

CANTON OBSERVER

THURSDAY 02.11.16 || HOMETOWNLIFE.COM || PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK



SAY IT WITH CHOCOLATE
FOOD, B10

Merritt confirmed as superintendent

Joanne Maliszewski
Staff Writer

Monica Merritt will become the permanent superintendent of the Plymouth-Canton Community Schools district, effective July 1, after former district chief Michael Meissen's contract ends.

Merritt, who has served as the interim superintendent for

about seven weeks while also serving as assistant superintendent of human resources and labor relations, was given the job by unanimous resolution Tuesday evening.

In an unprecedented move,



Merritt

Board of Education President Kim Crouch began Tuesday's regular school board meeting by addressing the overflow crowd. She apologized for what teachers and members of the public have criticized as a lack of transparency in the process of removing Meissen and appointing Merritt without a search.

"The board takes full re-

sponsibility for the process," Crouch told the board room that was packed primarily with teachers and their supporters.

Crouch's comments were in response to questions and criticisms made by residents and teachers Monday evening at a budget public forum. On Tuesday, Crouch said she "personally apologizes" for the the

apparent lack of transparency and for the lack of a full explanation of the change in superintendents and why the board decided to choose an internal candidate without a contracted search firm.

"None of this was done with willful malice or backroom dealings," Crouch said, adding

See MERRITT, Page A5



Kasey Baydoun delivers the 52nd free burger of the year to Jonathan Hicks.

BILL BRESLER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Residents win battle to block cellphone tower

Darrell Clem
Staff Writer

Residents have won a battle to block a Verizon cellphone tower from being built near the Abundant Life Church of God, on Hannan south of Palmer, but a local business owner says he might have an alternate site.

"It's amazing what the community can do when they get together and stick together," said Laurie Radiwon, a Realtor who lives near the church.

Abundant Life has notified Canton Township officials that it has dropped plans to allow Verizon to build the cellphone tower behind the church and lease the property for \$1,000 a month.

"We got a note from them at the end of (last) week indicating they were not going to do it," township Supervisor Phil LaJoy said.

In a separate development, the owner of Wayne Lawn & Garden said he has land on his property that Verizon could potentially use, though he said Monday the two sides haven't had any formal talks. His company is located along a commercial district on the south side of Michigan Avenue, between Hannan and Lotz.

"It would be more suitable than putting a tower in a residential neighborhood," Hermatz said Monday morning. "The commercial corridor would make more sense than having it in a neighborhood."

Hermatz said his property is about a mile from the Abundant Life church site.

Verizon officials have said they need to build a tower closer to Hannan and Palmer.

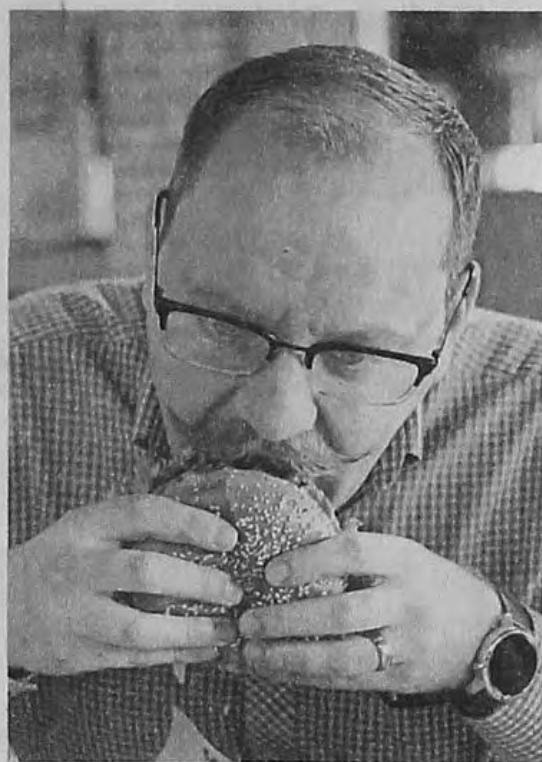
Cindy Campeau, who lives in the Meadows of Canton subdivision, commended the church for changing its position amid strong opposition from residents.

"I'm really glad that they decided not to do this," she said. "I appreciate that they're considering the community around them."

Radiwon said an alternate spot, such as at Wayne Lawn & Garden, is "a no-brainer" that potentially could satisfy all sides. She also said she was involved in "an honest, civil

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Canton man's burger trail starts, ends here



Jonathan Hicks takes the first bite of what was his last free Great American Cheeseburger at the Canton Bagger Dave's.

BILL BRESLER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Darrell Clem
Staff Writer

Jonathan Hicks has eaten 52 cheeseburgers in 52 weeks at the Canton Bagger Dave's restaurant.

His tab? \$0.

Unlike the character Wimpy of *Pop-eye* fame, Hicks didn't have to gladly pay someone Tuesday for a burger today.

Hicks was among the first 50 customers who lined up when Bagger Dave's opened the doors last February to its then-new restaurant on Canton Center, south of Ford Road.

His prize: One free Great American Cheeseburger every week for one year. "They're fantastic," Hicks said.

And at \$8.95 each, his one-year savings totaled \$465.40 plus tax.

His last free burger, along with complimentary fries and Santa Fe chipotle dipping sauce, arrived Monday afternoon as he took his regular seat in the bar area and placed his order with employee Kasey Baydoun.

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Canton police unveil next phase of crime-fighting effort

Darrell Clem
Staff Writer

A move by the Canton Police Department to enlist neighborhood groups to fight crime has drawn a warm response since it was rolled out late last year, officials say.

Patty Esselink, the department's community relations officer, said more than 30 rep-

resentatives from homeowner associations have contacted her and indicated an interest. She said she also has received "numerous" emails.

"It's a very positive response," she said.



Esselink

Police officials have announced two new informational meetings, scheduled for 7 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 16, and 7 p.m. Wednesday, April 13, at the Summit on the Park, 46000 Summit Parkway. The sessions will include a crime prevention presentation.

Police, striking back against crimes ranging from home invasions to vandalism, started

Partners in Your Safety to involve residents in improving safety. The goal is to keep Canton safe, one neighborhood at a time.

The new initiative goes beyond typical neighborhood watch programs and sets goals that homeowner groups need to achieve to

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POLICE

Continued from Page A1

make it work. It involves three major goals:

» Homeowner associations or groups need to get 25 percent of neighborhood households signed up for one or both of two crime alert platforms, www.nixle.com and www.nextdoor.com.

Canton police use those tools to issue crime alerts, crime prevention tips and other important information. Residents also may inform authorities of any problems in their neighborhoods.

» Police are asking that 25 percent of neighborhood households attend a crime prevention seminar hosted by Canton police. The sessions will focus on ways residents can protect themselves from crimes, while teaching tips for personal safety and recognizing suspicious behavior.

» Police say that 25 percent of households

need to take a pledge for Not in Our Town, a national movement urging residents to combat hate, stop bullying and build safe, inclusive communities. Canton already hosted a rally last September to roll out the program.

Neighborhood groups or subdivision associations that achieve all three goals will receive signs they can place near entrances and window stickers to warn potential criminals that residents are watching.

Deputy Police Chief Scott Hilden has said residents "can have a really big impact" in reducing crime.

For more information or to initiate a Partners in Your Safety program, call Essekink at 734-394-5194 or send an email to communityrelations@canton-mi.org.

dclcm@hometownlife.com



Canton residents have won a battle to block a cellphone tower behind a local church.

TOWER

Continued from Page A1

conversation" with Abundant Life's pastor, the Rev. Dan Smitherman, before the church changed its position.

Residents had protested the tower being built behind the church, saying it could hurt property values, intrude on wetlands, create an eyecore and potentially pose health risks. The *Observer* first reported on the controversy back in early January.

Smitherman had said the \$1,000 a month from Verizon could help the church expand its food pantry, but he also has said he didn't want to alienate Abundant Life's neighbors.

Church representatives met with about 180 residents Feb. 1 at the Summit on the Park to hear their concerns about the cellphone tower, opposed by residents of Canton, Westland and Wayne who live near the proposed site and who signed petitions against it.

Verizon last July lost a

battle to build the cellphone tower on township-owned property north of the church, on the east side of Fellows Creek Golf Course, after the township board rejected it amid opposition from residents.

Under the latest plan, Canton Community Planner Jeff Goulet had said the closest house would have been about 240-250 feet from the tower.

Campeau has said residents just emerged from the housing market crash and foreclosure crisis and can't withstand another hit on property

values. She said a Verizon tower would keep new homeowners away.

Responding to earlier questions by email, Karen Smith, Verizon public relations manager, said the tower was needed "to continue to provide reliable service to our customers, including public safety service providers."

It wasn't clear Monday morning what Verizon's next move might be.

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CANTON OBSERVER

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BURGER

Continued from Page A1

For a place that once called its burgers legendary, Hicks just might be a legendary customer in Canton.

Of all the customers who qualified for free cheeseburgers, Baydoun

said Hicks is believed to have been the only one who showed up for 52 consecutive weeks.

"I don't know of anyone else who has been here for all 52," Baydoun said.

Hicks remembers the bitterly cold February morning when he arrived and got in line around 8 a.m., three hours before Bagger Dave's first opened its doors. He believes he was 23rd in line, or close to it.

"I think it was the coldest day of the year so far," Hicks said. "It was extremely cold."

It was so cold that Bagger Dave's handed out numbers and allowed the early arrivals to sit in their cars and warm up without losing their place in line.

Hicks made Bagger Dave's part of his weekly routine, typically each Monday. With a career in sales and marketing, he would bring his laptop

computer and get work done as he put away another cheeseburger stacked with American cheese, lettuce, tomato, pickles, ketchup and mayo, on a grilled sesame-seed brioche bun.

But hold the mustard. "I despise it," Hicks said.

One of the Bagger Dave's locations other than Canton was once labeled a disappointment by two friends, Lucas Foster and Kevin McCown, who call themselves the Michigan Burger Boys in their quest for the perfect burger.

They changed their minds — and their review — after Bagger Dave's opened in Canton and they gave the restaurant chain other chances. They now give it high marks, including a score of 8 out of 10 for burger taste.

Hicks has taken his wife Rachel and their son Gary, almost 2, to Bagger Dave's, but they had to pay. Now, he will, too.

"I'll come back as a paying customer and have a burger," he said, "but I may expand my horizons and try some of the other items on the menu."

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Former county Commissioner Kay Beard dies

LeAnne Rogers
Staff Writer

Having been first elected Wayne County commissioner at 57, Kay Beard might have gotten a late start in elected office, but still managed a 30-year career.

That made Mrs. Beard, who died Tuesday, Feb. 9, at 94, the longest serving county commissioner in Wayne County history.

"She was a firecracker the whole time down at Wayne County," said Westland City Clerk

Richard LeBlanc, a county commissioner for three years until being elected clerk in 2015. "I appreciated her support when I ran for the commission."

Born June 7, 1921, in Detroit, Mrs. Beard raised five children before being elected to the county commission in 1978. A Democrat, she was active in politics and



Mrs. Beard

the community in metro Detroit for many years.

"I supported Kay when she ran against (then-Westland mayor) Bob Thomas. She was the incumbent," LeBlanc said. "She'd get all her volunteers out on election day in their green T-shirts — she was Irish."

In recent years a Canton resident, Mrs. Beard had represented Westland throughout her years on the commission. At one time, her district also included Garden City and Inkster. Redistricting eventually

made changes to the district to drop those cities, maintain Westland and add south Livonia.

Citing health issues, Mrs. Beard abruptly resigned from the commission in 2008. Beard's aide Ronaele Bowman was appointed to fill the seat, but later in the year, Schoolcraft College Trustee Joan Gebhardt of Livonia was elected to fill the seat.

Honoring her long service, the commission named a 150,000-square-foot building at the former Eloise property after

Mrs. Beard.

The building, on Michigan Avenue west of Henry Ruff, currently houses the county Head Start program offices and programs as nutrition congregate meals, home-delivered meals, liquid meals and emergency food assistance. It is expected to be vacated during the first quarter of 2016. Other buildings on the property have been offered for sale.

Mrs. Beard was wife of the late Jerry. She is survived by her children Ron, Kerry, Don (Deb),

Kevin (Edie) and Vicki; her six grandchildren; three great-grandchildren; and her brother Bill.

Mrs. Beard will be in state at 9:30 a.m. Thursday, followed by the 10 a.m. funeral service at Most Holy Trinity Church, 1050 Porter, Detroit (at the corner of Sixth Street).

The family suggests memorials to Angela Hospice.

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Super fundraiser



JULIE BROWN

High school youths at Geneva Presbyterian Church in Canton have a Super Bowl Sunday tradition of holding a submarine sandwich sale as a fundraiser. The teens sold the tasty subs after Sunday, Feb. 7, services at the church on Sheldon, north of Ford Road. Geneva youths will visit Iowa's Quad Cities region this summer on mission work and plan a dinner/auction Saturday, April 16, to raise funds. Donated auction items are welcome, with additional details on donating available from Nancy Glodich at nancyglodich@mac.com.

State school board leader to address LGBTQ issues

Darrell Clem
Staff Writer

A top-ranking state school board official who has called for new policies to better meet the needs of LGBTQ students will be the keynote speaker Sunday when a Plymouth-Canton advocacy group meets.

John Austin, president of the Michigan State Board of Education, said Tuesday morning that "excellent" policies are being developed — and could be adopted in coming months — to address issues facing lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students.

Austin is set to address the Plymouth-Canton PFLAG chapter — a group of parents and friends whose mission is to support, educate and advocate for LGBTQ people — at a meeting 3-5 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 14, at St. John's Episcopal Church, 574 S. Sheldon Road, in Plymouth.

George Belvitch, the PFLAG chapter's president, said the public is invited.



Austin

Belvitch called Austin "a strong ally" for the LGBTQ community.

Austin said his address to the group will be similar to one he made in late January, when he spoke to educators during the sixth annual Michigan Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Conference at Oakland University.

"Michigan needs to embrace all our young people and create environments in our schools and communities that helps them feel safe, welcomed and able to tune in and learn," Austin said in a press release about the SOGI event, adding that educators are looking for guidance, particularly for transgender students.

Under current state law, Michigan schools are required to implement anti-bullying policies to protect the rights of LGBTQ children, but officials say work remains to combat unsafe learning environments.

"It is terrific that a growing number of students are comfortable coming forward with the fact that they have non-traditional gender and sexual identity, but our schools are looking for guidance on the services and support they need, on issues ranging from bathroom use to counseling and teacher training," Austin said.

He said he and his state board colleagues have asked state Superintendent Brian Whiston and his staff to develop new policies to address the issues.

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Police release photo of suspect in indecent exposure incident

Canton police are seeking help identifying a suspect accused of exposing himself to a woman inside the Walmart store on Michigan Avenue, near Belleville Road.

Canton have released a photo of the suspect that was obtained from the store's surveillance video.

Detective Sgt. Dan Traylor has said the woman told police the man exposed himself to her about 3:30 a.m. Sunday, Jan. 31. She described him as a black male wearing a blue hooded sweatshirt.

Anyone who has information is asked to call Canton police at 734-394-5400.



CANTON POLICE

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PLYMOUTH CANTON COMMUNITY SCHOOLS PLYMOUTH, MI 48170 SECTION 00 11 13 ADVERTISEMENT FOR BIDS

Sealed bids for the Plymouth Canton Community Schools' Construction Bid Package 7, consisting of:

Site Upgrade Projects at Multiple Buildings

will be received at the office of Ms. Pamela Anstey, Assistant Superintendent of Business & Operations, Plymouth Canton Community Schools, 454 S. Harvey, Plymouth, MI 48170 until **11:00 A.M., local time on Thursday, February 25, 2016** at which time they will be opened, read publicly and tabulated.

Bids received after this time and date will be returned unopened.

Faxed or e-mailed proposals will not be accepted.

This Project will consist of sealed bids for the following Bid Division of work:

102: Asphalt Paving / Site Concrete

Bidding documents prepared by TMP Architecture, Inc. will be available for public inspection at the office of the Construction Manager, **McCarthy & Smith, Inc.**, 24317 Indoplex Circle, Farmington Hills, MI 48335; the Dodge Plan Room, Construction Association of Michigan (CAM), Reed Construction Data, and Builders Exchange, Lansing.

Bid Documents will be available beginning at 12:00 P.M. on Tuesday, February 9, 2016 via the following:

- Bidders may obtain one (1) set of 1/2 size bidding documents beginning at 12:00 P.M. on Tuesday, February 9, 2016, by contacting the Construction Manager, **McCarthy & Smith, Inc.**, at (248) 427-8400.
- Bidders may download bid documents from Gradebeam.com by contacting the Construction Manager, **McCarthy & Smith, Inc.**, at (248) 427-8400 to obtain log in information for access to the project documents.

Bids are to be submitted in a sealed envelope. The bid division(s) being bid is/are to be identified on the outside of the envelope.

There will be a pre-bid meeting held on Wednesday, February 17, 2016 at 10:00 A.M. at the Construction Managers construction trailer located behind Canton High School at 8415 Canton Center Road, Canton, MI 48187. The purpose of the meeting will be to review the project, schedule and to answer any questions that bidders may have. All Bidders are encouraged to attend.

All bids should include 2 copies (1 original, 1 copy) of the Proposal Pricing Form (Section 00 41 26), Proposal Execution Form (Section 00 42 00), and the Iran Economics Sanctions Act Affidavit. **The Proposal Execution Form provides a space for the bidder to disclose any familial relationship as required by Section 1267 of the Revised School Code, as amended, MCL 380.1267, and this form must be signed and notarized in order for the bid to be accepted. The Iran Economic Sanctions Act Affidavit form may be found in section 00 42 10 of the Bidding Requirements & General Conditions Manual.**

All bids must be accompanied by a Bid Security, in either the form of a bid bond or certified bank check, in the amount of five (5) percent of the amount of the bid, payable to Plymouth Canton Community Schools, as a guarantee that if the proposal is accepted, the school district is secured from loss or damage by reason of the withdrawal of the bid or failure of the bidder to enter a contract for performance. Further, the bidder will execute the contract and file the required bonds within ten (10) days after notice of award of contract.

If awarded a contract, the successful bidder may be required to furnish a Performance Bond and Labor and Material Payment Bond. Plymouth Canton Community Schools reserves the right to reject any or all bids received and to waive any informalities and irregularities in the bidding.

END OF SECTION

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PLYMOUTH CRIME WATCH

20-year-old accused
of attacking dad

A 54-year-old man reported being attacked late Friday morning by his 20-year-old son at the home of the victim's late mother in Plymouth Township.

The victim was slightly hurt, suffering elbow scrapes and a bruised knee, according to a Plymouth Township Police Department report. The son fled the scene in a vehicle driven by his girlfriend; the victim said he didn't want to press charges, police said.

The victim told police he arrived at his mother's house to find his son there and that

the two got into an argument. The son swung a walking stick at him several times, without connecting, the father told police, but calmed down and arranged to get a ride from his girlfriend.

Once she arrived and the 20-year-old got into the car she was driving, the report said, the father and son again argued and the son rushed out of the car, shoved his father to the ground and kicked him several times, then got back into the car. The driver drove off.

The victim refused medical treatment.

Littering ticket

A 21-year-old Plymouth Township man was issued a littering ticket the morning of Feb. 3 after admitting he had left a Wendy's bag in the area of Normandy Drive and Normandy Court, police said.

A police report said the man confessed to the littering and then said "so what" to the officer who had showed up at his house and asked him about it.

The complaint had come from a resident near the littering site who had filed two previous littering complaints since mid-January, police said. In one of those earlier inci-

dents, a receipt that was among the refuse was linked to a rewards card from a restaurant chain, plus a silver Ford vehicle was spotted. Police used information obtained from those clues to locate the suspect Feb. 3.

License suspensions

A 35-year-old woman was arrested the morning of Feb. 2 for driving with a suspended license. Police also learned she had multiple license suspensions and was wanted on seven misdemeanor warrants from four different communities, a police report said.

The arrest came after an

officer spotted a 2002 Pontiac Grand Am on eastbound M-14, west of Beck, and found, through a computer check, that the car owner's license was suspended. The woman driving turned out to be the owner of the car, which was impounded.

Another suspended-license arrest was also made the morning of Feb. 2 after police stopped a 30-year-old man for driving a 2012 Jeep Wrangler with an expired license-plate tab. The driver had two license suspensions and two traffic warrants out of Detroit, police said.

—By Matt Jachman

CANTON CRIME WATCH

She sold her iPhone,
but got fake money

A 24-year-old woman notified police Saturday after she arranged online to sell her iPhone and later realized the buyer had paid for it with a counterfeit \$100 bill, a police report said.

The woman told police she had used an app on her phone for a website, Wallapop, where she advertised her phone for sale. She said she arranged to meet the buyer outside a party store near Palmer and Lilley.

The woman said she sold the phone about 7:30 p.m. Feb. 1 to a suspect she described as a black male, 17-20 years old, wearing dark clothing and driving a Chrysler Sebring.

She said he walked up to her vehicle, asked to see the phone and handed her a \$100 bill before driving off. She said she later realized the bill was fake and said it had the phrase "for motion picture use only" on it.

Walmart theft

A woman who spent \$150.73 for groceries at a Canton retail store was ticketed for retail fraud after police say she stole an additional \$26.85 in merchandise.

Police say the incident occurred about 4 p.m. last Friday at the Walmart store on Michi-

gan Avenue, near Belleville Road.

A store employee called police after noticing the woman had placed some merchandise in her purse. A police report listed the items as a wallet, ink pens, tin foil and makeup.

Police issued a citation for retail fraud to the woman.

Mystery pills

Canton police took a 19-year-old Canton man into custody after finding a bottle of prescription pills — with someone else's name on it — in his car.

The incident unfolded shortly before 1:30 a.m. Sunday on Heron Court, near Warren and Ridge, a police report said.

Police stopped to investigate after seeing a 2015 Ford Fusion, occupied by three people, alongside the road. A 27-year-old passenger immediately got out of the vehicle and walked toward the back of it, telling police he was going to check the tire pressure.

A teen girl inside the car told police she and the two males were trying to find a friend's house and had lost their way. She said the three of them had been celebrating a birthday and were looking for another friend to go bowling.

During a search of the car, police found a bottle of a pre-

scription drug used to treat pain and muscle spasms. No one inside the car admitted to knowing the man to whom the drug had been prescribed. They also said they didn't know how the bottle of 48 pills got into the car.

Police took the car's owner into custody for possession of a controlled substance and released the teen girl to her father, who was called to the scene. The male passenger also was released and rode off with them.

'Unstable' behavior

A Canton woman reported her brother to police, saying he has been sending unusual emails and text messages and, since Thanksgiving, had shown up unexpectedly six times at her house on Wil-drose Drive, near Hanford and Ridge.

The 57-year-old woman told police that her brother, 49, from El Paso, Texas, is a U.S. Army veteran who has been exhibiting behavior that she referred to as mentally unstable. She said he has other family members who have also have refused to welcome him to their homes.

The woman filed the police report as documentation.

—By Darrell Clem

State police to host female
recruiting event next month

David Veselenak

Staff Writer

The Michigan State Police hope to attract more women into their ranks. They hope a recruiting event in Livonia will do just that.

The state police will hold a recruiting event more targeted toward women looking to join the ranks of the agency from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. March 19 in Schoolcraft College's VisTaTech Center, 18600 Haggerty, in Livonia.

The event, Trooper Marjorie Richardson said, will hopefully help bring in more female candidates for the state police, which she said has been an issue for several years. Nationally, about 12 percent of police officers are female, a figure that's higher than where the Michigan State Police is currently.

"For MSP, it seems to hover around 9 percent," said Richardson, a recruiter for the state police's second district, which consists of Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties. "We do need to get our numbers up. There's no question."

The event will feature

current female troopers discussing the roles for women within the agency, as well as training and the lifestyle of a state police trooper. Information on several units, including Forensic Science Division, Canine Unit, Special Investigations, Computer Crimes and the Gaming Section will also be available.

Requirements of those interested in applying include: good moral character; a U.S. citizen and Michigan resident at the time of appointment to the academy; be at least 21 years of age; and have a high school diploma or G.E.D., as well as a good driving record. Candidates must also possess a stable credit history and have no felony convictions on their record. Attire for the event is business casual.

Starting salary for troopers after they graduate from the 21-week academy is \$44,000 annually, with a \$7,800 raise after completion of the first year.

Those interested in attending are encouraged to email Richardson at richardsonm2@michigan.gov and are encouraged to arrive at the event at 9:45 a.m.



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'Sylvia' is newest play at Barefoot

Barefoot Productions in Plymouth has gone to the dogs with its latest offering, *Sylvia*, which opens Friday.

A play by A.R. Gurney that premiered in 1995, *Sylvia* tells the story of a New York City couple, Greg and Kate, and the dog they adopt, Sylvia. A comedy, *Sylvia* is also a look at one man's midlife crisis and the need for connection in an impersonal world.

Barefoot's production of *Sylvia* features Michael Ludlum and Rebecca Himm, both of Northville, as Greg and Kate, and Jennifer Beitzel of Pittsfield Township as Sylvia. It also features Cory Chambliss of Plymouth.

Sylvia is directed by

Chris Steves of Woodhaven, who is also Barefoot Production's president.

The show is at 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday and also 8 p.m. next Friday and Saturday, Feb. 19-20. There are matinee performances at 2 p.m. Sunday and also at 2 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 21.

Tickets range from \$15 to \$17 and can be purchased through Barefoot Production's website, www.justgo Barefoot.com.

Barefoot's venue is a 99-seat theater at 240 N. Main, in the strip mall next to Bode's Corned Beef House. The box office phone number is 734-404-6889.



BAREFOOT PRODUCTIONS
Michael Ludlum of Northville, Rebecca Himm (right) of Northville and Jennifer Beitzel of Pittsfield Township as the dog Sylvia star in the comedy "Sylvia," by A.R. Gurney, which opens Friday at Barefoot Productions in Plymouth.

Help us kick off 'Community Scrapbook'

The *Plymouth* and *Canton Observers* will start a "Community Scrapbook" spot in the papers to highlight residents and their lives.

We ask that if you and your family have an event, activity, vacation or anything you photograph and would like to see it published, email editor Joanne Maliszewski at jmaliszews@hometownlife.com.

To make this effort successful, we urge all to participate. It will be a fun way to include more people in our

newspapers and to highlight life in the *Plymouths* and *Canton*. We will not publish inappropriate photos.

Please be sure you email your photos as JPG attachments. And don't forget to identify the people – and pets – in your photos, as well as when the photo was taken and what the folks in the photo are doing. Also, be sure to put "Community Scrapbook" in the email subject line.

We look forward to "Community Scrapbook" and sharing life in our communities.

MERRITT

Continued from Page A1

that board members did not anticipate the angst that accompanied Merritt's selection.

"We feel we did this with the best intent for the district," Crouch said.

'Lightning in a bottle'

Following her appointment Tuesday night – and after comments from about 20 teachers and residents – Merritt offered her thanks. "I am humbled," she said. "I consider there to be no greater honor than to work for this district."

The former teacher, assistant principal, principal and, finally, assistant superintendent of human resources told the crowd that even after working in education for 20 years, arriving in the Plymouth-Canton district about five years ago, "I truly believed I caught lightning in a bottle."

Merritt acknowledged the district's difficulties and pledged her commitment and dedication to the job, the teachers, students and community. She referred to the camaraderie, sense of family and teamwork that she found in the district when she arrived in 2011.

"I want that so badly for us again," she said.

Merritt also referred to a teacher's comment that the district needs a titan – a reference to the movie *Remember the Titans*, in which actor Denzel Washington portrayed Merritt's father, Herman Boone.

"I believe I can be the titan for this organization," Merritt said. "We will get through. It will not be easy."

As confirmed by other board members' comments, Crouch told the crowd that the decision to pick a district insider was the best choice because of Merritt's knowledge and history of the community and the problems facing the district.

"We know employee morale is quite low at this time," board Secretary Kate Borninski said, adding that she believes Merritt has "the skill set" required to work through the district's challenges.

"She will bring the healing needed to move the district forward," she said.

In December, the Plymouth-Canton Education Association, which represents the district's teachers, rejected a proposed contract that offered a continuation of a pay freeze this year and a half-step increase next year for teachers earning in the first through 13th step. Teachers at the top of the scale, the 14th step and above, were offered a 0.5-percent increase next year.

Since that time, teachers dressed in red T-shirts have attended each board meeting to explain their personal situations and the need for better salaries. And some have questioned whether two superintendent salaries are on the

payroll.

"The district has the legal responsibility to honor that (Meissen's) contract," Trustee Mike Maloney said.

He told teachers Tuesday night that Merritt is not receiving the superintendent's salary now – and never asked for a raise – but a new contract has still to be negotiated and, when complete, will be made public. "We intend to be transparent," he said. "I think you'll be able to see what you want to see."

Lots of superintendents

In his comments, Trustee Michael Siegrist acknowledged that the district has had five su-

perintendents in eight years. "That's not healthy," he said, adding that the lack of continuity with so many superintendents has driven "inefficiencies and confusion" in the district.

The decision to appoint a new superintendent from within allows the board to "limit the harm by moving the district forward," Siegrist said. "It's our fault."

Crouch also acknowledged the number of superintendents hired and fired, adding that "none of them worked out because there's so much uniqueness to our district."

The board, she said, determined it needed a superintendent – an in-

sider – who understands the district and its problems. Referring to Merritt, Crouch said she has a history of demonstrated leadership, has consistently stepped up to responsibilities and challenges and has a strong commitment to the district and the community.

"We have put her in a very difficult position," Crouch said, adding Merritt deserves an apology from the board for putting her in a position without public explanation.

The gathering storm surrounding Merritt's expected appointment Tuesday drew former board member Adrienne Davis to the podium. "Honest to God, it's

much worse (on the administrative side) than you know," she told teachers, acknowledging the challenges, particularly financial, facing the district. She also said she is aware – considering pay freezes and deficits – that many outsiders would tell teachers, "No, you don't want to go there. It's not a place for your career."

In lauding Merritt, however, Davis compared her to the popular former Superintendent Jim Ryan – a comment that drew a loud applause from the audience. She said Merritt's integrity is "flawless. She walked into this district with a smile."

"If you start beating

up on Monica, there's a whole crew in central office who will be after you," Davis added, asking teachers to support Merritt.

"If we don't want (Merritt) or appreciate her, she will have other (career) options. We must come together now as a community," Davis said.

Bird Elementary Principal Cathie Williams talked about Merritt at a recent regular principal's meeting. "What I do know is this – every time I had something to say, she responded," she said.

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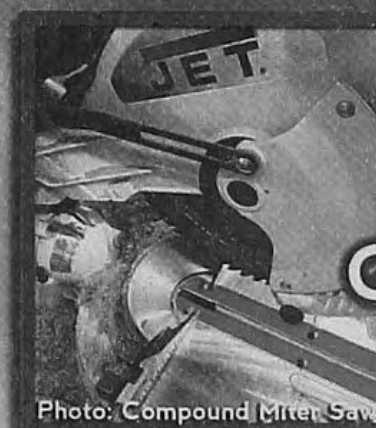


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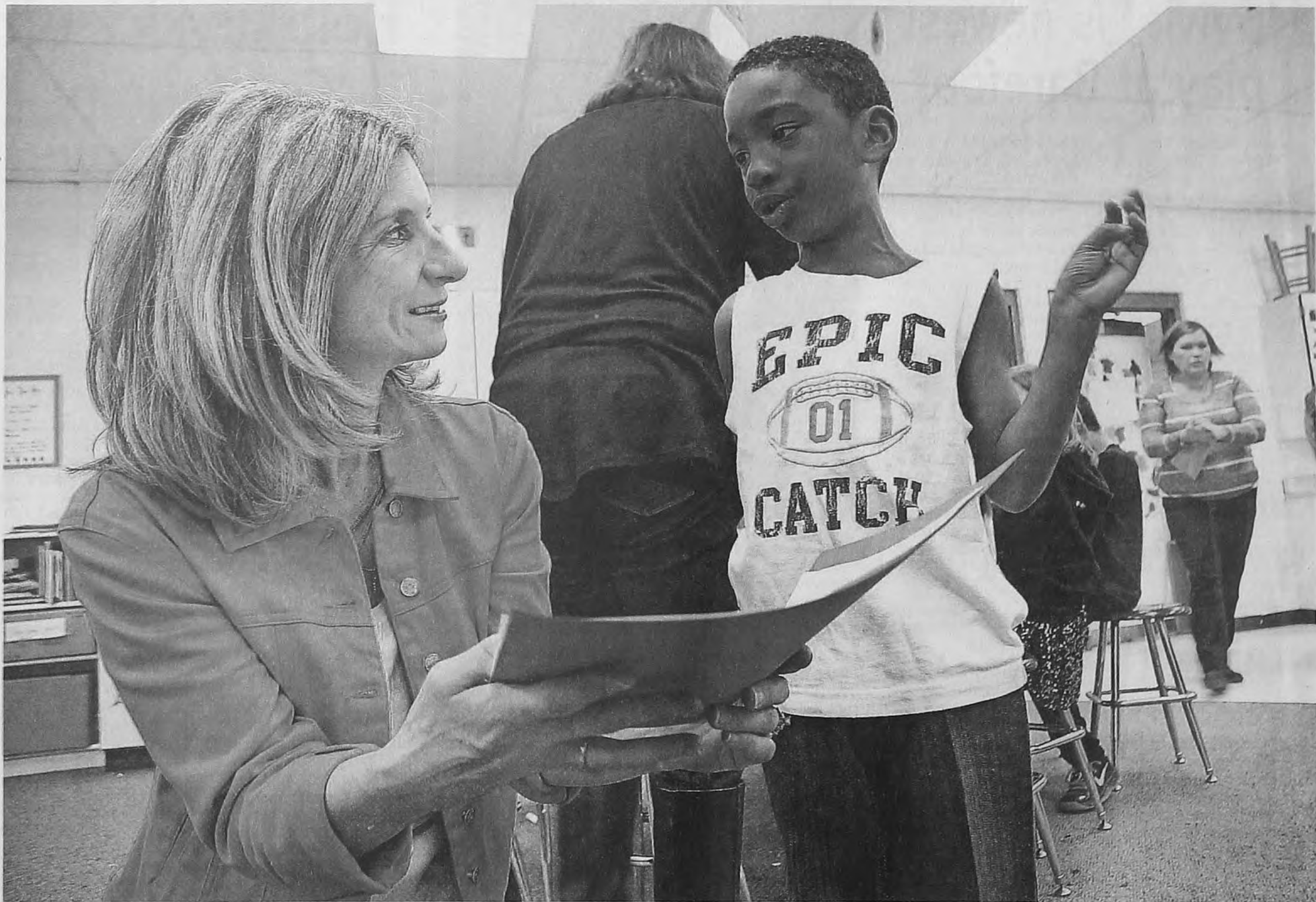
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Dodson PTO president Sara Olson looks at Landon McMullen's card that will go to a sick child at C.S. Mott Children's Hospital.

BILL BRESLER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Happy Valentine's Day

Joanne Maliszewski
Staff Writer

Dodson students have learned about giving from the heart – in time for Valentine's Day – with art and kind words.

"A lot of the notes made me cry," said Sara Olson, president of the Dodson Elementary School PTO. "I think this is just awesome. This is teaching kids about empathy and kindness."

As a third annual community service project, students wrote messages for current military men and women, veterans at the Ann Arbor Veterans Hospital, C.S. Mott Children's Hospital and, of course, Melba and George Dodson, for whom the school is named.

"Because they are sweet," Hillary Parrish said, when asked about the greeting card she created for the Dodsons.

By the time students were done with the project, some 560 greeting cards had been written and designed and were sorted in boxes for mailing or delivery.

With plenty of volunteers in the classroom helping students pick decorations for the cards, the adults could have cried by some of the messages the children wrote.

"Thank you for risking your life to keep us safe," a student wrote to a soldier. Another student wrote, "... my life is in your heart."

Madelyn Porco decided her greeting card would go to kids at Mott



BILL BRESLER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Teresa Babcock helps her son Luke make a card. Luke's older brother Brad serves in the Marines. He will receive cards made by the students.

Children's Hospital: "I want to make them feel better."

And the project proved that life is, indeed, a circle. Current members of the military include Grant Pilver, a former Dodson student, and Brad Babcock, whose brother Luke is at Dodson, said Bonnie Goodrich, reading specialist.

The kids had every that glittered to decorate their kindness cards, thanks to donations and parent volunteers, Goodrich said.

"Gosh, I just love this. I take so much pride in this," Olson said.

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BILL BRESLER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Fifth-graders Fawzan Syed and Logan McHugh work on their kindness cards.



BILL BRESLER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Ashley Rosiewicz decorates her card that will be sent to military members.



BILL BRESLER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER
Students had plenty of decorations from which to choose for their greeting cards.



BILL BRESLER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER
Austin Weiss, Luke Babcock, Brooklun Whipple, Aizah Lone, Lilly Olson, Aubrey Burke and Madison Albrecht show some of the cards made by Dodson Elementary students.



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Oona Landon made a card for Melba and George Dodson, former principal for whom the school is named.

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Canton businesswoman's quote makes it into calendar

A quote from Canton resident Sue Voyles, president of Logos Communications, was selected from more than 5,000 submissions to be featured in the 2016 Woman's Advantage@ Shared Wisdom Calendar. The calendar provides advice for women business owners from influential women leaders across the U.S. and



Voyles

around the world. Mary Cantando, growth expert of The Woman's Advantage, said that Voyles' advice appears in the square for March 17. This marks Voyles' eighth consecutive appearance in the calendar. Her quote reads, "Your best networking tool is a smile. Don't underestimate its power when meeting people."

Voyles' quote was selected because it is sound advice that is easy to understand. Her idea is relevant to almost every woman in business today, Cantando said: "Women business owners and those who dream of starting a business will learn so much from the advice provided by Sue Voyles and the other successful women quoted in the calendar."

The 2016 Shared Wisdom Calendar provides sound bites of advice on key business issues, including organization, promotion, sales and human resources.

Red Wings general manager talks at multi-chamber event

David Veselenak
Staff Writer

Schoolcraft College's VisTaTech Center saw a bit of a sea of red Tuesday morning.

That's because Ken Holland, general manager of the Detroit Red Wings, was in town to talk about the team and his experiences during an event held by the Livonia, Westland and Greater Farmington Area chambers of commerce.

The 11th general manager in team history, Holland talked about how he almost became a vacuum cleaner salesman in his native British Columbia after his professional hockey playing days were over. He was all set to join the sales force when he discovered and applied for a job as a scout in western Canada.

"Within three or four days, the Red Wings called and were looking for a western Canada scout," he said.

He also shared stories of former Red Wings coach Scotty Bowman, who left the team in 2002 after winning the Stanley Cup.

He told a story of when Bowman coached the St. Louis Blues years ago and found an interesting way to keep track of his players who came in late to the hotel the night before a game. Holland said Bowman went to the front desk and spoke to the employee working the night shift and told him the players who came in that night would be

happy to sign autographs on a hockey stick Bowman supplied.

The next morning, Bowman looked at the stick and everyone who had signed it, who had also come in late, was fined \$250.

"He was an interesting coach," Holland said.

Brothers Jonathan Reid and Andrew Reid, both of Farmington, came Tuesday morning to hear Holland's talk. They said they are particularly interested in the Red Wings this year, as standout left winger Dylan Larkin attended the same high school, Waterford Mott, as they did.

The two, who are avid hockey fans, said they really enjoyed hearing more of the back story to many famous hockey faces.

"I thought he was really candid with a lot of the stories," Jonathan Reid said. "You can tell he's an enthusiastic guy and that's what's led to a lot of his success."

Holland discussed the success in the late '90s and early 2000s, including the team that won the Stanley Cup in 2002 with Dominik Hasek playing goalie.

Holland said the drive for that team to do so well came from the veteran leadership willing to give up some potential salary in order to use that to sign a player like Hasek.

The moves, Holland said, paid off.

"It turned out to be maybe one of the greatest years in Red Wing history, with half that



BILL BRESLER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Ken Holland tells a few hockey stories to the combined chamber of commerce group.

"I thought he was really candid with a lot of the stories. You can tell he's an enthusiastic guy and that's what's led to a lot of his success."

JONATHAN REID
Red Wings fan

team going to the Hall of Fame," he said. "It happened because of the leadership deciding to sacrifice not only their ice time and their points, but in their negotiations to add one more player."

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BILL BRESLER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Ken Holland signed autographs and posed for photos with fans. Ten-year-old Livonia resident Dillon McCallion plays hockey when he isn't at school.

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Start the new year off right with a financial review

It's time to make those new year's resolutions. Lose weight, stop smoking, start exercising, go to college, change jobs, etc.

Is getting your finances in order on your list of resolutions? Should it be? Is now the time to get serious about your finances? You're not getting any younger.

At least once a year, I meet with my clients to review what happened in their life since the last time we met. Did their income or expenses increase or decrease? Did they have any unexpected expenses that reduced their emergency funds? Has their health changed? Did their goals change? We also review their portfolio's performance to determine how it will affect their short- and long-term goals and make changes, if necessary.

Taking time for a detailed financial review may help you progress toward your short- and long-term goals. Consider the following items as part of your checkup:

- Calculate net worth** — Calculating your net worth is key to assessing your financial health and reaching your goals. Reviewing your assets and liabilities will help give you a clear understanding of where you are today and what changes need to be made to reach your goals. The formula to determine your net worth: assets minus liabilities equals net worth. If you are young, it may not be a positive number, especially if you have a large mortgage and little savings. If you are older and your net worth is negative, you may want to take a closer look at your debt and savings plan.
- Review debt** — Living without debt is awesome and stress-free.



Paula Swain
GUEST COLUMNIST

Figure out how you can accomplish it and do it. Enough said.

Review insurances — As your move through life, your insurance needs will change. Give some thought to how much life insurance you need. If someone is dependent on you for support, you may need life insurance to continue that support if you were to die unexpectedly. Review your life insurance to determine if you need more or less and if you have the right type of policy. Every year, I review my auto, home and umbrella policies to see if I can reduce my premium. Last year, I reduced my annual premium by \$600. Review your health insurance, so you fully understand your coverage.

Re-balance portfolio — By re-balancing your portfolio, you can take steps to sell the investments that have underperformed and buy investments that have underperformed, using the concept sell high and buy low. By selling high, you will be taking your gains and possibly taking a taxable event. By buying low, you will be purchasing investments that are on sale. Who doesn't like a sale? You should contact your tax adviser about your specific situation.

Retirement reality check — Are you on track to retire when you want to retire? Are you saving enough? Is your portfolio invested to reach your goals? Recently, I meet with a couple to assist them with their retirement planning to determine if they were on track to retire at age 70.

They were maxing out their retirement contributions and taking advantage of their employers' match, but they had all their money invested in the cash option of their retirement plans. Based on their goals and risk tolerance, I recommended that they consider a portfolio invested in stocks, bonds and cash for the potential of a higher return. They could continue to maintain a cash portfolio, but they would have to save a lot more to reach their goals. By changing their portfolio, they have the potential to earn more on their money and maintain their current saving plans.

For those of you who will be turning 70%, you will need to begin planning for your RMDs that are taken from your employer retirement plans and traditional IRAs. RMDs are not required from Roth IRAs. Understanding the rules can help to ensure that you take these distributions in a manner that is best suited for your personal situation. Make sure to take your distribution; if not, the IRS will assess a 50-percent penalty on the amount you were supposed to take.

There is a good chance your new year's resolution won't stick. Getting your financial house in order shouldn't be a resolution, but something you do every year like your annual physical or teeth cleaning. If you need help, schedule an appointment today with a financial adviser.

Paula Swain is a financial consultant in Plymouth. The opinions are not intended to provide specific advice or recommendations for any individual. Please consult with an adviser about your specific situation.

Animals at Plymouth Township church among 'creatures God has made'

Julie Brown
Staff Writer

Haddie Allen, 5, likes "playing with my friends." A kindergartner at Go Like the Wind Montessori in Ann Arbor, she was among children at a Science Alive presentation Saturday, Feb. 6, at Lake Pointe Bible Church.

Haddie likes "the chinchilla" as well as "porcupine and armadillo." Dad Joe Allen asked how the Plymouth Township church program differed from school.

"It's different 'cause we don't sit on line and we don't go outside," Haddie said. "We just have a fish" at school.

Animals ranging from a Burmese python to a two-toed sloth were fascinating to kids at the church. "It's always been a fun thing," said Terri Neill, program coordinator for Waterford-based Science Alive, standing behind a partition preparing to present animals to the children. "They always get a lot out of it, the adults as well as the kids."

She said church presentations aren't unusual and she has recently been at Catholic elementary schools for Catholic Schools Week. "We do synagogues, we do parochial schools," Neill said.

This is the 16th consecutive year for Science Alive at Lake Pointe Bible. Joshua Haynes, pastor of student ministries, was glad to see so many children and their parents.

Greeting neighbors

"It's a good activity for our children," Haynes said. The families get "to enjoy seeing some of the creatures God has made. It's a good chance to interact with some of our neighbors."

Haynes, whose own three children liked the activity, doesn't see a conflict between science and faith. He was asked about a recent science-faith conference hosted by a nearby Presbyterian church.

"We believe faith should be defensible," Haynes said. After Neill's presentation, Haynes noted the "vestigial" animal features she described on some and larger issues of how they got there. He doesn't see a conflict between science and faith and noted some wish to make such a conflict.

Haynes noted "what we understand to be the cause of those animals. We honor God through the intricacies of those creations. It's the evidence there is design in creation," adding "which we would say is consistent with creation."

Downstairs Saturday, the children sat attentively on carpet squares as Neill brought animals out from cages. "All of these are bred in captivity," she said. "Elephants would not fit in this room."

Some animals have temperament issues that mean they can't be in presentations, Neill added.

Animal kingdom

"If there is something you do not want to pet, you don't have to," she said. Puff the chinchilla was popular.

"Chinchillas don't sit still most of the time," Neill said. "He takes a dust bath" and lives in Chile and other South American countries.

"They don't make good pets," she said. "They can't be held. He is nocturnal. He's also a plant eater." Children learned the word for plant eater, "herbivore."

Next was a two-toed sloth from the rain forest, including Brazil. "What mommy eats, baby eats. These eat leaves," Neill said. "I give them a wide variety of other things, too," including a rice-sweet potato mixture.

"Try not to go up on her head area. She is



Bungee, a wallaby, jumps across the room as fascinated children watch.



Joe and Katie Allen of Plymouth greet the Burmese python during the church Science Alive program.

eating," Neill reminded children as she moved through the room with the sloth.

Humans impact the sloth and other animals with development, Neill said: "It's a hard time for them to cross the roads. They're not designed to do walking."

A mallard "call duck" fascinated children. "She loves the crickets which I have here for her. She's going to do the duck dance," Neill said, adding diet includes insects, grasses and water plants. "Of course, she's a great swimmer," Neill said.

Bungee, a wallaby, jumped across the room as kids stood up. "Her tail is for balance," Neill said. "She does have a pouch. She's born with it. She does not get it later on-line."

When asked how fast

Bungee can run, Neill said, "Depends on what's coming after her. She throws out the baby and runs" if threatened. "They have to take care of themselves first."

The Burmese python was a big hit, growing up to 20 feet. Neill joked with "the ladies hiding in the back there" with their children up front.

The python was burned partially by lights giving off heat in too-small confinement. "We had to doctor it up. Our vet is helpful with that," Neill said.

Of the snake, she said, "He's just as gentle as any of my others." Children and adults tried on the snake.

"If you want to try him on, nice necklace," she said. "Who else needs a hug here? It sits on you nicely. Feeling comfortable."



Science Alive program coordinator Terri Neill introduces the Burmese python to children and adults at Lake Pointe Bible Church.

Armadillo finishes things up

An armadillo was the last animal before lunch. "I've trained this guy to do many things. He's not shy," Neill said of the armadillo, now 18. "This is an animal I've had for a long time."

Haddie's parents, who worship at Lake Pointe and have a nearby Plymouth address, liked the session. "We've come the last several years and it's always been a really fun time. I like animals," mom Katie Allen said.

They also brought son Ki, 8, who wore a "Commander Awesome" name tag. Joe Allen noted the church, its Awana youth program and MOPS group for moms of preschoolers all bring in children to Science Alive.

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Charges refiled in hockey association embezzlement case

LeAnne Rogers
Staff Writer

Charges that include embezzling more than \$20,000 from the Westland Hockey Association have been refiled against a Westland woman.

Sheri Benton, 45, has also been charged with writing insufficient funds checks for more than \$500. She entered a not guilty plea at her arraignment in Westland 18th District Court and is scheduled for a preliminary examination Monday, Feb. 29.

Originally arraigned on the same charges in September, Benton was bound over for trial in Wayne County Circuit Court. The charges were dismissed without

prejudice — meaning the charges could be refiled — Jan. 14. The charges were subsequently refiled.

A spokesperson for the Wayne County Prosecutor's Office didn't respond to a request for comments on the charges being dismissed and refiled.

Westland Police reported that the youth hockey group initially thought about \$8,600 was missing over the last couple of years. Instead, police said the financial records were closely scrutinized and approximately \$45,500 was missing over three years.

The charges are that Benton used the funds to pay personal expenses, including \$8,000 on a mortgage, and withdrew money from the group's account using an ATM card.

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Benton

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GUEST COLUMN

PARC: Here's a better idea for arts, recreation

A group of residents has expressed an interest in creating a taxing authority to retain a portion of the former Central Middle School, while adding a pool, auditorium and other elements. The authority would request upward of 1 mill from the residents of the city of Plymouth and Plymouth Township to fund the construction and operation of the new facility.



Tom Yack
GUEST COLUMNIST

tion Authority

Purpose: To establish an authority to construct, maintain and program art, cultural and recreation facilities for the benefit of the greater community

Goals:

1. Construct and support high-quality art, recreation and education facilities.
2. Construct a pool and theater on the campus of P-CEP.
3. Provide on-going financial support for art and recreational programs.
4. Construct facilities which provide benefits to the greater community.

5. Construct facilities that will be utilized as fully as possible.

6. Establish an organization which will knit Plymouth, Plymouth Township and Canton Township together.

7. Achieve the above goals at the least cost to taxpayers.

Governance: An authority would be created via an intergovernmental agreement by the city of Plymouth, Plymouth Township and Canton Township. The authority would be limited to a maximum of 1 mill. The authority would be responsible for the construction of the pool and theater and oversee scheduling. The authority would enter into an agreement with the Plymouth-Canton Community Schools district defining the use of the pool

and theater by the school district.

The authority would enter into contracts with each governmental partner (Plymouth, Plymouth Township and Canton Township). The contracts would detail the relationship between the authority and each government as it relates to use of authority facilities.

Authority board representation would be based upon population and other factors. The number of authority board members, terms and responsibilities will be determined jointly by authority communities.

Funding: A bond request in the amount of (approximately 0.4 to 0.45) mills would be placed on a ballot in each community. The term of the bond issue would be determined by the mu-

nicipalities.

The millage would generate approximately \$30 million in revenue for construction of the pool and theater. Each municipality would receive revenue (based on SEV) to support the arts, recreation or cultural facilities or program. The city of Plymouth would realize (all estimates) \$1 million, Plymouth Township \$3 million and Canton Township \$6 million. One or more of the municipalities may enter into an agreement to advance a common goal(s).

As an example, the city of Plymouth and Plymouth Township may agree to the following:

» Major portions of Central Middle School are demolished; areas include pool, gymnasium, warehouse, etc.

» Remainder of Central will be re-purposed to support, arts, recreation, senior services and association offices. Play fields will be developed and enhanced.

» The Plymouth-Canton Community Schools district would enter into an agreement to provide land and parking areas for the pool and theater.

» PCEP - 800-1,000-seat theater would be constructed in association with one or more of the Park's high schools. Estimated cost \$10 to \$12 million.

» A competition and/or leisure pool would be constructed in association with one or more of the Park's high schools. Estimated cost \$8.5 to \$10 million.

Tom Yack is a Canton Township trustee and former supervisor.

LETTERS

Diversionsary tactic

On Jan. 11, state Rep. Kurt Heise held a meeting at the Plymouth library. I brought up the situation of the work stoppage by the teachers in the state-run Detroit Public Schools. Heise raised his voice and declared that the leader of the work stoppage is an anarchist. It was apparent to me that his remark

was an attempt to divert attention from the real issues that drove the teachers to take the drastic action of a work stoppage to expose the conditions of the state-run Detroit Public Schools under the appointed manager Darnell Earley, former emergency manager of the city of Flint.

It is very disturbing to me that Heise seemed more concerned about

confining young students under a leaky roof with perhaps seats under their fannies than providing an environment where the mice do not play, the rooms are clean and in good condition and the necessary supplies are available for the teachers and students.

In my opinion, we should all be concerned about subjecting children and young adults of the state of Michigan to the conditions exposed by the Detroit teachers. It is a form of abuse to the K-12 young people of the Detroit Public Schools that Heise appeared not to be concerned about by proclaiming that the leader of the work stoppage is an anarchist.

I know of no action by the state of Michigan to

rectify the conditions before the teachers took drastic action to expose the condition of the schools. Why did the state of Michigan take over management of the Detroit schools in 2009 if the state only continued the mismanagement of the schools? "Shooting the messengers" will not improve the conditions.

William Cole
Plymouth

No surprises

Let's have a re-cap of what occurred during and after the Iowa caucus. From what I have been able to ascertain, aides to Ted Cruz sent out false emails stating that Ben Carson had dropped out of the Republican race. When Donald Trump learned of this, he

threatened to sue Iowa, blaming his loss on these misdeeds. Neither of the above acts should surprise anyone, considering the two people involved.

During the Democratic caucus, six of the polling sites ended up with the same number of votes for Bernie Sanders and Hillary Clinton. According to caucus rules, six coins were flipped and Clinton won all six tosses. Now, despite the odds of that occurring, Bernie Sanders didn't pull a Trump and whine, snivel or demand a new vote. And Hillary didn't sink low enough to send out false emails. If she had, I'm sure Bernie would have used his classic line, "I am sick of hearing about those damn emails."

Bernie Sanders has been portrayed by his detractors, pundits and sometimes the media as a wild man with disheveled hair, shaking his fists to get his point across. Except for the wild man part, I would have to agree that he gets passionate trying to right the wrongs that have been inflicted on our people by Wall Street and the very politicians who were running in the Republican caucus in Iowa.

If you get a chance to hear Bernie Sanders speak in Flint at the debate March 6, I'm sure you will find him quite refreshing, especially when compared to the BS coming from the right-wingers.

James Huddleston
Canton

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NEED MORE CUSTOMERS?

EDUCATION

Canton foundation continues scholarship tradition

By Brad Kuehler

When Canton Community Schools District (CCSD) announced that it would be closing a portion of the former Central Middle School campus, many residents expressed interest in creating a new facility for arts, recreation and education. The Canton Community Foundation (CCF) was established to support this vision.

The CCF has a long history of supporting education in Canton. It has provided scholarships for students in need and supported various educational programs. The foundation's goal is to ensure that every student has the opportunity to succeed.

The CCF is currently seeking donors to support the construction of a new facility. If you are interested in making a contribution, please contact the foundation at (734) 253-1111.

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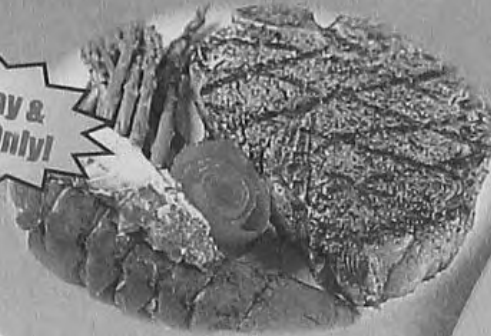


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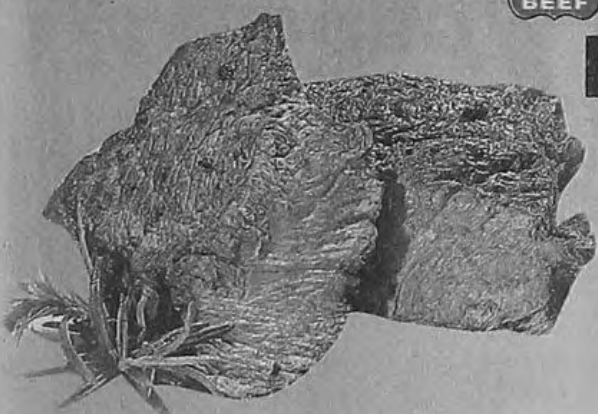
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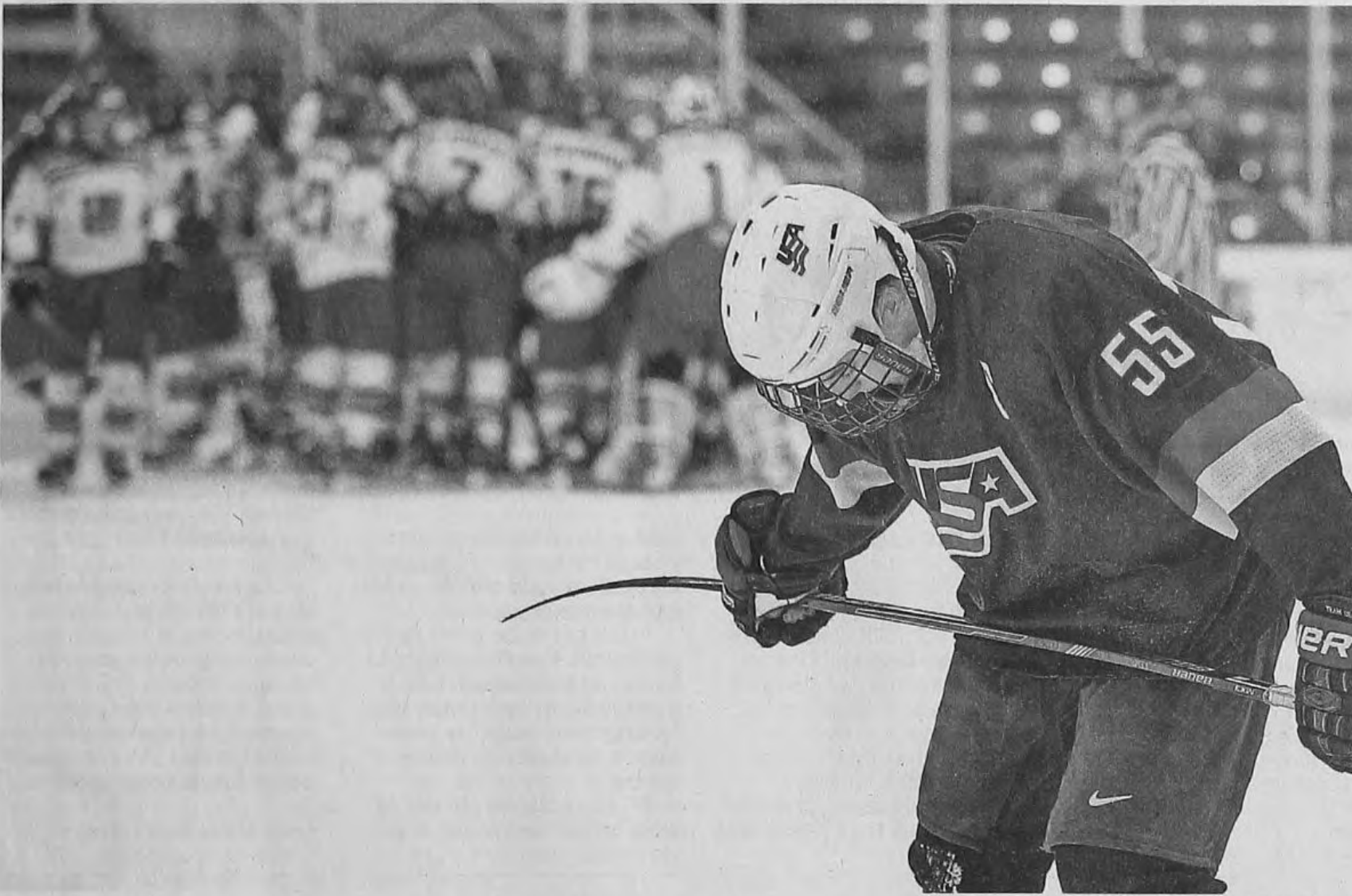


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FIVE NATIONS TOURNAMENT

STONEWALLED



RENA LAVERTY | USA HOCKEY

Czech Republic players mob each other after scoring the OT winner Tuesday, while U.S. player Phil Kemp slumps in disappointment.

Czech Republic tops Team USA in overtime, sparked by goalie's 49 stops

Tim Smith
Staff Writer

The power and beauty of international hockey was on full display Tuesday night at USA Hockey Arena in Plymouth.

Although a late comeback enabled the U.S. NTDP Under-17 team to reach overtime against the Czech Republic, the visitors grabbed a 4-3 victory with only 37 seconds left in the extra session, when Jan Kern chipped in a power-play goal.

When the Under-17 Five Nations Tournament contest was concluded, the victors piled on top of each other at one end of the ice — while Team USA players skated dejectedly, wondering what might have been if not for a sluggish start.

"Obviously, we lost the game and they were very excited they won the game," U.S. head coach Don Granato said. "That's the way it is. These games mean a lot. So it



RENA LAVERTY | USA HOCKEY

Finishing off his goal at the end of the second period is forward Jacob Tortora, slipping the puck past Czech goalie Tomas Vomacka.

certainly is a disappointment for us.

"We chased the game. We fell behind early and it's a different game when you do that. Everything seems to take more energy. And that's what it felt like from the ice, from the bench."

Meanwhile, Granato's players and NTDP fans in the

building (the actual attendance was not announced) might be having nightmares of Czech Republic goalie Tomas Vomacka.

He was like a human force field, displaying athleticism, anticipation and perfect positioning to turn aside 49 of the 52 shots sent in his direction. Actually, Vomacka had a

slight crack in the armor right off the bat.

At just 1:27 of the first period, Josh Norris scored an unassisted goal to get the NTDP's first-ever international home game at the Plymouth arena off to a rousing start. (Earlier Tuesday, Finland edged Russia, 4-2, to open the five-day tourney).

But the Czech Republic responded with two goals within a minute around the midway point of the first to go up 2-1 and chase Team USA starting goaltender Adam Scheel (four saves).

Taking over was Northville native Dylan St. Cyr, who stopped 10 of 12 shots the rest of the contest.

The U.S., despite trailing much of the night, looked to be on a perpetual power play, firing shot after shot at Vomacka — who quickly shrugged off the early goal by Norris.

It remained 2-1 after one

See FIVE NATIONS, Page B3



JOHN KEMSKI | EXPRESS PHOTO

Going up for a layup Tuesday night is Canton's Obi Okoli (left), who led the Chiefs with 22 points.

PREP BASKETBALL

Chiefs rally for 'doubly' impressive 63-57 win

Tim Smith
Staff Writer

Canton's perfect season nearly was derailed Tuesday night by Livonia Churchill.

But the host Chiefs — trailing 49-40 with 90 seconds to go — went on a 3-point scoring spree to extend the KLA South Division varsity boys basketball game into overtime.

From there, it took a second OT before Canton prevailed, 63-57, to give it 15 wins in as many outings and a 9-0 mark in the division.

"It was definitely clutch shooting," Canton head coach Jimmy Reddy said. "But I liked that, we really haven't had a game like this in a while. We haven't had a close game in a while."

"I liked that when we were down, we were still fighting. We still thought we had a chance. Down nine with under two minutes to play, it doesn't look great. But our kids kept fighting and kept believing and got it done down the stretch."

Even so, the pesky Chargers (9-6, 5-4) had the ball at the end of the fourth quarter and the final moments of the first OT with the opportunity each time to win with a basket.

"We had to get a stop at the end of regulation," Reddy said. "Chur-

See CHIEFS, Page B4

NATIONAL SIGNING DAY

Third Winters sister extends family's collegiate streak

Youngest of Canton soccer sisters signs with Iowa

Tim Smith
Staff Writer

Natalie Winters wanted to keep the family tradition alive by getting a scholarship to play college soccer, following sisters Lindsay and Rachel.

On National Signing Day, Feb. 3, the Canton senior midfielder got her wish as she signed a national letter of intent with the University of Iowa.

"It means a lot," Natalie

Winters said. "My family has supported me so much throughout this whole process. My sisters have gone to play sports, so it was always a dream to follow them, too, because I look up to them."

All three soccer sisters were at Canton High School for the late afternoon ceremony, as was their high school coach, Jeannine Reddy.

"I coached Rachel and I coached Lindsay, too," Reddy said. "They're all very different. Lindsay was such a poised and easy-going (player). They



BILL BRESLER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

See WINTERS, Page B2 Soccer player Natalie Winters has signed with Iowa.

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NATIONAL SIGNING DAY

Colleges a hit with baseball 'Cats

Plymouth baseball players firm up plans to play sport at collegiate level

Tim Smith
Staff Writer



Plymouth baseball players Josh Sulak (left) and Kyle Wolter signed to play at Northwood and Lawrence Tech, respectively.

When Josh Sulak and Kyle Wolter pitch for the Plymouth Wildcats, they pride themselves on hitting the target.

Both did just that in their search for colleges to keep playing baseball in the years following their high school career, which will end this spring.

Sulak is slated to play college baseball at Northwood University, while Wolter will be part of the debut team at Lawrence Technological University.

"I'm beyond blessed to be able to play at the next level," Sulak said Feb. 3 during the National Signing Day festivities at Plymouth. "I'm beyond blessed to continue my baseball career."

"It takes a lot of dedication, practice and hard work, but it definitely pays off in the end."

Just as pumped about moving on from high school to college beginning this summer (when LTU practices begin in earnest) was Wolter.

"It's presented me with a great opportunity to get an

education, a good one," Wolter said. "I get to start up a legacy at Lawrence Tech, since it's going to be their first year."

With a smile, Wolter added that being part of something new will be "something you can show to your kids when you're older, show them that you've accomplished something great."

Tip of the cap

Their Plymouth baseball coach, Jason Crain, gave full marks to both Sulak and Wolter for their on-field abilities and leadership skills. He also said he expects both third-year varsity players to do something special in their senior season with the Wildcats.

"Great ballplayers and leaders and I think they're going to

lead us to great things this year," Crain said. "Josh is a great all-around athlete and is a phenomenal pitcher."

"He's got some great action on his ball. People struggle to barrel up his fastball, which gives him an opportunity at a lot of ground balls. He commands himself well on the mound."

"Kyle, while he pitches as well, he's probably our best-

handed infielder (shortstop) that we've had. He makes every play."

According to Crain, both Sulak and Wolter have a bright future in the game following graduation this June.

And being on a Division I team or lower-level programs doesn't matter as much in baseball as it does in sports such as football and basketball when it comes to predicting future success.

Multiple levels

"There's a lot of players that come from all different levels that move on in their baseball careers," Crain said.

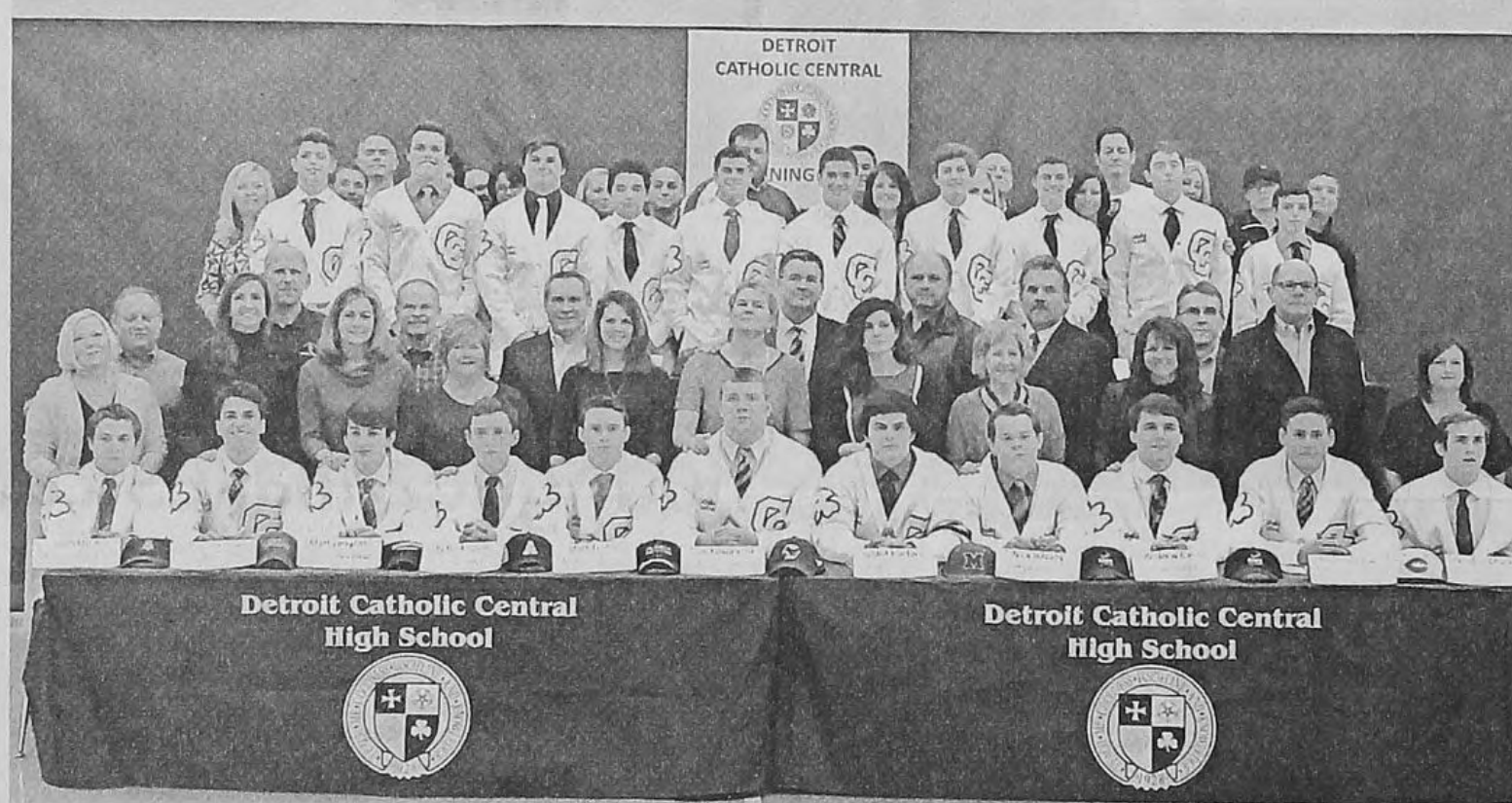
The coach added that the key is finding a spot where an individual is comfortable enough to keep moving forward on the field and in the classroom.

"Obviously, as a program, we try to give players the opportunity to play at the next level if they want to," Crain said. "In baseball, there's so many different levels you can play at. We want to help them find that spot that's a fit for them."

"As an athlete and as a former athlete myself, I think athletics really helps in the academic process as well, because it keeps you organized, teaches you time management and also teaches you life skills that you can take beyond your years in school."

tsmith@hometownlife.com

Shamrocks signees



AARON BABICZ

Novi Detroit Catholic Central High recently recognized 19 student-athletes on its 2016 signing day. Among those headed to play college football include: Tom Kowalkoski, Boston College; Tyler Laurentius, Hillsdale College; Alex Bock, Ferris State; Tarek Dalou and Concordia University. Soccer commits include Justin Murray, University of Detroit Mercy; Matt Turton, Kalamazoo College; Peter Kirouac and Ben Sargent, Albion College; and Connor Gaskin, Claremont McKenna (Calif.) College. Lacrosse commits include Alex Jarzembowski, U-D Mercy; Nick Bazany, Rocco Mularoni and Kyle Gaines, Hope College; and Matt Jarzynski, Augustana (Ill.) College. Baseball commits include Grant Hartwig, Miami of Ohio; Nick Marcon, College of Central Florida; and Brendan Charette, Carroll (Wis.) University. Golf commits are Max Palmer, Robert Morris University, and Josh Stein, Lawrence Tech.



JOHN KEMSKI | EXPRESS PHOTO

Salem senior softball players Kara Hutchison (left) and Jamie Squires shared the spotlight on National Signing Day.

NATIONAL SIGNING DAY

Softball Rocks seal their college deals

Tim Smith
Staff Writer

Watching from the wings on National Signing Day, Salem varsity softball coach Bonnie Southerland couldn't help but smile.

Two of Southerland's players, Jamie Squires and Kara Hutchison, signed with Oakland University and Davenport University, respectively, to continue their softball career.

Of course, both players have the 2016 high school season yet to play.

"We're very, very proud of Jamie and Kara," Southerland said. "They've brought a lot to the program. They're outstanding student-athletes and we're excited to see them move on to the next level after they come back their senior year and really do some good things for this program."

Squires, a multi-talented infielder, liked her future collegiate home as soon as she went there for a campus visit. Oakland is a Division I program.

"The teammates are great, the coaches are great," Squires said. "Everybody I've met is amazing. ... They have a great softball program and I love the coaches (including former Plymouth coach Val Canfield). And they have a beautiful campus."

Hutchison, a hard-hitting catcher, said she looked at different colleges "but Davenport was the best fit for me, both softball-wise and academically."

She holds a 3.1 grade-point average and will study for a degree in physical therapy.

"It's a great opportunity to be able to play college softball," Hutchison said. "I've been working so hard for it for so many years."

Sharing it

According to Squires, National Signing Day in and of itself is a pretty special occasion. But she said making it even better was having the chance to celebrate together at the Salem High School athletic department. Each of the three high schools at Plymouth-Canton Educational Park had an individual program throughout the afternoon and early evening.

"It's a great honor. It's great to have all the student-athletes together, everybody here to celebrate," Squires said. "It's just a good feeling. I love it. I think it's a great idea to have everybody sign together."

Southerland, meanwhile, said she always pegged Squires and Hutchison as future college players.

"I just think it's their love of the sport," Southerland said. "Both Jamie and Kara love to play softball. They're pretty dedicated athletes, so I think moving on to the next level was certainly inevitable."

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WINTERS

Continued from Page B1

all have different qualities. Natalie is quicker, a little more fiery. Rachel is also very good. Just a great family."

The youngest of the Winters soccer trio, whose parents are Julie and Jason Winters, said she immediately felt comfortable at Iowa, where she will look into pursuing a degree in crime scene investigation as well as play for a Division I women's soccer program.

Sisterly advice

Natalie added that she received plenty of advice from Lindsay and Rachel about trying to find a college fit. Lindsay graduated in 2010 from Canton and earned a degree from Olivet College; Rachel, a 2014 Canton grad, remains at Bowling Green State University.

"Go where it feels right, where you'll get a good education and where it feels like a home away from home," she said, recalling the helpful hints from her siblings. "I wanted to find a school that was good in academics, too."

Holder of a 3.3 grade-point average, Winters also has advice for current Canton players who shared the National Signing Day program (10 Canton seniors participated).

"If you don't focus on your grades, you're not going to go anywhere without them," she said. "Study, focus and do well."

Meanwhile, Winters, currently closing out her career with Canton's varsity girls basketball team, is foregoing her senior soccer season.

Instead, she will gear up for her



BILL BRESLER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Soccer coach Jeanine Reddy coached all three of the Winters girls. Lindsey Winters went to Olivet, Natalie Winters heads for Iowa and Rachel Winters is at Bowling Green.

career at Iowa by playing solely for the Michigan Hawks elite club program.

Reddy lamented losing her from the 2016 roster.

"She's matured so much as a person. She's an outstanding soccer player, probably one of the best we've had offensively and anywhere on the field, at Canton since

I've been coaching," Reddy said. "Leaving with a great legacy, with all the (Winters) sisters playing soccer. She's just been awesome."

Additional National Signing Day stories will be published in the Sunday, Feb. 14, Observer.

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MIHL SHOWCASE

Showing up big at the Showcase

Saunders' hat trick lifts Salem to second win over top teams; Plymouth also prevails

Tim Smith
Staff Writer

What better time to show some skills than the prestigious Michigan Interscholastic Hockey League Showcase?

Both Salem and Plymouth did just that, with big wins against top-ranked varsity boys hockey teams.

The Rocks defeated Grosse Pointe South, 3-2, in a shootout Friday at the Kennedy Recreation Center in Trenton. It was Plymouth's turn to shine that day before a bevy of Junior A and college scouts, prevailing 3-1 over Division 1-ranked Grandville.

Salem also turned back Grandville, winning 5-3 Saturday behind junior forward Jake Saunders' hat trick to finish 2-0 at the MIHL's annual event.

"The MIHL Showcase brings in scouts from the NHL on down," Salem head coach Ryan Ossenmacher said. "It is another good opportunity to provide our team with tough games and exposure to scouts from the next levels of hockey."

Salem needed a "beauty of a goal" in the shootout against South by senior forward Evan Newel, in tandem with Rocks goalie Matt Visel turning aside all three shootout attempts.

"We competed very well against one of the top teams in the state," Ossenmacher said. "Matt Visel was strong in net. We did a good job of keeping GPS to the outside and limiting their quality opportunities."

Newel also scored during the second period, finishing off a feed from linemate Matt Schaumburger to make it a 1-1 game at 4:31.

Breaking the tie about 11 minutes later was Salem defenseman Marty Mills (from Nick Callegari), but Grosse

Pointe South forced the shootout (no overtime was played) on a power-play goal in the third by Marshall Vyletel.

Visel was solid for Salem, making 26 saves. The Rocks fired 18 shots at GPS goaltender Camden Mills.

On Saturday, Saunders (three goals) and freshman forward Colin Goleniak (three assists) were the offensive stalwarts and junior goaltender Tristan Rehling (20 saves) the defensive standout as the Rocks (10-4-2) defeated the No. 5 team in Division 1.

"We started off a little slow against Grandville," Ossenmacher said, referring to a 2-0 deficit early in the second period. "After the first period, we increased our physical play and commitment to shot blocking, which created more offensive opportunities."

Saunders then started the Rocks on the comeback trail, scoring at 5:59 of the middle period. Setting up the goal were junior forward Shawn Weldon (two assists) and Goleniak.

It was 2-2 when Saunders scored again about five minutes later, with assists going to Newel and junior forward Joey Driscoll (two assists).

The Rocks went up 3-2 at 14:59, thanks to a goal by senior forward Nathan Homrich, with assists collected by Driscoll and Weldon.

Grandville tied the score at 3-3 on a goal just 1:33 into the third period, but Saunders grabbed the lead back again at 3:18. Assisting on Saunders' third goal of the night was Goleniak.

Closing out the scoring was junior forward Matt Schaumburger at 13:58. Setting up the insurance goal were Goleniak and senior defenseman Bailey Thompson.

Key to Salem being able to



Salem junior forward Jake Saunders celebrates after scoring one of his three goals Saturday against Grandville.



Salem junior goalie Tristan Rehling makes a stop against Grandville during Saturday's MIHL Showcase match-up in Trenton.

chip away and ultimately take control was Rehling, who "made a few key saves after we went down 2-0 to give us the

chance to come back," Ossenmacher said. "Plymouth's hard-fought win Friday was helped by ex-

cellent goaltending.

Senior Trevor McManus stopped 23 of Grandville's 24 shots to earn his sixth victory of the season.

Grandville opened the scoring in the first, but the Wildcats responded in the middle period.

First, junior forward Colton Borke snapped in sophomore forward Josh Weber's centering pass.

Plymouth then went up 2-1 when senior defenseman Kyle Kozler fired in a power-play goal.

Late in the third period, the Wildcats collected some insurance. Junior forward Alex Chartrand made it 3-1 with about two minutes to go.

Sophomore forward C.J. Mullenax and junior defenseman Zach Gallaher created a turnover to set up the goal.

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Pom pon champions!



SHANNON CRAGGS

The Plymouth Canton pom pon team, composed of girls in grades 6-8, took first place in the Middle School Division at the Michigan Pom Association State Championship hosted Jan. 31 by Alma College. Team members include (back row, from left) coach Chelsea Schroeder, Brooke Tyszkiewicz, Allison Hawkins, Cami Craggs, Cassidy Davis, Cordy Householder, Julia Battaglia, Erin Sugiura, Hannah Kulp and coach Kristen Beyer and (front row, from left) Rachel Provenzano, Olivia Henry, Rachel Pierson, Alli Glud, Lacey Courtney, Maria Hall, Kokoa Kaneko and coach Ari Bologna. Also on the team are Janae Washington, Lydia Brandt and coach Joslyn Covault.

FIVE NATIONS

Continued from Page B1

period, although the U.S. out-shot the Czech Republic, 21-7. The shot totals read 29-9 midway through the second period, when a defensive giveaway in front of St. Cyr led to Kern's first of the night.

Pucks continued to be driven in Vomacka's direction, to no avail.

With just under two minutes remaining in the second, U.S. forwards Grant Mismash and Evan Barratt teamed for a dangerous play that looked promising.

Barratt's one-timer of a Mismash feed was stymied by Vomacka's blocker.

Just when it seemed as though the Czech Republic would take a 3-1 lead into the second intermission, Team USA got one back at 19:31 to energize the crowd.

Forward Jacob Tortora broke in on Vomacka and slid the puck past the goalie's outstretched left pad.

Tortora said he saw an opening in the Czech defense and went for it. "The forwards on their team collapsed," he



Displaying uncanny quickness while making one of his 49 saves Tuesday at USA Hockey Arena is Czech Republic goalie Tomas Vomacka. Denied on this play is Josh Norris (right) of the U.S.

said. "We were in our zone and I just saw there was two (defenders). ... Luckily, I got around them."

The second period ended with the home team still trailing, 3-2, but up 38-17 in shots.

It only took 2:39 of the third period for the U.S. to tie the score at 3-3. Barratt finished a perfect set-up by defenseman Reilly Walsh.

Regulation ended shortly after Vomacka used his glove to rob defenseman Nate

Knoepke's laser, the 50th shot taken by the U.S.

Yet just when it seemed as though a shootout was imminent, a penalty was called against the hosts with 1:20 left.

With about 40 seconds to go, a shot taken by Dalimil Mikyska from the top of the right circle hit a body and caromed over to Kern, wide open on the other side of the ice.

The high shot was in and out of the net before St. Cyr had time to recover.

U.S. WOMEN'S SOCCER

Rodriguez makes cut for CONCACAF roster

Salem junior from Michigan Hawks will play for U.S. Under-17 Women's National Team

Canton's Isabelle Rodriguez, a member of the Michigan Hawks, is among 20 players named to the U.S. Under-17 Women's National Team for next month's 2016 CONCACAF U-17 Women's Championship.

U.S. head coach B.J. Snow unveiled the roster for the tournament, to be held March 3-13 in St. George's, Grenada. The tournament will send the top three finishers to the 2016 FIFA U-17 Women's World Cup, being held in Jordan from Sept. 30 to Oct. 21.

Rodriguez is among seven defenders on the American roster.

"We are extremely excited about the team that will be representing the United States at World Cup Qualifying Tournament in Grenada," Snow said. "It was a tremendously challenging process to narrow down the final roster and that's a credit to all of the players we've been able to evaluate in camps over the last year."

The cut-off date to be eligible for the upcoming U-17 Women's World Cup is players born on or after Jan. 1, 1999. Snow chose 12 players born in 1999, but also included five players born in 2000 as well as three 14-year-olds born in 2001.

Rodriguez, a junior at Salem High School, was selected from the Hawks' U-17 Elite Clubs National League program. Also on the U.S. team is Brighton's Alexa Spaanstra, a forward from the Hawks' U-18 roster.

The 2016 CONCACAF tournament will take place at two stadiums, the Grenada National Stadium and the Grenada Athletic Stadium.

"The main focus for our U-17 National Team is to evaluate and develop players that have the potential to navigate



U.S. WOMEN'S SOCCER

Isabelle Rodriguez, a junior at Salem, has been named to the roster of the U.S. Under-17 Women's National Team.

through our Youth National Team system and it's critical that we always keep this mindset at the forefront of our philosophy," Snow said. "At the same time, we never want to lose sight of the tradition of winning and the standards that have been created by those that have preceded us."

"At this level, there is always a fine line in the selection process of deciding who gives us the best chance of winning now versus those players who have the best chance of moving forward with our National Teams. With this current roster, we feel we have identified a group of young players that gives us the balance of being able to compete with the top teams in the world now, but who also possess the potential to be the future of U.S. women's soccer."

Snow also will bring this roster to the four-team 2016 U-17 Women's NTC Invitational that will run Feb 11-15 as the U.S. hosts Japan, South Korea and England.

The NTC Invitational will serve as final preparation for the CONCACAF tourney. All the invitational matches will be held at Glenn "Mooch" Myernick Field at the U.S. Soccer National Training Center in Carson, Calif.



Farmington film festival aims to inspire

Sharon Dargay
Staff Writer

"Prelude" from Bach's Suite for Solo Cello no. 1 in G major has never sounded sweeter than when it's played on garbage.

In a teaser for "Landfill Harmonic," a documentary about a Paraguayan youth orchestra, a 19-year-old cellist shows his instrument made of an oil can and old tools once used for tenderizing beef and making gnocchi - all parts recycled from a landfill - before he launches into the soulful Bach solo.

"Landfill Harmonic," which tells the story of the Recycled Orchestra of Cateura, is among the inspiring films that will screen next month at the Greater Farmington Film Festival.

It's also one of Festival Director Dwayne Hayes' favorite documentaries at this year's event.

"It's about a community that is recycling or taking garbage and turning it into instruments and creating a small orchestra and touring with it. It's incredibly inspiring, what they are doing.

"It's one of my favorite films," Hayes said, adding "I think they are all fantastic."

Inspiration is among the goals of this third annual film festival, which will run March 3-6 in various locations in Farmington and Farmington Hills.

kickStart, a Farmington Hills-based nonprofit, created the event to show documentaries and feature films that not only tell stories but motivate viewers. Each film will be paired with a non-profit organization. A representative from the group will talk to the audience about the work they do. Nonprofits also will be listed on the film festival website.

"If you're inspired about that issue, you can contribute," Hayes said. "The films we present deal with contemporary social issues and they usually are presented in some way that is inspiring and positive and that makes you want to be motivated to action."

Doubling attendance

Hayes said kickStart created the event to give the Farmington/Farmington Hills community an opportunity to see inspiring new films that have not been screened widely in the Detroit area. He said about half of the audience is from outside of the Farmington area.

"We've brought people in from all over...Detroit, Rochester, south of Dearborn."

Approximately 1,000 film lovers attended the event last year, more than double from the previous year. The festival organizing committee increased the screenings from seven to eight this year and added a new venue, The Riviera Cinema in Farmington Hills.

OTHER FESTIVAL FILMS

» **"The Hunting Ground,"** a documentary directed by Kirby Dick, uses first-person testimonies and expert insights to explore the issue of rape on college campuses. Screens at 7 p.m. March 4, at the Farmington Civic Theater in downtown Farmington.

» **"The Judgment"** is a drama in Bulgarian with English subtitles. Its story centers on a desperate man who, after losing his wife, his work, and the confidence of his son, starts smuggling illegal Syrian immigrants into Bulgaria. Screens at 9:15 p.m. March 4 at the Farmington Civic Theater.

» **"Prescription Thugs"** looks at the growing epidemic of prescription drug use. Director Chris Bell includes experts on the nature of addiction, survivors with first-hand accounts of their struggle, and whistleblowers who testify to the dollar-driven aims of pharmaceutical corporations in this documentary. Screens at 3 p.m. March 5, at The Riviera Cinema.

» **"Landfill Harmonic,"** about the Recycled Orchestra of Cateura screens at 7 p.m. March 5, at the Farmington Civic Theater.

» **"Under the Same Sun"** is a drama in Hindi with English subtitles. The film tells the story of Karim, an injured fugitive, who is welcomed like a beloved brother by three orphaned boys in a remote Rajasthani oasis of Hindu and Muslim harmony. Their simple human kindness disrupts the smooth and certain arc of Karim's mission and threatens his very identity. Screens at 9:15 p.m. March 5.

» **"A Month of Sundays,"** tells the story of Frank Mollard, who receives a call from an elderly woman, mistaking him for her son. He is thrown into the woman's life and surprises himself by developing a close bond with her. The relationship inspires him to reconnect with individuals he had neglected. Screens at 1 p.m. March 6, at the Holocaust Memorial Center, Farmington Hills.

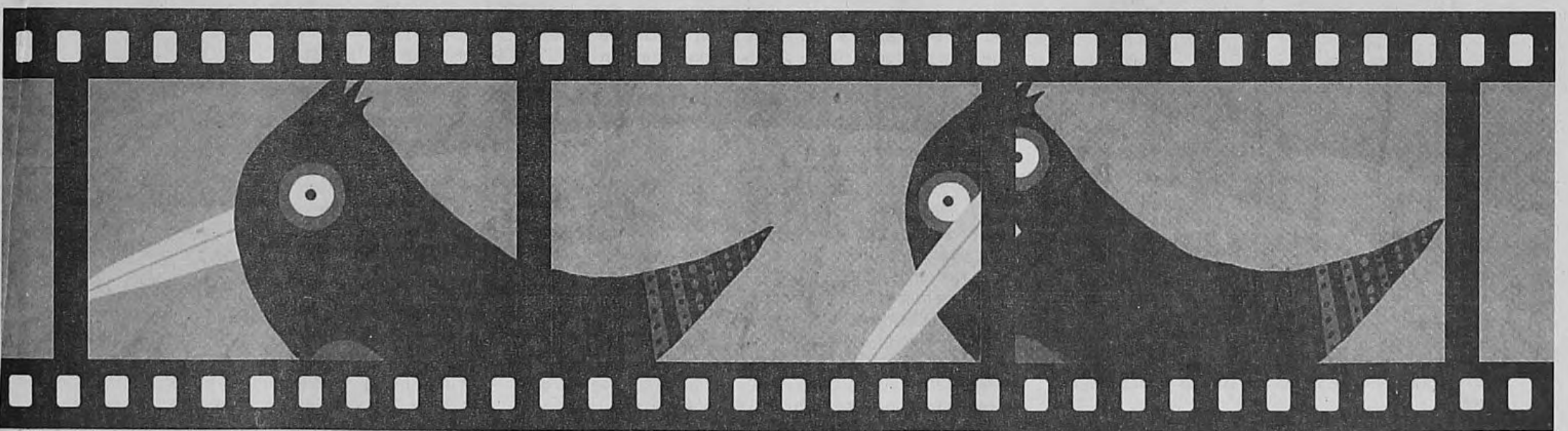
A free preview party will include a silent auction, film trailers, a cash bar, food and live music, 7-10 p.m. Feb. 18, at The Riviera Cinema, 30170 Grand River Ave.

Festival tickets are \$5 per film or \$30 for seven films. "The Best of the New York International Children's Film Festival," which will be shown at 10:30 a.m. March 5, at the Farmington Civic Theater, is free. Buy festival tickets at gffilmfest.com.

"How to Let Go of the World and Love All the Things Climate Can't Change" kicks off the festival at 7:30 p.m. March 3, at Smith Theatre on the Oakland Community College campus, located on Orchard Lake Road, just south of I-696. Josh Fox, whose documentary, "Gasland," was nominated for an Academy Award, directed the film, which looks at communities in 12 countries around the world facing grave effects of climate change.

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Meet the Boogie Woogie Kid Trio at Jazz@The Elks series

Sharon Dargay
Staff Writer

Matthew Ball will bring a new twist to his boogie woogie piano show this month when he performs at the Jazz@The Elks music series in Plymouth.

Ball, an attorney-turned-performer, is adding a drummer and a singer into the mix, creating the Boogie Woogie Kid Trio.

"I'm doing a couple of new things outside the realm of what I've been doing. The trio is a new project for 2016," said Ball, a Clawson resident who performs as the Motor City Boogie Woogie Kid. "The other is a ragtime to rock and roll show with four pianists including myself. We've done it twice so far and it was a huge hit.

"The trio is an expansion of what I'm already doing. There are many pieces of music I play that are songs, but I perform as an instrumentalist."

Emma-Lee Aboukasm, 19,

will add her voice to Ball's repertoire, which includes American favorites from the 1920s-40s. Aboukasm is the 2014 winner of The Detroit Youth Vocalist Jazz Competition, and was a finalist in The International Sarah Vaughan Vocal Jazz Competition. She studies music performance at the University of Michigan and just released her debut album, "Rise to It."

Sean Nasrey, a self-taught drummer who performs throughout the metro area, completes the trio.

Lawyer, pianist

Ball studied music and history, obtaining degrees in each, at Oakland University. The classically-trained pianist won the award for outstanding student in piano performance while at OU and performed overseas on a scholarship. He earned a law degree at the University of Detroit and worked as an attorney for several years. He left the legal



Matthew Ball, the Motor City Boogie Woogie Kid, performs Feb. 23 at the Jazz@the Elks series in Plymouth.

field after attending a boogie woogie festival in 2001 and never looked back. Today he teaches piano and performs throughout Michigan and online.

"I have 3 million views across 300 videos," he said, describing his presence on YouTube. He also has recorded three CDs which he'll have at the concert in Plymouth.

His shows include boogie woogie arrangements of such songs as "Swanee River" and "Waltzing Matilda," as well as ragtime tunes.

Ball said he is drawn to boogie woogie by its mass appeal.

"Boogie woogie is a niche of the whole jazz spectrum that has a unique ability to move and interest anyone from two years old to 80 years old. I don't think modern jazz art form can stake that claim.

"It's fun, upbeat and enjoyable music. It makes people tap along with their toes. I love it."

The Jazz@The Elks concert starts at 7 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 23, at the Plymouth-Ann Arbor Elks Lodge #325, 41700 Ann Arbor Road, Plymouth. Admission is \$10 and includes hor d'oeuvres. Call 734-453-1780 for more information.

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Say it with chocolate

These baked treats are a homemade way to show you care



BERRY CHOCOLATE LOAF WITH GLAZE

Prep time: 15 minutes
Cook time: 35 minutes
Serves: 14

4 cups all-purpose unbleached flour
2 envelopes Fleischmann's RapidRise Yeast
½ cup sugar
1 teaspoon salt
1 ¼ cups milk
4 tablespoons butter
2 eggs
1 package (5 ounces) Sunsweet Dried Cherries or Amaz!n Berry Blend
3 ounces chopped bittersweet or semi-sweet chocolate
½ cup coarsely chopped nuts, optional
Glaze
1 ½ cups powdered sugar
¼ teaspoon pure vanilla extract
2 ½ to 3 tablespoons very hot water

Preheat oven to 325°F. Combine 2 cups flour, undissolved yeast, sugar and salt in a large mixing bowl. Heat milk and butter until very warm (120° to 130°F). Add to flour mixture with eggs and beat on medium speed with electric mixer until smooth and elastic, about 3 minutes. Gradually stir in remaining flour. Add dried fruit, chocolate and nuts (if desired). Spread batter in two greased 8 ½-by-4 ½-inch loaf pans, filling each half full. Let rise in a warm, draft-free place until nearly doubled, about 1 hour. Bake for 35 to 40 minutes or until golden brown. Place on cooling rack. Cool for 10 minutes and remove from pan. Cool 20 minutes on wire rack. Combine glaze ingredients and drizzle over warm bread and continue to cool.

Nutritional information: Calories per serving 268, fat 6g, cholesterol 38mg, sodium 76mg, carbohydrates 50g, fiber 1.5g, sugar 23g, protein 6g

With the day of love not far away, it's the perfect time to consider all of the ways that you can share sweet indulgences with your nearest and dearest. This Valentine's Day, try some new, delicious ways to give the gift of decadent chocolate.

Whether you make a treat from scratch or simply fill a gift basket with a chocolate indulgence, you don't have to skimp on good health – especially as dark chocolate has risen in popularity and become a Valentine's Day favorite. These gift-worthy recipes from Sunsweet feature craveable chocolate to share with those you love most.

Courtesy of Family Features



SLENDER BLONDIE BROWNIES WITH PEANUTS, CHOCOLATE CHIPS, AND PRUNES

Prep time: 15 minutes
Cook time: 30 minutes
Serves: 12

Nonstick cooking spray
¼ cup white whole wheat flour
½2 teaspoons baking powder
¼ teaspoon baking soda
½ teaspoon salt
¼ cup canola oil
¾ cup packed light or dark brown sugar
2 egg whites
1 tablespoon vanilla extract
½ cup chopped pitted prunes
¼ cup peanuts
¼ cup bittersweet chocolate morsels

Preheat oven to 350°F. Coat a 9-inch-square pan with cooking spray. Sift the flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt onto a piece of waxed paper or aluminum foil. Set aside. In a large bowl, beat the oil and sugar until smooth, 1 to 2 minutes. Mix in the egg whites and vanilla. With a wooden spoon, stir in the flour mixture until just combined. Fold in the prunes, walnuts and chocolate morsels. Spread the batter in the pan. Bake 25 to 30 minutes or until a wooden pick inserted in the center comes out clean or with moist-looking crumbs. Cool 5 minutes in the pan, then turn out onto a wire rack to cool completely. Cut into 12 pieces and store in an airtight container for up to 5 days.

Nutritional information: Calories per serving 169, fat 7.2g, cholesterol 0mg, sodium 81mg, carbohydrates 25g, fiber 1g



CHOCOLATE HAZELNUT BISCOTTI

Prep time: 30 minutes
Cook time: 50 minutes
Servings: 30

1 cup Sunsweet Amaz!n Diced Prunes
¼ cup whole hazelnuts
2 cups whole wheat pastry flour
½ cup cocoa powder
1 teaspoon instant espresso powder
2 teaspoons baking powder
1 teaspoon salt
½ cup unsalted butter, at room temperature
1 cup sugar
2 eggs, large
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
½ cup bittersweet chocolate chunks

In a bowl, soak the Amaz!ns in warm tap water for 5 minutes. Drain well. Preheat oven to 350°F. Toast the hazelnuts until lightly fragrant, about 10 minutes. Rub the hazelnuts between a dishtowel to remove some of the skins (It's not necessary to remove all skins). Using the back of a sauté pan, crush the hazelnuts until some but not all of the nuts are cracked in half or in quarters. In a separate bowl, whisk together the flour, cocoa powder, instant espresso powder, baking powder and salt. In a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, cream the butter and sugar. Beat in the eggs one at a time, then add the vanilla extract. With the mixer on low speed, add the flour mixture in three stages, mixing briefly in between each addition. Mix in the Amaz!ns, chocolate and hazelnuts until just incorporated. Let rest for 20 minutes to allow the flour to hydrate; this helps alleviate some of the dough's stickiness.

Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Turn the dough out onto a lightly floured surface and divide in half (each half will be about 525 grams). Shape each half into a log about 2 inches wide and nearly 13 inches long. Transfer to the prepared baking sheet. Brush the tops of the loaves with the beaten egg white. Bake the loaves for 35 minutes or until firm on top but before the bottoms darken too much, then transfer to cooling racks. Lower the oven temperature to 300°F. Once the logs have cooled to a warm room temperature (after at least 30 minutes), use a serrated knife to cut the logs on a bias into ¼-inch-thick biscotti. Place the biscotti on the baking sheet and bake for 5 to 7 minutes or until lightly golden brown. Working quickly to avoid burning your fingers, flip the biscotti over and bake for 5 to 7 more minutes.

Nutritional information: Calories per serving 132, fat 6.5g, cholesterol 20mg, sodium 43mg, carbohydrates 18g, fiber 2.5g, sugar 9g, protein 2.5g



GLUTEN-FREE CHOCOLATE NUT COOKIES

Prep time: 15 minutes
Cook time: 15 minutes
Servings: 24

½ cup walnuts, lightly toasted
½ cup hazelnuts, lightly toasted
½ teaspoon salt
4 ounces bittersweet chocolate
2 egg whites, at room temperature
¼ cup sugar
¼ teaspoon cream of tartar
¼ cup Sunsweet Amaz!n Diced Prunes

In a food processor, grind the walnuts, hazelnuts and salt into a coarse meal (do not over process). Melt the chocolate in a heat-proof bowl over a pot of barely simmering water, ensuring that the bowl doesn't touch the water. Alternatively, microwave the chocolate at half power for about 2 minutes. Cool slightly. Preheat oven to 350°F. Line 2 baking sheets with parchment paper. In a stand mixer fitted with a whisk attachment, whip the egg whites, sugar and cream of tartar until the whites hold stiff peaks when the whisk is removed from the bowl, about 2 minutes. Gently fold the chocolate and nuts into the egg whites until the batter is uniform, then fold in the Amaz!ns. Using a 2-tablespoon ice cream scoop or a spoon, portion the batter onto the prepared baking sheets (Each cookie will weigh about 35 grams). Bake until firm on the outside but still soft in the center, about 12 minutes.

Nutritional information: Calories per serving 7, fat 5g, cholesterol 3mg, sodium 24mg, carbohydrates 7.5g, fiber 1.5g, sugar 4.5g, protein 1.5g



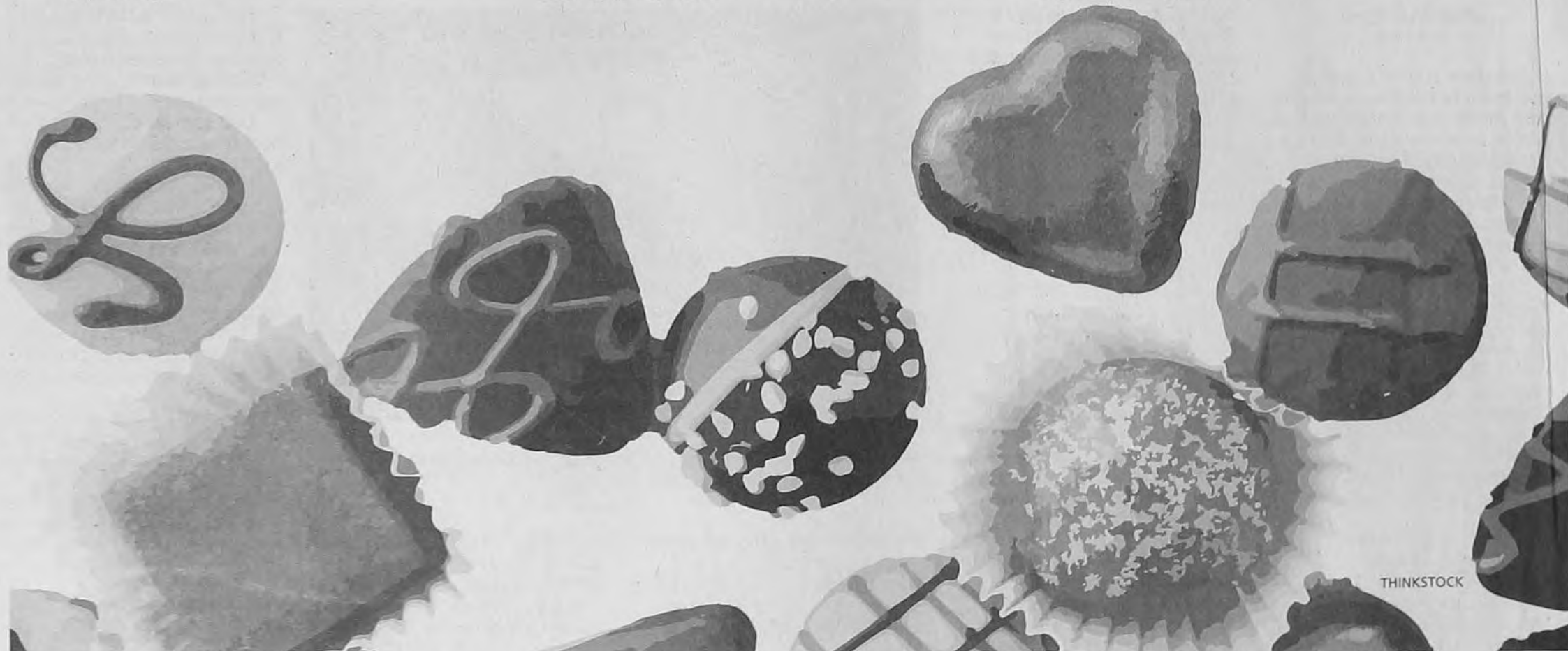
PLUMSWEETS MASON JAR TRAIL MIX

Prep time: 5 minutes
Serves: 4

1 cup almonds
1 cup pepitas (green pumpkin seeds)
1 cup large unsweetened coconut flakes
1 cup favorite whole grain cereal (such as puffed brown rice)
1 cup Sunsweet PlumSweets (use PlumSweets dark chocolate or Greek style)

Combine all ingredients in a bowl. Spoon mixture into mason jars. Makes a perfect gift.

Nutritional information: Calories per serving 160, fat 12g, cholesterol 0mg, sodium 15mg, carbohydrates 10g, fiber 2g, sugar 4g, protein 4g





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