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Events canceled at contaminated park

BY DARRELL CLEM
 STAFF WRITER

A small group of children, who used a popular Wayne County-owned park in Westland, tested positive for exposure to lead, officials said Tuesday.

However, preliminary results indicated that only a couple of youngsters who used Central City Park may have been exposed to potentially harmful levels of lead, according to county officials and residents.

In another development, the controversy has scuttled plans to use the park next summer for events that draw hundreds of people, including Little League baseball, the Western Wayne County Senior Olympics and the cancer-fighting fund-raiser Relay for Life.

Moreover, city leaders will work with organizers of the Westland Summer Festival to determine what to do about the Fourth of July fireworks display, which typically is set off in Central City Park.

Alan Helmkamp, assistant Wayne County executive, confirmed Tuesday that a "small group" of children tested positive for lead exposure based on blood samples taken Dec. 6 at the Westland Bailey Recreation Center. Results from a second round of tests Dec. 13 weren't yet available.

Helmkamp knew of only one child whose blood work showed lead levels above the 10 micrograms per deciliter that officials said could place a child at risk. Helmkamp said previous tests on that youngster had yielded similar results even before Dec. 6.

Officials can't say with certainty whether the exposure occurred in the park, located south of Westland City Hall on Ford Road east of Newburgh. Health experts have said that lead paint also can pose a threat, particularly for children 6 years old and younger. Lead can cause problems such as learning disabilities in children.

Westland resident Georgia Becker said her 12-year-old Garden City grandson — tested for lead for the first time Dec. 6 — showed levels of 16 micrograms per deciliter, above what's considered possibly harmful.

"This just sickens me," she said Tuesday. "I was hoping this wouldn't happen to anybody. He played baseball (on a league) in that park."



TOM HAWLEY | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER
 Megan Buford, 7, and her brother, Jason, 5, of Westland stand in line with their grandmother Kathy Dobbelstein for the lead testing done earlier this month at the Bailey Center.

PLEASE SEE PARK, A4

Many happy returns

Sale shoppers want gifts for themselves

BY REBECCA JONES
 STAFF WRITER

A sweater that was too small had Westland resident Pamela Wood standing in the "returns" line that wound around the Westland Kohl's on Tuesday. But she planned to make her trip worthwhile.

"We're going to get socks and the essentials now that we have everything else," said Wood, who had a coupon for an extra 15 percent savings. "Now is the time, when you can get something for 50 percent off, as long as you can find the size."

Wood called her 13-year-old son, Alex, from another part of the store to hold her spot in line while she shopped for more deals. He came to Westland mall to exchange a duplicate GameBoy cartridge.

Christmas cast a new calm on local



BILL BRESLER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER
 Michelle Carrico of Canton wrestles with a large return at Toys R Us in Westland. The Blue Thunder Monster Truck for daughters Monique and Alexis was supposed to be a Barbie Hawaiian Jeep. Shoppers headed for local stores on the day after Christmas for returns and sweet deals.

PLEASE SEE SHOPPERS, A5

Warming center needs volunteers

BY SUE MASON
 STAFF WRITER

Lighthouse Home Mission is looking for volunteers to help work at its warming center beginning Jan. 1.

Housed at the Full Gospel Temple on Palmer east of Wayne Road in Westland, the warming center will provide overnight accommodations for the homeless through March 31.

"This is our fourth year of reaching out, not only to provide a cot to sleep on, showers and food, but to help them start a better life," said Thelma Ivey, a volunteer with Lighthouse Home Mission. "The most important thing is to let them know we care for them."

Seven churches in Westland, Garden City, Wayne and Canton, support the shelter which can sleep up to 50 individuals between 7 p.m. and 8 a.m. seven days a week.

Volunteers are needed to work 7-11 p.m. or 11 p.m. to 8 a.m. on the days of their choice.

Help also is needed 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday through Friday to help sort clothing, work in the mission's food pantry and serve food at its soup kitchen.

"There's no state funding for the shelter, so we go to the people for help," said Ivey, a Garden City resident.

The shelter became embroiled in controversy in 2004 after the Westland Zoning Board of Appeals failed to grant a zoning variance. The decision closed the shelter, but also forced the Full Gospel to close the soup kitchen which had been in operation for many years.

Westland Mayor Sandra Cicirelli, however, ordered the kitchen to reopen and late last year let the warming center open with a change in hours and a promise to move people out of the area during the day.

The closing stemmed from concerns expressed by residents in the area about children heading to Adams Middle School about a half mile east at the same time people were leaving the facility.

"We don't want anyone leaving until the children are in school," said Ivey. "We want to open and have no complaints. We'll make sure to instruct them to go west toward Wayne Road, not toward the school."

The soup kitchen serves meals to the needy in the area 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

But the mission's work doesn't end there. It also handles referrals for assistance 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays and opens the clothing and food bank by appointment 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Wednesdays and Fridays. Referrals can be faxed to Ivey's attention at (734) 721-2423.

"The Lord never ceases to amaze me," said Ivey. "We take people from all over, and on nights when we say we're full, we make room for more."

The Lighthouse Warming Center is based at the Full Gospel Temple, 34033 Palmer, Westland. People interested in volunteering at the warming center can call (734) 326-3885.

PLEASE SEE MINISTRY, A5



BILL BRESLER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER
 Lillian Easterly of Livonia, care ministries pastor for NorthRidge Church in Plymouth Township, is driven by her own life experiences with addiction to help others in support groups at the church.

A ministry of caring grows out of misery

BY BRAD KADRICH
 STAFF WRITER

Even at the height of her despair, it was tough to tell Lillian Easterly was in trouble.

Easterly dealt with issues created by growing up in a dysfunctional family where her father was an alcoholic — "One of my primary sources of pain," Easterly says now — by following his example and getting involved with drugs and alcohol.

As a high functioning alcoholic, Easterly could handle work, appeared to be handling her relationships and hid fairly well her addiction.

As is the case with many alcoholics, that was all a facade. The realization she was going in the wrong direction and change was need-

ed all came crashing in on Easterly during a suicide attempt 21 years ago.

After swallowing who knows how many pills with who knows how much alcohol, the revelation came suddenly for Easterly.

"I started using when I was about 14, and continued down that path for many years," Easterly said. "After that suicide attempt, God got my attention."

"What came to my heart, which I now know was God, told me, 'You don't want to die, you just don't want to hurt anymore.'"

The hurt came from the way she dealt with her issues, getting into the same problems her father had. Not long after the suicide attempt, she said, she found her way to a Christ-cen-

PLEASE SEE MINISTRY, A5

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Livonia motorist killed in crash

An 84-year-old man from Livonia was killed in Southfield early Tuesday after he left his stalled car on Eight Mile Road and was struck by another vehicle.

"The crash remains under investigation," police spokesman Sgt. Michael R. Kuzila said Tuesday. "Right now, we're not releasing any names, and we don't have much to release."

The crash occurred about 4:40 a.m., east of Evergreen, the sergeant said.

The Livonia man's westbound car was stalled without lights in an active lane of traffic, Kuzila said. Another westbound motorist, identified as a 49-year-old man from Ferndale, swerved to avoid the stalled car and hit the driver, said Kuzila.

The victim was also in an active lane of traffic, said Kuzila who declined to comment about any possible traffic citations.

Canton

Police arrested a state employee Dec. 21 at Meijer in Canton after she attempted to steal three music CDs and a package of cotton swabs.

The woman, an employee of the state's Civil Rights Division, denied stealing the merchandise but later said she didn't have enough money to make the purchases. She expressed concern that she didn't want to lose her job.

According to Canton Police reports, a Meijer security guard spotted the woman concealing the CDs in a baby seat, and then followed her until she reached the checkout lanes. Although she purchased 10 energy drinks, she had placed two of the CDs in her purse and another in her umbrella. The box of cotton swabs were in a bag.

The woman was ticketed and given an early January court date.

A Canton woman has fingered her ex-boyfriend in stealing her Vicodin prescription from Walgreens.

The woman, 26, said she called the Ford Road store on Dec. 22 to find out the price of her prescription but was told that it had been picked up Dec. 10.

For cash purchases of prescriptions that aren't covered by insurance, Walgreen's only requires

that the buyer confirm the address of the person listed on the prescription.

The bottle of 20 pills cost \$18. After recovering surveillance film from the store, police spotted a man who fit the description of the woman's 28-year-old ex-boyfriend.

The man, who lives in Garden City, had allegedly stole other prescription drugs from the woman.

Farmington Hills

Farmington Hills police are asking for the public's help in finding the driver and car involved in a hit and run accident at about 9 p.m. on Wednesday, Dec. 20, on Haggerty Road, north of Nine Mile in Farmington Hills.

A 16-year-old female Novi resident was crossing Haggerty Road at about 9 p.m. when she was struck by a newer model, dark colored 4-door vehicle, possibly Ford Taurus, which was traveling northbound.

The vehicle continued north on Haggerty without stopping, according to police. The pedestrian suffered broken bones in one

hip, arm and leg, and was transferred to Children's Hospital in Detroit, where she is currently being treated for her injuries.

The Farmington Hills Police Traffic Safety Section is investigating the incident. Chief William Dwyer requests that any witnesses or persons with knowledge of the incident contact the Farmington Hills Police Department's Command Desk at (248) 871-2610 and reference police report No. 06-10531.

A 17-year-old student is suspended indefinitely from Harrison High School after he reportedly brought a Daisy BB gun to school on Dec. 15. The student had been suspended for being involved in a fight the day prior, but was at the school with his step-father to pick up an assignment when the gun was discovered. The boy reportedly bent down to pick up a piece of paper when the gun fell out of his sweatshirt pocket.

A 17-year-old North Farmington High School student reported her purse was stolen sometime during the morning of Dec. 15. The purse was found in a boy's restroom and was turned in to the office. The wallet was reportedly missing from the purse.

Livonia

A store employee was robbed and sexually assaulted Saturday, Dec. 23 at Fanatic U, 29243 Six Mile, according to Livonia police.

Two men walked into the store at about 8:15 p.m.

"(One of them) stuck a gun in the victim's back as she tried to help them with some merchandise and physically manhandled her to get her to give the money up," said Sgt. Cory Williams. The victim did not see a gun.

The robbers took money from the store's cash register and from the victim. One of the men took the employee to a bathroom and sexually assaulted her.

"He told her he would shoot her if she came out of the bathroom," Williams said. The victim waited for five to eight minutes after he left. She ran to a nearby business to call police because the robbers also took her cell phone and store's cordless phone handset.

The case is similar to another Livonia robbery a month earlier, Williams said.

The suspects are described as black men in their mid-20s. One is about 5 feet, 4 inches tall, 140

pounds. The other is about 6 feet tall, 250 pounds.

Redford

Redford police have a suspect in the shooting death of a 46-year-old Detroit man on Dec. 20, but no charges have been filed.

The victim was found at the Coach & Lantern Motel on Grand River at about 2 p.m. He died at Botsford General Hospital in Farmington Hills.

Capt. Kraig Brueck said other details were being withheld because the case is still under investigation. "We're working with the prosecutor's office. We expect to request charges soon."

A shooting spree overnight Friday, Dec. 22 left at least 20 vehicles with broken windows in Redford, police said.

Shots were fired from a BB or pellet gun into cars parked near Seven Mile between Inkster and Beech Daly, police said. Nothing was taken from the vehicles.

A witness reported seeing a white man with a shaved head hanging out the passenger side of a small white car.

Anyone with information can call the Redford police detective bureau at (313) 387-2570.

A man waited in a long line to rob a Charter One bank branch inside the Kroger store at 9369 Telegraph shortly before 1 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 23, according to Redford police.

The man reportedly told the teller, "This is a hold-up. Give me all your big bills." He then asked for the \$20 bills as well.

None of the other bank employees saw the robbery because they were busy helping other customers, police said.

The suspect is a black man, between 35 and 45 years old, standing at least 6 feet, 4 inches tall, weighing between 220 and 250 pounds. His hair was shaved along the sides and he wore black sunglasses, a black and gray running suit and black knit gloves.

The FBI is investigating.

After Christmas shopping Dec. 23, a Redford woman returned home to the 24000 block of Lyndon to find her side door kicked in and home ransacked.

About \$2,000 in jewels were taken from the master bedroom, along with a fur coat and a purse.

The burglary occurred between 11:30 a.m. and 3:45 p.m. Police do not have a suspect.

More than \$4,000 worth of drills and tools were stolen from

seven vans parked in a SBC telephone company parking lot at 25195 Glendale, according to Redford police.

Sometime between 5 p.m. Dec. 22 and 7:30 a.m. Dec. 26, a thief cut a hole to get into the fenced lot and broke the van windows.

Westland

Two drivers and a passenger were being treated for injuries received Wednesday morning during a two-car accident on Warren west of Middlebelt.

A Jeep Liberty being driving west on Warren by a 51-year-old man, was struck by an eastbound Dodge Neon when the Neon's 19-year-old driver crossed the center line, police Sgt. Rob Collier said.

The Neon then struck a tree, Collier said. A 47-year-old passenger in the Jeep also was being treated.

The Neon was traveling at a high rate of speed during the 7:18 a.m. accident, and Collier said possible charges are pending against the driver.

A 52-year-old Brighton man was arrested in Westland early Christmas morning on charges of impersonating a police officer and carrying a concealed weapon, police Sgt. Steve Borisch said. The suspect was arrested when real-life Westland police Sgt. Jeff Jedrusik saw him activate police emergency lights on an unmarked police car described as a 2005 Ford Crown Victoria, Borisch said.

The Brighton man apparently operates a Detroit company that contracts with Ford Motor Co. to test vehicles, Borisch said.

The incident happened just after midnight on Christmas Day on Ford Road east of Hix, on Westland's west side.

Jedrusik initially believed he was coming to the aid of a police officer from another community who was making a legitimate traffic stop, Borisch said. He was going to offer back-up.

Instead, the suspect turned off the emergency lights and started driving away, prompting Jedrusik to stop him. A .380-caliber pistol was found in the car, Borisch said.

The suspect told police the emergency lights came on by accident. The man posted \$5,000 of a \$50,000 bond and is awaiting a Jan. 4 preliminary hearing that will determine whether he should stand trial. If convicted, he could face penalties ranging up to five years in prison.

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Fast-thinking kids help their diabetic mom

BY REBECCA JONES
STAFF WRITER

If mommy ever acts goofy, bring her a juice box. That's the advice Marcy Janes gave to her kids. On Dec. 11, she was glad she did.

Janes has Type 1 diabetes. That Monday morning, she didn't wake up to get her sons, Brendan and Jake, ready for school. The boys knew something was wrong.

"Mom was having a diabetic emergency," said Tom Kiurski, training coordinator for the Livonia Fire Department. Her blood sugar level dropped to a dangerous level.

Brendan and Jake knew what to do. "I gave her a juice box," said Jake, a first-grader at Randolph Elementary in Livonia.

"She needed sugar," said Brendan, 9. But they couldn't get her to take a sip. "She was too far gone to even drink the juice box," Kiurski said.

The kids tried to give her a candy cane instead. They also called their aunts.

Aunt Jane Slipek of Westland came over immediately and called 9-1-1. Paramedics delivered glucose.

"(Patients with this condition) generally come back pretty quickly after that," Kiurski said. "She didn't even go to the hospital."

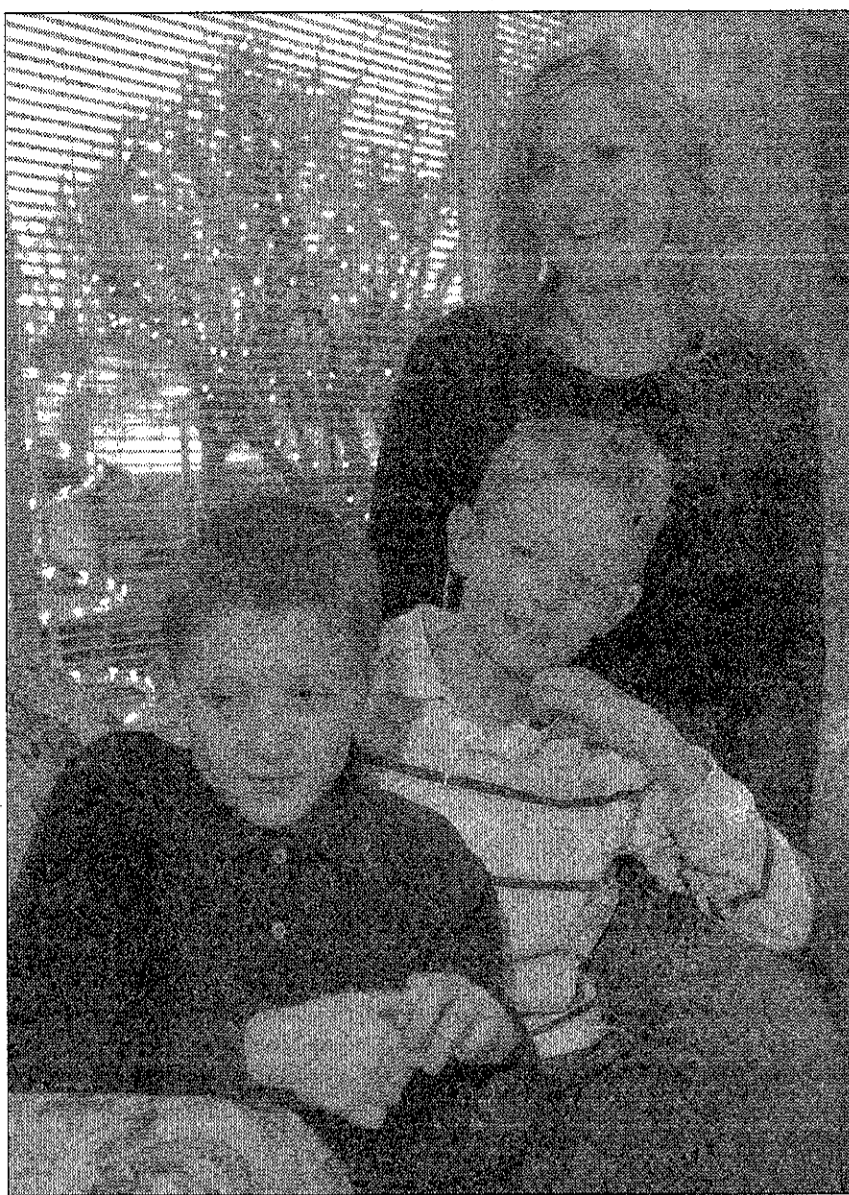
"And then we fixed her a peanut butter and jelly sandwich," Brendan said.

Marcy Janes, a nurse at St. Mary's Hospital, hasn't had a diabetic emergency like that in many years, but she trained her sons what to do just in case.

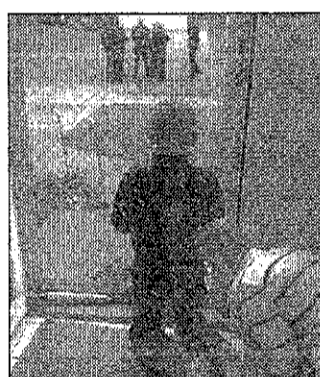
On Dec. 21, Kiurski, the fire chief, and three paramedics from Station 6 who responded to the medical call, visited the Janes family to congratulate Brendan and Jake.

"You guys did the right thing when you were supposed to," Kiurski said. The boys got certificates, stuffed animals, firemen's helmets and stickers.

"I'm very proud. They did exactly what they've been told to do," Janes said. She also commended the fire department for the way they praised her sons.



Marcy Janes and sons Jake and Brendan.



Jake and Brendan Janes watch the firefighters gathering for their visit to the Janes family.



Brendan and Jake Janes got to meet with John McKee, Matt Niemczewski, and David Bostater. Jerry Eizen, who is also on the crew, is not pictured.

PHOTOS BY BILL BRESLER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER



BILL BRESLER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Canton resident Maureen Hassien, here with niece Sheri Barber of Westland, is happy that her late husband Bud's Statue of Liberty was returned.

Return of 'Lady Liberty' brightens widow's Christmas

BY TIFFANY L. PARKS
STAFF WRITER

She left with a thief in the night and was returned by an angel in the morning.

The cherished Statue of Liberty replica stolen from a Canton woman's garden in late November was returned during the early hours of Christmas.

"That just made my day," said Maureen Hassien, whose plea to get the statue back was highlighted in the Dec. 21 *Canton Observer*. "In less than a week, all the (media attention) brought her home."

The 30-inch tall replica was a gift to Hassien's deceased husband, Assim "Bud" Hassien.

"This was our first Christmas without him so it had been a very hard week for me," said Maureen, who was married to Bud for 32 years. "It seems like him and God brought her back on what they knew would be our worst day."

Known for his longtime fondness of Lady Liberty, Bud Hassien planned to visit the national monument in October, but died of a heart attack just weeks before the scheduled trip.

The statue's theft only worsened the family's grieving process.

"I was so angry that someone had taken her but when she came back, I couldn't stop crying tears of joy," said Hassien's niece, Sheri

Barber of Westland. "This changed the whole spirit of our Christmas."

The 50-pound statue, affectionately referred to as "The Lady," was placed on Maureen's doorstep between 2-7 a.m.

"I could see something out there and when I opened the door, my legs just started shaking," Maureen said. "I just picked her up and brought her in the house. I couldn't believe she had come home."

Besides a small nick at the hemline of her robe and another near her seven-point crown, the cement replica is in good condition. The family plans to permanently attach it to the pedestal still standing in Hassien's garden.

"If someone tries to take it again, they're going to get a major backache," Maureen chuckled, glancing at the statue sitting near her fireplace.

Barber, who attended midnight Mass with Hassien, said she asked God to give her aunt strength to make it through her first Christmas as a widow.

"I said a prayer and I had hope," she said. "There's no excuse for stealing, but I'm glad whoever took it had a change of heart."

Maureen said she has no hard feelings toward the statue's thief. "Thank you for bringing her back but please don't do it again — to anyone," she said.

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Late President Ford remembered fondly

BY JULIE BROWN
STAFF WRITER

Bill Broomfield has a lot of good memories of President Gerald Ford from their years representing Michigan in Congress together.

"I served with him all through his congressional career," said the retired congressman, reached Wednesday morning at his suburban Washington, D.C., home. Ford, who died Tuesday night in Rancho Mirage, Calif., at age 93, came to Congress in 1948.

"He was a very decent and honorable man," said Broomfield, a Republican. "He was just a great person. Everybody liked him."

Broomfield believes Ford's legacy will be restoring decency and honesty to the presidency following the Watergate scandal. "Our country needed that kind of leadership," said Broomfield, who approved of the pardoning of President Richard Nixon. "It was a healing process and I think most people understood that."

Broomfield advocated for Ford to be



Former President Gerald Ford at an appearance at Laurel Manor in Livonia.

House minority leader and later vice president when Spiro Agnew resigned. He and his wife, Jane, just got their annual Christmas card from the Fords.

"Betty Ford and my wife are very close." "I think he did an awful lot for Michigan, too," Broomfield added.

"Michigan really benefited a great deal." He recalled being with Ford, Jimmy Carter and Henry Kissinger on a delegation to represent the U.S. when Egypt's Anwar Sadat was assassinated.

"I was deeply saddened by his passing,"

Broomfield said of Ford. "I feel I've lost a great friend."

Democratic Congressman John Dingell said in a statement, "Gerald Ford and I came from different sides of the aisle, but we forged a wonderful friendship as we served Michigan together in the House of Representatives. When his nation called on him to serve this country in the most difficult of times, he rose up and held the country together. It will certainly be his legacy."

"I will remember him fondly and I will miss him dearly," Dingell concluded.

Michigan Gov. Jennifer Granholm has directed all U.S. flags to fly at half staff to comply with federal law, and encourages residents and nongovernmental entities to follow suit.

"The nation has lost a president, but Michigan has lost a native son who honored us with his service to our state and nation," she said in a statement. Granholm praised Ford's leadership and decency from his days at the University of Michigan on to Congress and the presidency.

PARK

FROM PAGE A1

and we've always had birthday parties in the park."

Becker said her grandson, along with other family members, also helped build a children's playscape and attended some Relay for Life activities in Central City Park.

Becker said her grandson, who spent his early years growing up in a mobile home built in 1985, has no other known exposure to lead, such as lead-based paint. She said the boy has an appointment Friday with his pediatrician for further examination.

On Tuesday, Helmkamp said it is his understanding that the Dec. 6 blood tests found no elevated levels of lead in any adults. Most Wayne County officials weren't available for comment this holiday week.

In all, nearly 100 children and adults showed up Dec. 6 for the free blood tests. A much smaller number got tested a week later.

In yet another development, Helmkamp confirmed Tuesday that water samples taken from Friendship Lake in the park showed no problem with lead.

The controversy over Central City Park erupted in early November as Mayor Sandra Cicirelli moved to close the park until cleanup efforts can be approved by the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality. Only a paved walking path around the perimeter has remained open.

Park users became angry after learning that city, county and MDEQ officials had known about elevated levels of lead for several years, based on soil samples from several

years ago.

Soil tests also found other contaminants, including arsenic, cyanide, mercury, PCBs and pesticides, but officials said those weren't in elevated levels considered potentially harmful.

Officials have said they didn't believe the lead contamination posed a serious health threat. They have said most of the elevated levels of over 400 parts per million were found on the western ball diamonds and, to a lesser extent, the soccer fields.

Officials have said the park was used as a former dump site by county road workers from the 1930s to the 1970s.

Meanwhile, Westland's plans to host the 2007 Western Wayne County Senior Olympics have been postponed a year. Instead, Canton, which was supposed to host the 2008 Olympics, will switch with Westland.

"We've already arranged to switch with Canton," said Cicirelli, who will leave her mayoral job Jan. 1 to become a Westland district judge.

The 2007 Relay for Life event is expected to be moved from Central City Park to Jaycee Park in Westland. Local and county officials also will try to find alternate sites for Little League baseball.

"My gut feeling is that we're not going to get this (park remediation) wrapped up in time for the baseball season," Westland City Council President William Wild said.

Helmkamp pledged that county officials will help the city in the event that cleanup efforts can move forward quickly.

"We're hoping for the best but planning for the worst," he said.

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Physical Therapy UPDATE

Hands On Center
Presented by
Hands On Center For Physical Therapy


HITTING YOUR STRIDE

Runners who experience injuries such as a patello-femoral pain syndrome ("runner's knee") may want to avail themselves of a method of rehabilitation that seeks to correct flaws in their stride. Abnormal running mechanics are factors in many running injuries, and in most cases, these flaws can be corrected. The failure to correct form flaws in response to injuries may only invite the same problem to return after the original injury heals. While many physical therapists try to correct stride flaws indirectly by prescribing strengthening and stretching exercises that are designed to correct muscle imbalances, proponents of gait retraining believe that is just the first step. Modifying running mechanics helps reduce stresses that lead to injury. As a runner, there may be times when common injuries occur even when good running habits are practiced. When you are faced with such problems, a visit to a physical therapist for treatment and rehabilitation may be in order. For physical therapy care, call the HANDS ON CENTER FOR PHYSICAL THERAPY at 455-8370. We are located at 650 South Main Street in downtown Plymouth. We have easy access and parking. New patients gladly accepted.


P.S. Research has identified a number of stride flaws that appear to be associated with running injuries.



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MINISTRY

FROM PAGE A1

tered 12-step program at a church that taught her to be completely honest about everything.

"I'm so grateful for that," she said. "That's what drives me today, getting more people to realize that kind of honesty is the only way to have joy. You have to stop being fake."

DOESN'T HURT

She doesn't hurt anymore, at least not that way, and now she dedicates her life to helping others escape the same kinds of pain. Easterly, a Livonia resident, found her way to NorthRidge Church in Plymouth Township after attending one of its "Glory of Christmas" productions and hearing senior pastor Brad Powell speak.

"It was clearly a God thing," she said. "He spoke to me very clearly about making that change."

She left the church she'd been attending for 10 years and is now happily ensconced at NorthRidge. Starting as a volunteer, she began the "Life Share" ministry and attending Bible college. When she graduated, she said, she sought advice from Powell about a life direction and pitched him the idea about her ministry.

Now she's been on staff for six years and serves as the care ministries pastor, coordinating the activities of some 67 support groups for everything from divorce to addiction. "Out of your misery comes your ministry," Easterly said, smiling.

Easterly's honesty and openness is one of the things that attracted Beth (the *Observer* is withholding her last name at her request), a Canton woman who leads the ministry's Women of Serenity addictions support group.

Beth, who acknowledges "I was a mess" before being saved, said Easterly's attitude was "refreshing."

"When I first went there, Lillian was real open about it," Beth said. "It wasn't church-ish. It wasn't, 'here's what you did wrong,' it was more 'I know what you're feeling, and I know a way out.'"

'AWESOME PROGRAM'

Like Beth, Mike Smith of Westland is a recovering alcoholic. Smith, a musician who plays at the church, is a member of the church's Celebrate Recovery group for people with alcohol addictions.



BILL BRESLER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Lillian Easterly of Livonia, the care ministries pastor at NorthRidge Church in Plymouth Township, helps coordinate the activities of some 67 support groups at the church, which draws membership from all over Wayne County.

"It's really an awesome program," Smith said. "It's a place you can go where you don't have to be afraid of who you are, you don't have to put on any masks. You're not judged; there's just a lot of help."

Smith attributes much of that to Easterly, who he said has "tremendous compassion for people."

"Lillian has taken that program to unbelievable levels; in my opinion, it's the most important part of the church," he said. "She has caring and compassion for those who are in need. God works through her really well, and she really has a passion for that ministry."

Easterly shrugs off the praise with the air of someone who's simply doing what she loves. The church is getting ready for an increase in need after the first of the year, when people start taking stock of their lives and vowing changes.

"There's a contemplation that always comes after New Year, people start looking at their lives," Easterly said. "If people coming through our doors aren't in a state of crisis now, they will be. It's inevitable, it's just reality. Our doors are open to anyone."

Helping people sort out their problems is something Easterly, who got so much help with her own, loves to do.

"I have the privilege of entering into people's pain with them and then seeing God show up and do a miracle," she said. "I think I get more out of it than they do, and I wouldn't trade it for anything."

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SHOPPERS

FROM PAGE A1

stores. Shelves that had been picked over and in disarray days earlier were in neat order with new sale signs Dec. 26.

At Westland mall, shoppers could find sweaters for \$15, leather coats for \$85 and half off everything from the toy store to the calendar kiosk.

Macy's and J.C. Penney both offered extra savings until noon, which helped draw shoppers.

"I'm going to have lunch and see what the after Christmas sales are like — for as long as my

energy lasts," said Detroit resident Molly Thiry, who entertained on Christmas. "It's fun for a while."

"So far, so good. No returns," said Susan Mullen of Westland, who came to the mall empty-handed and planned to leave with Boxing Day gifts for her in-laws in Windsor.

The parking lot at Target on Ford Road in Canton was full, but there was no waiting at the returns counter.

Everyone shuffled through the aisles at the back of the store where Christmas decorations had been marked down by at least

Cyndy Masciulli of Canton and her two eager children filled their cart in the toy department.

"They just got money for Christmas so we figured we'd shop," said Masciulli. Her son, who gave his age as 4.2 years old, found good deals, like a Spider-Man Adventure Zone tent marked down to \$7.48, from \$30.

Outside, Shannon Larson rearranged the contents of her Jeep Laredo, trying to make room for three cartfuls of merchandise — including stocking stuffers for next year.

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OUR VIEWS

Help put an end to drunken driving

Despite years of public education by law enforcement agencies and groups like Mothers Against Drunk Driving, people continue to die on our highways in alcohol-related accidents.

Last year, 16,885 lives were lost — almost one every half hour, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

That's only a slight improvement from 2004 when 16,919 people died in drunken-driving accidents nationwide.

The New Year's holiday period continues to be one of the deadliest times of year, with 67 percent of all fatal crashes in Michigan involving alcohol.

Michelle Compton, director of MADD's Oakland County chapter, calls drunken driving the "public health equivalent of polio in the 1950s," with 3 out of every 10 Americans being involved in an alcohol-related crash at some point in their lives.

The national organization recently announced a four-point campaign aimed at wiping out drunken driving in the next 10 years.

The campaign calls for having:

■ Interlock ignition devices installed for a probationary period in the vehicles of first-time drunken drivers;

■ A higher visibility of law enforcement including roadside sobriety checks.

■ A partnership of insurance companies, automobile makers and governmental agencies marketing a device for the inside of vehicles to deter drunken driving and be as revolutionary as seat belts and;

■ A stronger network of agencies to fight drunken driving.

But no campaign will be 100-percent effective until everyone takes personal responsibility for his or her behavior.

If you drink and drive, pledge now to stop.

Even a small amount of alcohol — depending on your mood, how much you've eaten, any medications you're taking and how fast you drink — can affect your driving abilities.

If you drink, stay put or ask a designated driver to take you home.

The life you save may be your own or that of a loved one.

If you don't drink and drive, continue to be a good example to those around you and share with others the sobering statistics you've just read.

Michigan remains a great place to live

It seems in recent years that Michigan bashing has become a bit of an art.

That was especially the case during the last election when some politicians chose to paint a very bleak picture about our state. Some television campaign ads were particularly troubling, showing empty stadiums, empty cities and portraying a state in utter decline.

You would have thought that everyone had left the state and just forgot to turn off the lights.

That just isn't the case, however. New population estimates that came out this week from the U.S. Census Bureau show the state's population has remained steady, and is practically unchanged over the last two years. Our population is 10,095,643, which is down only 5,000 from last year. We actually had an increase of 7,000 people in 2005, so we're actually up 2,000 people over 2004.

And while there has been some out-migration as people go elsewhere to find work (115,000 people between 2000 and July of this year), the new census numbers show there was worse out-migration in the early 1960s, mid-1970s and especially in the early 1980s.

Despite the economy, which is struggling because of radical changes in the manufacturing sector, Michigan is still a great place to live. Most of us know that.

Just think of all the great things our state has to offer.

We have one of the world's largest concentrations of fresh water, which provides us with an unparalleled source of recreation, from boating to fishing to thousands and thousands of miles for walks on the beach. It also provides us with wonderful drinking water, something that is becoming more and more scarce in some parts of the nation.

The overall quality of life is still pretty decent in Michigan. We have good hospitals, good schools, and a relatively clean environment. Our natural resources are plentiful, and have been a driving force of our economy since the state was first populated. And despite some funding challenges, public education is still a priority in this state.

We are still home to the automobile, and as such, have attracted some of the most talented engineers in the world. The rise of Automation Alley is a testament to the fact that Southeast Michigan is home to one of the nation's most important high-tech centers. It is clear Michigan has more to offer than just manufacturing jobs.

In fact, we have the tools in place here in Michigan to be a leader in the development of alternative energy sources, something many pundits believe will be critical to the future survival of our nation and our planet.

Perhaps, as we enter a new year, we — especially our leaders — should begin to celebrate our wonderful state. Being a Michigander is something to be proud of.



Lightfest wonderful

As a Livonia resident who lives near Hines Park, I never took the time to actually visit the Wayne County Lightfest until 2004, when I was pregnant with my first child.

I was very impressed then and I was even more impressed again tonight, as my husband and I took our now 21-month-old daughter to the very park where we ride our bikes all summer long and I have to say I was proud to be a Wayne County resident!

For a donation of a mere \$5, visitors can choose two lanes to drive along the approximately 7-mile stretch and see the many eye-catching displays of color and light.

It was so exciting to watch the displays through the eyes of our daughter, who is now only starting to "get" Santa. Various religions were represented and I'm sure as we drive through the display a couple of years from now, my husband and I will have a great opportunity to describe the different religions to our daughter.

But for now, there were plenty of displays of snowmen, Santa's sleighs, reindeer, gingerbread houses and Nutcrackers and even a patriotic flag, complete with fireworks to bring smiles and wide eyes to the eyes of toddlers, as well as small kids and big kids alike!

The North Pole is represented and so is Santa's Flight School, where you can watch baby deer take off on practice leaps.

If you haven't driven through the Wayne County Lightfest with your family, I strongly recommend you pop in a Christmas CD, sit back, relax and enjoy the beauty of the season. And if you have a child, try remembering the excitement of this time of year through their eyes.

Congratulations to Wayne County for hosting such a wonderful family event that gets better each year!

Happy holidays to all!

Janice Fritz Ryken
Livonia

Park horror stories

This letter is about the lead levels in Central City Park. I was truly hoping that no one would have positive findings of lead. Well, how wrong I was. My 12-year-old grandson has elevated levels of lead. He will be going to his doctor this week to have a full metal testing. The rest of this family seems to have tested normal, whatever that means.

Ms. (Mayor Sandra) Cicirelli, you may be a judge, not with my help, but I still hold you responsible for this not being brought to our attention a long time ago. We will see where this goes after my grandson has further testing.

I have also heard some other horror stories. One example: a group of women have played softball on our diamonds for a number of years. So far one had a full metal test and they have found arsenic and a number of other metals. Hopefully the others will have this testing done too.

Not surprised.

Georgia Becker
Westland

Pipe dream

The rationale behind government's latest proposed welfare scheme, Granholm's Promise Scholarship is "a more educated

work force will draw more businesses to Michigan." I guess if you repeat enough times a statement with some surface plausibility, it becomes the incontestable truth. Scratch an inch below the surface with a minimum of critical thinking, however, and economic reality will show that this is just another pipe dream of professional bureaucrats.

For one (as Steve Sutton noted in an earlier letter), a subsidized increase in demand without a market-driven increase in supply will result in higher prices, making the subsidy irrelevant while pricing some current, unsubsidized customers out of the market.

Secondly, employees are much more mobile than businesses. It is much easier for an educated work force to move toward opportunity than for a business to set up shop in a state where an increasing tax grab will be required to "educate" the work force. Michigan's brain drain will only be exacerbated by this latest gimmick from the tax-and-spenders in Lansing.

Third, all the pink slipped automotive professionals in this state already provide a pool of available talent for entrepreneurs who *really* thought Michigan was a good place to do business. Why aren't those new businesses flocking to this state if, as Granholm says, the only thing stopping them is an uneducated work force?

While most Michigan residents will suffer because of this latest proposed outrage, there are always some winners. And the winners are the government schools and their unionized and tenured staff, the ultimate recipient of this taxpayer-funded largesse. Other Michigan residents, not the privileged members of this pampered oligarchy, are going to foot the bill. Should we really be surprised?

Jerry Smith
Farmington

Loyal to Farmington

We lived in the City of Farmington the last time merger was an issue. Residents compared our lower taxes and better services and saw no advantage to being absorbed into a bigger government.

Politicians speak of cutting costs and improving efficiency, promises that are quickly forgotten. We already share schools and libraries. The city has excellent police and public works departments and small-town friendliness. When or if it comes to a vote, nothing will change. Farmington residents are loyal.

Hank Borgman
Farmington

No more

No more troops for Iraq, period. We have to find a way to pull our troops out Iraq without the country falling in to total chaos. Sending in more troops will not achieve anything but adding to the total number of deaths.

Clayton Scott
Farmington

Can't stop McCotter

As time goes by, the impact of decisions made becomes apparent and amplified. The decision by some in our community to send Thaddeus McCotter back to Washington, D.C., is one of those. McCotter was an original co-sponsor of HR-5193, the Iran

Freedom Support Act, which was introduced in the 108th Congress by Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, R-Fla.

In 2005, Rep. Ros-Lehtinen reintroduced the legislation amending the Iran and Libya Sanctions Act of 1996 to eliminate mandatory sanction provisions respecting Libya. Libya has for a long time been led by a dictator and has a government and court system based on fancy and whim. It is a cruel place.

Just recently that nation, which McCotter feels should be spared sanctions, condemned five nurses and a doctor to death. The nurses traveled from Bulgaria and the doctor from Palestine. Libya claims that they infected 400 children with a genetically modified virus causing them to have AIDS. An organization representing the children claimed it was done on behalf of foreign intelligence agencies.

It is said that cries of "God is great!" and "Long live the Libyan judiciary!" were heard as the verdict of death was read by the judge. Scientific evidence proving that the hospital is filthy and harbored AIDS before the nurses arrived was, incredibly, "too late to be submitted in court."

It's too late to pull McCotter back. He's back in Washington again.

His message is amplified too — he is part of a rock and roll band called The Second Amendments.

Al Brock
Canton

Stop wasting money

Once again, Canton feels the need to spend money on items that provide very little return.

Each day, I drive north and south on Sheldon Road and Lilley Road and get my teeth rattled. It is so reassuring to know that there is a \$57,000 piece of art gracing Ford Road and Canton Center. Each day, as people try to get through the intersection, I am sure they will thoughtfully gaze at the sculpture and measure its finer qualities.

Hopefully Supervisor Tom Yack will once again pick up his telephone and call me at 10 p.m. to tell me how little my opinion counts, as he did when I expressed my displeasure at the millions of dollars spent on the Ford Road beautification project. I look around each day in utter amazement at the lack of foresight in the planning of Canton Township.

Albert D. De Grazia
Canton

SHARE YOUR OPINIONS

We welcome your letters to the editor. Please include your name, address and phone number for verification. We ask that your letters be 400 words or less. We may edit for clarity, space and content.

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Observer

PUBLISHED THURSDAY AND SUNDAY

GANNETT

Hugh Gallagher
Managing Editor

Marty Carry
Advertising Director

Peter Neill
Vice President
General Manager

Susan Rosiek
Executive Editor

Richard Aginian - Publisher Emeritus

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

QUOTABLE

'This is our fourth year of reaching out, not only to provide a cot to sleep on, showers and food, but to help them start a better life.'

— Thelma Ivey, a volunteer with Lighthouse Home Mission

Making China's economic rise work for Michigan's future

Quick, name three things that Michigan has that China does not. No, the correct answer is not the "trinity" of Oakland County Executive Brooks Patterson, Wayne County Executive Bob Ficano and the larger than life Detroit Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick. Nor is it the lousy Detroit Lions, potted roads or the almost-World Champion Detroit Tigers.

It is clean air, clean water and a pristine environment.

Those who have lived in Michigan for a number of years know that this was not always the case. The early days of our industrial strength witnessed the pollution of our air, our rivers, streams and lakes. Yet, as kids will say, "that was then and this is now." Certainly, we have yet to reach any "environmental nirvana," as any Michigan environmental group will be quick to point out. However, by nearly any measure, we have come a long way.

If you have traveled in China recently, your burning eyes will testify that along with their economic boom over the past quarter of a century, with double-digit economic increases on an annual basis, has come with a stiff environmental price — polluted air, rivers, streams and lakes.

China's environmental problems are not just limited to their political borders. Air and water pollution do not stop at the artificial boundaries marked on world maps. When we talk about "China's rise," it is more than just their economic mass, it is also pollution that is rising as well.

Clearly China's economic rise has come with a heavy and choking toll on the environment. The factories that are producing much of what will lay under your Christmas tree this year are fueled by dirty coal spewing out soot and fouling the air and water. Further complicating the problem is growing auto pollution. It is predicted that there will be seven times the number of cars on China roadways in 2020 than there were in 2004, and the Chinese auto market is expected to surpass the U.S. market in 10 years.

China's energy needs are as great or greater than their environmental needs as they continue to emerge from the horrors of the Cultural Revolution and other ill-forgotten national policies that held the sleeping dragon back for much of the 20th century. The Chinese will need to invest in energy production in an environmentally sensible way.

According to the Lawrence Berkeley National Lab, the Chinese need to invest nearly \$2 trillion in new power plants and transmission by 2030. Will the energy be clean? Can Michigan clean up by helping the Chinese meet these two mounting demands?

Many reports coming out of China point to

Clearly China's economic rise has come with a heavy and choking toll on the environment. The factories that are producing much of what will lay under your Christmas tree this year are fueled by dirty coal spewing out soot and fouling the air and water.

the fact that Chinese leaders are recognizing the huge problem of pollution and are encouraging new green technology to address these issues lest they choke off the economic dragon that is lifting many Chinese out of poverty and providing the stability the Chinese Communist Party will pay any price to maintain.

America remains number one in two categories today: economic output and the world's leading emitter of greenhouse gases. However, according to the International Monetary Fund, by 2040 or sooner, China could surpass us in both categories.

There is an economic doom and gloom hanging in the Michigan air like a smoggy day in Beijing. With the daily barrage of bad news from the auto industry and the continued loss of manufacturing jobs polluting our minds, it is easy to lose the forest for the trees.

Yet, China's problems could and should be seen by Michigan's leaders and entrepreneurs as our opportunities. China is sitting on an escalating energy and environmental crisis in addition to as much as \$1 trillion of foreign currency, much of that U.S. currency, seeking investment opportunities. Can Michigan help build environmentally friendly power plants in China, clean the air, help purify the water and put our people to work doing so?

Our state has a recent rich history of protecting our drinking water, reclaiming our rivers, streams and lakes while fueling our industrial needs. Through our creativity, innovation and can-do spirit we have the ability to take Michigan off economic life support and export our knowledge and products on the global stage.

Michigan must have the goal of becoming the brain bank of the world when it comes to auto technology, alternative energy and environmental entrepreneurship. As the state that protects our streams, air and rivers and stands tall as the protector of the Great Lakes, Michigan must seek ways to export this knowledge, technology and products to China.

How is that for clearing the air with China?

Tom Watkins is a business and education consultant. He served as state superintendent of schools from 2001-05 and as president and CEO of the Economic Council of Palm Beach County, Fla., 1996-2001. He has a long-standing interest in China and has traveled there many times. He can be reached at tdwatkins@aol.com.



Tom Watkins

Change Michigan headlines to employment, economic growth

Jobs. Disposable income. People. What do all these things have in common? The answer is simple — out of Michigan. For many years, our state has suffered significantly due to job losses, particularly in the automotive sector, thus making our state No. 1 in unemployment in the entire nation. As unfortunate as it may seem, the realism is there and we must do something as soon as possible to restore our great state to the economy glory and boom that we once cherished.

Jobs are continuing to pour out of our great state to our neighboring states, as well as those states in warmer climates. Why is this? It's because we here in Michigan have an unfriendly business environment.

For example, we have the Single Business Tax that has been the talk of being revamped. We have school districts across the country that are luring our teachers away because of bonuses and repayments of their educational loans, and states that are pitching big tax breaks for companies that want to do business in those states. The list goes on and on and on while Michigan's economy moves out as fast as a click of a switch.

Disposable income is such a significant economic boost to any location. For example, when Michigan was in the running for Boeing Corp. to locate the assembly plant for its new Boeing 7E7 Dreamliner in north-east lower Michigan, other states had better packages in place, therefore we lost an opportunity for thousands of jobs directly related to Boeing, as well as spinoff jobs being located here in southeast Michigan.

The infusion of disposable income in the local and state economy would have been vital in that more businesses would have flourished near the plant, more homes would have been built, more office space, etc.

Michigan didn't win the contract! This says a lot. It says to Boeing and other companies that Michigan is not a great place to do business. However, I believe we are a great place to do business, but this greatness must be met with the support of our lawmakers in Lansing and Washington. We offered Boeing \$300 million in tax incentives over a 20-year period, whereas Washington state offered it \$3 billion over 20 years. Washington's proposal was more aggressive than Michigan's. Hopefully, we will land a Boeing contract in Michigan in the next 10-12 years, the next time that Boeing will develop a new aircraft.

Our great state of Michigan has such a skilled and talented work force. Our strong aerospace industry would have served a log-

ical fit for Boeing to locate a plant here. Boeing has failed to land in Michigan and has landed elsewhere and billions of dollars to Michigan went with it.

People are leaving Michigan at a rate as fast as those people moving into states that offer better weather, a better business climate and jobs. That's plain and simple. We need to reverse this trend as fast as we can and not be complacent in sustaining our job losses here. It seems like that's the direction we are headed.

Our state must invest in its people, invest in its businesses, invest in education system, invest in health care. I just cannot stress how important it is to invest in Michigan. All this can take place with the strike of a pen in Lansing, where our lawmakers have been tasked with the responsibility to look out for the best interests of our state. We have such a talented and skilled workforce here that we can diversify our economy all across the board.

The automotive industry was certainly a driving force of Michigan's economy and has contributed to thousands of jobs, as well as job losses. Why the job loss? Because of fierce competition, particularly amongst Asian automakers. There are so many reasons why we have suffered here in Michigan. Our state is a center for education, medicine, manufacturing, technology, aerospace, financial services, etc. We must capitalize on these sectors by supporting them.

Our great state laid the foundation that put the world on wheels, however, we must grow beyond the automotive sector, in not only supporting them, but supporting Michigan farmers who help feed America and the world, help the scientific community as they are looking to find cures to the leading diseases of the day, support industries such as alternative energy in helping to deliver new energy alternatives to our citizens rather than depending on foreign oil, help boost our tourism industry to help fill in those hotel rooms in Michigan's landmark sites such as Traverse City and Mackinac Island, etc.

I urge our top policy makers in Lansing to pass legislation that would pay dividends for job creation, family finances, small government and low taxes. We must enact tax cuts to relieve Michigan citizens and business as they are suffering. Let's cut all this government spending in Lansing and invest in Michigan people. Let's reverse the statistic as being No. 1 in unemployment and be No. 1 in job growth. And let the headlines read: "Jobs are moving into Michigan," and "Michigan is America's No. 1 economy."

Mike Rogers of Farmington Hills is an Oakland County commissioner for the 14th District, Farmington Hills.



Mike Rogers

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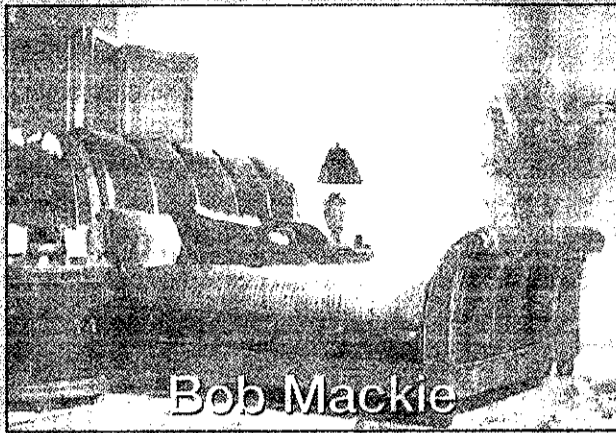
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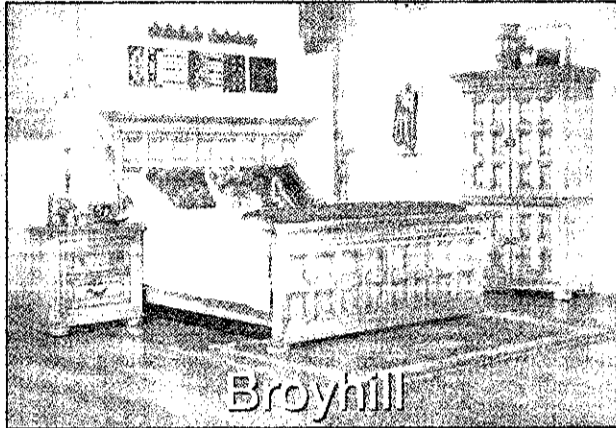
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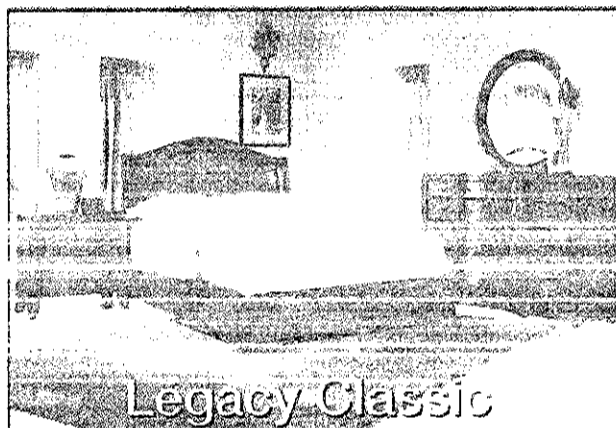
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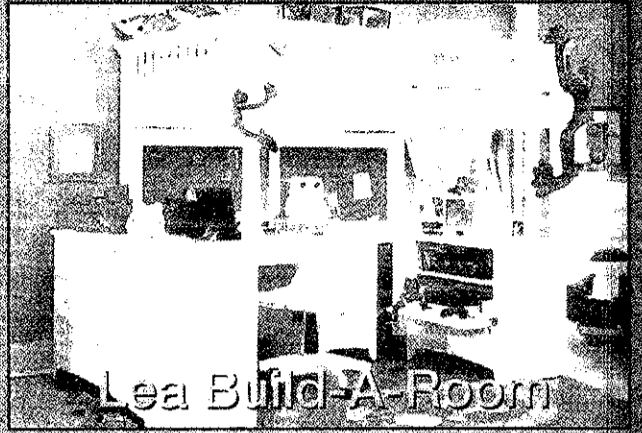
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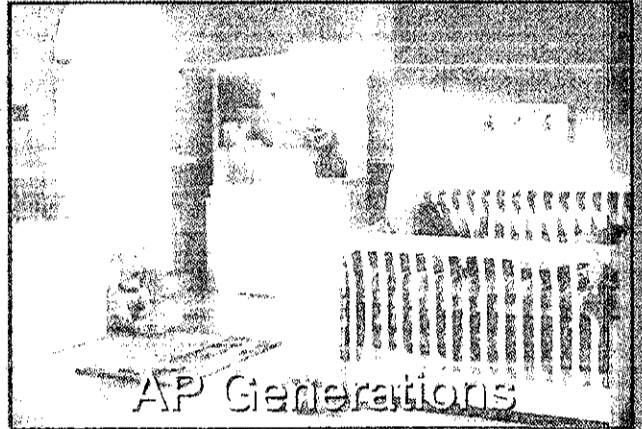
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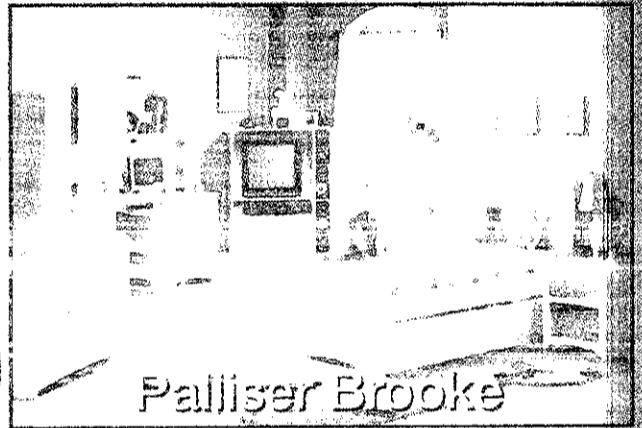
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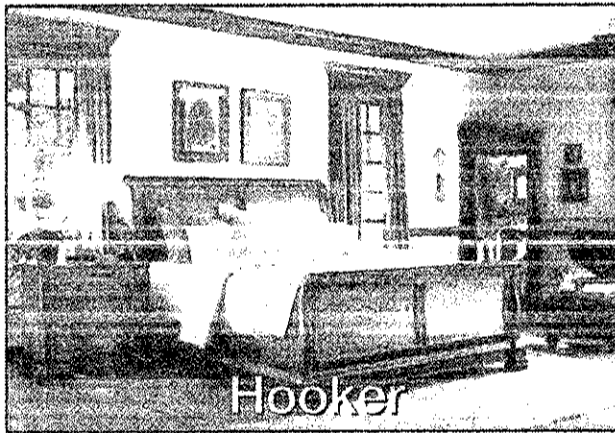
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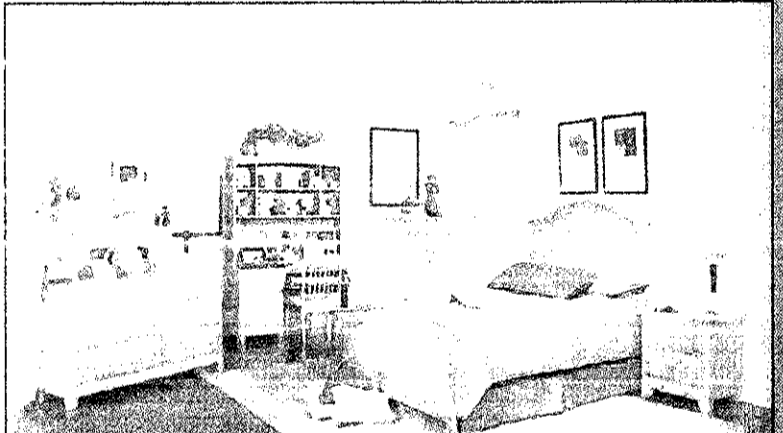
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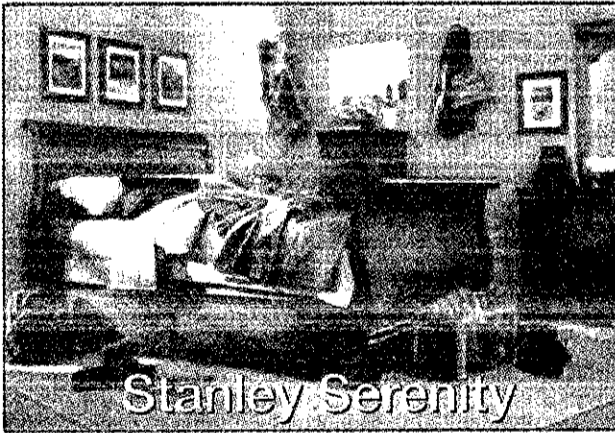
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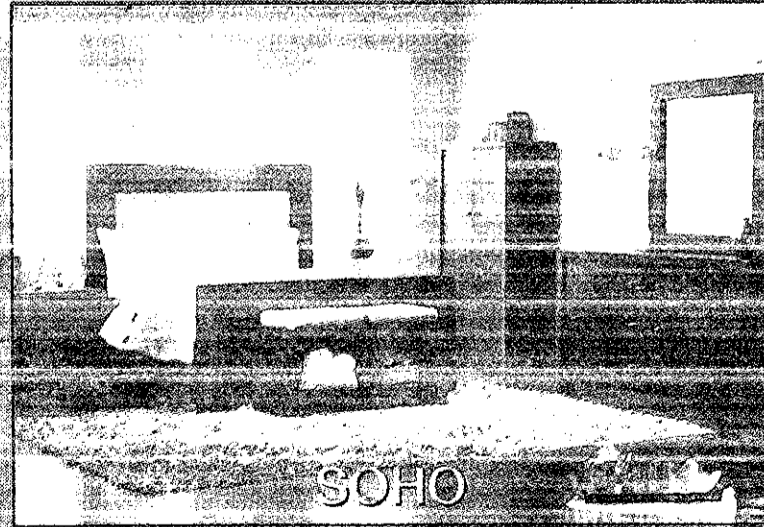
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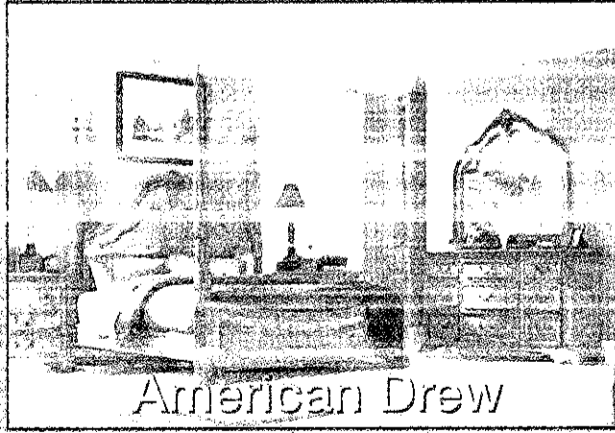
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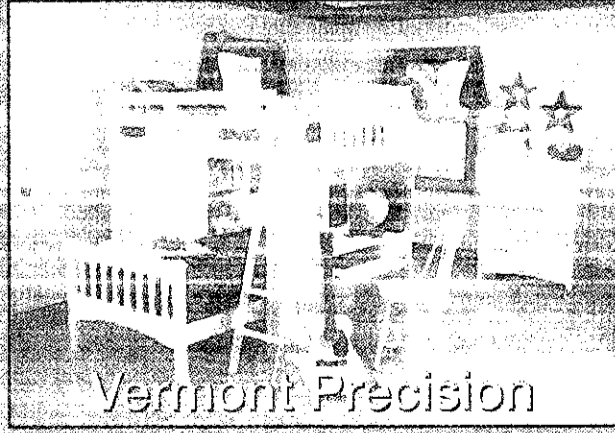
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Veteran reporter gives inside look at governor's race

BY HUGH GALLAGHER
STAFF WRITER

The title of Tim Skubick's entertaining, behind-the-scenes book on the just-completed governor's race is *See Dick and Jen Run*. Over the last year Skubick has been doing a lot of running himself in pursuit of the two candidates, Dick DeVos and Jennifer Granholm.

In fact he's still running. Last week he was late for an interview to promote his book because the successful candidate, Gov. Granholm, was holding a dour press conference on Michigan's uncertain economic future.

Skubick is the dean of the Lansing press corps who seems to be everywhere at once — as a reporter for several television and radio stations, a syndicated columnist and host of Michigan Public Television's *Off The Record*, a must-see for state political junkies. He has covered Lansing for more than 30 years, dating back to Gov. Bill Milliken.

It's that full menu and special access to the candidates that gives his book its special appeal and immediacy.

The book itself was written on the run, in real time, as Skubick and other reporters tracked the most expensive and one of the most interesting gubernatorial campaigns in Michigan history. The format allowed Skubick to turn the book around quickly for his publishers The University of Michigan Press and The Petoskey Publishing Company.

"It may sound crass, but the book had to get out soon after the election," Skubick said. "If I had written it after the election, it would have been March or April until I finished. I finished it the day after the election. I quote Dan Mulhern (Jennifer Granholm's husband) 'brilliant marketing' end quote."

Brilliant marketing was also key to Granholm's spectacular



Veteran capital reporter Tim Skubick gives an insider's view of the recent gubernatorial campaign in 'See Dick and Jen Run.'

turnaround. Early in the campaign DeVos, a wealthy Grand Rapids businessman, began a media blitz of commercials while Granholm held back.

"We were wondering, 'When are you going to start your ads and erase his 20 point lead.' But she made the right call, preserved her stash of cash until the end. I missed that," Skubick said.

The book's real-time format allows Skubick to brag about his scoops but it also honestly portrays those times when he and other reporters "missed it."

CONTRASTING CANDIDATES

Skubick clearly likes DeVos and Granholm.

"I like them both, personally. Professionally, I could give a hoot," he said.

But to the public, DeVos seemed awkward.

"In private he was personable. People I met universally said, 'He's not what I thought

he would be,'" Skubick said. "There is a stereotype about billionaires being aloof and above everyone."

Skubick said he tells a story about DeVos visiting a nursing home and spending time talking individually with the residents.

On the other hand, Granholm was made for the media.

"I call it the Granholm magic," he said. "Her staff call her a rock star, I'm not ready to go there. But she lights up a room."

He said she has a way of making everyone she meets feel important.

"She uses it in a positive way, but it didn't carry her as far this time as last time, a little of the bloom was off the rose," he said.

A weak economy, an ongoing struggle with a Republican legislature and a crisis in some government services made Granholm vulnerable. But the



first debate clearly showed the differences in the candidates.

THE FIRST DEBATE

Skubick was at the center of that pivotal event. He was originally set to be the sole moderator. But as negotiations went along, the DeVos camp was leery of Skubick's aggressive questioning style. A compromise had Skubick teamed with Detroit News political reporter Charlie Cain.

"I always prefer a single moderator, but this worked out wonderfully," he said.

Skubick said even DeVos' handlers admit that they didn't prepare him well for the debate. He was awkward, unsure of where to look and kept repeating pat phrases. Skubick said he had been ill advised to not go after Granholm.

Skubick said there were

issues on which she was vulnerable and DeVos could have scored points on content but didn't.

The debate had a no rules format.

"I've always felt the no rules format is the most telling for voters, to give them a better idea of what a candidate is all about," he said.

Not just for the debate but in general, Granholm had a better campaign team, Skubick said.

"She had people all around her who understood the state," he said. "The people around DeVos didn't know about Michigan except for (campaign manager Greg) McNeilly and (John) Truscott and DeVos' wife Betsy, who was very important to the campaign although rarely seen."

Another factor in the campaign that Skubick followed through the summer was the incredible turnaround of the Detroit Tigers. As the Tigers prospered, so did Granholm. Early in the campaign DeVos was hauled into an interview at a Tiger game and showed he really wasn't a fan. Granholm, on the other hand, knew the players and understood the game. Skubick writes that, unfairly or not, it suggested that "DeVos wasn't one of us."

THE TURNAROUND

Skubick said that by the time of Google announced that they were bringing a facility to Ann Arbor, he felt that Granholm was going to win.

"He was getting no traction at all. They overplayed the businessman advantage.

Businessmen really haven't been all that successful. They should have brought out Dick DeVos the man first, the businessman second," he said.

In the end, Skubick said, the DeVos campaign spent \$35 million and voters still didn't trust him. They did trust Jennifer Granholm.

Skubick says he thinks Granholm has had a hard time as governor because the economic slump never let up. He said she's done a good job of balancing the budget but it waits to be seen what she'll do in the future.

"Today she said being a lame-duck is liberating," Skubick said.

And what do the subjects think about the book?

"I've not heard a word from Dick DeVos and he's had the book for two weeks," Skubick said. "The governor and I had a privileged conversation and I can't tell you what was said. She finished the book in a day. I will say this, she said it could have been a lot worse."

Skubick said he hopes the book gives people a realistic look at what goes on in a political campaign and that what they see in political ads is not a true portrait of the candidates.

See Dick and Jen Run (The University of Michigan Press and The Petoskey Publishing Co., \$29.95) is available at major book stores.



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Chrysler sponsors grants for science teachers Livonia 'cold case' murder featured on television show

BY FRANK WASHINGTON

Snazzy science projects are being honored by the Chrysler Group's *Closing the Technology Gap* program, which has been called a critical investment in Michigan's public schools.

In only its second year, U.S. Sen. Debbie Stabenow has endorsed the Chrysler Group's effort to increase Michigan student's interest in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

In its second year, the *Closing the Technology Gap* program will bestow \$87,000 in grants to public school teachers who excel in creating innovative and motivating curricula and projects in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). The awards will be used to further advance creative projects in the winning schools.

"Education and innovation are the building blocks of a strong economy and good paying jobs for Michigan," said Stabenow. "Across our state, dedicated (STEM) teachers help our children build essential skills for the 21st century workforce. Chrysler Group's *Closing the Technology Gap* awards program is a critical investment in Michigan's future."

Research from the National Science Foundation found that fewer people are pursuing science, mathematics and engineering careers while employment opportunities in these fields will increase three times faster than in all

other occupations.

"Because of this, *Closing the Technology Gap* aims to increase student interest and participation in the sciences and ultimately provide companies such as ours with a viable, technology-savvy workforce in the future," said Frank Fountain, Chrysler Group Senior Vice President-External Affairs and Public Policy and President of the DaimlerChrysler Corporation Fund, which provides the monetary gifts.

Michigan teachers at the high school, middle school and elementary school levels have been invited to submit their applications to the New Detroit Science Center. The submissions will be judged on creativity and the uniqueness of the teaching process while also bringing passion and excitement for STEM curricula into the classroom.

Schools that finish first through third at each academic level and in each category will receive \$15,000, \$7,500 and \$3,000, respectively. Fourth through 10th place finishers will receive \$500. An independent panel of judges from the science, technology, engineering and mathematics fields will select the 30 winners.

"The children of Michigan need passionate and innovative teachers who can make science, technology, engineering and math come alive," said Kevin F. Prihod, president and CEO of the New Detroit Science Center. "That what may have been seen as boring with no relevance becomes the door to exciting and

profitable careers."

Noble is the word that Harry Istok used to describe Chrysler Group's *Closing the Technology Gap* Program. "Chrysler stepped up to the plate on this," he said. "I think they hit a home run."

Istok, a 35-year teaching veteran, was a first-place finisher at the junior-high level for what he called *Integration 2000*.

Integration 2000, created in 1994, merges classroom projects with the real world. Another of last year's winning submissions involved transforming an old VCR player into a model boat. Students had to be creative and inventive. They had to learn about - among other things - electric motors, wiring, electricity and structural design.

All of last year's winning submissions are posted on www.chryslerteacherawards.com.

Applications should be mailed to: 2007 Closing the Technology Gap in Education Awards, c/o New Detroit Science Center, 5020 John R Street, Detroit, MI 48202. They also can be emailed to: teacherawards@sciencedetroit.org.

Applications can be downloaded from www.chryslerteacherawards.com. Submissions should include the objective, the approach, the relevance, the measurement, the challenge and any support material. The deadline is Dec. 31, 2006, and winners will be announced in May 2007.

Livonia 'cold case' murder featured on television show

The long and tragic tale of a 17-year search for the killer of a Livonia man at his Seven Mile Road home will be featured at 6 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 31, on an episode of *Cold Case Files* on the A&E cable network.

Earlier this year, a video production crew began documenting the story of the 1989 murder of businessman Exavor Giller that finally ended in April of this year when former employee Richard Lawson was convicted of murder and sentenced to life in prison.

The turning point in the case was a telephone call from a woman who had an affair with a witness to the murder, though there were many twists to the tale.

A church volunteer, who met with inmates at a California prison, had an affair with prisoner Richard Mutica, who said he had been with Lawson and saw him shoot Giller. The woman took Mutica's information and called Giller's daughter, Bonnie Swoboda, in December 2004.

A month later, Lawson was arrested in his San Diego apartment.

The crew spent a week recording footage at the Giller home and Livonia Police Department and interviewing members of the Giller family, witnesses and police investigators who worked on the case through the years.

Those included retired Sgt. Don Vandersloot, who was the first LPD detective on the case and Sgt. Cory Williams, one of the officers who arrested Giller.

The cross-country investigation by Livonia police included trips to several states in search of evidence, including documents in Pennsylvania, key receipts in Florida and the recovery of weapons stolen from the Giller home in a New Jersey pond.

Williams said it was tough for the Giller family to talk about the ordeal again in front of a TV camera, but they hoped their story will give other grieving families hope.

For the filming, the production team also flew out to interview the dive team that recovered the weapons in Atlantic City and flew in the witness from California for an interview, Williams said.

Participants weren't paid to appear in the filming but got a *Cold Case* hat and T-shirt, plus a DVD of the show. "It's pretty cool," Williams said, adding that for one segment they put a camera on the floorboard of his car while he was driving.

"I think it would be a great memento for my kids to have of the work their dad did," he said.

- By Dave Varga

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Admiral Kirksey, Kitty Hawk captain, dies

Vice Admiral Robert E. Kirksey passed away on Dec. 16 in Ft. Myers, Fla., as a result of complications from Alzheimer's Disease. He was the brother of former Livonia Mayor Jack Kirksey.

Admiral Kirksey was 76 years old. Admiral Kirksey spent his years prior to his flight training in 1951 in Detroit and Grosse Pointe Woods. His permanent military address was his brother, Jack's, home in Livonia. In 1982, Admiral Kirksey served as the grand marshal of the Livonia Memorial Day Parade.

Jack Kirksey said he was proud of his brother.

"He was a great guy. Everyone loved him," he said.

When Admiral Kirksey served as grand marshal, Jack Kirksey said, "If I could put a billboard on Woodward Avenue in Detroit or on I-96 reading 'My brother is Bob Kirksey and he's the admiral,' I would do it because I am that proud of him."



Robert E. Kirksey

Admiral Kirksey was a naval aviator. He received his Navy Wings in 1953 and was promoted to a vice admiral in 1984.

During his 31 years of Naval service he achieved many accomplishments. Though Admiral Kirksey did not attend the Naval Academy, he rose to a three-star ranking, an unusual accomplishment without Academy credentials.

His first command of a ship was the mine sweeper, USS Cleveland, in 1972. His second command was the aircraft carrier the USS Kitty Hawk from 1973 to 1975.

Over the years he was in command of various carrier groups including the Seventh Fleet 35-Ship Battle Force in the Indian Ocean (The Iranian Hostage Crisis). He was a veteran of more than 240 combat

Over the years he was in command of various carrier groups including the Seventh Fleet 35-Ship Battle Force in the Indian Ocean (The Iranian Hostage Crisis). He was a veteran of more than 240 combat missions over North Vietnam.

Admiral Kirksey received his Silver Star medal over Hanoi, Vietnam, when he stayed with his Naval bomber after it was hit with a SAM missile. Even though his plane was badly damaged and on fire, he fought to stay in the air and complete his bombing mission at great risk to his own life. As wing commander he led the other pilots in his heavily damaged plane. The aircraft fire eventu-

ally burned out, and as he attempted a carrier landing, he discovered that the entire front of the plane had been blown away. He had to crash-land at a U.S. base in Vietnam.

Admiral Kirksey is survived by his wife, Vi, and their children, Jennifer Kirksey, Robert Kirksey Jr., Gregg Kirksey and Andrew Kirksey.

Admiral Kirksey was especially appreciative of his wife, Vi, who raised the family in his absence. She also had a leadership role with the military families in the Admiral's command while he was at sea.

He is also survived by his brother, Jack Kirksey and wife, Patt Kirksey, his sister, Anne Oliver, children and grandchildren, nieces and nephews.

A military funeral is planned at Arlington National Cemetery on Jan. 29, 2007.

In lieu of flowers, the family would appreciate donations to the Naval Aviation Museum, P.O. Box 33104, NAS Pensacola, FL 32508.

Maureen McGee, pilot and Livonia native, dies in crash

Maureen McGee, a native of Livonia and a graduate of Bentley High School, was killed Dec. 26 when the medical flight she was piloting crashed during an emergency landing attempt near Johnstown, Pa., around 3:55 p.m.

A female nurse onboard also died in the crash.

The flight originated in Morgantown, W.Va., and was on its way to pick up a patient in Teterboro, N.J., according to press reports.

According to the *Tribune-Democrat* of Johnstown, Pa., McGee, the pilot, declared an emergency and planned to land the twin-engine Cessna 414 at the John Murtha Johnstown-Cambria County Airport, the closest airport.

An FAA spokeswoman said icing may have played a factor in the crash.

McGee, 47, is survived by her husband, Gary Grosso and their 10-year-old daughter, Ammelin of Morgantown, and stepsons Brian Grosso, 17, and Joseph Grosso, 19, of Ann Arbor.

Other survivors include brothers, Michael of Livonia, Timothy of Grand Rapids, Patrick of Detroit and Kevin of San Francisco, and many nieces and nephews. She was predeceased by her parents, Billand Marie McGee, long-time Livonia residents. Marie McGee worked at the *Observer & Eccentric* Newspapers as a reporter, copy editor and special editor until her death in May 1990.

Both Maureen McGee and her nurse passenger were employed by Flight Source LLC, a fixed-base operator at Morgantown Municipal Airport that offers flight school, medical and charter services.

McGee and her family moved to Morgantown last year from Ann Arbor.

"Maureen enjoyed her job and they were enjoying the area," Michael McGee said.

"She was the Amelia Earhart of our family," he added. "She even bore some resemblance to her."

Flying was a lifetime love and achievement for his sister, Michael McGee said.

"She told Tim that she wanted to be a pilot since she was 9



Maureen McGee

years old," said Michael McGee, who last talked to his sister on Thanksgiving Day.

McGee graduated with honors from Michigan State University in 1983 with a bachelor's of science degree.

After graduation she worked as an au pair in France and in London.

She received her pilot's license in 1998 and had dual certifications in flight and ground instruction. She obtained a Master Instructor designation from the National Association of Flight Instructors in May 2005, which allowed her to teach.

The designation applies to approximately 500 of the national's 85,000 certified flight instructors. She was a flight instructor in Ann Arbor, Jackson, and Plymouth, and took a very active interest in her students. She also served as an Aviation Safety Counselor for the Detroit Flight Standards District Office.

Michael McGee said his sister had logged more than 3,500 flight hours and over 1,250 hours in multi-engine aircraft.

Until leaving for the job in Morgantown, McGee flew small planes out of airports in Livingston, Washtenaw and western Wayne counties.

She was an avid bicyclist and traveled to Montreal and back one summer. She made many cycling trips throughout Michigan.

McGee also enjoyed acting and was active in the Performance Network based in Ann Arbor. She was a Motor Meals volunteer in the Ann Arbor area. She was a lay reader and served on the social ministry committee at Trinity Lutheran Church in Charleston, W.Va.

She was a member of Women in Aviation, Detroit Aviation Safety Counselors and National Association of Flight Instructors.

A memorial service is set for 3:30 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 2, at King of Kings Lutheran Church, 2685 Packard Road, Ann Arbor.

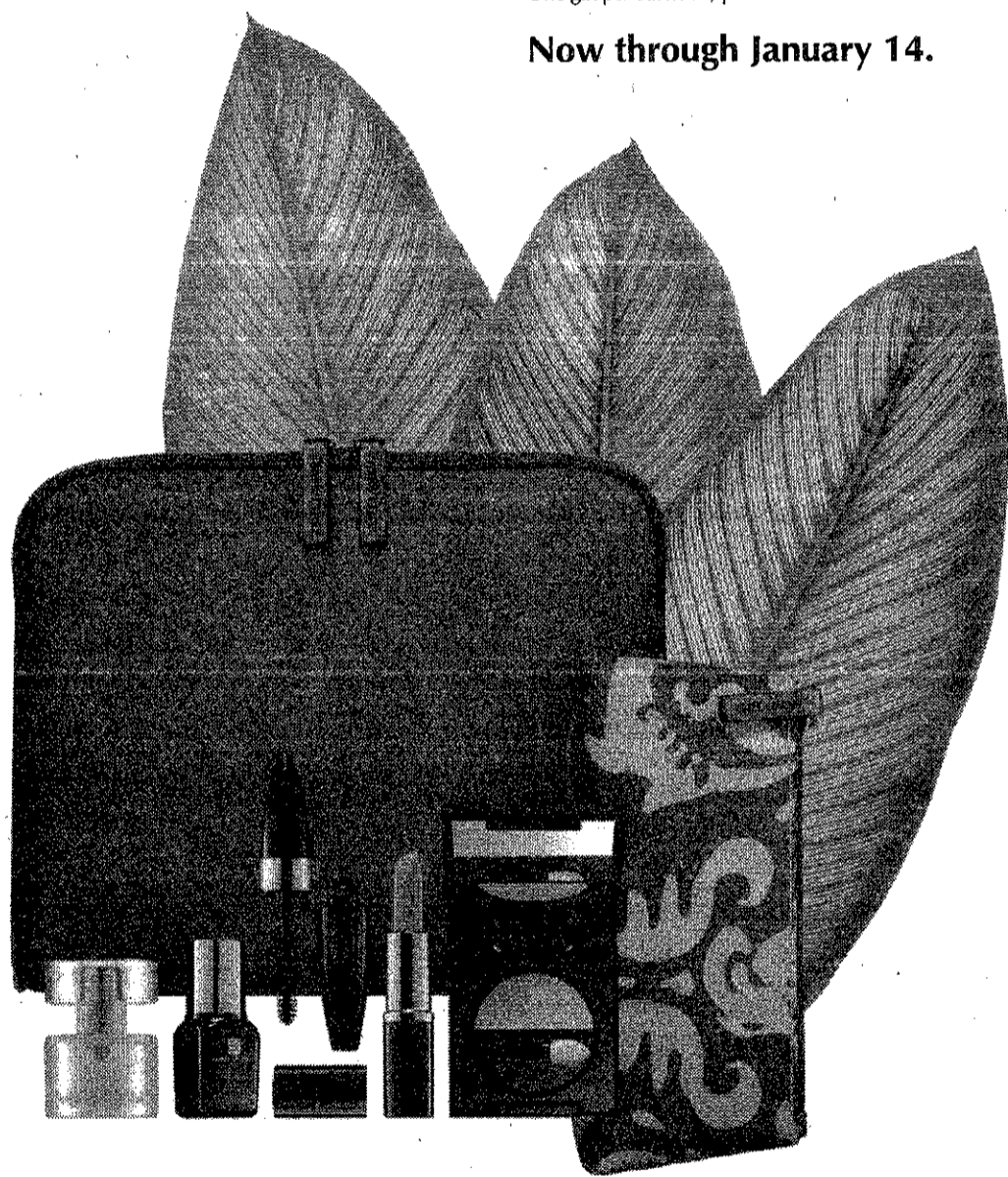
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Baseball cap wigs put lid on hair loss

BY SUE MASON
STAFF WRITER

Battling cancer is one thing; dealing with the hair loss that can happen with chemotherapy is another.

Susie Lucas can't do anything about the former, but she has an answer for the latter — her baseball cap wigs.

"There's such a need for them," said Lucas, the owner of Unique Hair Designs. "It's designed for everyone and anyone who has a need. It's not just patients, but for people who are having a bad hair day."

A licensed cosmetologist, Lucas recognized the need for people with hair loss to have access to a comfortable, stylish and simple hairpiece. In the late 1980s, she came up with the idea of attaching a partial hairpiece around the rim of a baseball cap. The caps are an alternative to traditional wigs, which can be irritating to the

scalp and uncomfortable to wear.

It took her six months to figure out how to assemble the caps and especially to get the hair to fit just right. Lucas buys the hats and strips of hair separately. She uses fitted caps and custom makes the bands of hair. The finished product, she said, "looks like real hair."

Long hair, short hair, straight hair or synthetic braids, baseball caps, slouch hats, sweater caps or dressy hats — Lucas has developed a variety of looks that are stylish and comfortable, especially for cancer patients, priced at less than \$100.

"People who have talked to me about them are surprised they're so reasonably priced," she said. "I want it so that everyone will be able to afford one. I truly believe people buy them and will want to sell them."

So committed was she to her

product, Lucas obtained a patent in 1996. It was a process that reaffirmed her belief that they're needed and gave her confidence to go forward with her project.

"A friend told me about a patent attorney and when I told him what I had he told me to come in," Lucas said. "I remember him saying that he had called his wife to look at the caps and she had said she wished she had had one during the time she was going through chemo."

But even having a patent, the road to getting the caps into the hands of people who could use them has been a slow go.

Trained as a cosmetologist, Lucas at one point had her own shop, but closed it in 1996 because of health problems. She's been operating as a home-based business and had manufactured about 75 caps. She has them on display at

Belleville Beauty Supply at 317 Industrial off Sumpter Road in Belleville and has even visited cancer support groups to demonstrate the caps. This summer, she donated 20 caps for cancer patients at Garden City Hospital.

Those caps are being given to women experiencing hair loss as a result of chemotherapy and conditions, such as alopecia areata, an autoimmune disease in which the immune system mistakenly attacks hair follicles.

"The caps improve self-esteem of patients," said Amy Hotycki, clinical coordinator at Garden City Hospital.

The effects were evident with Sandy Reinhardt, a patient at the hospital who received one of the first caps.

"It's great, really comfortable," Reinhardt said. "It's lifted my spirits 120 percent."

Lucas' dream is to open a shop where she is able to man-



TOM HAWLEY | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Using real hair and hats, Susie Lucas has come up with a patented design that gives people who lose their hair to chemotherapy or alopecia areata something to wear other than a full wig.

ufacture the caps and get them to market, and she has her husband and five grown children telling her to go for it. "My husband tells me to go on, don't stop," she said. "I've put everything into these hats because I feel there's such a need for them. I wish I had the words to express how impor-

tant they are to me." For now, she takes orders and fills them as she receives them. People interested in more information can call her at (734) 334-3491 or visit her Web site at www.uniquehairdesign.net.

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SPORTS

B

Thursday, December 28, 2006

The Observer & Eccentric Newspapers

www.hometownlife.com

Ed Wright, editor . (734) 953-2108 . ewright@hometownlife.com

Sidelines

Plymouth hoop tournament

The second annual Plymouth High School Holiday Basketball Tournament will be held today and Friday in the school's gymnasium.

Today's opening game, which is set to tip off at 5:30 p.m., will pit Riverside (Ont.) High School against Southfield. The nightcap, which will begin at approximately 7:30 p.m., will feature the host Wildcats against Madison Heights Bishop Foley.

The two winners will battle for the championship at 7:30 p.m. Friday. The consolation game will begin at 5:30 p.m.

PCS lacrosse registration

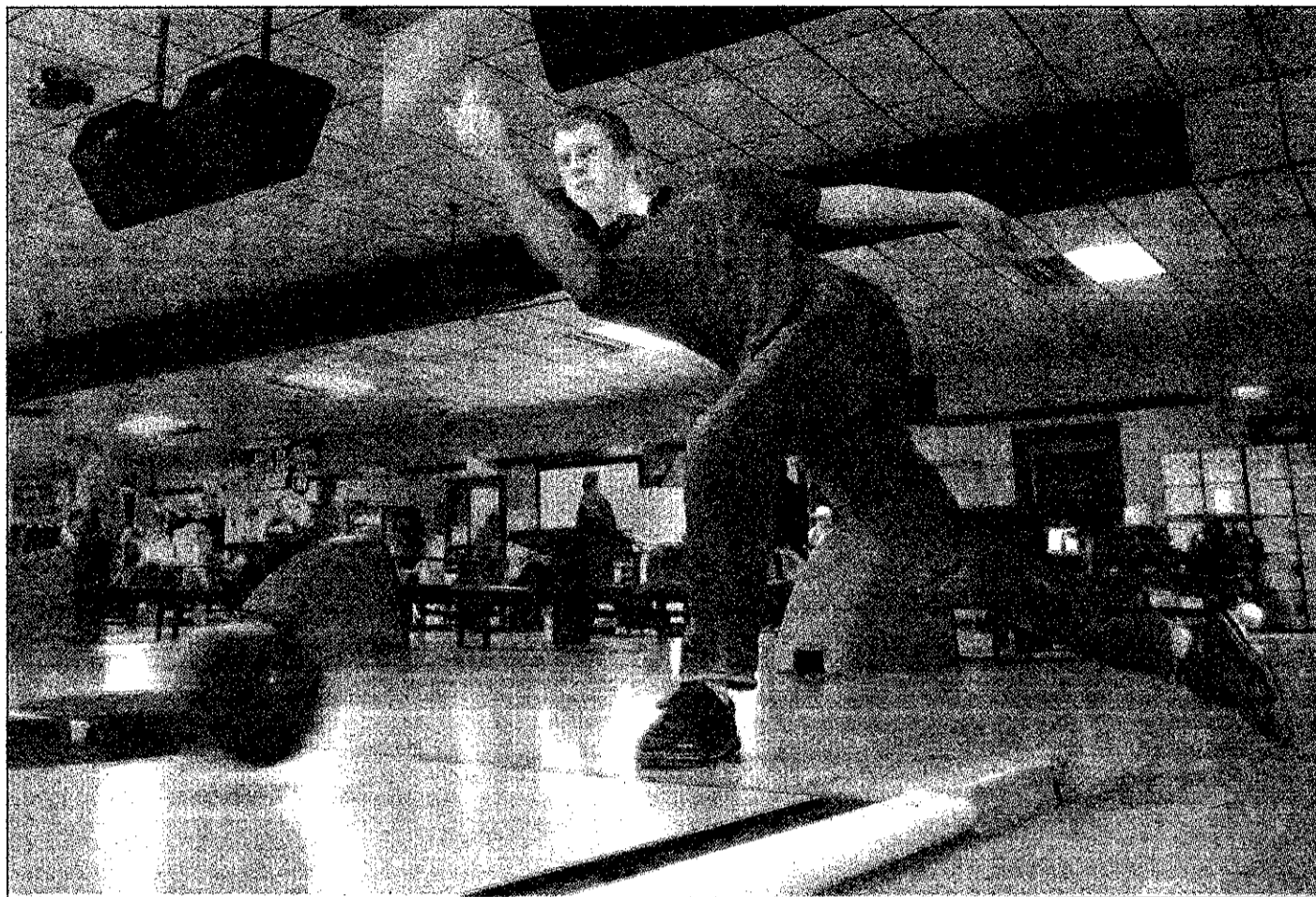
Girls interested in playing lacrosse for the Plymouth-Canton-Salem Lady Warriors are encouraged to attend a registration meeting Thursday, Jan. 4, at 6:30 p.m. in the Waldorf Room of the Plymouth Library.

Pistons youth camp

A Detroit Pistons youth basketball clinic will be held at Ward Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Northville on Saturday, Jan. 27. Coach Steve Moreland will conduct the clinic for boys and girls in grades 1st through 3rd from noon to 2:30 p.m.; and for girls and boys in 4th through 6th grade from 2 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Each participant will receive a "Pistons Basketball" T-shirt. Parents will be able to purchase Pistons tickets at a discount and they will be invited to attend a pre-game "shoot-around" with their children courtside. Refreshments will be provided.

The cost is \$15 per child. Pre-registration is necessary by calling (248) 374-5932.



BILL BRESLER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Canton resident Ryan Sochocki, 14, displays the form that helped him roll a 300 game Dec. 19 in a Sunday morning youth league at Wayne Bowl. The Plymouth High School student carries a 194 average in one of his leagues.

X's mark the spot

14-year-old strikes perfection with 300 game

BY ED WRIGHT
STAFF WRITER

The bowling ball weighed just 15 pounds, but it must have seemed like the weight of the world was cradled in 14-year-old Ryan Sochocki's hands as he started his approach toward the Wayne Bowl pins on the night of Dec. 19.

With nine straight strikes already in the bag, the Plymouth High School freshman was just three pocket-finding deliveries away from a 300 game — a score many of the most-seasoned keglers never register.

"I was a little nervous, more than usual, but I just tried to focus on what I needed to do," said Sochocki (pronounced SO-hockey), recalling the moments before his epic achievement. "I had thrown nine straight strikes once before when I bowled a 278, but when I stepped up there for the 10th frame, I started to feel the pressure a little bit."

Like pieces of metal drawn to a magnet, scores of bowlers from throughout the facility dropped their own balls and hustled down to Sochocki's lanes to get a first-hand glimpse of history in the making.

"During the eighth and ninth frames, I started to notice more people were watching," he remembered. "By the 10th, there were quite a few people crowded around."

Sochocki didn't disappoint them as he nailed the pocket on all three 10th-frame strokes.

"I was so happy because I realized that all the hard work and practice I've been putting into the sport had paid off," said Sochocki, reflecting on his emotions immediately after the 300th pin had dropped.

"My heart was beating pretty fast the last couple of frames," said Sochocki's

PLEASE SEE BOWLER, B3

'300' FACTS AND FIGURES

■ The United States Bowling Congress estimates a 300 is bowled once every 11,500 games by its 4 million sanctioned bowlers.

However, the odds are tougher for youths, making Ryan Sochocki's feat more amazing.

■ P.J. Haggerty of Weimar, Calif., holds the record for most 300 games bowled by someone before they reached their 19th birthday — 28.

■ Robert Mushtare of Fort Drum, N.Y., has bowled two 900 series, the latest on Dec. 5, 2005.

Statistics provided by www.bowl.com, the official Web site of the United States Bowling Congress.

Plymouth Whalers to host pair of games

The front-running Plymouth Whalers are ready to pick up where they left off before the holiday break with a pair of home games this afternoon and Saturday night.

The Whalers (22-10-1-1), who are tied for first with Saginaw in the Ontario Hockey League's West Division, host Windsor (12-19-1-1) today at 2 p.m. at the Compuware Sports Arena. The "Kids Day" matinee showdown will feature several youth-related activities, including face painting, the popular game "Whale of Fortune" and an autograph session with selected Whalers during the second intermission.

On Saturday, the Whalers will face off against Guelph (16-14-1-4) at 7:05 p.m. at Compuware. The Storm is coached by former Red Wing Dave Barr, who was named the OHL's "Coach of the Year" last season. Canton native Joey Underwood is a first-year defenseman for the Storm.

Plymouth's recent hot surge has been led by Evan Brophey, who is tied for the league lead in assists (46) and is fifth in scoring with 60 points in just 34 games.



TOM HAWLEY | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Livonia Churchill's Bradley Evans lays the ball over Garden City's Chris Conroy and into the basket during the Chargers' 53-48 overtime victory Dec. 21.

Late rally lifts Chargers in OT

BY TIM SMITH
STAFF WRITER

The inability to sink free throws down the stretch kept Garden City from putting away visiting Livonia Churchill in a non-league varsity boys basketball game last Thursday, Dec. 21.

As a result, Garden City fell 53-48 in overtime to Churchill. The Cougars (1-5) made just 10 of 26 free throws, and connected on six of 14 opportunities during the fourth quarter and overtime.

"Our free throw shooting killed us," said Williamson, who was optimistic for a while Thursday that his team would earn a second consecutive victory.

Garden City led 14-10 after one quarter and 20-18 at halftime, but the Chargers took a 27-26 margin into the fourth quarter.

The teams traded leads in the fourth quarter.

With about three minutes to go, Livonia Churchill (2-2) trailed by five points, but the Cougars missed free throws that would have maintained that

comfortable margin. Instead, the Chargers made a couple key baskets, forced overtime and took over from there, with a 12-7 edge in overtime.

Another trouble spot for Garden City was rebounding, said Williamson, adding that the Chargers had about twice as many rebounds as the Cougars.

For Churchill, Ryan Rosenick and Brad Evans led the attack with 17 points and 12 points, respectively.

Brett Lackey added 15 points, seven rebounds and six assists for Garden City. Mark Brissette had 12 points and seven rebounds.

Covenant victorious

Durrell Summers scored 40 points and grabbed 15 rebounds Friday night as Redford Covenant defeated visiting Academy of Oak Park, 77-52.

Adding 12 points for the Spartans (5-1) was Jacory Morning. Stephen Chester added eight points and eight rebounds.

Scoring 16 points each for Academy of Oak Park were Troy Burns and Vincent Butts.

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Plymouth cagers nipped by last-minute basket

BY ED WRIGHT
STAFF WRITER

Plymouth's basketball team was just one in-bounds give-and-go play from pulling off its second consecutive impressive road victory on Dec. 20.

The Wildcats (1-2) were tied with Novi, 35-35, when Novi's Mike Longo scored the eventual game-winner off a set in-bounds play with 20 seconds

left. Plymouth's Austin Barnett got off a potential game-tying shot with two seconds left, but it barely missed the mark.

Earlier in the season, the Wildcats recorded a huge victory at Walled Lake Central, which is expected to be one of the top teams in the Western Lakes Activities Association this season.

"We put our selves in a position to win again," said

Plymouth coach Tom Van Wagoner. "We were up three points in the fourth quarter, but our youth and inexperience showed when we gave up that last basket. It's frustrating, too, because we run that same play ourselves."

Novi (4-1) led, 10-4, after one quarter and 17-14 at the intermission. A huge third quarter vaulted Plymouth into the lead, 28-25, with eight minutes to

play. The fourth quarter proved to be a nip-and-tuck battle that the hosts eventually won.

Junior guard Myron Puryear made the best of his first varsity start as he poured in a team-high 12 points, half of which came from a pair of long three-point baskets. Junior point guard Brandon Roberts contributed eight points while junior center Jake Hager had five. Barnett, a senior forward, led

the Wildcats with four rebounds.

Kaleb Dean, Novi's 6-foot-8 center, led the winners with 13 points.

Plymouth hit 12-of-16 free throws (75 percent) while the hosts drained 11-of-18 (61.1 percent) from the charity stripe.

The Wildcats return to action Thursday when it hosts Madison Heights Bishop Foley, Riverside (Ont.) and Southfield

in The Wildcat Holiday tournament. Plymouth will open against Bishop Foley at 7:15 p.m. The night's first game will pit Riverside and Southfield at 5:30 p.m.

The winner of each game will tangle in Friday's 7:15 title game while the opening-round losers will square off at 5:30 p.m.

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Taller Parkway pulls away from Agape

The Canton Agape basketball team suffered its second loss of the season Dec. 21 when it fell 65-53 to Parkway Christian.

Senior guard Jack Anleitner turned in a stellar effort in the losing cause, pouring in a team-high 19 points. Mark Mullett contributed nine

points for the Wolverines while Jared Miller, Brandon Pierce and Michael Ruffin chipped in with seven points a piece.

Joel Williams led the winners with 20.

Parkway led 16-14 after one quarter, 35-27 at the half and 50-43 with eight minutes to

play. "Their length, height and speed were just too much for us," said Agape coach Keith Anleitner. "They go 6-4, 6-4 and 6-3 across the front line and they have two very quick guards. They have 12 players on their roster and they're all good."

RU cagers survive late scare, edge Pats

BY TIM SMITH
STAFF WRITER

Livonia Franklin seemingly handed a gift-wrapped victory to Redford Union three days before Christmas and the Panthers nearly handed it right back.

RU led by double digits virtually the entire game until the fourth, but something that has plagued the Panthers all season happened again. A big lead all but disappeared, with the Patriots' frantic half-court trap sparking a 17-4 run that sliced RU's lead to 46-44 with just 3:15 left in the Dec. 22 non-league varsity boys basketball game.

Franklin's Tyler Canyock (16 points) then missed a triple try that would have finally put the Pats ahead.

That seemed to give Redford Union the break it needed to wiggle off the hook and finish strong in a 58-48 triumph. In the final three minutes, Panthers junior point guard Terrell Beard and senior guard Remington Leverette (14 points) combined for nine points to hold off Franklin.

"Obviously, we have to figure out a way to get our kids to not be so tentative against pressure," said Panthers coach Brett Steele, whose team (3-2) has watched big leads evaporate in every game this season. "We've got to attack pressure."

About his team's Jekyll-and-Hyde impersonation, Patriots

coach Russ Keberly said it was a case of players needing time to figure things out — which they apparently did during halftime.

"We just took a half to settle down and figure out what was working for us," Keberly said. "It was that simple."

The first half didn't work out too well for Franklin, however, as the Panthers (1-3) tallied a mix of outside jumpers and strong moves to the hole.

A 9-0 run, featuring several putbacks, lifted RU to a 20-6 margin early in the second, and the lead grew to 28-13 when junior point guard Eric Mullen dropped in a layup.

Redford Union then closed out the half nicely, on a determined individual move by senior guard Justin Floyd (eight points) with 3.1 seconds to go. Floyd took a pass from Beard, dribbled along the baseline and hit a reverse layup as well as a subsequent foul shot.

Another reason for RU's early dominance was senior forward Tyrone Temple, who scored eight of his 10 points in the first half.

Then, after both teams scored 11 points in the third quarter, with Beard (all 13 points in the second half) and Mullen connecting on triples for the Panthers, RU carried a 42-27 lead into the final stanza.

TURNAROUND

That's when the Patriots suddenly gave the home team no

room to breathe — let alone move the basketball up the floor.

"Once they turned up the pressure," Steele said, "we lost all semblance of an offense."

Big reasons for that were the inspired play of Franklin 6-2 senior forward Alex Reid (10 points, 10 rebounds) and Canyock, who Keberly said might have snapped his early season slump in time for conference games next month.

"I was very happy for Tyler to have the kind of game he did," Keberly said. "He was in a slump, we talked about it. He certainly came to play and put on the kind of demonstration we knew he was capable of all year."

Other Patriots helping turn up the heat on RU included juniors Ryan Matthey (11 points) and Cole Kelly (nine points).

Although Franklin wasn't able to ride the late wave of momentum to a victory, Keberly said he was proud of the effort his team made to nearly come all the way back.

"I think their heart is something that is an intangible skill that may not make us successful every time on the court, but in life," he said. "These kids are good kids, they work hard."

The Panthers will host Redford Thurston at 7 p.m. Friday, Jan. 5.

Franklin's first post-holiday action is also on Jan. 5, at Livonia Stevenson.

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WLAA CONFERENCE RELAYS

WLAA BOYS SWIMMING RELAYS Friday at Salem

FINAL STANDINGS: 1. Livonia Stevenson, 276; 2. Northville, 246; 3. W.L. Northern, 195; 4. Salem, 176; 5. Canton, 160; 6. Plymouth, 152; 7. W.L. Central, 125; 8. Livonia Churchill, 118; 9. W.L. Western, 109; 10. Wayne Memorial, 68; 11. Livonia Franklin, 56.

EVENT RESULTS

400-yard medley relay: 1. Livonia Stevenson (Jeff Pauza, Joey Wingett, Luke Robert, Mike Cruce), 3:46.97; 2. Northville (John Barsley, Chris Keady, Will Bickie, Patrick Keady), 3:52.32; 3. Salem (Matt Underhill, Stan Chen, David Olson, Nick Leone), 3:58.57; 4. Plymouth (Mike Conger, Kyle Doll, Jack Distel, Chris Wilson), 4:10.69; 5. W.L. Central (Ryan Miceli, Mike Wilson, Brad Nedrow, Sean Riley), 4:14.56; 6. Livonia Churchill (Steve Jones, Mark Gordon, Ben Lamerand, Jake Keeler), 4:18.63; 7. W.L. Northern (Kylie Rattiff, Morgen Hummel, Riley Cole, Evan Cole), 4:20.81; 8. Livonia Franklin (Shane Shelton, Tim Tyler, Nick Anthony, Andy Rossiter), 4:22.23.

Rattiff, Alexander Musto, Brendan Clarke, John Shaw), 1:55.54; 5. Plymouth (Jack Dielst, Tony McLaughlin, Justin Scaparo, Frank Su), 1:57.85; 6. Salem (Cameron Dunn, Brian Fifield, Joe De Tassanyi, Chris Pavloff), 2:04.90; 7. W.L. Central (Ryan Miceli, Tyler James, John Molnar, Brad Nedrow), 2:06.95; 8. Franklin (Scott Ansteth, Danny Kosmala, Joe Michniewicz, Eric Madaj), 2:24.63.

1-meter diving: 1. Northville, 347.75; 2. W.L. Western, 271.40; 3. Stevenson, 253.35; 4. W.L. Central, 237.20; 5. Churchill, 226.20; 6. W.L. Northern, 169.20.

400 medley relay: 1. W.L. Northern (Riley Cole, Ryan Gerber, Matthew Zavislak, Eric Erdos), 4:02.98; 2. Salem (Stan Chen, Matt Underhill, David Olson, Nick Leone), 4:04.46; 3. Northville (Greg Sheppard, Joe Kargula, Anthony Adamowicz, Ben Schonek), 4:07.76; 4. Canton (Matt Carlson, Kevin Karlinski, Russell McBain, Brandon Zhang), 4:09.16; 5. Stevenson (Bryan Bielecki, Aaren Marecki, John Loria, Scott Geverink), 4:21.62; 6. Churchill (Ben Lamerand, Joey Libarati, Mark Gordon, Drew Randall), 4:34.62; 7. W.L. Central (Corey Casagrande, Matt Jannetti, Tyler James, Ben Baumgartner), 4:42.38; 8. Plymouth (Jack Gruszczynski, Adam Wing, Dan Stocsup, Nick Cobane), 4:45.22.

500 freestyle relay: 1. Stevenson (Chris Behler, Chrales Turio, Kyle Hermann, Jeff Pauza), 4:29.57; 2. Canton (Brandon Tolinski, Mike Booker, Robert Blaesser, Ross Schwarz), 4:47.34; 3. Northville (Nate Lunn, Patrick Keady, Clay Maloure, John Bickie), 4:49.72; 4. Churchill (Matt Castelli, Jason Young, Jake Keeler, Drew Randall), 5:03.75; 5. Plymouth (Alex Ruedger, Ryan Harrison, Jack Gruszczynski, Joe Eudy), 5:15.49; 6. W.L. Central (John Montgomery, Mac Drees, Sean Riley, Torey Tederington), 5:21.54; 7. W.L. Northern (Ian Gilgallon, Regan Parmentier, Kevin Dannecker, Alexander Musto), 5:31.90; 8. Salem (Ryan Hartwig, Troy Kerchen, Daniel Kuang, Chad Newton), 5:46.45.

200 freestyle relay: 1. W.L. Northern (Taylor Tannous, Brian Carter, Eric Erdos, Matthew Zavislak), 1:47.29; 2. Stevenson (Brendan Schoff, David Bladecki, Travis Hatt, Ryan Scott), 1:49.50; 3. Northville (John Lubisco, Erik Peterson, Chris Keady, Dan O'Brien), 1:53.67; 4. Salem (Jimmy Crabill, Nathan Spala, Cameron Dunn, Casey Olson), 1:56.35; 5. Wayne Memorial (Jacob Barnes, Danny Shirley, Steven Ogg, Jordan Holland), 1:59.85; 6. Plymouth (Ethan Weiner, Ben Ambrose, Justin Scaparo, Jason Oldani), 2:02.66; 7. Canton (Robert Goodwin, Matt Figlewicz, Chris Marinica, Eddie Koelzer), 2:05.82; 8. W.L. Western (Steven Nielsen, Rodrigo Andrade, Ivan Malinov, Jason Sherbel), 2:10.84.

200 breaststroke relay: 1. Stevenson (John oria, David Bladecki, Eric Schuman, Joey Wingett), 2:03.56; 2. W.L. Northern (John Shaw, Kevin Dannecker, Morgen Hummel, Brian Carter), 2:11.49; 3. Northville (Greg Sheppard, Colin Smith, Chance Miller, Erik Peterson), 2:11.51; 4. Plymouth (Tony McLaughlin, Frank Su, Dan Stocsup, Kyle Doll), 2:11.77; 5. Franklin (Tim Tyler, Shane Shelton, Nick Anthony, Andy Rossiter), 2:20.50; 6. W.L. Central (Ben Baumgartner, John Molnar, Artur Stepanov, Mike Wilson), 2:21.78; 7. Salem (Matt Rose, Kory Dondzila, Varun Bharadwaj, Paul Cherewick), 2:32.88; 8. Canton (Mike Booker, Matt Figlewicz, Dennis Rose, Joe Spillane), 2:35.09.

200 backstroke relay: 1. Stevenson (Brendan Schoff, Bryan Bielecki, Jimmy Vavis, Ryan Scott), 1:52.14; 2. Northville: 1. John Lubisco, John Barsley, Anthony Adamowicz, Clay Maloure), 1:53.27; 3. W.L. Western (Shane Rauss, Steven Nielsen, Dimitry Bugrimov, Rizart Stafa), 1:56.67; 4. Plymouth (Mike Conger, Ethan Weiner, Chris Wilson, Ben Ambrose), 1:58.51; 5. Salem (Nick Hoffmeyer, Alex Suriano, Casey Olson, Jimmy Crabill), 2:06.35; 6. Livonia Churchill (Ricky Scully, Matt Castelli, Jason Young, Steve Jones), 2:09.70; 7. W.L. Northern (Christopher Platt, Brendan Clarke, Evan Gerber, Paul Coldren), 2:12.86; 8. Canton (Robert Goodwin, Jordan Gorzalski, Eddie Koelzer, Rick Peters), 2:14.62.

200 butterfly relay: 1. Stevenson (Mike Cruce, Scott Geverink, Aaren Marecki, Robert Luke), 1:46.44; 2. Northville (Will Bickie, Joe Kargula, Ben Schonek, Jake Lane), 1:46.53; 3. Canton (Chris Marinica, Ross Schwarz, Joe Spillane, Jon Templeton), 1:52.22; 4. W.L. Northern (Kylie



Talented swimmer

Livonia Churchill captain Amanda Timson enjoyed a success-filled senior season this fall as she placed fifth in the 500-yard freestyle at the highly competitive Western Lakes Activities Association league meet. Timson was also a key member of the Chargers' 400 freestyle relay quartet that placed sixth at the WLAA league meet. Timson, who was named the team's MVP, was the lone Charger to compete in an individual event (500 freestyle) at the annual MISCA meet. Timson was inadvertently omitted from the list of All-Observerland swimmers that was published Dec. 17.

BOWLER

FROM PAGE B1

mom, Kerri. "I didn't want to talk to him because I knew he had to focus. A couple of the other bowlers' dads were talking to me right before the 10th frame, but I was so nervous, I just sat there and said, 'uh-huh, yeah, uh-huh.' "When he got the last strike, I just screamed."

Judging by Sochocki's impressive bowling resume, the 300 game he registered earlier this month won't be his last. The Canton teenager carries a 194 average in one of the two youth leagues he competes in and he has been taking periodic

lessons from noted instructor Michelle Mullens since he was 12. "Michelle helps me with just about every part of my game, especially the mental part," said Sochocki, who has already earned more than \$1,000 in college scholarships thanks to his performances at national tournaments. "She uses video recording and she'll just watch me practice, then make suggestions."

"Probably the most important thing I've learned from her is that no matter what happens, you don't want to get mad. If you do, it only makes things worse."

A few days after his date with perfection, Sochocki's achievement scrolled across

the sign that sits beside the entrance to Plymouth High School.

"That was neat," he said. "Some of my friends saw it and congratulated me."

Sochocki is the second member of his family to notch a 300. His dad, Rick, rolled the perfect score first in 2004.

The younger Sochocki's long-term goals include bowling for a college team — he mentioned powerhouse Wichita State as a preferred destination — and some day making it as a professional bowler.

On Dec. 19, he provided at least 300 reasons why those aspirations have a good chance of becoming reality.

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New Year's Eve in Texas will be

About eight hours before we turn the calendar to 2007, the Detroit Lions will be finished with a disastrous 2006. Forget the funny hats, noisemakers and bubbly. Win or lose, this season finale will end a season to forget.

No matter what happens, the Lions will wrap up with a worse record than last year. It wasn't supposed to be that way. One of the reasons Steve Mariucci was fired and Dick Jauron was not retained as head coach is because they couldn't find a way to get players to respond to their tutoring. Rod Marinelli was fresh blood with a stricter approach and all he needed to do was "coach them up."

There was certainly no country club atmosphere this time around. From the get-go, Lions players knew what they were in for and it just



Mark Wilson

never resulted in victories. "I believe in our system and I know with hard work we can get this done," Marinelli said repeatedly during this campaign.

To Marinelli's credit, he never wavered on that thinking. As he heads into his final game of his first season, Marinelli feels that what he and his assistants tried to do was the right thing. Mike

Martz changed the offense, Donnie Henderson adjusted the defense and Marinelli took control of that defensive line. There were just too many injuries and not enough talent to accomplish their goals.

Bill Parcells has Dallas going to the playoffs.

Despite winning nine times in 2005, the Cowboys missed out on the postseason. Not this time. They clinched a playoff spot a couple of weeks ago. It's more amazing when you think they benched a potential Hall of Fame quarterback in Drew Bledsoe for an unproven Tony Romo. He ripped off a four-game winning streak in which he was among the best signal-callers in the NFL. Not bad for a guy who had never thrown a single pass before taking over the Cowboys' offense.

Romo is among the league leaders in quarterback rating and is piling up yards and touchdown passes in a big way. Last year, he was battling with former Michigan QB Drew Henson for the backup spot to Bledsoe. Romo won out and Henson was sent packing. The only thing the former Walter Payton Award winner did as a

Cowboys quarterback in 2005 was take a knee to end a game against Philadelphia in October. Other than that, he was the holder on kicks.

By the way, the Payton award is given to the best player in NCAA Division I-AA. That's small school stuff for a guy who spent his college career at Eastern Illinois University. Romo was of No. 17 with the Panthers down there in Charleston. If you don't know where Charleston, Ill., is, you are not alone.

"I don't think we can just do this and do that whenever we want," Parcells said when commenting on his Romo-led offense. "Teams are going to adjust to that pretty quick. I am happy we are in the tournament, however."

Parcells is old school and calls making the playoffs, "being in the tournament." Dallas hasn't been

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There's no champagne jam for Lions

...the tournament" since 2003. He was hired by Jerry Jones that season to do more than just make the playoffs. Parcels was hired to do what he did twice with the New York Giants and that is to win Super Bowls.

This season, Parcels has had to put up with the league's biggest enigma, Terrell Owens. T.O. was fined 35-grand two weeks ago for spitting at Atlanta cornerback DeAngelo Hall. It was just another incident in a long line of incidents involving the Cowboys' All-Pro receiver. He is one of the most talented players in all of sports, but it's the stuff away from catching passes that irks Parcels.

"I try to stay away from talking about him because it's all you guys want to talk about," said the man known as "The Tuna." "I just try to get the player to play to his potential on the field.

That's what I told you when the player came here."

Parcels, who was once a Lions draft pick out of Wichita State, does his best to not even say Owens' name. When grilled at his Monday press conference following the spitting incident, Parcels stayed away from addressing T.O. as a distraction during a playoff year.

"I know it's a story and I am trying to be polite and answer the questions you people ask," he said. "I just try to keep balance myself."

Never a dull moment out at Valley Ranch. What would Dallas Cowboys football be without a little controversy from week to week? Owens still remains a vital cog in Parcels' offense.

The Lions have lost all three games they have played against Parcels as Cowboys coach. This

will be the third straight year they have played at Texas Stadium in Irving. Last season, Bledsoe was awful in the 20-7 win over Detroit. Marion Barber scored two rushing touchdowns and the Dallas 'D' did the job.

That game came one week before Mariucci's Waterloo in the Thanksgiving contest against Atlanta. This time it ends the year, literally.

"We just want to play well and finish on a good note," Lions defensive back Dré Bly said.

It's another Roy Williams vs. Roy Williams game. Cowboys star safety Roy Williams against Lions receiver Roy Williams. Too bad University of North Carolina basketball coach Roy Williams is busy. Three Roy Williams in the same building might set a new Roy Williams record.

An anniversary of sorts is coming up. In two weeks, it will have been 15 years since the Lions' last playoff win. It came against the Cowboys at the Silverdome in blowout fashion. The final score was 38-6 that day. Dallas and Detroit were anointed by John Madden as "the teams of the '90s." Dallas went on to win three Super Bowls, while the Lions never sniffed another postseason victory. It remains their only playoff win in the last 49 years.

Season ends Sunday in Texas. Not a moment too soon.

Mark Wilson is host of the Lions pre- and postgame shows on WKRC-FM (97.1). He's a former Associated Press and Michigan Association of Broadcasters Michigan SportsCaster of the Year. He lives in West Bloomfield.

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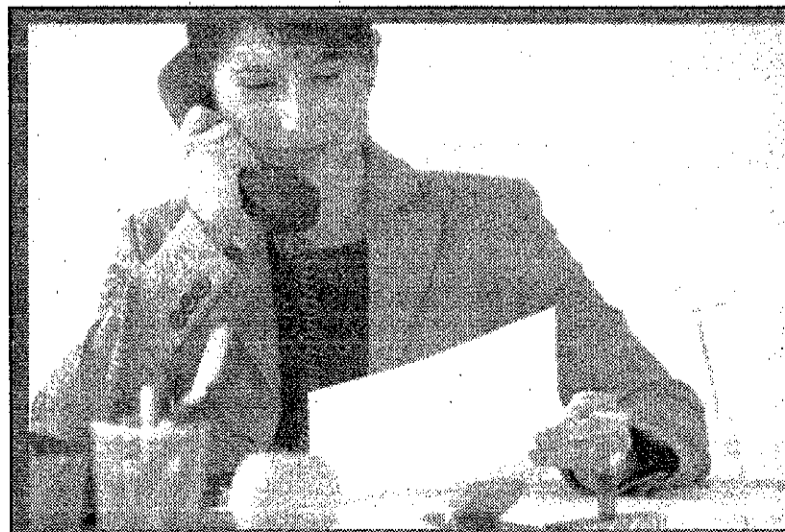
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Balanced scoring leads Charger icers to win

Four different players scored goals to lead Livonia Churchill to a 4-2 victory over Northville Dec. 20 in a Western Lakes Activities boys hockey game played at Eddie Edgar Arena.

The Chargers improved to 4-1-0 overall and 4-0-0 in the WLAA.

"It was a great WLAA game; it had a good pace," said Churchill coach Pete Mazzoni. "We are just trying to keep improving each week and continue to improve. We are getting different goal scorers each game. Northville is a very gritty team that competes real hard."

Churchill led 2-1 after one period thanks to goals from Steve Greco (from Kody Stong and Kyle Burke) and Bryon Niemczak (from Tony Ross

and Scott Sundberg). The Mustangs' lone first-period lamp-lighter came off the stick of Mike Garbarz, who picked up helpers from Anthony Deneau and Ian Jezak.

Garrett Miencier's goal three minutes into the third period (from Keith Yackley and Phil Wendecker) put the Chargers ahead 3-1. Northville's Kyle Ziomek and Churchill's Dustin Wischmeyer closed out the scoring late in the third.

Scott Lewan earned the victory in net for the Chargers, stopping 15 shots. Northville net-minder Ted Kiernan suffered the loss despite recording 23 saves.

Churchill outshot Northville, 27-17.

STEVENSON 8, FRANKLIN 0: On Friday, the Spartans improved

to 8-1-1 with a white-washing of the Patriots in a WLAA game played at Eddie Edgar Arena. The loss dropped Franklin to 2-4-2.

Stevenson led 2-0 after one period and 5-0 after 15 minutes to play.

Chris Rapp paced the winners' offensive effort with two goals and an assist. Six Spartans lit the lamp once, including T.J. Gosselin and Zach Roberts, who netted their first career goals.

Other goal-scorers were Marcus Voran, John Vella, Mike Gibbons and Mark Bekkala. Vella also contributed two assists.

Drew MacEachern starred in net for the Spartans, recording 16 saves for his first shutout of the season.

"Overall, the guys played good tonight," said Stevenson coach Mike Humitz. "We moved the puck well and created a lot of opportunities off the movement."

FRANKLIN 2, SALEM 1: On Dec. 20, the Patriots rode the solid goal-tending of Austin Mesler and goals from Alex Wypch and Ben Kubiak. Jordan Short and Rob Ringe assisted on Wypch's goals while Derek Cripe and Tyler Barnes.

The Rocks' lone goal came from Nathan Werda, who was assisted by Kris Brandt and Evan Meibers.

"We beat a very good hockey team," said Franklin coach Terry Jobbitt. "Our goal-tending was superior and we had a great effort from our entire team. We were very happy with

this victory as Salem played very good hockey and we continue to improve with each game."

Mesler stopped 26 shots while Salem net-minder Ralph Aspenwall re-directed 18.

CANTON 2, W.L. CENTRAL 2: On Friday in a game played at the Arctic Edge in Canton, the Chiefs (2-8-1) raced to a 2-0 lead before hanging on for the tie.

Senior captain Brad Barath opened the scoring with 3:36 left in the opening period when he scored off assists from J.P. LaFontaine and Alex Lajoie. LaFontaine doubled the hosts' advantage less than three minutes into the second period. He was assisted by Zach Nowak and Barath.

The Vikings rebounded with

two goals (Drew Sennhenn and Deano Nicholaidis) within a three-minute span of the third period to knot the contest.

"Overall, I thought we played well, but we had a couple of defensive breakdowns in the third period that cost us," said Canton coach Dan Abraham. "Hopefully, the kids learn from the mistakes and they don't repeat them in the future."

"Our goalie, Kevan Swanberg, was solid. Both goals he gave up were break-aways."

On Saturday, the Chiefs upended Ypsilanti Lincoln, 2-1, behind strong goal-tending from Swanberg. Details of the game were not available at presstime.

Panther wrestlers pin loss on Clarenceville

Redford Union's varsity wrestling team pounded Livonia Clarenceville, 60-12, in a Dec. 20 non-conference dual meet.

For the Panthers, Trevor Gorman earned a 9-3 decision over Spencer Haworth at 285 and Matt Kibner defeated

Jake Ruth 12-6 at 112.

RU also strung together several wins by fall. Sean Meixner pinned Scott Convery in 1:43 at 130, Keith Landen pinned Tony Brandt in 4:42 at 135 and Zac Goins pinned Tim Siecinski in 4:32 at 160.

Capturing their weights via void were Redford Union's Michael D'Arcangelo (103), Brandon Gutierrez (119) and Adam Kibner (152).

For the Trojans, Derek Robbins pinned Matt Birbetch in 3:28 to win at 145 and Andrew Jasmer pinned

his opponent at 189 in just 59 seconds.



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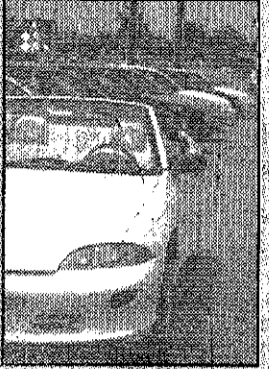
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Advertising Feature

CAReport



By Wendy Clem
Avanti News Features

Sporting new color or trim choices and changes in wheels for two 2007 models, the GMC Envoy is a great little SUV and consistent with Envoy quality in recent years.

It's pretty. It's comfy. It can take the tough roads and cruise along smooth pavement - in style. Don't overlook this Envoy if you need a value-packed sport-utility vehicle.

Reminiscent of its sister, the 2007 Chevy TrailBlazer, the 2007 Envoy has a new look. The arcs over the wheels have risen, and the belt line holds a new, higher position. Chrome trim is now an option, along with wheels designed with six spokes. New exterior colors are Silvermist Metallic, Midnight Blue Metallic and Graphite Metallic.

A bigger grille, complete with a protective sheath over the front end, has also made its debut. With its standard suspension, control is similar to that of an auto, especially on smooth roads. But even traveling bumpy surfaces and back roads is comfortable, particularly when benefiting from the optional load-leveling suspension.

Acceleration in the Envoy gets considerable applause. It has a quiet drive. The is little engine and road noise in this truck.

Respectable passing ability is achieved with the V6, but the availability of two sizes of engine kicks up the power. Research.car.com <<http://research.car.com/>> favorably akins its power to pass, overall handling and comfort with that of the Ford Explorer and Mercury Mountaineer.

The Envoy Denali version is equipped with a 5.3-liter V8 and 300 horsepower, and utilizes Displacement on Demand and Variable Valve Timing mechanisms. That technology, under light load use, helps to save on fuel by turning off half of the engine's cylinders, and boosts power overall.



2007 GMC Envoy Vehicle class: Sport-utility vehicle. Power: 4.2-liter V6 engine. Mileage: 16 city / 22 highway. Where built: Moraine, Ohio. Base price: \$26,560. The 2007 GMC Envoy offers improved storage, better cargo area accessibility and a plusher interior -- all starting at \$27,000.

The Denali Envoy offers cosmetic upgrades: Nuance leather interior with heated front seats and stitching accents; special air improvements for the engine; aluminum wheels; and grilles shaped like honeycombs. The standard Envoy engine size is a 4.2-liter V6, with 291 horsepower and 277 foot pounds of torque, and like the Denali, it has a 4-speed automatic transmission. Each vehicle has either Autotrac 4-wheel drive or rear-wheel drive.

For greater safety, the Envoy comes with all-disc anti-lock brakes as well as StabiliTrak, a rapid and exact pressure that's applied through sensors to the appropriate brakes to assist in keeping the vehicle on course.

Also standard is a tire-pressure monitoring system. Side-curtain airbags are optional.

The 2007 Envoy has earned the highest possible National Highway Traffic and Safety Administration grade for side-impact crash tests, the 5-star rating. A Spacesaver steel rim helps to store the spare wheel securely. The front suspension is wishbone-shaped and independent with a stabilizer bar and coil springs, while the rear suspension is rigid with stabilizer bar and coil springs.

The multi-point injection fuel system gives up 22 miles to the gallon on the highway and 16 in the city, but

maintains only a 22-gallon tank -- a distinct downside for travelers.

The Envoy's interior is decidedly more plush than some of the competition's, like Jeep. This can all be had for a \$27,000 price tag.

There is new respect for the design in the front seat -- the dashboard, including the optional navigation system, will be far more accessible to most drivers. Also, the seats bear an upgrade in upholstery as well as include reclining front bucket seats and the ingenious split rear seat that folds down for added cargo space.

XM Satellite Radio, a DVD entertainment system, adjustable pedals for variable power, and an MP3-capable player are more options for the Envoy. Add-ons include head curtain side airbags, which are mounted in the roof; and a larger DVD screen for rear passengers. Trailering equipment is another notable extra.

Storage capacity has been improved on in the rear, and can be generally more easily reached, due in large part to the new power rear liftgate.

Wendy Clem covers the automotive beat for Avanti NewsFeatures. Write her at wendyclem@gmail.com. Mail to: wendyclem@gmail.com @2006, Fracassa Communications.

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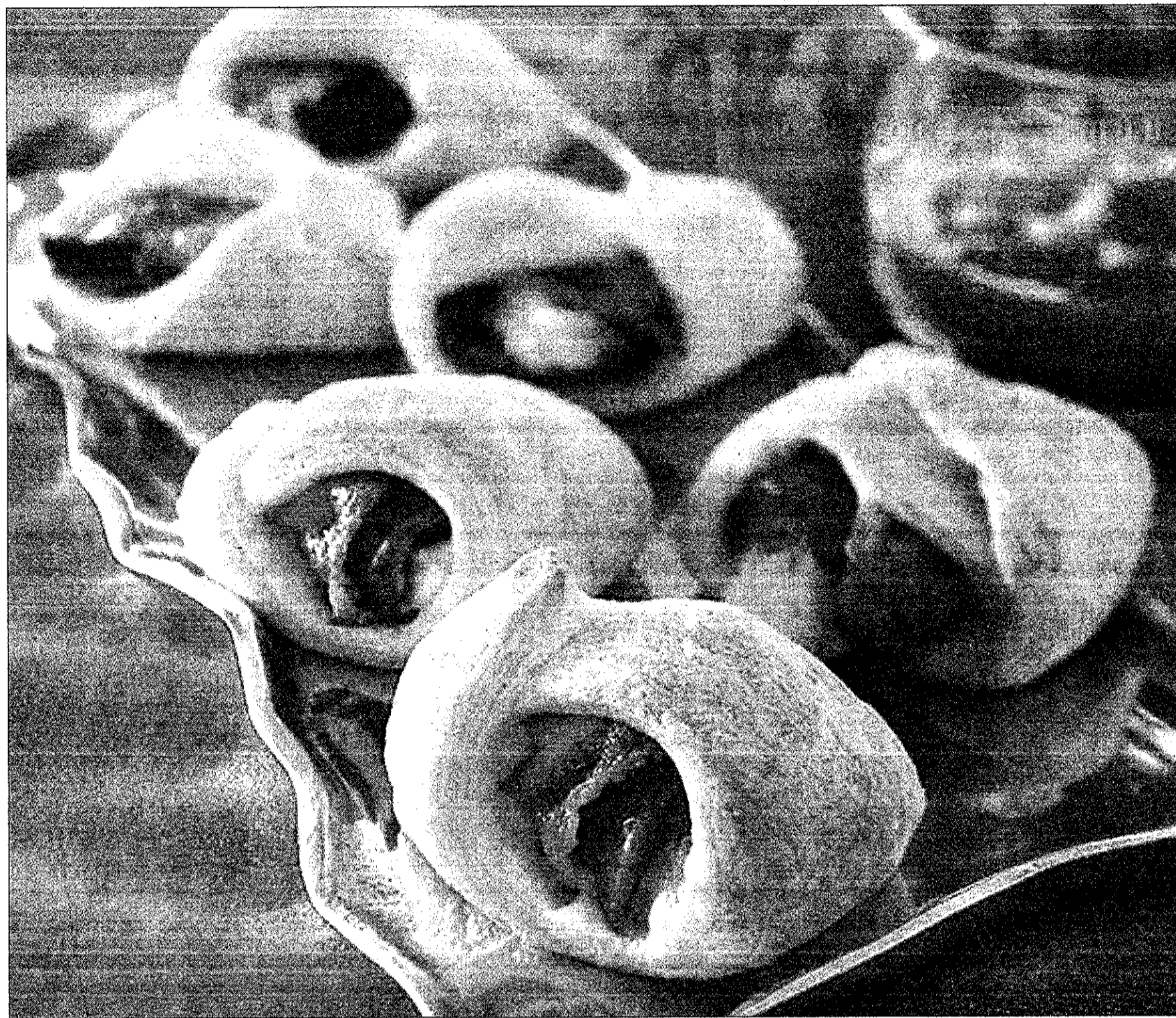
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Try these delectable appetizers

BACON-CHILE RELLENOS

- 4 jalapeno chilies (about 3 inches long)
- 1/2 cup Boursin cheese with garlic and herbs (from a 5.2-ounce container)
- 8 slices packaged precooked bacon (from 2.2-ounce package)
- 1 8-ounce can of refrigerated crescent dinner rolls, such as Pillsbury
- 1/2 cup salsa (Old El Paso Thick n' Chunky)

Heat oven to 375 degrees F. Carefully remove stems from chiles; cut each in half lengthwise and again horizontally to make 4 pieces. Remove and discard seeds. Spoon about 1 teaspoon cheese into each chile quarter. Wrap half slice of bacon around each.

On cutting board, unroll dough; separate dough into 8 triangles. From center of longest side to opposite point, cut each triangle in half, making 16 triangles. Place chile, cheese side down, on dough triangle. Fold one point of triangle over filling; fold two remaining points over first point. Place on ungreased cookie sheet.

Bake 12 to 15 minutes or until golden brown. Immediately remove from cookie sheet. Serve with salsa. Makes 16 servings.

Recipe courtesy of Pillsbury.

DOUBLE-CRUST PIZZA MELTS

- 2 8-ounce cans of refrigerated crescent dinner rolls
- 1/2 cup pizza sauce or 3 tablespoons tomato paste with basil, garlic and oregano
- 1 3.5-ounce package of sliced pepperoni
- 2 cups shredded mozzarella cheese
- 1 egg, beaten
- 2 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano leaves
- 1 cup pizza sauce, if desired

Heat oven to 375 degrees F. Grease cookie sheet. On cookie sheet, unroll 1 can of dough into 1 large rectangle. With floured rolling pin or fingers, roll or press dough into 12-by-9-inch rectangle, firmly pressing perforations to seal.

Spread pizza sauce over dough to within 1/2 inch of edges. Top with pepperoni and mozzarella cheese.

On 14-inch length of parchment paper, unroll remaining can of dough. Press to make 12-by-9-inch rectangle, firmly pressing perforations to seal. While holding paper with dough, turn dough upside down to cover cheese. Remove paper. Brush with beaten egg. Sprinkle with Parmesan cheese and oregano.

Bake 12 to 15 minutes or until golden brown. Let stand on cooling rack 5 to 10 minutes. Move to cutting board. Using pizza cutter, cut into 16 squares. Cut each square in half diagonally. Serve with pizza sauce, if desired. Makes 32 servings.

Recipe courtesy of Pillsbury.

SINFUL STUFFED POTATOES

- 12 small new potatoes
- 6 cups water
- 1/2 teaspoon of kosher salt
- 1/2 cup feta
- 1/2 cup pine nuts, toasted
- 2 tablespoons chopped green olives
- 1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
- 1/2 teaspoon chopped lemon zest

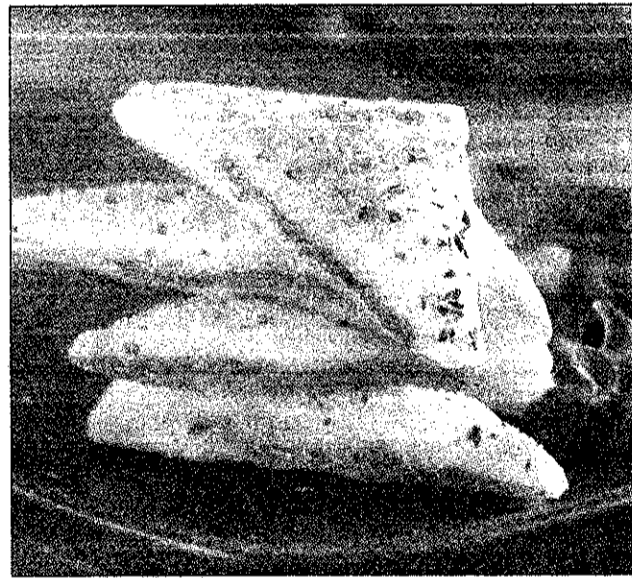
PLEASE SEE APPETIZERS, D3

Bacon-chile rellenos make a smoky treat for holiday appetizer trays.

PILLSBURY

Good things, small packages

Serve up bite-sized delights for a holiday bash



PILLSBURY

Get the party started with double crust pizza melts.

Holiday parties seem to lend themselves to a seasonal buffet full of bite-sized eats. And when it comes to friends and relatives, each appetizer tells a tale. There's the family member who insists on bringing homemade bruschetta to the annual Christmas party, and the friend who's bacon roll-up bites are always a hit. From the elaborate appetizer to the can't miss cut-out sugar cookie, small plates shine during the holiday season. Savory or sweet, they're the perfect addition to any potluck party. And bite-size can be just right for children who are too busy daydreaming about gifts to sit still at the table and eat a proper dinner. This season we've compiled some "can't-miss" recipes to add to your holiday menu.

Columnists to return: Tech Savvy by Rick Broida will return next week. Off the Air with Dick Purtan & Purtan's People will return Jan. 11.

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APPETIZERS

FROM PAGE D1

- 1/4 teaspoon oregano
- 1/4 black pepper
- 12 parsley leaves, optional for garnish

Cut a thin slice off the top and bottom of each potato. Cut each potato in half. Place in a saucepan and cover with water. Add salt. Bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce heat and simmer until potatoes are tender, about 10 to 15 minutes. Don't overcook. Strain and let cool.

Crumble feta in a small bowl, add pine nuts, green olives, olive oil, lemon zest, oregano and black pepper. Mix well. This mixture can be made up to two days in advance, and kept refrigerated. Let it sit out at room temperature one hour before assembling.

Assemble by scooping out the center of each potato with a spoon or melon-baller. Then fill the centers with a teaspoon of the feta mixture. Garnish with parsley if desired.

Recipe can be found in *Cocktail Food: 50 Finger Foods with Attitude*, by Mary Corpening Barber and Sara Corpening Whiteford.

CAPRESE SKEWERS

- 1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar
- 1 tablespoon plus one teaspoon extra virgin olive oil
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
- 1/4 teaspoon kosher salt
- 4 ounces of mozzarella cheese cut into 2 1/2-inch cubes
- 24 small cherry tomatoes
- 24 small to medium fresh basil leaves
- 24 skewers or toothpicks

Whisk together balsamic vinegar, a tablespoon of olive oil, 1/4 teaspoon of pepper and salt in a small bowl. This can be prepared up to three days in advance.

Toss the mozzarella cubes in 1 teaspoon of olive oil and 1/4 teaspoon of pepper. Add salt to taste.

Assemble skewers by sliding on a cherry tomato, one folded basil leaf and a cube of mozzarella on each toothpick. Arrange all 24 on a plate and brush with the balsamic vinegar mixture. Serve immediately.

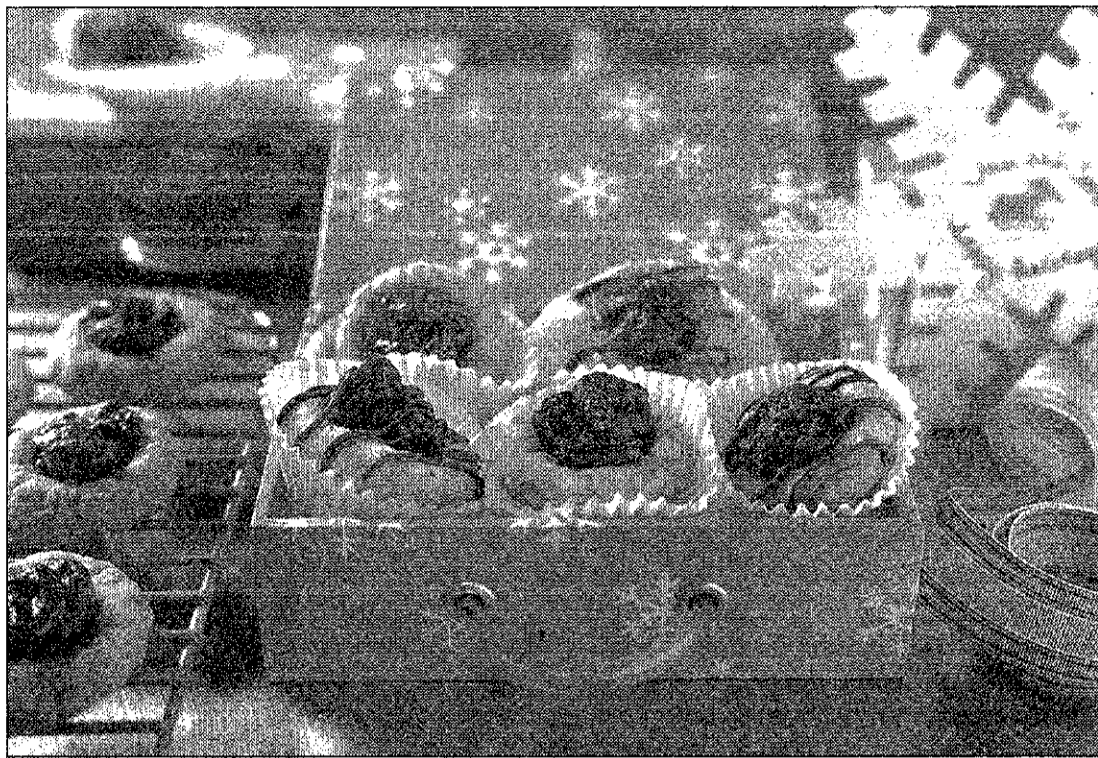
Recipe can be found in *Cocktail Food: 50 Finger Foods with Attitude*, by Mary Corpening Barber and Sara Corpening Whiteford.

ARTICHOKE AND SPINACH SWIRLS

- 1 package (17.3 ounce) frozen puff pastry sheets
- 1/2 cup mayonnaise
- 1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 teaspoon onion powder
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 1 package (10 ounces) frozen chopped spinach, thawed and well-drained
- 1 can (14 ounces) artichoke hearts, drained, chopped

Thaw the pastry sheets at room temperature for about 40 minutes. Heat the oven to 400 degrees F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

Stir the mayonnaise, cheese, onion powder, garlic powder, black pepper, spinach and arti-



Try these Cranberry Oat Thumbprint cookies and start a new holiday tradition.



Try these mini raspberry almond treats to satisfy a sweet tooth.

chokes in a small bowl.

Unfold one pastry sheet on a lightly floured surface. With the short side facing you, spread half of the spinach mixture on the pastry to within 1 inch of the edges. Starting at the short sides, roll up like a jelly roll. Repeat with remaining pastry sheet and spinach mixture.

Cut each roll into 20 1/2-inch slices. Place two inches apart on prepared baking sheets. Bake for 15 minutes or until golden. Remove and cool slightly on a wire rack. Serve warm or at room temperature. Makes 40 pastries.

Recipe courtesy of www.puffpastry.com.

MINI RASPBERRY-ALMOND SWIRLS

- 1/4 cup sugar
- 1/4 cup slivered almonds
- 13 ounce package of cream cheese, softened and cut in pieces
- 1/4 teaspoon vanilla
- 1/4 teaspoon almond extract
- 1 egg yolk
- 1 8-ounce can of refrigerated crescent dinner rolls
- 1/4 cup seedless red raspberry jam
- 3 tablespoons semisweet chocolate chips
- 1 teaspoon shortening
- 24 fresh raspberries for garnish

Heat oven to 375 degrees F. Spray 24 mini-muffin cups with

cooking spray. In food processor, place sugar and almonds. Cover; process about 30 seconds or until almonds are finely ground. Add cream cheese, vanilla, almond extract and egg yolk. Cover; process about 10 seconds or until well blended.

On lightly floured surface, unroll dough into 1 large rectangle. With floured rolling pin or fingers, roll or press dough into 12-by-9-inch rectangle, firmly pressing perforations to seal.

Spread cream cheese mixture evenly over dough rectangle. With pizza cutter or knife, cut rectangle lengthwise into two narrow rectangles. Starting with cut edge, roll up each narrow dough rectangle (filling will be soft). Repeat with remaining half. With serrated knife, cut each roll into 12 slices; place cut side up in muffin cups.

Bake 11 to 13 minutes or until light golden brown. Remove rolls from oven. With handle of wooden spoon, make indentation in center of each roll; spoon 1 teaspoon jam into each.

Bake 2 to 4 minutes longer or until golden brown. Run knife around edge of each muffin cup to loosen. Remove rolls from cups; place on cooling racks.

Place raspberry over jam on each roll. In 1-cup microwavable

measuring cup, microwave chocolate chips and shortening uncovered on High 30 to 45 seconds, stirring once, until melted. Drizzle chocolate over warm rolls. Serve warm or cool.

For an optional powdered sugar glaze, in small bowl, stir 1/4 cup powdered sugar and 2 teaspoons water until smooth; drizzle over warm rolls.

Store rolls in refrigerator. Makes 24 rolls.

Recipe courtesy of Pillsbury.

CRANBERRY OAT THUMBPRINTS

- 1 cup (two sticks) of butter, softened
- 3/4 cup sifted confectioner's sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1-1/2 cup all purpose flour
- 3/4 cup ground, toasted walnuts
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup oats (quick or old-fashioned)
- 1 cup fresh or frozen cranberries
- 6 tablespoons granulated sugar
- 1/4 cup water
- 1/2 cup semisweet chocolate chips

For cookies, beat butter, confectioner's sugar and vanilla in large bowl with electric mixer until creamy. Add combined flour, walnuts and salt; beat just until combined. Add oats; beat just until combined. Cover and refrigerate dough until firm, about two hours or overnight.

For filling, combine cranberries, granulated sugar and water in small heavy saucepan. Bring to a boil, reduce heat. Simmer gently, stirring frequently, until cranberries pop and mixture thickens. Cool slightly. Cover and refrigerate until ready to use.

Heat oven to 350 degrees F. Pinch off pieces of dough and roll into 1-inch balls. Place two inches apart on ungreased cookie sheets. Use thumb to make deep indentation in center of each ball. Bake 10 to 12 minutes or until bottoms are light golden brown. Cool two minutes on cookie sheets. Transfer to wire racks; cool completely.

Store cooled cookies at room temperature in airtight container, separating layers with parchment or waxed paper, up to three days or freeze up to three months. Thaw in container at room temperature.

To serve, fill centers of each cookie with 1/2 teaspoon cranberry filling.

Melt chocolate according to package directions. Transfer to resealable plastic sandwich bag and seal. Snip a tiny piece from corner of bag. Pipe chocolate over each cookie. Refrigerate just until chocolate sets. Makes 4-1/2 dozen.

Recipe courtesy of Quaker Oats.

LAYERS OF LOVE CAKES

- 1 (18.25 ounces) package white cake mix, regular or with pudding
- 1-1/2 cups skim milk
- 1/2 cup canola oil
- 3 large egg whites
- 1-1/2 teaspoons vanilla, divided
- 1 cup oats (quick or old-fashioned)
- 2 ounces reduced fat cream cheese softened
- 3 tablespoons confectioner's sugar, with extra for garnish
- 1/2 pint heavy whipping cream
- 1-1/2 cups fresh or frozen raspberries, coarsely crushed

Heat oven to 350 degrees F. Lightly coat 24 medium muffin cups with cooking spray; set aside.

For cupcakes, beat cake mix, milk, oil, egg whites and 1 teaspoon vanilla in large bowl with electric mixer on low speed 30 seconds to blend. Beat two minutes on medium speed, scraping bowl occasionally. Gently fold in oats. Divide batter evenly between muffin pan cups, filling each about 3/4 full.

Bake 20 to 22 minutes or until wooden pick inserted in center comes out clean. Cool two minutes in pan; remove from pan and cool completely on wire rack.

For filling, beat cream cheese, confectioner's sugar and remaining 1/2 teaspoon vanilla with electric mixer on low speed until blended. Add cream, gradually increasing mixer speed to high and beating until soft peaks form. (Do not overbeat.)

With serrated knife, slice cupcakes in half horizontally. Spread cut side of cupcake bottoms with heaping measuring tablespoonful crushed raspberries. Top with heaping measuring tablespoonful whipped cream.

Place cupcake tops cut sides down on top of cream, pressing gently. Sprinkle with confectioner's sugar and garnish with additional fresh berries, if desired. Cover and refrigerate leftover cupcakes up to three days. Makes 24 cupcakes.

Recipe courtesy of Quaker Oats.



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Detroit Fashion Incubator

New organization aims to help designers

When the Detroit Design Lab unraveled with little fanfare last fall, it left a hole in the local fashion design scene. But not for long. Michael Delon Wilson soon mended the fray by creating the Detroit Fashion Incubator, an organization designed to promote metro Detroit fashion designers through workshops, seminars and support. The DFI launched with a grand opening party on Dec. 1 and is offering free memberships through 2007.

PINK recently caught up with Wilson to find out more about the DFI.

What is the DFI?
It is a launching pad for designers who really want to be able to create sustainable businesses in metro Detroit. We started out with seminars and workshops, and now we've kind of morphed into a retail space as well.

What does the DFI offer?
We have an outreach program. We host monthly members' networking meetings. About 15-20 people on average attend. We offer seminars and workshops, discounts from companies such as fabric stores, sewing equipment. We have a monthly newsletter compiling information or events that we think people might be interested in. We have a fashion calendar on our website. For outreach members we will set up a page with a bio and photos of their garments.

Who can join DFI?
We're still looking for designers so if anyone's interested in our consignment or joining the organization, from Jan. 1, 2007 to Jan. 1, 2008 we



DFI's Michael Delon Wilson at the DFI Grand Opening party on Dec. 3.

Detroit Fashion Incubator
4737 Grand River Ave., Detroit 48208
(313) 281-8001
www.detroitfashionincubator.com
The Detroit Fashion Incubator is offering free Outreach Membership to fashion designers through 2007.

are offering free membership to our outreach program, so they can get an understanding as to what the incubator's role is. After that it's \$135 per year.

What prompted you to start the Incubator?
I was actually inspired through a trip to Toronto. They have a fashion incubator which I actually happen to be a member of. It's very cool. It's a great organization. They do a lot of things to really support the designers in Toronto.

When did you put the machine in motion?
I started working on it about two years ago. We launched an event called Project Refashion Detroit. We featured about five designers and it was just a very great event to get designers on the same page with presenting

their collections and things like that. From that event we started talking about developing studio spaces that designer could rent and have shared industrial machines and cutting tables — a collective organization.

What is your background?
I studied fashion at Wayne State University. I also started sewing when I was about 13. My aunt who is a seamstress taught me how to sew. I work in Chicago and Toronto. My background is custom clothing, mostly evening or cocktail attire.

Do you think Detroit's design scene is growing?
It's definitely growing. I think it's just developing and we have very great talent here.

Do you think designers need to work together?

I think you do because we don't have an industry here in Detroit with manufacturers, pattern makers and wholesale fabric suppliers, so you have to reach out to markets that have that. One of the things we want to provide is a resource list. Whether designers want hang tags for their clothing or embroidery we have those resources to call. As a designer starting out time is the most valuable resource we have.

Do you feel DFI is replacing the Detroit Design Lab?

Only the retail space is similar. When Pure Detroit decided to close the lab that's one of the reasons I wanted to open the retail space. We only had planned a showroom for the designers to be able to come in and meet with clients, meet with buyers and present their collections in an elegant space. I didn't want to compete with the Design Lab because I'm a very big supporter. I had just dropped off new merchandise two weeks before it changed its organizational structure.

Do you think Detroit style can be defined?

I see it as very eclectic. I've met so many different designers that do different things. There's not one style that stands out in my mind.

What are some of your goals for 2007?

We have seminars and workshops that are going to launch after the first of the year. We'll have seminars like how to develop your collection to how to put together a business plan. We want to bring on people who can help designers at every stage of their business. DFI is going to continue to expand and grow and it will change. As our member's needs change, we'll change with them.

Pink Picks

Read It!

PINK Readers share their favorite books

When we staged our 2006 Reader PINK Picks contest, dozens of local ladies shared their favorite books with PINK. From classics and current events to drugstore paperbacks and guilty pleasures, these reader-recommended titles (listed in no particular order) are worth a look:

- Dispatches from the Edge* by Anderson Cooper
Amy Ormsbee, Rochester Hills
- The Color Purple* by Alice Walker
Jennifer Hensel, Shelby Twp
- Nights in Rodanthe* by Nicholas Sparks
Helly Hrecin, Madison Heights
- The Undomestic Goddess* by Sophie Kinsella
Deva Gibson, Farmington

A Million Little Pieces and My Friend Leonard by James Frey
Angi Balluff, Livonia

Power, Freedom and Grace: Living From the Source of Lasting Happiness by Deepak Chopra
Aleta Demeester, Garden City

The Man of my Dreams by Curtis Sittenfeld
Katie Martin, Farmington Hills

French Women Don't Get Fat by Mireille Guiliano
Andrea Herzog, Troy

Herland by Charlotte Perkins Gilman
Heather Johnson, Redford

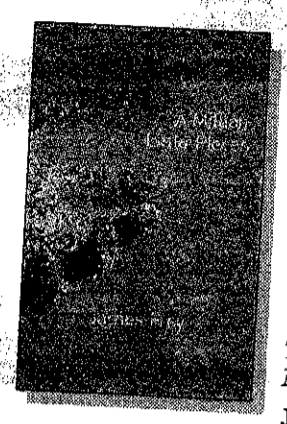
The Innocent by Harlan Coban
Gretchen Kloyz, Birmingham

Straight Up and Dirty by Stephanie Klein
Jamie Poppenger, Livonia

The Kite Runner by Khaled Hosseini
Cailey Ryckman, Livonia

Suzanne's Diary for Nicholas by James Patterson
Olivia Boitos, Westland

America (The Book) by Jon Stewart
Caitlin Pasqualone, Farmington



The Shopaholic Series by Sophie Kinsella
Katy Thomas, Milford

Wicked by Gregory McGuire
Rosemary Pfaffman, Farmington Hills

The Chronicles of Narnia by C.S. Lewis
Joan Rayford, Livonia

Marley & Me by John Grogan
Mary Beth Conger, Livonia

Blue Smoke by Nora Roberts
Terri Toma, West Bloomfield

Blue Flame by Nora Roberts
Maureen Lesondah, Livonia

Tell No One by Halen Coben
Erin Garner, Oak Park

Elements of Style by Wendy Wasserstein
Courtney Head, Brighton

Heat by Bill Buford
Stephanie Brockmiller, Webberville

A Breath of Snow and Ashes by Diana Gabaldon
Brooke Brennan, Wayne

Swapping Lives by Jane Green
Ashley Stohler, Milford

One Special Summer by Jacqueline and Lee Bouvier

She's Come Undone by Wally Lamb
Sarah Hirsch, West Bloomfield

Duh! The Stupid History of the Human Race by Bob Fenster
Jacquel Grimes, Detroit

The Ten Commitments by David Simon and Deepak Chopra
Carmen Hockney, Birmingham

Honeymoon with My Brother by Franz Wisner
Sandy Menczer, Birmingham

East of Eden by John Steinbeck
Carol Clarke, Westland

Nickel and Dimed by Barbara Ehrenreich
Elizabeth Lafontaine, Rochester Hills

Burnt Toast by Teri Hatcher
Jennifer Zur, Westland

The Sun and Moon over Assisi by Gerard Thomas Straub
Dolores Kapanke, Garden City

Emma by Jane Austen
Margie Stambaugh, Westland

The Alchemist: A Fable About Following Your Dream by Paulo Coelho
Kanette Worlds, Pontiac

Party Planning Tips

Thinking about hosting a New Year's Eve soiree? Holiday party planning can be a daunting task. For advice on how to plan the perfect gathering, Pink turned to Sydell Schubot, co-owner of Jules R. Schubot Jewellers in Troy.

The annual Schubot holiday party held each December in their 'jewellery' salon has become a tradition for family, friends and clients alike. The inspiration behind many of their celebrations for nearly 50 years, Sydell believes parties can be as lavish or as simple as you wish. The Schubot family style-setter suggests hosts or hostesses blueprint these preparations:

Think outside the box. Over the years, the Schubots have hosted a variety of parties from a charity benefit that featured a renowned animal designer from Steuben Glass to another where a fashion-focused television program was being filmed in their salon during the party.

Presentation is as important as the cocktails and menu. Select a caterer to handle preparation, serving and cleanup. Select taste sensations with an eye on quality vs. quantity to ensure pieces look beautiful as well as taste great.

Establish a festive ambience. Music should be light and not overpower conversations. Decorations should lend a festive touch and not be obstructive.

Create a layout that enables good flow. Consider removing chairs and other obstacles to encourage mingling and more one-on-one conversation.

Introduce guests to one another, who might not already know each other, thereby making sure everyone is engaged. Be sure to thank each guest for attending and ask about their family.

Begin with the guest list. Invite guests who hold a special place in your heart and will enjoy mingling with each other.

Anticipate the needs of your guests before they even arrive. Invitations should include a map, parking arrangements and phone number in case of last minute direction requests or inquiries from a cell phone. A designated greeter can collect and return guests' wraps near the door and serve them wine and appetizers upon arrival.

Offer a keepsake to take home. Party favors can be creative and not expensive. Some of Sydell's favorites include small candles and homemade cookies wrapped up in an attractive gift bag.

Jules R. Schubot Jewellers is located at 3001 W. Big Beaver Road in Troy. Call (248) 649-1122.



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