



## PCA student takes being a multi-sport athlete to new level

SPORTS, 1B

CANTON

# OBSERVER

SUNDAY, APRIL 19, 2020 ■ HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

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## Plymouth co. shifts to making face shields

**Ed Wright** [Hometownlife.com](http://Hometownlife.com)  
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

Beginning March 23, Troy Design and Manufacturing in Plymouth Township shifted focus.

As of April 14, the facility has made more than 3 million face shields, shipped to medical staff battling the coronavirus pandemic.

From nurses and doctors at Detroit's Henry Ford Hospital to emergency medical technicians in New York City, the shields are protecting essential workers from coast to coast.

"It's been a very cool experience," said TDM President Todd Jaranowski, of Milford. "From the design process to the production and delivery process, it's been a team effort.

"It's especially nice knowing that our products are helping the heroes on the front lines."

Thorough safety precautions and a "Wall of Heroes" have been implemented at TDM to ensure the employees' physical and mental health, Jaranowski said.

Upon entering the plant, workers must walk through a thermal scanner

that can detect even the slightest fever. All employee work stations are spaced at least six feet apart to comply with social-distancing protocols required by medical professionals.

"First and foremost, we have the safety of the employees in mind when they walk in the plant," Jaranowski said.

See **FACE SHIELDS**, Page 4A



Builder Constructionman Steven Schwab, of Westland, assigned to Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 1, inspects a lighting unit for a pre-staging area in front of Naval Hospital Rota in southern Spain. PHOTOS COURTESY OF CAINE STORINO

## Westland COVID-19 survivor shares his gratitude

**Susan Bromley** [Hometownlife.com](http://Hometownlife.com)  
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

While many are chafing at Gov. Gretchen Whitmer's stay-at-home order and struggling with cabin fever, Richard Cockrum is just happy to be home in Westland, recovering from COVID-19.

He's glad to have socks. He's grateful for nurses. He's thankful for the intuitive girlfriend who rushed him to St. Mary Mercy Hospital in Livonia as he struggled to breathe, infected with coronavirus.

"It's a miracle, man, that's all I've got to say," Cockrum said. "I don't know why I was chosen to go through this rough road, wouldn't wish this on anyone."

See **GRATITUDE**, Page 4A

## Westland native helps fight pandemic in Spain

Navy Seabee builds pre-staging areas for medical staff

**Shelby Tankersley** [Hometownlife.com](http://Hometownlife.com)  
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

Steven Schwab, a Westland resident, enlisted in the Navy last year. He's the son of a Navy SEAL with a brother in the Navy and felt like it was the right time to serve his country.

Little did he know he'd end up aiding the coronavirus fight in Rota, Spain.

"Me and the Seabees here in Rota assisted the hospital on base by setting up a tent that is being used for screening patients for COVID-19," he wrote in an email interview. "Maintaining the power and lighting for the hospital tent has been one of our main efforts. Here at camp we're enforcing social distancing

and limiting the number of people we come in contact with to prevent any further spread."

Schwab, who has called Westland home for about 16 years, is a graduate of Wayne Memorial High School. His background in landscaping led him to being a Navy Seabee as a constructionman, builder striker (BUCN).

"We construct buildings and other structures, assist with humanitarian assistance if needed, and support security in theaters of operations," he wrote. "We're the forward-deployed Seabee battalion now so we're here in Spain to be ready to respond to anything that

See **SPAIN**, Page 4A



Schwab enlisted in the Navy last year.

## Company to pay \$4M in Medicare settlement

**Susan Vela** [Hometownlife.com](http://Hometownlife.com)  
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

A Farmington Hills rehab therapy enterprise will pay \$4 million to resolve allegations that it knowingly caused three Michigan nursing facilities to submit Medicare claims for services that were not reasonable, necessary or properly skilled.

The U.S. Department of Justice announced the agreement with Encore Rehabilitation Services, a contract therapy provider, April 10.

Headquartered along Twelve Mile Road, Encore is "one of the nation's largest contract therapy providers with over 8,000 skilled therapists providing rehab therapy to patients in more than 600 facilities across

See **SETTLEMENT**, Page 4A



# Company offers greeting cards for front-line heroes

**Ed Wright** Hometownlife.com  
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

In a classic display of pivoting to fit the times, a Plymouth-based stationery company is producing greeting cards specifically designed to put smiles on the faces of heroes on the front lines of the coronavirus pandemic.

Inklings Paperie, founded by Canton resident Lindsay Henry, and based in the former Burroughs factory in Plymouth Township, has manufactured a series of "Healthcare Hero" cards that are printed with a heartfelt message and a scratch-off bonus on the front of the card.

The cards offer space inside for senders to write uplifting words of encouragement to everyone from front-line nurses and doctors to mail carriers and grocery store clerks.

An example of a card reads: I see how much you are giving and sacrificing right now ... (and underneath the



**Plymouth-based Inklings Paperie has designed greetings cards specifically for people working on the front lines of the coronavirus pandemic.**

COURTESY OF INKLINGS PAPERIE

scratch-off section) and have never been so proud to know you.

"Now more than ever before, we're seeing people who are desperately trying to remain connected with loved ones amidst the current stay-at-home orders," said Inklings Paperie owner Lindsay Henry. "A handwritten note not only offers that meaningful connection between two people, but it also becomes a tangible keepsake that they can hold on to for years to come."

"Think of all the love letters written during World Wars I and II. These are the keepsakes we'll pass along to our own grandchildren."

Inklings' project is rolling along while adhering to Gov. Gretchen Whitmer's social-distancing guidelines.

"Our staff of five meet using teleconferencing, and we never have more than one employee in the office at one time," Henry said. "We brainstormed for the messages on the outside of the cards and decided on the ones we thought were most powerful."

Henry reflected on how quickly times

have changed in her industry.

"In early February, we were at a greeting cards convention in the Javits Center in New York," she said. "Now, that same facility has been turned into a temporary hospital for COVID-19-infected patients."

To show its appreciation to customers, Inklings has pledged to give away up to 5,000 free greeting cards throughout April. Visit the company's website to place an online order and use the code HERO to secure a free card.

"It's so important for us to lift up those who are currently on the front lines of this crisis," Henry added. "There is tremendous power in a note of encouragement. We need to be telling our nurses, first responders, mail carriers and grocery workers, 'Thank you. We see you, and we are endlessly grateful for you.' This is something that we all can do."

The coronavirus-focused cards range from thankful to humorous.

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### Newsroom Contacts:

**Phil Allmen, Content Strategist**

Mobile: 248-396-3870

Email: pallmen@hometownlife.com

Follow us on Facebook: @OEHometown

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## Plymouth fountain project delayed by coronavirus

**Ed Wright** Hometownlife.com  
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

Downtown Plymouth's \$1.2 million Wilcox Fountain Project has been delayed until spring 2021 due to the coronavirus pandemic, the city announced Monday.

"There is now just too much risk involved in trying to complete the project this year," Plymouth Mayor Oliver Wolcott and Wilcox Foundation representative Scott Dodge said in a joint statement. "The project schedule was already tight, and the current pandemic adds a considerable number of unknowns and new risks to the schedule."

"The uncertainties around the city's ability to schedule the independent contractors to perform the site construction work, and supply-chain disruptions are two of the major factors in our decision; a partial completion of the fountain before winter is not an option."

Wolcott and Dodge added that,



**A rendering shows the latest Kellogg Park fountain design proposed by the Wilcox Foundation for downtown Plymouth.** COURTESY OF THE WILCOX FOUNDATION

while the temporary setback is disappointing, it allows the project to begin earlier in the spring of 2021 and potentially be completed by that summer.

"Unfortunately, circumstances beyond our control have forced major upheavals in many aspects of our lives," the statement said. "The City of Plymouth and the Wilcox Foundation re-

main committed to the project, and seeing it become a reality in 2021.

"We are all making the best of a truly unprecedented situation and will emerge from this crisis a stronger community."

Contact reporter Ed Wright at [ewright@hometownlife.com](mailto:ewright@hometownlife.com) or 517-375-1113.

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# Clerks expect slow election results with absentee ballot numbers rising

Shelby Tankersley Hometownlife.com  
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

During the 2016 Presidential Primary, Livonia issued 5,307 absentee ballots. During the same election in 2020, the city gave out 13,477.

When Michigan voters passed Proposal 3 in November 2018, adult residents gained the ability to vote absentee without reason and register to vote as late as Election Day itself. And while clerks love that voting is easier, it makes their jobs harder.

"Our permanent list is growing daily," said Livonia Clerk Susan Nash. "I mean, daily now we're getting people asking about, especially now with this pandemic."

## Counting ballots

Absentee ballots can't be opened until after polls close at 8 p.m. on Election Day. So in August and November, especially as communities consider all mail-in elections during coronavirus, people might wait a while to get results out of Michigan.

"I think you're absolutely going to be waiting if we do not put laws in place that are going to help us process these ballots," said Farmington Hills Clerk Pam Smith, who encourages her staff to process 200 absentee ballots an hour.

Clerks are hopeful about Michigan Senate Bill 757, which would give clerks



More Michiganders are choosing to vote through absentee ballots.  
HOMETOWNLIFE.COM FILE

in larger municipalities, 40,000 or more people, some ability to pre-process absentee ballots early if it's passed.

"To be able to at least start opening them, even if we don't process them prior to election day, is going to be huge," Smith said. "It is going to be a huge help to clerks across Michigan."

But for smaller communities, not much would change.

"The ability to open the envelopes before 7 a.m. Election Day would be great... But the bills apply to communities with a population of (4)0,000 or more, and I don't have a population of (4)0,000 or more," said City of Northville Clerk Dianne Massa said.

## Registering voters

Another source of hold-ups for communities in March was same-day registration.

"I think the biggest struggle for us was trying to answer all of our calls with our own staff and then trying to do same-day registration," Smith said. "We registered 172 people that day, and that line was kind of pretty constant all day." Livonia had the same issue.

"We couldn't get to the other things because we had so many people registering to vote," Nash said.

Smith warned for really large communities, same-day registration can be

a huge hold-up.

"If you talk to cities like Ann Arbor, East Lansing, Grand Rapids who had over a 1,000 people in line to register and their last person didn't register didn't register until 10:20 p.m. and then they still have to get a ballot and vote, they're not even getting their last ballot in until 10:30 p.m.," she said. "So you're not even able to shut down and get any results until that time."

## More staff, organization

Smith, Massa and Nash said they want to hire more temporary workers for elections so their staffs can focus on more specialized work.

"I want to have stations set up where I have a place for, if you're just here to register to vote this is where you go or if you're here for an absentee ballot this is the line you should be in," Nash said.

Smith added that it would be nice to give people a break, too.

"These people are already working 13, 14 hours," she said. "You can't expect them to go and work 20 hours when the majority of them are probably over the age of 65."

But as they all said, only time will tell how long it'll take to find out what wins in Michigan.

Contact reporter Shelby Tankersley at [stankersle@hometownlife.com](mailto:stankersle@hometownlife.com) or 248-305-0448. Follow her on Twitter @shelby\_tankk.

## Wayne-Westland to virtually interview superintendent finalists

Shelby Tankersley Hometownlife.com  
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

Coronavirus put Wayne-Westland's superintendent search on hold a month ago. Now, the pandemic has forced schools to close for the remainder of the academic year.

So, Wayne-Westland is finishing its superintendent search virtually.

Finalists Keith McDonald, director of human resources for Livonia Public Schools, and John Dignan, director of post secondary options and community partnerships for Southfield Public Schools, will be interviewed by the board of education in a special meeting over Zoom 7 p.m. Tuesday, April 21.

Zoom is a video conferencing application, similar to Skype or FaceTime.

The district initially planned to interview Dignan and McDonald March 16 and 17, respectively, in face-to-face interviews. In the first round interviews, both men came to the school board with ideas to unite the community around the district and find new ways to serve students.

The community will not be able to physically participate in the final inter-

views, but can send questions for either candidate by emailing [supesearch@wwcsd.net](mailto:supesearch@wwcsd.net).

Another special meeting is scheduled 7 p.m. May 4 where the board is expected to vote on picking its next superintendent. The district hopes for the new leader to start in July.

Contact reporter Shelby Tankersley at [stankersle@hometownlife.com](mailto:stankersle@hometownlife.com).

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## Face shields

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"Every worker is equipped with the proper PPE (personal protection equipment): a face shield and medical gloves."

The "Wall of Heroes" is a source of inspiration for TDM employees. What started as a small space dedicated to newspaper clippings and grateful letters from recipients of the face shields has spread into an massive monument to how much the employees' diligence is appreciated.

"Once employees become comfortable with the safety of the work environment ... their pride and morale has been outstanding," Jaranowski said. "And when they look at all of the 'thank-you' clippings, letters and Facebook posts from medical personnel across the country, well, that makes them even more proud of what they're accomplishing."

As of April 14, TDM employed 500 people for producing the masks, according to Jaranowski.

"We have two shifts, so we're working pretty much around the clock," he said. "We've even had volunteers from our UAW workforce and Ford and TDM salary staff supplementing our full-time employees."

Jaranowski heaped praise on Ford's logistics team, which has made distributing face shields a smooth operation.



**Troy Design and Manufacturing employee Pat Tucker works on assembling a face shield.**  
COURTESY OF KRISTINA KARSCHNIA

The facility was expected to assemble 2.5 million masks this week alone and 5 million to 6 million shields next week after hiring additional workers: 120 this week, and 100 to start next week.

"As it is now, we can't build enough," Jaranowski said, when asked how long face shield production will continue at TDM. "We'll be making them at least for the next couple of months. After that, it's a bit of an unknown."

As a subsidiary of Ford, TDM, under normal circumstances, builds prototypes for future model vehicles.

Contact Ed Wright at [ewright@hometownlife.com](mailto:ewright@hometownlife.com) or 517-375-1113.



**Todd Jaranowski, president of Ford subsidiary Troy Design and Manufacturing, oversees the production of face shields at TDM's plant in Plymouth Township.**  
COURTESY OF FORD MOTOR CO.

## Spain

Continued from Page 1A

we're called upon to do.

"I really enjoy the hands-on type of work that we do, and I enjoy seeing my work improve the quality of life and safety for those we serve."

In Spain, the World Health Organization reported 172,541 cases of coronavirus, with 183,056 deaths and 70,853 recoveries, as of April 15.

Schwab said he doesn't have a lot of contact with people and is taking social distancing precautions. While they can enjoy free time as usual, Schwab and the other BUCNs are trying to better themselves and hone their skills.

"We're being strict with hand sanitiz-

ing and cleaning our work spaces thoroughly," he wrote. "It's affecting people by limiting our extra-curricular activities like back home, but we're using this time to push for qualifications and getting licenses for equipment."

To those back home in Westland and throughout Michigan, Schwab encouraged people to stay the course.

"Just be safe and take the proper precautions to prevent the spread of the virus and to follow the recommendations of health care providers," he wrote. "I believe that we will get through this by not losing faith and keep pushing forward one day at a time."

Contact reporter Shelby Tankersley at [stankersle@hometownlife.com](mailto:stankersle@hometownlife.com) or 248-305-0448. Follow her on Twitter @shelby\_tankk.

## Gratitude

Continued from Page 1A

Cockrum is unsure where he contracted coronavirus, whether it was from touching a contaminated surface or from coming in contact with an infected person.

He said he's never been diagnosed with underlying conditions such as diabetes or hypertension, which have been associated with patients severely impacted by coronavirus. He doesn't drink, smoke or "do any crazy stuff."

However, the 6-foot, 6-inch 300-pound "healthy as an ox" graphic designer for Valassis was already working from home March 25 when he started experiencing symptoms.

He initially chalked it up to the constantly changing spring weather, possibly a sinus issue, and called his doctor, who prescribed a "five-day Z pack" course of antibiotics, which Cockrum started that night.

Still, his fever increased. With the antibiotics gone and his mobility declining, Cockrum said the intuition of Nancy Schneider, his girlfriend of seven years, took over.

"She says, 'Richard, I need to get you to the hospital,' but I could barely get out of the chair," Cockrum said. "I couldn't get myself together - I left my glasses, my cell phone, I had no socks on my feet. I slipped on summer shoes and we went to the hospital."

Schneider drove straight to St. Mary Mercy in Livonia, where three coronavirus triage stations have been set up in the parking lot. They were met at the first station by a "guy gowned up" who checked Cockrum's blood pressure, heart rate and temperature and then wrote his vitals on the windshield.

"Never in a million years would I think my vitals would be on a windshield," Cockrum said. "I say to myself, 'I'm in big trouble.'"

At the next station, he was tested for COVID-19 with a nasal swab. At the third station, after medical staff checked at his oxygen levels and witnessed his breathing struggles, Cockrum was told he was being admitted and was helped from the car and into a waiting room outside the emergency room, without Schneider.

He then waited for hours - although he couldn't recall how many - with no beds available and about 15 strangers waiting with him.

Head in excruciating pain, shivering and feverish, Cockrum said he was "soul-searching," wondering when they might call his name. He bonded with a young woman sitting eight or nine chairs away, who comforted him by saying, "You will be next."

At about 1:30 a.m., he was called, and remembers he thought the nurse saying "Richard, Richard," sounded like his mom.

But he couldn't get out of the chair. He was helped to the ER, where his care began: he was put on oxygen and got a chest X-ray. Within a day and a half, he was moved from the ER to the second level, and "the docs worked their magic" as well as "all these wonderful people who work for St. Mary," including nurses Bianca and Eileen.

While they administered medications including hydroxychloroquine



**Richard Cockrum, 57, is recovering from COVID-19 at home in Westland. He required a four-day hospital stay at St. Mary Mercy in Livonia.**  
COURTESY OF RICHARD COCKRUM

**"I am so thankful for everyone who works hard, they are doing a helluva job and they are all remarkable people. There is hope, and it's a tough road, but people have to realize staying home and staying safe is what will make a difference."**

**Richard Cockrum** COVID-19 survivor

and insulin after his sugar spiked due to the infection, he also remembers the kindnesses, including the "great pair of yellow socks" Eileen put on his feet, and the ice she laid next to him.

"She was so calming, sincere, such a loving person, she knew I was under a lot of stress," he said.

Cockrum was given oxygen, but did not need a ventilator. After four days, he stabilized enough to be discharged and went home April 2.

"Every day is a better day," he said. "I am happy I'm still here."

He continues to work on increasing his lung capacity using a breathing apparatus from the hospital and is still isolated from Schneider in their two-bedroom home, and maintaining six feet of distance while sitting outside on the patio. Cockrum must be isolated until April 18, and continues his care by having video chats with his doctor.

Schneider has not shown any symptoms of COVID-19 and has not been tested.

His strength is improving and he's doing small chores like loading up trash cans with accumulated clutter. He talks by phone with his parents across the street, who are in their 80s, and to his daughter in Texas, a teacher who had to postpone her July wedding.

Cockrum said he most looks forward to hugging Schneider, mowing the grass and eventually returning to the hospital to thank those who cared for him.

"I am so thankful for everyone who works hard, they are doing a helluva job and they are all remarkable people," Cockrum said. "There is hope, and it's a tough road, but people have to realize staying home and staying safe is what will make a difference."

## Settlement

Continued from Page 1A

34 states," according to the company's website.

The settlement is tied to Encore's alleged conduct at the Autumn Woods Health Care Facility in Warren, Bay Shores Senior Care & Rehab Center in Bay City, and Medilodge of Yale in Yale from fall 2010 to summer 2018.

"Today's settlement reflects our continuing efforts to protect patients and taxpayers by ensuring that the care provided to beneficiaries of government-funded healthcare programs is dictated by clinical needs, not a provider's fiscal interests," Deputy Assistant Attorney General Michael Granston said in a statement. "Rehabilitation therapy companies provide important services to our vulnerable elderly population, but they will be held to account if they knowingly provide patients with unnecessary or ineligible services."

Allegations were made officially in

lawsuits under the whistleblower provisions of the False Claims Act by former Encore employees.

Along with the civil settlement, Encore has agreed to a five-year Corporate Integrity Agreement that involves risk assessment and internal reviews to identify and address compliance risks. Training, auditing and monitoring is required.

According to the company's statement:

"Encore has been cooperating with a government inquiry for the past four years and recently decided it was in the company's best interests to enter into a settlement agreement.

"The settlement amount of approximately \$4 million is considerably less than payments required to resolve cases involving other providers in the industry, and allows Encore to avoid further costs and management distraction."

Contact reporter Susan Vela at [svela@hometownlife.com](mailto:svela@hometownlife.com) or 248-303-8432. Follow her on Twitter @susan-vela.

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# Obituaries

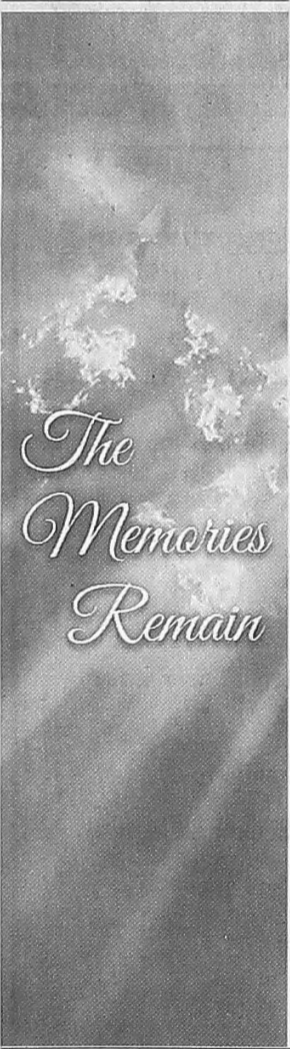
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**Suzanne C. Javid**

- - Age 76, of Bloomfield Hills, passed away on April 11, 2020 due to complications from COVID-19. Beloved wife of Jason, to whom she was married for over 47 years. Loving mother of Patrick (Sara) Javid and Rebecca (Jim) Hardman. Proud grandmother to Iris Javid, Jack Hardman, Lydia Javid, Sam Hardman and Luke Hardman. Sister to Joan Greif and Jane (Roger) Baehr; and aunt to her dear niece and nephews. In lieu of flowers, please consider a memorial donation to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. A.J. Desmond & Sons, 248-362-2500.

View obituary and share memories at [AJDesmond.com](http://AJDesmond.com)



## Iva Mae Vaughn

**TAWAS CITY** - Iva Mae Vaughn, age 86, of Tawas City, Michigan formerly of Farmington Hills, Michigan passed away peacefully Saturday, April 11, 2020 at her home.

Iva was born October 24, 1933 in Novi Township, Michigan to the late Amadon and Delia (Session) Aldrich. She married William Vaughn on October 16, 1953. Iva enjoyed cooking and would feed anyone at any time when they walked through her doors. She was a giving and selfless person whom many will miss.

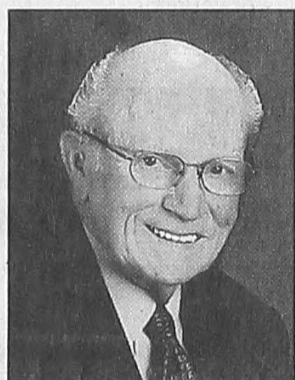
Iva is survived by her children, Randie (Gary) Chomin, William Vaughn, and Brenda Vaughn; twelve grandchildren; nine great grandchildren; two great great-grandchildren; numerous nieces and nephews. In addition to her parents, Iva was preceded in death by her husband, William, in 1967; her children, Clyde, Paula, Debbie and Fritz; brothers, Art, Paul, Fritz, and Harvey; sisters, Ellen, Edna, and Marie.

In a private graveside ceremony, Iva was buried next to her husband, William, in Oakland Hills Memorial Gardens Cemetery in Novi, Michigan. A celebration of life will be held at a later date. Online condolences may be offered at [www.bureshfuneralhomes.com](http://www.bureshfuneralhomes.com).

*Buresh*  
FUNERAL HOMES

## James Vermeulen

**PLYMOUTH** - age 88, died peacefully at home on Easter Sunday. Beloved husband of 67 years to Sylvia. Dear father of Krista (Tim) Schaafsma, Jim (Nancy) Vermeulen, Ken (Shelly) Vermeulen, and the late Debra (the late Stan) Hoksbergen. Proud grandfather of Allison (Chris), Becky (Jason), Libby (Justin), Ross (Rumi), Alden (Mary), Mieke (Aaron), Derek (Jen), Kyle (Richenda), Alissa (Raimundo) Morgan, and Sarah. Also, dearest great grandpa of 18. Survived by three of his nine siblings, Casey, Gertrude & Elaine. Founder of the Vermeulen Funeral Homes in Plymouth and Westland. There will be a public Visitation Thursday, April 16th from 4-6 PM at the Vermeulen-Sajewski Funeral Home, 46401 Ann Arbor Rd. W. (btwn Sheldon & Beck) Plymouth. For those who would prefer to not enter the funeral home building, there will be a Thursday 6-7 PM "Drive-by visitation". Friends will be able to pay respects from the privacy of their vehicle. The family will greet friends at the South Parking Lot Entrance. The Friday funeral service will be private. Entombment at Riverside Cemetery. Memorials may be made to the Plymouth Kiwanis Foundation or the Plymouth Salvation Army. To share a memory, please visit [vermeulenh.com](http://vermeulenh.com)



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FUNERAL HOMES CREMATION SERVICES

## James L. Niland, Jr. ("Jim")

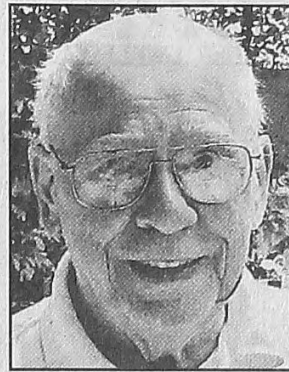
**PETOSKEY** - James L. Niland, Jr. ("Jim") passed away peacefully at home in Petoskey, MI on April 5, 2020. He was 91.

Jim was born on September 4, 1928 in Cincinnati, Ohio to his parents James and Merle (Muen-scher) Niland. He graduated from Fort Hamilton High School in Brooklyn, NY, served as a first lieutenant in the U.S. Army, and eventually received a Master's Degree in Education from Miami University of Ohio in 1955. That same year, he married E. Corrinne (Florian) Niland of Port Clinton, OH. They moved to Garden City, MI where they were both teachers in the Garden City school system. Jim later held several administrative posts, including a long tenure as principal of Garden City West High School. The family moved to Livonia in 1967. Jim retired in 1986 and bought a home on Crooked Lake in Petoskey, MI, where he had spent many childhood summers. He enjoyed his retirement immensely, and spent many hours trolling the lake for walleye and other treasures.

More than anything, Jim loved his wife and family, and especially enjoyed big gatherings at Thanksgiving and Christmas. Music was a big part of his life, and he loved to sing and play the piano. He also loved sports and was a diehard Michigan Wolverines fan.

Jim is survived by his wife of 64 years, E. Corrinne Niland; his sons James L. Niland, III (Ronald Allen), Timothy W. (Jeannie) Niland, Scott H. Niland (Cecile Do); his sister Rosanne Robillard; and his granddaughter Courtney Nicole Niland.

Jim will be cremated at Stone Funeral Home in Petoskey, MI (<https://www.stonefuneralhomeinc.com/>). A memorial and celebration of his extraordinary life will be held at a later date, to be announced. Condolences may be sent to Corrinne at 965 Hager Drive, Apartment 330, Petoskey, MI 49770-8749.



**Sylvia Wirkkunen Kannisto**

**FARMINGTON HILLS** - Sylvia Wirkkunen Kannisto, 99, passed away peacefully on April 6, 2020. She was predeceased by her beloved husband of 59 years, Arthur W. Kannisto, her parents, Otto and Aina Wirkkunen of Gackle, North Dakota and four brothers. She was the loving mother of five children, Rodney Kannisto (Cara); Renee Romps (Timothy); Susan Bauer (Phil); Charles Kannisto (Carol) and Mark Kannisto (Carrie). She leaves behind numerous adoring grandchildren and great grandchildren who called her "Mummu". She was an active member of the Finnish Center Association for many years, and was known for her love of Detroit sports. Her warm smile and kindness will be missed by all. A memorial service and burial will take place at a later date in Michigan's upper peninsula. Funeral arrangements by: Thayer-Rock Funeral Home.

## Ronald Bryson Petrella

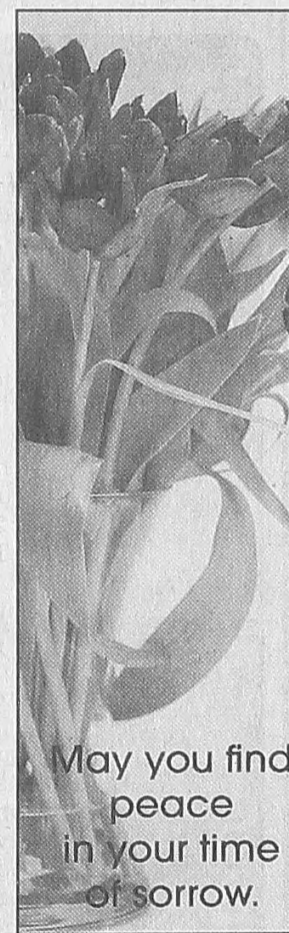
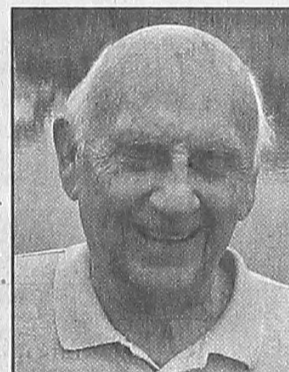
April 9, 2020

Age 85. Loving husband of the late Marcia. Dear father of Nancy Low, Sally (Paul Stark) Petrella and Judy Petrella. Beloved grandfather of Christie and Ashley Low.

Ronald was born in Detroit in 1934. He had six older brothers and sisters who all preceded him in death. He attended Cass Technical High School and was the first in his family to graduate from college, receiving a B.S. in Design from the University of Michigan. He retained a deep sense of pride in both of these schools throughout his life and was extremely proud when his daughter and granddaughter also graduated from UofM. He was active with the alumni of Cass Tech and his UofM fraternity, Psi Upsilon.

Ronald married Marcia Mary Roth in 1958, worked as an Art Director and together they raised a family of three girls in Birmingham. They had many friends and loved to entertain. After retirement he volunteered at the senior center and played on a local baseball team. Ronald loved sailing with family and friends, gardening, cooking, history and genealogy. He was most proud of the sailboat that he built himself in his youth.

A memorial service will be planned after the pandemic. Memorial donations can be made in his name to the Friends of the Rouge at [www.therouge.org](http://www.therouge.org)



## Robert "Bob" and V. Claudine "Deanie" McFarling

**FARMINGTON** - Robert "Bob" McFarling passed away on March 10, 2020. V. Claudine "Deanie" "Mac" McFarling passed away on February 20, 2020. Bob was 97 years old, born in South Dakota to the late Cyrus Asa and Olive McFarling. Deanie was 96 years old, born in Kansas to the late William I. and Mildred. They spent over 75 years together in marriage. Bob was soft-spoken, kind, gentle, and had a heart of gold. Bob was a retired ordained minister, but Deanie was not the typical "preacher's wife." She was outspoken, brutally honest, quick-witted, friendly and charmingly sarcastic.

Raised on a farm in South Dakota, Bob earned a Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Theology degrees from Anderson (College) University in Anderson, Indiana. Raised on a farm in Colorado, Deanie graduated from high school in Pueblo, Colorado. She attended Anderson (College) University in Anderson, Indiana.

Bob served as associate pastor at Park Place Church of God in Anderson, followed by service as pastor of the Church of God in Cheyenne, Wyoming, and then Boise, Idaho. Bob and Deanie moved to the Midwest where Bob served as associate pastor of Pennway Church of God in Lansing, Michigan and then associate pastor of Riverside Park Church of God in Livonia, Michigan. Deanie had a career as a ward clerk at St. Mary Mercy Hospital in Livonia, Michigan. Together they raised five children.

Bob's ministry included roles as Boy Scout leader, youth and young adults pastor, parenting class leader and daycare/nursery school director at New Schools Children's Center. He loved organizing camps and retreats for various groups. He served as Project Director for the Child Care Coordinating



Council of Detroit/Wayne County. In retirement, he taught leadership development, and led gardening and senior groups for Elderwise, and the greater community. Deanie enjoyed yardwork, baking (especially pizza and pie), needlework, sewing, home decorating and upholstery.

Bob and Deanie were talented creative writers and belonged to a writing group for seniors. They loved to travel to visit relatives all over the country. Both were loving grandparents and great-grandparents-- always interested in their descendants' lives from afar.

Bob and Deanie spent most of retirement at their home in Westland, Michigan, moving to Farmington, Michigan for their final years. After attending the Church of God for most of their lives, Bob and Deanie became members of First United Methodist Church in Northville, Michigan and attended there for more than 20 years.

Bob and Deanie are survived by sons Larry (Serita) McFarling and Scott McFarling, daughter Jeanette (Alex) Mills, grandchildren Jason (Liz) Kaan, Mark (Trisha) McFarling, Melissa Kaan, Aaron (Jennifer) McFarling, Lindsey McKennett, Jeremy (Adriana Keaton) Mills, and Cassandra (Jordan) Veres, and great-grandchildren, Brandon, Jacob, Casey and Hannah McFarling, Abbilyn, Brynley, and Brody Kaan, Vivienne, Evangeline and Beatrix Tabor, Kayden and Maia McKennett, and Odin and Frances Mills, and many siblings, nieces, and nephews. Bob and Deanie were preceded in death by their daughters Louise Kaan and Judy McKennett, their son-in-law Richard McKennett, and their grandchildren Michael and Megan McKennett.

A memorial service will be held in the future at First United Methodist Church, Northville, Michigan, 777 Eight Mile Road, Northville, MI 48167. Interment will be at the memorial garden of First United Methodist Church, Northville. In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to the First United Methodist Church, Northville.

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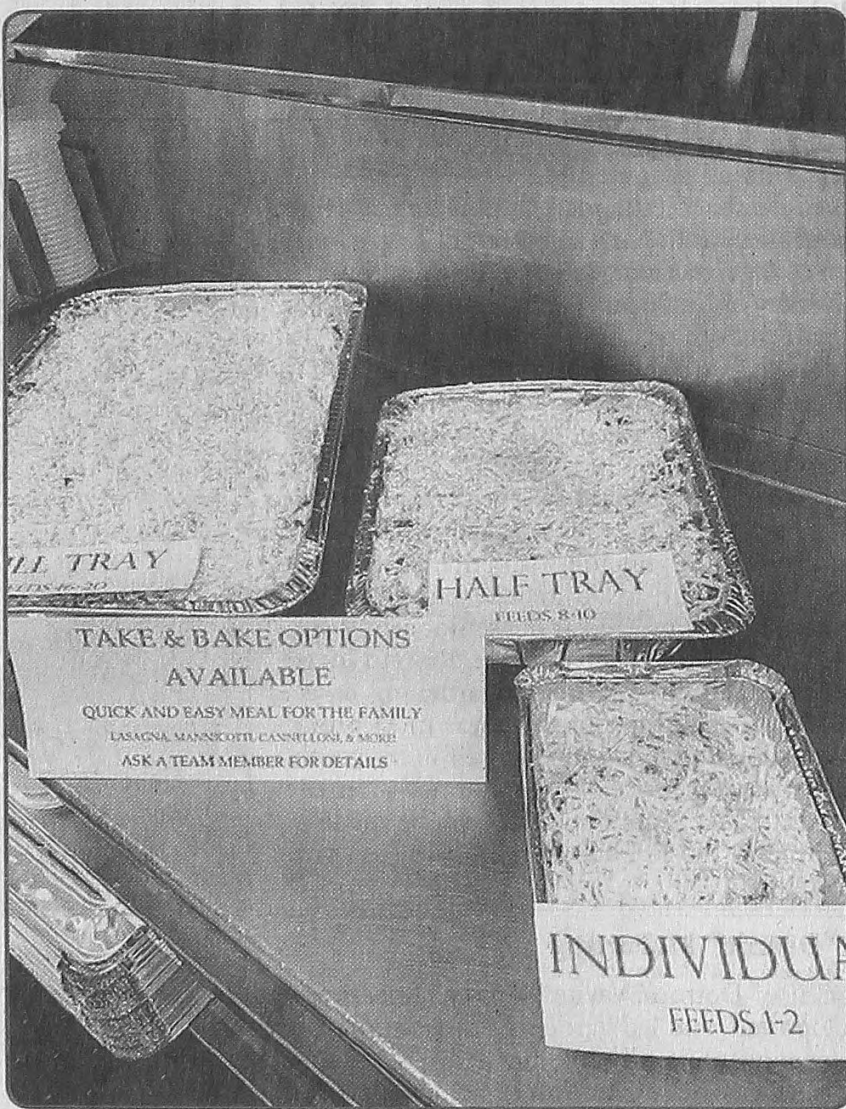
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*[Signature]*  
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# Sports

## Student takes multi-sport athleticism to a new level

Plymouth Christian Academy's Costello planned to compete in 3 sports in one season

**Andrew Vaillencourt**  
Hometownlife.com  
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

Rachel Costello had it all figured out. Basketball season had just ended for the Plymouth Christian Academy Eagles after the team was ousted on March 6 in the district final by Adrian Lenawee Christian. Spring sports were scheduled to begin the following Monday and after speaking with the golf coach, soccer coach and the track and field coach, she had made up her mind — she was going to play three sports in one season.

"I like playing sports because it gives me a purpose," Costello said. "I enjoy exercising and being on a team gives me an opportunity to be with friends — different friends on different teams. I like the co-ed teams (golf and tennis). It gives me an opportunity to play against the guys and talk with them. I wanted to play soccer this year because I was told that they were like the basketball team — a great family. It was my senior year, and I wanted to try new things."

Like the rest of the state's seniors, her final chance at high school athletics were wiped out when the MHSAA canceled the rest of the spring sports calendar.

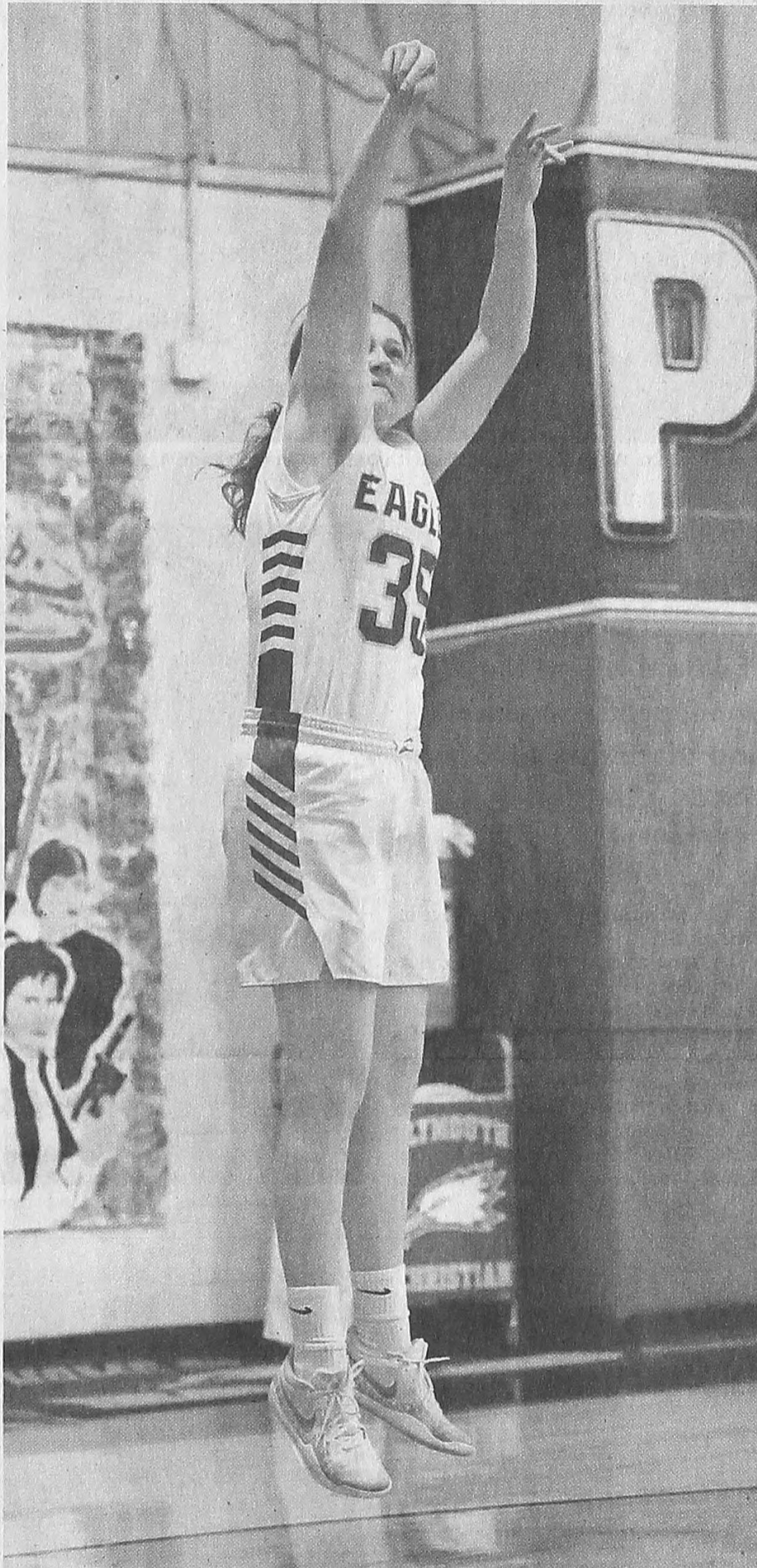
Costello played golf since she was a freshman and was named a captain for her senior year. Earning all-conference awards the previous two seasons and named most-improved player in two of her campaigns had her excited for 2020.

"I had a bad finish at regionals last year and I really wanted to redeem myself from that," Costello said. "I really wanted to help be a 'coach' and work with the younger players. The team had talent and we were all excited about the season, we really thought we could qualify for the state tournament. This was going to be my fourth year and I was looking forward to playing. I had a couple of practice rounds and was hitting it well. I love golf and I may have an opportunity to play in college. We'll see."

### Tending the goal

Two other sports also beckoned. The PCA soccer team was looking for an additional goalkeeper. Fellow players, senior Ava Atchinson and junior Lexi Thomason inquired about Costello's

See LEVEL, Page 3B



Plymouth Christian Academy senior Rachel Costello just finished basketball season with the Eagles. She planned to compete in three sports this season. COURTESY OF MATT WINDLE

## Livonia podcaster talks about life without sports

**Andrew Vaillencourt**  
Hometownlife.com  
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

With sports across the country shut down, the entire industry is facing new challenges that impact every person in a team's organization.

With every canceled game or paused season, team broadcasters, scouts, coaches and athletes have been forced to adjust both what they do and how they do their jobs — something Livonia resident Jeremy Otto is exploring with a new podcast called In the Absence of Sports.

Otto, a Madonna graduate, is the TV play-by-play broadcaster for the University of Detroit Mercy men's basketball team when sports are in session. He also does play-by-play for Catholic League football games and Michigan Stars soccer (a NISA league pro team that was set to start its first season this year).

Starting a podcast had been a goal of his for a while, but until now he never felt he had enough time to adequately devote to one. With games and, in turn, his jobs being canceled, Otto quickly decided to make a move.

On March 16, just days after high profile sporting events began to get canceled, he reached out to a friend for help on a voice-over and got to work on booking guests. His idea was to tell the stories on how coronavirus was affecting individuals in the sports industry.

"Content out there, it seems, is negative at this time," Otto said. "Obviously we address some issues on the podcast that aren't the most positive always in terms of talking about seasons getting canceled and paused, but I'm also trying to bring some good stories to it and search for some guests that have positive things to say, too."

For his first episode, Otto reached out to Detroit Tigers radio broadcaster Dan Dickerson, who he worked with when he interned several years ago in the team's broadcast booth. Dickerson obliged, and the podcast was underway.

"I've had a really good relationship with Dan," Otto said. "I consider him a friend at this point more than a colleague. He's been really helpful in terms of mentoring me. He's my go-to if I have questions about how I should handle this situation, I'll often send

See PODCASTER, Page 3B

## Vaillencourt lists top 10 games of high school season

**Andrew Vaillencourt**  
Hometownlife.com  
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

Much of the world has come to a halt with the recent outbreak of COVID-19 and that includes Michigan high school sports.

With the remainder of winter sports playoffs and the entire spring sports season canceled, we've decided to take a look back on the 2019-20 school year and pick out some of the best games

we've had the opportunity to cover for Hometown Life.

Sports department colleague Colin Gay and I each compiled a list of the 10 best games that we have covered throughout this school year. It's important to note that not all of these games had our local teams come out victorious, but that didn't take away from how great the games were. We each attended different games throughout the year, so our list of games to pick from is completely different.

Here is my list, starting with a trio of honorable mentions:

### Honorable Mentions

#### Livonia Franklin football fights off Stevenson in high-scoring battle

■ This was my first introduction to the high-flying Franklin offense and it did not disappoint. The Patriots won 47-21, but after scoring 21 straight points to start the game, allowed Stevenson back into it. The second half was one of the

most explosive halves of football I've seen and featured some wild big plays and turnovers.

#### Novi soccer beats Detroit Catholic Central to win regional title

■ Coming into this game, Novi hadn't beaten CC in the postseason since 2016. With two second half goals, the Wildcats got it done and won the regional title.

#### South Lyon East basketball stifles

See TOP 10, Page 2B

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# Westland man recalls meeting Al Kaline

Shelby Tankersley [HometownLife.com](http://HometownLife.com)  
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

John Wagatha was eight years old when he met the 1962 Detroit Tigers, but he remembers it like it was yesterday.

Wagatha entered the first-ever honorary Tigers bat boy raffle put on by the Hudson's department store in downtown Detroit that closed in 1983. Out of about 6,000 entries, Wagatha's name got picked.

Soon enough, he found himself sitting in the dugout at Tiger Stadium rubbing shoulders with professional baseball players, including right fielder Al Kaline. Kaline, who in a long and unique Detroit Tigers lifetime grew from youthful batting champion to Hall of Famer to distinguished elder statesman, died April 6 at his home in Bloomfield Hills. He was 85.

"I just kind of hung out in the dugout," Wagatha said. "They actually had a little ceremony out on the field where they announced my name and that I was honorary bat boy."

It was a night game, and Wagatha said it was incredible to look at the filled seats of Tiger Stadium. Kaline was still recovering from his legendary collarbone injury, which he sustained making a game-winning catch against the New York Yankees in May 1962. But Wagatha still got to meet him.

"He had a broken collarbone because he injured himself trying to make a catch in the outfield," said Wagatha, who now lives in Westland and makes a living selling Christmas trees and surveying. "So, it's hard to tell in the photo, but his arm is in a sling."

Wagatha had five siblings, so it was a little too expensive for his family to frequent Tiger games. But his honorary bat boy status came in handy when the Tigers played in the 1968 World Series. Wagatha wrote to management asking for tickets, attaching a flier showing him as a bat boy.

"They sent me two tickets to the World Series," he said. "They weren't free, but dad paid for the tickets and my brother and I went to the fifth game, which was the turning point of the series."

José Feliciano famously sang his own rendition of the "Star Spangled Banner," and Kaline hit a two-run single that gave the Tigers the lead they'd use to win the game. They'd go on to win the series' final two games, cementing a place in history.

As Detroit recovered from the 1967 riots, Wagatha remembers the World Series victory being one of the key things that helped stitch the city back together.

Baseball has dramatically changed over the years, but one thing that hasn't



A young John Wagatha, right, talks with Detroit Tigers legend Al Kaline. PHOTOS COURTESY OF MARINA WAGATHA

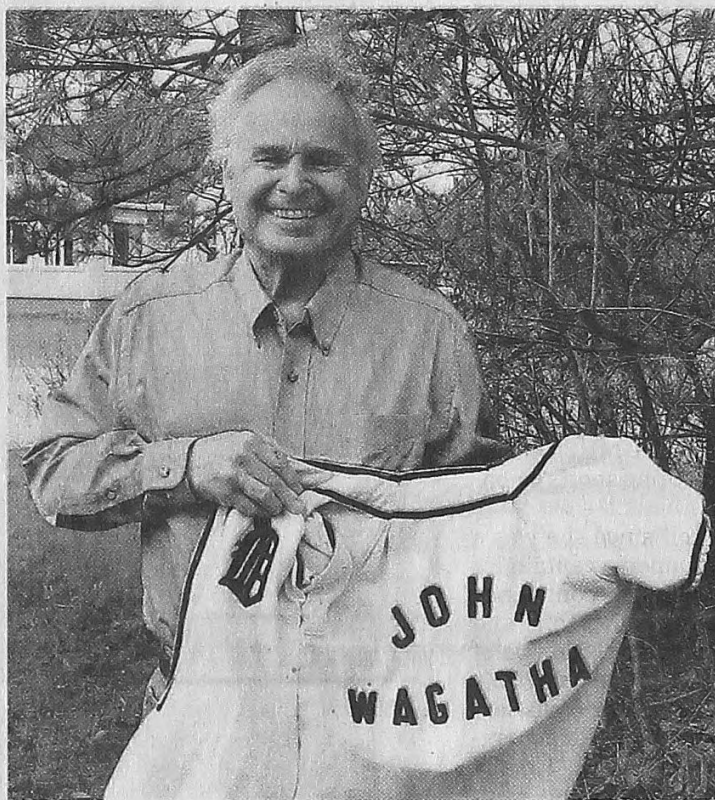
**"They actually had a little ceremony out on the field where they announced my name and that I was honorary bat boy."**

John Wagatha

is the captivating effect players have on young kids.

As Detroit waits to memorialize Kaline, affectionately known as Mr. Tiger, after it's safe to hold large public gatherings again, Wagatha and so many others will carry forward the memories of the man who inspired them as children.

Contact reporter Shelby Tankersley at [stankersle@hometownlife.com](mailto:stankersle@hometownlife.com) or 248-305-0448. Follow her on Twitter @shelby\_tankk.



The Tigers gave Wagatha his own jersey, which he still has. He received it when he was 8 years old after entering the first-ever honorary Tigers bat boy raffle put on by the Hudson's department store in downtown Detroit that closed in 1983. Out of about 6,000 entries, Wagatha's name got picked.

## Top 10

Continued from Page 1B

### rival South Lyon in OT in district semifinal

■ Coincidentally, this is the final game I covered in the boys basketball playoffs. South Lyon and South Lyon East split the regular season series and needed overtime to decide the playoff winner. It was East that held on, scoring the only three points in OT to secure the win.

### Vaillencourt's Top 10

#### 10. Livonia Franklin football shuts down Wyandotte Roosevelt, advances to district final

■ Franklin won this game with its defense, a change-up from what we'd seen from the Patriots all season. They held Roosevelt to seven points and forced two intentional grounding penalties, recorded six sacks and eight tackles for loss. The defense also forced and recovered two fumbles, blocked a punt and tallied a safety.

#### 9. Northville volleyball beats Livonia Churchill in five-set thriller

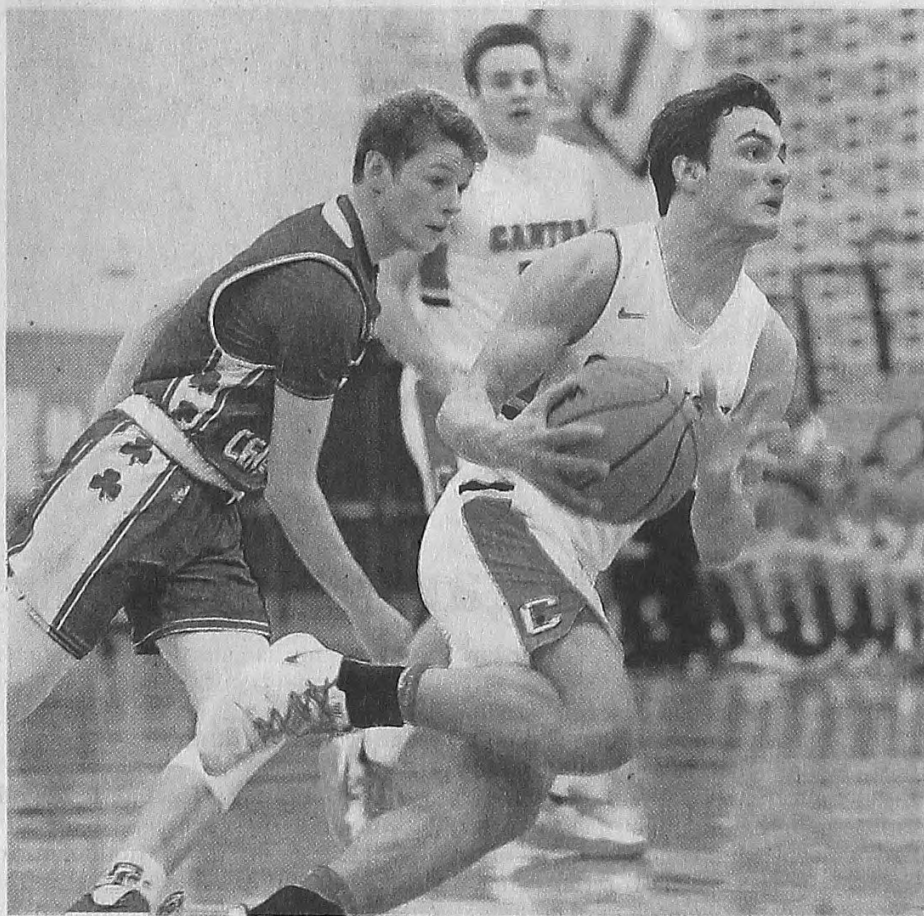
■ Opening night of KLAA volleyball action saw Churchill take Northville to five sets before the Mustangs pulled out the victory. Churchill's Sarah Dunn had 21 kills and Northville's Jenna Boksha had 15.

#### 8. Novi volleyball defeats Northville in thrilling district final

■ A battle of two powerhouse programs took four sets to decide a winner. Novi won 3-1, but the final three sets all had a two-point differential. With the win, Novi became district champs.

#### 7. Detroit Catholic Central soccer beats South Lyon after PK save to win district title

■ In a one-goal game, CC's goaltender was given a yellow card in the box, giving South Lyon a penalty shot that could tie the game. The Shamrocks had



Canton's Ben Stesiak drives to the hoop against Catholic Central. TOM BEAUDOIN | SPECIAL TO HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

to put in their backup goalie, Erik Dosch, who made the save of a lifetime. The save preserved the win and gave CC the district title.

#### 6. Northville basketball stuns Plymouth with comeback victory

■ In this regular season game, Plymouth took a 13-point lead into halftime before things fell apart in the second half. Northville earned a one-point win after holding off a wild Plymouth push in the game's final minute. Mustang senior Zach Shoemaker had 27 points.

#### 5. Livonia Franklin football falls to Belleville, finishes third in KLAA East Division

■ Facing one of the state's best teams, Franklin was a major underdog coming into this game. Despite losing 39-29, the game was much closer than even the score indicates. Franklin had its chance to secure the upset before one bad play cost it. This was the most well-played, competitive game I saw all year.

#### 4. Traverse City West eliminates Novi soccer in overtime in state semifinals

■ Another game that didn't end well for the local squad, Novi couldn't hold on for a trip to the state title game after losing to Traverse City West in overtime. The weather was nasty, creating a slip-

pery and wild second half, which saw West come back from a 2-0 deficit to upset the Wildcats.

#### 3. Canton basketball advances to KLAA championship game on miracle buzzer beater from behind the basket

■ So far, all but one game in the top 10 is from the fall, but that changes here with three winter events to round it out. Canton was a fun team to watch all year long and would be playing Northville in the district final if the playoffs had not been suspended. In this game against Belleville, Canton saw the Tigers come roaring back to tie the game in the final minute. Luckily for the Chiefs, senior Ben Stesiak was there to save the day, making a miraculous behind the basket shot at the buzzer to win the game.

#### 2. Livonia Stevenson hockey tops Novi in triple overtime to win regional championship

■ In the Division 2 playoffs, upstart Novi gave Stevenson all they could handle before the Spartans won 2-1 in triple OT. Ian Kimble scored the game-winning goal, but it was Novi sophomore goalie Austin Muirhead that stole the spotlight. He made 54 saves to carry the Wildcats.

#### 1. Howell hoops clinches KLAA West with wild triple overtime win over Canton

■ The best game that I covered in the 2019-20 school year was February's KLAA showdown between Howell and Canton. The game had some sloppy moments on both sides, but kept me on the edge of my seat for the entire game as the team's fought to three overtimes. Howell won the game 75-71, but it featured star performances on each side, pitted two of the leagues best coaches against each other and displayed the passion everyone has come to expect from a big high school sporting event.

Contact reporter Andrew Vaillencourt at [availlenc@hometownlife.com](mailto:availlenc@hometownlife.com) or 810-923-0659. Follow him on Twitter @AndrewVcourt. Send game results and stats to [Liv-Sports@hometownlife.com](mailto:Liv-Sports@hometownlife.com).



## Podcaster

Continued from Page 1B

him tape and he'll break it down for me, the good bad and ugly in terms of what he thinks. He's been awesome for my career."

As of Monday, Otto released 10 episodes of the podcast, each about 25-35 minutes long. His guest list is impressive, featuring interviews with Fox Sports broadcaster Gus Johnson, New York City ABC7 sports reporter Ryan Field, Kansas basketball broadcaster Brian Hanni, The Athletic's Emily Waldon, a scout from the Texas Rangers organization, former Michigan basketball player Jordan Morgan, recruiting insider Allen Trieu and more.

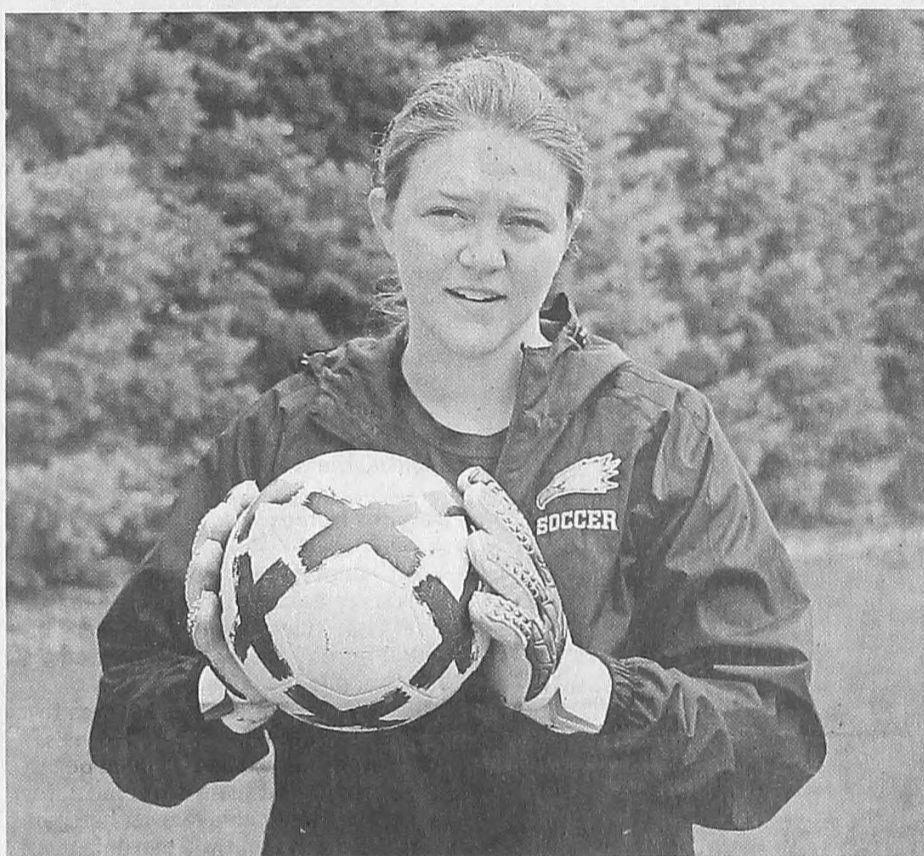
The podcast is available on SoundCloud and Apple Podcasts, and can be found by searching In the Absence of Sports. You can also connect with Otto and the show on Facebook and Twitter (@jeremyottpxp).

"The biggest thing in starting it all was creating content for a crop of people in the sports world that are craving for it," Otto said. "With everything at a pause, this should be a time when sports should be buzzing."

Contact reporter Andrew Vaillencourt at [availlenc@hometownlife.com](mailto:availlenc@hometownlife.com) or 810-923-0659. Follow him on Twitter @AndrewVcourt.



Livonia resident Jeremy Otto records an episode of his new podcast, "In The Absence of Sports." COURTESY OF JEREMY OTTO



Above at left, Plymouth Christian Academy senior Rachel Costello was set to be a goalie on the soccer team this spring. Above at right, Costello will play lacrosse at Concordia University in Ann Arbor next year. PHOTOS COURTESY OF MATT WINDLE



## Level

Continued from Page 1B

availability. Her main sport is lacrosse where she already plays goalie. "How hard could it be?", they said, "just get in front of the ball". Costello thought they had a point. The soccer ball is certainly larger and easier to track, and it doesn't come at you at 100 mph.

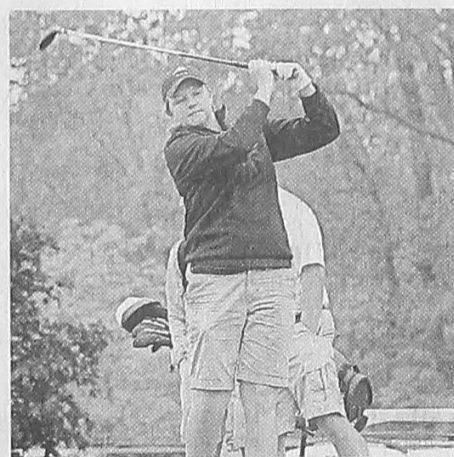
Costello discussed the opportunity with PCA's coach, Ryan Thomason who said they would love to see her play this year and so she began to work out with the team in their winter conditioning sessions. Her skill sets seemed to translate, and she got better and better as the workouts progressed.

"I played my first winter game and my teammates said I wasn't awful," Costello said. "I had a couple of saves and made good decisions on the outlet passes. It was fun and the girls were supportive, they were great. Given that it was a new sport I had to make some investments. I bought some goalie gloves and a ball for some extra work. And YouTube has some great videos on technique, and I asked a couple of friends who play soccer for some goal-tending advice. I was looking forward to playing this season with some new friends who I would not get the opportunity to be with outside of soccer. Plus, our uniforms looked sharp."

### Stick in hand

Costello has played lacrosse since she was in middle school and says there are even pictures of her holding a lacrosse stick at 13 months old. Her father has played and coached lacrosse, so she has been around the game from the time she was born.

"Lacrosse has been around me all my life," Costello said. "I played in the basement when I was real young. I remember playing organized lacrosse when I was in fifth grade. When I was in sixth grade, I played for the 5/6 team and then



Costello was ready to compete on the golf team before sports were halted.

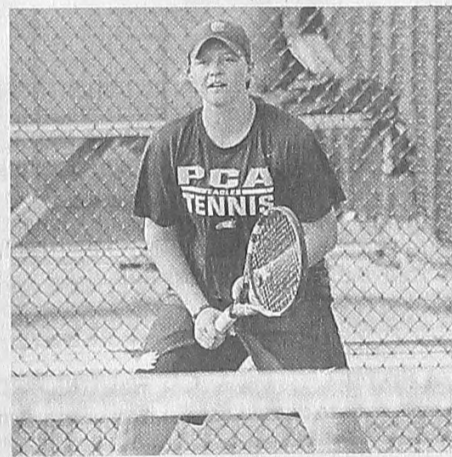
played up for the 7/8 grade team. I played for four hours (practices and games) and I didn't care. I love the game."

She began playing lacrosse in Ann Arbor, with the Blue Jays club program. At first, she was a field player, running up and down the field, playing offense and defense. The team had a goalie but she didn't like the position. After volunteering once, she was hooked and everyone on the team was relieved.

"It was a small club team and the younger team (5/6) needed a goalie," Costello said. "I said I would play and played in one game and made a bunch of saves. They offered me the position and I said sure. Then the coach said the older team needed a goalie, too. So, I got a chance to double up on the practices and the games. It was a great opportunity and I got better, quicker."

Costello improved quickly and was looking for an opportunity to step up her game. Enter Chris Merucci. Merucci was in the throes of starting the Triumph Lacrosse Club and they had more coaches, a dedicated practice schedule and they were looking to play in additional leagues and out-of-state tournaments.

"It was a tough decision at first," Costello said. "I liked the players on the Blue Jays and was a leader. But I made the



Costello lettered in tennis, one of five sports she has played in high school.

decision because of the opportunities. They hired full-time goalie coaches and were focused on playing on the East Coast. Playing for Triumph made me a better goalie. And I made some great friends, too."

Since 2014, Costello has had the opportunity to play lacrosse in Florida, Virginia, New Jersey and all around the Midwest. She has been a part of many championship teams and as she got closer to graduating high school, she wanted to look at playing at the next level.

"I probably decided to play college lacrosse in my sophomore year," Costello said. "I went to a summer goalie camp and was inspired by one of the coaches. She played in college at the Division 2 level and she had a great college experience. I realized that I wanted that and learned more about the recruiting process and worked harder to get better. I emailed some college coaches to let them know I would be at some summer tournaments and I went to a few prospect camps. The process is tough but exciting."

### College plans

Last summer, Costello was recruited to play at Concordia University Ann Ar-

bor in the Fall for Coach Amanda Asher. Now, she's committed.

"I made my decision last summer," Costello said. "The school has everything I wanted all in one place. It's not too big and it's reasonably close to home. Coach Asher is great. The team seems like a big family. I like that — it's like the team atmosphere at PCA. I'm really looking forward to getting there, competing and working hard to try and win a WHAC championship."

The trip from Concordia to PCA is about 20 minutes and that's ultimately how long it took Costello to decide to participate in the third spring sport: track and field. At her last basketball practice in early March, coach Evan Horne recruited Costello to participate in two field events: shot put and discus.

"Coach Horne asked me if I was interested in running track," Costello said. "I told him, not really. I was playing two other sports already. He said, 'Well, you could add it to your resume.' Kiddingly, I told him yes, but if I did, I wanted a five-sport athlete t-shirt. He told me he would talk to Matt Windle (PCA's Athletic Director) about that, but he was serious. He thought I could do a good job with the shot put and discus. I was strong and he thought I could pick up the techniques quickly. Track was the third sport I decided to participate in, but once I thought about, I knew it was the right decision."

Costello took to the Internet to learn about the two events. Unfortunately, school was canceled due to the coronavirus outbreak before she had the chance to put her knowledge to use.

In the history of Plymouth Christian athletics, no student athlete has ever lettered in five sports or accumulated more than 11 career letters.

"Knowing all of that is kind of overwhelming," Costello said. "It would have been cool to do that. I think that it helped in making my decision. Yes, I love all the sports, but to do something that no one else had done. Well, that's something that doesn't happen every day."

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## Tried, tested job search hacks that will get you hired

**Eric Titner**  
 thejobnetwork.com

In today's winner-take-all, ultra-competitive job market, smart candidates take full advantage of every opportunity to get ahead of the competition in order to get noticed and be taken seriously by today's savvy hiring managers. Simply put, if you're not approaching your job search with this level of all-or-nothing seriousness, then you're putting yourself at a tremendous disadvantage – and are making it easier for more engaged candidates to succeed.

So, unless you just like the process of hunting for jobs with no end in sight, then it's time to start taking your job search game to the next level. Regardless of your industry, age, background, skill set, or experience level, there are tried and tested hacks that you can take advantage of to help you cut through the competition, get off the job search treadmill, and lock down your next great job opportunity.

### Maintain authenticity

These days, it's harder than ever before to connect meaningfully with an HR manager or hiring personnel. They're usually swamped with resumes and cover letters from highly polished candidates with similar backgrounds who overpromise and work tirelessly to come off as improbably flawless – so much so that it can be hard to tell one from another. If you aim to be the "perfect candidate," not only will you get lost in the crowd, but you also will seem too good to be true to folks who have been in the recruiting world for a while and have incredibly sharp lie detection skills. Trying to put one past them can be a real



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risk.

Make the choice to be authentic at every stage of the job search process – avoid over-embellishing, exaggerating, and making outright lies. When telling the story of who you are on your documents and in interviews, be honest, forthright, and humble. Not only will it free you from the stress and anxiety of

possibly getting tripped up by a lie, but you'll come off as more relaxed, confident, and personable along the way – all wins for you.

### Demonstrate value

Don't be the candidate who expects the skies to open and the curtains to

part for them when they're on the job hunt trail.

Remember, the purpose here is not for companies to show you how they can meet your needs and convince you that they're worth devoting your time and effort – it's the reverse. Your primary mission when hunting for a job is to demonstrate your value and show companies how you would be a real asset to their teams, not vice versa. Focus on explaining that you can recognize and anticipate their needs (and capably meet them), and you'll be one step ahead of the competition – and several steps ahead of those entitled candidates who make all the wrong moves.

### Do your homework

An unprepared candidate rarely finds success on the job hunt. Make sure that you're fully prepared for every interaction you have, whether over email, during a phone conversation, or on an interview. Be well versed in the latest news, trends, and tools in your industry and learn what you can about each target company you meet with, including ideas for helping them relieve their pain points and ways that you can help them reach their target goals.

Don't just keep this valuable info hoarded in case it comes up – be proactive and showcase what you know when appropriate. The stakes are simply too high to leave things to chance, and you'll put yourself one step ahead of candidates who spent more time picking out an interview outfit than preparing effectively.

*Eric Titner has been an editor and content creator for more than a decade. His primary professional focus has been on education- and career-related topics. He currently lives in New York City.*

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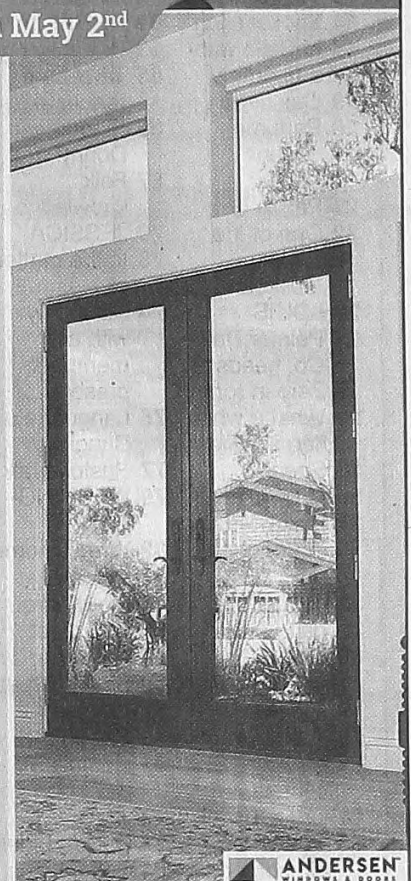
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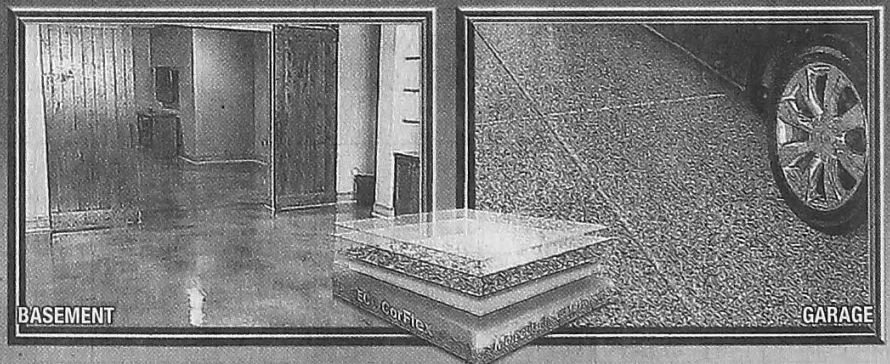
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