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AROUND TOWN

Mentor training

Training for adults interested in mentoring local teens is being offered by the Westland Youth Assistance Program and the Garden City Family Resource Center.

New mentor training will be held from 5:30-9:30 p.m. Friday, Jan. 7; from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 8; and from 5:30-8:30 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 11. Mentors do not have to live in Westland or Garden City. The training sessions will be held at the Westland Youth Assistance office on Ford west of Central City Parkway.

"I know this is intense training - it's not typical. We hope to capture some adults with a New Year's resolution to help the community," Westland Youth Assistance Director Paul Motz said. "Helping one kid helps the community."

Currently, Youth Assistance has 20 youngsters matched with adult mentors, Motz said, with another 10 kids waiting to be matched. The training includes listening and communication techniques to help provide support to teens.

"We believe the need for mentors will grow in 2011," Motz said.

Call (734) 467-7904 for more information about the mentoring program.

New job

Westland residents will see a familiar face on WDIV-TV Channel 4 news. Westland resident and former Miss Michigan Ashlee Baracy has signed on to handle traffic reports for the early morning news program.

Baracy will continue working for WLND, the city's cable contractor, on a part-time basis. Baracy has also been featured in Westland's shopping and dining district campaign.

Senior activities

Westland's Friendship Center has reopened after the holiday break. That means it's time to get back on an exercise regimen or get started on one.

Meeting at 9 a.m. Monday, Wednesday and Friday, the Friendship exercise group is for those who do better with exercise both standing and sitting.

The class focuses on balance and flexibility, and some endurance. It's upbeat and positive for those who like to start the day right. It's also a great place to start for people who are not avid exercisers. Consult a physician before beginning any new exercise program.

Heavy debris hindered search efforts

Two from Westland killed in explosion

BY LEANNE ROGERS
OBSERVER STAFF WRITER

Two Westland residents, employees of William C. Franks Furniture, were killed Wednesday morning when an explosion destroyed the Wayne Road store.

A natural gas leak is suspected of being the cause of the blast that happened as the store was getting ready to open for business. The victims have been identified as salesman James Zell, 64, and Leslie Machniak, 54, a secretary.

Both were reported to have died of multiple trauma due to the collapsed building following autopsies by the Wayne County medical examiner. Rescue workers had removed debris by hand as they searched for the pair, who weren't found until Wednesday evening.

"There is a lot of heavy debris - the roof trusses of the building were made of concrete and that has been hindering the search," Wayne Fire Chief Mel Moore said about the search efforts.

Store owner Paul Franks, who was also in the store, was quickly pulled

from the wreckage - he happened to be at the rear of the store. He is hospitalized in serious but stable condition at the University of Michigan Hospital burn center.

A 44-year fixture on Wayne Road, the furniture store was located just south of Glenwood, the boundary between the city of Wayne and Westland. Some Westland residents on the north side of Palmer were briefly evacuated after a second gas leak was reported near the store.

Westland firefighters and police were among many agencies, including Urban Search and Rescue teams from four counties, who responded to assist Wayne with the disaster.

Filled with debris from the blast,

which damaged nearby businesses and homes, Wayne Road remained closed to traffic midday Thursday as the cleanup and investigation began.

Consumers Energy spokeswoman Debra Dodd said that a resident reported a possible gas leak on Chestnut near the store about 6 a.m. Wednesday. A second complaint was received around 8 a.m., Dodd said, and crews were on site investigating when the store exploded shortly after 9 a.m.

"This was a very, very unfortunate incident," said Dodd, adding the two-inch gas main identified as having the leak would be examined to determine the cause of the problem.

irogers@hometownlife.com | (313) 222-5428

A SYMPHONY OF LEARNING



ANN ESPINOZA

Olivia Qui attends Livonia's Coolidge Elementary where there is no string program. Qui plays violin with the Junior Strings.

Young musicians grow with symphony experience

BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN
CORRESPONDENT

It's break time. Before long, the halls of North Farmington High School fill with laughter as members of the Metropolitan Youth Symphony rush to the snack area.

Welcome to Saturday morning rehearsal where students have the opportunity to play with the Junior Strings or advance ensembles including the String, Concert and Symphony orchestras.

The MYS program is designed to complement school music programs and provides rehearsal as well as performance opportunities. Now in its 28th season, MYS draws 212 students from nearly four dozen metro Detroit communities including Redford, Livonia,

Canton, Farmington and Farmington Hills.

WHY THEY JOIN

Students join for a variety of reasons. Kiana Spiller is home schooled so MYS is the only opportunity the 11-year-old Redford girl has to perform viola with orchestra.

Olivia Qui attends Livonia's Coolidge Elementary where there is no string program. Qui plays violin with the Junior Strings.

"They help me a lot," said Qui. "I like playing the music and they're helping me."

Yunseo Cho enjoys the camaraderie of the other student musicians. The Canton girl plays cello.

"I get to see my friends, make new friends and I like the doughnuts. They're awe-

some," said Cho, 9 1/2.

Many of the students study privately as well as play in school bands and orchestras. Chrissy Hart, 12, also plays cello with the East Middle School Orchestra in Farmington Hills. She picked up her first violin at age 3.

Claire Petrak never had the opportunity to play music in school and applauds MYS for providing an ensemble experience for student musicians. She signed up her daughter, Victoria, with MYS in seventh grade. Today, the 15-year-old North Farmington sophomore still enjoys rehearsing and performing. She told her mom it makes her "so happy to come here every Saturday."

Please see SYMPHONY, A2



Wayne County Executive Robert Ficano, considered one of the top Democrats in the state, has aggressively promoted southeast Michigan.

Ficano stock rising in Democratic Party

BY PAT MURPHY
OBSERVER STAFF WRITER

In a recent interview, Wayne County Executive Robert Ficano was asked if he might be considered Michigan's foremost Democrat.

It probably wasn't the first time he thought of himself in that context, but Ficano chuckled. "I'm just the last Democrat standing," he said.

In November when many Democrats were taking a shellacking, Ficano easily won re-election as the leader of Michigan's largest county - and 11th largest in the U.S. - with almost two million people and an annual budget of \$2.1 billion. As the GOP was trouncing or scaring other entrenched Democrats, Ficano pulled 75 percent of the votes cast.

Other stalwarts were mentioned, including Virg Bernero, remains a force although he lost decidedly in his bid for governor. So is outgoing Gov. Jennifer Granholm, along with Michigan's representatives in Congress, particularly Sens. Carl Levin and Debbie Stabenow and U.S. Reps. John Dingell and Gary Peters.

"I'm not sure there is one top Democrat," said Bill Ballenger, publisher of *Inside Michigan Politics*. Depending on who is asked, he said, picking the state's top Democrat is a matter of opinion, and answers will vary - particularly in the context of someone who might run for governor in four years or can rebuild the party before the 2012 presidential election.

Please see FICANO, A13

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SYMPHONY

FROM PAGE A1

QUALITY EXPERIENCE

"I felt I missed out," said Claire Petrak, MYS president and one of its biggest supporters. "After seeing the first concert I was hooked as to what these kids could do. We had five auditions this morning. First and foremost, MYS is quality, but there's a maturity issue as well. If they're not ready socially they're not ready to make friends and communicate to be able to play music together."

Julian Mueller wanted to play with MYS after his sister joined.

"I like playing with other groups of people. I think it's nice so I do it," said Mueller, 7, of Farmington Hills.

John Robertson loved playing with MYS so much he's back as conductor of the Symphony Orchestra after playing with MYS from 1987 to 1991. He earned a master's degree in orchestral conducting from Oakland University and is director of Orchestras for Berkley High School and Norup International School. He also is conductor of the Royal Oak Symphony.

"MYS was largely responsible for making me want to pursue a career in music, gave me the love of playing, the first taste of playing in an orchestra," said Robertson of Madison Heights. "It combines a high level of instruction with a warm student environment. I want to provide that for other students and I love the environment of meeting other people interested in music."

PROFESSIONAL CONDUCTORS

The conductors are all professional musicians. Their experience adds another dimension to teaching students how to play with an ensemble. Victoria Haltom conducts the String Orchestra. She was concertmaster with the Livonia Symphony Orchestra in the 1990s and held the positions with the Michigan Opera Theater Orchestra and as director in the Berkley Schools and Lahser High School in Bloomfield Hills. She regularly performs with the Birmingham-Bloomfield Symphony Orchestra and LaCorda Ensemble.

Geoffrey Benes leads the MYS Concert Orchestra. He began his teaching career in the Troy school district in 1988. Under his direction, the Athens High School Orchestras perform at Carnegie Hall in New York City March 2011.

Kathleen Grimes became the con-



Rebecca Li of Canton is a member of the Junior Strings.

Geoffrey Benes leads the MYS Concert Orchestra. He began his teaching career in the Troy school district in 1988. Under his direction, the Athens High School Orchestras perform at Carnegie Hall in New York City March 2011.

ductor for the newly formed Junior Strings in January 2009. The group is a steppingstone for children ages 7-13. She plays with MOT and is principal viola with the Ann Arbor Symphony.

"I was the kid who would have fallen through the cracks if music hadn't been offered free in Ann Arbor Schools," said Grimes of Ypsilanti. "Being a professional musician adds a real world perspective."

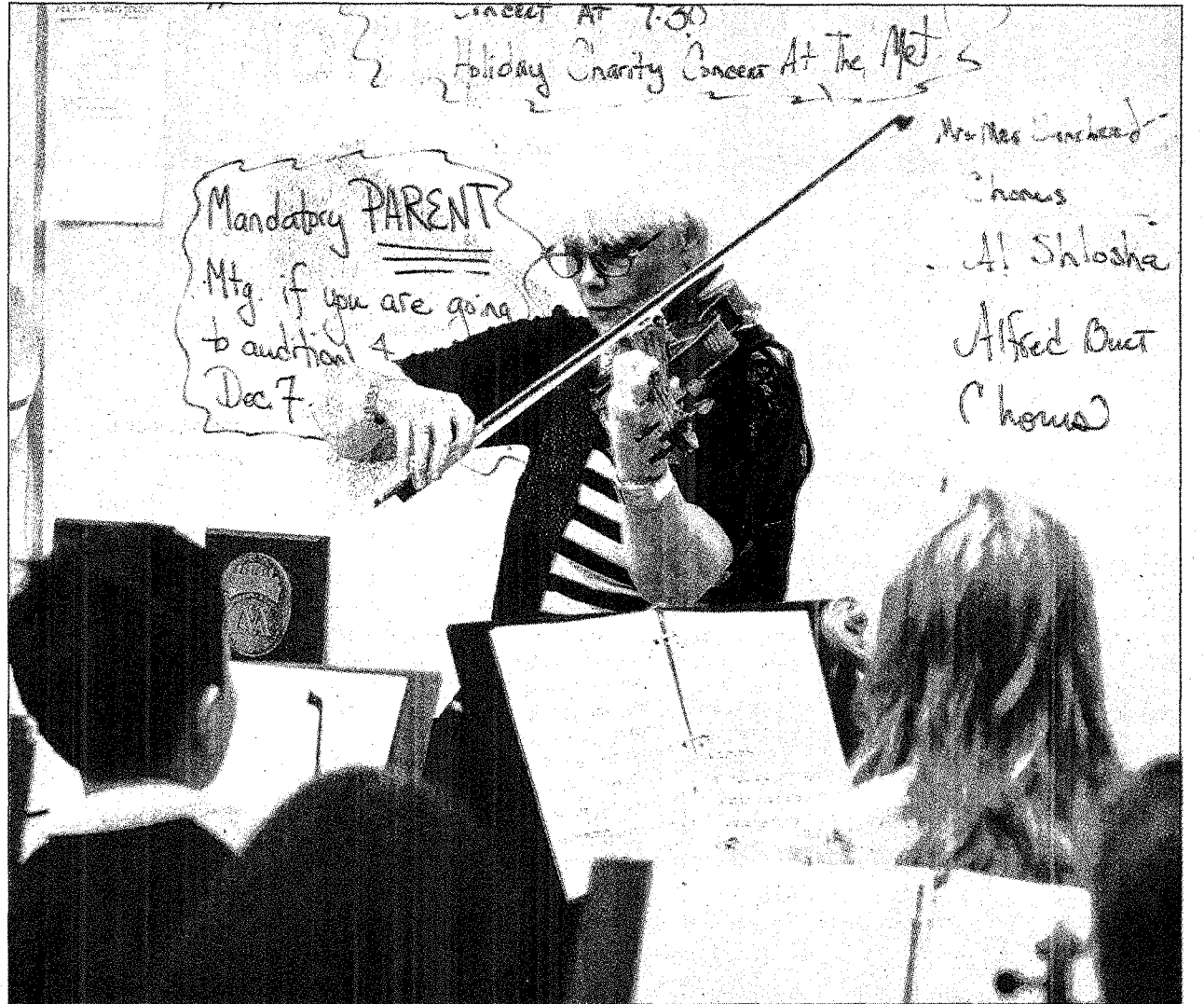
Carly Burke, 16, plays tennis at North Farmington High School. Not all of the students plan to pursue careers in music. Burke wants to go to medical school.

"I will continue to play for the rest of my life," said Burke, a violinist, "but I always wanted to be a doctor, love science and like to help people."

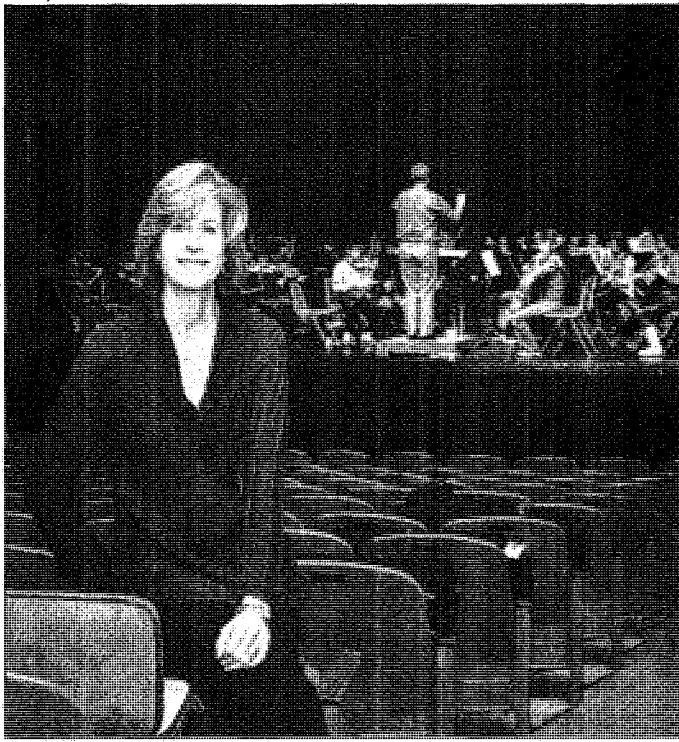
Debbie Tylenda believes the orchestra experience helped her sons excel in math and science. She's one of the volunteer parents who make the nonprofit MYS successful.

"It's a great organization," said Carol Poirier of Farmington Hills. "Other organizations will have college students to play principals. If outside sources are used to fill a position, they sit last chair and only as needed are professionals brought in."

The next concert is Sunday, Feb. 6, at the Ford Community & Performing Arts Center. For more information, visit www.metropolitanyouthsymphony.org.



Victoria Haltom conducts the String Orchestra at MYS. She was concertmaster with the Livonia Symphony Orchestra in the 1990s and held the positions with the Michigan Opera Theater Orchestra and as director in the Berkley Schools and Lahser High School in Bloomfield Hills. She regularly performs with the Birmingham-Bloomfield Symphony Orchestra and LaCorda Ensemble.



Claire Petrak is MYS president and one of its biggest supporters. She is proud of the quality that distinguishes MYS.



Ynshee Choi, 9, of Canton enjoys the camaraderie of MYS.

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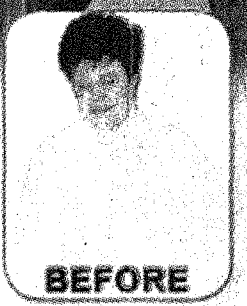
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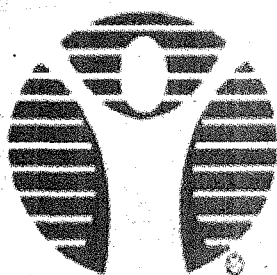
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Cleanup, investigation begin at explosion site

BY LEANNE ROGERS
OBSERVER STAFF WRITER

The city of Wayne continues to recover from the explosion that rocked the community Wednesday morning, as crews begin to clean up and investigate the cause of the deadly blast at the William C. Franks Furniture Store.

The effort begins, following the search-and-rescue outcome no one had hoped for Wednesday night when two store employees were pulled, deceased, from the debris.

One employee, secretary Leslie Machniak, 54, was found at about 10:45 p.m., more than 12 hours after the Wayne store exploded due to a suspected natural gas leak.

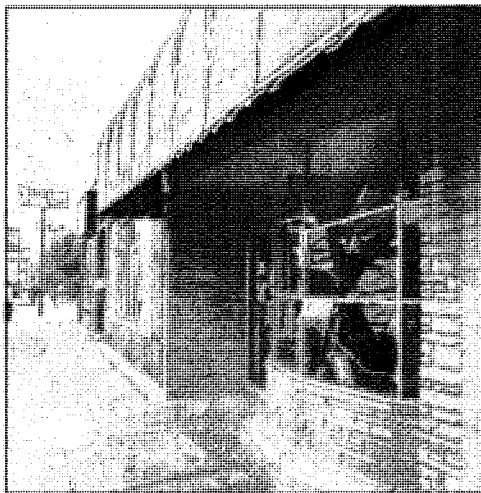
The other employee, salesman James Zell, 64, also of Westland, was recovered about 7 p.m. Wednesday. Store owner Paul Franks, 64, is listed in critical condition at the University of Michigan Hospital's burn unit, according to Shantell Kirkendoll, spokeswoman. He was pulled from the debris shortly after the explosion.

The two employees were found trapped under debris from the collapsed building, said Wayne Fire Chief Mel Moore. At the time of the explosion, Moore said that Franks was at rear of the store, which was why he was found much sooner.

CLEANUP, INVESTIGATION

Now that the victims have been recovered, Moore said the investigation and cleanup will be getting under way. On Thursday morning, only Wayne Road remained closed to traffic. The side streets of Ash, Elm and Chestnut are open to residential traffic only. Greenwood is reopened to through traffic.

"We hope the roadway will be cleared up



Nearby businesses were damaged by the explosion at the William C. Franks Furniture store. Police helped secure the buildings until the windows could be boarded up Wednesday night and Thursday.

this afternoon. The debris is very heavy, which contributed to the difficulty in locating the victims," said Moore. "Everything on the scene has been mitigated except for the cleanup."

The two employees were recovered by members of the Urban Search and Rescue Teams which worked into the night, often removing debris brick by brick.

Police officers provided security near the blast area to allow the firefighters to continue their work, but also to secure nearby businesses damaged by the explosion. It was expected that business owners would be allowed to return to their facilities Thursday afternoon.

Residents of nine homes — all located on Ash, Elm and Chestnut — stayed at a

hotel last night but were expected to return home Thursday, accompanied by Consumers Energy employees.

The cause of the explosion is being investigated by Consumers Energy with assistance from local, state and federal agencies. Spokeswoman Debra Dodd said the investigation could take weeks or months to complete. A temporary repair has been made to a 2-inch gas line at the rear of the building and the permanent repair will begin in the days to come.

Consumers Energy was in the area hours before the explosion, on reports of the smell of natural gas, but Dodd could not confirm the incidents were related to the blast.

"We can't speculate," she said. "We've got to be able to do our investigation first. The timing was just very, very unfortunate."

COORDINATED RESPONSE

Wayne Mayor Al Haidous thanked the 30 responding agencies.

"I can't thank (enough) the men and women who rushed to our help," he said. "It showed that public safety in our region is well trained and well equipped."

He also thanked the Salvation Army for its assistance and those who provided food throughout the day.

Moore said the entire response went well. "We appreciate all of the help from all of the communities," he said. "Everything went as well as could be expected."

The City of Wayne declared a state of emergency, in hopes of recouping yet known costs of the response, recovery and investigation which involved agencies from Wayne, Oakland, Macomb and Washtenaw counties.

Staff writer Stacy Jenkins contributed to this report.

Wayne Rotary: 'If you need anything, call us'

Don Nicholson, of Westland, president of Wayne Rotary, was on the scene Wednesday morning shortly after the explosion.

"He's a wonderful person in our community," Nicholson said of store owner Paul Franks, who remains hospitalized at the University of Michigan Hospital.

Nicholson put the word out through Wayne Rotary: "Let's find out what they need. We want to be there for them."

"It's horrible," he said of the tragedy, in which two employees died in the blast.

"This could have happened the Saturday before Thanksgiving, when there were 100 kids waiting for Santa," he said. The club holds its annual Christmas Parade that day and passes the intersection where the explosion occurred.

"It could have been a whole lot worse," Nicholson said. Nicholson lives on Farragut in Westland, not too far from the site.

"They sent everybody down our road and our road was solid ice," said Nicholson. He salted part of it to help.

"Wayne does pull together," he said. "I'm sure that the family's getting phone call, after phone call, after phone call."

Rotarians went to the Wayne Community Center Wednesday and found there were already many volunteers.

Nicholson was interviewed by CNN mid-afternoon Wednesday, and his photos appeared on CNN and Fox. He talked to John Zech, outgoing Wayne city manager, and Bob English, the incoming city manager, to let them know the club can help. Wayne Mayor Al Haidous is also a Wayne Rotarian who can help.

"If you need anything, call us," was Nicholson's message. "We'll rally the troops."

— By Julie Brown

FOUR SEASONS REHABILITATION AND NURSING

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Holiday party brings families together at Four Seasons Rehabilitation and Nursing

ANNUAL HOLIDAY DINNER PRESENTED BY FOUR SEASONS ATTENDED BY 230 GUESTS



L to R: Bob Anderson, June Daly, Bob Anderson Jr., Cheryl Hartman, Debra Anderson, Jim Hartman, Derek Anderson, Janis Boyless; seated front: Barbara Anderson, Four Seasons resident

Families socialized as they waited to enter the Four Seasons dining room where tables were covered with festive green and red tablecloths. "It's a good idea," said Ronald Bellanger whose mother, Christine, is a resident. "It gives her something to look forward to and she gets to see her family."

This was the first time Carol and Clifford Gannaway of Canton joined Habard Gavin, a seven month resident. "It's great they do something for the residents so they aren't feeling lonely," said Carol Gannaway.

"It's nice to see everybody together and happy to see everyone," said Nancy Boland, Livonia.

Boland came with husband Charles to see his Uncle Jerry.

"It's clean. It's great," said Bea Colling of Westland who's happy with her mother's care. Rose Butcher, a Four Seasons resident for two years, celebrated her 100th birthday in September at Four Seasons. "The staff all brought food. We brought food. We had more food than a wedding," said Colling. "Their meals are so good even during the week. The name's Four Seasons, but it should be Four Stars."

"... the name is 'Four Seasons', but it should be 'Four Stars'..."

"It's great. It's fun," said Pat Lyden, Four Seasons' Administrator and an RN. "It's an opportunity for families and residents to be together for the holidays."

Charlyce Walsh began coming to the dinner a couple of years ago with her husband's mother, Isabel and sister, Kathy. The three traveled from Richmond and Port Huron for the occasion. "They really go all out and do a good job," said Isabel Walsh.

"We were very blessed to find Four Seasons for Danny six years ago," said Charlyce Walsh. "If you pass someone in the hall, they always say, 'Hi'. The new owner is wonderful. In summer they had a picnic that was excellent."

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Local leaders hope smoke clears on medical marijuana law in 2011

BY STACY JENKINS
OBSERVER STAFF WRITER

If there's one thing for certain, the state's medical marijuana law — and how local communities are dealing with it — remains cloudy.

Local ordinances have been changed to prohibit medical marijuana operations such as growing facilities, distribution centers and compassion clubs. Other communities have adopted a moratorium (a freeze) on all medical marijuana issues until things are clarified.

Several communities are going with the federal law that bans the use of marijuana, medical or otherwise, because it is a controlled substance.

"The law is a total mess," said Bloomfield Township attorney William Hampton. "The Legislature must do something about this. It's such a poorly written law."

It's an issue that needs to be worked out between local municipalities, counties and the state legislature in 2011, said state Rep. Vicki Barnett, D-Farmington Hills.

She said there has been some talk among Oakland County officials and a bipartisan group of Oakland County state legislators, but nothing has been ironed out to clarify the law or the wishes of the voters. She hopes to see the issue addressed in 2011.

Voters in Michigan approved the Michigan Medical Marihuana Act with a 63 percent vote, including majority support in 83 counties statewide. The law went into effect on April 6, 2009, at which time patients could start applying for identity cards from the state health department. The cards are supposed to prevent people from being arrested for using medical marijuana.

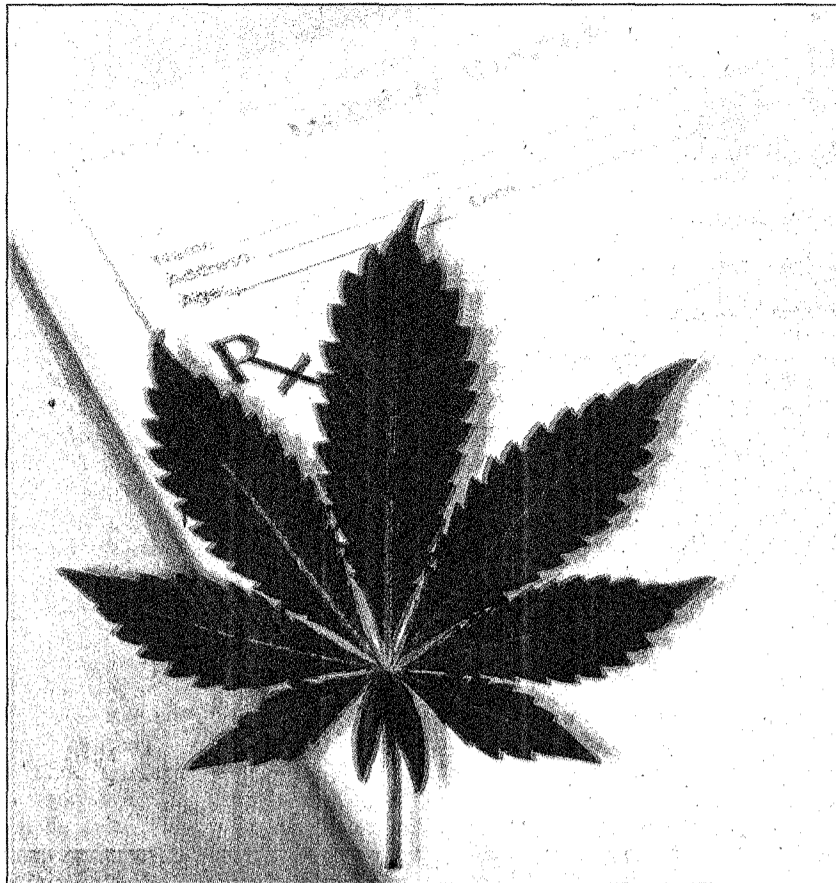
RAIDS, ARRESTS

Medical marijuana cards were irrelevant in August 2010, when police raided a medical marijuana facility in Ferndale and arrested several people.

The incident prompted a recent protest rally, in which about 90 medical marijuana supporters arrived in three buses from cities across the state.

LAWSUITS

The American Civil Liberties Union of Michigan filed a lawsuit in November, against the cities of



Birmingham, Bloomfield Hills and Livonia on behalf of Linda and Robert Lott of Birmingham.

The couple wants to grow marijuana in a Livonia warehouse and they want to be able to smoke it without trouble at their home and at a Bloomfield Hills private social club. Local ordinances in the three communities do not allow it.

Linda, 61, suffers from multiple sclerosis. Robert, 61, was recently diagnosed with glaucoma. Both husband and wife possess state-certified cards qualifying them as medical marijuana patients.

"When Michigan voters passed the medical marijuana ballot initiative, I was relieved," said Linda Lott in a previous statement. "My doctor and I knew that it would help me fight the muscle spasms and painful symptoms of multiple sclerosis. What we didn't realize is that it would be temporary. Instead of relief, I now live in fear that I could be arrested by local officials for following state law."

The lawsuit asks that the city ordinances be declared invalid and unenforceable against medical marijuana patients and caregivers who comply with the state law.

"In a democracy, city commissions do not have the power to veto statewide ballot initiatives after they have been approved by the voters and enacted into law," said Kary L. Moss, ACLU of Michigan executive director.

In December, the Law Offices of Thomas M. Loeb of Farmington Hills, and Neil Rockind, P.C. of Southfield, filed a joint lawsuit in Oakland County Circuit Court against Bloomfield Township for its medical marijuana ordinance passed in October.

According to the complaint, one of the ordinances requires qualifying patients and caregivers to register with the Bloomfield Township Police Department and provide protected and confidential information, including their name, home address, driver's license number and date of birth.

Rockind said he intends to keep the two clients anonymous.

"That's the whole point," he said. "They shouldn't have to provide their identity just because they're trying to follow state law. We're going to do everything to make sure their right to privacy is protected."

FLAWED LAW

Livonia City Attorney Don Knapp highlighted the law's shortcomings.

"I don't know of any prescribed medication where the patient is allowed to determine the dosage," Knapp said. "You get a physician's certification, which is not a prescription. I think that people like to think it's a prescription, but it's not."

Knapp said there are no provisions regulating the grade of marijuana, whether it is Mexican ditch weed or something that is 30 percent THC.

"There's no regulation on any of it," Knapp said.

Knapp tells the story of case of a man in his early 20s who was ticketed last year for possession of marijuana and paraphernalia. After he had received the citation, the defendant went and received a physician's certificate from Dr. Eric Eisenbud, who is highlighted by The Hemp and Cannabis Foundation in assisting medical marijuana patients.

Knapp said the defendant made an appointment with Eisenbud after he was ticketed, then presented the certificate to the court, indicating he received the certificate for chronic neck and back pain. Eisenbud is listed as an ophthalmologist.

"He travels the circuit," Knapp said of Eisenbud, going from state to state and operating out of various offices.

Still the defendant was found guilty.

"Just because you have a Michigan Marijuana card doesn't mean you have a 'get out of jail free' card," Knapp said.

ZONING ISSUE

While the state's medical marijuana law allows for the sale, use and distribution of medical marijuana for qualified people, it's up to each municipality to decide where those activities are allowed.

That's where zoning ordinance amendments and moratoriums are taking place in communities such as Milford, Milford Township.

"We're still in the planning mode," said Don Green, Milford Township supervisor. "What fits best for us? That's the question."

In Milford Village, the moratorium has been extended.

The Plymouth City Commission recently passed an amendment to the city's zoning ordinances that

prohibits property from being zoned for a use that would be in violation of federal law. A technicality, Mayor Dan Dwyer admits, but one that prevents anyone from formally opening a dispensary or marijuana-growing operation in the city.

Al Cox, Plymouth's police chief, said he's aware of activity at Dr. Ernest Mullen's office, the only medical marijuana office in Plymouth. However, Cox said, as far as he knows, nothing illegal is taking place.

"It's not a dispensary, he's just providing the recommendation. It's not a prescription," Cox said. "To sell or buy the marijuana — that's the violation."

In Farmington Hills, a moratorium was in place until recent city council action on a zoning ordinance amendment that prohibits land use that's in violation of local, state or federal law.

Farmington Hills City Councilman Barry Brickner said he wanted to make sure the local ordinance didn't go against the state initiative.

"I don't want to establish dispensaries, compassion clubs or have people selling it on the street corners ... I want us to follow the state initiative that says one person can grow up to 12 plants in their home," he said.

In Garden City, a growing operation was approved for a warehouse facility and a second growing facility is on its way to approval. Special land use has been approved for a medical marijuana growing facility in an industrial building near Ford Road and Venoy.

LOBBY CONGRESS

Farmington Hills Councilman Ken Massey said the issue was a topic at a recent National League of Cities meeting.

"This is not just affecting the city of Farmington Hills or the citizens of Michigan," he said. "There are a number of states (dealing with this issue). The federal government has to resolve the conflict (and interpretation). It was unanimously support by the NLC delegates that we need to lobby Congress for this and that maybe we need to revisit the federal law."

Observer & Eccentric and Hometown staff writers contributed to this report.

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The Little Stars Foundation members Alan Sun, 12 (from left), Amy Sun, 16, and Anna Sun, 9, show off the 120 teddy bears the foundation purchased to pass out to seniors as Christmas presents.

Little Stars brighten seniors' holidays

Residents at two nursing homes in Westland were treated to a concert when musicians as part of The Little Stars Foundation's holiday performance season.

The musicians performed at Hope Nursing Center in Westland to more than 50 senior residents on Dec. 12, while residents at Four Season Nursing Center in Westland had a chance to enjoy a TLSF Christmas concert on Dec. 18.

This is the fifth consecutive year TLSF has toured nursing homes and senior centers, playing Christmas carols on their violins and passing out Christmas presents to residents.

This year, the foundation purchased 120 teddy bears, 50 snowman picture frames and 100 stockings to give to seniors at the nursing homes as Christmas presents. They raised more than \$2,000 from birthday parties and from Borders Book Store Holiday Book Wrapping to pay for the gifts.



TLSF's performers at Four Seasons Nursing Home in Westland include Anna Sun (from left), Alan Sun, Amy Sun and Kathie Chuang.

TLSF also performed holiday music at Waltonwood at Cherry Hill and Waltonwood at Carriage Park, both in Canton.

The Little Stars Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization started in 2006 by Amy Sun and her siblings Alan and Anna of Canton. The foundation consists of members ages 5-16 from Canton, Novi,

Livonia, Farmington Hills and Westland, and currently has 25 active members. While they play music and spread joy primarily over the holidays, they also perform for local seniors periodically throughout the year.

For more information, go online to www.thelittlestars.org or send an e-mail to tlsf@thelittlestars.org.

Website gives parent tools to help teen drivers

Parents can get involved with their teens' learning-to-drive process with the launch of its new teen driver safety website, TeenDriving.AAA.com.

The interactive site helps parents and teens manage the complex coming-of-age process by providing users with specific information based on where they live and where they are in the learning process - from preparing to drive (permit) through the learner's permit and solo driving.

"Parental involvement is critical in developing safe and prepared teen drivers," said Jack Peet, AAA Michigan Traffic Safety manager. "AAA recognizes the learning-to-drive process can be intimidating, particularly for today's busy families. TeenDriving.AAA.com is a unique and

comprehensive teen driver safety website that simplifies the process by offering parents the tools and resources they need as they progress through each stage of the process. This makes what can be a daunting task for parents and teens much easier to manage."

The site features AAA StartSmart, a series of online newsletters and webisodes based on the National Institutes of Health's Checkpoints program, which has been scientifically shown to help parents improve teen driver safety and is being offered nationally for the first time. Some of the topics covered in AAA StartSmart's 18 newsletters and webisodes include nighttime driving, distracted driving, alcohol and other drugs and parent-teen

driving agreements.

The site also offers an online version of AAA's Dare to Prepare workshop and lessons from the motor club's Teaching Your Teens to Drive coaching program, both of which assist families that are or soon will be learning to drive.

Parents also can find information about Michigan's graduated driver licensing (GDL) system, selecting a driving school and choosing the right vehicle for their teens, as well as learn more about some of the common risks associated with teen drivers.

Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for teens, killing nearly 6,000 teens annually. Last year, 110 young people between the ages of 16 and 20 years in Michigan lost their lives in motor vehicle crashes.

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Time is running out on unclaimed lottery ticket

BY PAT MURPHY
OBSERVER STAFF WRITER

Time is running out for the person who purchased the unclaimed winning lottery ticket at a Redford Township supermarket.

That person has precious few hours to make arrangements to claim \$250,000 he or she won almost a year ago after purchasing a Keno ticket at Spartan Foods, 25850 Grand River.

The prize must be claimed

in Lansing by 4 p.m. Tuesday, or the \$250,000 will be deposited into the state School Aid Fund.

"I hear about it almost every day," said Ronald Sesi, owner of the store, who expects to hear more about the missing ticket before Tuesday's deadline.

Most of the comments come from regular Keno players, he said Thursday. "They keep track of winners on the Internet," he said. "And they know. They tell me they'll be going through old jackets, their drawers and the trash to see if they might have

the winning ticket.

"It seems like I've been hearing about that ticket for years."

The ticket — with the numbers 02-03-04-06-07-11-18-19-23-26-29-31-36-37-45-50-51-59-61-63-74-76 — was purchased Jan. 4, 2010. All Keno tickets are valid for one year after the draw date, otherwise the money goes to schools.

The holder of the winning ticket is urged to contact the Lottery at (517) 373-1237 to make arrangements to claim the prize.



Co-op Services Credit Union employee Bryan Feldpausch and the Project 100 team surprises its 50th recipient, Jane Collins of Livonia, with a crisp \$100 bill in downtown Detroit. The team has given away \$5,000 throughout southeast Michigan this year.

Local woman gets cash surprise

Project 100 hit the halfway point when it gave away its 50th \$100 bill to a lucky Jane Collins of Livonia in downtown Detroit Dec. 16.

Created by Co-op Services Credit Union to encourage giving in local communities, the Project 100 team has been randomly handing out \$100 bills to recipients all over southeast Michigan with one request: to

think about what they can do to give in their community.

"I am so excited. This is a great program!" said a surprised Collins when the Project 100 team handed over a crisp \$100 bill. "I love what this program is doing for our area. What a wonderful idea."

"We're amazed to meet so many people who are excited about the concept of giving," said Lisa Fawcett, Marketing Director for Co-op Services Credit Union. "When the team met Jane, she was a bit overwhelmed, but she quickly listed off several ideas about what she might do with the money including possibly giving to local charities."

Collins marked Project 100's 50th recipient and the

halfway point in the project. So far, Project 100 has delivered \$5,000 in \$100 bills to residents throughout the Southeast Michigan area with only one request; to think about what you can do to give in your community.

"We love receiving enthusiastic responses like Jane's," says Fawcett. "Because it shows us that people are excited and continuing the giving in their communities, which is exactly what we are all about."

Conceived by Co-op Services Credit Union in 2009, Project 100 is well into its second year as a community initiative designed to encourage giving in southeast Michigan. The team will continue handing out \$100 bills until it reaches its goal of \$10,000.

Juice to perform one-of-a-kind show Jan. 7

The Ann Arbor-based ensemble Juice will perform at Canton's Village Theater at Cherry Hill at 8 p.m. Friday, Jan. 7. Juice combines percussion, invented instruments, energy and humor in what

is billed as a one-of-a-kind show.

Tickets are \$16 per person purchased in advance by Jan. 6. Afterward, they are \$20 for adults, \$18 for seniors and students, and \$16 for groups of 15

or more.

To purchase tickets, go to www.cantonvillagetheater.org and click on the box office tab or call (734) 394-5460. The theater is at 50400 Cherry Hill Road, west of Denton.

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Understand implications of Tax Relief Act

Q: Dear Rick: I read that the Bush era tax cuts have been extended for another two years. My understanding is that tax brackets, no matter what your income, will be kept the same. Is that true? In addition, can you tell me if I will be able to make a tax-free distribution from my IRA to a charity? I am over 70½.

A: You are correct. A couple weeks ago, President Barack Obama did sign new legislation which extends the Bush era tax cuts for another two years. From the standpoint of ordinary income, the brackets will remain at 10, 15, 25, 28, 33 and 35 percent. These rates are scheduled to remain in effect through 2012.

In addition, the capital gain rate and the dividend rate, which are currently taxed at a maximum of 15 percent, have also been extended for another two years.

The 2010 Tax Relief Act also extends, for a two-year period, the ability of an individual taxpayer, who is over the age of 70½ and is required to make a minimum required distribution, to make a tax-free distribution to a charity. The maximum tax-free distribution that is available is \$100,000. What is interesting about this new tax law provision is that it is valid in 2010 and 2011. The problem is that by the time the law was passed it was too



Money Matters

Rick Bloom

late for most people to take advantage of it. However, surprisingly, Congress has included a provision that allows eligible taxpayers to treat a direct distribution from an IRA to a charity made in January of 2011 to count as if it was made in 2010. This does create a planning opportunity for many taxpayers. However, to take advantage of this provision you probably want to discuss it with a tax representative.

There are lots of other changes to the new tax law that will provide some tax benefits. For example, the 3 percent itemized deduction limitation, which had the effect of reducing deductions for many taxpayers, has been eliminated. In addition, the \$1,000 child tax credit, which was set to expire, has been extended for another two years.

Whether you were for the new legislation or against it, at this point in time it really doesn't matter. The bottom line is that it is the law so take advantage of the changes.

I was listening to a TV commentator discuss the tax law changes. His basic observation was that for the next two years

it's good news that we will have some certainty as to what the tax law will be. Although I would like to believe that we will not have any tax changes over the next two years, I do not believe that's realistic. When it comes to taxes, it seems that we're in a phase where every year something changes. As taxpayers, we have an obligation to ourselves to stay current. After all we don't want to be in the position of paying unnecessary taxes.

When I first got involved in this business, talk about long-term tax planning was referring to five-seven years down the road. Today, long-term tax planning at six months seems like a long time. That is one of the reasons I am very cautious about recommending any investment just for tax reasons. After all, who knows what will happen regarding taxes in two years when the Bush era tax cuts expire again. Bottom line is never do anything for tax reasons alone.

As we enter the New Year I want to take this opportunity to wish you and yours the best in 2011.

Good luck!

Rick Bloom is a fee-only financial adviser. Observer & Eccentric readers can submit questions at moneymatters@hometownlife.com. For more information, visit his website at www.bloomassetmanagement.com.

Forum on Sikh religion follows school ban on kirpan

In hopes of educating the community about the Sikh religion and its customs, Plymouth-Canton Citizens for Diversity and Inclusion will sponsor a public forum 7 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 6, at St. Thomas a'Beckett Catholic Church, 555 S. Lilley Road, south of Cherry Hill, in Canton.

The forum comes after Plymouth-Canton Community Schools banned the kirpan, a non-violent religious symbol that resembles a dagger, from

school property after a Bentley Elementary fourth-grader was found wearing a blunt-edged object to school in December.

Anne Marie Graham-Hudak, who chairs PCCDI, said the forum is intended to educate residents about Sikhism and to push back against misconceptions that have arisen following the incident.

"We are concerned about this being turned from a school policy to an attack on a community, and that's what we want to avoid," she said. "We

want to show how Sikhs have contributed to the community and explain more about their culture and customs."

Under their religion, baptized Sikhs often wear the kirpan to represent a commitment to peace and to symbolize the defense of the weak. It is not meant as a weapon for violence.

The Jan. 6 forum is expected to include representation from Sikh gurdwaras, or places of worship, in Canton and Plymouth.

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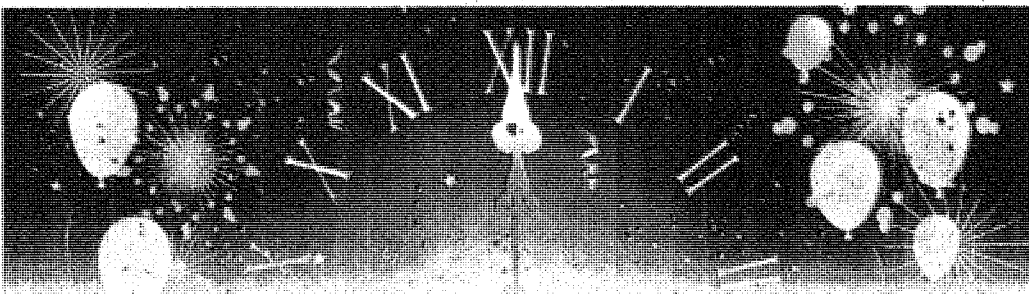
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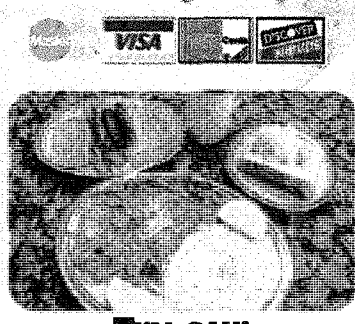
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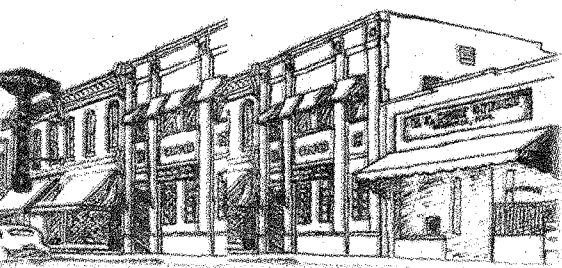
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COMMUNITY EVENTS

Tai Chi Classes

Time/date: 7 p.m. Monday through Thursday, Jan. 3-6
Location: Michigan Tai Chi Association, 38121 Ann Arbor Road, Livonia
Details: The non-profit Michigan Tai Chi Association is offering Tai Chi classes for beginners. Dues are \$40 per month.
Contact: (734) 591-3530

Pomegranate Guild

Time/date: 1 p.m., Sunday, Jan. 9
Location: Community room of the Prentiss Apartments located on 10 Mile Road, east of Greenfield Road in Oak Park.
Details: Farmington Hills based Pomegranate Guild is a group that studies and creates Judaic needlework.
Contact: Judy Galperin (248) 661-5337

Quilting Bee

TIME/DATE: 7-8:45 p.m., every first Monday of the month.
LOCATION: Farmington Community Library, main branch on 12 Mile, west of

Orchard Lake Road.
DETAILS: The Farmington Library Quilters meet for a drop-in quilt bee. All quilters welcome.

Chorale Auditions

Time/Date/Location: 7 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 4, at the Village Theater, 50400 Cherry Hill in Canton and 7 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 11, at Plymouth First United Methodist Church, 45201 N. Territorial in Plymouth Township
Details: BeckRidge Chorale will be conducting auditions. Sign up for an audition at www.beckridgechorale.org.

Mask Fitting Clinic

Time/Date: 5-6 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 5
Location: Sleep Disorders Center of Michigan, 35600 Central City Parkway, Suite 103, Westland
Details: Attention CPAP and BiPAP users. Did you know that most insurances cover new supplies every year? Have you been wanting to try a new style of mask, but don't know how to get one? Garden City Hospital's Sleep Disorders Center can help. Visit 5-6 p.m. any Wednesday for a free mask-fitting clinic. No appointment

is needed.
Contact: (734) 458-3330

DAR Meeting

Time/date: Noon Saturday, Jan. 8
Location: Meeting Rooms A and B, Livonia Civic Center Library, 32777 Five Mile, Livonia
Details: Oakland Community College Emeritus Professor Dennis Fiems will speak on The Great Pandemic of 1918 during this meeting of the John Sackett Chapter of the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution. Bring a sack lunch. Dessert and beverage will be provided. The meeting starts at 12:30 p.m.
Contact: jbcheyne@oaklandcc.edu; (248) 820-9156

Family Fun Day

Time/Date: 1-5 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 8
Location: Girl Scouts Heart of Michigan's Camp Linden in Deerfield Township
Details: Family members of all ages can spend an afternoon at Camp Linden, enjoying sledding, broomball, ice fishing, cross-country skiing, snow sculpting and snow painting, along with hot chocolate

and s'mores around a fire in Hunter Lodge. Indoor and outdoor activities will be available. Prior membership in Girl Scouting is not required. Families of four can join in the fun with a registration fee of \$20 - \$5 for each additional family member. As a special incentive, any girl or adult who joins Girl Scouts through Family Winter Fun Day will receive a \$5 discount on the \$20 registration fee to become a member of Girl Scouts Heart of Michigan. Camp Linden is located 30 minutes from Flint and 45 minutes from Ann Arbor. Girl Scouts Heart of Michigan serves girls living in several counties including Oakland and Wayne. Pre-registration is required by Monday, Jan. 3.
Contact: (800) 49-SCOUT, ext. 7261; pgrubaugh@gshom.org

Finnish Singers wanted

TIME/DATE: 7-9 p.m. Mondays
LOCATION: Finnish Cultural Center, 35200 W. Eight Mile Rd., Farmington Hills, MI 48335.
DETAILS: The Finnish-American Singers of Michigan, a mixed chorus of 20 voices, is looking for sopranos and other voice

parts, including men, to join in song. Need not be Finnish.
CONTACT: Ilene Yanke, Chorus president, at (248) 887-3538.

Play Auditions

Time/Date: 6:30 p.m. Monday-Tuesday, Jan. 10-11
Location: Inspire Theatre inside Warren Road Light and Life Church, 33445 Warren Road, east of Wayne Road, Westland.
Details: The theater is looking for five men and five women ages 18 to 70ish for its upcoming production of "The Musical Comedy Murders of 1940." No singing or dancing involved. Arrive on time and come prepared to do cold readings. The plot concerns several showbiz folks that have been gathered into a mansion house to flush out a serial killer. As the events unfold, there are bits from the past that seem to come back and haunt some of the characters. Once folks start dying off, the madcap search to find the killer begins. The performances are scheduled for March 4-6 and 11-13.
Contact: (734) 751-7057; inspire@inspire-theatre.com



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Canton Township Facebook fraud

A woman told Canton police in late December that someone created a Facebook account in her name, put her picture on it, made claims she was starting a business and provided links to pornographic Web sites, according to a police report.

The woman said she was notified of the Facebook account by family and friends who had seen it.

The woman told authorities she and her husband have been going through a divorce. She asked police to investigate. She told police she had never created a Facebook account.

Suspicious pair

Canton police made two arrests after an officer on patrol saw two suspicious people on Northwind, southwest of Cherry Hill and I-275, around 4:30 a.m. Dec. 22.

An officer saw a woman in the driver's seat of a Ford Taurus and noticed a man who was lying down in the passenger seat. The two got out of the car when they saw the police car and said they had just returned from Meijer.

Police ran a background check and learned the woman was wanted on a dangerous drugs warrant out of Wayne and for a traffic offense in Westland. They turned her over to Wayne police.

Canton police turned the man over to Monroe County authorities after learning he was wanted there for a larceny warrant.

Suspicious men

A Canton woman told police she walked out of her home shortly after 8 p.m. Dec. 24 and saw two men between two cars parked in her driveway in the 1700 block of Woodstock, northeast of Palmer and Lilley.

The suspicious men apparently were scared off when they saw the woman, and they ran from the location.

The woman told police the

passenger door of her 2001 Honda Accord was ajar but she didn't notice anything missing.

Farmington Hills Larceny

A Farmington Hills woman reported someone stole clothing, Christmas gifts, two iPods, a laptop computer, a GPS unit, three suitcases, dishes, jewelry, a coat and shoes from her vehicle during the night of Dec. 20 while it was parked on the 20000 block of Colwell Street. She had just returned from a road trip and she told police she may have left her vehicle unlocked over night.

Home invasion

A resident on the 29000 block of Shiawassee reported returning home the night of Dec. 23 to find someone had broken in and stole his TV from the wall in his front room. The front door had been forced open. Nothing else was reported missing from the home.

Redford Township Car hits pole

Redford Township police continued to investigate a crash that occurred after a truck twice rammed a vehicle causing it into a utility pole and injuring the two female occupants.

The crash occurred about 11:30 p.m. Monday, when a vehicle traveling north on Beech Daly, south of Plymouth Road, was rammed from behind by an orange truck, according to police.

The driver told police she sped up to elude the truck. But after pulling into a gas station, the truck continued to follow.

A passenger in the vehicle told police the female driver of the truck was a one-time friend, "but they no longer get along."

Burglary attempt

A burglary attempt was foiled early Tuesday when the

garage alarm sounded, police said.

The owner of a house in the 17300 block of Five Points told police the alarm sounded about 4 a.m., and he saw a man running from the garage. The suspect apparently fled in a white, four-door Buick or Oldsmobile. Entry was gained, police said, by breaking the garage door. Nothing was reported missing.

Plymouth Township Theft from pickup

A radar detector was reported stolen Monday from the cab of a Ford F-350 pickup truck that was parked outside a house on Risman Drive in the township, a police report said. In addition, the cloth cover on the pickup's bed had been slashed.

The incident occurred between 11 p.m. Sunday and just before 10 a.m. Monday, a police report said. The victim told police he had locked the truck.

Garage break-in

Nothing was reported missing from the garage at a house on Ivywood Lane in the township after a daytime break-in on Dec. 22.

A door to the attached garage had been forced open, a police report said, its frame splintered and its deadbolt lock broken. It did not appear that an attempt to break into the house had been made, police said.

The garage break-in occurred between 7:30 a.m. and 5 p.m. on Dec. 22.

Livonia

Woman arrested on Christmas Eve

A 38-year-old Livonia woman was arrested on a disorderly person charge after she argued with relatives and police officers Christmas Eve.

Police arrived to a home on Gary Lane after receiving a call about a disagreement

between relatives. Police spoke with a woman who said she was involved in an argument with her mother. Police noticed that she had been drinking. Officers told her that she was not welcome at her mother's home that evening due to her condition. The woman was angry and upset that her children were staying with their grandmother.

Officers tried to talk her into staying with a friend. A friend had agreed, but then as one of the officers was returning to his vehicle, the women walked down the middle of the street after him instead of remaining with the friend. She began to raise her voice again, then ran behind a home. Police then arrested her for disorderly conduct.

Restaurant break-in

A burglar or burglars broke into Zorritos, 32030 Plymouth Road, some time during the evening of Dec. 21 or early Dec. 22 and stole two cases of liquor and removed cash from a register. The managers told police that the back door had been locked the night before, but when one of the managers arrived on Dec. 22 he found that the metal door frame had been pried open on one of the doors. Police were continuing an investigation into the burglary.

Home invasion

A home on the 19000 block of Pollyanna was hit by a burglar who made off with two jewelry boxes.

Livonia police were called shortly before noon Dec. 22 by someone who heard a noise, and looked to see a pickup truck parked in the driveway of a home on Pollyanna. The witness saw a man carrying a pillow case get into a black Ford F-150 with a loud exhaust. The driver of the truck pulled out of the driveway and drove away. Police arrived, and the homeowner was contacted. A door had been kicked in and someone rummaged through a dresser and jewelry box drawers. Two jewelry boxes were missing from the home.

The suspect was described

as a white male, about 5-foot-8, in his early 20s, medium build, short dark brown hair and a dark waist-length coat and a dark green shirt.

Trucks stolen

A gray 2004 Dodge Durango was stolen from a parking lot of the Apple Ridge Apartments on the 30000 block of Morelock some time between 10 p.m. Sunday and 7:30 a.m. Monday.

The owner told police he was current on his payments, but that he allowed his insurance on the vehicle to lapse because he needed the money to buy Christmas gifts.

A truck with a snow plow was stolen from the 18000 block of University Park some time between 11:30 a.m. Christmas Day and Sunday morning.

The owner noticed the truck, labeled with "Dunn-Rite Land Services, Northville, MI," was missing shortly before 8 a.m. Sunday. The truck's front end was equipped with an 8-foot yellow plow.

A salt spreader was stolen some time between Dec. 23 and Monday, Dec. 27, from a plow truck at Rainbow Rehab, 38777 Six Mile. Nothing else was missing from the truck.

Westland

Stolen vehicle

A Westland man making a delivery for Vizzy's Pizza told police Dec. 26 that someone stole his car, which had been left running. The delivery person told the officer he parked the 2000 Hyundai Elantra in front of 6635 Lakeview in the Landings Apartments and delivered the pizza two addresses away. As he returned, he said he saw the backup lights come on. As he reached inside the vehicle, the man said he saw a man wearing a black ski mask behind the wheel trying to back out of the parking space.

A second man had been standing behind the car and fled over a wooden fence. The delivery man told police the vehicle belongs to his father. Inside the car, he said were his laptop computer, GPS

unit, iPod and a leather bag containing more than \$1,000 worth of Pokemon cards.

While the officer was at the scene, a Pizza Hut delivery person arrived to make a delivery to an apartment at the same building. It turned out that the apartment number he had been given was a vacant unit.

The officer went to Pizza Hut and was told the first call for delivery gave a non-existent apartment number, which was later changed to the unit which was vacant.

Larceny from vehicle

Items valued at \$120 including a DVD player and a hair tool were reported stolen from a vehicle parked in the 33000 block of Belding Court Dec. 25. The owner told police the vehicle had been locked but there was no sign of forced entry.

Break-in

Police were called to Benito's Pizza, 8129 N. Middlebelt, Dec. 26 after the owner found someone had broken the glass door and unlocked the door.

Approximately \$140 was reported missing from the cash register, a charity collection canister and a tip jar.

The business owner told police he suspects a former employee is responsible for the break-ins at the store but isn't sure which one since there were several possibilities.

Tires stolen

Eight tires valued at \$882 were reported stolen Dec. 27 from Firestone, 6885 N. Wayne Road. Two employees told police the tires were on a display rack that is kept outside the store. At about 7 p.m. when the store was closing, one employee said he went outside and saw a man rolling one of the tires from the display toward the north side of the building.

The employee followed as the man got into a white Ford Windstar minivan occupied by a second man. Both were described as white males about 40 years old. The pair fled and was gone before the employee could get into his vehicle to follow.

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FICANO

FROM PAGE A13

TOP DEM?

Balleger's pick for Michigan's top Democrat is Stabenow. But Ficano and Detroit Mayor Dave Bing should also be included on any list of influential Democrats, he said, along with Gretchen Whitmer of East Lansing and Rick Hammel of Genesee County, the minority leaders in the state Senate and House of Representatives, respectively.

Hammell insists there is no "one top Democrat."

"We all have roles to play, he said, and the party has a lot of great people. But leading — or for that matter strengthening the party — is a team effort."

"Ficano is a great asset to the Party," Hammell continued, he's a proven vote-getter with a demonstrated ability to raise money for an affective campaign.

Andy Dillon remains in the mix, according to some observers. His selection as the state's next treasurer — under Republican Gov.-elect Rick Snyder — could strengthen his credentials and his appeal to independent voters in the long run, they insist.

Asked if anybody was rebuilding the Democratic Party, Oakland County Executive L. Brook Patterson responded, "I hope not."

But Democrats — foremost being President Barack Obama — could be in for another "shel-lacking in 2012," he said, "if they don't get their act together — and soon."

Ficano might be "too wedded to organized labor to be elected to statewide office," said Patterson. "But Ficano is as close to anybody to being the state's top Democrat," he said.

The chair of the Michigan Democratic Party, Mark Brewer, would logically take the lead in rebuilding the party, Patterson said, although he might be too closely associated with November's defeat.

"Mark Brewer can not be responsible for those losses," the Oakland County executive said, "but neither can he be considered blameless."

Former Detroit Mayor Dennis Archer, who refers to himself as a "recovering politician," said selecting the state's top Democrat (or Republican) is often a game played by the media to generate stories.

"Nobody I know even tries to lay claim to that title," he said, and the most effective Democrats are team players who don't even think in those terms.

When it comes to influence, however, Michigan's members in Congress are decidedly the state's most powerful, with Sens. Levin and Stabenow being the most prominent, he said.

Bing and Ficano are team players, Archer said, and they're definitely power brokers. As the top elected officials in the state's largest city and county, they have to be considered among Michigan's top Democrats.

Bing, however, has said he will seek another four-year term as mayor of Motor City. He was elected to a first full term in 2009, and earlier this month said he couldn't fix Detroit's problems in four years.

The businessman and former NBA great with the Detroit Pistons, will still be influential state wide, but he is presumably focusing his attention on Detroit.

Ficano said he too is focused on the job at hand. Unemployment is too high in Wayne County, he said, and balancing the budget is always a challenge.

"But I also like what I'm doing," he said. "Being county executive is a demanding job," he continued, but it's also gratifying.

The executive, however, acknowledged some of his efforts on behalf of Wayne County would benefit Michigan — if replicated state wide by a savvy governor.

As an example, Ficano cited Aerotropolis — the name given his plan to use tax incentives to make Metropolitan and Willow Run Airports an economic development zone.

On Dec. 15, Gov. Jennifer Gov. Jennifer Granholm signed the Next Michigan Development Act (NMDA) into law giving the Aerotropolis Development Corporation

(ADC) the ability to move forward. NMDA passed the house and senate on Dec. 3.

"This is about jobs, jobs, jobs, and getting people back to work. This makes things official," said Ficano.

NMDA includes tax incentives throughout the nine communities which have all signed an intergovernmental agreement to be part of the Aerotropolis Development Corporation (ADC).

Ficano has also led trade missions to China, Europe and the Middle East, with the results of those trips beginning to show results. The trade mission to Turin, the home of FIAT, the parent company of Chrysler, included Bob King, president of the UAW.

LABOR, BUSINESS TIES

"I'm proud of my ties to labor," said Ficano, whose father was a member of the Michigan Education Association and whose grandfather belonged to UAW Locals 600 and 182.

General Motors and Chrysler could not have been saved from bankruptcy without the cooperation of President Obama, state Democrats and the UAW, he said. Without that joint effort many of parts suppliers to the Big Three would have gone under too, he said, "Saving GM and Chrysler saved another one million jobs."

Ficano also has strong business ties, according to Sandy Baruah, president and CEO of the Detroit Regional Chamber.

"Bob has been very aggressive in terms of promoting Wayne County and the region," said Baruah, who also went to Italy with the county executive's trade mission to FIAT and its suppliers. "He understands being pro-business is also being pro-jobs."

In recruiting economic development, Baruah said, Ficano is able to present a unified front, with government, business and labor. "That's a very powerful message," he said, "one I'd like to duplicate with Oakland, Macomb and Washtenaw counties."

Baruah considers himself to be a "Brooks Patterson kind of guy," meaning he's a pro-business Republican. "But Bob Ficano is as easy to work with

(on business development) as Brooks Patterson."

Doug Rothwell, Governor-elect Snyder's choice to lead the Michigan Economic Development Authority agrees.

"Bob Ficano is very pro business," said Rothwell who co-chaired Snyder's transition team, "and he has developed some good initiatives for economic development."

Ficano is proof an elected official can be friendly to business and labor, said Rothwell, who also served as president and CEO of Business Leaders for Michigan.

TOUGH CALLS

As an indication of his ability to lead and govern, Ficano cited some tough decisions he's made — including cutting the county work force by nearly 40 percent. "Nobody is happy about cutting jobs or laying people off," he said. "But it had to be done. I cut the workforce from 5,200 to about 3,200."

Ficano undoubtedly has work to do if he wants to estab-

lish a statewide identity. As Wayne County sheriff for 20 years, however, he was a member of the Michigan Sheriffs' Association. Besides helping him learn the intricacies of the state Legislature, membership in the association enabled Ficano to befriend lawmen state wide — a friendship that could translate into the beginnings of a state wide organization. That organization may not be as strong as the machine Ficano has built in southeast Michigan, but it could be a start.

Shortly after front-runner John Cherry took himself out of the race for governor, a poll was taken on perspective Democratic candidates.

"I didn't commission the poll," Ficano said. "But I did well."

Another person who thinks Ficano has the early credentials for a state-wide race is Phil Cavanagh, who worked with the executive as a former Wayne County commissioner and last month was elected state representative.

Ficano is smart and effective,

said Cavanagh, "and he already has considerable influence in Lansing," said the son of the late Jerome Cavanagh, one-time mayor of Detroit.

Since Nov. 2, Cavanagh has spent days in Lansing preparing for his state representative job. One mark of Ficano's influence with the legislature, he said, is lawmakers' approving enabling legislation for Aerotropolis, the executive's economic development initiative. "The lame-duck legislature didn't do much," Cavanagh said, "but it passed the Aerotropolis bills."

"Aerotropolis is very much on the right on track," said Miles Handy, a senior executive project manager with the county executive who was involved in getting the Aerotropolis bills approved by the legislature.

Handy is foremost among those who considers Ficano as a leading contender for the title of Michigan's top Democrat.

"We've got a lot of good people in the Democratic Party," he said, "and Bob Ficano is one of the best."

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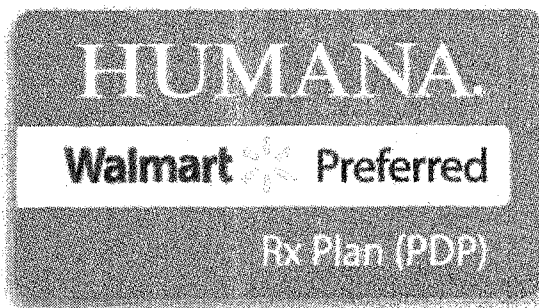
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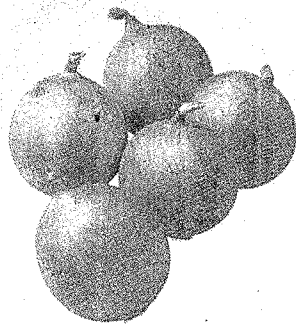
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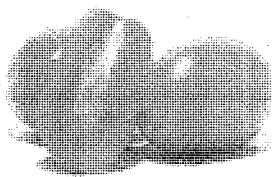
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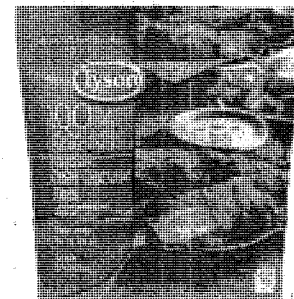
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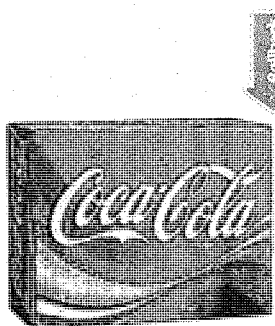
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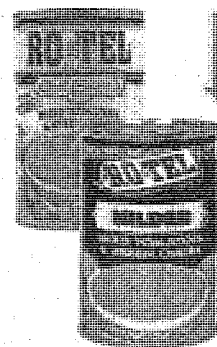
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State finalists top All-Area football

First team offense

TYLER GOBLE, OL, Plymouth: Whether protecting his quarterback and running backs with strong work on the offensive line or being a defensive menace from linebacker, Goble's efforts were instrumental in the Wildcats' drive to the Division 1 finals at Ford Field.

"His cerebral and physical abilities have allowed him to dominate," coach Mike Sawchuk said. "He is one of the most coachable kids we have ever had in this program."

The 6-1, 220-pound junior was named to the all-conference team and was selected to the All-Metro West teams for The Detroit News and Detroit Free Press.

ADAM CLAY, OL, Franklin: the 6-3, 289-pound junior earned all-KLAA honors as the Patriots finished 7-3 overall and made the state playoffs.

Clay, who started all nine games, also earned Detroit News All-Metro West honors.

"We moved Adam always to our strong side so we could run behind him," Franklin coach Chris Kelbert said. "He's real intelligent. He knew his blocking schemes and picked up things quickly from start of season. He's a quiet, soft-spoken kid, but he made quite a bit of improvement with his intensity from start of the season."

JON ANEED, OL, Stevenson: The 6-1, 246-pound senior, a three-year starter, was named the team's MVP and earned all-KLAA honors.

Aneed also played defensive tackle.

"Jon was very versatile," outgoing Stevenson coach Tim Gabel said. "He could also play guard. He's an outstanding pass blocker and drive blocker who can get on the edge and lead on the sweep or pitch."

BEN POIRIER, OL, Canton: Most of the time, players of the skill positions garner headlines.

But anybody watching Canton's offense and its ability to take it to the house on any given play knows how integral offensive linemen such as the 5-10, 225-pound Poirier are.

Poirier started at offensive tackle during his senior year and also was a key starter on the defensive line, getting in on 52 tackles and four sacks.

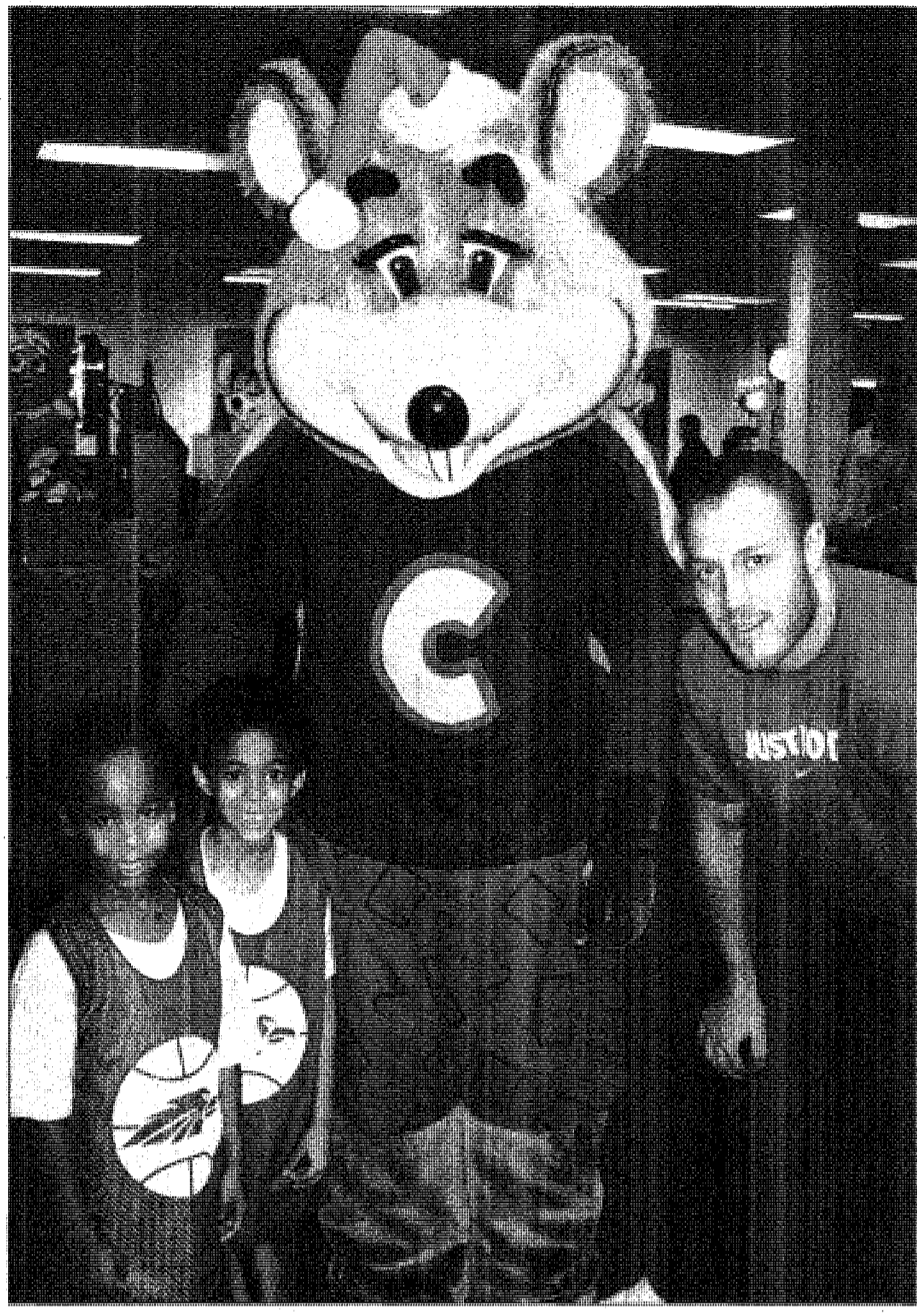
Coach Tim Baechler needed to shift him from nose guard to defensive tackle "and by the end of the year he was dominant at times."

Poirier, described by Baechler as a "very quick, powerful athlete," earned All-KLAA honors.

ANDREW LAIRD, OL, John Glenn: The 6-3, 260-pound senior was a three-year starter at offensive tackle and the Rockets' top offensive lineman.

"They don't come any tougher," Glenn coach Tim Hardin said of Laird, an all-KLAA selection. "He had to battle some significant injuries and was still our best offensive lineman. He anchored our offensive line and had a heck of a year."

Please see **ALL-AREA, B2**



PHOTOS BY JOHN SHAW

Tim Shaw (far right) of the Tennessee Titans had a recent fun day with the Chucky Cheese mascot and brothers Parker Keyshawn (far left) and Logan Johnson in Nashville.

Gift of giving

Shaw family shows there's more to life than football

BY BRAD EMONS
OBSERVER STAFF WRITER

The holidays have come and gone for another year for the Shaw family, who recently celebrated Christmas a few days later normal.

That's because Tim Shaw, one of Sharon and John's four sons, was given a 24-hour leave of absence last Tuesday from his job as a special teams player and linebacker for the NFL's Tennessee Titans.

It was a chance for the Shaw family to all be together for at least one day. His brother Andrew arrived from California, while his fraternal twin Pete was back home from Wisconsin. The oldest brother Steve, band director from the Freeland Schools, was also in for the holidays.

It was a special reunion for Tim, the former Livonia Clarenceville High and Penn State standout, who learned the gift of giving at an early age from his parents.

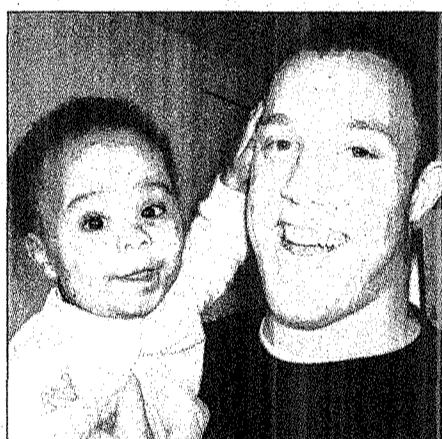
And another neat reunion took place earlier in the month — at Chucky Cheese of all places — when Sharon and John flew down to Nashville to meet with Tim and the Johnson family. Tim and Teri Johnson have two adopted sons, including 6-year-old Parker Keyshawn, who spent five months as an infant with the Shaws in their Livonia home.

"He was with us for five months and I look at his face and still see him as a baby," Sharon Shaw said. "He seems to be a happy child, very active."

Through Bethany Christian Services in Madison Heights, Sharon and John Shaw have fostered a total of 45 infants since 1991.

Tim Shaw has been around infants his entire life. Even for a hulking 6-foot-1, 240-pound NFL player, holding babies and changing diapers is second nature.

"There was always a baby in the house



Tim Shaw, during his days at Penn State, holds infant Parker Keyshawn Johnson, a foster child of the Shaw family, in 2004.

from the first grade all the way through high school," he said. "That's the way it was. My mom always had one."

"My mom, as well as anyone, has that baby touch. She just has a way. It's one of my mom's gifts. She can get them to sleep through the night and get them to behave. She just has that soothing touch that's just amazing."

After Tim was released by the Chicago Bears and signed just prior to the season by the Titans, Tim and Teri Johnson — ironically, Titans season ticket holders — stopped by the team's practice facility one day and left Tim a message.

The Johnsons had made contact when the Carolina Panthers, Tim's first NFL team as a rookie, played a game in 2007 at Tennessee.

They eventually met for dinner this fall at the Johnson home, and Tim hung out with Parker Keyshawn and his brother Logan, who is 11 months older.

Please see **SHAW, B4**

Whalers end skid with matinee win

BY TIM SMITH
OBSERVER STAFF WRITER

Nearly 3,000 fans came out Tuesday for the Plymouth Whalers' annual "Kids Day" matinee and players such as goalie Scott Wedgewood and forward Mitchell Heard weren't about to let them go home disappointed.

Wedgewood stopped a penalty shot in the second period and Heard went all out to score a timely goal to spark Plymouth's 4-2 victory over Erie at Compuware Arena.

The victory snapped a four-game losing streak, which included three road losses in three nights Dec. 16-18.

"I thought we played pretty good for being off six days," Plymouth head coach Mike Vellucci said. "That losing streak, all those games were on the road and we were short five guys again tonight."

"Our team is a young team, and when you're missing that many guys it's very difficult."

Among those not in Tuesday's lineup were three players competing at the World Junior Championships in Buffalo,



BILL BRESLER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Plymouth Whalers forward James Livingston (No. 26, left) rips a shot past Erie defenseman Derek Holden. Livingston picked up an assist in the Whalers' 4-2 victory Tuesday.

forwards Rickard Rakell, Tom Wilson and defenseman Dario Trutmann.

Without them, others such as newcomer Chris Albertini would need to chip in. Albertini, in his fourth Ontario Hockey League game, collected his first point when he assisted on a goal scored by defenseman Max Iafrate (Livonia) at the 7:01 mark. Heard centered the puck and drew the other assist.

Please see **WHALERS, B4**

PREP WRAPS

Happy holiday for Hawks

Eman Hubbard's basket with :03 on the clock in the second overtime Wednesday night lifted Farmington Harrison's girls basketball team to a thrilling 48-46 victory over host Northville in the finals of the Northville Holiday Tournament.

"It was a real fun game to be a part of," beamed Hawks head coach Tim Micklash, who saw his club improve to 5-2 with the win. "It was back and forth the whole way and what I'm real proud of is how the girls battled for the entire 40 minutes."

Hubbard finished with 18 points, 14 rebounds and four blocks. Teammate Tiera Parker matched Hubbard's offensive prowess by also bagging 18 points.

Spartans win in OT

It took overtime Wednesday night, but Livonia Stevenson was able to prevail, 49-45, in Detroit University Prep in girls basketball holiday play at Pontiac Notre Dame Prep. Junior Jordan York netted five of her team-leading 13 points in the extra session to spark the Spartans who improved to 4-1 with the victory. Freshman Charlesann Roy chipped in with 12 points and junior Molly Knoph twined nine.

Prep (1-4) was paced by Jasmyne Owens with 16 points and April Watson with 14 points.

Free throws proved crucial in the outcome as Stevenson converted 12-of-24 attempts while Prep drained just 7-of-26.

Eagles gain split

Redford Thurston evened its overall ledger at 2-2 heading into 2011 with a hard-earned 58-41 boys basketball triumph Wednesday over Adrian (0-4).

Will Webster, Mike Flannel and Anthony Barley each scored eight points as the Eagles out-scored their opponents in each of the four quarters.

Thurston opened up a 13-9 lead after one quarter, increased the margin to 29-23 at the half, and put the game away by out-scoring the Maples 29-18 over the final two frames.

The victory came on the heels of a tough loss one night prior to Chelsea (3-0). Tied at 37-all entering the final period of play, the Eagles saw the Bulldogs erupt for 24 fourth-quarter points and the 61-54 non-league victory.

Zavier Bowen topped the Eagles with 12 points. He also dished out four assists. Barley registered a double-double with 10 points and 14 rebounds. Barley handed out five assists.

Falcons stall Tractors

Farmington raised its record to 2-3 Wednesday with a convincing 60-43 boys basketball victory over Dearborn Fordson. Anthony Rutledge and Chris Hare each tossed in 16 points to lead Farmington to its second victory in five starts.

Faraj Mohamed scored 16 to pace the Tractors.

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Madonna women cagers knock off ranked opponent

The Madonna University women's basketball team pulled off a major surprise Wednesday when they upended host Southern Nazarene University (Okla.), ranked No. 16 in the latest NAIA Division I poll, 84-79, in overtime.

Sophomore center Kaylee McGrath (Livonia Stevenson) scored a team-high 22 points as the Crusaders improved to 5-7 overall.

Heather Pratt came off the bench to score 17, while senior guard Tabatha Wydryck contributed 15 points, nine rebounds, five assists and seven steals. Erin Bentley also came off the bench to score nine points.

Southern Nazarene (8-2) got a game-high 27 points from Logan Martin, who made 9-of-14 shots from the floor including 6-of-8 three-pointers.

WHALERS

FROM PAGE B1

"He's a defenseman playing forward for us," Vellucci noted. "He did some smart things for us tonight and was really happy with his effort."

Plymouth (18-14-1-1) went up 2-0 at 14:18 on a carbon copy goal. Center Robbie Czarnik, just as Iafra did, wired a one-timer from the slot after receiving a centering pass.

SHORTHANDED TROUBLE

But while on a power play during the middle stanza, the Otters (17-17-1-1) scored one shorthanded goal (by center Phil Varone with 10:51 left) to make it 2-1 and nearly added another within seconds.

Shortly after the Varone goal, Erie center Luke Cairns was hauled down from behind. He was awarded a penalty shot with 10:32 remaining and had a golden opportunity to even the contest.

Enter Wedgewood with his best stop of the contest, at the most-opportune time for Plymouth.

Wedgewood didn't fall for Cairns' deke attempt, moving from his right-to-left until snuffing out the shot near the right goal post.

"He kind of went to his backhand coming across and he had nowhere to go and he missed the net," said Wedgewood, who sparked throughout the game with 29 saves. "He didn't have much of an option and he'd want to take a perfect shot to beat me back where I was coming from."

The Whalers, given that reprieve, padded their lead to 3-1 with 6:43 to play in the second. This time, it was Heard who made a determined play to help maintain the advantage.

Defenseman and captain Beau Schmitz kept the puck in Erie's zone and it caromed behind the Otters' goal. Heard retrieved it, saw

goalie Ramis Sadikov looking the wrong way and skated out from behind the net to stuff the puck inside the right post.

"The puck just came to me and I quickly wrapped it around, the goalie wasn't expecting it," Heard said. "But it was a great play by Beau."

Also assisting was forward James Livingston, who along with Heard and RJ Mahalak formed a pesky line for Vellucci.

A defensive giveaway led to an unassisted goal by Erie winger Brett Appio with just 1:28 left in the second, to make it 3-2 entering the intermission.

But the Whalers, who out-shot Erie 45-31, got that goal right back at 1:17 of the third.

Forward Stefan Noesen scored his team-leading 16th goal, going top shelf with a backhand. The lone assist went to defenseman Colin MacDonald.

For the rest of the third, the Whalers and Wedgewood held the fort, keeping the four-game slide from getting any worse.

SHAW

FROM PAGE B1

"Any opportunity to impact kids, I'll jump at that," said Tim, who has 29 tackles this season for the Titans and is on the NFL Pro Bowl ballot as a special teams player. "They (the Johnsons) reached out and it's just a cool connection. He's (Parker Keyshawn) just a cool little kid, super smart and athletic. He's doing his multiple times tables. He's full of life and has a sharp older brother (Logan). I've played football with him and his brother. I've watched them play soccer and watched them play basketball."

Sharon Shaw applied the same philosophy raising foster children such as Parker Keyshawn as she did with her own four boys.

"We've tried to teach our kids reality, discipline and give them as many experiences you can in life to have options," Sharon Shaw said. "You teach them how to make decisions and you support them. And, of course, there's love through everything. It's communication. You find out what's behind kids' thinking. And when they make a

statement, you're not necessarily judged, but find out what's behind their thinking."

Sharon and John Shaw have not had a foster infant child in four years.

"The system has changed," Sharon said. "More and more they're going from the hospital straight to adoption."

Sharon, however, said it's been her calling to reach out to others and it will be a blessing when her sons start raising their own children.

"I believe God put a baby hole in my heart and it's one way I can give back," she said. "Having babies in the home was tremendous for the boys because it taught them how to love people and let them learn the hard lessons in life."


"They're already asking me for advice. I think they'll also be great dads."

Tim Shaw, meanwhile, said his experiences growing up will be a great benefit when he becomes a parent down the road.

"It made me more rounded and the experience is priceless when I have kids," he said. "My mom doesn't get enough credit."

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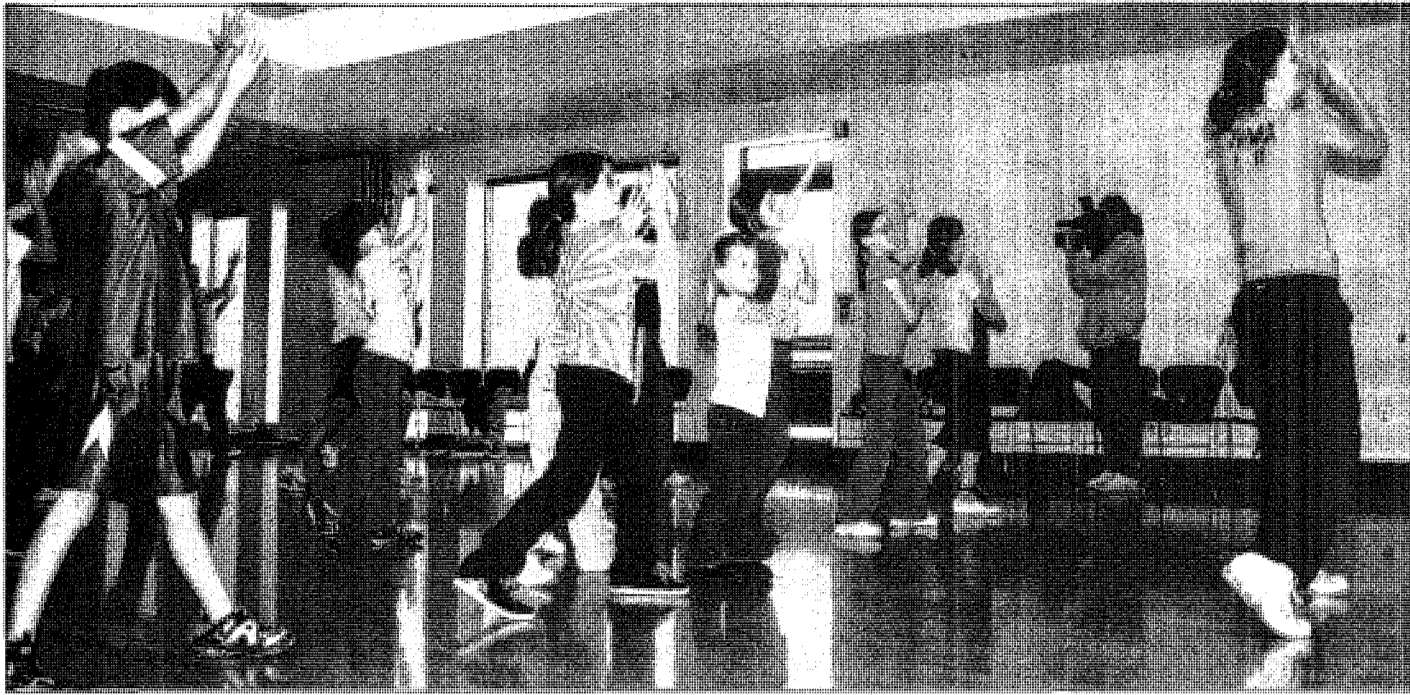
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An exercise class for children is among the many classes offered through Canton's 100 Days of Fitness.

Include realistic goals in your New Year's fitness resolutions

TOPS Club, Inc., (Take Off Pounds Sensibly) suggests setting small, definite goals as a way to achieve weight loss success this year.

The nonprofit weight-loss support organization, shares the following tips for realistically planning — and achieving — New Year resolutions:

- 1. Be specific**
Determine an exact goal. Instead of resolving to lose weight, consider a specific amount or goal weight and time frame, such as losing 20 pounds by the Fourth of July and 20 more pounds by Thanksgiving. No matter what the resolution, setting small goals will be easier to achieve one step at a time.
- 2. Make a plan for success**
Construct a "road map" as a guide to achieve your goal. Consider what it will take to accomplish the plan. For example, to lose weight, healthy eating, exercise, and joining a support group like TOPS is paramount. Consider keeping a journal to keep track of progress ups and downs.
- 3. Review the plan along the way**
Once a week, take time and evaluate progress. Review the journal and determine if the goals need revamping or ramping up. Everyone makes mistakes. When that happens, avoid falling into the traps of shame and guilt.
- 4. Keep resolutions realistic**
Be realistic in goal setting. If completely eliminating a behavior is too difficult, consider resolving to do it less often.
- 5. Make it personally meaningful**
A resolution should be something an individual desires to change or achieve and should not be dictated by family members or society. Resolutions without strong, personal motivation can be doomed to fail.
- 6. Tell others about the resolution**
Sharing goals with friends and family can be an outstanding support mechanism and a source of gentle nudging if a detour from the plan takes place.

TOPS Club Inc., the original, nonprofit weight-loss support and wellness education organization, was established more than 62 years ago to champion weight-loss support and success. Founded and headquartered in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, TOPS promotes successful, affordable weight management with a philosophy that combines healthy eating, regular exercise, wellness information, and support from others at weekly chapter meetings. TOPS has about 170,000 members in nearly 10,000 chapters throughout the United States and Canada. Visitors may attend their first TOPS meeting free of charge. To find a local chapter, view www.tops.org or call (800) 932-8677.

Get healthy in just 100 days through wellness program

Canton Leisure Services and Oakwood Healthcare System kick off "Canton's 100 Days to Health" program Saturday, Jan. 8, in the gym at Summit on the Park in Canton.

Registration for the community-wide health and wellness program is underway.

At the kick off, participants will get a chance to try a few of the fitness classes offered

through the program. They also may join an open swim from 1-3 p.m. in the Aquatic Center.

Staff from Oakwood Healthcare System will be on hand during the kickoff providing health screenings, including: blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar levels.

Summit on the Park is locat-

ed at 46000 Summit Parkway, west of S. Canton Center Road.

Register now for Canton's 100 Days to Health 2011 online at www.cantonfun.org, at the Summit front desk, or at the 100 Days Kickoff Event on Jan. 8. Registration fees for Canton residents are: \$15 for adults, 16 and up, and \$5 for youth, ages 4-15. Non-resident fees are \$25 for adults, 16 and up,

and \$5 for youth, ages 4-15. There is no charge for children under 3.

After registering, participants can access all classes and events on the 100 Days to Health calendar for free. The program ends April 16.

To learn more about 100 Days to Health program visit www.cantonfun.org or call (734) 394-5460.

branch; 1-1:45 p.m. Monday and Wednesday at the Livonia branch; and 2-3 p.m. Wednesday and Friday, at the Birmingham branch. All classes are offered to members and non-members of every age and participants do not need to know how to swim to participate. To join, interested individuals can contact their local YMCA branch or visit www.ymcadetroit.org.

The YMCA of Metropolitan Detroit and the Arthritis Foundation have partnered to offer aquatic classes designed to ease the pain of arthritis. Classes are held 10-11 a.m., Tuesday and Thursday at the Farmington

MEDICAL DATEBOOK

JANUARY

Diabetes

St. Mary Mercy Hospital Diabetes Support Group will present "Healthy Weight Loss Strategies" from 7-8:30 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 12, in the hospital's auditorium. Participants will learn healthy strategies to lose


weight from Tamara Lark, a registered dietician and health educator at the hospital. The support group meets the second Wednesday. There is no charge, and pre-registration is not required. Call Community Outreach at (734) 655-8950 with any questions.

ONGOING

Aquatic classes

The YMCA of Metropolitan Detroit and the Arthritis Foundation have partnered to offer aquatic classes designed to ease the pain of arthritis. Classes are held 10-11 a.m., Tuesday and Thursday at the Farmington

branch; 1-1:45 p.m. Monday and Wednesday at the Livonia branch; and 2-3 p.m. Wednesday and Friday, at the Birmingham branch. All classes are offered to members and non-members of every age and participants do not need to know how to swim to participate. To join, interested individuals can contact their local YMCA branch or visit www.ymcadetroit.org.



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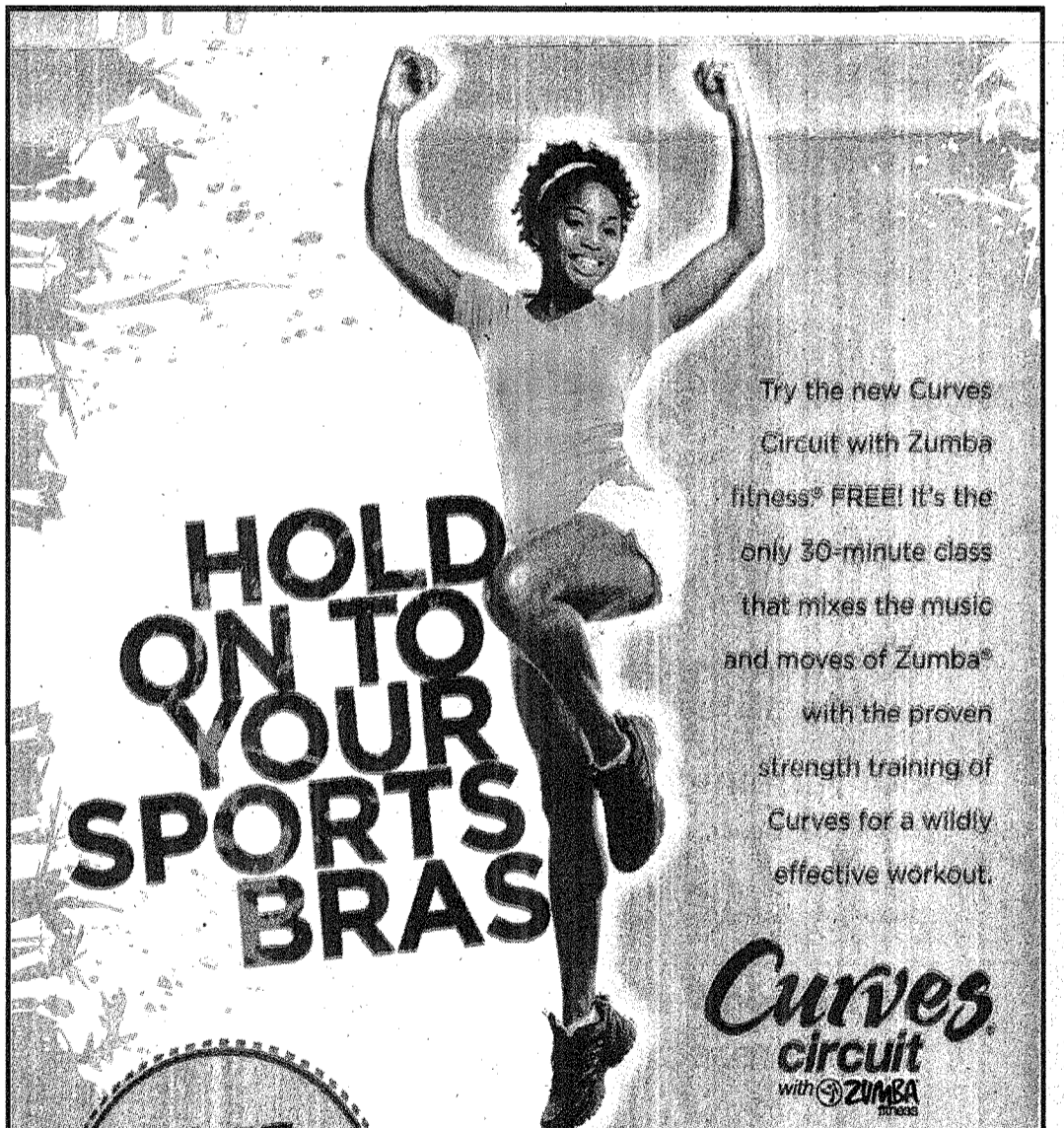
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COMMUNITY LIFE

Sunday, January 2, 2011

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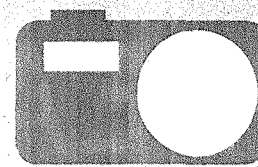


PHOTO GALLERIES

hometownlife.com

Westland couple 'pays it forward' through good deeds

BY SHARON DARGAY
O&E STAFF WRITER

Jim Millsaps can't pass a stalled car on the road without stopping to lend a hand.

The Good Samaritan keeps jumper cables and a gas can ready to aid motorists and tells members of his church, Garden City Presbyterian, to call him day or night if they need assistance.

The 57-year-old Westland man figures he has made some 2,000 or more runs in all kinds of weather to help fellow congregants, friends and church referrals in Wayne, Westland, Garden City and Canton over the past decade. And that doesn't include the stops he has made to help strangers who are stranded on the road.

"I figure it this way, I'm retired and I can come home and go to bed. So, if someone is stuck out by, let's say Willow Run at 1 or 2 in the morning, there is no one out there. The cars that might pass by aren't going to stop. So, if it's a church member or someone I know, I'll go out," he said. "I've had women who will call me — I don't know what to do, the car stopped? — I go up to some of these and they are out of gas. But their gas gauge is not working properly. They've got an eighth of a tank and they try to get to their destination by stretching it."

His wife, Judy, 56, stocks his Jeep with blankets to keep motorists warm while her husband tinkers under the hood. A mechanic and welder by trade, Jim's goal is to get the cars started and on the way to their destination, not to make major repairs, although he occasionally has fixed a problem on the spot.

He doesn't expect anything in return for his service, although he will accept donations if offered to help pay for gas.

He tells even the most apologetic callers, "I'll be right there, just tell me where you are."

LESSONS LEARNED

Jim, one of three siblings, said his late mother taught him the importance of helping others when he was a youngster. He'll never forget the time he ignored her lessons and simply drove past a stalled car.

"I remember before my mom died and I started doing this, I drove by my mom who was stuck on the road. I didn't know it was her because she had gotten a new car," Jim said.

"Since then," Judy added, "Nobody sits on the side of the road in a car."

Although Jim responds to roadside assistance calls on his own, the couple works together on other volunteer efforts.

They clean elderly neighbors' sidewalks in the winter; paint, lawn mow and rake leaves at homes of senior church members; and co-lead the TOPS Inc. weight loss chapter that Judy formed at church last year. Both were ordained as deacons in Wayne Presbyterian Church, where they were members before it merged with Garden City Presbyterian Church.

Jim is president of the Men's Club and Judy attends both Men's Club and Women's Club sessions at Garden City Presbyterian Church.

"The Men's Club has adopted me. So it's Men's Club plus one," she said, with a laugh. "Every Sunday I'm in the (church) kitchen, putting on the coffee and putting out the treats."



Jim and Judy Millsaps "pay it forward" by volunteering in their church and community - whether it's snow blowing sidewalks of elderly residents in their Westland neighborhood or jumpstarting stranded motorists. They're always out and about, lending a helping hand.

BLESSING OTHERS

The couple says helping others and volunteering at church simply "pays forward" the blessings they have received over the years, including repairs on Judy's childhood home, where the couple live, and Jim's cancer survival 10 years ago. He also underwent vascular bypass surgery and lost a kidney to cancer two years ago. He hasn't been able to work a regular job for several years, but remains positive about his health. He jok-

ingly says he has to stay alive, because he made a contract with Judy to celebrate their 75th anniversary together. The document is kept under lock and key.

"The first five years of our marriage, he was going through treatment," Judy said, adding that the contract was designed to "make him fight for his life."

The couple met in 1991 and married a year later. Both had previous marriages and children. Jim's three daughters and Judy's three daughters and

son are grown. The couple also have 28 grandchildren.

VOLUNTEERING TOGETHER

"My kids were raised in the church and I made sure everyone around them were positive thinkers," Judy said. "I didn't allow people to tell them you can't because in our vocabulary there is no such thing as can't. You can, if you just put your best effort to it you can do it."

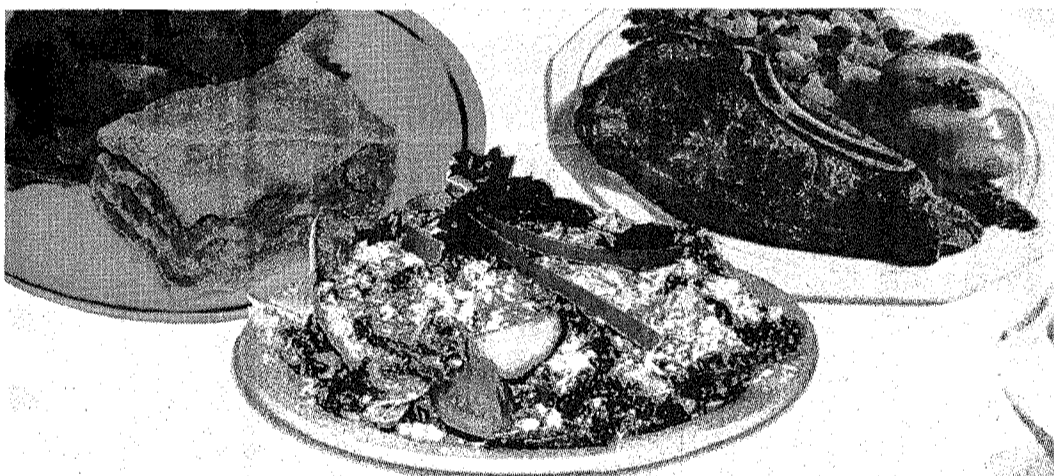
They've included their children in some of the volunteer work they've done and have

repaired steps, black-topped a driveway and painted walls as a family.

Jim said it gave him a chance to pass along his skills to their children. Judy said it also instilled important values.

"If you know a senior who is struggling, you get your can over there and help them. Don't let them struggle," Judy said. "God gave us this planet to take care of it. Be the Good Samaritan."

"Don't just walk by," Jim added. "It's all a part of stopping to smell the roses."



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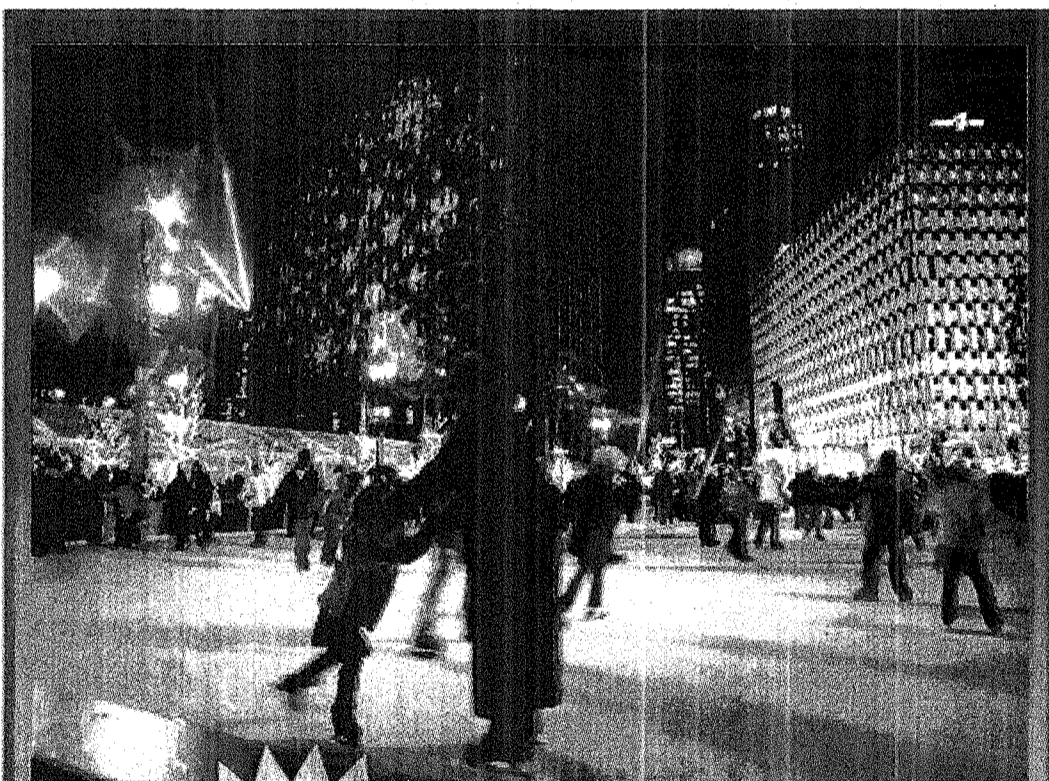
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Salvation Army volunteers make the season brighter

woke up the other day feeling sad, thinking of friend and neighbor Gerry Kruse, who lost his battle with cancer this summer.

The day's calendar held a volunteer shift with my husband, Mark Rembacki, at the Wayne-Westland Salvation Army. Mark and Gerry had been friends since their days together at the University of Detroit. Mark and I, with capable help from other volunteers and staff of the Salvation Army, were giving out toys, food and grocery gift cards for Christmas.

"Welcome to Toy Heaven," said Sandy Kollinger, Wayne-Westland Salvation Army volunteer coordinator/administrative assistant, as she opened the doors to the toy-filled gym at the corps building on Venoy in Westland.

Many of our fellow volunteers were from Ford Motor Co., which gives its staffers two paid days a year for charitable work. Jing Wei Lu, 48, of Canton works for Ford in information technology.

It was Lu's first year at the Salvation Army, although he's done the Rouge Rescue cleanup and other projects. "Quite a few," he said as we waited in line to take parents through the Toy Shop to choose gifts. "Every year, we do twice, basically. They encourage us to help in the community. You contribute something to the community."

"You feel good," Lu added of the volunteer assignments, with choice left up to the employee. "You feel satisfaction making a contribution to the community."

Also from Ford IT was Johanna Wittbracht, 57, of Livonia. She was new to the Salvation Army but had done work with Habitat for Humanity, the Detroit Zoo and Focus:HOPE.

"We do a lot of different things," Wittbracht said. "A lot of children's charities, fixing things up outside. I did Habitat several times because that was really neat."

Volunteer Tim Williams, 53, of Dearborn works

in purchasing for Ford and liked his first-time assignment at the Wayne-Westland corps. He's been brought back from retirement to work for Ford.

"To help give back," is his reason for signing up, said Williams, who's also worked with the Capuchins in Detroit. "And I get a lot of personal satisfaction out of it too."

Some of us took parents through the Toy Shop, with toys on tables divided by age and gender. There were some clothes to give out as well, and other volunteers took food donations and the toys out to waiting cars.

Roselle Tablada, 36, of Sterling Heights, a first-timer, is in the Ford College Graduate program. That comes after undergraduate work and rotates staffers through departments one year at a time.

A Monday assignment takes Tablada to Boys and Girls Republic in Farmington Hills for gift wrapping. "I think it's nice that Ford is giving back," she said of the two days a year. "And it's nice to give back to the community."

Volunteer Wittbracht also liked an assignment at Northville Township's Maybury Farm. All the volunteers enjoyed a pizza and salad lunch at the corps, then returned to their volunteer posts.

"They're the backbone of our volunteers this time of year," said Capt. Derek Rose, corps commander with wife Capt. Joanna Rose, of the Ford staffers. "They're the warm and friendly smile. We just can't say thank you enough to the Ford Motor Co."

Our day with the volunteer group at the Wayne-Westland Salvation Army left me feeling a lot better about what can be a sad season and time of loss. Two nice young boys asked my husband if he was Santa Claus, perhaps because of his red jacket. Santa lives in the hearts of all the volunteers and donors who together make Christmas brighter for so many.

Julie Brown of Plymouth Township is presentation editor for the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers. She can be reached at (313) 222-6755 or via e-mail at jcbrown@hometownlife.com



Julie Brown

Auxiliary plans its garage sale

The Disabled American Veterans Auxiliary, Livonia Unit 114 is collecting items for its "Garage Sale For Veterans" fund-raiser Jan. 27-29.

Items in good condition are accepted 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Wednesdays, at the DAV Hall, 30905 Plymouth Road, in

Livonia. Or call (734) 546-6968 to arrange for another time.

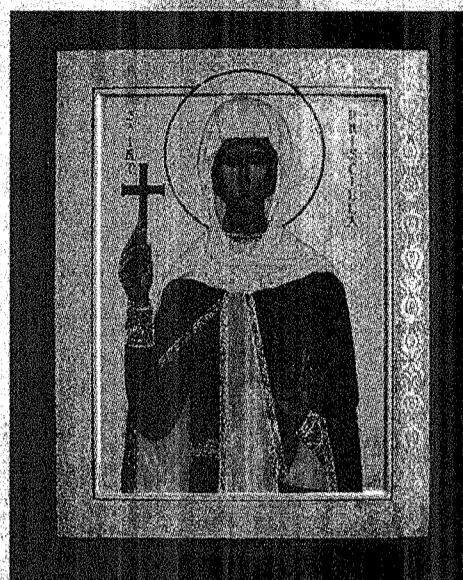
All proceeds from the garage sale, which will be held at the DAV Hall, will be used for local veteran's programs.

The organization's previous garage sale raised

enough money for donations to VA hospitals. It also enabled the group to provide Thanksgiving dinner for a veteran and his family. At Christmas, the Auxiliary assisted a deserving veteran with children.

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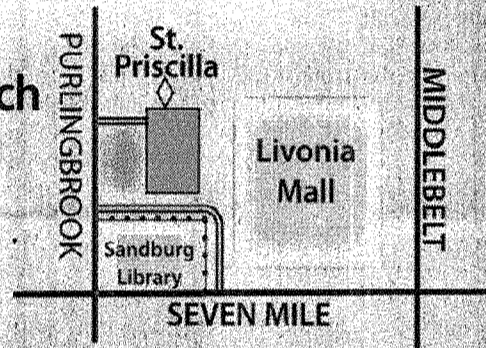
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4:30 pm Mass

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See historic photos at Canton theater

A Michigan State University travelling exhibit, "Welcome to Idlewild: The Black Eden of Michigan," will be on display through Feb. 24 at the Village Theater at Cherry Hill, in Canton.

Exhibition visitors can learn about Michigan's role in the history of segregation and how a strong African-American sense of community developed in this Michigan town.

For many years Idlewild was known as a "Black Eden," one of only a few resorts in the country where African-Americans could vacation and purchase property. In 1912, a group of entrepreneurs bought 2,700 acres of land in rural northwestern

Michigan to establish a vacation community specifically for upper class African Americans. Prospective buyers came primarily from Detroit and other Midwest cities but some came from as far as Cuba. Prominent African Americans who purchased and developed property helped Idlewild quickly gain a national reputation.

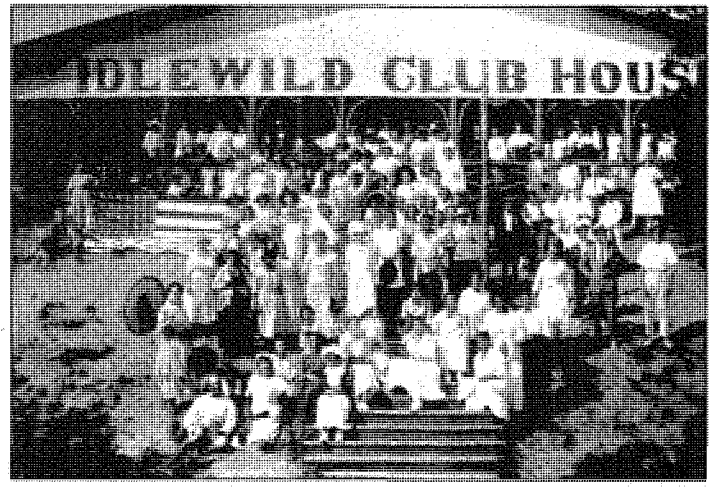
At its peak it was the most popular resort in the Midwest and as many as 25,000 individuals came to Idlewild in the height of the summer season to enjoy camping, swimming, boating, fishing, hunting, horseback riding, roller skating and night-time entertainment. When the 1964 Civil Rights

Act opened up other resorts to African-Americans, Idlewild's boomtown period subsided but the community continues to be an important place for vacationers and retirees. Idlewild also holds special meaning as a place for younger generations of African-Americans seeking to learn about their heritage.

"Through the evocative stories and photographs in this exhibit, Idlewild community members share their rich past and their contributions towards a vital future," stated Marsha MacDowell, curator of folk arts at the MSU Museum and MSU professor of art and art history. The MSU Museum worked with Idlewild community leaders

and scholars over a five-year period to develop the exhibit that shares the stories of the resort community's development, its thriving "Summer Apollo of Michigan" entertainment scene, and the town's active cultural, social, religious and political organizations.

The exhibition consists of freestanding photographic interpretive banners and a reproduction of a quilt by Michigan quilter Deonna Todd Green. It traces through words and images the development of the Idlewild community from its inception in the 1920s to the present day. This multi-media art



A photo from the Idlewild exhibit now on display at the Village Theater at Cherry Hill in Canton.

exhibit at the Gallery@VT is free and open to the public 10 a.m.-2 p.m., Monday-Friday and during public performances at the theater. The Village Theater

at Cherry Hill, located at 50400 Cherry Hill Road in Canton. For more information call (734) 394-5300 or visit cantonvillagetheater.org.

GARDEN EVENTS

Send garden information and photos to Sharon Dargay at sdargay@hometownlife.com

LIVONIA GARDEN CLUB

A speaker from English Gardens Floral Design Department will demonstrate the basics of arranging fresh cut flowers at 7 p.m., Tuesday, Jan. 4. The Club meets at the Livonia Senior Center at Five Mile and Farmington Road. Visitors are welcome.

BUTTERFLIES

The Southeast Michigan Butterfly Association will show

the film, *Secret Life of Butterflies*, at its next meeting, 7 p.m., Jan. 19, at Nankin Mills, 33175 Ann Arbor Trail, Westland. For more information visit www.sembabut-terfly.com

GARDEN TRIP

Party Animal Travel is accepting registration now for the The Garden Club of Wayne County trip to the North American Flower and Garden Show, Friday, March 4 in Chicago, Ill. Cost is \$88 and includes motorcoach transportation, time for shopping and admission to the show, which will include garden displays, Master Gardeners and more than

100 informational booths. For more information call (734) 525-9777.

AT ENGLISH GARDENS

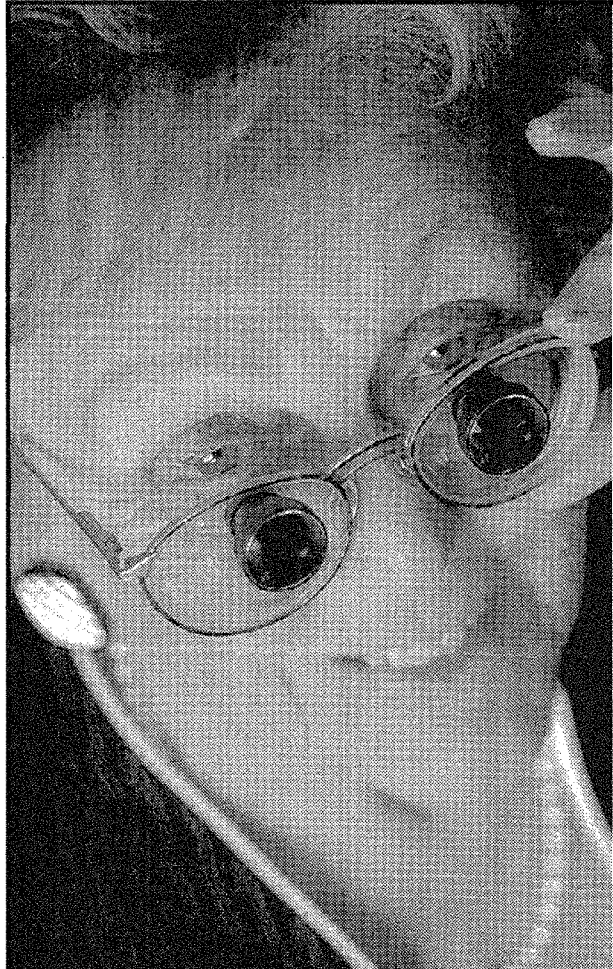
Learn how to properly select and care for plants that will thrive indoors at a free presentation, 1 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 8 at all English Gardens stores. All stores also will offer a "Make it and Take it" workshop at 2:30 p.m. that same day. The workshop costs \$29.99. The store will supply the materials needed to create a seasonal basket filled with long-lasting green and flowering plants. Participants can sign up online at www.english-gardens.com. Other upcoming programs:

gardens.com. Other upcoming programs:

- A free program at 1 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 15 will teach the basics of creating an outdoor room.
- A free presentation on arranging fresh flowers is scheduled at 1 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 22 at all stores except Brighton and Eastpointe locations.
- A Make it & Take it workshop on floral arranging starts at 2:30 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 22 at all stores except Brighton and Eastpointe. The store will provide everything needed to design a gorgeous fresh flower arrangement with a touch of spring. The

workshop costs \$24.99. Sign up online.

- Learn to attract birds and wildlife to your yard through a free presentation at 1 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 29.
 - Youngsters can choose between a pine cone or orange cup bird feeder in a Make it & Take it workshop at 2:30 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 29. Cost is \$5. Sign up online.
- Local English Gardens stores are at 155 N. Maple, Ann Arbor, (734) 332-7900; 4901 Coolidge Highway, Royal Oak, (248) 280-9500; and 6370 Orchard Lake Road, at Maple, in West Bloomfield; (248) 851-7506.



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Learn about schoolyard habitats

The Friends of the Rouge, Rouge Education Project will present a how-to workshop focused on Schoolyard Habitats from 6-8 p.m. Jan. 19, at the Livonia Civic Center Library, 32777 Five Mile, in Livonia. Sarah Halson of the Greening of Detroit, Emily Hughes of the Friends of the Rouge and Gary Oswell of Logan Elementary School will talk about installing and planning a habitat, funding a habitat and using it for teaching. Light refreshments will be served. Cost to attend is \$10 and both payment and pre-registration are due by Jan. 12. To register call (313) 792-9626 or e-mail repmanager@therouge.org. For more information about the Friends of the Rouge, visit www.therouge.org.

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Must be dependable & responsible. Join our family of cleaning professionals. \$10/hr w/flexible schedule. (248) 478-3240</p> <p>Local Jobs Online HOMETOWNLIFE.COM</p> <p>JOBS AND CAREERS CLEANERS, Full-Time for area homes. \$10 hr. to start. No nights or wkends. Car req. Plymouth Area: 734-812-5683</p> | <p>Help Wanted-General 5000 CREW LEAD For early morning (6am-10am) cleaning of retail location, Novi, Michigan. Eye for detail, including carpet cleaning, vacuuming, floor care, trash removal and restroom cleaning. Part-time. Must be authorized to work in the US. Call John (313) 213-6951 or email your contact information or resume to: jobs@capitolbsg.com EOE</p> <p>GENERAL New position opened in our Set-up/Display Dept. Within our pollution Control Team \$15/Start No experience required, we will train. Benefits, vacation pay and paid field training. Call Mon. or Tues. to set up interview at 248-623-1419</p> <p>HOUSECLEANING, PT \$10-\$15/hr. M-F. Apply at: Rub's Inc., 101 S. Holbrook, Plymouth, 734-334-7857 (Steve)</p> <p>INSTRUCTORS Needed to help in pre-school, dance, cheerleading, gymnastics classes & kid sit. Will train. Flexible hrs. Part time position. Call 734-560-7943 or email jump-a-rama@sboglobal.net</p> | <p>Help Wanted-General 5000 LOCKSMITHS to service Oakland, Macomb, Wayne, Washtenaw or Genesee Counties. 248-366-4767</p> <p>LOOKING FOR A CAREER (not a job) REAL ESTATE CONSULTANT (Special pricing for Pre-licensing only \$99) This is the time to buy homes in Michigan, be the one to sell the House. Change your life personally & financially register today. CALL ED BOWLIN at: 734-591-5940 x107</p> <p>MAINTENANCE TECH Full-Time For large Dearborn Heights area apartment community. Experience in apt. community maintenance preferred. Please fax resume to: 810-694-3371 Attn: Brian</p> | <p>Help Wanted-General 5000 MARKETING & ADMISSIONS For assisted living facility. Experienced. Email resume to: rosearake@aol.com or fax: 734-522-5797</p> <p>RN Insurance Service firm providing Medical Assessments (IME's and Reviews) seeking RN to perform Quality Review on med assessments for Disability. Good benefits/Competitive pay hr_mls@yahoo.com Or fax (248) 356-6757</p> <p>VETERINARY TECH LVT or equivalent, full-time. Please apply in person: Strong Veterinary Hospital, 29212 5 Mile Rd., Livonia, MI 48154 ~Factory CALL 313-292-9300 \$-15/hr Entry Level Benefits Assembly Line Work - CALL (313)292-9300 J118 E1 \$185 FULL TIME Permanent JOB!</p> <p>"It's All About Results" 1-800-579-SELL (7355)</p> | <p>Help Wanted-Office Clerical 5020 Administrative Assistant For a quality, growing immigration law firm in Farmington Hills, MI. Email resume to: careers@antone.com or mail or fax (no calls please). See firm description and contact information at: www.antone.com</p> <p>To expand your advertising needs... Classified Advertising hometownlife.com 1-800-579-SELL(7355)</p> <p>LEGAL ASSISTANT/ SECRETARY For Bingham Farms family law firm. Must have legal experience and knowledge of Timeslips and accounts receivable. Email resume to: msrover@hauersrover.com</p> | <p>Help Wanted-Dental 5040 DENTAL ASSISTANT Are you an experienced assistant looking for an opportunity to expand skills and advance professionally in a high-quality, leading-edge environment? Birmingham/Southfield area specialty practice seeks a bright, personable, motivated assistant to join its enthusiastic, dedicated clinical team. Call: (248) 357-3100</p> <p>DENTAL INSURANCE BILLER Exp'd need only apply. Dentech exp. preferred. Approx 30 hrs per wk for our Westland Office. Fax resume to: 734-676-3641</p> <p>Dental Surgical Assistant Our multi-office Oral Surgery practice in the Plymouth, MI area is looking for a full time surgical assistant. Dental office exp. preferred. Oral Surgery exp. preferred. Travel between offices is required. Benefits available. Qualified candidates please email your cover letter with salary requirements and resume. Attn: Rachel to: potsinmi@yahoo.com</p> <p>Jobs! Autos! Real Estate! Apartments! Garage Sales! A Top Notch Service Directory! The best local classifieds! 1-800-579-7355</p> | <p>Help Wanted-Medical 5060 Medical Insurance Specialist Part-Time Medical/Podiatric Insurance Specialist position needed for our busy Detroit practice with possibility of becoming full time. Looking for a team player with excellent people skills and a mature, responsible attitude. Applicants must possess organization skills, be detail oriented, knowledge in pre-certification, medical insurance, prior authorization & insurance co-pays. Benefit package offered. Please fax resume: 614-239-6992, or email: GFCDetroit@gmail.com</p> <p>Help Wanted-Food/Beverage 5080 COOK Work line, prep, etc. Exp. preferred, but will train. Dunleavy's Pub 248-478-8866, 248-921-9966</p> <p>A word to the wise, when looking for a great deal check the Observer & Eccentric Classifieds!</p> |
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Winter weekends wild at Detroit Zoo

The Detroit Zoo's annual Wild Winter Weekends will feature children's music, zookeeper talks, crafts and games. All activities are free with regular Zoo admission:

- Wild Winter Inuit Adventure — 11 a.m.-3 p.m. Jan. 8 - 9. Explore the Inuit culture and traditions with arts and crafts and live performances. Watch ice carving demonstrations and learn about the Zoo's arctic animals with enrichment activities and zookeeper talks.
- Wild Winter African Adventure — 11 a.m.-3 p.m. Feb. 12 -13. Celebrate Black History Month with an African drum lesson and listen to stories told by Kenyan naturalist and Detroit Zoo

Education Specialist David Gakure. Enjoy live entertainment, arts and crafts, games and educational experiences.

- Wild Winter Safari Social —11 a.m.-3 p.m., March 12 -13. Escape the winter "blahs" with hot drinks and cool treats. Ice cream and hot cocoa will be available for purchase at a discount. Animal arts and crafts, face painting, animal enrichment activities, zookeeper talks and a winter

safari scavenger hunt add to the fun. The Detroit Zoo is open daily 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Admission is \$12 for adults, 15 to 61, \$10 for senior citizens, 62 and older, and \$8 for children ages 2 to 14. Children under 2 are admitted free. The Detroit Zoo is located at 10 Mile and Woodward, just off I-696, in Royal Oak. For more information, call (248) 541-5717 or visit www.detroit-zoo.org.



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My name is Oscar and I'm looking for a family to call my own. That just might be you. How about it, who's interested in a 1 1/2-year-old handsome guy? If you are, then I'm definitely your man. I'm brindle colored and have a laid back, friendly attitude. Please call Greyheart Greyhound Rescue and Adoption at (866) 438-4739 and make sure to check out our website at www.greyheart.org for another handsome photo of me.

Learn about dementia at senior community

Botsford Commons Senior Community in Farmington Hills will offer a monthly program about dementia beginning Jan. 4.

Developing Meaningful Connections with People Experiencing Dementia will start at 7 p.m. the first Tuesday of the month and will cover such topics as

normal aging memory changes vs. causes of dementia; differences between

Alzheimer's disease and dementia; understanding brain changes; person-centered care; building a rapport with people with dementia; understanding and preventing challenging behaviors; and visiting people with dementia.

Guest speakers will present periodically throughout the series.

After the informational part of the evening, guests may stay for Botsford Commons'

Alzheimer's Support Group.


The sessions are free and will be held in the Chapel on the Botsford Commons campus at 21440 Archwood Circle, located between Middlebelt and Orchard Lake Road, north of Eight Mile, south of M-5 and Grand River Ave. For more information on the sessions, call (248) 426-6902.

Botsford Commons Senior Community is a nonprofit

corporation providing housing and service options for seniors. Located on a 30-acre campus in Farmington Hills, it offers a full continuum of care, including short stay rehabilitation services, privately owned condominiums, and rental options for senior apartments and assisted living suites.

For more information visit www.botsfordcommons.org.

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ACKNOWLEDGING ACHES

A person should not accept that aching is part of aging. It is true that arising in the morning or getting up from a chair is more difficult as one approaches age 70 and beyond. But this difficulty of movement comes from stiffness which is a reflection of the slowing of chemical processes in the muscles and ligaments. Stiffness differs from aching; stiffness lessens with activity and aching continues or worsens with movement.

Aching is another way of saying that a joint(s) hurts. A painful joint is not acceptable particularly if the pain means ongoing discomfort and prevents one from carrying on with the day as intended or planned.

Indications for seeing a doctor include persistence of the ache, worsening of the pain, the onset of swelling of the involved joint or the spread of pain to other joints. One should come to the appointment able to answer the physician's questions on when the pain began, where it moves, what makes the pain better, what makes the pain worse, how much pain comes on at night, and what medications has the person taken to treat the ache.

At times, the doctor will want x-rays or will order laboratory studies before making a diagnosis and recommending long term treatment. In the interim between the initial visit and the return one, he will prescribe pain medication.

It is best if the person's expectations are in line with the tempo of the joint evaluation. Then the individual will not be disappointed when the initial visit does not immediately resolve the problem and the pain.

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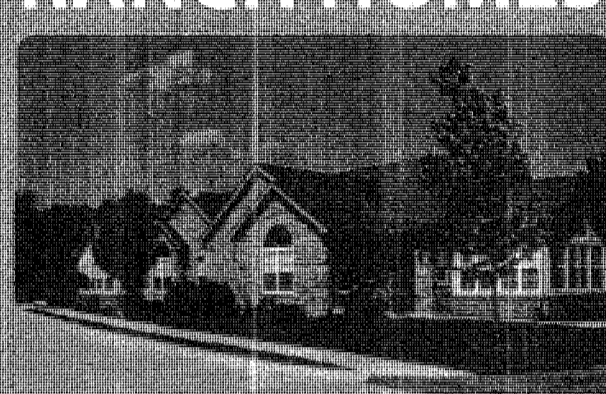
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