

CANTON OBSERVER

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**SPORTS
YEAR IN
REVIEW
— B1**

Family opens home, hearts to girl

After initial rocky prognosis, child is making remarkable strides

Katrease Stafford
Detroit Free Press

It's no small feat that Julia Fenton is alive today. In fact, some consider it a miracle. Julia, 1, was just 4 pounds when she was born prematurely in a bathroom

somewhere in Detroit and abandoned by her mother, who was battling drug addiction.

And from there, the odds only seemed to continue to stack higher against her.

She was diagnosed with a number of congenital health defects, including

Down syndrome, and faced other medical issues during numerous, lengthy hospital stints and a medically induced coma.

But her life changed when she met high school sweethearts Charles and Katie Fenton in January 2015, a Canton family who would later adopt her and welcome her into their home — and hearts — permanently.

"Any child is going to require your

love in different ways, and right now, Julia requires my love in therapy, working with her at home and other ways," said Katie Fenton, 27. "She is so very worthy of life and of a family and so worthy of receiving all I have to give to her."

The Fentons already had one child at home, their now 3-year-old biological

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Image No. 4 in Bill Bresler's "Americans in Our Communities" gallery shows Tajmann Kaur, 6, at the Gurdwara Sahib-Hidden Falls in Plymouth Township in August 2012. The occasion was a memorial vigil for victims of the Oak Creek Gurdwara shooting in Wisconsin. View the gallery at www.hometownlife.com.

BILL BRESLER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

PHOTOGRAPHER'S GALLERY SHOWS 'WE ARE ALL AMERICANS'

Brad Kadrich
hometownlife.com

Bill Bresler watched as the 2016 presidential campaign turned nasty and divisive, and couldn't help but notice Americans are "a divided people."

But Bresler also believes this reality: The U.S. is a big country, with widely divergent ideas.

"This has always been true," said Bresler, a longtime photographer for the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers. "Even the founding fathers who wrote the Constitution were a mix of contradictions."

In a time of heightened anger and divide, Bresler turned to what he knows best — photography — to show that everyone, despite their points of view, is an American.

"We are all Americans," he said. "Whether you're a politician running for president or a prisoner in custody, you're an American."

Bresler began compiling a gallery of photographs for his "Americans in Our Community" project. Many of the people in the gallery were photographed while Bresler was on assignment for the O&E; others are from his personal work or even photos taken on vacation. View the ongoing gallery www.hometownlife.com.

"When I'm on assignment, I'm obviously looking for photos to tell the story, but I'm also looking for other interesting photos that may have nothing to do with the assignment."

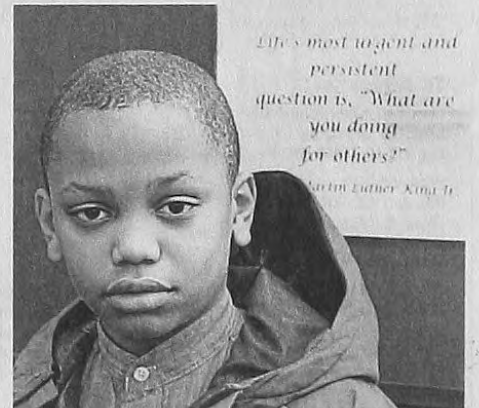
One of his favorites: A very quiet photograph of a friend of Bresler's on a

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I am an American We Are One Nation

Each week, a related series will introduce you to an exceptional American who unites, rather than divides, our communities. In the first installment, read about Meg Heubeck, who teaches kids how to settle differences through civil discourse, **Page 6A**



Life's most urgent and persistent question is, "What are you doing for others?"
— Martin Luther King Jr.

BILL BRESLER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Image No. 8 shows Trevor Peterson at a MLK Day celebration at the Westland Friendship Center.



BILL BRESLER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Image No. 33 shows Hurricane Katrina survivor Penny Klei who built a new life in Michigan.



BILL BRESLER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Image No. 10 shows an unidentified woman gathering flags at the conclusion of a Canton community celebration for Canton's Olympic athletes in late August 2016.



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ADOPT

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son, John, when they decided to take in 10-day-old Julia. The couple originally planned to be her foster parents for a short time, but they ended up being drawn to the little girl.

The lively toddler, who will celebrate her second birthday in January, now can be spotted regularly sporting a smile, carrying around her favorite doll or trailing behind her parents and brothers, a remarkable change from just a few short months ago, her family said.

At any given time, there are about 3,000 Michigan foster children available for adoption, according to the Michigan Department of Health & Human Services, and of that number, nearly 300 do not have an identified adoptive family. According to data provided by MDHHS, in fiscal year 2016, more than 2,000 children were adopted from the foster care system in Michigan.

The agency oversees adoptions like Julia's that are through the state's system, which places children in foster care due to abuse or neglect.

"Finding homes that children in our foster care system can call their own is one of the top priorities for MDHHS," Steve Yager, executive director of the department's Children's Services Agency, said in a statement. "We are extremely appreciative of the families and individuals in Michigan who step up to provide forever homes for children who need love and stability. We hope that more Michiganders will open their hearts to adoption."

And because of her own family, Katie Fenton became familiar with foster care and adoption when she was just a child herself.

"Katie's parents had done foster care through-

out her life and adopted a total of five kids, so she grew up around it," Charles Fenton said. "We kind of had to put our money where our mouth was and care for kids that didn't have homes, didn't have families. We ended up getting licensed at the end of 2014 and then a few weeks later got a call that there was a little premature girl in Detroit that had Down syndrome."

A waiting game

Katie Fenton said they don't know much about Julia's birth mother, aside from the fact she was homeless and didn't have enough support around her in the weeks leading up to her delivery.

"She didn't know she was pregnant," Katie Fenton recalled. "She delivered the baby at just 31 weeks gestation and she was transported to Hutzel Hospital in Detroit. She was a pretty sick baby."

The family's early days with Julia seemed to blur together with multiple hospital stays and a frightening waiting game of whether she would pull through.

"I was absolutely convinced the first six months that we had her that there was very little chance she was going to survive just because she was always so sick and in and out of the hospital," Charles Fenton said.

After she was diagnosed with Down syndrome, doctors discovered she suffered from pulmonary hypertension and respiratory syncytial virus, which infects the lungs and breathing passages and can be fatal to infants. She also had to be placed in a medically induced coma to allow her body to heal.

"They had a really hard time getting her back to health and able to get home," Katie Fenton said. "It was a long two months. She came out of the hospital with feeding tubes, lots of medication and oxygen."

The situation became



Julia Fenton, 1, plays with her brother, Daniel, 1, as their mother, Katie Fenton, 27, watches at their Canton home. The Fentons originally planned to be Julia's foster parents for a short time, but they ended up being drawn to the little girl.



Katie Fenton said of Julia: "She has this beautiful smile and at the same time is just really tenacious. She still is in a lot of therapy but she's going to walk and talk and everything, just at her own pace."

even more stressful when Katie Fenton found out she was pregnant with her second son, Daniel, who is now a year old.

"There was definitely a period after we found out I was pregnant shortly before we got Julia where we were like, 'Can we handle this?'" Katie Fenton said.

At one point, the couple considered transferring Julia's care to another family because she was in such a fragile state, but they quickly changed their minds.

"We found out that there was a plan to put her in a state home and at that point, she was still extremely sick and we didn't like that idea," Charles Fenton said. "She had been on the verge of dying numerous times and I didn't think she was going to be able to survive that so Katie's par-

ents stepped up a few weeks before Katie had our second son. They got their foster care license back up and running and took her for about five months so that Katie could have the baby and we could get acclimated."

While Katie recovered, the family thought deeply about what they would do, and love eventually prevailed.

"We both loved her as our own and I felt it was the right thing to do for us even though it meant our life was going to change pretty dramatically," Charles Fenton said. "We felt called by God to adopt her."

The adoption was formalized Aug. 23 of last year, and Julia's health has continued to stabilize. According to the family, she hasn't been admitted to the hospital in more than a year and

she's grown extremely close with her brothers.

"She's very sweet, she's very joyful," Katie Fenton said. "Just really loves being loved. She's always ready to cuddle and loves her brothers a lot. She has this beautiful smile and at the same time is just really tenacious."

"She really turned the corner at the end of last year. She still is in a lot of therapy but she's going to walk and talk and everything, just at her own pace."

The family said they're often asked what made them adopt Julia, knowing their lives would vastly change. For Katie Fenton, she couldn't imagine her life any other way.

"People are constantly saying how do you handle it?" Fenton said. "How do you do it? Of course it's hard and it's a difficult

thing but it's a beautiful thing. It's not without its sacrifices but it's such a rewarding feeling that I'm getting out of this."

A joyful girl

Charles Fenton said he believes there's a significant need for foster and adoptive parents across the state, and he hopes his family's story of love and perseverance will lead at least one family to consider opening their hearts to a child in need.

"It's kind of powerful to reflect on what we've experienced when I look back on the time when she was really sick in the hospital and everything she went through and everything we had to sacrifice for her," he said.

"Julia, she had all of the odds stacked against her from day one and to be able to see her grow into a joyful little girl and to be able to see the lives she's impacted already and see her grow into a beautiful little girl is something I'm grateful for and I'm grateful that my sons have the opportunity to love her as their sister. I'm a better man, a better husband and a better father for it ... If we can touch one person's life by her story, it'll be worth it."

Anyone interested in adopting can contact the Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange at 800-589-6273 or learn more about the children available for adoption at www.mare.org. For more information about adoption in Michigan, visit www.michigan.gov/adoption. To learn more about becoming a foster parent, call Foster Care Navigators at 855-MICHKIDS.

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313-223-4759.

AMERICANS

Continued from Page A1

dock with his 3-year-old granddaughter. The photo was taken in the early morning and there is mist rising from the

water. They are feeding bread to the fish. He's holding a cup of morning coffee.

"It's about time well-spent with family and the link between different generations," Bresler said. "It's about love. To me, that photo is uni-

versal."

The people in this series are, Bresler notes, a diverse group. Not just their ethnic diversity, but politics, religion and even worldview. But, he insists, they are all Americans.

"I hope that people

who look at these photos stop and think when they see someone who is different from them," Bresler said. "I hope that they consider what we all have in common."

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Jogger finds 19 puppies left at Hines Park

Darrell Clem
hometownlife.com

Nineteen puppies found abandoned in Hines Park in Plymouth are “doing well” after a jogger took them to the Humane Society of Huron Valley, an HSHV spokeswoman said Thursday.

“Some of them were in rough condition when we first got them,” said Wendy Welch, HSHV communications director.

“All of them are eating, so that’s a positive sign.”

The Humane Society has received numerous requests to adopt the puppies, which are described as a pit bull terrier mix. However, Welch said they will not be ready for adoption for another month or so.

Julie Newman was

jogging on Northville Road in Hines Park about 9:30 a.m. Wednesday when she heard “little yelps” and noticed movement inside a cardboard box.

She found 19 abandoned puppies climbing over each other and trying to escape a urine-soaked box. Newman, who has two rescue dogs of her own, called her sister and they took the puppies to the Humane Society.

“I’m just heartbroken,” she said in a statement released through HSHV. “I just don’t understand how anyone could do this.”

Neither do HSHV officials. And they are seeking the public’s help to learn where the puppies came from and who might have dumped them in the park.

The puppies, found near Wilcox Lake, are believed to be 4 weeks old and from multiple litters. Nine are males and 10 are females.

The puppies have received medical treatment at HSHV. Some of them were suffering from dehydration.

“It’s hard to say why someone would dump puppies in a park. But there is no good reason for such a careless act,” said Tanya Hilgendorf, HSHV CEO and president.

“This is exactly why animal shelters exist — to provide safety and care to animals in need.

“We don’t ever want to see animals, especially babies, abandoned in the cold, left to fend for themselves. Thanks to a compassionate community member willing to

take action, these innocent puppies will get the help they deserve,” Hilgendorf added. “When they’re ready, they’ll be adopted into loving homes — but first spayed or neutered to help ensure this doesn’t happen again.”

Anyone who has information about the puppies or who abandoned them — or witnessed them being dropped off — is asked to call HSHV’s cruelty and rescue line at 734-661-3512 or submit a report at hshv.org/cruelty.

Welch said donations to the puppies’ care can be made by calling 734-661-3571 or visiting hshv.org.



Nineteen puppies abandoned in a box in Hines Park have been taken to the Humane Society of Huron Valley.

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Canton partnership wants new Village Arts Factory roof

Brad Kadrich
hometownlife.com

By the time folks at the Canton Partnership for the Arts and Humanities get to their gala celebrating the evolution of the Village Arts Factory at the end of January, they’re hoping to have raised enough money to brag about even more progress.

Thanks to generous contributions from donors, and an offer to match donations up to \$20,000 from Iron Mountain and Gil-Mar Manufacturing, the partnership is more than halfway toward its goal in its fundraising campaign to restore the roof of the Ford Factory, one of the centerpieces of The Village Arts Factory project in Canton’s Cherry Hill Village.

“In the historic structure reports we commissioned, they recommended taking the roof off and returning it to its initial state,” said Jill Engel, director of the Partnership for the Arts and Humanities. It’s the latest project in the development of the project, an arts and recreation complex the partnership put in motion in 2012 with the purchase of the 14-acre site, formerly known as auto magnate Henry Ford’s Village Industry.

The site includes a dormitory, the Ford factory — both of which are



Partnership for the Arts director Jill Engel said upcoming events will trumpet the progress at the site of the Village Arts Factory.

on the National Historic Register — and an industrial warehouse. The site is where Ford had one of 19 village industries, 18 of which were for farmers who could work at the factories during their off-season. The one in Canton served as a factory at which disabled World War II veterans could live in the dormitory, receive rehabilitation and work.

The fundraising for the roof had netted nearly \$13,000 by mid-December. The funds will be

used removing the existing roof and restoring the original flat roof of the Ford Factory.

Donations can be made through Sunday, Jan. 1, at partnershipforarts.org/raise-the-roof.

Gala event

The roof campaign will be one of the successes Engel will tout when the partnership hosts “It Takes a Village,” an event designed to celebrate the progress of the factory. The gala takes place 6:30 to midnight

Saturday, Jan. 28, at The Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn.

The event will feature 2015 Canton Idol Middle School winner Grace Rembinski, a 12-year-old seventh-grader at Discovery Middle School, along with the music of the five-member band, Sinjon Smith. In addition to dinner, gala-goers will be able to enjoy Sanders hot-fudge sundaes and Faygo ice cream floats.

One of the highlights of the event will be a video, produced by Canton Cable, detailing the evolution of the project, and what is yet to come. The video features Engel, new Canton Supervisor Pat Williams talking about the culture, former Canton Treasurer Melissa McLaughlin talking about history, and state Sen. David Knezek talking about the importance of the project to area veterans.

“The presentation is to show people what the progress means, and what is the actual progress,” Engel said. “People think you buy this property and wave a magic wand. We’ve been making steady progress for four years.”

Hosting the gala at The Henry Ford, rather than someplace closer to the factory’s Canton home, highlights the regional nature of the project, Engel said.

“I hope people are coming to this event because they want to hear more about this project,” Engel said. “But if you just want a place to go to have fun, this is for you, too. If people are looking for an elegant event to attend, to get rid of their winter blues, they should come join us.”

Tickets are \$150 per person (\$1,000 for a table of eight), and must be

purchased by Jan. 13. Tickets can be purchased at <http://bit.ly/2h0ePjE>.

Winter concert

Finally, the partnership is getting ready for its winter fundraiser, “Old Time Rock-n-Roll,” featuring Steve King & the Dittilies at the Village Theater at Cherry Hill.

The concert is set for Saturday, March 4, with a welcome reception at 7 p.m., and the concert at 8 p.m.

The opening reception will feature sample-size appetizers featuring the offerings of Antonio’s Cucina Italiana, Black Rock Bar & Grill, and Hayden’s Grill & Bar.

Tickets are \$35 (\$30 if purchased before Jan. 29), which includes the reception, and can be ordered at www.cantonvillagetheater.org. The Village Theater is located at 50400 Cherry Hill in Canton.

CANTON PUBLIC LIBRARY PROGRAMS

The Canton Public Library has a variety of activities for all ages, Jan. 7-21. The library is at 1200 S Canton Center Road. Its contact number is 734-397-0999.

Dance your fanny off

This program features a half hour of tunes that will keep your little one on their feet. Dance Your Fanny Off is intended for new walkers up to 5 years old as a way to have fun and build gross motor skills. The upcoming program is on Jan. 7 from 10-10:30 a.m.

Homework help

National Honor Society students visit the library to provide third through 12th graders free homework help. If you’re a student interested in getting tutored: You must be in third through 12th grade; If you’re under 12, your parent must remain in the library; and you must bring the assignment and any other needed materials.

It runs 6-8 p.m. Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays in the Children’s Library. Those seeking tutoring will be helped on a first come first served basis. They will be allowed a 30-minute maximum if there is a line. Note: There will be no tutoring during breaks or school closures/snow days.

Family reading night

Family Reading Night is back as a way to celebrate sharing books and stories. Themed activities, raffles and more are also included in the evening for children ages 4-9 and their families on Jan. 11 from 7-8 p.m. Registration is required.

Lunch and a book

Lunch and a Book is a monthly gathering for those who enjoy reading and discussing fiction, nonfiction, classic literature and contemporary novels. It’s set for the second Thursday of each month and this month’s title is *The Little Paris Bookshop* by Nina George. The upcoming meeting is noon to 1 p.m., Jan. 12.

Beginning Excel 2013

Learn to create spreadsheets and charts with this introduction to Excel 2013. This program is on Jan. 12, from 6:30-8 p.m. Prerequisite: Mouse and keyboarding skills.

Sylvan SAT practice

Sylvan Learning Center is back at the library to administer a full length SAT practice test, open to teens ages 14-17. Students should bring their own calculator and pencils and are required to attend the entire session 9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., Jan. 14. Registration is required and participants must have a valid CPL

library card.

Note: Sylvan administers one form of the SAT diagnostic test. If you attend more than one of these sessions, you will be repeating the same test each time. As a result, any improvements in SAT scores from one Sylvan session to another may not accurately reflect how one might do on the actual SAT test.

E-books made easy

Learn how to access free e-books on your e-reader, tablet or smartphone and enjoy your library no matter where you are. Visit the library’s Internet Lab 2-3:30 p.m. Jan. 14 to fill up on e-books and more with Hoopla and OverDrive.

Yu-Gi-Oh! Card Battle

Whether you’ve played Yu-Gi-Oh! before or not, you’re welcome to join this club that meets bi-monthly to learn how to play and battle with the library’s cards. This program is for children ages 11 and older, and the next one is set for 7-8:30 p.m., Jan. 18.

Library Board Meeting

The library board meets on the third Thursday of each month and the next meeting is 7:30 p.m. Jan. 19. The public is invited to attend and the meetings are held in the library’s Community Room.

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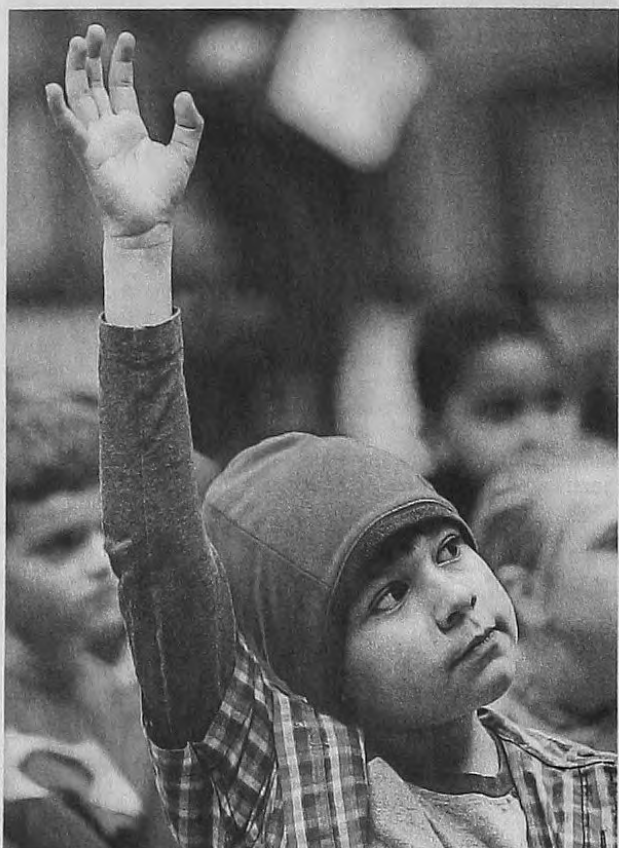
TUES, WED & FRI 9AM - 6PM SATURDAY: 10AM - 3PM

Hoben third-graders give Toys for Tots

Third-graders at Hoben Elementary School in Canton wanted to make sure other children had plenty of toys for Christmas.

So the students, who had raised money for a Toys for Tots campaign, took the proceeds on a class field trip to the Canton Meijer on Dec. 6.

A U.S. Marine came to the school the next day to collect the toys.



BILL BRESLER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Cesar Flores has a question for Lance Corporal Yousof.



BILL BRESLER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Marine Reserves Lance Corporal Roman Yousof answers questions from Hoben Elementary third graders. He lives in Livonia and works in Farmington Hills.



BILL BRESLER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Lance Corporal Yousof loads donated toys in the van.



BILL BRESLER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Hoben Elementary third graders carry donated toys to the van.




Atchinson Ford is pleased to announce the addition of Dave Starzyk to our sales team. We invite all Dave's friends and previous customers to contact him at (734) 697-2283 or email dstarzyk@atchinsonford.net

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Hills artist displays portraits, abstracts at Canton theater

The Village Theater at Cherry Hill will host an intriguing collection of abstracts and portraits by Farmington Hills resident Nina Ashraf Asmi, Jan. 4-30, in the Gallery@VT, 50400 Cherry Hill Road in Canton.

Asmi has been drawing the people of Metro Detroit for several years now. "With my portraits, I like to depict our shared humanity, to go beyond superficial differences to embrace what makes us the same," she said.

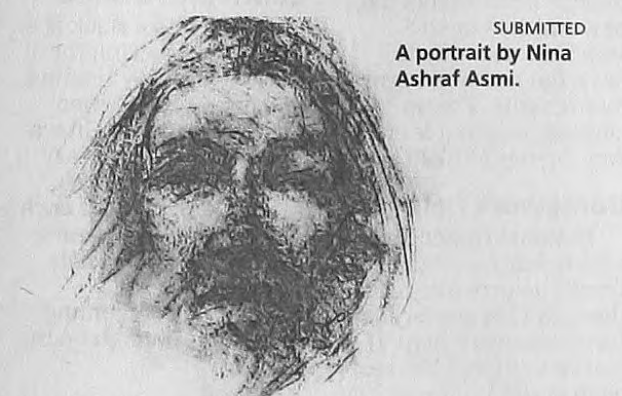
Asmi's featured faces, which are generally conceived using the minimum strokes, are always done so with maximum insight. The portraits are of people you may not know, but you'll be drawn to and be fascinated by. With a few strokes of Conte crayons, delineating at times just a portion of the face, she seems to capture the person, the soul behind the face.

Asmi found her passion for the arts early in life, born as she was, into an art-loving family. Her parents were both journalists. Her childhood was alive with the interaction and work of her father's many artist friends—classical to modern, painting in both in the Eastern and Western



"Another Monday" by Nina Ashraf Asmi.

SUBMITTED



A portrait by Nina Ashraf Asmi.

SUBMITTED

traditions. This early exposure shaped her aesthetics.

Asmi's journey as an artist and photographer that started in Pakistan and continued after her arrival in the United States in the 1990's. Asmi

is an award-winning artist whose work reflects the quieter influences of her heritage and the abandon of Western expressionism. Her work is featured in the publication, "Strokes of Genius."

For additional information about Nina Ashraf Asmi, please visit www.ninaasmiart.com. This exhibit at the Gallery@VT is free and open to the public: Monday-Friday 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. During performances at the theater, and by appointment, call 734-394-5300. The Gallery@VT is closed on holidays

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GABE CAVALLARO
USA TODAY NETWORK

As Americans, we are a diverse population. Historically, we have embraced that diversity as what brings us together and truly makes us one nation encouraging all to seek life, liberty and happiness. By sharing our individual differences and finding commonalities, we can work to unify the nation. One thing unites us: We are all Americans. Each week, this series will introduce you to an exceptional American who is making a difference to unite, rather than divide, our communities.

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. - On the campus of Thomas Jefferson's university and in the shadow of his home, Monticello, former social studies teacher Meg Heubeck channels the founding father who sought to unify a nation after a nasty, corrosive election in 1800. Heubeck wants to resurrect civil discourse. She and her small project aim for a more cooperative America by focusing on those who have yet to vote.

Heubeck, 48, represents the many quiet leaders that the USA TODAY Network will profile throughout 2017 in the wake of the divisive presidential election. She's an American taking real strides to make civic conversation comfortable again.

"We're Americans — that's the thing that holds us together," she says. "Politics shouldn't be something you lose friends and family over."

She has connected with 70,000 teachers across the country as director of instruction for the Youth Leadership Initiative at the University of Virginia Center for Politics, giving them full lesson plans. In one, students play a board game that forces them to understand the compromises it took to write the Constitution. Another uses a mock election and e-Congress simulations to model what actually happens in Congress.



JARRAD HENDERSON | USA TODAY

Meg Heubeck is director of instruction for the Center for Politics' Youth Leadership Initiative at University of Virginia. She works with teachers nationally to help students respectfully deal with the divides of our society through civil discourse, debate and compromise.

ONENATION See more of this project

Each week, this series will introduce you to an exceptional American who unites, rather than divides, our communities. To see a video and read more about the American profiled here and learn about more average Americans doing exceptional things, visit onenation.usatoday.com.

It's meant to prepare students to be lifelong citizens and constructive participants in American democracy. "Discussion, debate and compromise — everything we do has an element of that," Heubeck says.

She learned that lesson as a social studies teacher for 12 years in low-income areas of Baltimore and again in travels to post-civil war Sri Lanka in 2009 and to Afghanistan in 2011.

She says that sense of "them" and "us" — tribalism really — that she so often hears was a key determinant in 2016's schismatic course.

"You have to make a choice whether

to engage or isolate, and I've made a choice to engage, to inspire other people because I see what it's done for me," says Heubeck, who grew up in Jarrettsville, Maryland, with a father who taught at-risk students.

She's also teaching her 10-year-old son, Remmer, to understand different points of view.

The earlier educators can teach children about the American political and civic system and help them understand the election process, the more likely they are to participate later, says Larry Sabato, director of the Center for Politics.

The Youth Leadership materials are available for children as young as kindergarten age. Elementary school teachers can register online and access all the materials for free.

Heubeck's election resources have been used by Julie Strong, a social studies teacher at Albemarle High School in Virginia.

Seniors in Strong's AP Government class developed a better understanding of the political processes before casting their first ballots as new adults.

"We try to put everything in one spot so teachers can find it," says Heubeck, who joined the program in 2004. The program is operated by a mish-mosh of state funds, donations, partnerships, word-of-mouth and unpaid interns.

The next step for concerned citizens, Heubeck says, is to get involved. "We can't cry and hide in the basement. We've got to do something and have that faith in one another."

Q&A WITH MEG HEUBECK

What it means to be an American

Meg Heubeck of Waynesboro, Virginia, leads instruction projects for the Youth Leadership Initiative at the University of Virginia's Center for Politics. The daughter of a teacher and a social worker, she grew up in the suburbs of Baltimore and later spent 12 years as a teacher herself.

What does it mean to you to be an American?

It means that you have the ability to change

things. It means that you have the power to make the country what you want it to be. It means the freedom to vote without worrying about going to jail. It means being able to discuss the challenges we face without fearing legal repercussions.

What moment touched and motivated you to launch this effort?

The exact moment was when I heard one of my colleagues saying their family wasn't talking to each other at Thanksgiving because of the election. I had been working on this topic since the summer, but that's the instant I realized I had to do something. It's going to be really serious business. I want to start

rebuilding those relationships. Let's start now.

What gives you hope or what concerns you?

We've been through this before in American history. We've had elections that have been tumultuous. We've had candidates who have been unusual, like Andrew Jackson. The way our government is set up protects us from the volatility of strong personalities. We will be OK. But one thing that gives me concern is the sectionalism between the regions of America that don't talk and don't share experiences. It could cause a rift if we don't do something about it.

What do you hope to accomplish through your efforts?

I hope to bring back a spirit of discourse, debate and compromise that I think is missing. We can do that through civic education and working with students. I think that makes our democracy a lot stronger. ... These are required skills for the 21st century. I want them to internalize that they can make a difference. We need an increase in voter turnout among young people. That would be fabulous. And more young people running for office!

— William Ramsey

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State championship, innovation awards go to Green Mustaches

The Green Mustaches team of nine middle schoolers from the Plymouth-Canton area, walked away from the state level First Lego League competition Dec. 17 with the two biggest prizes for the event: The Michigan state championship and the state level Global Innovation Award invitation. The team will go to St. Louis in late April to represent Michigan in the First Lego League World festival.

FIRST LEGO league is a global program that engages elementary and middle school students in real world challenges by pairing a robotics competition with a research project based on an annual theme. Globally almost 27,000 teams compete in 80 countries for a total of over 255,000 kids participating in hands-on, inquiry based STEM learning. By participating in FIRST LEGO league, kids develop persistence, the ability to deal with open ended problems and confidence in dealing with complexity.

The Green Mustaches team includes four girls: Riya Bhakkad, Misri Modi, Megan Wu and Siya Modi; and five boys: Vishal Kumaravel, Rohan Parikh, Alex Chang, Vidvath Vasudevan and Shalin Lakhia.

The students have been participating in robotics competition for three years. A very determined bunch, they won regional awards in their first two years. They started early this season with a determination to go to the World Championship. Under the guidance of their parent coaches and high school



The Green Mustaches include: Back row from left: Alex Chang, Shalin Lakhia, Vishal Kumaravel, Vidvath Vasudevan, Rohan Parikh. Middle row from left: Misri Modi, Siya Modi, Megan Wu and Riya Bhakkad. Front row, high school mentors include, Sonia Bhakkad, Ritika Parikh, Ryan Wu and Varun Kumaravel.

mentors - Varun Kumaravel, Ritika Parikh, Ryan Wu and Sonia Bhakkad, - this team accomplished exactly that. They will represent Michigan at the World Championship after winning the Michigan state championship. About 450 First Lego robotic teams participated across Michigan this year.

The FIRST LEGO robotics championship has two facets to the competition. Each team had to design a robot to complete the highest number of missions in 150 seconds and create an innovative solution to a real world problem around an annual theme. The theme for this year is "Animal Allies."

Teams had to research and identify a real world

problem between a human and animal interaction and then find a real world solution to that problem. The Green Mustaches zeroed in on injuries seen in horses and humans due to bad rider posture. They designed the "Mustaddle" (patent pending), an innovative pad to be used on the top of a horse saddle to help new riders learn the right posture. The team designed the "Mustaddle" by combining use of sensors and LEDs placed strategically in order to provide instant feedback to the rider about improper posture.

The Green Mustaches' product is cheaper compared to various alternative solutions in the market today. Proper posture

by riders avoids back pain not only for the riders, but also the horses. In recognition of their research and innovation, the Green Mustaches have received an invitation to submit their innovation for consideration to be the top 20 innovative products across the world.

They will compete to win a \$20,000 award to pursue further development of their innovation. The Green Mustaches hope to raise enough funds to build and donate more Mustaddles to various horse training schools in the area as part of their research. You can help in their mission to "save the horses" by donating at www.gofundme.org/save-the-horses.



Cellular & More, with a store in Canton, adopted 15 families in need for Christmas.

Cellular & More adopts 15 families for holidays

Cellular & More's sixth annual Adopt-A-Family Program helped 15 Michigan families in need have a Christmas they may have otherwise not had. Each of the 13 stores, including in Canton, was able to adopt a family within or surrounding their own community. The families were provided with warm clothing, toys, household items and full Christmas dinners.

"Being able to help local families is really the true meaning of Christmas," stated Dean Leja, Cellular & More vice president/COO. "Christmas is a magical time of the year, people are so generous, and it's such a great feeling knowing we are giving back to those who really need it."

Donations were raised through in-store inquiries and reaching out to local businesses. Before taking payment, clients had the opportunity to donate any amount of money they deemed appropriate. One hundred percent of the funding and donations went directly to the families.

As of Jan. 1, Cellular and More is merging with another Verizon wireless retailer (Wireless Network Communication) and acquiring a six more stores; bringing the total to 19.

"More stores means more families to adopt for Christmas," Leja said. "We are looking forward to next year already."

Passages

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GANZ



JOHN ANTHONY JR. age 87, of Garden City, Michigan, went to be with the Lord on Sunday, December 11th 2016. He was predeceased by his dear wife Ilene Nancy (Popowicz) in 1998. He is survived by sons John III, Paul and Eric; brother Robert, and granddaughters Sheralyn and Jeanette Ganz. A 1947 graduate of Chadsey High School, he and his wife Ilene were classmates and sweethearts and married in 1950. They were best friends and partners in life for 48 years. John was drafted into the US Army during the Korean War, and served in the Signal Corps while stationed at the Panama Canal. He rejoined civilian life and his career at Michigan Bell Telephone company where he worked his way from installer to manager over a career of 46 years. He was a proud member of the VFW, the American Legion, the Elks Club, the Yankee Air Museum, the Detroit Institute of Arts, the German Club, and Historic Trinity Lutheran Church. His remains are to be combined with his beloved, and interred at the Veteran's columbarium at Great Lakes National Cemetery, better known as little Arlington, in Holly, Michigan in the spring. Friday May 19th, at 12:30 p.m. There will be a Lutheran commitment rite as well as a military color guard. The family requests that instead of flowers, a donation in Mr. Ganz's memory be made to the Historic Trinity Lutheran Church in downtown Detroit. Please share a memory at www.cremationmichigan.com.

MURRAY



NINA JEAN a longtime resident of Michigan, most recently of Brighton, died Christmas night. Born in 1932 in Detroit, MI, Nina was the mother of six, grandmother of eight, and great grandmother of four. After spending 23 years as a stay at home mother, Nina received her Associate's degree in Nursing. She worked at Harper Grace Hospital, Wayne County General, and spent the last 25 years of her career working at the University of Michigan's Mott Children's Hospital. Nina was a spectacular cook, who always sang in the kitchen (and everywhere really). She loved socializing and travel and had so many friends that will truly grieve her passing. To know her was to love her. She was habitually late, but so much fun, no one cared if she showed up late, just that she came. She loved to shop and was always the most beautifully dressed person in the room earning her the title of Nina Jean the Fashion Queen. Even dressing in scrubs could not dim her style, she would accessorize them into fashion. But most importantly she was the most wonderful mother who made every day special and everyone feel loved no matter what it took. Nina is survived by her children, Preston (Janet Berriman Murray), Mark, Michelle Urban, Kevin (Brenda Webster Murray), Paul (Ryan Jackson), and Kathryn Kzeski (Kent Kzeski). In lieu of flowers please donate to the Alzheimer's Association at alz.org. Please leave a message of comfort for Nina's family at 1-877-231-7900, or sign her guestbook at www.borekjennings.com.

GONCHAROFF



ELAINE (BRZUCH) December 26, 2016, age 68 of Westland. Beloved wife of the late Dennis who died May 19, 2016. Dear sister of Ron (Donna) Brzuch. Dear aunt of Nick (Jitra) Brzuch and Jim Brzuch. Visitation Saturday, January 7, 2017, 12 p.m. until the 1 p.m. Funeral Service at Vermeulen-Sajewski Funeral Home, 980 North Newburgh Rd., (Btw Ford & Cherry Hill) Westland. Memorials may be made to the Alzheimer's Assoc. or the American Heart Assoc. To share a memory, please visit vermeulenfuneralhome.com

WARREN



WILLIAM "BILL" passed away at the age of 93. He is the beloved husband of Dorothy and the late Kay (Kathryn). Dear father of Brent (Kathleen), Scott (Tina), Lorie (Carl) Monroe and Todd (Maria). Loving grandfather of Chris, Michael and Jesse. Brother of the late Robert and Sara Lou. Bill was an administrator for 40 years for the Livonia Public Schools and founder and Past President of the Livonia High Nooners Lions Club. Services to be held at St. Paul's Presbyterian Church in Livonia at a later date. Please share a memory with the family www.mannsfuneralhome.com

May you find comfort in family and friends

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN WAYNE COUNTY

Learn to fuse

Join The Three Cities Art Club at 7 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 3, at D&M Art Studio in Canton to learn how to handle, prepare and cut glass to create your own 4-inch fused dish or night light.

Lori Barry will explain the glass-fusing process from the type of glass and cutting supplies needed all the way through the kiln temperature schedule. Students will be able to use their own creativity to create their project. Inspirational examples will be brought to class.

Projects will be taken to be fired and available for delivery a week later.

For those creating their own piece, there will be a materials fee of \$25. Register by calling Marilyn at 313-231-3939 or emailing marilynmeredith@wowway.com. Fee to be paid the night of the event.

The public is welcome to this free event. D&M Art Studio is in the Golden Gate Shopping Center, 8691 N Lilley Road, Canton. Light refreshments will be served. For information, visit www.threecitiesartclub.org.



Barry

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The club will meet at 7 p.m. Jan. 3, at the Livonia Senior Center. The program includes: How does a scholarship help a student? Kit Gunn, World Gardening Chairman of the Michigan Garden Clubs will talk about the project that funds a high school scholarship to students in Belize.

What's your story?

The Plymouth Community Arts Council will offer a three-day winter break workshop on making your own film with help from instructor Jenn Teed. Using a per-

sonality trait, anecdote or life event as inspiration, students will storyboard, narrate and film a short creative piece under the direction of film maker and writer Jenn Teed. Students will learn and employ filming techniques and tricks of the trade to make their finished product something to be proud of. The workshop is for kids ages 10-17. The cost is \$144 for members and \$154 for non-members.

Students should bring their own recording device with transfer USB cord or memory chip. Contact lisa@plymoutharts.com with questions. Students should pack a light lunch. The center is a nut-free facility. Online registration is available by clicking the green button on the homepage at www.plymoutharts.com or by calling 734-416-4278.

Students should bring their own recording device with transfer USB cord or memory chip. Contact lisa@plymoutharts.com with questions.

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Blues and jazz at the Elks

Blues @ The Elks happens on the second Tuesday of the month from 7-10 p.m. at the Plymouth Ann Arbor Elks Lodge #325 in partnership with the Detroit Blues Society. \$5 donation at the door and bring your dancing shoes.

On Tuesday, Jan. 10, you will be amazed by the Alicia Marie Band with the extremely talented young lady Alicia Marie on guitar and vocals. She is joined by Dan Devins on harmonica and vocals, Kurt Krahnke on bass, and Ron Pangborn on drums. Alicia Marie is inspired by B. B. King and many of the legends in blues.

Jazz @ The Elks happens on the last Tuesday of the month from 7-9:30 p.m. There is a \$10 donation at the door, which includes hors d'oeuvres. Enjoy jazz in a listening room setting close to the entertainers.



Alicia Marie

On Tuesday, Jan. 31, join The Boogie Woogie Kid Trio with the award-winning singer Emma-Lee Aboukasm, YouTube's viral sensation The Motor City Boogie Woogie Kid and drummer Gary Stevens for a night of piano and song favorites from the swing dancing days of the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s. Don't miss classics like "Women be Wise," "In the Mood," "Don't Get Around Much Anymore," "Basin Street Blues," "Blue Moon" and many more! For a preview, visit www.boogiewoogiekid.com.

The Plymouth Ann Arbor Elks Lodge 325 is at 41700 Ann Arbor Road. For information: 734-453-1780, www.plyaa325.com or jazzattheelks@gmail.com.

Auto art workshop

The Plymouth Community Arts Council will host an auto art workshop featuring "Old Truck No. 6," from 1-3 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 26.

Students will participate in a gallery tour and art-appreciation lesson using the diverse art pieces in our January exhibit. Then, students will create their own 2D version of Tim Tonachella's photograph, "Old Truck No. 6," inspired by the work in the exhibit.

A variety of media will be available for students to use and they will be encouraged to be creative with paint, colored pencils, collage materials, and illustration marker. Photos of each piece will be exhibited on the website as part of the Interpretations Exhibit Artists' group. Instruction and all materials provided. The instructor is Lisa Howard. The program is for ages 7-18. The cost is \$24 per student. To register, call 734-416-4278 or visit www.plymoutharts.com. The PCAC is at 774 N. Shelton Road, Plymouth.

Secondhand Prose closed for now

Canton Public Library's Secondhand Prose Bookstore will be closed for renovations until Feb 1.

Friends of the Canton Public Library support the library through advocacy and fundraising.

Strikes for freedom

MLK weekend has become a time for education, remembrance and celebration of the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King. Four years ago Printing Plus by United Sonz began "Bowl It Out" and annual event dedicated to continuing to spread Dr. King's message of love, equality, justice and peace for all persons. This year's theme "Strikes for Freedom" combines the fun of bowling with a message of hope, love and prosperity. The message embodies freedom from discrimination, freedom from injustice, and freedom from all inequalities.

It all takes place at Wayne Bowl (36900 Michigan Ave.) from 7:30 p.m. to 1 a.m. Sunday, Jan. 15. Festivities include two games of bowling, shoes and a T-shirt. The team fee of \$100 covers a five-person team. Bowl It Out also features a Live DJ, full kitchen, mystery jackpots and portion of proceeds raised will be donated to local nonprofit African American Endowment Fund. For registration and information, call 734-485-8889.

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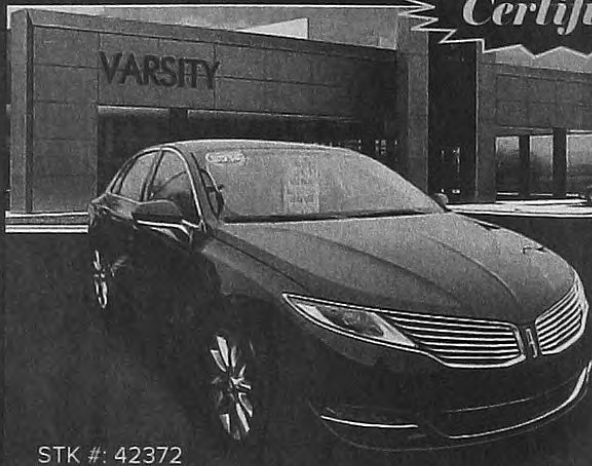
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PREP FOOTBALL

Catholic Central QB Brown transferring to home district

Brad Emons
hometownlife.com

Austin Brown, Novi Detroit Catholic Central's starting quarterback both as a freshman and sophomore, is transferring back to his home school district.

The 6-foot-1, 180-pound sophomore, who severely broke his leg in the Shamrocks' MHSAA Division 1 semifinal victory over Romeo, will enroll the next semester at Madison Heights Madison High where his father Jimmy Brown has been athletic director the past eight years.

Brown guided CC to a 13-0 record this season completing 61.5 percent of his passes (72 of 117) with 14 touchdowns and only two interceptions before

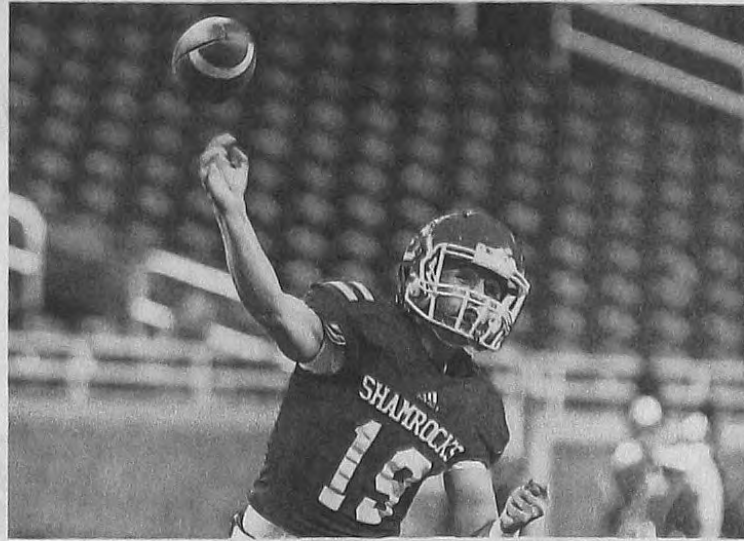
going down during the first half while trying to run for a touchdown near the goal line in a 17-0 win over Romeo.

Brown, who was replaced in that semifinal game by sophomore Marco Genrich, underwent surgery prior to CC's 49-20 state championship loss at Ford Field against Detroit Cass Tech where senior Dillon Dejong got the start.

"Obviously it wasn't football related," Jimmy Brown said. "They went 13-0 and made the finals, so it really didn't have anything to do with that. I mean you can't get any better than Division 1 and 13 wins in a row, so it really didn't come down to that."

Jimmy Brown said his son's

See BROWN, Page B3



SCOTT CONFER

Quarterback Austin Brown led Catholic Central to 13 straight wins before going down in the state semifinals with a broken leg.

O&E sports on social media

Go to our Facebook page @hometownlifeSports and follow us on Twitter @OandESports

Battle of the Fans VI

The Michigan High School Athletic Association's Student Advisory Council will host its sixth "Battle of the Fans" contest this winter to award the top high school student cheering section in Michigan and promote the opportunity for a fun, positive cheering experience for fans supporting their teams.

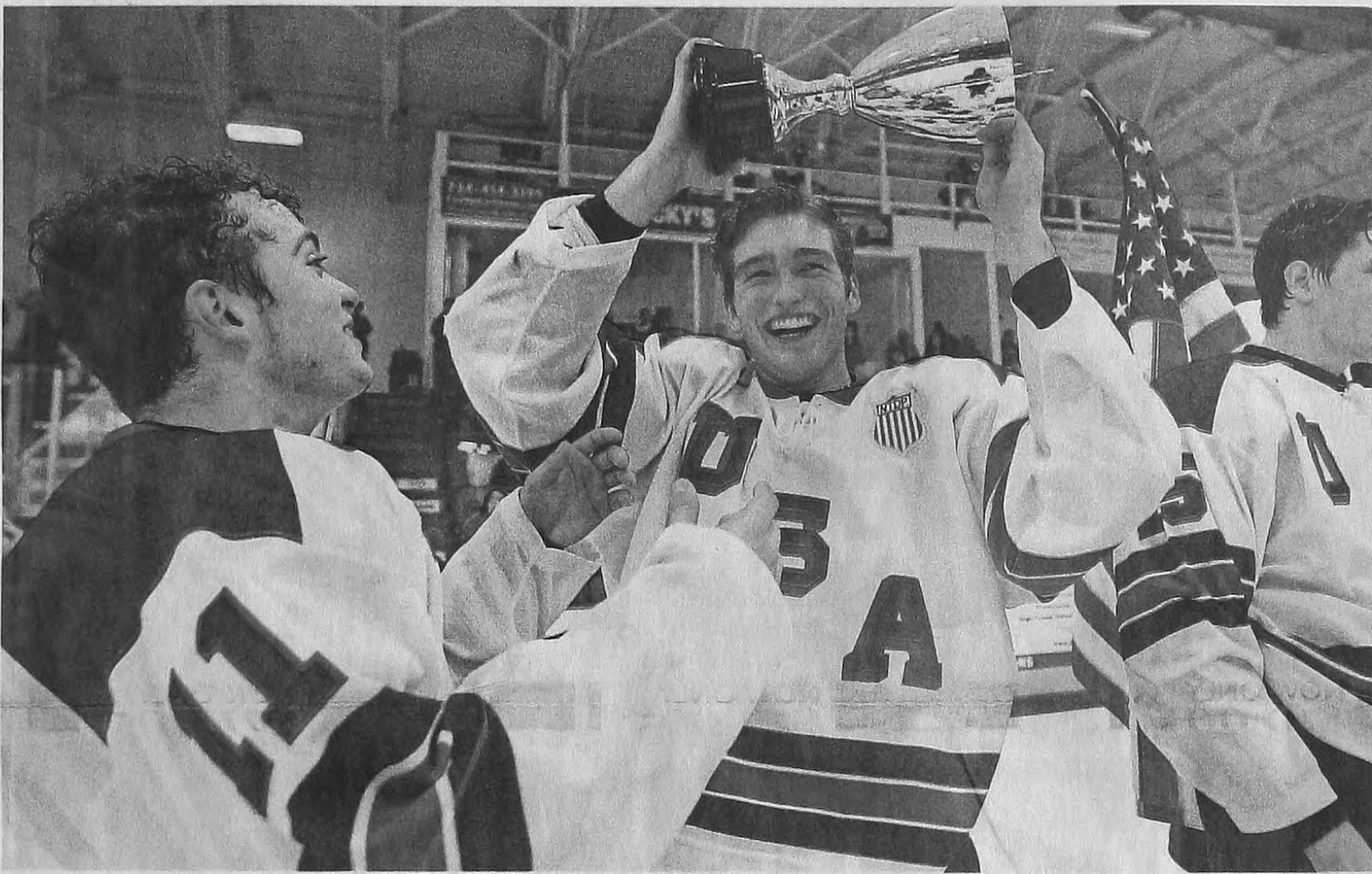
Traverse City West was named last year's champion and presented with a banner during the MHSAA Boys Basketball Finals at Michigan State University's Breslin Center. Sections from Charlotte, Munising, Muskegon Western Michigan Christian and Yale also were finalists and recognized during the Breslin ceremony.

Schools are invited to submit a short video, via YouTube, of their cheering sections in action. Video submissions should be between 90 seconds and three minutes long and explain how that section meets the following contest criteria: positive sportsmanship, student body participation, school spirit, originality of cheers, organization of the group, student section leadership and fun.

The deadline for student-submitted video applications is noon Jan. 7. Five finalists including at least one Class C or D school then will be chosen and visited on a home game night by MHSAA staff and Advisory Council representatives. The MHSAA will produce a video of that finalist after each visit, with the champion being selected by the Student Advisory Council based in part on activity on the MHSAA's social media sites.

This year's winner will be announced Feb. 17 and recognized March 24 at the Breslin Center.

Rules, directions for submitting videos, plus links to coverage of finalists from the first five years of the contest can be found on the MHSAA website at www.mhsaa.com/BOTF. This year's finalist videos, plus the announcement of the 2016-17 winner, will be published at secondhalf.mhsaa.com.



RENA LAVERTY

Scott Reedy hoists the Five Nations trophy after Team USA defeated Finland 3-2 on Nov. 5 to win the 2016 U-18 Five Nations Tournament title at USA Hockey Arena in Plymouth. At left is Jacob Tortora.

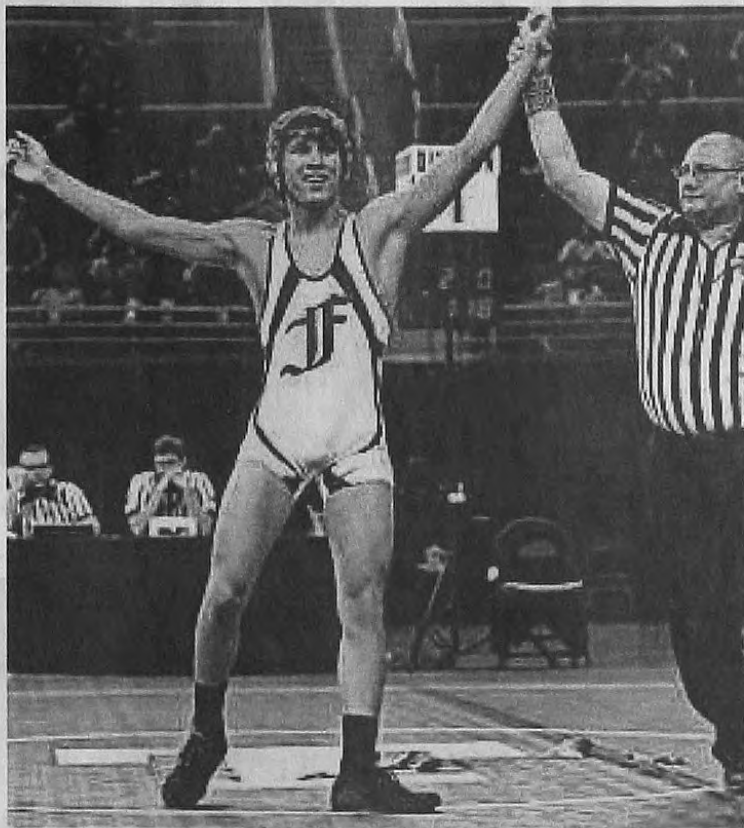
LOOKING BACK AT 2016

The drive to perform your best comes from a passion for achieving goals and an inner peace that no matter the outcome, everything you could give to the sport was exerted. It was a memorable year in local sports; enjoy some of our favorite photos and story lines from 2016. For more photos, turn to B2 or visit www.hometownlife.com/sports for a complete gallery.



SUBMITTED

Sarah Monte is the first female to play varsity football at Livonia Stevenson.



SUBMITTED

Livonia Franklin's Nathan Atienza's arm is raised for the 58th time last season following his victory at 145-pounds in the state finals, concluding a perfect 58-0 season.



DAN DEAN

The marathon and international half include a run on the Ambassador Bridge and return to Detroit via the tunnel.

Run the tunnel

Your chance to cross the Ambassador Bridge and Windsor Tunnel on foot happens each October during the running of the Detroit Free Press Marathon.

Registration for the 40th anniversary race in 2017 begins at 12:01 a.m. Jan. 1. Race events include the American Home Fitness 5K and Meijer Kids Fun Run on Saturday, Oct. 14. On Sunday, Oct. 15, the full marathon, international half-marathon and marathon relay kick off the international events followed by the U.S.-only half-marathon.

Go to www.freeppmarathon.com for more information and to register.

U.S. FIGURE SKATING CHAMPIONSHIPS

Novice Pairs skaters maturing with age

Brad Emons
hometownlife.com

It's a skating partnership still in its infant stages, but Cora DeWyre and Jacob Nussle have grown-up expectations and big-time dreams.

The Novice Pairs skaters, who have only been together for 18 months, will compete for the second straight year in the

2017 Prudential U.S. Figure Skating Championships, Jan. 14-22, at the Sprint Center in Kansas City, Mo.

And after placing 12th a year ago in the 2016 U.S. Nationals in St. Paul, Minn., DeWyre and Nussle have experience to draw and renewed confidence after taking fourth and qualifying for the second time following last month's

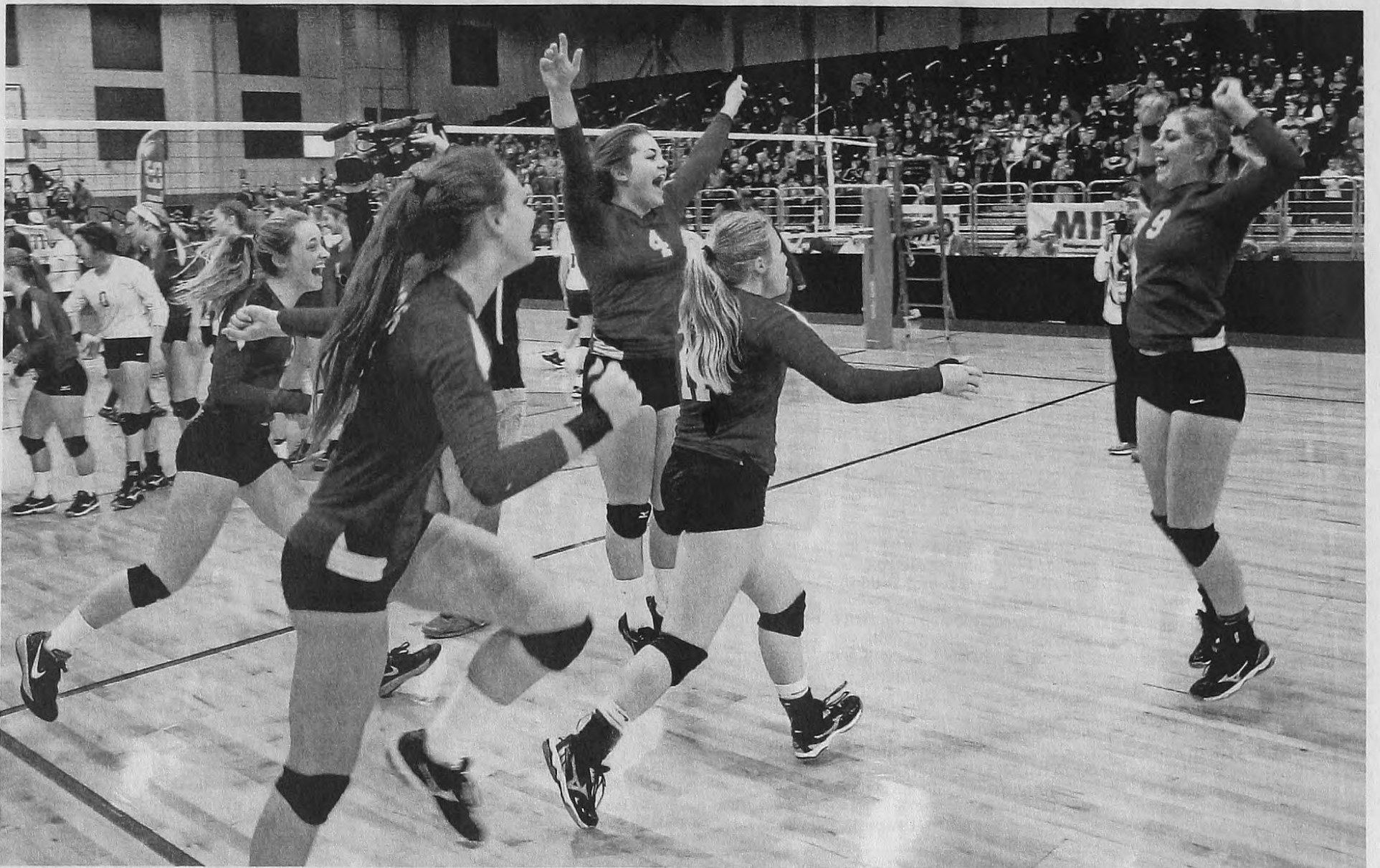
Sectionals in Colorado Springs.

"This team got together last year and made it to nationals on a fluke," said coach Michelle Hunt, who trains the pair at the Kensington Valley Ice House in Brighton. "They were alternates, but someone pulled out and they got to go; so all year long they've been working really, really hard and they're in a much better posi-

tion this year to end up in top half of the group, which we're really excited about. We're hoping they get some international assignments; so hopefully it's going to be a good year. Hopefully, I don't want to jinx myself, but they're doing well."

The partnership is unique to

See SKATERS, Page B3



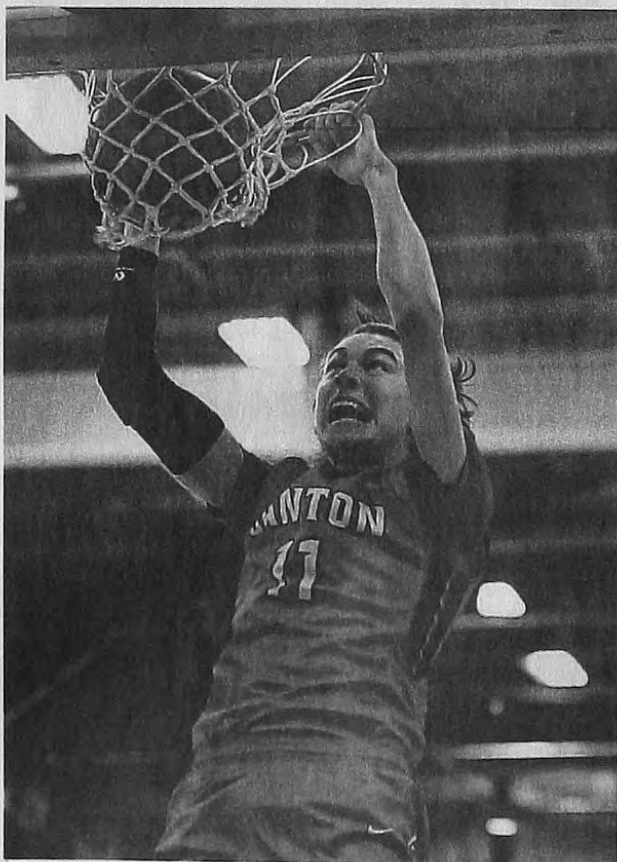
Plymouth Christian players jump for joy after winning the Class D girls volleyball title in Battle Creek.

TOM LANG | DETROIT FREE PRESS

2016 year in sports photos

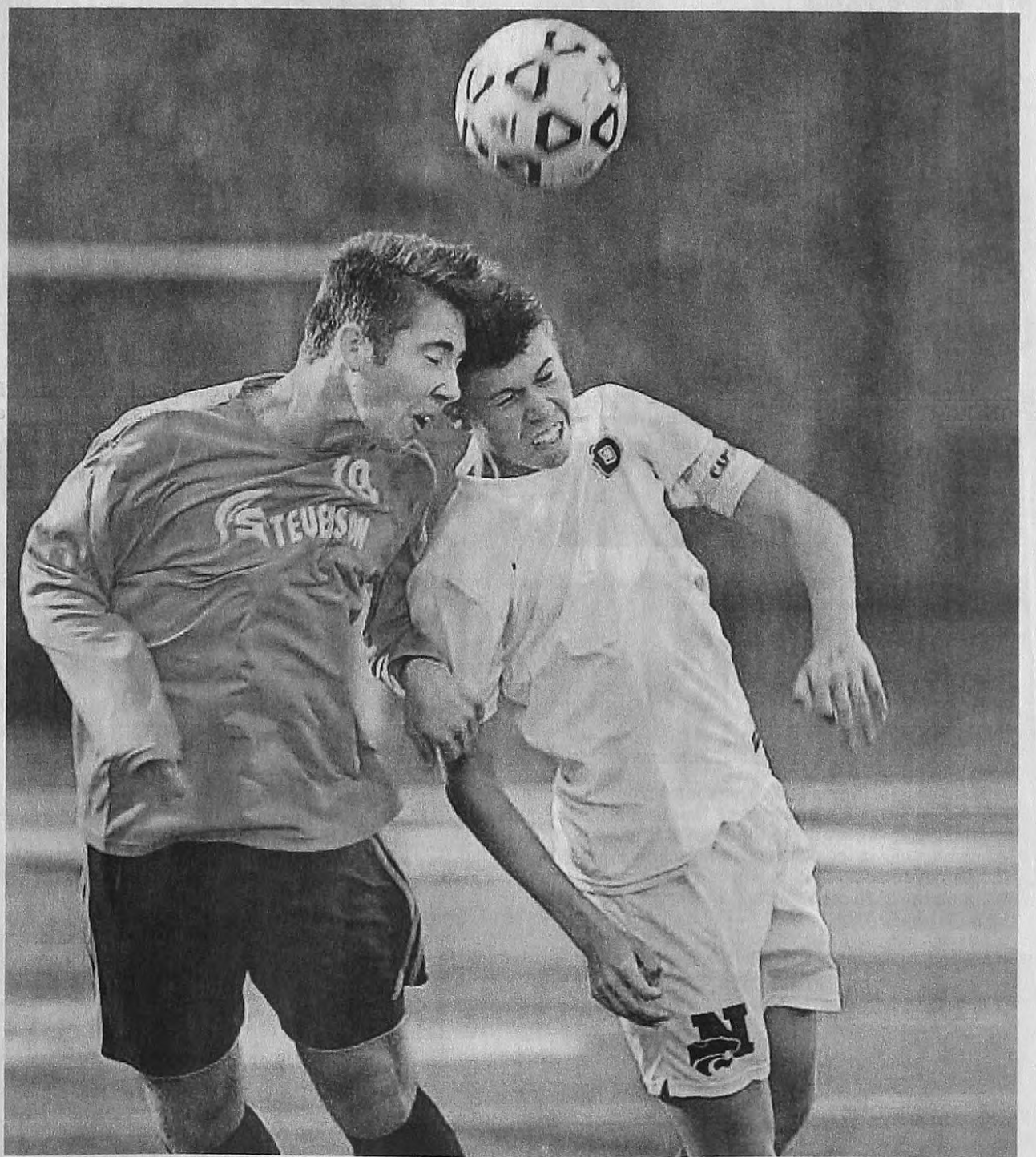
On fields, rinks, courts and tracks around the Observer & Eccentric area, local athletes and teams — and their families and fans — had many reasons to celebrate in 2016. These images capture their effort and glory.

For a complete gallery of photos, visit www.hometownlife.com/sports.



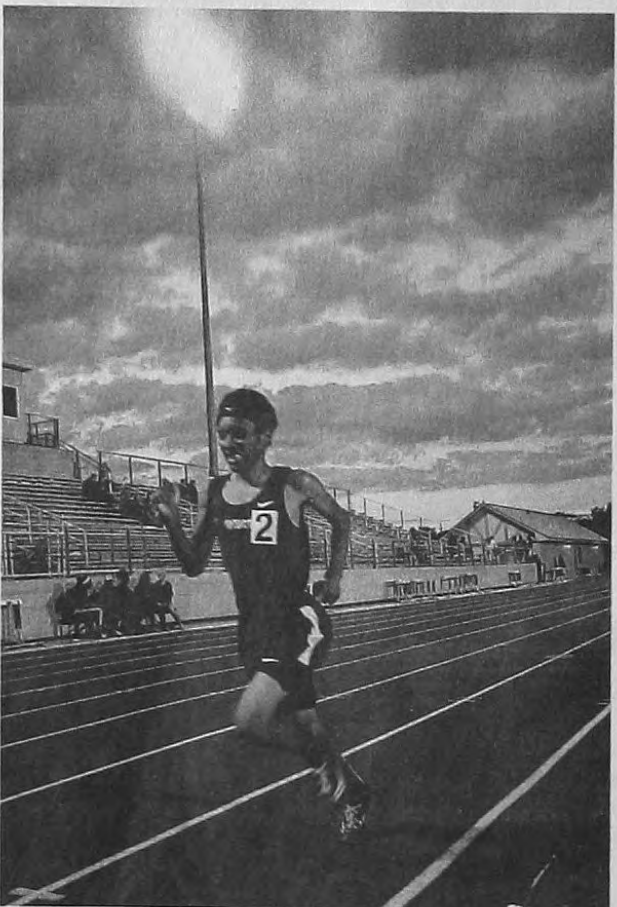
MICHAEL VASILNEK

These spectacular dunks by senior forward Logan Ryan did a lot to power the Canton Chiefs boys basketball machine in 2015-16. The Chiefs were the first team ever at the Park to go 20-0 in a regular season.



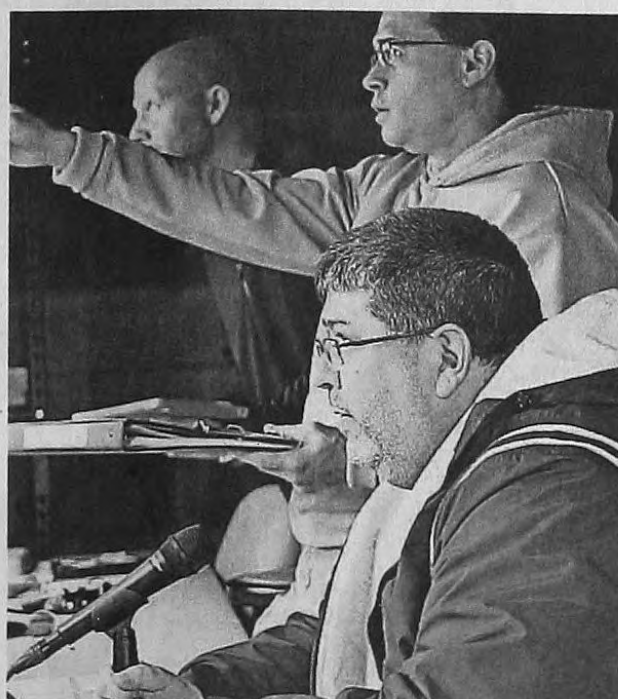
Stevenson's Ryan Cox (left) battles a Novi player for a 50/50 ball during a 2016 match.

JOHN HEIDER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER



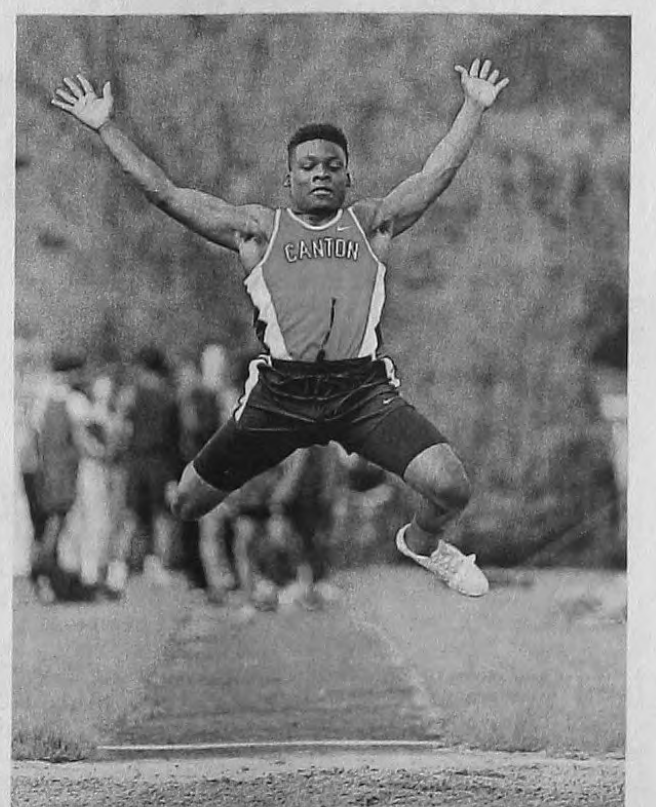
DAN DEAN

Franklin's Tony Floyd leads the pack in the 3200-meter run under the lights at Farmington High School to a first place Oberverland Invite finish in a time of 9:47:51.



SUBMITTED

The Livonia baseball community grieved the passing of longtime Westland resident and Livonia Franklin baseball announcer Tom Chinavare (foreground) who died Nov. 26 at the age of 52. For as long as anybody at Livonia Franklin can remember, his reliable voice could be heard at Patriots baseball games — announcing every batter in the lineup.



DAN DEAN

Canton's Steven Walker finished in fifth place in the long jump with a best jump of 19' 2 3/4" at the Oberverland Invite.

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Focus on getting a new job in the new year

BY MATT TARPEY
 CAREERBUILDER

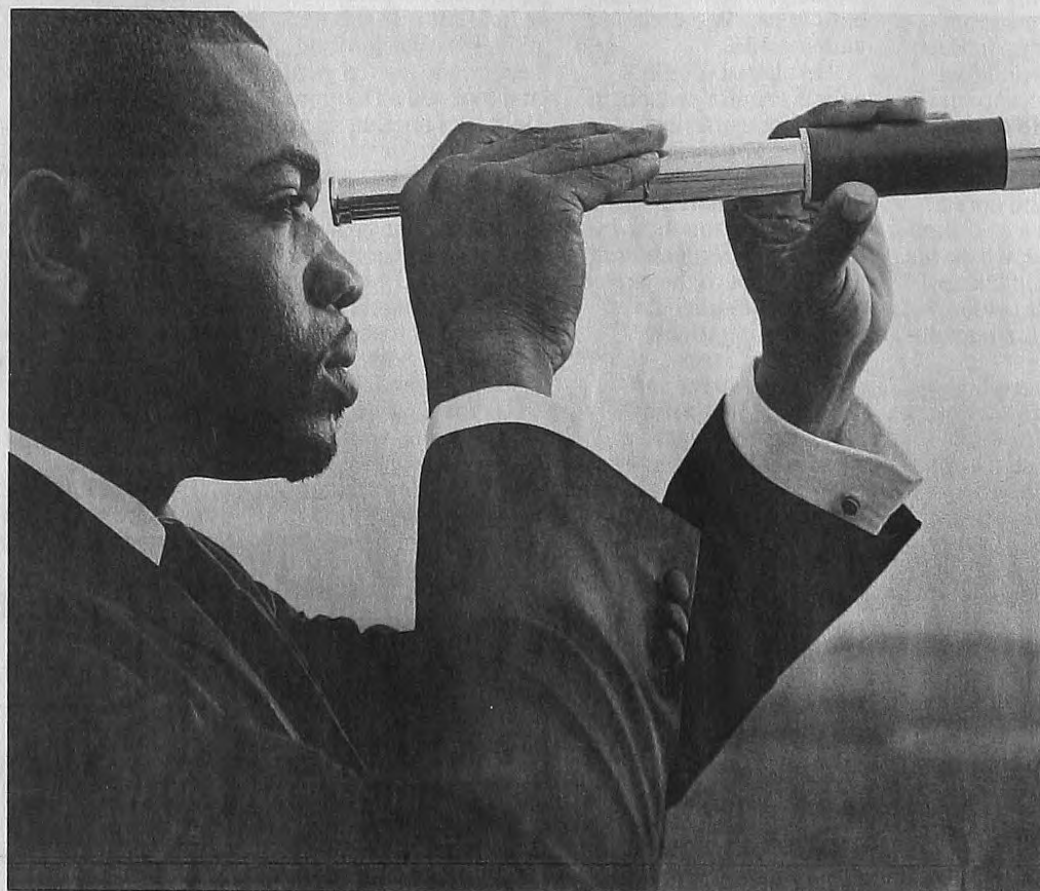
Finding a new job is one of the most common New Year's resolutions — but not all resolutions come to fruition. If a new job is at the top of your list of goals, here are some tips to help you make it happen.

Get specific.

The most important step you can take is to make sure the resolution itself is clear and quantifiable. "Those that deal in specifics seldom fail; those that deal in generalities seldom succeed," says Heather Monahan, a career and business expert and chief revenue officer for the Beasley Media Group. "This Jan. 1, be sure to create very specific goals in order to give yourself the chance to achieve them. A general goal like 'I want to find a new job' is setting yourself up for failure, versus a very specific goal like 'I want to get into the PR business, and I have targeted these three companies as my first choice. The devil is in the details, and we all need the details in order to deliver on the resolution.'"

Have a plan.

Just as a very specific end goal is important, it's also crucial that you set a clear



GETTY IMAGES

course for achieving that goal. A plan is an essential part of any New Year's resolution. "Failing to plan is planning to fail. In order to achieve your goal, you are going to need a plan," Monahan says. "Many people tap a mentor or a friend that has had success in the area you are working on to build the plan. Building a comprehensive plan will ensure you are taking the next

right step toward achieving your goal."

Commit to a schedule.

One of the most common excuses people offer for giving up on their New Year's resolutions is that they simply didn't have the time to keep at it. Avoid this pitfall by designating a specific block of time each week to spend on reviewing job postings and

researching your industry.

"The most important part here is sticking to your allotted time," says professional development coach Laine Schmidt. "It might require giving up a leisure activity, but the outcome in the end will be well worth it. If it's something you've discovered you're truly passionate about, the time spent researching will be enjoyable."

Track your progress.

As part of your resolution to find a new job, be sure to include smaller goals linked to the number of jobs you apply for and new connections you build during the process. The satisfaction of meeting these smaller goals — or the guilt over falling short — can help keep you motivated beyond the first few weeks of the year.

"Keep a detailed spreadsheet or list of where you apply, whom you speak with, when résumés are sent and networking opportunities," says Heather Rothbauer-Wanish, owner of Feather Communications. "Even when the job search becomes difficult — and it can be — this list or tracking will show you how far you have come and what you have accomplished."

There are always external factors at play, but ultimately, whether you follow through on your New Year's resolutions or not comes down to how seriously you commit to them. Follow these tips, and there's no reason 2017 can't be the year you land that great new job.

Matt Tarpey is a writer for the Advice & Resources section on CareerBuilder.com. He researches and writes about job-search strategy, career management, hiring trends and workplace issues.

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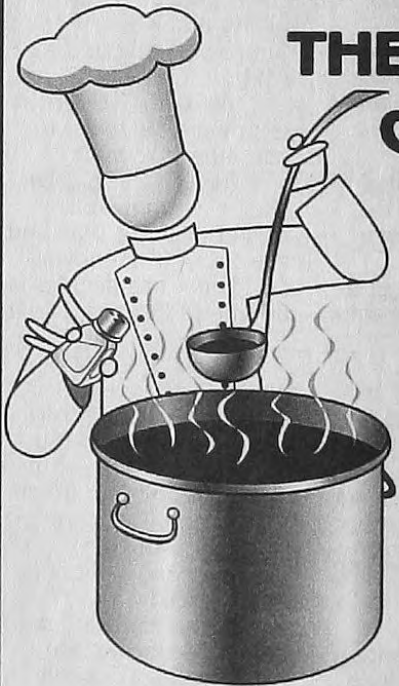
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Car Report

COMMERCIAL POSSIBILITIES: RAM PROMASTER, FORD TRANSIT FAMILIES STOKES HOT-SELLING CARGO VAN SEGMENT



By Dale Buss

Ask them to answer a multiple-choice question about what is the buzziest segment in the U.S. auto business these days, and most Americans probably wouldn't guess: It's cargo vans.

Arguably the most mundane of all vehicle types, commercial vans -- not aspirational Mustangs nor tough-talking F-150s -- were the vehicle Ford hyped most on the huge stage of World Series television broadcasts with its incessant promotion of the Transit.

And Ram has just launched a new marketing campaign into the swell, to try to capture more sales for its ProMaster and ProMaster City models.

Ram commercial sales overall are up more than 30 percent so far

this year compared with a year ago, and industry-wide commercial sales are more than 15 percent higher, representing 2.6 percent of the total vehicle market in North America, FCA said.

By contrast, after a record seven-year run, the total U.S. vehicle market is losing gas, as year-to-year sales are expected to fall in October for the third straight month.

Enter Ford's marquee positioning of Transit in the Fall Classic and Ram with a campaign that shows off the utility and versatility of ProMaster and ProMaster City with TV ads and digital elements that illustrate these qualities.

Ram's video includes "test drives" of a day for four different actual small businesses, such as Andrew's Honey, a beekeeper in New York City, and Veestro, a food-delivery company in Los Angeles.

"We're trying to reinforce that we're easy to do business with and respectful of [consumers'] time and

that we've got some great, efficient offerings for them to look at," Jim Morrison, head of the Ram brand, told me.

Ram introduced its new generation of commercial vans beginning in 2013 with ProMaster and followed with the smaller ProMaster City in 2014.

These sales are becoming more important. The segment has boomed in part because of a proliferation of offerings, with Ford Transit and Transit Connect, and the new Mercedes-Benz Metris, along with associated advertising, creating more interest. Plus, FCA's entire truck fleet has taken on even more responsibility as the company's biggest profit driver while sales of its cars dwindle.

"The [commercial] segment will sell around 450,000 units this year, which is a lot," Morrison said. "And also there's a lot of other volume linked to commercial-van sales. A business might have a fleet of 10 pickup trucks, and since we recently upgraded our fleet of vans, now we have a chassis cab for them.

"Before, if they had the trucks but needed a van, they had to go to two different dealerships. This way they can have one relationship, with one dealer, one guy who does their regular maintenance and service on the whole fleet, and one purchase order."

Right now is "commercial truck season" also, Morrison said. "Business owners are wrapping up their finances



A commercial featuring the 2017 Ram ProMaster City

for the year and taking advantage of tax breaks. They're upgrading fleets. So we're explaining what we have to offer them. For some people, it's just getting their recognition of our full line of commercial vehicles."

Morrison acknowledged statistics which continue to show a decline in the formation rate of new U.S. businesses over the last several years and an increase in the failure rate.

"But I think small businesses are getting more confidence in their wealth, so they're coming in and buying," Morrison insisted. "Also we're attracting them with our efficiency message, about having the most fuel-efficient work van and about total cost of ownership. Also ProMaster City is very easy to maneuver. And ProMaster is available in both gas and diesel. A lot of customers are trading in old rear-wheel-drive V8 vans, so they can both upgrade and

save money."

Ford seems to encourage a certain amount of non-commercial consumer interest in its Transit Connect small commercial van, even offering it in a seven-passenger version. Why doesn't Ram do likewise?

"Well, that's a function of the fact that Ford doesn't have a minivan," Morrison explained. "Whereas FCA has minivan leadership for consumers with the new Chrysler Pacifica. We don't try to stuff people into cargo vans."

Morrison also dismissed the fact that there's been a crescendo of discussion about declining viewership of NFL games on TV, where Ram -- per the industry norm for trucks -- launched its ProMaster campaign. But he insisted he's not concerned overall.

"There are still a lot of people watching football," he said, "and they're not DVR-ing it."



The 2017 Ford Transit Connect

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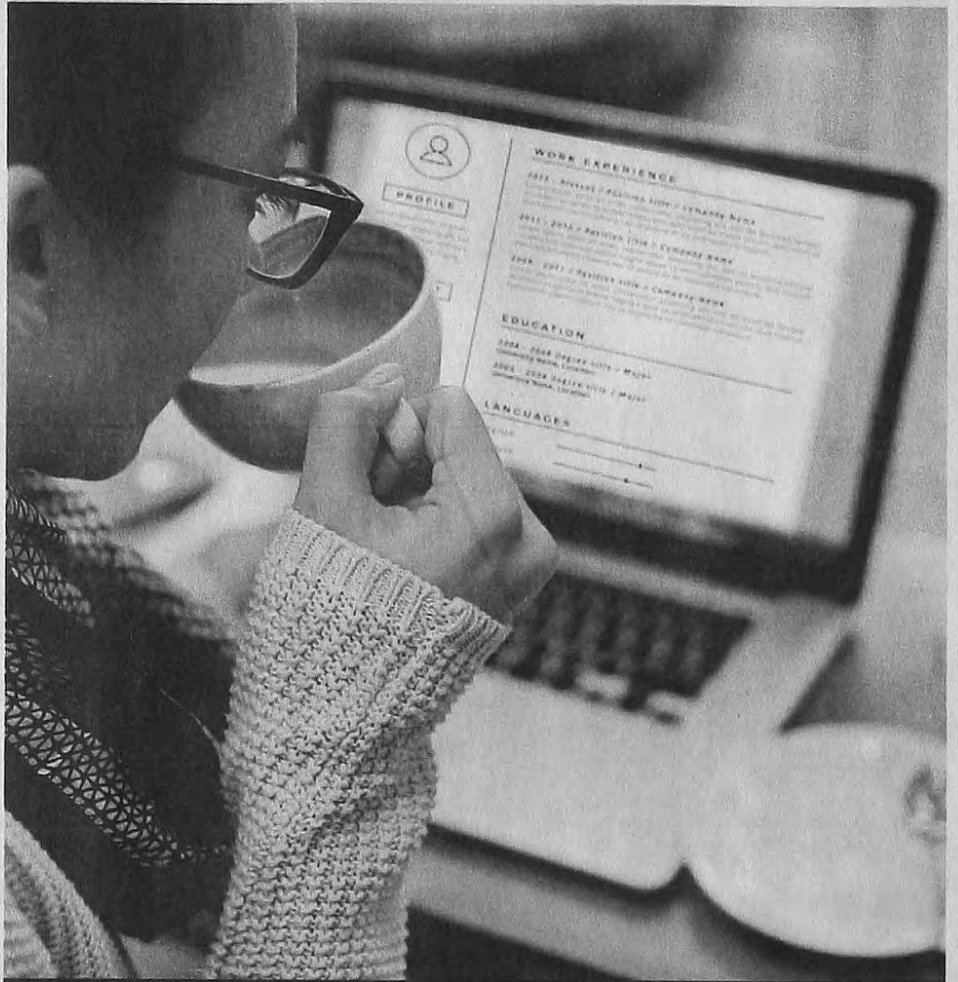
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