

# WAYNE-WESTLAND OBSERVER

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COMMUNITY LIFE, B5

## Millage question coming in Wayne

By LeAnne Rogers  
Staff Writer

In an effort aimed at alleviating pressure on the general fund, Wayne voters are likely to be asked in May to approve city charter amendments and allow the levy of 3 mills for five years to fund police and fire pensions. Council directed the city

attorney to prepare language for the ballot questions following a presentation and recommendation from Councilman Albert Damitio. "We got the audit and I reviewed the history of what the contribution to the pension fund was," said Damitio, whose council assignment is looking at city finances. "We have taken \$1.1-\$1.2 million

from the general fund for pensions in recent years. I didn't want to ask for more than we needed." With a mill currently worth about \$370,000 in Wayne, the 3 mills would generate enough to make the pension payment currently coming from the general fund. After years of decreasing property values, Wayne is

dealing with an estimated \$500,000 shortfall in the current fiscal year and a larger deficit projected for next year. As Damitio noted, the city had been taking money from its risk-management and equipment-rental funds to help pay pension obligations. "We established those funds back in the 1980s to replace equipment and for emergen-

cies," Damitio said. "We built those funds up. They were self-sustaining. We needed a cushion." With those funds depleted, Damitio said the city wouldn't be able to pay for unexpected equipment failure or other emergencies. If there isn't sufficient money in the drug

See MILLAGE, Page A2

## Four men charged in Westland woman's death

By LeAnne Rogers  
Staff Writer

Four Westland men have been arraigned on charges in connection with the beating death of a Westland woman whose body was found on a Dearborn Heights street.

Two of the men are charged with killing Diedra Akins, 46, including her live-in boyfriend Terrence Johnson, 44, who is charged with one count of first-degree murder.

Randy Batts, 30, is also charged with first-degree murder as well as second-degree murder. Both Johnson and Batts are being held without bond.

Two other men, Michael Bashlor, 34, and Joshua Hurston-Herron, 23, are charged with being accessories after the fact. The charges are that Bashlor and Hurston-Herron helped dispose Akins' body. A \$250,000 bond was set for Bashlor and Hurston-Herron.

A preliminary examination has been scheduled for Feb. 5 for all four defendants. Not guilty pleas were entered for all four defendants at their arraignment Thursday afternoon in Westland 18th District Court.

A woman, later identified as Akins, was found dead in the roadway in the area of Powers and Glenis in Dearborn Heights early Jan. 19. Akins was found to have died from blunt force trauma to head. Later that same day, police said Bashlor came to the West-

See CHARGES, Page A2



Members of the student councils at P.D. Graham Elementary School and John Glenn High School represented the district's more than 12,000 students in saying thanks to the school board for all it does.

## W-W STUDENTS THANK SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

By Sue Mason  
Staff Writer

The Wayne-Westland school board received a very special thank you from its students. January is School Board Recognition Month and student council members from P.D. Graham Elementary and John Glenn High School were at the Wayne-Westland board meeting this month to thank members for what they do on behalf of students.

"It's my pleasure to start off with something unique for the board," John Glenn Principal David Ingham said, referring to the board recognition portion of its meeting. "The board makes a point of recognizing students and students' accomplishments. We're turning the tables on you and having the students recognize you. This represents all the students in Wayne-Westland." P.D. Graham Principal Jennifer Curry thanked her student council

advisers, kindergarten teacher Jennifer Morris and third-grade teacher Aileen Balatico and Glenn Assistant Principal Kim Cieszynski, who worked with the students on the presentation. "They truly have done tremendous work with student councils and in doing a wonderful presentation for you," Curry said. The P.D. Graham students presented the board with a *Thanks* poem,

See THANKS, Page A2

## State to conduct assessing audit in Westland

By LeAnne Rogers  
Staff Writer

A multi-year citywide appraisal of Westland homes is already underway — and now, like other Wayne County communities, the state will be auditing the city's assessing records. It's called an Audit of Minimum Assessing Require-

ments, approved by the Michigan State Tax Commission. It replaces the 14-Point Review and the Mini Review, which were previously used to make sure communities complied with state assessing policies. "It's like an outside audit of your finances. The state comes in to review," said Aaron Powers of WCA, which handles city assessing and is

doing the citywide appraisal. "We generate all the (property) tax revenue. It is a couple-step process that will take a year to complete." The State Tax Commission has hired the firm Tax Management Associates to conduct the audit, which will be conducted over the spring and summer. Westland isn't alone in hav-

ing its assessment practices and records reviewed. As part of reviews of the entire state, Powers said this year Wayne County will go through the audit process. "A lot of it is record-keeping. We don't anticipate any problem at all," Powers said. "The state wants to make sure

See AUDIT, Page A2



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# Men sentenced in Westland teens' murders

By LeAnne Rogers  
Staff Writer

The sentences of two Detroit men convicted of murdering Westland teens Jacob Kudla and Jourdan Bobbish were no surprise. Both Fredrick Young, 26, and Felando Hunter, 24, had both been convicted of multiple felonies, including two counts apiece of first-degree murder, which carries a mandatory sentence of life in prison without parole. On Wednesday, Wayne County Circuit Court Judge Dalton Roberson also sentenced Young and Hunter to 50-75 years on charges of torture; the same sentence for armed robbery; and two years for the felony firearm charge that has to be served before the other sentences. Young also received a five-year concurrent sentence for being a

felon in possession of a firearm. Testimony during the trial was that Kudla and Bobbish went to a home on Detroit's east side in July 2012 to buy drugs. Instead, they were robbed, stripped of their clothing and driven around in a car before being shot execution-style in a vacant field. Bobbish was a Livonia Churchill High School senior, and Kudla was a Churchill grad who was attending Schoolcraft College. Throughout the trial, the courtroom was filled with family and friends of the teens. The sentencing is when family members get to make a statement on the impact of the murders of Kudla, 18, and Bobbish, 17. "I stand here today broken inside. I have sorrow in my heart, soul and every fiber of my being today, and I will carry that with me for the rest of



Hunter

Young

my life here on Earth," said Jourdan's mother Carrie Bobbish. Jacob Kudla was an only child.

"God's got this," said Virgie Kudla, Jacob's mother. "Not only did they take my son's life, they took my life, my future." During the trial, Hunter and Young were impassive. Hunter is already serving life sentences in two other murders, including the death of Vietnam War veteran John Villneff. According to Detroit Police, Hunter and Young were part of a crime spree that began with the killings of Kudla and

Bobbish. Hunter made no comment when asked if he had anything to say before he was sentenced. But Young said, "I'd like to say sorry to the family of Aiyana Jones, Michael Brown, Eric Garner and I want to apologize for them for not being able to get justice for their loved ones who were murdered in cold blood and in respect for the peaceful protest I want to say hands up, don't shoot, black lives matter." Young was using the slogan used by protesters in Ferguson, Mo., after Michael Brown, a black teenager, was fatally shot by a white police officer.

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Twitter: @LRogersObserver



SUBMITTED

The new mini recital series is designed to bring Livonia Symphony musicians and the audience closer together in a more intimate setting than the one pictured.

## 'Colored women's club' founder is topic of library program

Rosa Gragg, a member of the Michigan Hall of Fame who helped People of Color advance in education and commerce, will be the topic of a free Friends of the Library program at 2 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 15, at the Livonia Civic Center Library, 32777 Five Mile, Livonia.



Calloway

Speaker Angela Calloway will use a slide presentation to relate how Gragg in 1941 undertook the purchase of the William Lennane home on the corner of Brush and Ferry Street and how the house became well known as the "colored women's club" but today is home to the Detroit Association Women's Clubs Inc. Gragg's accomplishments eventually led her to be elected into Michigan Hall of Fame.

Calloway is a native to Detroit. She received her B.A. from Spelman College and later earned a Juris Doctorate from the Detroit College of Law. Angela joined the Detroit Association of Women's Clubs Inc. in 2004 and served in various leadership roles. Presently she works for the Detroit Public Schools in the Office of Human Resources - Division of Employee Relations. For more information, call 734-466-2495.

## Symphony holds series of 3 mini recitals

The Livonia Symphony Orchestra will hold a series of three Sunday afternoon mini-recitals beginning Sunday, Feb 1. Ania Sorokhtei Piano Trio will perform at 3 p.m. at St. Paul's Presbyterian Church, 27475 Five Mile Road, Livonia. Other members of the trio are Lillian Fenstermacher, violin, and Stephanie Urban, viola. The group will play the Mozart Piano Trio in E-Flat Major. Sorokhtei has performed many times with the Livonia Symphony and will perform again on the symphony finale on May 2 at Clarenceville High School. Born in Lviv, Ukraine, she was selected to attend the Lviv Special Music School for Gifted Children at age 7. She performed throughout Europe until arriv-

ing in the United States in 1977, where she now teaches and performs locally. Fenstermacher graduated with both bachelor's and master's degrees from Hartt College of Music, Hartford, Conn. She joined the Detroit Symphony Orchestra in 1965 and has recently retired, dedicating her time to teaching, coaching and playing with the Chamber Arts Piano Quartet. Urban, a student of DSO violists LeRoy Fenstermacher and Caroline Coade, received her bachelor's degree in viola performance and music education from the University of Michigan. Urban, current principal violist of the Livonia Symphony Orchestra, is an avid chamber musician and regularly performs in the Detroit-metro area.

Tickets are \$10 and may be purchased online at www.livoniasymphony.org or at the door. The new series is designed to bring the musicians and the audience closer together in a more intimate setting, providing a great opportunity to introduce young people to the various instruments of the orchestra and allow them to meet the soloists. A reception will follow the performance. The Sunday afternoon series continues at 3 p.m. March 22 with the LSO String Ensemble at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, 16360 Hubbard Road, Livonia and concludes at 3 p.m. April 26 with the LSO Woodwind Ensemble at St. Paul's Presbyterian Church, 27475 Five Mile Road, Livonia.

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## Four W-W students win poster awards

Four students from the graphic design class at the William D. Ford Career Technical Center won awards in the 27th annual North American International Auto Show 2015 High School Poster Contest.

Sixteen awards were given out in this year's competition, which attracted 781 entries from 58 Michigan schools.

Veronica Peterson of John Glenn High School won Designers Best of Show, while Jasmine Traxler and Kyle Wilkin of John Glenn High School and Jada Baskin placed first, second and third, respectively, in the 12th-grade competition.

Peterson and Traxler received \$500



Jada Baskin (from left), Kyle Wilkin, Veronica Peterson and Jasmine Traxler show off their designs that won awards in the 2015 NAIAS Poster Contest

prizes, while Wilkin received \$250 and Baskin \$100. The four are students in Steve Paulsen's graphics design class at the Career Technical Center.

The posters, judged by panelists from the local art community, are

posted on the NAIAS website at [naia.com](http://naia.com). The winning posters also have been on display at the 2015 NAIAS at Cobo Center in Detroit and reproduced in the official auto show program.

## STUDENT ACHIEVERS

**Jessica Gnacke** and **Catherine Ionescu** of Westland have been named to the Dean's List for the fall 2014 semester at Norwich University in Northfield, Vt. Norwich University was founded in 1819 by Captain Alden Partridge of the U.S. Army and is the oldest private military college in the United States. Norwich is one of the nation's six senior military colleges and the birthplace of the Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC).

**Annette Perkowski** of Westland has been named to the Dean's List for the 2014 fall semester at Michigan Technological University in Houghton. To be included, students must achieve grade-point averages of 3.5 or higher.

A graduate of Livonia Churchill High School, Perkowski is pursuing a bachelor of arts degree in scientific and technological communications.

Students from Garden City, Wayne and Westland have been named to the Dean's Honor Roll for the fall 2014 term at Lawrence Technological University. To be named to the honor roll a student must maintain at least a 3.5 grade point average for the term.

On the Dean's list are **Joshua Piehl** and **Zachary Wardell**, both of Garden City and both majoring in mechanical engineering; **Bailey Terrell** of Garden City, who is majoring in media communication; **Herve Djoumbi** of Wayne, who is majoring in mechanical and manufacturing engineering; **Matthew Castaldini** of Wayne, who is majoring in computer science; **Mark Pisaneschi** of Westland, who is majoring in audio engineering technology; **Jacob Ulrich** of Westland, who is majoring in computer science; **Tyler Trombley** of Westland, who is majoring in English and communication arts, and **Zaid Zwayyed** of Westland, who is majoring in architecture.

Named to the Davenport University Dean's List for the fall 2014 semester were **Rebecca Marian**, **Iesha McFalling** and **Eriona Shega** of Westland and **Joshua Poirier** of Garden City. To achieve the Dean's List, a student must maintain a minimum 3.5 grade-point average while enrolled in at least nine credits of regular coursework.

**Derek Carr** and **Timothy Keener** of Westland were named to Davenport University President's List for the fall 2014 semester. The President's List recognizes top students who excel with outstanding academic performance. To achieve recognition, a student must maintain a minimum 3.8 grade-point average while enrolled in at least nine credits of regular coursework.

## Wayne-Westland gets tips from OK2SAY

A comprehensive school safety initiative is showing modest success in the Wayne-Westland Community Schools.

Launched last September by state Attorney General Bill Schuette, OK2SAY has already provided Wayne-Westland Schools with confidential information that has helped the district respond to critical student needs, according to John Albrecht assistant superintendent for instruction.

"Providing students and families with the resources to report potentially harmful behaviors or situations to school officials across Michigan was much needed," Albrecht said. "By including Wayne-Westland Community Schools in the OK2SAY network, we hope to continue to better serve our students, their families and our communities."

It's a sentiment shared by Schuette and Michigan State Police Director Col. Kriste Kibbey Etue, who recently announced a significant first semester success for OK2SAY which generated 410 tips, including 163 tips on bullying

and cyber-bullying, 54 threats of suicide and 13 tips on child abuse.

"OK2SAY is working to keep our kids safer in Michigan communities and schools," Schuette said. "If even one child's life is saved by OK2SAY, this program will have been a success. OK2SAY has passed its first semester with flying colors."

"OK2SAY has been successful in giving students the opportunity to break the code of silence by submitting tips by telephone, text, web, email and multimedia technologies," Etue said. "We're pleased to be part of a program in which more than 400 tips have helped to respond to threats and prevent tragedies in our schools."

In Wayne-Westland, school officials received information through OK2SAY after two John Glenn High School students were hospitalized after using the synthetic drug Cloud 9.

OK2SAY operates as an early warning system in schools to thwart tragedies before they occur. Created as a result of the Student Safety Act of 2013, OK2SAY's focus is on early in-

tervention and prevention.

OK2SAY was modeled after Safe2Tell, a Colorado program started after the 1999 Columbine tragedy. It enables students to confidentially report potential harm or criminal activities aimed at students, teachers, staff or other school employees. It became operational in Michigan schools Sept. 2 and by Dec. 19, 410 verified tips had been received by MSP operators through phone calls, text messages, web and mobile app submissions.

The key features of OK2SAY include confidential reporting and 24/7 operations. Students, teachers, parents, school workers, friends and neighbors can all submit tips, if they are aware of a threat in school by calling 8-555-OK2SAY, 855-565-2729, texting 652729 (OK2SAY), emailing [ok2say@mi.gov](mailto:ok2say@mi.gov) or online at [www.mi.gov/ok2say](http://www.mi.gov/ok2say).

An OK2SAY mobile app also is available for download in app stores for iPhone and Android.

- By Sue Mason

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## Financial decisions after death of spouse

**Q:** Dear Rick: My husband passed away in 2014. He had an IRA variable annuity with death benefits. He had been withdrawing, so there's only \$20,000 left. I am 58½ and work part time. My house (5.2 percent interest), will be paid off in approximately three years. Also, I have a variable home equity home loan with a balance of \$80,000. Should I put the annuity



Rick Bloom

MONEY MATTERS

in my name, roll it over and, if so, where? Should I take the dollars and pay off my house? Should I pay

down the balance of the variable home equity loan before the repayment period starts in July? Should I put a fixed locked rate on this equity loan with the repayment period or put the \$20,000 in a Roth IRA?

**A:** I'm very sorry to hear about your husband. In reviewing your situation, it makes sense to lock in the rate of the home equity loan. Sometime in the not-too-distant future we will begin to have higher interest rates and your home equity interest rate will rise. You may want to consider refinancing your mortgage. The interest rate that you would have on a refinance would be lower than you currently are paying on your primary mortgage. Take into consideration the cost and fees regarding the refinance. With regard to the IRA, variable annuities don't belong in IRAs. There are hefty fees associated with variable annuities and you have limited investment options. If income is currently not a problem, then it may make sense to invest the money for long-term growth. You are only 58½ and you need growth. However, if income is going to be a problem, I recommend transferring the money into an IRA and then withdrawing that money over time to pay down your mortgage. If you do not need the money and you can invest for growth, then consider converting the money into a Roth IRA.

Rick Bloom is a fee-only financial adviser. Email questions to rick@bloomassetmanagement.com.

## Cox appointed to four subcommittees

State Rep. Laura Cox, sworn in earlier this month to her first term in the Michigan House, was appointed by House Speaker Kevin Cotter to the House Appropriations Committee, where she will serve as chair of the Subcommittee on General Government for the 98th Legislature. Cox also has been named to three other

subcommittees. She will serve as vice chair of the Subcommittee on Judiciary as well as on the subcommittees on Higher Education and Department of Community Health. As chair of the Subcommittee on General Government, she will lead discussions for allocating the \$4.7 billion annual budget to make the best use of



Cox

looking forward to working with my colleagues to find the best ways to distribute Michigan's budget between the state's various

taxpayer dollars for efficiently operating state government.

"I am looking forward to working with my colleagues to find the best ways to distribute Michigan's budget between the state's various

agencies and departments," said Cox, R-Livonia. "I am honored to have been named chair of the Subcommittee on General Government. My previous leadership of the Ways and Means Committee in Wayne County has provided me the experience to help me work with my colleagues on crafting a budget for Michi-

gan's taxpayers." The House Appropriations Committee helps distribute the state's budget for each state department and agency. There are 18 House appropriations subcommittees that assist in delegating the annual budget based on subject area.

## Meet the newest members of the Botsford medical family

### Botsford Center for Internal Medicine



Judith M. Edge, D.O. is a graduate of Michigan State University College of Osteopathic Medicine and board certified in internal medicine. She specializes in the care of geriatric patients with multiple health concerns.



Zachary Lemon, D.O., FACOI is a graduate of Michigan State University College of Osteopathic Medicine (MSUCOM) and board certified in internal medicine. He specializes in preventative medicine and is an adjunct clinical instructor at MSUCOM.



Kerry Stone, PA-C is a graduate of the University of Detroit Mercy with a Master of Science Degree in Physician Assisting. She specializes in primary care medicine.

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# Stan Lee lithograph highlights St. Damian auction

By Sue Mason  
Staff Writer

An ice skate signed by Olympic gold medalists Meryl Davis and Charlie White and a lithograph signed by comic book legend Stan Lee are just two of the items that will go to the highest bidder at the St. Damian School's 17th annual auction Saturday, Feb. 7.

It takes an almost year-round effort to stage the auction, which is the major fundraiser for the Westland school. This year's theme is "Super Heroes and Villains" and the event will feature a full-course dinner, cash bar, live and silent auctions and jelly jar and 50/50 raffles.

Kelly DeLaRosa and Michelle Rudzinski are heading up this year auction. Working out of several rooms at the school, they spend their



Auction co-chair Michelle Rudzinski shows off a T-shirt that will be part of Livonia Churchill Chargers basket in the annual St. Damian auction.

Tuesdays putting together the auction that includes the skate and lithograph as well as a one-week time share in Kissimmee, Fla., plenty of Detroit Red Wings items, tickets to next fall's Michigan-Oregon State game at the Big

House and a fishing trip. "As parents, we're required to work 25 hours; we never have a problem with that," Rudzinski said. "Tuesdays are auction Tuesdays, and the next several weeks we'll be here in the evenings. The week



Co-Chair Kelly DeLaRosa shows off the Ladywood High School auction basket.

of the auction, we'll be here all week."

A group of 30 parents put on the auction, which originally started in a rented hall. When the new church was built, the auction was moved to the school. The multipurpose room and hallways are used to stage the event.

"We use the whole school," Rudzinski said. "We put the silent auction in the hallways so families can see the school."

### Biggest fundraiser

The auction is the biggest fundraiser of the year for the school. Last year it grossed \$31,000, up from previous years, according to Rudzinski, adding that "we're rebuilding." Although only 300 tickets are available, the auction has never sold out. The two women would like to hit 200 this year.

The event is for those 21 years and older. Tickets for the evening are \$30 per person and include a full buffet-style dinner with cash bar and a costume contest with a \$100 prize. Doors open at 6 p.m. The silent auction will be open until the live auction starts at 8:45 p.m. and re-open after 10 p.m.



An ice skate, autographed by Olympic gold medalists Charlie White and Meryl Davis, will be up for the highest bid in the live auction.

"The idea is if you didn't get anything in the live auction, you can find something to spend your money on in the silent auction," DeLaRosa said.

Organizers start soliciting donations in September. They have a list of more than 800 businesses that they approach, but they also get donations from teachers, parents and Pastor Fr. Patrick Casey who has donated a pizza party for a class. Some items like the front pew of the church for First Communion or the Christmas concert or having a hall-way named after your child have set off bidding wars. Even lunch with fourth-grade teacher Kim Rourke has gone for as high as \$100.

### Guaranteed authentic

The Stan Lee autograph was donated by a family that had gone to Comic Con and met him. It fits in nicely with the auction's theme and comes with a certificate of authenticity. There also is limited-edition, signed-and-numbered duck carvings by Wildflower Decoys, gift certificates to restaurants like the Mongolian BBQ,



Rudzinski expects the bidding to be high on this lithograph signed by comic book legend Sam Lee.

Dave and Busters and Buffalo Wild Wings and passes to The Henry Ford and the Pro Football Hall of Fame in Ohio.

Missing from the auction, however, will be furniture made by Thomas Eldred who passed away last year. The husband of eighth-grade teacher Karen Eldred, he had made items like an outdoor bar with a sink and mini-fridge, garden bench, whiskey barrel patio table, potting station and kitchen island on casters for the auction.

A strong supporter of the school and a firm believer in the mission of St. Damian's, this auction is dedicated to him.

St. Damian is clustered with St. Theodore and Divine Savior parishes, also in Westland. Tickets are available in their respective parish offices and at the school at 29891 Joy, between Merriman and Middlebelt. The deadline for ordering is Feb. 4.

For more information, call the school at 734-4271680. To see more of the items up for auction, visit [stdamianauction2015.weebly.com](http://stdamianauction2015.weebly.com).

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# Gov. signs Colbeck free-market health care bill

State Sen. Pat Colbeck, R-Canton, believes the path to providing Michigan citizens with access to higher quality, lower cost health care has been cleared following Gov. Rick Snyder's signature into law of Colbeck's SB 1033 (Public Act 522 of 2014).

According to Colbeck, this legislation ensures that direct primary care services are not treated as insurance products by regulators. The direct primary care model enabled by Colbeck's legislation has been referred to by David Chase of Forbes.com as "Two parts Marcus Welby and one part Steve Jobs."

The new law assures physicians who adopt a direct primary care service business model that the administrative burden associated with insurance regulations will

not interfere with their treatment of patients. Physicians who offer direct primary care services provide specified services for a monthly subscription fee that usually vary between \$50 and \$125 per month.

Typically, Colbeck said, these services include routine medical care such as office visits and basic tests and procedures. Consumers would also purchase a high-deductible health plan at reduced rates to cover those services not provided through their DPCS plan.

DPCS redirects the focus of health care away from government mandates, regulations and fee schedules back to the simplicity of the doctor-patient relationship. The enactment of this law comes on the heels of the release of a



Sen. Pat Colbeck believes the path to providing Michigan citizens with access to higher-quality, lower-cost health care has been cleared.

study of the impacts of DPCS by Seattle-based Qliance Medical Management, LLC.

In this study, Qliance reports that the adoption of DPCS as a component of employer-sponsored health plans resulted in a

20-percent reduction in health care costs, increased patient satisfaction and better care.

"The citizens of Michigan will have greater access to high quality, low cost health care as individual physicians,

finally free of the insurance and hospital system bureaucratic monopolies can innovate and deliver high-value healthcare," said Tom Valenti, founder and partner of Forthright Health.

"Kudos to Sen. Pat Colbeck and Gov. Rick Snyder for making SB 1033 law. This law enables direct primary care here in our state. This innovative health care delivery model will help solve Michiganders' health care costs and access challenges," said Matt McCord, M.D., with Docs4PatientCare.

The legislation is the centerpiece of Colbeck's "Exploit then Repeal" strategy regarding the Affordable Care Act.

This strategy seeks to identify sections of existing law that can be exploited to promote free market health care solu-

tions such as his patient-centered care solution. The adoption of this solution would "effectively nullify the need for the 159 new federal organizations erected between a doctor and patient under Obamacare," Colbeck said.

"As we pursue health care reforms, we need to protect the doctor-patient relationship," Colbeck said. "I do not want our citizens to be subject to the same anxieties around coverage or continuity of care that accompanied the rollout of Obamacare as we pursue its repeal. Patients enrolled in DPCS agreements at the time of the repeal of Obamacare will have no such anxieties."

For more information, go to the "Obamacare Alternative" section at [www.MorninginMichigan.com](http://www.MorninginMichigan.com).

# Madonna earns national recognition for community service

Once again, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching has selected Madonna University to receive the 2015 Community Engagement Classification.

Madonna is among just 240 U.S. colleges and universities to be given the designation and one of 157 schools, only two in Michigan, to be granted renewal of the honor.

"We are honored and proud of this recognition. Engagement through service is central to Madonna's mission and identity," said Sister Rose Marie Kuja-wa, Madonna University president. "Our timeless Franciscan values - respect for all people, reverence for creation, peace and justice and education for truth and service - animate all that we do to prepare graduates to contribute positively in an increasingly interconnected global society."

In order to be selected, colleges and universities with an institutional focus on community engagement were invited to apply for the classification, first offered in 2006. Participating institutions voluntarily submitted materials describing the nature and extent of their engagement with the community, be it local or beyond.

"Receiving this classification for a second time is an important milestone for Madonna University," said Ernest Nolan, provost and vice president for academic administration. "Our deep commitment to community engagement and public service continues despite the devastating effects of economic recession."

Madonna University's selection recognizes the institution's deep commitment to engagement both inside and outside the classroom, demonstrated through numerous programs and projects, including:

» Academic Service-Learning integrates community service with course content and provides opportunities for students to apply their talents, knowledge and skills to address community needs and pressing social issues, in partnership with local and global nonprofit organizations.

» Days of Service provide ways for students to engage in community service through

out their education at Madonna University.

» International Service-Learning involves students in applying their academic knowledge and skills to help address global issues in countries such as China, Costa Rica and France.

» 9th Grade Counts! Summer Program is a partnership with The Phoenix Academy and the Springwells Village Local College Access Network to help equip eighth-grade students from southwest Detroit with the skills and resources to succeed in

high school. Students participate in academic enrichment activities and benefit from college readiness programs.

» College Positive Volunteerism helps youth and families plan for college and Know-How2Go! CPV students have diverse academic interests, including broadcast and cinema arts, criminal justice, dietetics, education, nursing and social work.

» Ford MU Community Corps is a unique service-leadership experience supported by the Ford Motor Co. Fund.

Small teams of students with similar academic interests work together to address community needs. Teams develop and expand service projects in collaboration with a faculty mentor and nonprofit organization professionals.

» Alternative Spring Break programs expose students to complex social and cultural issues through community visits, experiential learning, direct service, group discussion, readings and reflection.

Each year, Madonna students, faculty and

staff volunteer their time and talents to benefit the community. During the 2013-14 academic year, 1,878 students contributed 47,463 hours to the community. These numbers represent a financial contribution value of more than \$1 million per year.

Madonna University also was named to the 2014 President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll. Administered by the Corporation for National and Community Service, in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Edu-

cation and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, as well as the American Council on Education, Campus Compact and the Interfaith Youth Core, the President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll recognizes institutions of higher education that support exemplary community service programs and raise the visibility of effective practices in campus community partnerships. Madonna University has received this distinctive recognition since 2006.

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# LOCAL RESIDENTS ENJOY EVENING OF GLAMOUR, FUN AT CHARITY PREVIEW



PHOTOS BY BILL BRESLER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER  
Plymouth Township Treasurer Ron Edwards (right) working security at the ribbon cutting opening event, with Leslei and Anthony Markwort of Holt.



Former state Sen. Bruce Patterson of Canton at the Ford truck display.



Roz Lullove Cooperman of Bloomfield Township, Beth Stewart, Michigan Philharmonic director and Plymouth Township resident (center), and Connie Hogan of Bloomfield Hills, wait for the Charity Preview to begin.



Ron Munson of Southfield, Tina Lyle of Farmington Hills, and Hollis Sheffield of Detroit stop for a photo.



Delta Airlines pilot John Vena of Canton enjoying the party.



Martin and Terry Olejnik of Canton.



Karen and Tim Hanchett of Canton.



Aaron and Jacki Karnws of Livonia stroll through the Audi exhibit.

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**Wish you were here**



The Alessandrini family of Livonia traveled to the big island of Hawaii in December. Pictured are: Dan Alessandrini, Jane Alessandrini and David Alessandrini, all of Livonia. Also on the trip was James Alessandrini, who took the photo.

**Wish you were here**



Nancy, Finn, Patrick and Hannah Rhatigan — all from Livonia — visited Langkawi, Malaysia, during the Christmas holiday to see Patrick's brother get married at The Andaman. This picture was taken at Langkawi's Skycab, one of the world's steepest and longest free-span cable cars. The Rhatigans also spent time in Kuala Lumpur and Sydney, Australia.

**Wish you were here**



Peg Gall and Dick Saunders in Antarctica in December 2014 with the Livonia Observer celebrating his 81st birthday, the 31st anniversary of his quadruple bypass surgery and their 33rd wedding anniversary in January 2015.



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# Westland's Nicholson keeps focus on classic cars

By Sue Mason  
Staff Writer

While metro Detroiters have been flocking to the North American International Auto Show to see the latest and greatest in cars and trucks, Don Nicholson has had his eye on some much older models.

A car cruise promoter, the Westland resident is using the winter months to organize his lineup of events that will start with a new Cruisin' Michigan the Road Rally and end with the highly popular Cruisin' Hines Drive.

"This is the time for the automakers to shine, but this is when I get

sponsors on board," Nicholson said.

Nicholson plans to kick off his cruise season with the road rally May 2, which will feature a cash prizes for first place — no speeding allowed. The rally will be open to only classic cars 25 years and older. Participants will have access to multiple auto history sites and a large party and car show at the end.

"Participants will have to stop at business check sites and answer a question in order to win the \$1,000 prize," Nicholson said. "It's about a 100-mile route. Model T's and IROC Camaros will be able to compete



Don Nicholson and his son Edward enjoy the view from the iconic 1960s Batmobile.

against each other. There will be some fun things going on like games to earn points."

#### On the calendar

His calendar also includes the Hot Rod Palooza at Milan Dragway on May 31, featuring cars, vendors, drag racing and Miss Hot Rod Palooza contest; a charity event at MaryCrest Manor in Livonia on June 15; and the third annual All American Wayne Road Cruise in Westland,

which will have a movie and concert July 10 at the Wayne-Ford Civic League as a prelude to the July 11 cruise.

"We've been working with the Civic League for the All American Cruise. We'll have vendors there, and Benny from Benny and the Jets will be the emcee. I've already booked Eddie Cooper and the Exit Band," he said.

Nicholson is working on get the automakers on board with the cruises. The Detroit Grand Prix

is back for another year "and is on board for all of the events," Nicholson said.

Capping off the season is the Hines Drive cruise that attracted more than 60,000 people last year. Like the All American cruise, the Hines Drive cruise is being expanded to a two-day event with the addition of a kick-off party and Family fest at CrossPointe Community Church in Wayne on Aug. 22.

"The church came to me. They moved the date of their Family Fest to the cruise date to bring in more people," Nicholson said. "Pastor Phil (DiLernia) is a car guy."

It took four years to get a handle on the crowds that turn out for the Hines cruise. Last year, Nicholson moved the entrance to Ford Road, eliminating the traffic jams that occurred at the Hines Park entrances off Ann Arbor Trail and Merri-

#### Autopalooza

Helping to drive interest in the cruises is Pure Michigan's Autopalooza, which showcases automotive events around the state. That "has opened doors for us, especially the tourism," Nicholson said.

"We had 12 states, three Canadian provinces represented at the Hines cruise," he said. "We even had a group come in from Australia. We now have a display set up at the I-75 welcome center. We've been able to make agreements with hotels and partnered with those out of state to put our information in their rooms. It helps draw in people."

Nicholson has set up websites and Facebook pages for Cruisin' Michigan the Road Rally and Cruisin' Hines. For more information on how to become a sponsor, call him at 734-658-5296.

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## Mental Health Authority offers training

As part of Mental Health First Aid Awareness, the Detroit Wayne Mental Health Authority is again offering free training courses designed to teach people methods of assisting someone who may be in the early stages of developing a mental health challenge or in a mental health crisis.

A course in Spanish will be available for the first time.

DWMHA received a grant through the Michigan Department of Community Mental Health to support and educate about the importance of Mental Health First Aid, which ties closely with Gov. Rick Snyder's call for attention to the improvement of the mental

health system in Michigan.

"Mental Health First Aid training is an evidence-based program that will do just that — greatly increase the understanding of mental health issues, and in turn, improve the recognition and appropriate treatment of mental health issues for our residents," said Dr. Carmen McIntyre, DWMHA Chief Medical Officer. "Last year nearly 3,500 people in Wayne County alone attended the Mental Health First Aid training courses; far exceeding our local goal set by MDCH."

"This is an effort to reduce stigma, improve mental health literacy, and greatly empower the

individuals serviced throughout our region," said Tom Watkins, president and CEO of DWMHA.

Mental Health First Aid will give people the knowledge of the potential risk factors and warning signs for a range of mental health problems, including depression, anxiety/trauma, psychosis and psychotic disorders, substance use disorders and self-injury.

It will also give them the skills, resources and knowledge to assess a situation, select and implement appropriate interventions, and help the individual in crisis connect with professional care.

Suggested partici-

pants include family members, advocates, students, juvenile justice workforce, court professionals, law enforcement professionals, school teachers and emergency personnel.

The training courses are:

» Youth Mental Health First Aid — 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 27 and Feb. 3rd, in Room 123 at the New Hope Baptist Church, 33640 Michigan Ave., Wayne.

» Adult Mental Health First Aid — 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 21, at EMU-Livonia, Suite 400, 38777 W. Six Mile, Livonia.

Visit [www.dwmha.com](http://www.dwmha.com) for more dates and details.



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# Players stage 'Miracle on South Division Street'

Opening night to benefit Manna Community Meal soup kitchen

A deathbed confession begins to blow the lid off the Nowak family "miracle," unraveling a secret kept for decades. This revelation is at the heart of *Miracle on South Division Street*, a hilarious comedy (with a terrific twist) by Tom Dudzick opening Friday, Feb. 13, and running through Feb. 28 at the Farmington Players Barn in Farmington Hills.

Imagine the guy next door erecting a life-size shrine in his front yard and the rest of the community flocking to it as a symbol of hope and faith. It's easy to envision this occurring in a Buffalo neighborhood in 1942 at a time when Americans needed so desperately to "believe." The family legend began when Grandpa Nowak witnessed a "holy vision" right in his barbershop, which inspired a commemorative shrine on his property that served as a source of family and pride in the Polish neighborhood for years.

*Miracle on South Division Street*, provides a breezy look at ordinary people with extraordinary dreams — people who consider themselves to be "special" and "chosen."

"It's sort of a Polish version of *Seinfeld-Moonstruck-My Big Fat Greek Wedding!*" said director Suzanne Rogers of West

Bloomfield

Rogers sees it partly as a play about "faith and family." "What is a miracle?" she asks. "Do they exist? In what or whom do you put your faith? How do you maintain faith in a world of chaos?"

The "Shrine" that makes the Nowaks the talk of the town gives them their identity. But when they gather to discuss daughter Ruth Nowak's plans to write a play about that family "miracle," a deathbed confession shakes their faith to its core.

Margaret Gilkes of Farmington Hills plays the kind-hearted family matriarch Clara who runs a neighborhood soup kitchen and offers "healing soup" prepared on "holy ground." Clara's daughter, Ruth, is the free-spirited budding playwright destined to make her mark on the world. She is played by Margaret's real-life daughter Katie Gilkes-Bigwood of Farmington Hills.

Ruth's sister Beverly (Kristi Schwartz of Canton) is the opposite of her sibling, a skeptical traditionalist who works as a ketchup bottler. Michael Soave of Ferndale plays the "baby of the family" Jimmy, (a garbage collector) who is thinking about marrying outside the faith. His biggest struggle is keeping the peace among all the women in his life.

Rogers says the comedy is also "about divisions: divisions in families (even loving families), divisions between



The cast includes (from left) Katie Gilkes-Bigwood (Farmington Hills), Kristi Schwartz (Canton), Michael Soave (Detroit) and Margaret Gilkes (Farmington Hills).

young and old, Catholics and Jews, conservatives and liberals, tolerant and intolerant," Rogers said.

Such divisions certainly develop in both heartfelt and hilarious ways while the Nowaks reveal layers of secrets and lies while embracing life's delightful surprises. As the family shares stories amidst a shrine, some soup and a series of secrets, this comedy contains just the right mix of ingredients to leave us all laughing about our own families back at home.

*Miracle On South Division Street* is sponsored by Varsity Automotive Group. Tickets are on sale at the box office, 248-553-2955, and at farmingtonplayers.org.

The opening night performance of *Miracle on South Division Street* benefits Manna Community Meal, a soup kitchen in Detroit where Rogers volunteers to help others in need. In a unique twist on the Players' popular 50/50 drawing, money collected during the Barn's 50/50 raffle will be matched by Varsity Automotive Group. The 50/50

winner will receive half the pot, but matching funds will be donated to the soup kitchen.

Additionally, the Barn will provide a post-show dessert bar for the patron afterglow party with treats from On The Rise Bakery, which is sponsored by the Capuchin Soup Kitchen. This venture is run by members

of the Reaching Our Potential Everyday program. These are men who have recently been released from prison or have completed a substance abuse treatment program and are trying to change their lives.

Cast members include: Clara (Margaret Gilkes, Farmington Hills); Ruth (Katie Big-

wood, Farmington Hills); Beverly (Kristi Schwartz, Canton); and Jimmy (Michael Soave, Ferndale). In addition to Rogers, the production team includes assistant director Julia Spina-Kilar of West Bloomfield, producer Phil Hadley of West Bloomfield and stage manager Jill Jones of Southfield.

## INVITATION TO BID ASBESTOS ABATEMENT

The Livonia Public Schools Board of Education, Livonia, Michigan is accepting Asbestos Abatement Contractor firm bids for all labor, materials, equipment and all other services necessary to complete asbestos abatement at the following schools:

- Hayes Elementary School
- Kennedy Elementary School
- Roosevelt Elementary School

Bid forms and specifications can be obtained at the Livonia Public Schools Website, [www.livoniapublicschools.org](http://www.livoniapublicschools.org) under the section title DISTRICT, Purchasing Bids, or at Buy4Michigan Website [www.buy4michigan.com](http://www.buy4michigan.com). A MANDATORY pre-bid walk through is scheduled, for Thursday, February 5th, 2015 at 4:30 p.m. at Kennedy Elementary School, 14201 Hubbard St., Livonia, Michigan 48154. Meet in the Media Center.

**Sealed bids marked Hayes/Kennedy/Roosevelt Asbestos Abatement will be received until 12:00 p.m. on the 18th day of February, 2015 at the Livonia Public Schools Board of Education, 15125 Farmington Road, Livonia, Michigan 48154.** Mailed bids should be sent to the attention of Nick Armelagos, Administrator of Finance. Livonia Public Schools is not responsible for the delivery of the bid. Livonia Public Schools is not liable for any delivery or postal delays.

The Bid Opening will take place at 2:00 p.m. on the 18th day of February, 2015 at the Livonia Public Schools Board of Education office at which time all bids will be publicly opened and read. No bids will be accepted after the date and time specified, and will not be opened. Oral, telephone, fax or electronic mail bids are invalid and will not receive consideration.

All bids must include a Treasury listed bid bond or certified check made payable to Livonia Public Schools for not less than five percent (5%) of the contract for each bid over \$22,767.00 and must be submitted with the bid forms finished with specification.

All bids must be submitted on the forms provided in the bid packet and all sheets must be returned for the bid. All bid proposals shall remain firm for a period of ninety (90) days.

All bids must be accompanied by a sworn and notarized statement disclosing any familial relationship that exists between the owner of any employee of the bidder and any member of the Board of Superintendent or the Livonia Public Schools. All bidders must disclose any relationship with an Iranian company in compliance with Act No. 517. The bid will be accompanied by a sworn and notarized statement disclosing any relationship with an Iranian company that exists between the Owner and any Employee of the bidder. No bid shall be accepted that does not include this sworn and notarized disclosure statement. All bids must be accompanied by the Equal Opportunity Statement included in the bid packet. No bid shall be accepted that does not include this statement.

The Board of Education reserves the right to accept or reject any or all bids, either in whole or in part; to award to other than the low bidder; to waive any irregularities and/or informalities; and in general to make awards in any manner deemed to be in the best interests of the district, with rationale to support such a decision. Livonia Public Schools local preference resolution will be followed for all proposals.

All questions regarding this bid may be directed to Nova Environmental at 734-930-0995 or to James McMuldroch, District Engineer, 734-744-2500 ext, 42158.

Nick Armelagos  
Administrator of Finance  
Livonia Public Schools  
15125 Farmington Rd  
Livonia MI 48154

Publish: January 25 and January 29, 2015

## INVITATION TO BID ASBESTOS ABATEMENT

The Livonia Public Schools Board of Education, Livonia, Michigan is accepting Asbestos Abatement Contractor firm bids for all labor, material, equipment and all other services necessary to complete asbestos abatement at the following schools:

- Riley Upper Elementary Emerson Middle School

Bid forms and specifications can be obtained at the Livonia Public Schools Website, [www.livoniapublicschools.org](http://www.livoniapublicschools.org) under the section title DISTRICT, Purchasing Bids; or at Buy4Michigan Website [www.buy4michigan.com](http://www.buy4michigan.com). A MANDATORY pre-bid walk through is scheduled for Monday, January 27, 2015 at 3:00 PM starting at Emerson Middle School, 29100 West Chicago, Livonia, MI 48150, meet in the main lobby. The walkthrough will move to Riley after the Emerson walkthrough is complete. Attendance at both walkthroughs is required.

**Sealed bids marked Riley/Emerson Asbestos Abatement will be received until 12:00 P.M. on the 5th day of February 2015 at the Livonia Public Schools, Board of Education, 15125 Farmington Road, Livonia, Michigan 48154. Sealed bids should be addressed to the attention of Nick Armelagos, Administrator of Finance. The Bid Opening will take place at 2:00 P.M. on the 5th day of February 2015 at the Livonia Public Schools Board of Education at which time all bids will be publicly opened and read. No bids will be accepted after the date and time specified, and will not be opened. Oral, telephone, fax or electronic mail bids are invalid and will not receive consideration.**

All bids must include a Treasury listed bid bond or certified check made payable to Livonia Public Schools for not less than five percent (5%) of the contract for each bid over \$22,767.00 and must be submitted with the bid forms finished with specification. All bids must be submitted on the forms provided in the bid packet and all sheets must be returned for the bid. All proposals shall remain firm for a period of ninety (90) days.

All bids must be accompanied by a sworn and notarized statement disclosing any familial relationship that exists between the owner of any employee of the bidder and any member of the Board of Superintendent or the Livonia Public Schools. All bidders must disclose any relationship with an Iranian company in compliance with Act No. 517 and attach this information to the bid. The bid will be accompanied by a sworn and notarized statement disclosing any relationship with an Iranian company that exists between the Owner and any Employee of the bidder. No bid shall be accepted that does not include this sworn and notarized disclosure statement. All bids must be accompanied by the Equal Opportunity Statement included in the bid packet. No bid shall be accepted that does not include this statement.

The Board of Education reserves the right to accept or reject any or all bids, either in whole or in part; to award to other than the low bidder; to waive any irregularities and/or informalities; and in general to make awards in any manner deemed to be in the best interests of the district, with rationale to support such a decision. Livonia Public Schools local preference resolution will be followed for all proposals.

All questions regarding this bid may be directed to Leo Wall at ETC Group at 734-955-6600 or to James McMuldroch, District Engineer at 734-744-2500, extension 42158.

Nick Armelagos  
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Publish: January 22 and 25, 2015

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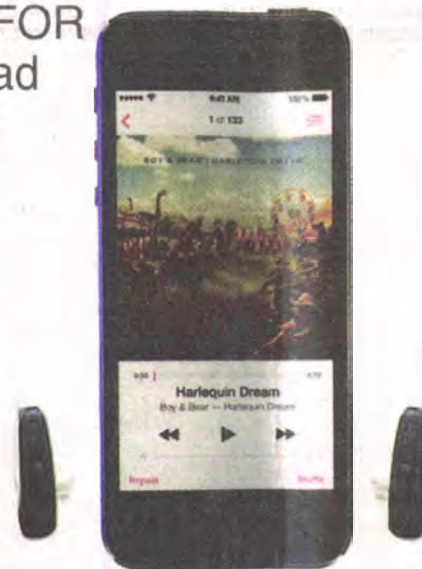
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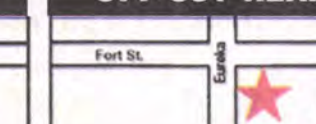
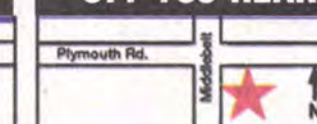
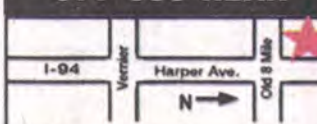
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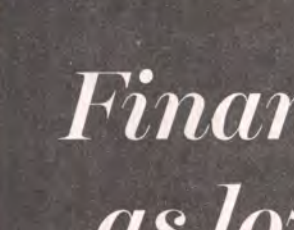
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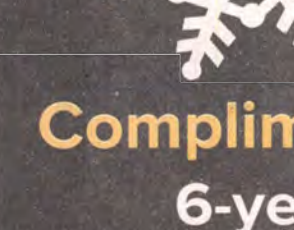
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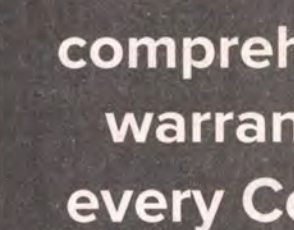
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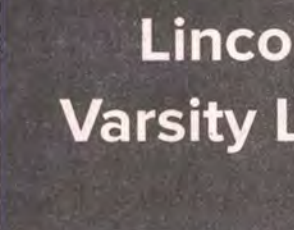
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PREP VOLLEYBALL

## Grenier returning to Churchill's sidelines



Mark Grenier has agreed to return as the head coach of Livonia Churchill's volleyball program following a two-year absence.

Widely-respected coach is back after two-year absence

By Ed Wright  
Staff Writer

When Mark Grenier is inducted into the Livonia Churchill Athletics Hall of Fame on March 19, it turns out he won't be going in as the Chargers' former volleyball coach after all. Churchill athletic director Marc Hage announced earlier this week that Grenier has agreed to return as the Chargers' head volleyball coach following a two-year absence. Grenier, who coached high

school volleyball for 17 years – and led the Chargers to a Class A state title in 2007 – before stepping aside after the 2012 season to spend more time with his four children and wife Amy, will replace Anna Gatt, who resigned from the post due partly to time constraints presented by her full-time job. “We could not be happier that Mark is back at the helm of the Charger volleyball program and we are most excited to get start-

See **GRENIER**, Page B3

### Hockey pre-regional

All three Livonia high school hockey teams will participate in an MHSAA Division 2 hockey pre-regional set for March 2 and 4 at Eddie Edgar Arena.

On March 2, Franklin and Churchill will meet in a match-up set to begin at 7 p.m. The winner of that contest will advance to the March 4, 7 p.m. game against Stevenson, which drew a bye.

The victor of the Wednesday showdown will move on to the D2 regional final, which is set for March 7 at 7 p.m. at Edgar Arena.

### Ranked wrestlers

Several high school wrestlers from Livonia and Westland have earned top-10 rankings in their respective weight classes from michigangrappler.com.

Westland John Glenn, which is unranked in the Division 1 team rankings on michigangrappler.com despite a 21-3 dual-meet record, has two representatives in the individual rankings: freshman Michael Mars is listed as the fifth-best grappler at 103 pounds while sophomore John Siemasz is No. 2 in the 112-pound ratings.

Returning state-qualifier Nathan Atienza of Livonia Franklin is ranked No. 5 at 140 pounds while Livonia Stevenson senior 171-pounder Connor Vaughan is ranked No. 10 in his weight class.

Livonia Churchill's Baker Hadwan has earned a No. 5 ranking at 215 pounds.

In the Division 4 rankings, Lutheran Westland senior Caleb Richter has earned an honorable mention listing at 140 pounds.

### Reporting results

Local high school athletic coaches are encouraged to report results of their team's contests to Observer sports editor Ed Wright, who can be reached at 734-578-2767 or ewright@hometownlife.com.

The deadline for Thursday editions is Tuesday at 10 p.m. The deadline for Sunday editions is Friday at 10 p.m.

PREP BASKETBALL



Livonia Stevenson student Alex Saleh puts up a shot for the Michigan Challengers wheelchair basketball team Friday night during an exhibition against a team of Stevenson alumni players.

## TOO MUCH GREEN

Novi pulls away from Stevenson in KLAA Central Division clash

By Ed Wright  
Staff Writer

A close, compelling high school basketball game gradually evolved into a slow-motion train wreck for Livonia Stevenson Friday night.

Spartan sophomore guard Ian Knoph's steal and layup with 3:45 left in the second quarter gave his team a 21-20 advantage over visiting Novi, but the Wildcats re-charged

their batteries at halftime before running away with a 74-45 triumph.

The game marked the return to Stevenson of former head coach Brandon Sinawi, who took over the reins at Novi during the off-season.

It was also a special night thanks to a halftime wheelchair basketball exhibition between the Michigan Challengers and a

See **STEVENSON**, Page B4



Stevenson's Jalen Webber battles Jaylen Dixon for a rebound Friday night.

KLAA WRESTLING

## John Glenn makes statement at Franklin

By Ed Wright  
Staff Writer

Westland John Glenn's wrestling team put a stranglehold, so to speak, on the top spot of the KLAA South Division standings Wednesday night at Livonia Franklin.

In a quad meet that also included the host Patriots, Wayne Memorial and Canton, the Rockets outlasted Franklin 36-24 before dominating the youthful Chiefs, 62-11.

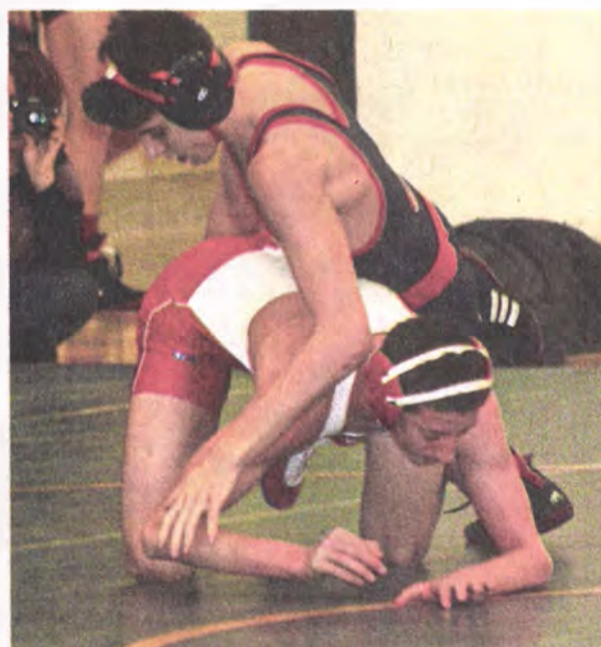
The Rockets improved their overall record to 21-3 overall

and 3-0 in the South with only a division encounter against the winless Wolfpack remaining.

In the night's other matches, Canton upended Wayne and Franklin out-pointed the Wolfpack, 54-19.

“Tonight's matches went pretty much as we expected,” said John Glenn head coach Bill Polk. “We know it's always going to be a battle against Franklin. Our matches against Canton are usually very competitive, but they're extremely young this

See **STATEMENT**, Page B2



ED WRIGHT  
Westland John Glenn's Steve Spencer registered an 18-3 victory over Canton's Abdelhadi Shuair Wednesday night.

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## Plan ahead to assure secure future for aging parents

**By Sharon Dargay**  
 Staff Writer

Tom Dobolski worries about his mother-in-law's well-being. She is elderly, lives alone, experiences symptoms of dementia, and doesn't accept help easily.

"She refuses to have strangers in the house. She has lost all effort to cook, but she will not have someone come in to help her with cooking," said the Livonia man. "We tried a couple of house cleaners, but they don't clean the way she does. She refuses to even look at any of these assisted living places. If she knows my wife is taking her there, she refuses to get in the car. She's stubborn. What do you do, call the cops?"

Dobolski was part of an over-flow crowd of mostly baby boomers, who shared their frustrations, stories and questions with a panel of experts recently at St. Mary Mercy Hospital, in Livonia.

The free two-hour session, "When Aging Parents Need Your Help," gave attendees a chance to ask specific questions about finances, housing, legal needs and other issues they've encountered as they provide care for elderly loved ones.

Joanne Darga, community liaison for Comfort Keepers, a home care assistance company; Erin Mortenson, an elder law attorney from Northville; Paula Swain, a financial consultant from Plymouth; Jessica Weathers, a social work at St. Mary Mercy's Senior Wellness Center; and Bruce Webb, a senior real estate specialist for Coldwell Banker Preferred Realtors, came together to field questions and offer advice.

The panel meets in libraries, hospitals and other venues approximately eight times a year. It will be back at St. Mary Mercy for another round of questions on Tuesday, Feb. 10. Call 734-738-6300 for more information.



### Getting advice

"We've seen an elder law attorney. For us, it was is there any new information we don't have. Is there anything we're not familiar with that we should be?" said a Livonia woman, explaining why she and her two sisters attended the event. They declined to give their names because they hadn't told their mother about the panel discussion.

"We just don't want to miss out on any help that is available for our parents," another sibling said.

The panel members stressed the importance of

planning well before elderly parents are physically or mentally unable to care for themselves.

The process should include two important documents — a power of attorney that can give an adult child legal authority to act on behalf of elderly parents with financial matters and a patient advocate designation to assist them in medical matters. Children and parents can work together to make sure documents, are in place.

"Without those two documents you can spend thousands and thousands of dollars in court," Mortenson said, adding that one of her clients

might have saved \$10,000 if only she had both in place.

Here's a sampling of topics that surfaced during the meeting:

» Do you recommend putting your name on your parents' bank accounts?

"I never recommend that kids be joint owners. You are subjecting your parents' assets to all of your liabilities," Mortenson said. "You are causing problems for any kind of benefit in the future."

She said the government will be more likely to scrutinize a joint account if the parent applies for Medicaid when transitioning to a skilled nurs-

ing facility.

"They may want a receipt for every \$100 debit for the last five years."

She said a signed financial power of attorney can allow an adult child to pay bills, sign checks and assist their parent with other financial responsibilities, without the need for joint bank accounts.

» If an elderly parent, on Medicare, needs rehab in a skilled nursing center, who pays?

"The first 20 days Medicare pays 100 percent. Once day 21 hits, Medicare pays 80 percent," Weathers said, adding that supplemental insurance may pay the other 20 percent of the bill.

"There is a 100-day Medicare benefit, but it's broken up that way. You also need to have a 30-day wellness period outside the hospital or a skilled nursing center for that benefit to reset. So, let's say mom or dad goes home Friday, but they are back in rehab next Friday. If they left off at day 20, they will start at day 21 when they return, because they didn't have a 30-day wellness period."

» Should you give any money away if you are considering going into a skilled nursing home (with Medicaid assistance)?

"The answer is no," Mortenson said. "Medicaid has a five-year look back, meaning that if you give away any money other than gifts at Christmas, for birthdays and usual tithing at church, then you will get a penalty. For every approximately \$7,800 you give away, you'll get a one-month penalty. And you won't get Medicaid even if you have zero dollars."

"So don't give away your money. There are other things you can do ahead of time. Talk to an elder law attorney to make sure you are maximizing your dollars, that you can still give your kids some kind of inheritance and still go into a skilled nursing home on Medicaid."



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## WESTLAND GOODFELLOWS



**"2014-  
 No Child  
 Without a  
 Christmas"**

**Thank you from the Westland Goodfellows and 784 Westland children!**

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[www.westlandgoodfellows.org](http://www.westlandgoodfellows.org)

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