

Board gives schools chief top review, contract extension

BY SUE MASON
OBSERVER STAFF WRITER

Using words like outstanding and extraordinary to describe its schools chief, the Wayne-Westland school board has agreed to offer Superintendent Greg Baracy a one-year contract extension.

The extension came as the result of a glowing performance evaluation that praised him and his staff for finding "extraordinary ways to contain costs and preserve educational programs" in spite of the state's failing economy.

"He received an outstanding evaluation due to his deep commitment, strong work ethic and passion for the students and the community," said school board President Skip Monit. "Once again he has received an evaluation with the highest accolades. It's an evaluation he definitely earned and he deserved."

Baracy was evaluated on eight points — professional leadership and personal qualities, curriculum and instruction, business and finance and community, board relations, intergovernmental and student relations.

He was lauded for his "high energy level" in dealing with all aspects of district operations and his ability to motivate his staff to address the goals set for the district by the school board.

One by one, board members addressed Baracy, thanking him for his leadership and acknowledging his commitment to education.

"Thank you for being the person you are," said Trustee Ed Turner about Baracy's leadership.

"I can say unequivocally that he is one of the best superintendents in this county, if not this state," said school board Trustee Terrance McClain. "Other superintendents value his opinion and his knowledge."

"We're extremely fortunate to have him," said Trustee Steve Beecher. "He's had the opportunity to go elsewhere for more money and had chosen to stay here. He's committed to education, committed to moving this district forward, and we continue to move forward because of his leadership."

"He's a wonderful person to work with," said board Vice President Cindy Schofield. "He has integrity and has been honest with us. When you go to functions and hear what other districts are going through, I can't fathom that happen here. That's a tribute to your leadership."

"He still has a passion for what he does," added Trustee Frederick Weaver. "We're honored to have a superintendent who has a passion for the kids and moving them forward."

Baracy thanked the school board for its vote of confidence and for the ability to continue serving as superintendent.

"But I'm not naive, this didn't happen because of me," he said. "I have an outstanding cabinet and I'm grateful for the many contributions of my administrators and administrative team. They enable me to do an outstanding job. I share this with them."

The one-year extension does not include an improvement to Baracy's current contract.

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



TOM HAWLEY | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Anticipation ...

Westland John Glenn High School Principal Joan Sedik grimaces as the Seatbelt Convincer plunges down the track, letting her experience what it was like to be in a collision. The simulator was one of two Wayne County Sheriff Warren Evans brought to the school to kick off his Seatbelt Convincer Program. For story and photos, see Page A5.

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LPS candidates share views on outsourcing, safety issues

BY REBECCA JONES
OBSERVER STAFF WRITER

With more children bused to school, the audience at the final Livonia Public Schools candidate forum wanted to know candidates' ideas about transportation outsourcing and safety. Incumbent Tom Bailey said the school district should be purchasing a few new buses every year as part of a replacement cycle, but said that hasn't happened. "We didn't buy any buses last year and haven't purchased any this year," he said.

Greg Oke, elected one year ago, said he was opposed to any form of privatization and that the district should think about buying more of its own buses. He also suggested installing cameras, or rotating them among buses with the most problems. Patrice Mang agreed that could be one answer. She also suggests opening more schools to reduce the need for buses and shorten routes. Other questions at the debate, hosted by the Livonia PTSA, included candidates' views on asking teachers to pay health care premiums and higher co-

pays to help the budget crunch, seeking grants, and drug and bullying curriculum. Mang said although teacher contract issues are a negotiated item, not a board decision, she said she wouldn't have a problem with that, if it happens from the top down. "We are at a time when everybody has to give back a little." "I would be ashamed to go before our community and ask for that," Bailey said. Oke added that employee groups have looked out for the district's financial situation, but he would be hesitant to change the com-

pensation packages too much because the district has to be able to attract top talent. All agreed that a grant writer would be useful. Mang said she has written and received grants and is teaching a vocational education class right now that's funded by a grant she procured. One person in the audience asked about the idea of a partnership between the building trades students and city, to fix up foreclosed homes for resale. Oke said it would be worth looking at and Mang said it had merit. Bailey said while it's an innovative suggestion, the

district doesn't have the kind of money to do it. In summary, Mang expressed concern about declining enrollment since the Legacy Initiative was implemented two years ago; at the same time, the local Montessori school's enrollment has gone up. "They're sending us a message. They want some change," she said. "How are we going to fix this problem?" Mang said she would work with board members to move forward. Oke said people need to ask themselves if they're happy with the school district. If so, he said, vote for the current board

members. "If change needs to be made," he said, "who out of each candidate do you feel is able to move the district forward?" Oke said he has done that. Bailey said he has always been prepared, made himself available to the community and taken school board courses "all to be a better trustee." "I promise to put my heart and soul into every decision I make, just as I have done in the past."

Livonia PTSA Council's School Board Candidate Forum will be rebroadcast at 7 p.m. April 29 at 7 p.m. on Channel 19 for Comcast/Westland viewers.

Rotary grant buys kids' books

BY JULIE BROWN
OBSERVER STAFF WRITER

Rotary District 6400 Gov. Jennifer Jones brought good news to the Westland club April 10. Jones, a member of the Windsor Roseland club, presented a check for \$1,000 to support work in Westland's Norway neighborhood, a Rotary District Simplified Grant. "First of all, it's a very positive way to bring the (Rotary) Foundation to life," said Jones, a Windsor resident. "It's about the community as well as our world community." Westland Rotary applied for a grant to buy books for

children at Jefferson-Barns and Lincoln elementaries in the Wayne-Westland district, said Lou Toarmina, club president. "It just shows how good Rotary is at keeping the money in their own community. That's why it's the greatest service organization in the world." In addition to books, the local Rotarians have provided backpacks and school supplies for the students. Additional money will pay for benches at Jefferson-Barns and a public address system at Lincoln, he said. Jones noted money donated to the Rotary International Foundation was set aside, with some \$27,000 going to about

25 clubs for projects. District 6400, which includes Windsor and the surrounding Ontario area, also stretches west to Adrian. District Simplified Grants support the service activities of Rotary districts locally and abroad. Since the program began in 2003-04, more than 1,160 grants totaling more than \$17 million have been awarded to districts in almost 60 countries, according to www.rotary.org. Rotary International's Web site. Westland Rotary meets 12:15 p.m. every Thursday at the Wayne-Westland Salvation Army on Venoy south of Palmer. New members are welcome.

AROUND WESTLAND

Day of prayer

The Wayne/Westland/Garden City Ministerial Association is hosting a National Day of Prayer event noon Thursday, May 1 at Westland City Hall. Everyone is invited. For more information, call Cathy Fisher at (734) 306-8242.

Ice show

Sixty-five Westland's skaters will strut their stuff during three live performances of the 2008 Westland Figure Skating Ice Show at Westland's Mike

ON THE WEB

Look for the expanded version of Around Westland on the Westland page of our online edition at www.hometownlife.com.

Modano Ice Arena, 6210 N. Wildwood, just north of Ford. Show times are 7 p.m. Friday, May 2, 6 p.m. Saturday, May 3, and 1 p.m. Sunday, May 4. This year's theme is "Enchanted." Tickets are \$8 for adults and \$6 for children and seniors.

Presale and group rates are available. For more information call (734) 729-4560.

Dining to Donate

Rocky's Family Dining in Westland is hosting a "Dining to Donate" to benefit the Westland John Glenn High School Football Boosters. The all-day event on Tuesday, April 29, allows diners to donate 20 percent of their bill to the boosters, so long as they simply tell the cashier that they support John Glenn football. Rocky's is at 1622 S. Wayne Road, just north of Palmer.

RELAY FOR LIFE BENEFITS

Teams signed up for Westland's annual Relay for Life are busy fund-raising in advance of the 24-hour walk. Slated for 10 a.m. Saturday, May 31, to 10 a.m. Sunday, June 1, the relay will be held at Westland Jaycee Park at Hunter and Wildwood. Teams can announce their fund-raiser by sending the information by e-mail at smason@hometownlife.com. Upcoming events include: Bowling for a Cure. Town N' Country Lanes will host a Bowling for a Cure fund-raiser for the

American Cancer Society Relay for Life at 6 p.m. Saturday, May 17. The cost is \$20 per person and includes three games, shoes and pizza. There also will be prizes and an auction. Registration is a 5:15 p.m. To purchase tickets, call Jennifer at (734) 634-6157 or by e-mail at Jlynn8582@aol.com. All tickets will be sold prior to the event. Town N' Country Lanes is at 1100 S. Wayne Road at Avondale. Shop for a Cure. A Shop for a Cure shopping extravaganza will be held 6-9 p.m. Friday, April 18, at American Legion Post 32 on Newburgh between Joy and Ann

Arbor Trail, Livonia. The Body Shop at Home, Tastefully Simple, Party Lite, Comfort Zone, Longaberger and Sipada Jewelry will be featured with a portion of the sales benefitting the Westland Relay for Life. There also will be drawings, refreshments, specials and Mother's Day gifts. Tips for a Cure. Westland Mayor William Wild will be the celebrity bartender for a Wild Walkers' fund-raiser 5:30-8 p.m. Thursday, May 22, at Malarkey's, 35750 Warren Road. Tips raised will support the American Cancer Society Relay for Life.

WAYNE-WESTLAND STUDENT OF THE MONTH

Name: Jane Awoh, 10
Grade/School: Fifth-grade at Edison Elementary, Westland
Parents: Uchenna Awoh-Wilson
Nominated by: Barbara Case
Reason for nomination: Jane is being nominated for Student of the Month for several reasons. Jane works very hard at school and has been on the honor roll every marking period. She serves on Edison's service/safety patrol as a classroom assistant. Jane has been involved in Girl



Jane Awoh

Scouts for the last two years. She has always shown respect for and is caring of others. Jane is an outstanding student. **Future plans:** To become a pediatrician. **What do you like about school:** I like to learn about math and English because they help me have more knowledge. **Favorite subject:** Spelling because you can learn words that are really hard. It also helps you with vocabulary. (She was runner-up in Edison's spelling bee.) **Roles models:** My sister Becky and my mother. They teach me the rules of life so I can learn more.

CAFE

FROM PAGE A1

chicken, feta cheese, spinach, onion and homemade hummus. With the most expensive sandwich costing \$6 with chips or adding fries for an additional 50 cents, Hermiz said the restaurant offers a good value. "We're always open to suggestions. I'm here to make really quality food," Hermiz said. "It's important to us that people like what they get, especially with times being as

hard as they are. People don't want to spend on something that they really don't want." This is the first business venture for Hermiz, 25, who worked in restaurants while attending Wayne State University. He graduated in 2007 with a bachelor's degree in public administration and political science. Helping out at the restaurant are Hermiz's sisters Helen, 22, who is completing nursing school, and Mary, 17, who will graduate from Warren Mott High School in June and plans to eventually attend law school. All three

live with their parents in Warren where they grew up. "After three years working at a smoothie shop, I thought I'd never do restaurant work again," Helen Hermiz said. "I make the best smoothies around. I interact with the customers and talk with them. It's all very homey." Fire on Ice Cafe offers wi-fi service and recently added a flat-screen television. It's open from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. weekdays, stays open until 11 p.m. on Fridays and Saturday, and closes at 7 p.m. on Sundays.

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GAS

FROM PAGE A1

"There is a lot of need for this, the problem is finding volunteers who are willing to drive people to those appointments," said Cheryl Stepanian, Garden City's Maplewood Community Center supervisor. "Transportation is one of the biggest needs for seniors when you get to a certain age and don't drive anymore." Along with Inkster and Wayne, Garden City and Westland participate in the Nankin Transit Authority which provides bus rides to seniors and handicapped residents. Nankin Transit charges fares but limits rides to within the four participating communities. "I've had people tell me Nankin Transit is booked up, also, they put a priority on doctor appointments," said

Stepanian, adding the FISH Dial-A-Ride program is aimed at providing rides when alternatives like Nankin Transit aren't available. Agreeing that the high gas prices are hurting efforts to get volunteer drivers, Stepanian noted that a trip to Ann Arbor from Garden City or Westland would be about 20 miles each way. "That's probably two gallons of gas or about a \$7 donation and you're really helping someone out," said Stepanian. "This will be a huge problem as more people retire and need services. This is something I'd personally volunteer to do once I retire." A few times each month, Simon said rides are requested by wheelchair users which can mean a van might be needed. "I hate to turn anyone down. I'm in dire straits (about volunteers), especially with people on fixed incomes, transportation can put a big dent in your

bank account," he said. Even volunteering one day each month would be a benefit to the FISH Dial-A-Ride program, Stepanian said. "When people first retire in their 50s and 60s, while they are able to help out, they should set that example so the services will be there when they are in their 80s or 90s," she said. Stepanian has little trouble getting volunteer drivers for the Meals on Wheels program that takes food to local seniors. "They are local within Garden City and they are committed people," Stepanian said. "I think the FISH Dial-A-Ride is a great program. I wish more people would take the time to volunteer." For more information, call (888) 660-2007 and leave a message. Someone will return the call.

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Students learn about China through e-mails

BY SUE MASON
OBSERVER STAFF WRITER

When eighth-graders went to Wayne Memorial High School recently to see what activities are available to them, one of the displays was about China.

No, it wasn't about travel or about language. The China Club, as it's called, is about Wayne Memorial students communicating by e-mail with their counterparts at Changzhou Tianjibing Experimental Middle School in Jiangsu Province, China.

"We try to get to know what their culture is like, the similarities and the differences with ours," said Josh Lowe who has belonged to the club since December.

The exchange was set up by Superintendent Greg Baracy during an educational trade mission to China last June and July. Baracy signed a letter of understanding while at Changzhou Tian Jiabing Experimental Middle School that allows Wayne Memorial teachers and students to interact with their Chinese counterparts.

By February, the two groups had exchanged about eight e-mails. The process is slow, more like electronic snail mail because of the need for translators. Lowe has received two e-mails, while Harris had gotten three.

"They're small e-mails," said Lakinya Harris. "It's kind of hard because of the



TOM HAWLEY | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Wayne Memorial High School sophomores Lakinya Harris and Josh Lowe talk with Nicole Odom (left) and Brooke Pietruszka of Adams Middle School about the China Club.

language thing."

"We try to keep it basic," said Lowe. "We try to get to know them before we talk about other things."

What they have learned so far is a snippet of life in China. Education is a priority, a big deal, according to Harris. One high schooler they heard from changed schools because her grades weren't high enough.

"She had a B average, not an A," Harris said. "She did express that she was having difficulty at the school. She said the past school wasn't that nice, but she's making new friends."

"She worries about the same things we do," Harris added.

The teens said another stu-

dent wrote that "education was such a priority that she doesn't get time to learn ice skating."

Another cultural difference is that the Chinese prefer to eat like a family at the same time, although the students do admit to a penchant for Kentucky Fried Chicken and McDonald french fries.

"They prefer McDonald's over any other fries," Lowe said.

Both are 10th-graders at Wayne Memorial. Lowe likes China and would like to go there someday. Asked to join the club by Assistant Principal Sandra Morante, he's hoping to find out more about the culture.

"I want to see how they do things over there," he said.

Wild named Glenn's distinguished grad

Westland Mayor William Wild is a proud "John Glenn Rocket."

And come June 7, he will be honored by his alma mater as its 2008 Distinguished Alumni winner. Wild graduated with honors from John Glenn High School in 1986 and attended the University of Michigan-Dearborn.



He has been the owner of Scrap Busters U-Pull-It Auto & Truck Parts in Wayne for 20 years and is a recipient of the Automotive Recyclers of Michigan Presidential Award in 1996.

He served on the Westland Planning Commission 1999-2001 and on the Westland City Council for five years, including one year as council president. He was appointed mayor in January 2007 and served until he was elected to fill the remaining two years of the four-year term.

As mayor of Westland,

which is Michigan's 10th largest municipality, Wild oversees 19 directors and a total of 500 employees.

Wild supports a variety of charities, including the American Cancer Society's Relay for Life and CATCH - Caring Athletes Team for Children - and Henry Ford Hospital. He also is a member of the Westland Community Foundation, the Westland Lions Club and supporter of D.A.R.E. - Drug Awareness Resistance Education.

In his spare time, Wild enjoys playing hockey and helping coach his five-year-old son's "mini-mite" hockey team, and spending time with his family - wife Sherri and children Luke, Lily and Payton - particularly at their family cottage near Higgins Lake.

The award is presented annually and recognizes the achievement of a distinguished alumnus. Wild will be the guest of honor at a Distinguished Alumni Reception at 2:30 p.m. Friday, June 6, and participate in the Saturday, June 7, commencement ceremony.

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Senators offer opposing views on Blue Cross reform

BY HUGH GALLAGHER
OBSERVER STAFF WRITER



Allen

George

State Sen. Tom George, R-Kalamazoo, says he wants "to turn the screws" on Blue Cross Blue Shield to "make them fulfill their mission."

George is chairman of the Senate Health Policy Committee which is holding hearings on legislation to reform medical insurance laws in Michigan for the individual market.

The House bills, HB 5282-5285, were passed in October with a large bipartisan majority. The bills as passed are supported by Blue Cross Blue Shield, which has been heavily lobbying the Senate in their support.

George and Sen. Jason Allen, R-Traverse City, have each offered alternatives to the House bills. Testimony was taken at two hearings last week.

The House bills would:
 ■ Create a high-risk pool of guaranteed-access plan for those denied coverage, to spread some of the losses across all health care insurers in the state. Blue Cross is mandated by law to be an insurer of last resort and operates as a not-for-profit charity.

■ Allow Blue Cross to replace "community rating" with rate bands, which would allow the insurer to set different rates based on age, place of residence and other factors.

■ Set a loss ratio of 70 percent, meaning an insurer must spend 70 cents of each dollar collected on health care.

■ Set limits on renewal rate increases.

■ Allow Blue Cross Blue Shield's for-profit subsidiaries to sell other kinds of insurance. Their largest subsidiary is The Accident Fund of America which

is now restricted to selling workers' compensation insurance.

The House bills have drawn opposition from Michigan Attorney General Mike Cox, the UAW, AARP, the Consumers' Union and others. Blue Cross has argued that they are at a disadvantage as insurer of last resort at a time when the individual market is growing. It now represents 6 percent of those insured but is expected to increase as companies drop health care benefits and lay off employees.

OPPOSES HIGH RISK POOL

"Blue Cross says we should do these things because of growth in the individual market," George said last week. "Testimony is not supportive of their assertion that the market is growing."

George said some people are covered by COBRA, others find new jobs and some people who are forced to work two part-time jobs wouldn't be able to afford individual insurance, so are not in the market.

George is opposed to creating a high risk pool, as 35 states currently have.

"Those states don't have a carrier of last resort that doesn't pay taxes," he said. "They want to keep their tax status, take away the attorney general's oversight and allow their Accident Fund insurance to go into any kind of insurance."

George also questions Blue

Cross maintaining a \$2.5 billion reserve. He said his proposals are modeled on Pennsylvania, where Democratic Gov. Ed Rendell wouldn't approve rate increases for the insurer of last resort because of its high reserve.

"In the end they agreed to give the state \$100 million to expand SCHIP (the State Children's Health Insurance Program)," George said. "I have a Republican spin on this. We'll take the excess surplus to create tax credits for those buying in the individual market."

George proposes allowing Blue Cross's Accident Fund to move into selling other kinds of insurance in exchange for the insurer making a one-time contribution of \$100 million to the state treasury to pay for the tax credit.

His proposals also include prohibiting commercial insurers from raising rates or dropping people who develop health problems; allowing Blue Cross to charge higher rates to people with unhealthy behaviors; require Blue Cross to report to the Legislature on its expenditures for entertainment, advertising and lobbying; and require Blue Cross to place excessive surpluses into a state fund administered by the Treasury Department. George would cap the surplus at 600 percent of risk based capital. Blue Cross reserves are now 688 percent of RBC.

'TERRIBLE PRECEDENT'

Andrew Hetzel, vice president of corporate communications for Blue Cross, said George's views do not reflect what's happening across the state.

"Auto companies are downsizing and laying people off and this is affecting families," he said.

"Many are leaving group coverage and going into the individual market."

He said that taking \$100 million for the state is taking money from rate payers.

"This is a terrible precedent, you're going to tax paying companies and taking money from these companies to pay for tax credit support," he said.

He said the burden of taking on customers with high risk medical conditions was too great for one company to take on its shoulders.

"A high-risk pool makes it so that all insurers share the responsibility," Hetzel said. "It's a model that worked in 35 other states."

He said the model is different in each state, but that by allowing Blue Cross to remain tax exempt and creating a risk pool will give people with severe medical conditions two options for access to health insurance.

"George's one-on-one relationship is fundamentally flawed," said Hetzel. "As he well knows, Blue Cross is regulated by Public Act 350. Any insurance company in the state can choose to be regulated under 350 but they don't."

He said the act requires that Blue Cross do many other things beside being the insurer of last resort including supporting affordable Medigap coverage and providing group conversion coverage by charging customers a subsidy on premiums; subsidizing SCHIP by \$15.5 million in 2007; and subsidizing hospital charity care.

Hetzel said the Blues' reserve fund cannot be viewed as a monetary surplus.

"It's the consolidated assets of the corporation including the Accident Fund, cash, buildings,

assets, Blue Cross Assets, building," he said. "It's not a bank account of \$2.5 billion."

He said the reserve is well under the 1,000 percent cap imposed by the state.

TIGHT OVERSIGHT

While Blue Cross favors passage of the House bills in the Senate, Hetzel said he is more favorable to some of the proposals made by Allen, particularly reducing the waiting period from a year to six months for people with pre-existing medical conditions for all carriers.

Allen's proposal retains a high risk pool but tightens oversight. He proposes giving the insurance commission authority to order refunds to ensure rates are not excessive relative to costs; creating a nine-member Guaranteed Access Pool oversight board which would include the attorney general; require accountability reports on the individual market and guaranteed access pool; provide credits for wellness; raise the loss ratio to 75 percent for commercial carriers, 85 percent for Blue Cross and 90 for Medicare supplement; and narrow the rate bands.

"The problem with the House bill was that we didn't think there was the proper regulatory overview," said Norm Saari, Allen's chief of staff.

He said the House bills also didn't make it clear how it was going to serve the growing need for individual insurance.

Kurt Gallinger, vice president and counsel for Amerisure Cos. in Farmington Hills is the spokesman for The Coalition for a Fair and Competitive Insurance Market. His group is focused on opposing HB 5284 and 5285, which would allow

The Accident Fund to compete in selling other lines of insurance.

Gallinger said George's proposals did respond to some of their concerns but didn't put enough emphasis on creating a "firewall" between Blue Cross and its for-profit subsidiary. He said he is opposed to George's plan to have Blue Cross pay \$100 million to compete.

"We need to address unfairness in the competitive market," Gallinger said. "Since Sen. George came up with \$100 million, if you are going to address the issue of lost taxes, you need to look at \$3 billion."

He said under Public Act 350 Blue Cross shouldn't be using its charitable dollars to support its subsidiary.

"We want that part of the act enforced," Gallinger said. "When Accident Fund competes with our companies, we can't use charity money."

Gallinger said the state made a mistake when it reformed the laws governing Blue Cross in 1993.

"Blue Cross was not created to be a state insurance company to compete with other companies," he said.

George said there is room for compromise but that "these are two diametrically opposed versions."

"I'm comfortable enough in my position. I'm a physician in medical practice, I'm term limited and I'm comfortable doing what I think is right," he said.

The *Detroit Free Press* reported Friday that Attorney General Mike Cox and UAW President Ron Gettelfinger would hold a press conference on Monday to endorse George's proposals.

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Cheer for the hometown, read today's **SPORTS** section

Video crew hops in to tape rabbit shelter

BY TONY BRUSCATO
OBSERVER STAFF WRITER

Nearly 100 people, many carrying signs and wearing bunny ears, gathered in Kellogg Park Thursday morning cheering representatives and a film crew from Zootoo.com in hopes the pet lovers Web site will award the Midwest Rabbit and Rescue Re-Home in Plymouth a \$900,000 shelter makeover.

The rabbit shelter at 882 N. Holbrook finished sixth among the top 20 shelters in an online contest which will give the eventual winner up to \$900,000 for renovations. The second-place winner will receive \$10,000. The Plymouth group already has qualified for a \$5,000 cash prize.

Representatives from Zootoo.com and The Humane Society of the United States are visiting all 20 shelters and will name the winner May 21.

"I wanted to do something meaningful to help shelters around the country," said Zootoo.com founder Richard Thompson to the crowd. "I didn't know about rabbit rescues until Zootoo, so Zootoo has educated me as well because I was thinking dogs and cats."

Thompson also encouraged shelters to ban together and become one political voice to garner more financial help.

"Until you form a block of people, politicians aren't going to do anything," Thompson said. "Seventy percent of people in



PHOTO BY KIRSTEN GRAVDAHL

Nearly 100 people, many carrying signs and wearing bunny ears, gathered in Kellogg Park Thursday morning cheering representatives and a film crew from Zootoo.com in hopes the pet lovers Web site will award the Midwest Rabbit and Rescue Re-Home in Plymouth a \$900,000 shelter makeover.

a community don't even know where the local animal shelters are. It's a tragedy."

After addressing the crowd, the group visited the shelter which houses 150 rabbits to inspect operations and procedures, finances and community support.

"Everybody in the nation will know about little Plymouth, Michigan, which I am so proud of," said Debbie Toundaian of Midwest Rabbit & Re-Home, the only rabbit shelter in the national contest, after receiving an award from Zootoo in Kellogg Park.

Midwest founder Dominique Moroz was pleased with the support the shelter received

during the contest period. "Many times, when I spoke to people about starting the shelter (two years ago), they told me I would never get it off the ground," Moroz said. "But, there's the need and support and it happened."

Lauren Follmer, 16, of Novi was on hand to greet the guests from Zootoo in an effort to boost Midwest's chances of winning.

"It's important to raise awareness for our shelter and our bunnies," said Follmer. "Bunnies are the third most popular pet but people don't understand them."

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Sheriff's 'Convincer' pushes seat belt use

BY SUE MASON
OBSERVER STAFF WRITER

See our photo gallery online at www.hometownlife.com

It may have been the excitement that made Josh Jackson feel a rush of adrenalin as he was pulled backward up a short incline before being hurtled forward into a metal barricade. The impact caused an airbag to deploy although the seat belt he was wearing failed to lock.

"Overall, I think it was a life-changing experience," said the John Glenn High School senior who was the first student to try out the Wayne County Sheriff Department's Seat belt Convincer. "Even at 10-15 mph, you can see what would happen if it's 60-70 mph."

Wayne County Sheriff Warren Evans was at the Westland High School Tuesday morning to launch his "Seat belt Convincer" program. Using two simulators, Glenn students got the opportunity to feel the impact of a high-speed crash and see what can happen to belted and unbelted people - test dummies - in a rollover accident.

"Having been young once, I realize that kids this age tend to think they're indestructible," said Evans. "Our hope is to remind them that they are not and encourage them to wear their safety belts."

Evans has instituted the program in an effort to get the word out to young people about

the dangers of not wearing a seat belt.

While young people can try the Seat belt Convincer machine, the rollover simulator uses only test dummies to demonstrate what can happen to belted and unbelted passengers.

Statistics show the 85 percent of all Michigan motorists involved in traffic accidents in 2006 were wearing safety belts and that nearly 30 percent of people killed in traffic accidents had failed to use their vehicle restraint system.

According to John Roach of the Sheriff's Department, the convincer is making its debut now as a way to remind students about buckling up, especially during the prom and graduation season and summer vacation.

"Teenagers are less likely to wear belts and accidents in which the occupants were not wearing belts have a much higher rate of fatalities," he said.

On hand for the demonstration was Westland Mayor William Wild who said that while young drivers will say they drive safely, the demonstration may help "stress the importance of doing so."

"Anytime you can present a visual to young adults helps them grasp it better," he said. "I was surprised, in talking to the



PHOTOS BY TOM HAWLEY | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Glenn senior Kaylie Brincat, 17, grimaces as the Seat belt Convincer hits the barricade. "I've never been in an accident. It's new to feel the impact."

students, how many had already been in accidents."

Joining the students in trying the convincer was Glenn Principal Joan Sedik. Her trip down the ramp was greeted by the applause of the students.

"Just from how slow it was going gives you a real feel of what happens," she said. "I hope it made an impression on the kids."

"I think it would encourage

youth to use seat belts," added Jackson.

The program is for use by schools, churches and community groups anywhere in the county. All that's required is a pickup truck equipped with a trailer hitch. For more information or to schedule their use, call the Wayne County Sheriff's Road Patrol at (734) 721-2222.

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The first to try the Seat belt Convincer was John Glenn High School senior Josh Jackson who called the experience 'life-changing.'

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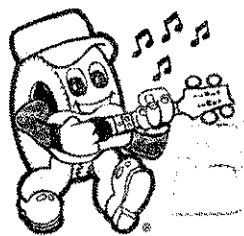
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- 22 **KANYE WEST** wsg RIHANNA, N.E.R.D. and LUPE FIASCO
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- 22 **TIM MCGRAW** wsg JASON ALDEAN and HALFWAY TO HAZARD
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- 23 **EDDIE MONEY** wsg IMPOSSIBLE TUESDAY ☼
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- 31 **TOM PETTY AND THE HEARTBREAKERS**
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THE PALACE OF AUBURN HILLS

JUNE

- 4 **JAMES TAYLOR AND HIS BAND OF LEGENDS**
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- 6 **ALICIA KEYS** wsg NE-YO and JORDIN SPARKS
THE PALACE OF AUBURN HILLS
- 9 **DAVE MATTHEWS BAND** wsg PAOLO NUTINI
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- 10 **JIMMY BUFFETT AND THE CORAL REEFER BAND**
DTE ENERGY MUSIC THEATRE
- 11 **CYNDI LAUPER, ROSIE O'DONNELL, ✕ THE B-52'S, TEGAN & SARA, THE CLIKS**
and HOSTED BY CARSON KRESSLEY - **TRUE COLORS TOUR**
DTE ENERGY MUSIC THEATRE
- 14 **JOHN MICHAEL MONTGOMERY** ☼ ☉
DTE ENERGY MUSIC THEATRE
- 15 **STEVIE NICKS / BOSTON - DOUG FEST 2008 ✕**
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- 18 **JACK JOHNSON** wsg MASON JENNINGS and MONEY MARK
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- 19 **NEWSBOYS** ☼ **ON SALE THIS FRIDAY!**
wsg SUPERCHICK and DECEMBERADIO
DTE ENERGY MUSIC THEATRE
- 20 **RANDY BACHMAN / BURTON CUMMINGS:**
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DTE ENERGY MUSIC THEATRE
- 21 **CHICAGO / THE DOOBIE BROTHERS ✕**
DTE ENERGY MUSIC THEATRE
- 22 **ABBA THE TOUR** ☼ ☉
MEADOW BROOK MUSIC FESTIVAL
- 27 **STEVE MILLER BAND** wsg JOE COCKER ✕
DTE ENERGY MUSIC THEATRE
- 27 **THE STEPCREW** *Celtic Tap Dance Fest* ☼ ☉
MEADOW BROOK MUSIC FESTIVAL
- 28 **TRACY MORGAN** *Comedian* ☼ ☉
MEADOW BROOK MUSIC FESTIVAL
- 29 **THE TEMPTATIONS / THE FOUR TOPS** ☼
DTE ENERGY MUSIC THEATRE
- 29 **"THE LION, THE WITCH AND ☼ ☉ THE WARDROBE"** (2PM & 7PM)
MEADOW BROOK MUSIC FESTIVAL

JULY

- 3 **GIN BLOSSOMS** wsg PAT MCGEE BAND ☼ ☉
DTE ENERGY MUSIC THEATRE
- 3 **1964 THE TRIBUTE** ☼ ☉
MEADOW BROOK MUSIC FESTIVAL
- 4 **TED NUGENT ✕** **ON SALE SOON!**
DTE ENERGY MUSIC THEATRE
- 5 **JONAS BROTHERS** wsg DEMI LOVATO
DTE ENERGY MUSIC THEATRE
- 7 **BON JOVI** wsg THE ALL-AMERICAN REJECTS
THE PALACE OF AUBURN HILLS
- 11 **MARTINA MCBRIDE ✕**
wsg JACK INGRAM and CHRIS YOUNG
DTE ENERGY MUSIC THEATRE
- 12 **ANITA BAKER ✕** **ON SALE THIS FRIDAY!**
DTE ENERGY MUSIC THEATRE
- 13 **CREEDENCE CLEARWATER REVISITED** ☼
DTE ENERGY MUSIC THEATRE
- 15 **MÖTLEY CRÛE** wsg BUCKCHERRY, ✕ PAPA ROACH, SIXX: A.M. and TRAPT
CRÛE FEST
DTE ENERGY MUSIC THEATRE
- 15 **KIDZ BOP LIVE! (2PM & 7PM)** ☼ ☉
MEADOW BROOK MUSIC FESTIVAL
- 17 **TRACE ADKINS** wsg KELLIE PICKLER ✕ and JASON MICHAEL CARROLL
MEADOW BROOK MUSIC FESTIVAL
- 18 **JOHN MELLENCAMP** wsg LUCINDA WILLIAMS ✕
DTE ENERGY MUSIC THEATRE
- 18 **"WEIRD AL" YANKOVIC ✕** **ON SALE SOON!**
MEADOW BROOK MUSIC FESTIVAL
- 19-20 **KID ROCK** **ON SALE THIS SATURDAY!**
DTE ENERGY MUSIC THEATRE
- 19 **CROSBY, STILLS & NASH**
MEADOW BROOK MUSIC FESTIVAL
- 20 **LAUGH-A-PALOOZA** featuring JON REEP ☉
MEADOW BROOK MUSIC FESTIVAL
- 21 **CINDERELLA / WARRANT** ☼ **ON SALE SOON!**
wsg LYNCH MOB and LYNAM
DTE ENERGY MUSIC THEATRE
- 24 **LIVE / COLLECTIVE SOUL / ✕** **ON SALE SOON!**
BLUES TRAVELER
MEADOW BROOK MUSIC FESTIVAL
- 25 **O.A.R.** wsg THE BEAUTIFUL GIRLS
MEADOW BROOK MUSIC FESTIVAL
- 26 **THE POLICE ✕**
wsg ELVIS COSTELLO and THE IMPOSTERS
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- 26 **DETROIT SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA ✕ ☉**
Mozart in the Meadow
MEADOW BROOK MUSIC FESTIVAL
- 27 **EARTH, WIND & FIRE ✕** **ON SALE SOON!**
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- 27 **DETROIT SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA ✕ ☉**
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MEADOW BROOK MUSIC FESTIVAL

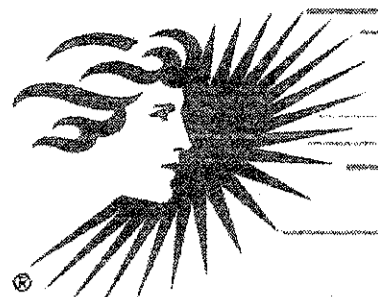
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31 **NEIL DIAMOND** **ON SALE MONDAY, MAY 5!**
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31 **TONY HAWK'S BOOM BOOM HUCK JAM** **X** **ON SALE SOON!**
wsg MIKE RELM
DTE ENERGY MUSIC THEATRE

31 "IF YOU GIVE A MOUSE A COOKIE" (2PM & 7PM) **S** **@**
MEADOW BROOK MUSIC FESTIVAL

AUGUST

1 **LASERSPECTACULAR - THE MUSIC OF PINK FLOYD** **S** **@**
DTE ENERGY MUSIC THEATRE

1 **DETROIT SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA** **X** **@**
Night at the Opera - Leonard Slatkin, Conductor
MEADOW BROOK MUSIC FESTIVAL

2 **ERIC BURDON AND THE ANIMALS**, **S** **@**
JACK BRUCE OF CREAM and MORE - **HIPPIEFEST 2008**
DTE ENERGY MUSIC THEATRE

2 **DETROIT SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA** **X** **@**
Russian Spectacular - Leonard Slatkin, Conductor
MEADOW BROOK MUSIC FESTIVAL

3 **GIPSY KINGS** **X** **ON SALE SOON!**
DTE ENERGY MUSIC THEATRE

3 **DETROIT SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA** **X** **@**
Salute to Bernstein and Sondheim
MEADOW BROOK MUSIC FESTIVAL

5 **SHERYL CROW** **X**
wsg JAMES BLUNT and TOOTS & THE MAYTALS
DTE ENERGY MUSIC THEATRE

6 **ROD STEWART** wsg BRYAN ADAMS
DTE ENERGY MUSIC THEATRE

7 **THE MANHATTAN TRANSFER** **S** **@**
MEADOW BROOK MUSIC FESTIVAL

9 **SLIPKNOT, DISTURBED, DRAGONFORCE, X**
MASTODON and MORE
ROCKSTAR ENERGY DRINK MAYHEM FESTIVAL
DTE ENERGY MUSIC THEATRE

9 **CHELSEA HANDLER** *Comedienne* **S** **@**
MEADOW BROOK MUSIC FESTIVAL

10 **LOS LONELY BOYS** wsg LOS LOBOS **X** **@**
MEADOW BROOK MUSIC FESTIVAL

12 **POP GO THE WIGGLES LIVE!** **ON SALE SOON!**
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THE PALACE OF AUBURN HILLS

14 **TRAVIS TRITT** wsg KEITH ANDERSON **S** **ON SALE SOON!**
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17 **THE STYLISTICS, HAROLD MELVIN'S BLUE NOTES** **S** **@**
and **THE MAIN INGREDIENT** featuring CUBA GOODING, SR.
70'S SOUL JAM
DTE ENERGY MUSIC THEATRE

17 **CHRIS ISAAK** **X** **ON SALE SOON!**
MEADOW BROOK MUSIC FESTIVAL

18 **JUDAS PRIEST, HEAVEN & HELL**, **ON SALE SOON!**
MOTORHEAD and **TESTAMENT - METAL MASTERS TOUR**
DTE ENERGY MUSIC THEATRE

21 **THIRD DAY, SWITCHFOOT**, **ON SALE SOON!**
ROBERT RANDOLPH & THE FAMILY BAND, JARS OF CLAY
and MORE - **MUSIC BUILDS TOUR**
DTE ENERGY MUSIC THEATRE

21 **GEORGE THOROGOOD** **X** **ON SALE SOON!**
& THE DESTROYERS / BUDDY GUY
MEADOW BROOK MUSIC FESTIVAL

22 **UB40** **S** **@**
DTE ENERGY MUSIC THEATRE

22 **FRANK CALIENDO** *Comedian* **@**
MEADOW BROOK MUSIC FESTIVAL

23 **NINE INCH NAILS** **ON SALE SOON!**
THE PALACE OF AUBURN HILLS

23 **BROOKS & DUNN / ZZ TOP** wsg **RODNEY ATKINS** **X**
DTE ENERGY MUSIC THEATRE

23-24 **WINE & FOOD FESTIVAL** **@**
MEADOW BROOK MUSIC FESTIVAL

24 **THE HUMAN LEAGUE, BELINDA CARLISLE** **S** **@**
ABC, A FLOCK OF SEAGULLS and **NAKED EYES**
REGENERATION TOUR
DTE ENERGY MUSIC THEATRE

24 **GET BACK! CAST OF BEATLEMANIA** **S** **@**
MEADOW BROOK MUSIC FESTIVAL

27 **THE ALLMAN BROTHERS BAND / X** **ON SALE SOON!**
BOB WEIR & RAT DOG
DTE ENERGY MUSIC THEATRE

29 **MAROON 5 / COUNTING CROWS** wsg **AUGUSTANA**
DTE ENERGY MUSIC THEATRE

30 **THE MUSIC OF LED ZEPPELIN** *A Rock Symphony* **S** **@**
DTE ENERGY MUSIC THEATRE

31 **THE TEMPTATIONS REVUE** featuring DENNIS **S** **@**
EDWARDS and **THE CONTOURS** featuring SYLVESTER
POTTS - **LEGENDS OF MOTOWN**
DTE ENERGY MUSIC THEATRE

SEPTEMBER

7 **BARRAGE "High Strung" Fiddle Fest** **S** **@**
MEADOW BROOK MUSIC FESTIVAL

9 **JOURNEY** wsg **HEART** and **CHEAP TRICK** **X**
DTE ENERGY MUSIC THEATRE

14 **TOBY KEITH** **ON SALE SOON!**
wsg **MONTGOMERY GENTRY**
DTE ENERGY MUSIC THEATRE

26 **CELINE DION**
THE PALACE OF AUBURN HILLS

COMING SOON

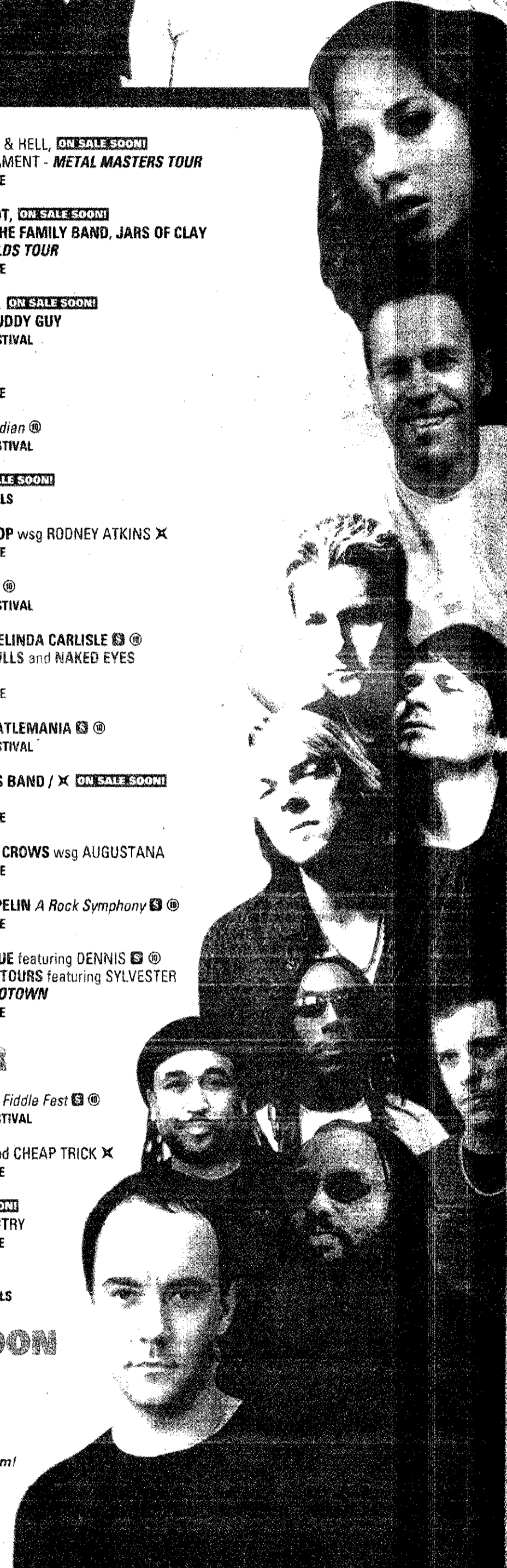
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Tammy Henderson poses with her Observer in an airport gift shop in Narita, Japan.

Wish you were here, here and here

When Tammy Henderson headed for Thailand for adult stem cell treatment, she took along her Garden City Observer to do a Wish You Were Here photo. But instead of one, she ended up with three, chronicling her trip to the Far East for treatment to repair her damaged heart.

She first posed for photo with the newspaper in the gift shop at the airport in Narita, Japan.

"That's all we saw of Japan, we had just enough time to take a photo and board our next flight," she said.

Husband John joined her for a second wish photo in front of a Chinese Budha in the Ancient City in Thailand then she used the floating market just outside Bangkok for a third wish snapshot.

Through donations, fundraising and a loan, the family raised some \$40,000 needed for the stem cell treatment. According to Henderson, the treatment cost less than expected, so they are close to meeting all of the costs.

A lawn sign that had promoted an ongoing can and bottle drive has been redone "to say thanks to all those who helped us reach our goal," she said.



They may have been in Thailand, but John and Tammy Henderson pose in front of a Chinese Budha in the Ancient City.



The floating market outside Bangkok offered the backdrop for Henderson's third photo with her Observer.

Two weeks after the treatment, Henderson reported that there had been no change in her condition.

"It can take up to six months for the full effect," she said.

If you go on vacation, be sure to take a picture with your Observer and send it to Sue Mason, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48150. Be sure to include your name and information about your photo.

May is Motorcycle Safety Month

Riding a motorcycle can be a fun and exhilarating experience. Unfortunately, motorcycle riders get into more fatal accidents than regular vehicles. As May is Motorcycle Safety Awareness Month, there are several tips motorcycle riders and would-be riders can follow to increase their safety on the road.

Motorcycle riders are much more physically vulnerable than other car drivers when it comes to collisions. Statistically you are 26 times more likely to die when riding a motorcycle than you are when riding in a car. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates that 1,658 motorcyclists' lives were saved in 2006 because they were wearing helmets. Another 752 could have been saved had they been wearing a helmet.

Other safety considerations like speeding may seem like over-exhausted rhetoric to your average car driver, but for a motorcycle rider the implications of speeding can be even more serious. One third of motorcyclist fatalities were speeding upon impact. Proper motorcycle training is also very important to ensure safety. One out of four motorcycle operators that were involved in fatal crashes had an invalid license. You must have a motorcycle endorsement on your license in order to operate a motorcycle in the

state of Michigan.

Motorcycle safety literature emphasizes visibility as another key factor in staying safe on a motorcycle. Assume you're invisible to other drivers and ride as defensively as possible. It's important to be aware of how positioning your motorcycle in a lane can ensure maximal visibility to the car drivers around you.

To find out more about how to ride a motorcycle safely you can check out "Proficient Motorcycling: The Ultimate Guide to Riding Well" by David L. Hough. You can also look at the Web site for the Motorcycle Safety Foundation at www.msf-usa.org. Another useful Web site with motorcycling tips, techniques and also some mechanical information is available at www.msrgroup.org.

As always the William P. Faust Public Library of Westland is here for your information needs. Stop by the reference desk, call us at (734) 326-6123 or search our catalog any time of the day online at www.westland.lib.mi.us.

Highlighted Activities

Independent Movie Night: 7 p.m. April 29.

Come join us for a viewing of "Grey Gardens." Meet Big and Little Edie Beale - high-society dropouts, mother and daughter, reclusive cousins of Jackie O.

thriving together amid the decay and disorder of their ramshackle East Hampton mansion. A feature film starring Drew Barrymore will be coming out about their lives in November. All are welcome. No registration is required. Refreshments will be provided.

Science Fiction and Fantasy Discussion Group:

7 p.m. April 30.

This month, we discuss "Tarzan of the Apes" by Edgar Rice Burroughs. We'll probably watch a couple of Tarzans, too - Weismüller vs. Lambert and more. If you can't come, check out our blog, at sfwestlandlibmius.blogspot.com. Everyone with an interest in science fiction or fantasy is welcome, but please read the book before the meeting.

Retirement Planning:

7 p.m. April 30.

Learn how to make your retirement dreams into reality. Join Andrew Gagne, associate financial advisor, to discuss what investments fit your unique dreams and goals. Find out what retirement means to you, what your personal plan is and what your options are. For more information or to sign up to reserve your seat, call the library at (734) 326-6123.

Information Central was compiled by reference librarian and Web designer Kristy Cooper. The William P. Faust Public Library is at 6123 Central City Parkway, Westland. For more information, call (734) 326-6123.

Constan: Projects create jobs, give economy a boost

As part of a statewide plan to speed up construction projects and create thousands of jobs for Michigan workers, State Reps. Gino Polidori, D-Deerborn; Morris Hood III, D-Detroit, and Bob Constan, D-Deerborn Heights, have announced two projects at the University of Michigan-Deerborn and Henry Ford Community College that will create more than 800 local jobs.

The projects were approved on Wednesday by the Michigan House, and now head to the Senate for final approval.

"Shoring up our state's infrastructure and strengthening our schools are two sure ways to attract investment to our state," said Constan whose district includes Garden City. "These projects can create more jobs for our workers and give our economy a significant boost. I call on my colleagues in the Senate to take quick action to approve this plan."

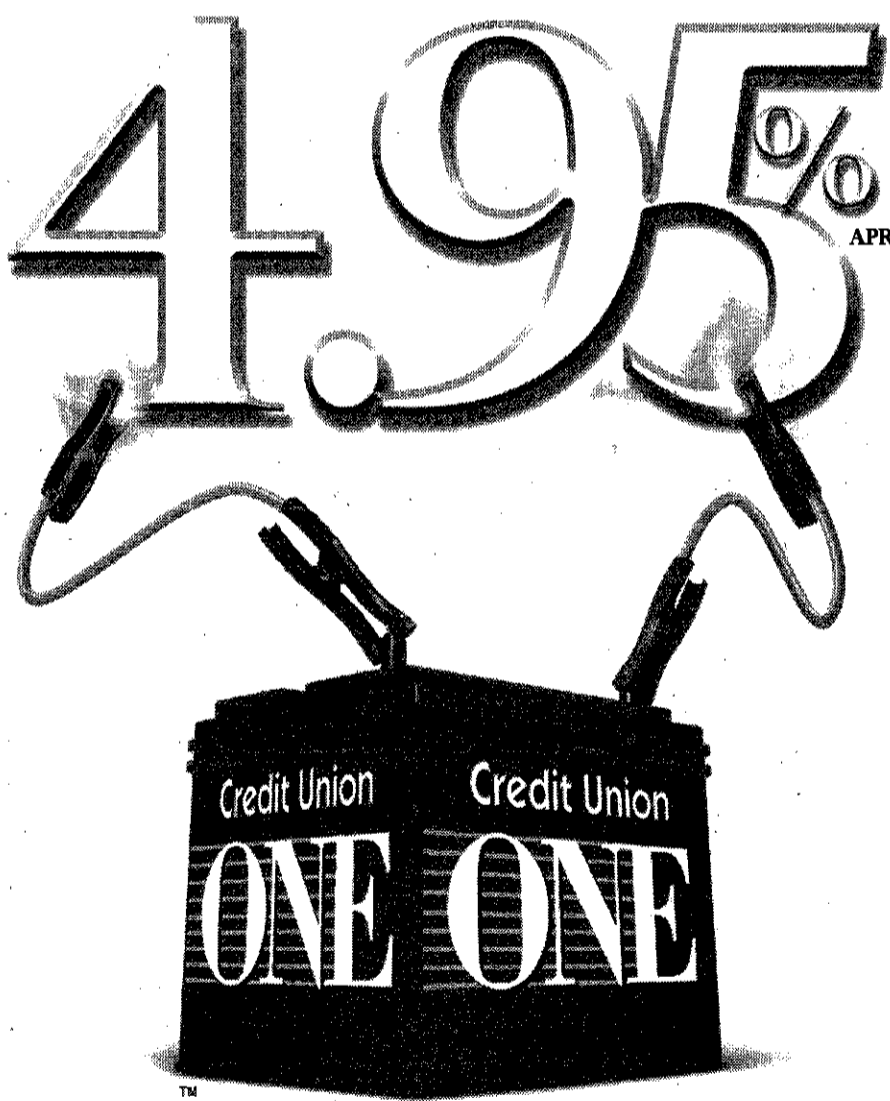
The University of Michigan-Deerborn and Henry Ford Community College are targeted for construction and renovation projects, totaling \$51 million, made up of a mix of state, federal and local funding. The Science Building and the Computer Information Science Building at UM-D will get \$36 million in upgrades and renovations. The 52,000-square-foot Science Building at HFCC will get a complete renovation.

"In this day and age, education must be one of our top priorities," said Hood, chair of the Joint Capital Outlay Subcommittee and sponsor of the legislation. "Ensuring that our schools have the facilities and resources they need to prepare our students for the global economy is essential to making Michigan a magnet for cutting-edge businesses."

"These projects will help get Michigan moving in the right direction."

In addition to creating jobs for our workers, the projects will help better equip both schools to prepare Michigan's students for high-tech jobs in homeland security, life sciences and other cutting-edge fields. The projects are two of hundreds of construction projects at universities, colleges, airports, military facilities and state parks across the state that aim to help create more than 29,000 jobs for Michigan's workers. It is part of a plan to pump \$1.8 billion into the economy and help move Michigan forward.

"Creating jobs for our workers is my top priority in Lansing, and that's exactly what these projects will do," Polidori said. "In addition, the improvements planned for both schools will help these fine institutions provide the best possible learning environment for our students, and help prepare them for the high-tech jobs of the 21st century."



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Artist puts her own style into handbag gig

BY KIMBERLY MORTSON
OBSERVER CORRESPONDENT

Aladdin may have been best known for his magic carpet, but for Michele Kramp it's her magic bags.

A textile artist from Canton, Kramp has been designing one-of-a-kind handbags since 2003 under the name The Magic Bag Lady. Unconventional designs, recycled fabrics and unique embellishments are all trademarks of her custom handbags.

Born in Redford, Kramp moved to Canton with her parents, James and Georgette Craig, when she was 10 years old. Kramp says both of her parents encouraged her cre-

ativity at a very young age.

"My mom taught us to knit, crochet and sew. She's a strong, self-motivated woman and took great pride in how her three daughters looked growing up. From our hair to all the clothes she made us - we always looked so neat and put together," said Kramp.

When she was in elementary school, Kramp first tried her hand at sewing by making her own doll clothes. After graduating from Plymouth Canton High School, she earned a degree in apparel design and merchandising from Wayne State University.

"It was my dad who encouraged my love of drawing, which I refined in college," Kram said.

"He allowed me to use his drafting tools and made sure my school projects were done well. He had high standards for all his daughters. He would say, if you have the proper tools use them, no excuses."

In addition to drawing, Kramp took fine tailoring classes at WSU, where she learned all the old-school techniques, such as welt pockets, hand-sewn buttonholes and draping.

"I became even more proficient when I used those skills everyday working for a couple of local tailors," she said. "Tailoring is much more mechanical and structural in nature but my sewing skills were so much better by the time

I left."

A STITCH IN TIME

In 1997, Kramp and her husband Matthew gave birth to their daughter Madeline.

"The first year of her life I made all of her clothes. I wanted to take the same pride in my daughter's appearance that my mom did for me and that I have done for myself," said Kramp. "At the same time I tried to make a go of designing and selling children's clothing at craft shows, but it seemed like I never had the right size someone was looking for in something I sewed. So I made this little green bag out of fabric with fairies on it. It was perfect. So I made another and another and another."

Then in 2001, Michele and her family moved to Italy while her husband, a computer-aided designer, worked with an international company fabricating automotive door latches. Kramp says she became a "professional tourist" and immersed herself in the Italians' love of fashion.

"We went crazy buying clothes, sunglasses and shoes," Kramp said. "It was fantastic."

While touring the countryside with a Canadian family they befriended, Kramp became known for carrying everything they might need while sightseeing in her handbag.

"My friend Lorraine started referring to me as 'the keeper of the magic bag,'" she recalled.

And the rest is history. Upon their return from Europe, Kramp revived her handbag designing and got to work improving the style, quality and structural integrity of her bags. Again, she tried craft shows as an outlet for her handbags but that didn't work.

"People at craft shows wanted



BILL BRESLER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Michele Kramp specializes in handbags that look like art.

to see 10 of the same bags so if their friend bought one they could walk in and buy the same one. My bags do have some little similarities but no two are the same," said Kramp.

It's that level of individuality that fuels Kramp's creativity. Her handbags are based on current trends but with "a little rebellion mixed in."

"I combine what's going on this season and funk it up a bit," she said.

Kim McCord, a local pediatrician and internist, has purchased several handbags for herself and given them as gifts over the past 10 years.

"I don't know how to describe it but I like what she does on a lot of levels," said McCord, a Plymouth resident. "She's got a good business idea. If you see her work you recognize it's very unique and I love that she recycles material. Her bags are fun, creative and artistic."

A signature of Magic Bag Lady handbags is the integration of reused and recycled fabric.


"I get a lot of material from friends. Either sentimental pieces, such as wedding dresses or neck-

ties worn by someone's grandfather to the clothing my daughter is outgrowing. I'm cheap and I work with whatever I have," said Kramp. "From an environmental standpoint - everyone has something they're not using. Instead of throwing it out they give it to me."

Last fall, Kramp's friend and fellow artist Laura MacIntyre introduced her to Karen Thomas, the owner of Biddle Gallery (www.biddlegallery.com) in Wyandotte. Original artworks by more than 100 Michigan artists are available for purchase including jewelry, fiber, furniture, glass and more.

"Michele stopped by the gallery with another artist who was dropping off her portfolio. The friend mentioned Michele was really cool handbags and was wearing one of her bags to prove it," said Thomas. "I love that the bags are made from recycled and sentimental textiles. Each bag is one-of-a-kind. Michele's handbags are functional works of art. The craftsmanship and attention to detail is outstanding."

In addition to running her own business, Kramp is a substitute teacher in the Wayne-Westland School District and a member of HATCH - Hamtrac Art Collective (www.hatchart.org), a community of artists that come together to host group, solo and juried exhibitions at Café 1923.


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THEN AND NOW

Here's a timeline of the handbag:

480 B.C.: Peasants in early rural societies used bags to carry seeds

14th century: The very first mention in written literature comes from the 14th century, even though Egyptian hieroglyphs show pouches carried around the waist. Embroidery and jewels adorned these articles and were used to show status - the richer the person, the more elaborate the bag.

15th century: The drawstring bag was a status possession. Wedding purses were a traditional gift from groom to bride.

16th century: Cloth bags were used that were made larger and used by travelers and carried diagonally across the body. Men continued to carry a little netted purse for money inside the pocket.

17th century: Small purses with more complex shapes were popular. Embroidered artwork becomes more popular in handbags.

1800s: Women now have handbags for every occasion. Reticules (handbags) are used for carrying rouge, face powder, a fan, a scent bottle, visiting cards, a card case, and smelling salts.

1900s: Handbags become more complicated with the inclusion of fasteners, internal compartments and locks. Now compartments are added for opera glasses, cosmetics and fans.

1920s: Bags no longer needed to match the outfit perfectly. Men discover the convenience of toting their belongings in a handsome hand or shoulder bag.

1940s: Handbags are made with the economy and the warm in mind. Metal frames, zips, leather, and mirrors were in short supply so manufacturers used plastic and wood.

1950s: The foundations of handbag styles are set by designer houses including Chanel, Louis Vuitton and Hermes.

1960s: We see the breakdown of old notions of the classical and the rise of youth culture. Wild colors, fabrics and patterns.

Today: We now see handbags made from space age synthetics to handwoven straws - a handbag for every mood, outfit and occasion.

WHAT'S IN THE BAG

All of Kramp's handbags have leather handles and grommets, are hand stamped with the Magic Bag Lady logo she designed herself and are lined featuring multiple interior pockets for everything from lipstick pouches to cell phone and MP3 player compartments. Embellishments have included silk flowers and men's neckties to buttons and CDs.

"I recently made a handbag for someone that featured a bunch of these old keys their dad used to carry around with him and it was lined with a pair of his plaid pants," she said. "They loved it."

Some of the most exclusive designs in The Magic Bag Lady collection are Kramp's coffee bean bags. She recycles the burlap sacks local retailers throw away that once contained beans from coffee growers. Although burlap is one of the most challenging materials to work with - Kramp says no two bags are alike due to the unique brand names and designs stamped on the outside of the burlap sacks.

"My customers love the fact that no one else will be carrying a bag like theirs. Michele's bags are very distinctive - you know it's a Magic Bag Lady when you see it," said Thomas.

Kramp's 10-year-old daughter Madeline has undoubtedly inherited her creative spirit. She and her husband have done everything they can to encourage it and are very proud of her efforts. This spring Madeline will debut her own line of jewelry labeled "Whatever Styles." Her designs include memory bracelets, earrings and rings. The mother-daughter duo will sell Madeline's jewelry and Michele's other textile related merchandise (handmade wallets, change purses, notepads and note books) at Craft Uprising at Biddle Gallery.

Craft Uprising (CU) is every third Friday from 6 to 9 p.m. and third Saturday from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. each month. The idea behind CU is to showcase indie crafters whose work would not normally show in the gallery and to keep the pieces affordable.

"I attribute much of my success to my parents. They instilled the confidence in me that I could do whatever I wanted. I think that rings true throughout my life and in my designs. They taught me I didn't have to follow a pattern in life... just like my handbags. They don't have to 'fit' anybody because they fit everybody," said Kramp.

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For more information about The Magic Bag Lady handbags, call Michele Kramp at (734) 664-8636 or by e-mail at themagicbaglady@yahoo.com. To see more of The Magic Bag Lady handbags, go online to www.biddlegallery.com or stop by the gallery at 2840 Biddle Ave., downtown Wyandotte.

OUR VIEWS

Gather at flagpole and say a prayer

The Wayne-Westland-Garden City Ministerial Association is asking people to gather around the flagpole in front of Westland City Hall at noon Thursday for the annual National Day of Prayer. The crowd will most likely be small, but the prayers huge as they have been in the 56 years the event has been held.

There are those people who would say that such a religious-based event should be held in a church rather than around a flagpole, but the intent of the National Day of Prayer is very specific. People of all faiths are asked to unite to pray for our country and leaders.

Prayer is portable, it can be said anywhere, and for those who believe, it can be very powerful. And praying as a country is nothing new. It's always been used in this country for guidance, protection and strength — even before it was a nation or a handful of colonies. The Pilgrims at Plymouth relied on prayer during their first winter. The Founding Fathers also called for prayer during the Constitutional Congress.

Even President Abraham Lincoln knew the power of prayer. Before the battle of Gettysburg, when the fate of the nation hung in the balance, he turned to prayer. The Union won the battle, a turning point in the Civil War that ended slavery and kept the United States intact.

And as American troops stormed the beaches of Normandy in World War II, President Franklin Roosevelt called for the nation to unite in prayer. He also offered a prayer to prepare each citizen for the road ahead: "Let our hearts be stout, to wait out the long travail, to bear sorrows that may come, to impart our courage unto our sons wheresoever they may be."

Today, we face many of the same challenges. The men and women in our armed forces are embroiled in wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Many have died and many have suffered life-altering injuries. The economy is struggling and many of our neighbors are seeing their dream of the good life evaporate. We can go it alone in resolving these problems or we can ask for help.

Those who went before us did the latter and succeeded. We encourage people to gather at the flagpole on Thursday and pray for our city, county, state and national leaders, even if you don't agree with what they have done. Pray for the safety of our men and women in uniform, for their families, and for the comfort and recovery of those who have been wounded. Those who can't participate, take a moment to bow your head and say a prayer.

If Roosevelt, the Pilgrims and Lincoln never underestimated the power of prayer, neither should we.

Using religion for politics

Chris Torres' letter in the April 24 edition of the *Observer* concerning Rep. McCotter's proposed HR 598 (Ten Commandments acknowledgement) requires comment; comment from an opposing, yet religious, point of view.

Politics is an ugly business. Religion is a beautiful one. So when a politician audaciously attempts to use religion to advance his political agenda, citizens should be outraged. HR598 is one of those attempts. It is a transparent effort to pander to McCotter's socially conservative base; to convince these good people that he and his party are men of God and, by extension, his opponents are heathen secularists, never to be trusted.

I, for one, find the manipulation of religion, its symbols, and its sacred writings for political gain offensive and a direct attack upon our religious freedom.

Contrary to the text of HR 598, no one — less the most cynical political manipulator — perceives the Ten Commandments as anything but a religious document. And no one — less the most disingenuous purveyor of pseudo history — believes our government and judicial system is based upon them. So why is Rep. McCotter, a well-known student of history, attempting to sully a religious document with our secular government's seal of approval? I'm sure he's got an answer if you can cut through his political double-speak.

The Decalogue is a meaningful and sacred guide for billions of Christians and Jews. It should never be used as a means to grease the path for anyone's re-election. That's why I'm outraged and you should be, too.

Hal Downs
Livonia

Pope is liable

I am ashamed to be an American today. I have friends who have suffered from the abuse of pastoral sexual perversion and yet my government has given the pope full honors equal to heads of countries.

Truth is, when the pope's plane landed on American soil, he should have been arrested and fingerprinted. He is, after

LETTERS

all, the CEO of an organization which has evaded our criminal laws by providing priests with new identities and giving them Vatican immunity.

The pope should not be above the law. On this soil, we are a nation of laws, not men.

Greg Thrasher
Birmingham

Officials should 'get on board'

Every week we read in the newspapers about how the American worker needs to "get on board" with the global economy. If they want to keep their jobs, they will have to accept lower wages, less fringe benefits and higher co-pays on the benefits they do keep.

The time has come for our own government to "get on board" with the global economy. They, too, may have to accept the same bitter pill that the rest of us have had to swallow. Increasing taxes on those who can least afford it is not a valid solution. No one wants their wages to be cut, but if that is the cost of survival, so be it. Those who don't want to accept this harsh reality will have to step aside and let others, who are willing, step into their shoes.

Ken Champagne
Canton

Another sham

On Feb. 13, 2008, President George W. Bush signed into law the Economic Stimulus Act of 2008 before Congressional leaders in the White House. This bi-partisan created law is intended to boost a sluggish U.S. economy by providing cash rebates directly to 128 million American households. Rebates range from \$600 for individuals to \$1,200 for couples plus \$300 per child. Much fanfare has been made surrounding this so-called "windfall" for the American consumer who is expected to use it for retail shopping to "pump-up" our economy.

As the prime vehicle for distributing the rebates, the Internal Revenue Service has gone to great lengths to differentiate this special stimulus rebate from standard tax refunds: "It's not taxable, and it won't reduce your 2007 or

2008 refund or increase the amount you owe when you file your 2008 return," quotes the IRS.

However, millions of otherwise eligible households will not receive much (if any) rebate payment due to a little known and largely concealed IRS practice. The IRS states: "For this purpose, the stimulus payment is treated like any other tax refund. This means that part or all of your payment can be used to pay past-due federal or state income taxes or non-tax federal debt, such as student loans and child support ..." Tens of millions of taxpayers and families owe and are making restitution on, such debts.

In other words, the highly touted Economic Stimulus Act of 2008 is not completely about boosting our economy. It is apparently also about boosting federal and state coffers through an automatic transference of federal revenues to agencies that would not ordinarily receive such dollars in a single tax year.

To this extent, the U.S. economy, the intended beneficiary of the economic stimulus package, will undoubtedly suffer. The Economic Stimulus Act of 2008 may just be another political sham dropped on the American taxpayer and families.

Murray Davis
Southfield

Letter writer is off the mark

That article "Granholm is missing the mark" might as well have advocated hiring illegal aliens.

He says support right to work, privatize, kill prevailing wage, cut payroll, cut pensions, allow oil drilling — heck, I bet he is the first to complain about services when something he wants done isn't getting done.

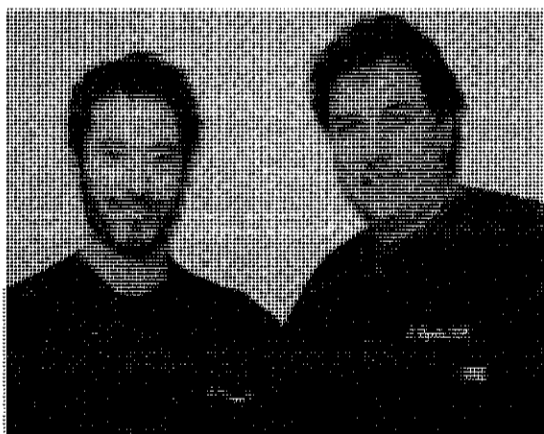
People who want something for nothing just drive me up the wall. The only way to ensure his level of government would be to fire everyone from the governor and the legislature on down and replace them with about a million illegal immigrants. We can pay them \$5 a day, with no health insurance, no pensions and if they aren't busy running the state, they can help with the oil spills in our Great Lakes. Give me a break.

Mike Smith
Clawson

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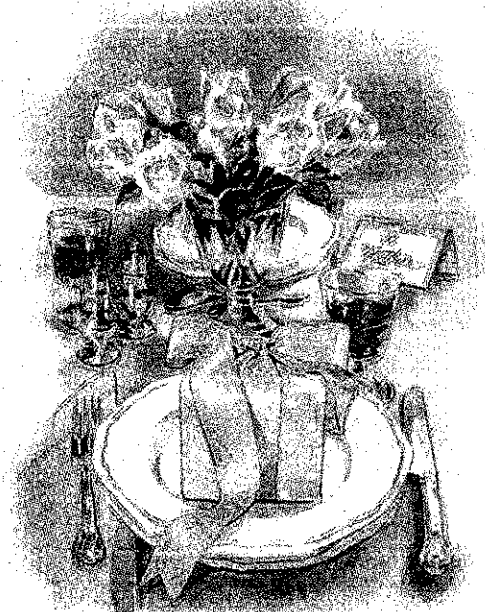
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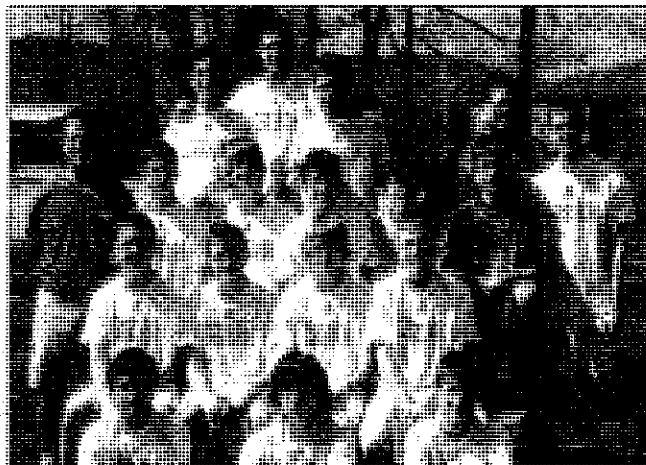
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U-16 Meteors 1st

The Livonia Meteors, a boys under-16 team, captured the Mid-American Soccer Classic, April 5-6, in Fairfield, Ohio. The Meteors defeated Michigan Rush Nike in the final, 2-1, after wins over Lakota (Ohio) United, 2-0, and Northern Kentucky Thunder, 3-0, along with a 0-0 tie with Magic Black. Members of the Meteors include (bottom row, from left): Mike Case, Kyle Morgan, Brandon Hess; (second row, from left) Mike MacDonald, Jake Hodge, Reilly Mullett, Tim Devine; (third row, from left) coach Dave Burton, Jacob Gates, Dominik Meyer, John Selinski, Erik Bird, Conner Burton, Travis Matthey; (top row, from left) Brian Azar, Khalid Suleiman, Brendan Mulcah and assistant coach Tim Matthey. The team manager is Alexa Devine.

MU

FROM PAGE B1

six strong innings to improve to 5-2. He walked only two and struck out five before McCracken came on to get the save. Losing pitcher Drew Linder gave up two earned runs on seven hits for the Cardinals. Patrick Kenny went 2-for-3 in the MU win, while Ryan Morrow and Drew Fry each had RBI. Concordia took the nightcap, 6-4, as Aaron Hacias went 2-for-3 and Tony Pounders (Livonia Stevenson) knocked in a pair of runs. Justin Gauthier (7-1) went all seven innings, scattering seven hits and two walks in the win. Jeff Sonnenberg took the loss, going the first four innings. Morrow, Kevin Zerbo and Tarik Khasawneh each collected two hits in the loss. MU is 30-12 overall and 17-5 in the WHAC, while Concordia is 27-18 and 11-11.

SOCCER

FROM PAGE B1

Other assists went to Johnston, Lindsey Marlow and Sam Meeker. "We dominated from the start," Churchill coach Dave Hebestreit said. "After Monday's result (2-1 loss to Livonia Stevenson), I think any team would have had difficult time with us. We were crisp right from the beginning, which was

nice to see."

CLARENCEVILLE 1, LUTH. N'WEST 1: In a Metro Conference match Wednesday, host Rochester Hills Lutheran Northwest (0-3-1) and Livonia Clarenceville (2-3-1, 0-2-1) fought to a draw.

Mary Katherine Goodard scored for the Crusaders, while Jill Brown countered for Clarenceville.

On Monday, Clarenceville lost 8-0 in a mercy to Macomb

Lutheran North.

KINGSWOOD 2, LUTH. WESTLAND 0: Goalkeeper Abby Cohen notched her fifth shutout of the season Wednesday as Bloomfield Hills Cranbrook (4-1-1, 3-0-1) downed host Lutheran High Westland (3-4, 1-2).

Sefora Armstead scored on a penalty kick and Ariel Roddy added the second goal off an assist from Rosalia Pembroke, both coming in the opening half.

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Hugh Gallagher, editor . (734) 953-2149 . hgallagher@hometownlife.com

Staying at home can be wonderful for young dad

Please help me out with this. I am a 27-year-old man that is planning to quit my job and stay at home with my two daughters, ages 3 and 14 months. My wife and I have both worked full time and feel that we are missing out on raising our daughters so we decided that it would be in their best interest, as well as ours, if one of us could stay home with them full time. Financially, she makes about two and a half times what I do so the decision was easy ... I will be the one to stay home.



Chat Room

Terry Wilamowski

The problem is that everyone seems to think that this is the worst idea ever. Our friends seem to think that I'm some kind of bum or that I won't be able to handle the girls on my own. Even my family has called my masculinity into question. Is it so difficult to believe that a man can be a good parent? Is it impossible to understand that stay-at-home fathers can be every bit as effective as stay-at-home mothers? Or am I the one that's mistaken? Is there something wrong with a father taking care of the children while the mother goes to work?

I'm sorry that you are experiencing such opposition to this plan because I would like to applaud you and your wife for even considering this family structure. Sure, if a family can afford it, it's usually the mother that stays home with the children, but there is absolutely nothing in the parenting rule-book that says that a father cannot or should not fill this role. I believe that a father can be every bit as effective and nurturing as a mother and every bit as capable of being a stay-at-home parent.

The lack of support that you are experiencing is probably the direct result of the fact that you are not adhering to societal norms and traditions. In effect you are planning to become abnormal and, frankly, this tends to make people nervous and uncomfortable. Let me be perfectly clear, being "abnormal" is not a bad thing, nor is it a good thing, it is just a "thing." Whenever a person does something that defies convention they will face some resistance and criticism, justified or not. This is a sad fact of society. The good news is that if you can withstand this negativity, you can experience something truly wonderful and worthwhile: spending time with your children.

All of the criticisms that you are and will be facing can be endured and countered if this is the right decision for your family. Anyone that believes that being a stay-at-home parent is easy and that you are taking the easy way out by staying home, has never done this kind of work. In addition, anyone that questions your masculinity as a result of this plan needs to re-evaluate their notion of "manhood." Most women would agree that a man that is a good father is far more masculine and desirable than one that is not. Just ask your wife. In short, no, there is absolutely nothing wrong with a father that chooses to stay at home and raise his children while his wife works outside of the home. After all, raising our children is the most important vocation of all.

My 10-year-old son has been having horrible nightmares. He wakes up screaming and kicking and punching the air as if he's fighting for his life. We try to wake him up, but he doesn't seem to know that we're even there even though his eyes are open. When we do get him to wake up he says that he doesn't even remember dreaming at all. The whole thing is scary. What can we do about this?

It sounds as if your son is experiencing night terrors. Night terrors are a kind of dream that usually occur within the first 60 to 90 minutes of sleep and involves restless and seemingly wakeful actions, such as screaming, kicking, thrashing around, hitting, etc. And as traumatic as this all may seem, the dreamer seldom, if ever, remembers any of it.

The first thing that I would recommend is that you take your son to get a physical to rule out anything medical. Some research suggests that these night terrors are the result of seizures not unlike epilepsy. In addition, explore for the possibility of significant stressors that may be triggering these events, such as any big changes in his life, etc.

If everything checks out OK, the next step is to interrupt the pattern of sleep that produces these night terrors. Try waking your child when he has been asleep for about 45 to 50 minutes, which is just prior to when the night terrors usually occur. After a few days to a week of doing this, the night terrors usually subside. If they don't, contact a qualified child therapist to assist your with more individualized interventions.

Terry Wilamowski is a clinical therapist specializing in the treatment of children, adolescents and their families at Heron Ridge Associates in Plymouth. Questions and comments can be sent to terrywilamowski@yahoo.com.



Raychel Rork (left), Dianne Quinn, Terri O'Brien, and Mandi Buckland are partnering to put on the first Green Street Fair in Plymouth.

BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN
O&E STAFF WRITER



Dianne Quinn looked down at the potato she was preparing for Christmas dinner and couldn't believe how big it was. Then it dawned on the Plymouth woman she was feeding her family chemicals.

Since that epiphany more than a year ago, she's changed her shopping habits not only for produce but everyday products such as household cleaners. It was a turning point that has everything to do with watching her two grandchildren running around the house while she and daughter Raychel Rork work on last-minute details for Art in the Park in Plymouth.

Quinn is concerned about their future so what better way to do her part than by putting on a Green Street Fair May 3-4 in downtown Plymouth to educate the public about keeping the planet healthy for generations to come.

"I began researching organics," said Quinn. "This (green movement) is not a fad. This is for real. This is about our world and of course for our children and grandchildren. Even if they can't come to the event they can listen to the speakers on a line feed on our Web site (www.greenstreetfair.com). There's so much more to learn, to teach about recycling."

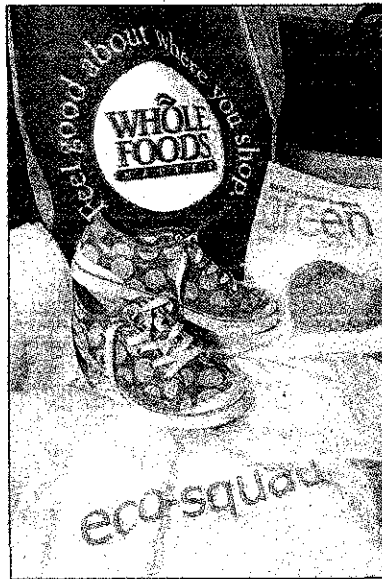
The mother-daughter team has plenty of expertise in organizing the art fair Quinn founded 29 years ago. To ensure the success of the green fair the two are partnering with Mandi Buckland and Terri O'Brien whose Street Marketing firm has promoted the art extravaganza with more than 400 exhibitors every July for the last eight or nine years.

GREEN OPTIONS

Green Street will be just that with companies selling eco-friendly sneakers made from recycled tire treads and plastic bottles, independents offering organic hemp and cotton bags to make Home Grown Sprouts, an Alternative Highway where visitors can learn about hybrid vehicles, or hear speakers talk about how our choices and what we eat affects the earth and all its inhabitants. Drop off your old crocs to be recycled into new shoes to be donated

Please see **GREEN, C5**

The Green Street Fair spotlights a variety of eco-friendly products from sneakers made with recycled tire tread and plastic bottles to canvas shopping bags that replace plastic and paper at the checkout.



GREEN STREET FAIR

When: 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Saturday, May 3, and 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday, May 4
Where: Downtown Plymouth, north of Ann Arbor Road at Main Street
Details: Visit www.greenstreetfair.com

Lace makers weave a love for the art



Shirley Coe works on a lace snake bookmark in her Redford home.

BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN
OBSERVER STAFF WRITER

Shirley Coe carefully unrolls the bobbin lace she wove on a special pillow. The finely crafted linen threads represent hours of work, but in this case it's all for the love of her daughter. The delicate handiwork will soon adorn the border of a tablecloth for Sue's table.

Over the years, Coe's lace has accented important aspects of her family's life, including decorating her daughter's wedding veil and flowers and a garter for her granddaughter. Coe has nine grandchildren, four great-granddaughters and would like to see the art live on. On Saturday, May 3, Coe and the Great Lakes Lace Group share their Love of Lace at a daylong event at the Livonia Civic Center Library. Members come from as far away as Midland, Cadillac, Ohio, and Indiana to attend.

LOVE OF LACE

What: A day of lace making, demonstrations, try-it tables, vendors, displays
When: 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, May 3
Where: Livonia Civic Center Library, 32777 Five Mile, east of Farmington Road
Details: No charge. For information, visit GLLG.org.

Lace making reached its peak in the late 17th and early 18th centuries.

Visitors can learn about the different types from bobbin to tatted by visiting displays, watching demonstrations, or trying their hand at the craft.

"Vendors come from all over and bring everything from pillows to bobbins to thread and tating supplies," said Coe, 75, of Redford.

Please see **LACE, C3**

Salon holds events to raise money for breast cancer walk

Rebekah Dupuis and the rest of the staff at the salon Philip Nolan's is inviting the community to help their team raise money for the Susan G. Komen 3-Day event this fall.

The Pink Themed bake sale takes place 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Friday, May 9, and 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday, May 10, at Philip Nolan's in the Northridge Commons at 33523 W. Eight Mile.

All proceeds go directly to support the team's members

who will participating in the Susan G. Komen 3-Day Walk. Philip Nolan's has been in Livonia 28 years and most of the staff has been together 15 to 20-years.

For more information, call the salon at (248) 478-2626.

In addition to the bake sale, staff is working on fund-raisers from raffles to selling crystal bracelets. On May 19, and June 29, they'll hold charity haircutting days, and a golf outing at Fox Creek on Aug. 10.

Meet your new best friend at GreyHeart events

GreyHeart Greyhound Rescue & Adoption of Michigan is hold a number of Meet & Greets in May to find homes for the dogs. The first event takes place noon to 4 p.m. Saturday, May 3, at the Livonia Pet Supplies "Plus," 29493 W. Seven Mile, (248) 615-0039.

The Canton Petco hosts the

rescue group noon to 4 p.m. Sunday, May 4, at 43435 Ford Road at Morton Taylor. ACO Hardware is the place to be if you're looking to adopt a greyhound 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Sunday, May 25, at 37133 Six Mile, Livonia.

For more information, send an e-mail to jfoxley@comcast.net.

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THE CHANGING FACE OF FIBROMYALGIA

Patients have said to me: "A friend mentioned that my pain sounded like Fibromyalgia; I looked up Fibromyalgia on the Web. I hurt all over like the description said, but I don't have any pressure points. Do I have fibromyalgia?"

The medical answer is that you certainly could. The diagnosis of Fibromyalgia depends on a number of features. The presence of pressure points - sites on the body where light touch brings on marked pain - is only one feature. The constellation of findings includes headaches, jaw pain, anterior chest pain, irritable bowel, frequent urination, and tingling or burning pain down the arms or legs. Individuals with Fibromyalgia note difficulty falling asleep, frequent awakenings in the night, and undue fatigue during the day. Patients with Fibromyalgia often experience sleep apnea even if not overweight.

Response to pressure point testing remains a basic feature. Physicians consider an individual with 12-18 pressure points as having fibromyalgia, even if the other features are not present. The diagnosis also holds if a patient has few or no trigger points, but experiences the fatigue, tingling, that is also a part of the condition.

No person will have all the features of Fibromyalgia. Today, the characteristic presentation of Fibromyalgia is not the classical one that depended on multiple points. Making the diagnosis rests on a series of changes. However, now as in the past, no laboratory tests exist that can confirm or deny that your diagnosis is Fibromyalgia.

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Pianist brings lifelong love of music to recital series

BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN
OBSERVER STAFF WRITER

Angela Cheng has one word for parents struggling to instill a love of piano in their children - practice.

Cheng wouldn't be traveling the world giving concerts if she didn't spend hours at the keyboard every day.

Music was simply a part of her family's life in Hong Kong. Her mother conducted a chamber ensemble and choir. Her grandfather owned music stores in China. Her aunt, a professional piano teacher, took over her lessons at age 5. Cheng's mother had taught her the basics beginning at 3 1/2.

"My family was great lovers of classical music," said Cheng who moved to Edmonton in the Canadian province of Alberta with her family at age 11. She went on to earn a bachelor of music from The Juilliard School in New York City and a master's degree from Indiana University in 1982.

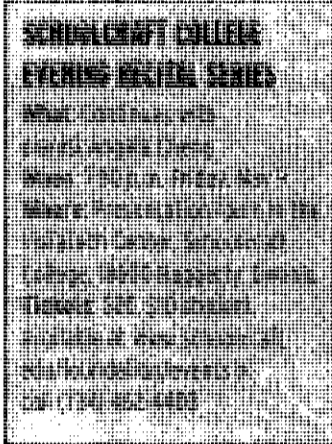
"You either played piano or violin. All my cousins played, all my aunts and uncles. I grew up in that kind of environment."

Over the years Cheng's practice paid off. She won numerous awards including the Gold Medal at the Arthur Rubinstein International Piano Master Competitions and was the first Canadian to win the prestigious Montreal International Piano Competition (1988.) She has performed with more than 100 orchestras including Montreal, Toronto and the Boston Pops, and given master classes at the University of Michigan, Hong Kong Academy for the Performing Arts, and the Glen Gould School at the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto, to name a few. Today, in addition to performing 40-concerts a year, she trains future pianists as an associate professor at Oberlin Conservatory of Music in Ohio. She has made recordings for Koch International and CBC Records. Her latest CD was All Chopin, for Universal Music Canada.



PHOTO BY LISA KOHLER

Angela Cheng closes the 2007-2008 Schoolcraft College Evening Recital Series with a program of Beethoven, Haydn, Schumann, Schubert, and Canadian composer Alexine Louie on May 9.



Morelock, chairman of the music department, who says Angela (Cheng) is one of my favorite people performing today.

Both of Cheng's children, Alyssa, 10, and Amanda, 12, continue in her footsteps playing piano. She admits it's difficult to get them to practice between lessons even though her and husband Alvin Chow are accomplished pianists. Chow is chairman of the piano department at Oberlin.

"I definitely encourage parents to find a teacher who's supportive, but the most important thing is practice," said Cheng. "Practice is very lonely, but if you don't practice you can't get better."

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Irish-Americans spotlight culture

Several Irish events are taking place in early May including a concert, competition, and lecture.

James S. Rogers talks about Irish America in the Fifties at noon Tuesday, May 6, at the Gaelic League, 2068 Michigan Ave., Detroit. Rogers is director of the Center for Irish Studies, University of St. Thomas, St. Paul and editor of New Hibernia Review published by the university. He will discuss the many ways in which literature, movies and the resurgence of traditional music show that Irish-American culture and identity were still alive in the 50's. The cost is \$12 and includes lunch. For information, call (248) 540-6687.

On Friday-Saturday, May 9-10, the Detroit Irish Music Association hosts the 2008 Midwest Fleadh Ceoil (Festival of Music), at the Doubletree Hotel in Dearborn. First and second place winners of the competition qualify for the All-Ireland Fleadh in September in Ireland.

To raise money for the Midwest event which gets underway 8:30 a.m. Saturday, May 10, the Detroit Irish Music Association is presenting a concert and celi dance 8 p.m. Friday, May 9, featuring Boholo with all-Ireland champion accordionist Jimmy Keane and multi-instrumentalist and balladeer Pat Broaders. Irish tenor Paddy Homan, originally from County Cork, performs as well as step dancers from the Heinzman School of Dance.

Tickets are \$15, free for competitors and \$5 for Saturday pass holders. Passes are \$15 for all day, \$8 for the morning only or evening only programs. For more information, call (313) 537-3489 or (248) 837-8022.



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HANTZGROUP



LACE

FROM PAGE C1

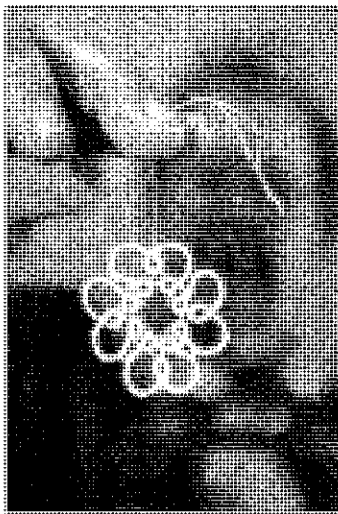
Coe is currently president of the GLLG. "It's knitting, crocheting, all kinds of lace. It's a fun event. They can sit down and talk with lacers. For me I just like lace. It's a beautiful thing to have and do."

Coe began making lace more than 25 years ago after watching a demonstration at the Michigan State Fair. She started with bobbin lace and then tatting which is sometimes more difficult to learn.

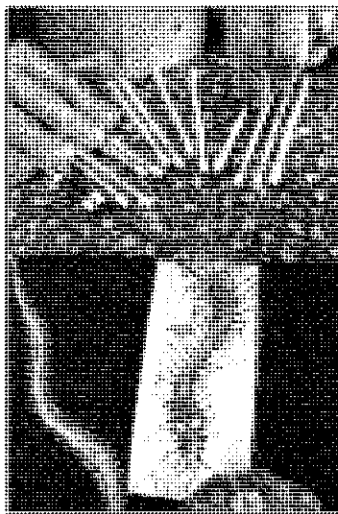
"Bobbin is done on a pillow with pins, tatting with a shuttle held in the hand. The technique of bobbin lace people pick up a little bit faster because you have to be able to flip the thread in tatting and people get a little bit fazed with the technique," said Coe.

"I tat every night. I carry around a bag of supplies. That's how I got my daughter's veil done."

Today, Coe likes to do more tatting than bobbin lace because of its portability. If she has a doctor's appointment and must wait, she can pull out her thread and shuttle and work. Coe and various members will demonstrate tatting and bobbin lace at the May



Shirley Coe of Redford displays a lace snowflake she created to hang on her miniature tree at Christmas.



Shirley Coe of Redford straightens out the bobbins as she works on her lace snake bookmark.

3 event. Cari Baum will help visitors make a mouse bookmark on a bobbin pillow, Coe a snake.

"It takes seven pairs of bobbin attached to cotton thread to make a snake bookmark," said Coe. "Kids love to work these. I taught my grandson Brandon to make a snake at 5 years old and he won a ribbon at the state fair. Any time we demonstrate and ask for volunteers kids are the first ones to raise their hand to try it."

"You're twisting and crossing threads to make a pattern.

There's no knotting."

Coe's only real problem when it comes to making lace is keeping her cats, Tweety and Patch, away. Tweety was so fascinated by the thread she ate it and had to be rushed to the veterinarian.

"I don't let them near my thread," said Coe.

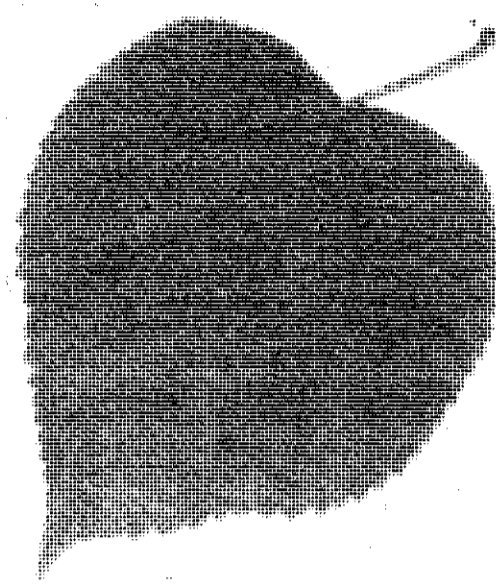
For lace making classes or membership information, call Kathleen Campbell at (734) 483-5693.

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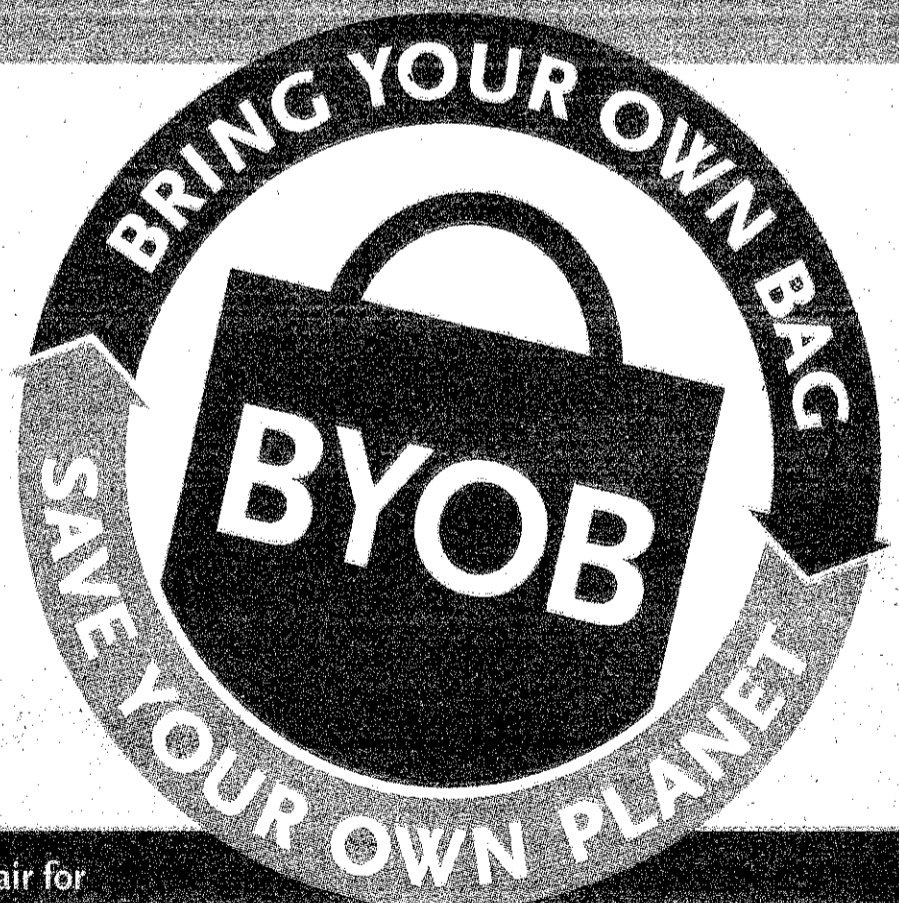
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GREEN

FROM PAGE C1

to people in need (solesunited.com) or stop by the booth on Ann Arbor Trail where members of Handmade Detroit will be helping people sew new items like tote bags from used clothing.

Whole Foods has invited many of its vendors to the Market Village under The Gathering on Penniman. Throughout the streets, organic pet products, including catnip, will be available. Plymouth Coffee Bean is introducing five kinds of organic fair trade coffee. Stop by the Green Box City in Kellogg Park to view the future as seen through the eyes of East Middle School students with the help of Lawrence Technological University.

"I went to my first green event in Chicago last May," said Quinn. "I now

distill my own water. Just last week there were reports of drugs in our water. I don't want to keep buying plastic bottles. I like giving my grandkids fresh water."

These days Quinn is serving that distilled water in glasses recycled from bottles as she organizes the first Green Street Fair presented by Whole Foods Market. Rork is just as concerned about the products consumed and used by her children Dylan, 5, and Lily, 2, who had to be tested for lead poisoning last winter after chewing paint off a recalled toy.

"It's learning what's in your kid's baby food, their milk, what chemicals are in their clothes. My kids drink organic milk now," said Rork, 30, of Canton. "I think a lot of people want to do this but don't know where to start. We're going to build a mural

that people can walk up and pick up a marker and write on a canvas what you plan to do differently — I'm going to recycle more, buy a hybrid, buy light bulbs (energy-saving CFL compact fluorescent). My son will not let us throw stuff away. He wants us to recycle everything. Now he wants his dad to help him build sculptures from recycled stuff."

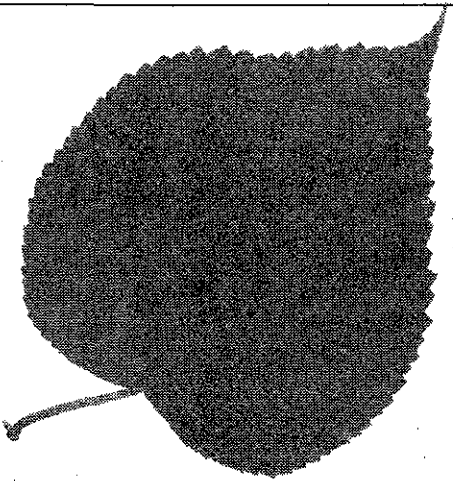
BECOMING AWARE

Mandi Buckland is busy decoupageing signs for the street fair out of recycled *Observer & Eccentric Newspapers*. She's especially become conscious of the environment since the birth of her first child, Tuula, nearly a year ago.

"We're going to appeal to everybody from children to older people as well to learn about going green, not to

stand up on a soapbox and preach, but what are the small steps that you can take right now that can have an impact for children and grandchildren," said Buckland of Plymouth. "Since my baby was born you start to think about how the earth is going to affect them. One of the biggest things is you don't have to buy brand new things. I find myself going to more antique stores, buying used items that can have new purpose. I've taken up sewing. I've been making pillows out of old concert T-shirts that are hard to part with.

"I've been buying all organic food for her, making my own baby food. I'm learning something new everyday. We want this to be a family-friendly event, if they can walk away with just one piece of information to make a softer



imprint on the planet. I keep a tote bag in my car. Whether I go grocery shopping or anything I buy I put in my tote. I never ask for a bag."

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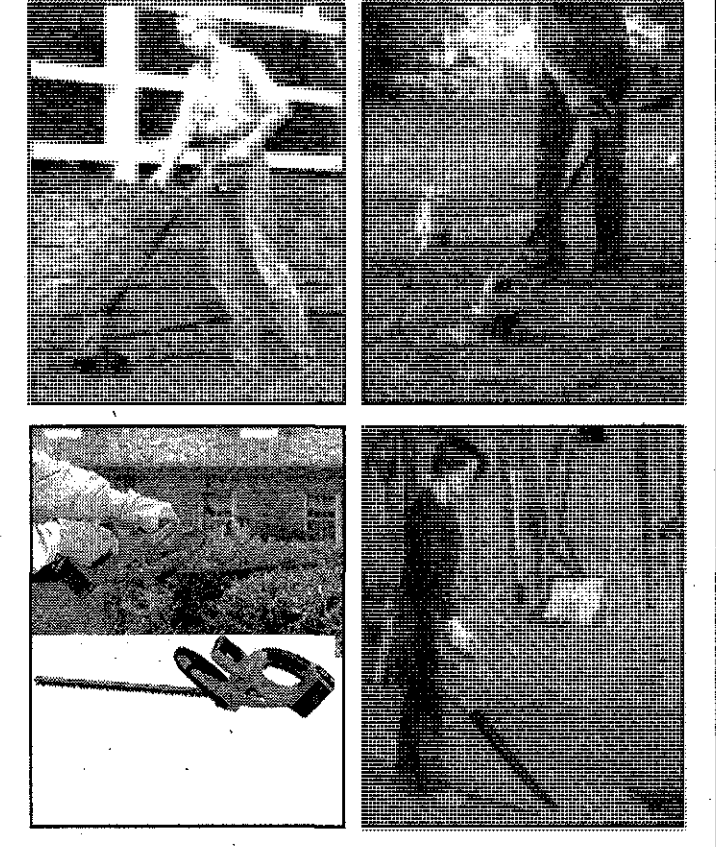
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Pouring out memories

Area man offers light-hearted glimpse of his life in new book

BY SHARON DARGAY
OBSERVER STAFF WRITER

Morris Last's grandchildren know their 77-year-old "Papa" filled jelly doughnuts to help pay the family rent when he was 8.

His daughter, Laura Solomon, can tell you all about his guitar-playing days in the Army, when her father learned a few chords in exchange for singing gospel songs.

And his wife, Helene, is aware of the most minuscule details, from the first time her husband cheated — at Pin the Tail on the Donkey — to the names of his grade school pals.

They'll never forget even a snippet of his experiences, because Last, of Bloomfield Hills, poured out his memories onto the printed page last year. With the help of Solomon, who typed his hand-written manuscript, and friends who edited, Last authored his memoir, *The World According to Monyak, Facts, Fiction & Outright Lies*.

Last takes a humorous approach to growing up in Detroit as a Jewish immigrant from Poland, and explores personal history, Jewish traditions and community, as well as universal themes of life.

The paperback, with a photo of Last at age 4 on its cover, is available from Amazon.com and iUniverse.com. It retails for \$14.95.

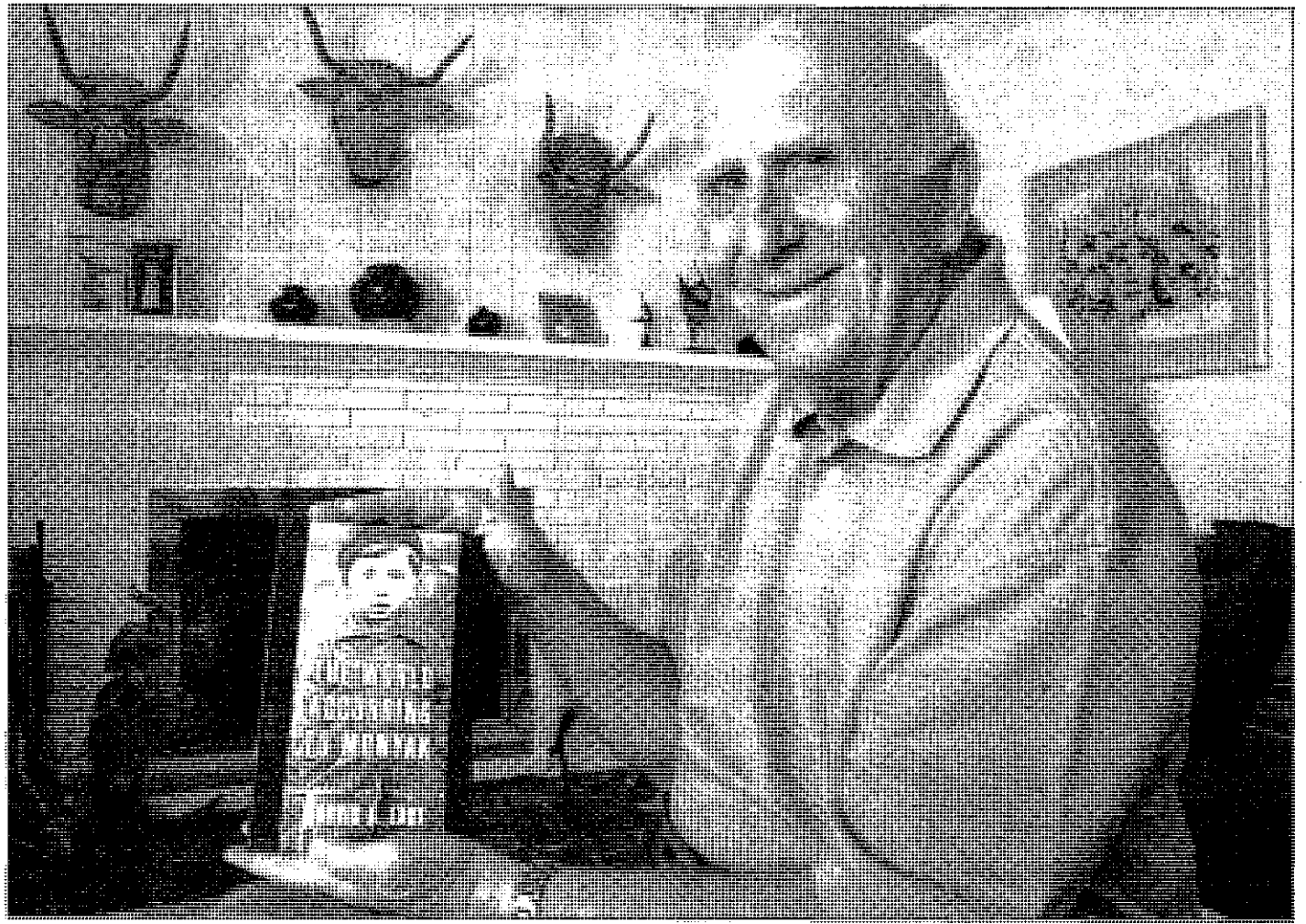
"The impetus to write this book was to get it all down before you either forget it or take the dirt nap," said Solomon of West Bloomfield, mother of nine children and an avid scrap booker.

"With the scrap booking I do, I get down a memory visually. With the book, you're getting it down literally. But it's two ends of the same thing. A lot of the (scrapbook) pages I make are lessons for the kids. But he talks in the end of the book about messages to the grandkids. I think they're good life lessons.

"Everyone we talk to says, 'I wish my dad would have done that.'"

RICH WITH EXPERIENCES

Last is not a writer by trade. He taught physical education, music and art for 41 years in Detroit Public Schools — where he won teacher of the year honors in 1986 — and also gave guitar lessons, both at



Author Morris Last of Bloomfield Hills shows the cover of his book about growing up Jewish in metro Detroit.

an after-school club and at the Jewish Community Center.

He did a stint in the Army, travelled extensively as a civilian through Europe, Africa and Asia, and took an extended overseas sabbatical to study physical education abroad. During the height of the folk music's popularity, he'd invited dozens of musicians to jam sessions in his apartment near Wayne State.

He co-authored a guitar instruction book with Joe Fava, an accomplished guitarist, and owned an art gallery for seven years, Art Forms, in the Livernois-Seven Mile area of Detroit. His association with Fresh Air Camp in Brighton lasted for years, while he rose through the ranks from waiter to assistant director.

After his first wife and Solomon's mother, Marcia, died, Last married Helene, who had been a student in his guitar class years before. For five months each year, for the past 18 years, the couple has lived in Zihuatenejo, Mexico, about 150 miles north

of Acapulco.

The experiences — and all the people he's met along the way — served as interesting fodder for the book.

IN MEXICO

"When we come into town, a cab driver will drive by and he'll see us. He'll get on his phone and say, 'Morrie and Helene are back!' The cab drivers will tell each other we're back and they look out for us," Last explained.

Helene teases that her husband could "talk to anyone, even dirt."

"He makes friends wherever he goes. I always told him the perfect job would be a greeter for Wal-Mart, but no one would get any shopping done," she said. "He's got stories."

Last offers a simple explanation: "I really love Mexico. But most of all, I love people. And in Mexico I've had the opportunity to meet hundreds and hundreds of people."

He's already working on ideas for his

second book, which likely will focus on the couple's adventures abroad.

Last encourages other senior citizens to pen their memoirs as a legacy for their children and grandchildren, as well as a memory tool for themselves.

"What's good about the book is you get it all down while you remember every minuscule detail," he said. "The woman across the street came over and said, 'I've been wanting to write.' I said, 'don't just talk about it. Do it. I'll help you on anything you want help with, but just do it.'"

He tells other first-time writers not to stress over recalling a lifetime of memories or worry about penning the perfect book.

"It's there. If you can't remember it, wait 10 minutes," he said. "No one is ever going to write the best book there ever was. You write it and do the best you can. It's like in athletics, you can throw the ball at the basket and if you can't make it, keep practicing. Keep trying to do what you can and you're a winner. You're still a winner."

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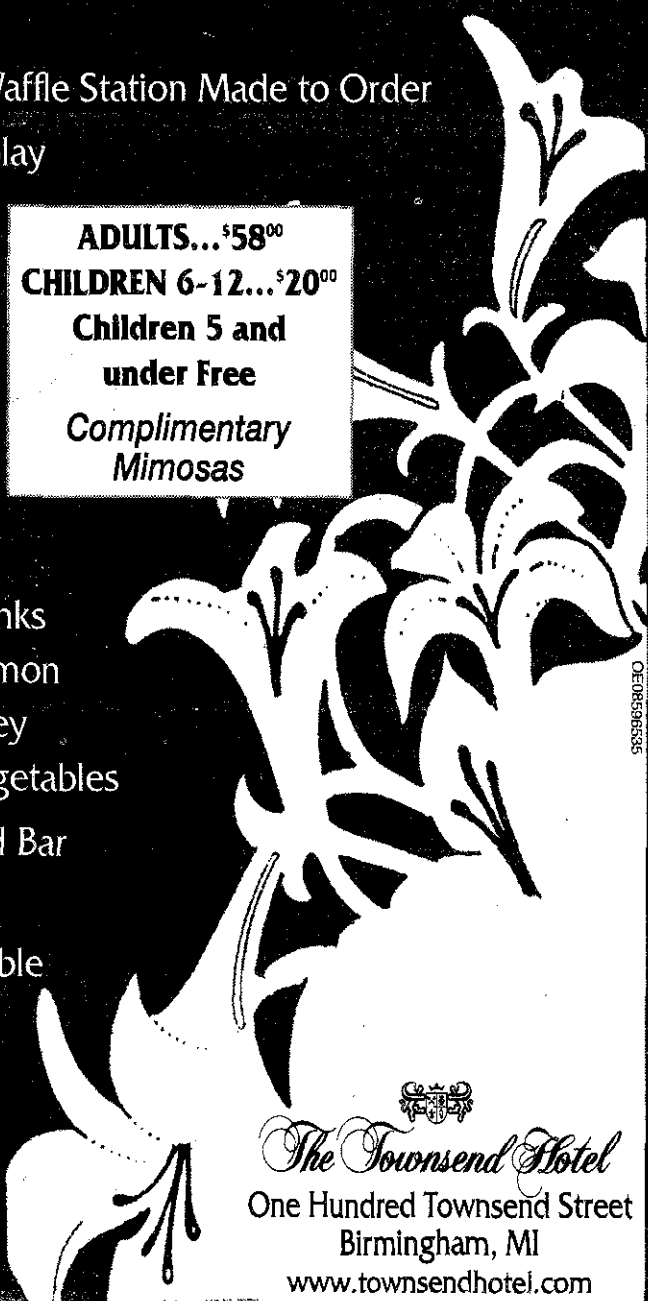
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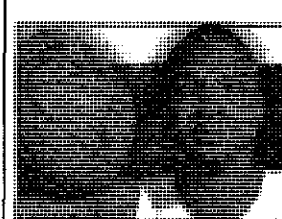
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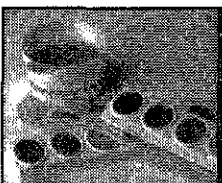
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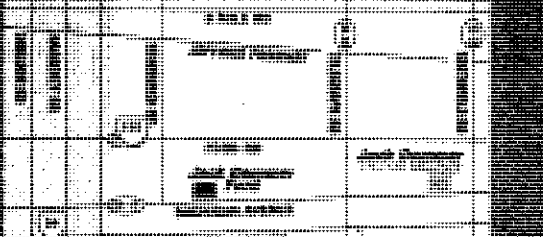
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