

THURSDAY

June 25, 2009

The Observer & Eccentric Newspapers

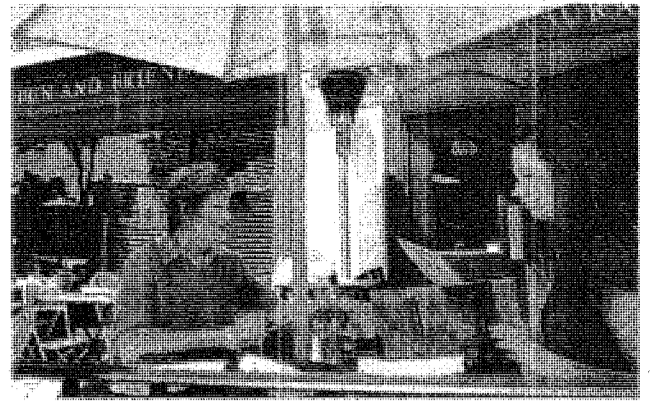
Volume 45 Number 9

75 CENTS

Talent abounds on All-Area baseball team - B2

# WESTLAND OBSERVER

online at hometownlife.com



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Food & Wine, B8

## AROUND TOWN

### Celebration

It's been around for 150 years, first in the city of Wayne and now in Westland. It's a milestone worth celebrating and that's what the 877 members of the Wayne Masonic Lodge No. 112 will do Saturday, June 27.

The lodge will celebrate its 150th anniversary with a series of activities, beginning with an open house from 10 a.m. to noon. There also will be a light lunch, followed by a Ceremonial Rededication of the building by the State Grand Master and Grand Lodge Officers at 2 p.m., the burial of a time capsule at 3:30 p.m. and dinner and awards presentation at 5 p.m.

The lodge is at 37137 Palmer just east of Newburgh. For more information, call the lodge at (734)721-7950 or visit the Masons online at [www.waynelodge112.org](http://www.waynelodge112.org).

### Book sale

The League of Women Voters of Northwest Wayne County will hold its used book sale Friday through Sunday at the Westland Shopping Center, Wayne and Warren roads, Westland. There will be a preview 6-8:30 p.m. today (June 25). It costs \$3.

Hours will be 10 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday and 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday.

Most books and magazines will be priced at \$1 or less; videos, CDs and DVDs will be individually priced.

### Get e-news

Sign up for the a free electronic *Westland Observer* newsletter and you could win a pass for two to Imagine Theatres and a free Buddy's pizza like Marilyn Konchel of Westland. Konchel signed up for the E-Newsletter and was selected in a random drawing. The alternate was Terry Banka.

Today's Headlines is an e-mail newsletter that will automatically send the latest news via e-mail to anyone who signs up at [hometownlife.com](http://hometownlife.com). To sign up, click on the e-newsletters tab on [Hometownlife.com](http://Hometownlife.com) (top left of the home page). The *Observer Newspaper* editions offer e-newsletters Thursday and Sunday. Local business and local entertainment newsletters will come out once a week.

Getting the newsletter is easy. The first thing you have to do is become a member of our Web site by going to [Hometownlife.com](http://Hometownlife.com) and clicking on the link Become a member, which is just above the main carousel of stories. Once you are a member, click on the E-newsletters tab at the top left of the home page to sign up.

E-newsletter subscribers are entered in weekly drawings for Imagine Theatre movie passes, concert tickets at The Palace and DTE Energy Music Theatre and gift certificates for dinner at restaurants throughout western Wayne and Oakland counties.

# Park cleanup plan 'on right track'

BY LEANNE ROGERS  
OBSERVER STAFF WRITER

Plans for rehabilitating a portion of the lead-contaminated Central City Park appear to be moving closer to approval by the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality.

The more than 200-page proposal was reviewed recently at the monthly DEQ Quality Review Team meeting.

"We asked for meeting dates. We want to meet in person so we give a review of our comments," said Beth Vens, MDEQ project manager.

"Overall, it looks like a good plan. There are some things they need to adjust but they are definitely on the right track."

Trying to coordinate a meeting date with Wayne County and the MDEQ, Westland Mayor William Wild said he is trying to get the meeting scheduled by the end of the month.

"I hope they'll give us their take on our plan and say OK or OK, do this," said Wild, who ordered the park fenced off when he became mayor in January 2007. "I hope we are to the point of being able to move forward."

Vens was also hopeful that the

remediation plan could soon move forward.

"I think the items will be relatively easy to correct," she said "I hope they can move forward very soon. If they are willing to modify the things the department wants, the plan could be approved in a few weeks."

The first phase calls for addressing environmental problems on the 12 acres at the east end of the park and installing new soccer fields, pavilions and concession stands.

Wayne County, which owns the property, would fund the \$1.2 million project and is hopeful it could

qualify for stimulus money. The plan calls for installation of a geo-textile membrane, 12 inches of fresh soil and other landscaping to prevent park users from coming into contact with contaminated soil.

Other areas would be covered by asphalt or concrete. Outside the 12 acres, the remainder of the park would remain fenced off until additional phases of remediation are completed. The county's plan also calls for several measures to address findings of methane gas from the former landfill.

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Phlebotomist technician Ann Coles gets Scott German ready to donate blood during the Westland Police and Fire Departments' annual Battle of the Badges.

## Firefighters claim victory in blood battle

BY LEANNE ROGERS  
OBSERVER STAFF WRITER

It was the narrowest of margins but the Westland Fire Department can again claim victory in the Battle of Badges American Red

Cross blood drive.

There were 33 pints of blood collected Monday at the Bailey Center — 17 pints from donors designating support for the fire department and 16 pints donated on behalf of the police department.

"The fire department won, of course. I'll tell you that. It was very close," said fire Capt. John Adams, who coordinated the event. "It's not so much a battle between the two units but against the shortage of blood. We had people who

marked their donations for both departments. I noticed that about midway."

Historically, there is a significant decrease in the number of blood

Please see **BLOOD DRIVE, A3**

## Contractor to conduct city's rental inspections

BY LEANNE ROGERS  
OBSERVER STAFF WRITER

A private contractor will be taking over Westland's rental property inspections beginning July 1.

Last week, the council approved a professional services proposal from

Ken Buccilli LLC, Infrastructure Inspections for an amount not to exceed \$150,000. Buccilli's staff will handle administration of the program and also conduct the inspections.

"This is the first time the contractor will take over the (entire)

program. We will collect the money basically," said Building Department Director Roger Shifflett. "We will probably break even and maybe make a little money. It's not really meant to make money under state law."

Buccilli's firm works for a per-

centage of the inspection fees collected rather than a retainer or other fee. As a result of the subcontracting of the inspections, an inspector who had been on the city staff is being laid off. The Buccilli

Please see **INSPECTIONS, A3**

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## City updates charter on election filings

BY LEANNE ROGERS  
OBSERVER STAFF WRITER

Copies of Westland's city charter will be revised with new language to accurately reflect a state law setting the filing deadline for city offices 12 weeks before the election.

Copies of the charter will have new language added with a sticker overlying the existing language, which set the filing deadline at seven weeks prior to the election.

"We discussed the filing deadline with (Michigan) Attorney General's office. We could do it with a ballot proposal, but if it didn't pass we would be in the same position — state law supersedes the charter," City Attorney Angelo Plakas said. "We're going to put together some-

thing to place over that provision in copies of the charter."

Changes to the city charter require voter approval and the conflict between the charter came to light when proposed charter amendments were being reviewed by the Attorney General's staff as required by state law.

"The council has passed a resolution for two charter questions for November," Clerk Eileen DeHart said.

One question was to allow candidates to pay a \$100 filing fee rather than gathering signatures on nominating petitions. The second question was to move the filing deadline to 12 weeks before the election.

"We can't hardly get the ballots printed in seven weeks," DeHart said. "The

Attorney General's office said we didn't need a charter amendment because of the state law."

The timing on when the conflict was discovered resulted in the filing deadline being moved up unexpectedly. Nine candidates are in the race for four council seats. Mayor William Wild is running unopposed for his first full term as mayor. The change has resulted in complaints from a few of the regular council watchers.

"I talked on the telephone to all the candidates, mailed them registered letters and letters by regular mail," DeHart said. "None of the candidates complained."

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AROUND WESTLAND

4-H workshop

Michigan State University's 4-H Extension in Wayne County is reaching out to youngsters interested in a craft workshop, hosted at the Wayne County Fair, 1-3 p.m. Tuesday, June 30.

more information, call Rivetto at (734) 727-7236.

In concert

The 2009 Concerts in the Park Series continues Sunday, June 28, with the easy listening music of Pam & Scott.

Golf outing

The John Glenn High School Wrestling Program will hold its 12th Annual Golf Outing Fund-raiser Saturday, Sept. 19, at the Warren Valley Golf Course.

and dinner. Dinner only guests are welcome, cost is \$25. Contact Coach Polk at rocketwrestling@gmail.com or Judy at (734) 634-4595 for more information or to make reservations.

Citizens academy

Applications are now being accepted for individuals who want to learn more about how the fire department in Westland is organized and operates.

To participate in the 32-hour program, applicants must be 18 years or older and either live or work in Westland. Sessions are approximately three-four hours in length and will be held on July 31, Aug. 2, 7 and 9.

Hazardous Waste Collection day in the City of Westland.

The Westland event is scheduled for 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 22, in the lot behind J.C. Penney at the Westland Shopping Center, Warren Road and Nankin Boulevard.

For further information, contact the Wayne County Department of Environment at (734) 326-3936.

Another event has been scheduled for 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, June 27, at the Northville Public Works, 650 Doherty, just north of Seven Mile Road and east of South Main.

Glow Skate

Grab your skates and head for the Mike Modano Arena on Friday nights for Glow Skate. Cruise around the rink with blacklight illumination from 7:30-9 p.m.

Friends of Eloise

The Friends of Eloise meets at 7 p.m. on the third Tuesday of the month (except July, August and December) at the Collins House in the Westland Historic Village Park.

Prison families

Do you have a family member currently in prison? Do you feel alone? Do you wish you had a support group that you could turn to?

Preschool sign-ups

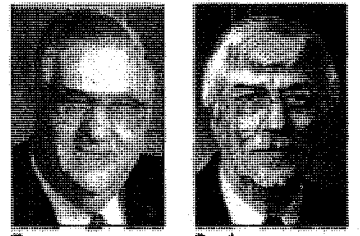
Willow Creek Cooperative Preschool is currently accepting enrollment into its Parent/Tot, Young 3's, 3-year and 4-year programs.

Hazardous waste

The Wayne County Department of Environment has announced a Household

W-W school board says goodbye to Turner, Becher

BY SUE MASON OBSERVER STAFF WRITER



Turner Becher

There will be two new faces at the table when the Wayne-Westland school board meets for its organizational meeting on July 14.

Joining the board will be Carol Middel of Canton who was elected to a four-year term and John Goci of Westland who will serve out the remaining two years of term that had been held by Frederick Weaver.

But as the board prepares for the change, school officials and trustees took time at this month's meeting to honor departing members Steve Becher and Ed Turner, and they, in turn expressed their thanks.

"It's been a pleasure to serve on this school board, this district is amazing," said Turner.

Turner has served on the board for 12 years. He pointed out that he never missed a day of school, both elementary and high school, and never missed a school board meeting.

"I'm proud of my record, I served to the best of my ability," he said. "I always said I put students first, parents second and the administration and teachers third."

"I'm thankful that the residents allowed me to serve the last five years," said Becher. "I've enjoyed my tenure on the board. It has done an excellent job in providing an education for our students with no major layoffs or program cuts."

Becher expressed confidence that the district will endure the economic crisis and become the "lighthouse in the state." He also thanked school officials for "putting up with me every year I proposed single sex physical education classes."

"Great futures do begin right here," he added. "Thank you for allowing me to serve."

Board President Martha Pitsenbarger noted that the two men devoted them-

selves to the district and that they "surely will be missed by the board."

"I'm truly thankful for your years of service," she said. "By your willingness and dedication, you have enriched the lives of our students."

Board Secretary Cindy Schofield noted that Turner "set the standard for attending events in the schools and it still stands."

"People don't realize that besides the events, Ed provided scholarships to our students. He gave more than people realize," she said. "He set a good example for us."

She added that while she wasn't sure what to expect when Becher, a retired Wayne-Westland teacher, joined the board, she came to realize he had "expertise on issues we didn't understand because you had been in the classroom."

Board Vice President Skip Monit told the two men he will miss their "devotion to what we do as a board" and said their service was exemplary.

"You both contributed a great dynamic to the board," he said. "Ed, you were devoted to the kids and that never changed. Steve, I will miss your ability to speak frankly, your knowledge and your friendship."

The newest member of the board, Shawna Walker, said the two men "were right there" when she joined the board last August.

"Mr. Turner, you went to every event and that made me want to do that. Steve Becher showed me a lot in a short period of time," she said. "I'm going to miss you both. You will be truly missed."

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# BLOOD DRIVE

FROM PAGE A1

donations and an increase in use during the summer. Donors participating in the "Battle of the Badges" blood drives help the American Red Cross maintain a safe blood supply at a time when additional supplies are needed, according to American Red Cross communications specialist Martha Roemer Kurtz.

Scott German, a Stevenson Middle School teacher, and daughter Rachael came to donate blood but neither happened to be there to support police or firefighters.

"I'm pretty much of a regular donor. I'm here with my daughter so she can get extra credit for her microbiology class," said German. "She just graduated from Central (Michigan University) and is taking a class at Schoolcraft College. We came here last year for the blood drive."

Needles don't bother him, German said, as phlebotomist technician Ann Coles got him ready for his blood donation. And with good reason.

"He's got Stevie Wonder veins," said Coles. "Stevie Wonder could draw blood on him."

Rachael German won't be getting that extra credit — she said it was contingent on her donating blood and she was rejected for low iron.

Westland Parks and Recreation foreman Terry Martin also wasn't there to donate for either department.

"I was a serviceman. I served," said Martin, a Korean War army veteran. "I donate once or twice a year. People don't realize how important it is, they always say they have a shortage."

One early donor designating his support for the police department was Officer Dan Serrano, who is assigned to the Youth Bureau.

"I cleared up a couple of cases, so I thought I'd stop by. It's been awhile since I donated," said Serrano, who was predicting a police department victory. "I registered as a bone marrow donor in 1997 but they have never called."

The 33 pints total donated at the Westland Battle of the Badges was from the 30 pints collected in 2008 but down from the peak year of 79 units of blood collected in 2006.

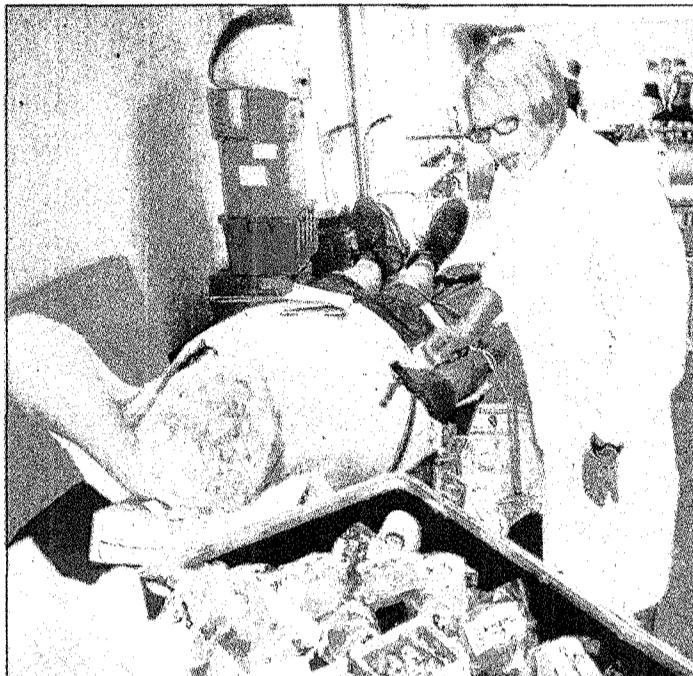
For next year, Adams said he will be looking at making changes to get the number of donors higher — like not scheduling the Battle of the Badges on the same day and times that the Bova VFW Post in Westland was having a blood drive.

"I'd like to schedule it before school gets out and people leave on vacation. I'd like to double the number of donors next year," said Adams. "I'm not sure how to explain the drop-off. Our first year (2005) we set the pace in Wayne County. The mayor and chiefs received an award."

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Westland Police Officer Dan Serrano was predicting a police victory when he stopped by to donate blood.



Red Cross nurse Marilyn Wojtowicz talks with Terry Martin as he gets ready to donate blood.

# Volunteer Johnson was friend to Westland

BY LEANNE ROGERS  
OBSERVER STAFF WRITER

Over some 40 years, Ernest Johnson was an active volunteer in Westland — president of the Westland Historical Society, a member of the Parks and Recreation Board and president of the Westland Cultural Society.



Ernest Johnson

"Whatever needed to be done in the city, he would volunteer for it," said Georgia Becker, a longtime friend. "There were just so many things, you just can't name them all."

Mr. Johnson, 79, died June 18. Despite his health problems, Mr. Johnson continued to be active.

"He absolutely kept going. People were saying the other night at a meeting how well he looked," said Becker. "He and my (late) husband Howard were so alike — right up to the end, constantly on the go. Being active keeps you going — if you stopped, you don't last as long."

It was usually given that if you saw Mr. Johnson, you would also see his wife, Jo — she was equally active in the community.

When then-Wayne County

Commissioner Kay Beard honored Jo Johnson as a woman of achievement, she called Mr. Johnson out of the audience to join his wife.

"One of my fondest memories is when Kay Beard called Ernie up to share the honor. I think he was the only man to be recognized as a woman of achievement," said Carol Larkin, a local activist who works for Wayne County. "In his quiet way, he just kind of smiled and went up with Jo. It was a spontaneous thing when Kay called him up."

Becker has known the Johnsons so long that she said she doesn't remember when they first met.

"When Jo called to tell me he had died, I was broken up. He was just a good man, a good friend," said Becker.

In addition to his wife, Mr. Johnson is survived by his children, Donna (John) Swanson, Jan (Bill) Mackenroth, Vicki (Michael) Webster, Laura (Rick) Hazen, sister Dorothy Briggs, grandchildren Angela (Andrew) Hathikhanavaia, Amanda Webster and Katie Webster. A son, Mike, and grandchild Kris Mackenroth predeceased Mr. Johnson.

Donations to Westland Historic Village Park are suggested. A note of condolence can be left at www.uhthf.com.

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# INSPECTIONS

FROM PAGE A1

firm also will be providing inspection services to Garden City as a subcontractor to McKenna Associates, which was recently hired to serve as that city's building department.

"When the city originally did this several years back, as a council member I thought we were sold a bad bill of

goods," said Mayor William Wild. "The contractor got most of the money and we got most of the work. We brought it back in house to sever ties with that company. We're going to do it the right way this time. It will be more efficient and cost-effective."

With 18,000 rental units — apartments, duplexes, quads and single family homes — housing about 35,000 people, Westland's rental inspection program examines the rental

units every three years. The building department, which has five full-time inspectors, still handles other inspections and also has picked up additional ordinance enforcement duties.

"In the future we will see more and more of this (outsourcing). We've also been increasing the ordinance work to be able to keep our building inspectors," said Wild. "We've also brought

animal control into the building department. The animal control officer is doing ordinance enforcement, too. We've added work to protect those jobs."

Councilman Michael Kehrer abstained from voting on the contract, noting he didn't currently work for Buccilli but had previously and wanted to avoid any potential conflict.

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# PUBLIC SAFETY

## Duo take cell phones, wallet from worker

### Robbery

A Detroit man told police he was robbed at knife point just after midnight June 22 in the parking lot of Kroger, 31300 Michigan Ave.

The man works for a parking lot cleaning company and was on foot blowing trash so that it could be picked up by the sweeper machine. He said two men approached him and one man asked if the company was hiring.

Distracted while talking to the first man, the Detroit man said the second man came up to his left side and pulled out a steak knife which the man held to his throat.

The man said he was told to "give up what you got." The man told police gave one man his wallet while the second man took the two cell phones which were on his belt.

### COP CALLS

Police dog Drago tracked the suspects to the area near Carlisle and Andover before losing the scent due to large amount of foot traffic in the area.

### Larceny from a vehicle

A Southfield woman told police June 22 that on June 14 she had visited her daughter at an apartment at Woodland Villa, 7550 Drew Circle, and left after about 30 minutes to find her vehicle rear hatch open.

Reported missing were a large suitcase containing clothing, shoes, make-up and toiletries, a lap top computer, a diamond necklace, a camcorder, a watch and topaz/diamond ring. The missing items were valued at \$3,780.

The woman said the vehicle might have been left unlocked. The report wasn't file immediately, the woman said, because she wasn't sure it was needed.

### Vandalism

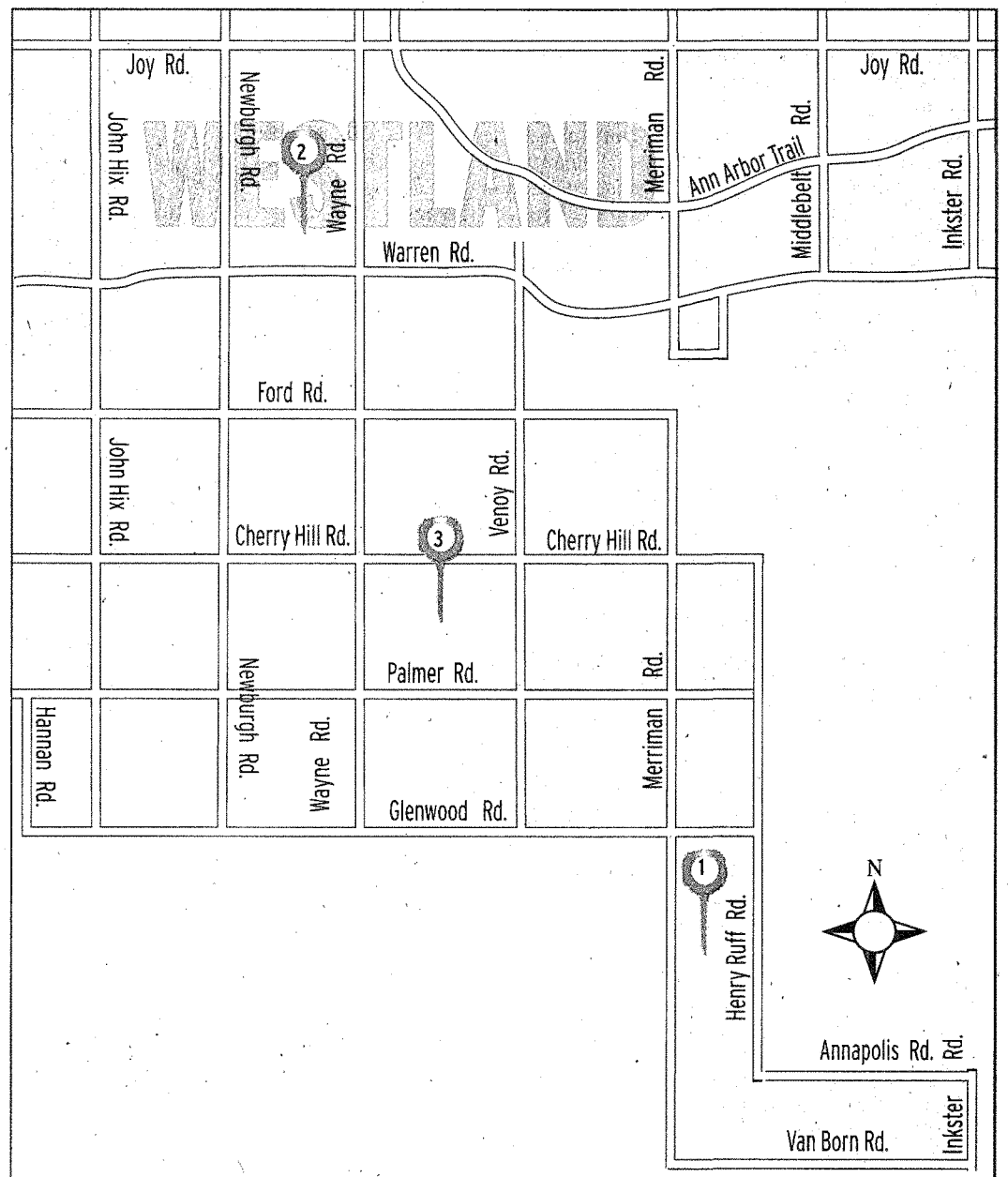
On June 18, a resident in the 36000 block of Melton told police that someone had thrown eggs at his vehicle while it was parked on the street. The damage was estimated at \$500.

The owner said it was the third time this year his vehicle had been egged.

### Larceny from a vehicle

A Romulus woman told police June 22 that someone smashed a window on her vehicle and stole a GPS unit, valued at \$200, while she was inside Fortneye, 35675 Warren Road.

— By LeAnne Rogers



## Holiday crackdown targets drunken driving

Choose to drive drunk and fireworks won't be the only flashing lights you see over the July 4 holiday.

The Westland Police Department is joining law enforcement agencies across the state for a summer "Over the Limit. Under Arrest" crackdown on drunken drivers.

Drivers in Michigan will find stepped up patrols looking for drunken drivers throughout Westland beginning Friday and continuing through Sunday, July 5.

This includes the July 4 weekend, which is a time for parties, picnics and celebrations. Last year, 14 motorists died in Michigan over the July

4 holiday, with five of those deaths involving alcohol and three of those motorists not wearing seat belts.

"We want people to have a good time and be responsible. By stepping up enforcement during the holiday season, we can keep motorists safe by removing drunk drivers from the roadways," Westland Police Sgt. Ron Kroll said.

The stepped up enforcement is funded by a grant through the federal Office of Highway Safety Planning administered by Wayne County.

"We will have two extra patrol units working the six nights of the grant. We will have 12 officers working," Kroll said.

In Michigan, a motorist can be arrested for drunken driving with 0.08 blood-alcohol content or higher. A drunken driving conviction is costly and comes with assorted penalties including fines, legal fees, driver responsibility fees, court costs and higher insurance rates.

"Not driving is so much easier than getting behind the wheel after drinking too much. Penalties can be avoided by designating a sober driver, taking a cab or spending the night at a friend's house," Kroll said.

In 2008, there were 317 alcohol-related traffic deaths statewide, a decrease of 8.2 percent from 2007.

## Trial date set in fatal pedestrian accident

An Aug. 10 trial date has been scheduled for a Livonia man charged with killing a pedestrian in Westland while driving drunk.

Wesley Sanborn, 22, is charged with killing Gary Brown, a 27-year-old Livonia father of two, in an Aug. 3 accident. Brown, who was also reported to be intoxicated, was walking along Joy east of Newburgh when he was hit by a vehicle.

Westland police arrested

Sanborn seven hours after the accident, when he drove back to scene in a damaged Chevrolet Blazer. Officers reported that Sanborn still smelled of alcohol.

Sanborn told police he was receiving a text message and cell phone call at the time of the accident and believed that he had hit a mailbox.

The trial date was scheduled after attempts to reach a plea agreement failed. In May, Wayne County Circuit Court Judge Michael Hathaway

rejected as too lenient a plea offer that would have sentenced Sanborn to one year in the Wayne County Jail and five years probation. If convicted, Sanborn faced a maximum of 15 years in prison.

Hathaway had given Sanborn the option of a 2- to 15-year prison sentence under a new plea agreement or going to trial.

Through their attorney, the Brown family was willing to accept the original plea agreement.

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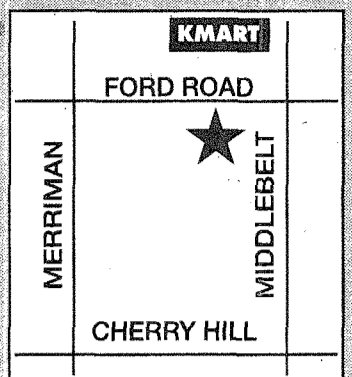
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# LOCAL OPINION

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Our fundamental purposes are to enhance the lives of our readers, nurture the hometowns we serve and contribute to the business success of our customers.

## OUR VIEWS

### Get signed up for recycling

The carts have been delivered, now it's up to Westland residents to make curbside recycling happen in a big way.

Please, no more excuses about have to pre-sort recyclables. No more complaining about having to peel labels off cans and bottles. No more grumbling about having to cart items to the recycling center on Marquette. About the hardest thing residents will have to do is rinse out jars, bottles and cans and wheel the cart to the curb.

This new program is light years ahead of the city's old curbside recycling program in which residents had to pay to have their recyclables picked up. In fact, it gives new meaning to turning trash to treasure. For that little bit of effort, residents who recycle will get rewards through RecycleBank which can be redeemed for gift cards, groceries and products from Coca-Cola, Kraft Foods and CVS/pharmacy as well as local participating Westland businesses like Westland Shopping Center, Heartland Marketplace, Nankin Hardware, Marvaso's Italian Grille and Palace Supermarket.

RecycleBank has more than one million members across 19 states who have cumulatively saved more than 1.5 million trees and more than 105 million gallons of oil through recycling efforts. So doesn't it make sense to sign up?

We urge residents who receive carts to activate their account today. Don't wait. You get 40 bonus RecycleBank points just for signing up. And as soon as you start setting your cart out on your designated collection day, you'll begin earning more.

This recycling program is a win-win for residents and the city. It offers rewards to encourage recycling which in turn cuts down on the amount of trash going to landfills. It costs the city money to have garbage hauled away. With the state's failing economy, every penny saved can help maintain city services.

You use your charge cards to build up frequent flier points, so why not use your blue cart to build up RecycleBank points? It's the smart thing to do.

## ONLINE VOICES & VIEWS

### • A wonderful story

What a Great Story. Congratulations to Maggie and Roy. They are one in a million. Also thank you for publishing this story. It renews hope of everlasting love.

themotormouth

### • Thanks for recycling program

Kudo to city officials for instituting this great program. I've almost filled my container with recyclables. I hope the majority of Westland citizens take advantage of this program, as most will have more recyclables than trash if they recycle all they can.

ALMac7

### • Village is addition to city

I think it is incredible that in these economic times, there is someone willing to invest in our community and bring additional tax revenues up to where it will actually benefit the residents! I see this as an addition, not as a disruption.

tlahhlahhlah!

### • Project not good for city

I support good city planning and smart construction that benefit our community. This project fails both those criteria. It is more an act of desperation. There were numerous alternative sites to put a senior citizen high rise, which would have been more appropriate for this type of construction.

## COMMUNITY VOICE

### Do you have any plans for vacation this summer?

We asked this question at the William P. Faust Public Library in Westland.



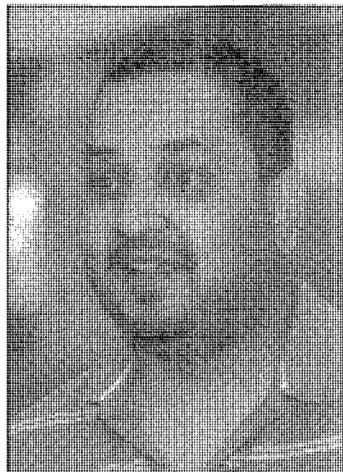
"I plan to camp at Bruin Lake in Pinckney."

Sherri McCabe  
Westland



"Nothing. I'm retired and I'll be taking care of my son who's ill."

Warren Brown  
Westland



"Right now, I'm unemployed. When I get a job, I'll think about a vacation. But right now, I have no plans."

Kotieswar Meghadri  
Shelby Township



"I'm going to Quebec and Montreal in August. I'm going with the seniors from the Dyer Center."

Betsy Spreen  
Garden City

## LETTERS

### • Recycling plan not fair

I live in Westland Meadows, where we have dumpsters for our trash. I have been recycling for many years now, making my weekly visit to the Westland dump. I don't think it's fair that they haven't put something in place for us to get rewarded. Maybe they need to give us a card that can be swiped when we bring our things to the dump.

I don't think this was very well thought out because people are being left out. It's bad enough I get treated like a second-class citizen because I live in a "trailer park," actually a mobile home community, but this really beats all. Unfair treatment to your citizens.

Lori Gabbert  
Westland

### Thanks for support

The staff, students and community of Taft-Galloway Elementary would like to thank you for your coverage of our first annual "Keep It Safe" community event on May 27.

Without the generous support of our local business and community partners, this fantastic event could not have been a reality. We look forward to a continued partnership with your organization, and we thank you for your support in keeping all children safe.

Stephanie Ormsby  
principal Taft-Galloway School  
Westland

### Health care reform needed

In less than five months, President Obama and his administration have already achieved an impressive list of domestic and foreign policy accomplishments for the near term as well as long-term benefit of America's people. However, the president's remarkable successes thus far are merely a prelude of what is still to come. Topping the administration's current agenda is the most important and difficult issue of all, that of health care reform.

The obstacles to real reform are many, most notably the entrenched and arrogant health insurance industry, perhaps the only American industry that is actually sleazier than Wall Street bankers, big oil, defense contractors and credit card companies. Notably, and unsurprisingly, each of the preceding considers the Republican Party as a wholly owned subsidiary. Thus, it is equally unsurprising that obstruction to health care reform, especially the absolute necessity of a public option, is led by the troglodytes of the GOP as well as the right-wing media noise machine. Unfortunately, even a few cowardly Democrats have been unwilling to break free of the filthy campaign money of the insurance industry.

However, unlike the past when conservative and corporate slime campaigns derailed health care reform, the hundreds of millions of dollars of dirty money being poured into efforts to sabotage the Obama administration's reforms will this time be for naught. All the endless right-wing cheerleading against the common good of America's citizens cannot stop the inevitable progress of our nation toward ensuring that the fundamental right of affordable health care is available to every citizen. A public option is the only way of ensuring this as a reality.

The insurance industry is outright terrified of competition, especially competition that significantly lowers medical costs for all Americans while ensuring that everyone has equal access to high quality and affordable care. How ironic that the self-anointed Republican defenders of free and competitive enterprise are so obsessed with shielding their pet industries from actual competition! It is time for our nation to break free from



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a health care system which is rigged to screw over American families. Never again should any citizen of our nation be refused coverage or have to declare bankruptcy because of health care bills. The arrogant conservative mind set of greed and selfishness blithely considers affordable health care as a "privilege." It is not. Rather, it is an inalienable right, directly derived from our intrinsic rights of life and liberty. Most of all, it is a right which America's citizens are about to reclaim once and for all.

Joe Golonka  
Westland

### Emphasize hygiene

So the PETA people were upset that Obama killed a fly. Actually, it should have been the World Health Organization that should have been upset when he didn't text anyone for a hand sanitizer. Instead of pushing for health care reform, Obama should consider stressing better hygiene.

Dolores Kapanke  
Garden City

### No to health care plan

I will not support any new or higher taxes to cover the health care reform measure that Obama and the Democrats are forcing upon us. Any politician that does will not get my vote at the next election cycle. I have written my state and federal representatives daily and conveyed this message to them.

This is nothing more than yet another power grab by the Obama administration. This plan has failed miserably everywhere in the world it has been tried. Health care costs are just another example of the greed of our political system.

High costs can be directly blamed in most part on politicians, they write the rules that permit or deny actions by insurers, hospitals, doctors and patients. Politicians at both the state and federal level have turned what should be the best health care system in the world into a terrible mess, all to collect campaign funds for their re-elections. They've done the same with our financial system and now our manufacturing icons.

It's easy to blame patients for the overuse in the health care system, and indeed, they must share some blame. But physician overuse is greater as most patients generally dislike unnecessary doctor visits and hospital admissions.

As a former business owner, if I had an employee giving company assets to outsiders in exchange for money on the side, I'd fire

him and possibly even have him jailed. In any other venue we call it bribery, payola and theft. But in the American political system, we call it freedom of speech. We don't jail them, we re-elect them.

Joe Biden has admitted that the Obama \$1 trillion dollar stimulus plan has failed to do what they had promised us in creating new jobs and keeping unemployment below the 8 percent mark, we are currently at 9.4 percent and still climbing yet they still want to spend another \$1.6 trillion as a down payment on this health care "reform" that will force private insurers out of business and that includes the not-for-profit Blue Cross Blue Shield which is among the top health care companies in this country.

Obama stated that he could add 47 million to the Medicaid rolls and still save each family \$2,500 a year, how is this possible? He will tax the money that your employer pays for your insurance plan and use that to pay for the new national insurance coverage. It's the old government pea game, cut by a dollar what you pay a private insurer, take it away in taxes and then feed it to the federal government spending machine.

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) concludes that this plan will leave 36 million without insurance and 23 million will lose the current insurance they have. On top of that, they state that the cost will far exceed the estimation by the Obama administration.

The Obama administration wants everything done now and will not stop and look at the details of these plans because their goal is power and control over the people and ultimately, our money.

Congress should initiate a national health care database that would help eliminate errors in prescriptions and procedures. They should set caps on medical malpractice lawsuit awards and remove the restrictions from health care savings accounts.

Congress should also enact a Fair Tax Plan and abolish the IRS, saving us \$6 billion a year and initiate a Fair Trade agreement and then, just maybe, we the people would have restored faith in them, otherwise the next move Congress should make is return itself to a part-time status with corresponding reductions in salaries and the elimination of health and retirement benefits.

If we can bank online, we certainly can vote online. We can get any lawyer to write a piece of legislation for us for a whole lot less than \$5 billion plus a year.

Phil Solarz  
Westland

## WESTLAND OBSERVER



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MALLS & MAIN STREETS

If you have an item for Malls & Main Streets, please e-mail Susan Steinmueller at ssteinmueller@hometownlife.com or Sharon Dargay at sdargay@hometownlife.com

Book sale

The League of Women voters of Northwest Wayne County will hold a used book sale Thursday-Sunday, June 25-28 at Westland Mall, located at Wayne and Warren roads in Westland. Admission to the sale preview from 6-8:30 p.m., Thursday, is \$3. Free admission 10 a.m.-8:30 p.m., Friday and Saturday and 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Sunday.

The League will sell books of interest to adults, children and youth; hard cover and soft cover books, cookbooks, fiction and books in many categories, some special books and some audio and video tapes. Most magazines and books are priced at \$1 or less. CDs, DVDs and videos are individually priced. Bag sale - \$6 per bag or \$11 for two bags - is Sunday.

This fund-raiser allows the League to honor a local political science student with a scholarship each year.

Comerica Cityfest

Two local merchants will set up shop at the LISC Street Market during the Comerica Cityfest, July 1-5, in the New Center area, on West Grand Boulevard, between Woodward and the Lodge Freeway. The street market will be located on Second Avenue within the festival boundaries. The local merchants are:

Middle Kingdom of Plymouth with Asian-inspired treasures, including beautiful pearls, and silk items

Vaidehi Design of Westland with henna body decoration.

Comerica Cityfest hours are 11 a.m.-11 p.m., Wednesday-Saturday, July 1-4 and 11:30 a.m. to 8 p.m., Sunday, July 5.

Trade electronics

RadioShack at Westland Mall will appraise your used electronics - MP3 players, GPS receivers, digital cameras, mobile phones, games and gaming systems, and camcorders - and give you their value in the form of a RadioShack gift card on trade-in. The program runs through December. Westland Mall is located at 35000 W. Warren Road, Westland. (734) 421-0291

Wall the mall

Too hot or wet to hit the pavement outdoors? Head to Laurel Park Place Mall where the doors open to walkers at 6 a.m., Monday through Saturday and at 9 a.m. on Sunday. You'll log more than a half mile for every completed trip through the mall, including hallways. Laurel Park Place is located on Six Mile, between I-275 and Newburgh, in Livonia.

Inline skating

Summit Sports and the Farmington Inline Skate Club will host inline skating events 6:30 p.m.-midnight. Intermediate/advanced skaters will meet every Monday in June in the rear parking lot of Our Lady of Sorrows, 23815 Power Road, Farmington for a 15-25 mile skate through hilly terrain.

Beginner/intermediate skaters will meet Wednesdays, through Aug. 26, in the public parking area on Orchard Street (behind the Farmington Shopping Center at Farmington and Grand River) for 4-12 miles of skating in two loops.

The store is located at 28942 Orchard Lake Road. On July 29 and Aug. 26, Summit Sports will hold a skate maintenance clinic at 7:30 in between the loops Call (248) 737-0970.

- Compiled by Sharon Dargay

Midwest talent, locals, celebrities perform at comedy festival

Need a few laughs? Head to Joey's Comedy Club in Livonia where the summer comedy festival continues through July 11.

Bill Bushard, festival organizer and a stand-up comedian, says the festival focuses on Michigan comedians from throughout the state.

"We have a variety of shows planned."

Each show offers something different:

Thursday, June 25 - "The Freaks & Geeks Show!" featuring Mike Bobbitt (Detroit International Comedy Festival, DC Comedy Fest). The stand-up fringe hits the stage with smart edgy comedy.

Friday-Saturday, June 26-27 - "The 20 Midwest Comedy Showcase!" featuring Dave Landau (Comedy Central: Live at Gotham, NBC's Last Comic Standing) this weekend will bring together some of the most talented comedians in the Midwest.

Monday, June 29 - "Comedy Jump Start Contest: Round 2!" Watch as 11 of the Detroit area's newest comedy talents compete for cash and prizes.

Tuesday, June 30 - "Joey's Summer Variety Extravaganza!" This one of a kind show will combine music, dance and comedy resulting in a night of high-energy entertainment.

Wednesday, July 1 - "Comedy Overdrive!" featuring Michael McDaniel

(Detroit International Comedy Festival) and the best talent on the Detroit comedy scene

Thursday, July 2 - "Red White and Butland!" featuring PJ Butland.

Friday, July 3 - "Joey's Comedy Club All Stars!" A line-up of the best comedians in the Detroit area.

Monday July 6 - "Comedy Jump Start Contest: Round 3!" Watch as 11 of the Detroit area's youngest talents compete for cash and prizes.

Tuesday, July 7 - "The Roche Show!" featuring Frank Roche (Boston Comedy Festival, clubs and colleges across the US.)

Wednesday, July 8 - "Funny Top Cops!" featuring funny cops Dwayne Gill, Khurum Shiek and Henry Forbes. The fundraiser show will benefit M I Concerns of Police Survivors.

Thursday, July 9 - "1001 Laughs!" --- The best in Arab American comedy from all over the country featuring Amer Zahr and Mike Batayeh.

Friday-Saturday, July 10-11 - "The Midwest Comedy Showcase!" The weekend will bring together some of the most talented comedians in the Midwest.

Show schedules subject to change. Admission prices will vary. Joey's is located at 36071 Plymouth Road, Livonia. Call the Joey's Comedy Club box office for details at (734) 261-0555.

Furniture company awards grants to nonprofits

In honor of its 50th anniversary, Art Van Furniture is spending \$1 million to fund 50 grants for Michigan-based children, health and human services programs. The grants will range from \$5,000 to \$50,000.

Art Van will design the grants as Challenge Gifts in order to encourage others to donate and maximize fund-raising opportunities. To be eligible for a grant, an organization must be recognized as a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) and not be a private foundation. Organizations must also submit to a financial audit by an independent, certified public accountant, and not discriminate based on age, race, creed, gender, religion, disability, sexual orientation or ethnicity, in policy or in practice.

Interested organizations must submit

a grant application through the Art Van web site at www.artvan.com. Grant applications are due by midnight on June 30. Winners will be announced July 31. For online application form questions, call (586) 983-2050.

Art Van Elslander, founder of the furniture retailer, has made giving back a priority since the first Art Van Furniture store opened in 1959. His generosity has earned him honors such as Greater Detroit Outstanding Philanthropist of the Year, the University of Detroit Mercy President's Medallion Award and the Detroit News Michiganian of the Year.

"It is our honor to give back to communities and charities across our great state of Michigan that have supported Art Van

Furniture over the past 50 years," stated Art Van Founder Art Van Elslander. "The \$1 Million Charity Challenge will benefit 50 remarkable and deserving organizations to help them continue their work and improve the lives of people across our state. We encourage all eligible charities to apply for a grant."

Those not eligible for the grant program include: individuals, private foundations or endowment funds, religious organizations, political activities, parties or candidates, veteran organizations, fraternal or labor organizations, courtesy advertising program books and yearbooks, entertainment events, scholarships or conferences, sporting events or teams, and travel groups or tours.

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# Young Champions All Stars take aim at national title

BY SUE MASON  
OBSERVER STAFF WRITER

A group of youngsters from Westland and Canton are aiming high in cheerleading. Members of Westland Young Champions' All Stars, they're getting ready to compete for a national title after placing first in the state in Division 4.

"It's a nice group of girls. They're a well-rounded team, they fit together like a puzzle," said coach Danielle Santo. "They all get along fantastically. They're very caring to each other within cheer and outside cheer."

The team ranges in age from 9 to 16 and is part of the Westland Parks and Recreation Department's Young Champions, a division of Cheer America. They practice once a week at the Bailey Recreation Center.

According to Santo, the girls have been working hard in a quest for a state championship. They've done well at regionals, but never seemed to make the top spot at state competition.

"They did some difficult moves that raised the bar at the state competition," said Santo. "Some old coaches came and saw them and said they had improved 100 percent. They couldn't believe how fan-



Members of the Westland Young Champions All Stars show off the medals they won after placing first in the state championship last month. They're now preparing for national competition in Grand Rapids in late July.

tastically they pulled together as a team."

**'FEARLESS'**

The team has three fliers — Kelly Davis and Kelly Cossin of Westland and Becca McSorley of Canton — who Santo describe as "fearless." The team also includes twins Morgan and Mackenzie

Parrent, Jessie Gilmer, Kaitlin Koval, Kayley Riker, Rio Santo, all of Westland, Danielle Hart of Madison Heights, Bryanna Olsen-Williams of Dearborn Heights, and Aiyanna Perkins of Detroit. The assistant coach is Tara Krolowski.

Santo has plenty to say about each girl and what they bring

to the team.

About her fliers, Santo praised Davis, a fairly new to the Champions program, for doing split stunts. She's the only one at state competition to perform the stunt "that's very hard to do." Coffin is the team member who "really tries the hardest," while McSorley is the "daredevil."

The twins are an added bonus with their work and commitment to practice and competition, while Gilmer and Koval, the bases for stunts, "are a great pair, they complement each other."

"It's amazing how they work together," she said.

Riker has incorporated some stunt skills in her mounting skills "that are fantastic, and Rio Santo, Santo's daughter is a versatile cheerleader. She is an excellent back spotter and base."

Hart, the team's "power-house jumper," is new to the team this year.

"I actually think she was one piece of the puzzle needed to complete the team," said Santo about Hart. "She filled a hole in the team."

Santo describes Perkins as a "fantastic performer" who's "good at everything she does." Olsen-Williams has been with the team from the start when she lived in Canton. Her dance abilities shine in competition.

**TEAM EFFORT**

Santo also has praise for her assistant coach who takes the girls' confidence level and keeps them motivated and for parents Kim Cossin and Charlotte Spiteri. Cossin runs the team and works with par-

ents, keeping Santo connected with the girls, while Spiteri handles the conditioning work.

The team will compete in the national competition in Grand Rapids on July 25 where they'll go against some 35 other Division 4 teams from around the country. Santo has high hopes of the team winning.

"They're all performers, when it comes to competition time, they thrive," she said. "They don't have the jitters. Once they're put in the situation of a competition the things I complain about at practice go away."

And the program's Division 3 team also is making news, winning a third place in regionals and a second in state competition.

"It's a huge accomplishment, they've never placed in regionals before," Santo said. "I had one little girl say, 'Now we have to place first in nationals and we'll have a first, second and third.'"

While the Division 4 girls prepare for a trip to nationals, they're also fund raising to go to cheer camp for Division 4 teams in August. The goal is to raise \$4,800, "to make sure everyone can go," Santo said.

smason@hometownlife.com | (313) 222-6751

# Funeral planning can ease the strain on loved ones

A few weeks ago, I was talking to a client who unexpectedly had to bury a spouse. In the process of arranging the funeral he said he was in a very vulnerable situation and felt some people used that for their benefit. He asked for my advice in pre-planning a funeral.

Although it is a topic that most of us avoid having to talk about, the reality is that we are all going to leave this great earth some day. Since we generally do not know the timing of our demise, it is a good idea to plan ahead. After all, during our lifetime we try to do the best we can for our loved ones. Why not make our passing as



Money Matters

Rick Bloom

easy as possible on them?

One issue people run into when making funeral arrangements immediately after a death is that they do not want to appear cheap. Whether it is deciding on the type of casket or other amenities associated with a funeral, the prices add up. One of the great benefits of pre-planning a funeral is it gives one the opportunity to be cost-sensitive. Funerals can be expensive but pre-planning

can help mitigate the cost.

If you are thinking about pre-planning your funeral, there are a few issues to consider. The first is the type of funeral arrangements that you want. Do you want your remains cremated or do you want to be buried? In addition, you need to decide on the funeral home and the type of service that you desire. Many people are no longer choosing a traditional service at a funeral home instead opting for a graveside service.

If you decide on burial, another important issue is the casket. In the past, the only way to purchase a casket was through the funeral home.

Caskets from a funeral home are a high-profit margin item and it is not unusual for caskets to be marked up 500-700 percent.

As morbid as it sounds, you can select your casket before you pass on. Not only are there internet sites that sell caskets, but retailers like Costco have gotten into the casket-selling business.

When I talk about pre-planning a funeral, I'm not necessarily referring to pre-paying. If you are considering pre-paying your funeral there are some things that you must consider. First, in today's world where people are constantly on the move, what happens if you no

longer live in your community?

If you have prepaid through one funeral home can that money be refunded or transferred to another? In addition, determine what happens if the funeral home goes out of business. Do you have the right at any point in time to cancel your contract and get a refund? If you do decide to prepay your funeral you need to do some homework. Check with the Better Business Bureau and the Michigan attorney general's office.

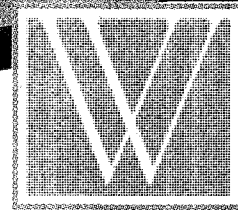
Death, dying and funerals are subjects that no one likes to discuss, however, they are a fact of life. There is one reason we do estate planning and that

is because we love our family. The same thing can be said with regards to pre-planning your funeral. We all know that the worst time to think about a funeral is after you've lost a loved one. Therefore, as difficult as it may be, it makes sense to pre-plan.

What better ultimate act of love for your family is there than easing their burden during a very difficult time.

Good luck!

Rick Bloom is a fee-only financial adviser. Observer & Eccentric readers can submit questions at [money matters@hometownlife.com](mailto:money matters@hometownlife.com). For more information, visit Rick's Web site at [www.bloomassetmanagement.com](http://www.bloomassetmanagement.com).



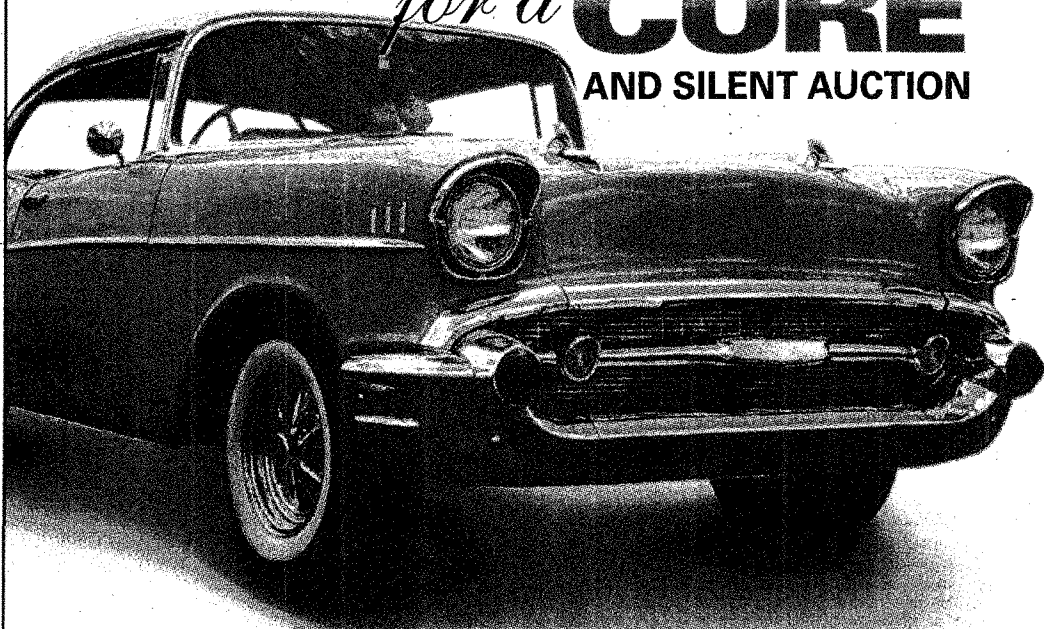
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SECTION B  
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Tim Smith, editor, (313) 222-2637  
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New Spree pole vault to attract competitors of all ages, B4

SPORTS, FILTER, FOOD & WINE

# HOMETOWN LIFE



PHOTOS BY ANDREW RUBENSTEIN

Participants at the 30th annual Plymouth YMCA Father's Day Run try to get a jump on the competition as the 5K Run begins in downtown Plymouth. More than 2,000 people came out to compete in a number of running and walking events.

## DASHING WITH DAD

### Families enjoy holiday at Plymouth YMCA Father's Day Run



Motoring toward a triple victory Sunday is Lisa Veneziano of Fenton. She took first in the 10K, 5K and mile runs.

BY TIM SMITH  
OBSERVER STAFF WRITER

A Father's Day tradition in Plymouth keeps getting bigger and better.

Sunday's 30th annual Plymouth Family YMCA Father's Day Run provided families with a unique and hearty way to celebrate the holiday as more than 2,000 runners of all ages came out on "a beautiful day," YMCA spokeswoman Cindy Morency said.

"It was our most successful event to date," Morency said, estimating that overall registration was up about 500 from 2008.

There was something for everybody, whether seasoned race veterans from Michigan, other states and Canada or local families out to help raise money for the Plymouth YMCA Strong Kids Campaign (to benefit summer day camp programs).

One such "daddy daughter" tandem was Plymouth's Michael Sytniak and his 8-year-old daughter Francesco, who competed in the mile run. In the 5K Run was Canton's Rob Shaver and his 14-year-old daughter Shannon. Many others ran with their dads more for the cherished memory than for the sheer competition of the event.

"It's a family tradition," Morency said about why the event

**'It's a way for families to come out every year and celebrate Father's Day.'**

CINDY MORENCY, Plymouth YMCA

continues to grow. "It's a way for families to come out every year and celebrate Father's Day."

Participants of different ages, experience and physical capabilities had plenty of choices. At 8 a.m., Gault Race Management simultaneously started the mile run and walk from downtown Plymouth, near Ann Arbor Trail and Union.

Fifteen minutes later opened the 5K run/walk, while the 10K run/walk started at 8:45 a.m. Some also raced in the MDG Triple — simultaneously competing in all three runs for a total of 10.3 miles, with all runners and walkers finishing up near the historic Penn Theatre.

Meanwhile, there were events for infants, toddlers and children. Those included the Diaper Dash (ages 0-1), Wee Walkers (ages 1-2), Kids Trot (ages 3-4) and Kids Jog (ages 5-7).

#### TRIPLE WINNER

The big winner of the day was Fenton's Lisa Veneziano, who

Please see **YMCA RUN, B4**



Carl Rundall, of Birmingham, sets the winning pace in the 10K run on Father's Day in Plymouth.

## Diesels avenge defeat

BY CHRISTIAN YOUNG  
SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

It's all about redemption for the Detroit Diesels this year. After avenging last year's first-round playoff loss to the Southwest Michigan Punishers last week with a 28-14 victory, the engines were really cranked for their bitter Great Lakes Football League Eastern Division rival, the Michigan Vipers.

And last Saturday at Livonia Franklin High School, that dish of revenge was served, as Western Wayne County's minor-league football team rattled the Vipers, 24-0.

The Diesels opened the scoring with a 6-yard quarterback keeper by Matt McCullough (Livonia Franklin) early in the first quarter. JaKendall Brown caught the two-point conversion pass.

The Diesels would strike again on their next possession, as McCullough would fire a 26-yard scoring toss to Jon Craven (Farmington). Venzal Russell caught another two-point pass.

The Diesels sat on the lead for the second half, except for one play, as Jeff White crushed the Viper ball carrier in the end zone for a safety and a 24-0 lead.

McCullough finished 11-of-16 passing for 189 yards and a touchdown, and also rushed for 15 yards on three carries of his own, including the TD. Craven, Brown, and Russell each had three receptions. Craven's 99 led the way. Crushshon gained 122 yards on the ground for the Diesels.

Defensively, Earl Blanchette led the charge for the Diesels with three sacks. Lamarr Miller, Brian Aneed, Rob Love, and White were also defensive standouts.

The Detroit Diesels, 3-1 overall and 2-0 GLFL's Eastern Division, will travel Saturday to Ada, Ohio, to take on the Dark Knights.

FOOTBALL



CHRIS FLECK | PHLECK PHOTOS

## All-Area baseball team

Farmington Harrison senior third baseman Steve Pelletier connects for one of his school-record 56 hits during the recent baseball season. Pelletier, who will continue playing at Madonna University, is one of 15 players selected for the All-Observer first team. The area includes Livonia, Plymouth, Canton, Redford, Garden City, Westland, Wayne and Farmington. Eleven schools are represented on the first team. See B2 for the story.

## Bushart blazing trail in two sports

BY JIM TOTH  
OBSERVER STAFF WRITER

For Julie Bushart, summer vacation seems more like a continuation of the recently completed school year.

Take away classroom activities and there seems to be little difference as the Redford native is engaging in some sort of athletic competition pretty much every night of the week. A two-sport athlete who just completed her junior year at Livonia Ladywood High School, Bushart is virtually taking no time off between school years as she continues to hone her skills involving the sports she loves so much — softball and hockey.

Two nights a week, the starting right fielder on the Blazers softball team that earlier this month advanced all the way to the Division 2 title game, can be found competing for the Blazers summer softball team. Three to four nights a week, she is lacing up the skates and working out with the girls ice hockey squad at Arctic Edge Ice Arena in Canton.

"I try to be a normal teenager, but this is keeping me real busy," Bushart said of her commitment to the two sports. "Most people wouldn't think a girl would be playing hockey, but it's something different and I really enjoy being around my teammates."

There were plenty of smiles expressed by teammates last spring on the softball diamond as the

Please see **BUSHART, B4**



Redford native Julie Bushart, a two-sport athlete at Livonia Ladywood, played a key role in the Blazers' run to the Division 2 title game in girls softball.













# Dine al fresco

## Fresh air comes with every meal on a restaurant patio or deck

BY DIANE GALE ANDREASSI  
CORRESPONDENT



Lisa Beneges and her daughter Carolyn Beneges are almost ready to order lunch at Compari's in downtown Plymouth.

BILL BRESLER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

An outside patio at Compari's in Plymouth on a balmy spring afternoon was like a magnet to two sisters when they needed a break from shopping.

Sitting comfortably at a table facing Kellogg Park with all its greenery and charm, they talked about how much they enjoy restaurants that allow patrons to dine in the fresh air.

"People gravitate to patios," said Susan Clark of Lansing, who was visiting her sister, Mary Khoshnegah of Hamburg Township.

A few tables away, Catherine and Todd Mueller enjoyed lunch with their daughter, Anna, 6.

"We live downtown and enjoy being able to walk downtown, sit outside and enjoy a great meal," Catherine Mueller said.

Restaurant patios are good for business and seem to be a trend that will last well into the future, according to Nichole Jacobs, manager of Leo's Coney Island in Plymouth.

"More and more restaurants are adding patios," and if they're new construction, outdoor seating is built into the plans.

Like many cities with a downtown area, Plymouth is teeming with restaurants offering dining outside even where space is limited. The Sweet Afton Tea Room and Simple Sandwich face each other on Forest Avenue in Plymouth. Each business has only a small patch of sidewalk, but it's enough for a couple of tables and chairs.

"The Porch" was added last year at the longtime dining establishment, Ginopolis of Farmington Hills, which is owned by brothers, John and Peter Ginopolis.

It's been good for business, said John Ginopolis.

"The nice weather is so short in this state people really enjoy sitting out there having lunch, dinner or cocktails," he explained. "They take advantage of it. They will specifically come here just to sit outside."

Across town, CJ's Brewery, a res-

taurant attached to Compuware Arena in Plymouth Township, also recently opened a patio.

"If you go to any downtown you see more diners outside than you do inside," said David Doyle, Compuware Arena food and beverage director.

"We thought we would try it in our setting to draw people up to our restaurant and so far so good," Doyle said.

Front lot patios are the key feature of a block-long stretch of restaurants on Haggerty Road between Six Mile and Seven Mile.

The Claddagh Irish Pub, Mitchell's Fish Market and Bravo Cucina Italiana sit side by side with ample outdoor seating.

The Livonia block looks like a scene from a small town in Europe, and with the various ethnic groups represented, it's up to you to pretend which country you're visiting.

Jason King, general manager of The Claddagh Irish Pub, thinks most people are relieved to be outdoors after spending harsh Michigan winters inside buildings. Fresh flowers and a full power gas fire pit are extra features on the patio that lure diners.

Luciano Del Signore, owner and chef of BACCO Ristorante in Southfield, invites customers to "come, relax, sip some wine, treat yourself to a savory dessert, and share the joys of summer with friends and family."

"In Michigan people are cooped up for so long, to go outside is a bonus," DelSignore said. "On perfect summer days, our patio tables are the first ones reserved. We have actual furniture with table cloths outside. We keep it very much the same as inside."

At Penn Grille & Bar in Plymouth, the atmosphere is much more casual.

Marykay Marocco, day manager, said, "As soon as the patio opens we do twice the business. We also have a television facing outside and you can watch sporting events even if you're out on the patio."

Outdoor seating was added this year at Michnos Café, in Redford.

"We opened up on a Friday during the Wing's game and it was a blast," said Anthony Michnos, who is the son of the restaurant owner, Ron Michnos.

"People tend to want to relax and talk outside," he added.

Mike Lucaj, manager of Grand Tavern in Farmington Hills, says patios "put people in a better mood."

And that is definitely the case with the sisters visiting Plymouth at Compari's.

"It's great to be able to sit outside, have the action of the city and people walking by," Khoshnegah said. "And we can people watch."

## Local eateries with outdoor dining

Here's a sampling of restaurants with outdoor seating:

- Athenian Coney Island**  
43324 W. 11 Mile, Novi; (248) 305-9700  
Seating capacity outdoors: 40
- BACCO Ristorante**  
29410 Northwestern Highway, Southfield; (248) 356-6600  
Seating capacity outdoors: 50
- Bravo Cucina Italiana**  
17700 Haggerty, Livonia; (734) 591-5600  
Seating capacity outdoors: 65
- CJ's Brewery in Compuware Arena**  
14900 N. Beck, Plymouth; (734) 453-4455  
Seating capacity outdoors: 70
- Compari's on the Park**  
350 S. Main St., Plymouth; (734) 416-0100  
Seating capacity outdoors: 40
- Fiamma Grille**  
380 S. Main St., Plymouth; (734) 416-9340  
Seating capacity outdoors: 60
- Ginopolis**  
27815 Middlebelt, Farmington Hills; (248) 851-8222  
Seating capacity outdoors: 60
- Grand Tavern**  
35450 Grand River Ave., Farmington; (248) 476-5700  
Seating capacity outdoors: 40
- Hermann's Olde Town Grille**  
195 W. Liberty, Plymouth; (734) 451-1213  
Seating capacity outdoors: 30
- Leo's Coney Island:**  
41496 Ann Arbor Road, Plymouth; (734) 416-8200  
Seating capacity outdoors: 40
- Michno's Café**  
25524 Five Mile, Redford Township; (313) 532-9212  
Seating capacity outdoors: 36
- Mitchell's Fish Market**  
17600 Haggerty, Livonia; (734) 464-3684  
Seating capacity outdoors: 60
- Penn Grille & Bar**  
820 Penniman, Plymouth; (734) 453-3570  
Seating capacity outdoors: 40
- PI of Southfield**  
28847 Franklin, Southfield; (248) 358-3355  
Seating capacity outdoors: 50
- Sandy's by the Beach**  
25853 Five Mile, Redford; (313) 534-0333  
Seating capacity outdoors: 34
- Stone House Coffee & Tea**  
16923 Ridge Road, Northville; (248) 449-2669  
Seating capacity outdoors: 16
- Tanglewood Golf Course**  
53503 W. 10 Mile, South Lyon; (248) 486-6217  
Seating capacity outdoors: 112
- The Claddagh Pub of College Park**  
17800 Haggerty, Livonia; (734) 542-8141  
Seating capacity outdoors on two patios: 75



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