



Hockey teams wait to start, hope to finish winter season

SPORTS, 1B

CANTON

OBSERVER

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 2020 | HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

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Wayne taxes will skyrocket to pay pension deficit

Shelby Tankersley Hometownlife.com
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

A decision made in 2008 has come to bite the City of Wayne taxpayers.

The city needs to pay \$4,753,409 into its pension program by the fiscal year's end. That's money the city doesn't have. Though officials don't seem happy about it, the plan is to have property tax-

payers pick up that deficit with a 13.1399 mill levy part of this year's winter taxes.

"I know that, when people receive their tax bills, they're going to be upset," City Manager Lisa Nocerini said. "They're not going to be happy. I don't blame you. But the issue is that we don't have the money to fill the gap."

On behalf of the city's pension recipients, the Municipal Employees Retirement

System of Michigan, or MERS, is suing the city to make sure people can collect their pensions. The judge in that case made the decision to put the burden on property owners.

At a meeting Nov. 17, city council approved the addition of the extra tax funds to its current budget. However, the funds will go directly to MERS rather than the city's fund balance.

"This is certainly the best option we have right now - to do this and to meet our pension obligation ... Pensions are not something we can just decide not to pay," Nocerini said. "By law, they are protected."

A mill equals \$1 for every \$1,000 of taxable value on a property.

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Kate Hondorp is pictured during her tenure as a teacher at Tonda Elementary School in Canton. SUBMITTED

PCCS educator battles long-term effects of COVID-19

Ed Wright Hometownlife.com
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

Before the latter stages of summer arrived, Kate Hondorp was a whirlwind of productive energy.

A highly-respected Plymouth-Canton Community Schools teacher for the past 23 years (the first 20 at Tonda Elementary School, the last three at Pio-

neer Middle School), Hondorp was a motivating educator, relentless problem-solver and loving caretaker for her family - husband Steve, and sons Ryan and Jack - and the hundreds of students she taught and nurtured.

"I was especially looking forward to this school year because I was going to get a chance to teach a group of eighth-grade students who I had in my class as

third-graders at Tonda," she said, sighing.

Downtime was rare for Hondorp, who participated in five-nights-a-week yoga classes, walked and jogged regularly - joyfully finding purpose in every minute of every day.

"I rarely, if ever, watched TV," she

See EDUCATOR, Page 3A

FPS board begins search for interim superintendent

Shelby Tankersley Hometownlife.com
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

Farmington is having a no good, very bad school year.

Zach Rich, the Farmington Public Schools board of education's newly-elected president, said in a meeting Tuesday he understands it probably looks like the district doesn't have its "act together."

In the midst of this pandemic school year, during which the district has yet to implement any kind of in-person learning model, Superintendent Robert Herrera resigned Nov. 16 after alleging school board member Angie Smith was harassing him. That same night, school board President Pam Green and Vice President Terry Johnson resigned their posts effective the end of that week.

So on Tuesday, a four-member board met - Smith was absent - to try and start picking up the pieces.

"Whatever drama came before needs to be in the past," Rich said.

In accordance with his resignation, Herrera will continue as superintendent through Jan. 22, 2021, before being placed on work leave and continuing to serve in an advisory role until June 30, 2021. Herrera started work in the district in July 2019.

Rich said it would be "near impossible" for the district to find a full-time replacement in just a few months, so an interim superintendent will be needed while Farmington holds a search for a long-term replacement.

The board voted unanimously to ask Oakland Schools Intermediate School District to start a candidate search for an interim leader. In the meantime, the district will also consider any feasible internal options.

Wanda Cook-Robinson, superintendent of Oakland Schools, said the county is ready and willing to help.

"I am so glad the county is ready to wrap their arms around us," Treasurer Terri Weems said. "That brought a smile to my face."

Cook-Robinson said the district could do one of two things: Select an internal candidate who would have familiarity with the district, or one of the experienced external candidates Oakland Schools provides. Cook-Robinson said any external candidates the county provides will likely be retired superintendents.

The board will likely meet again in a special or committee meeting before its next scheduled regular meeting on Dec. 15 to further discuss the search.

Contact reporter Shelby Tankersley at stankersle@hometownlife.com.

Bring a mask when visiting Santa this year

David Veselenak Hometownlife.com
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

Add a face mask to the red suit and floppy hat for ol' Kriss Kringle this year.

Despite a world that looks incredibly different this holiday season, Santa Claus will still make himself available across the region to children seeking gift requests this year.

Many of the area malls will bring Santa back this holiday season, though it will look plenty different than years past. Santa's Flight Academy returns to Twelve Oaks Mall with a contactless option beginning Friday a little later than in previous years. Santa will hold court in his usual spot in the center of the mall and don a face covering when meeting socially-distanced with visiting boys

and girls.

Kelsey Kiefer, marketing specialist for the mall at 27500 Novi Road in Novi, said it was important to find a way to bring Santa to the mall this year.

"When you think of Santa and you think of the holidays, I think a lot of people think of shopping and visiting a

See SANTA, Page 7A



Southeast Michigan Auto Show postponed

David Veselenak Hometownlife.com
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

The Southeast Michigan Auto Show, which held its debut event this past January, will not take place this January as originally planned, according to a news release sent out by the Suburban Collection Showplace in Novi, which hosts the event.

"The overwhelming enthusiasm for continuing the event and building on last year's great experience was ultimately offset by the current conditions and needing to make sure there was an appropriate amount of time to plan," Blair Bowman, manager of the convention center, said in the release. "We will be considering available options within the event schedule at Suburban Collection Showplace and if we are able to find an open date at a more appropriate time

we are very interested in hosting the 2021 Southeast Michigan Auto Show. If we are unable to do so, we of course are very much looking forward to the 2022 event."

The Southeast Michigan Auto Show is a new car show that featured several makes and models of vehicles and had activities for the family.

The show began in January as a way to continue holding an auto show in metro Detroit in winter: the North American International Auto Show, which is typically held at TCF Center in downtown Detroit, was originally moved to the summer months before also being canceled this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The NAIAS is expected to return in Sept. 2021.

If the Southeast Michigan Auto Show does find a way to be held at the Suburban Collection Showplace at 46100



The Southeast Michigan Auto Show at the Suburban Collection Showplace has been postponed. COURTESY OF THE SOUTHEAST MICHIGAN AUTO SHOW

Grand River, it would have plenty of safety protocols to help keep guests safe, according to the release. An increased area floor plan would allow

greater social distancing with guests and increased sanitation during the day and after each day of the event.

The pandemic has essentially ceased much of the public activity at the convention center the past several months due to restrictions on gatherings of people. Part of the center served as a field hospital to treat COVID-19 patients in the spring when hospitalizations spiked across metro Detroit. That field hospital closed in June after treating 16 patients. The State of Michigan signed another contract this fall to keep the center as a potential field hospital through the end of the year, though it has not been reactivated.

In addition to serving as a COVID-19 field hospital, the convention center also hosted Eric Trump for a campaign rally supporting President Donald Trump's reelection efforts in October.

Guitar Center files for bankruptcy

David Veselenak Hometownlife.com
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

Guitar Center, which has a location in Canton, announced this past weekend it was filing for Ch. 11 bankruptcy protection. Its announcement is the latest national brand to seek protection in a year where the COVID-19 pandemic has done lasting damage to the nation's economy.

The filing is expected to reduce financial obligations for the company by as much as \$800 million.

"This is an important and positive step in our process to significantly reduce our debt and enhance our ability to reinvest in our business to support long-term growth," said Guitar Center CEO Ron Japinga in a news release. "Throughout this process, we will continue to serve our customers and deliver on our mission of putting more music in the world. Given the strong level of support from our lenders and creditors, we expect to complete the process before the end of this year."

The release indicates store operations, including at the store at 39415 Ford Road in Canton, will not be affected by the filing. A message seeking information regarding the Canton store was sent Monday morning.

In addition to the Canton location, Guitar Center operates metro Detroit locations in Southfield, Allen Park and Roseville. The store focuses on selling guitars, providing lessons and offering rentals of guitars for those looking to learn how to play the stringed instrument. The company has about 300 stores nationwide and nine in Michigan.

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History teacher hunts Bigfoot

Susan Bromley Hometownlife.com
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

By day, Jim Sherman deals in facts as a Birmingham Groves High School history teacher.

But in his free time he hunts the elusive, some would say mythical, creature known as Bigfoot.

Sherman, 50, has followed this quest, which often takes him into the forests of the Upper Peninsula, for more than three decades. Now, he is taking it to the next level, with "Bigfoot Hunters," a Roku video blog channel.

"If you are weird, and interested in looking into things that aren't supposed to be out there, other people's experiences with crazy things in the woods that aren't supposed to happen, this is where to look," Sherman said of the channel which currently has five video compilations. "I try to apply as much science to the research as possible. I like to analyze the data and am really skeptical and will throw in random bigfoot experiences."

The path that led to an extraordinary obsession with Sasquatch began when Sherman was still in fourth grade. He was fascinated by not only the idea of Bigfoot, but anything "scary" or supernatural — including ghosts, the Loch Ness monster, and UFOs.

"The funny thing is, it's cool and exciting when you're young, and then you let it go," Sherman said. "I stopped paying attention, because number one — I grew up and thought, 'I should probably go to college.'"

He set aside the childish fantasies, matured and did indeed go off to college. But not far into his higher education, he had an experience he couldn't explain while camping with his father in the Upper Peninsula.

Over the course of three nights, he heard sounds outside the tent of something he identified as big "bipedal," walking on two legs. Having grown up hunting, Sherman said he knew the sounds of critters normally found in the woods, and knows that deer can also sound bipedal, but "this was different."

From inside the tent, Sherman heard things being thrown about outside, and the creature even touched the tent. When he reached up to swat it away, Sherman thought he would be hitting a bear snout, but instead felt what he described as a "really big hand" which pressed against the side of the tent.

"It made a harrumph noise, and then it walked away," Sherman said. "A bear would have run off like a freight train, but this walked away... I never looked out, I was scared to death."

Sherman said the logical person in him knew it was not a bear, which without opposable thumbs could not throw objects. He reasoned that it had to be a person, but wondered why would someone mess with his tent and throw things?



Jim Sherman stands in the backyard of his Bloomfield Township home with a few Bigfoot plaster impressions he has acquired over the years. His favorite, at which he is pointing, is an impression of a supposed Bigfoot knuckle that was taken from the banks of a river in the Pacific Northwest. JOHN HEIDER/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

The mystery continued the next night, getting even stranger. While whatever it was never approached as close to the tent as it did the previous night, it commenced to shaking trees, Sherman said, making "an unbelievable noise." By the third night of this, Sherman told his Dad they had to go.

"It so freaked me out that I was uncomfortable hunting, I couldn't hunt anymore," he said. "I was just afraid of the woods."

For a dozen years after, Sherman avoided secluded forests where legend has it Bigfoot lurks. But when he was about 30, he decided to face his fears and embrace his natural curiosity. He did that by research—seeking others who had similar experiences.

He also joined the Bigfoot Field Researchers Organization, which was founded in 1995 and whose members have a mission "to resolve the mystery surrounding the bigfoot phenomenon, that is, to derive conclusive documentation of the species' existence," which is done through seeking the large primates in forested regions. According to the group's website, numerous sightings have occurred and are mapped in locations across North America.

Sherman has been leading expeditions in search of Bigfoot (or Bigfeet, as he observes there is multiple in the species) for the past decade, and is "absolutely hooked."

The expeditions feature all the things he normally enjoys—hiking, camping, stories around the campfire, and research.

"Once you get the Bigfoot bug, it's hard to get rid of it, because it is exciting," he said. "There's so much weirdness out there."

As an investigator, Sherman is a contact person for others who have claimed Bigfoot sightings. In his conversations with them, he said he first must "verify they aren't a lunatic," which has ended some conversations early, including those purporting to have seen unicorns.

Sherman says as a high school history teacher, he has a "pretty good BS detector" and can tell if someone is just

parroting things they saw on a television show, one of which he has appeared on himself—"Finding Bigfoot" on Animal Planet. He listens to them, putting more trust in those who, like himself, aren't quite sure about what they experienced and have skepticism.

"The idea of a Bigfoot is awesome—an elusive, huge, hairy creature evading people for millennium," Sherman said. "Will I ever find it? I don't know. The idea across cultures, a wild man, is fascinating."

So Sherman leads, or follows, other like-minded individuals into the woods, most often in the Upper Peninsula. He won't disclose an exact location for fear of a stampede of tourists ruining it. Like a favorite fishing spot, it's a secret, he says.

On these expeditions, he uses audio recordings and teaches others to identify common woodland noises, such as the sounds made by owls, martens, porcupines and more. He shows people how to cast a footprint they discover without tainting it.

The evidence is scant and he is frustrated when good video and photos can't be obtained, as he hopes to one day capture something like the Patterson-Gimlin film, the famous one-minute footage shot in 1967 in northern California of what the filmmakers claim was a Sasquatch, or Bigfoot.

To date, his most convincing personal piece of evidence, apart from the experience in the tent as a child, has been scary growling and howling he has heard and could not identify to anything known to him, and on multiple occasions in the UP, seeing "a single red eye," at a height of about 7 feet, which fled when approached.

"It's a dumb thing to think there is something that can elude all the cameras, game cameras and everything, but look at all the witness accounts," Sherman said. "But it's worth having fun... Honestly, it's such a more healthy hobby. At this point, I could have a midlife crisis and grow a mullet or ride a motorcycle. Instead, I have this silly hobby. It's like a wilderness CSI kind of thing."

CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF PLYMOUTH LEGAL NOTICE

2020 WINTER TAXES

Winter taxes are due December 1, 2020 and payable through February 16, 2021 without penalty. Additional information appears on the reverse side of your tax statement. Make checks payable to: CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF PLYMOUTH. Payments may be made via mail, online, or at Township Hall during regular working hours Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. at the Treasurer's Office. Township offices will be closed for the holidays on December 24th, December 25th, December 31st, and January 1st. After hours payments may be placed in the 24-hour white drop box located along the circular drive at Township Hall.

Mark Clinton
Plymouth Township, Treasurer

COVID-19 Q&A

I tested positive, how long will I be contagious?

Krystal Nurse Lansing State Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

If you test positive for COVID-19, how long will you be contagious?

Someone's ability to infect others varies. It's difficult to measure because people experience symptoms differently, and the onset of symptoms changes a person's contagion level.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention breaks it down for those who have symptoms, and those who don't have symptoms but did test positive.

If you have COVID-19 symptoms

The CDC advises that a person with a positive test who has symptoms can be around others 10 days after the symptoms first appeared as long as they have been fever-free without medication for 24 hours and all other COVID-19 symptoms have improved.

"You are also contagious 48 hours before onset of symptoms ... and will remain contagious throughout the quarantine period," said Linda Vail, Ingham County health officer.

COVID-19 symptoms could include cough, difficulty breathing or shortness of breath, fever, runny nose or congestion, sneezing, sore throat, headache, muscle or body aches, fatigue, vomiting or nausea, diarrhea.

If you don't have COVID-19 symptoms but tested positive

The CDC advises that asymptomatic people can be around others 10 days following their positive test. The agency also advises that most health care pro-

viders will make recommendations on when to resume daily activities.

Should you test to prove you are negative?

Vail said getting a second test for a negative result is not necessary.

The process of someone testing until they no longer test positive for COVID-19 could use test capacity beyond the limits. Vail said if people were to excessively test themselves, it would force the county to prioritize testing.

Educator

Continued from Page 1A

added. "I enjoyed cooking for my family when I returned home from school. Before I went to bed, I'd figure out what my lesson plans for the next day would be."

When Hondorp's head hit the pillow each night, she slept well.

Along came a nightmare

On Aug. 29 — five days after first experiencing a series of unusually intense headaches — Hondorp's idyllic life morphed into a nightmare. That was the day she tested positive for COVID-19; a seemingly mild case at the time, minus the troublesome breathing some victims endure, with no hospitalizations required.

"School was getting ready to start, so I figured the headaches were caused by stress," she said. "I thought I could power through them like I have in the past, and that I'd be fine. Reflecting back now, though, I realize they were probably the start of the acute COVID stage."

Little did Hondorp know, the virus had invaded her sharp-as-a-tack brain, leaving the 48-year-old teaching superstar incapable of calculating even the simplest of math equations and limiting her exercise activities to a few steps, before fatigue forced her to rest.

A return to teaching was put on hold. "At one of my neurology appointments, the doctor asked me what 70 minus seven was," Hondorp shared. "I thought to myself, 'Oh, that's easy. Seventy minus five is 65 so 70 minus seven is ...' then I asked the doctor, 'What was the question again?' I couldn't read more than three paragraphs at a time ... it was really bad.

"Physically, I'd get winded just walking down stairs. I couldn't walk to the end of my block any more without having to rest. Just a few weeks before, I was walking and running two miles. A couple of times I considered going to the emergency room because I honestly thought I was having a stroke or a heart attack."

Hondorp's physician limited their interactions to virtual calls due to strict COVID-19 social-distancing protocols in place.

"That was frustrating because I needed her to see my heart rate, take my blood pressure, which would shoot up even when I was sitting down," she said. "I even had my husband sit in on the virtual meetings with me so he could tell the doctor I wasn't exaggerating; I wasn't making this stuff up."

Following six weeks of enduring debilitating symptoms — relentless dizziness, lightheadedness, blurred vision and a serious case of brain fog — a series of medical tests (MRIs, EKGs and a heart echocardiogram) proved Hondorp's post-COVID symptoms were neurological in nature.

"The good news was, I hadn't had a stroke," she said. "The bad news was that the virus had attacked my brain."

"At first, I'd think back to all the things I used to be able to do; then I'd try to set a timetable as to when I was going to return to normal, like, 'Oh, I'll be fine in a couple of weeks.' But my neurologist explained to me that was the worst thing I could do because it taxes the brain. I have to focus on living in the moment, not looking back or ahead."

As of mid-November, there was no quick-fix light at the end of Hondorp's COVID-19 tunnel; only occupational and physical therapy sessions several times a week that doctors hope will retrain her brain so she can return to leading a normal, productive life.

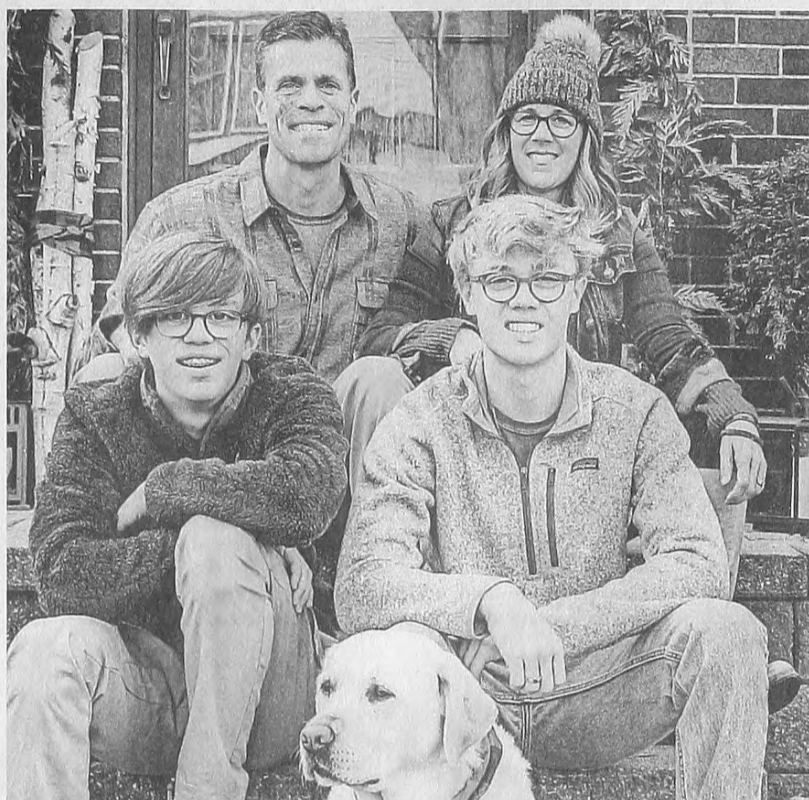
Hondorp has returned to driving following a multi-month hiatus, but the length of her trips is limited.

"My life is like a rollercoaster now; I have good and bad days," she revealed. "Last week was my husband's 50th birthday, so I wanted to do something special for him because he's been my rock through this."

"I decided to drive a few blocks to downtown Plymouth and stop at a few places to pick up some things for his birthday. When I got downtown, I couldn't remember where I was going, so I had to pull into a church parking lot and sit there for a half hour to get my thoughts together."

"I miss the simple things in life: walking more than a block, driving to pick up my kids, going to the grocery store. I miss teaching incredibly. I want to get back in the classroom."

Hondorp became emotional when discussing the support she has received from school colleagues, both present



Kate Hondorp is pictured with her husband, Steve, sons Ryan and Jack, and family pet, Timber. COURTESY OF GENEVIEVE DEVRIES

and past.

"I can't tell you how many meals they've made for my family, how many encouraging cards they mail us, the gift cards to restaurants ... it's just overwhelming," she said. "It's heartwarming to know there are so many kind, caring people out there."

Long haul ahead

Hondorp has joined a Facebook discussion group that includes COVID "long-haulers" like herself — victims of the virus whose side effects don't disappear after two or three weeks.

"I share my story and hope it might help one person," she wrote on a recent social media post. "One person to remember to wear their damn mask. One person to remember that we don't really understand all the aspects to COVID invasion. One person who might be struggling in the same manner I am."

An estimated 10% of people diagnosed with COVID-19 experience prolonged symptoms, according to the British Medical Journal.

Dr. Zijian Chen, director of the Mount Sinai Center for Post-COVID Care in New York City, asserts that long-hauler symptoms can affect a person physically and cognitively.

"You have patients with cognitive dysfunction, you have difficulty concentrating, having very bad fatigue, and also patients who are very [physically] deconditioned," said Chen.

According to the Mount Sinai Health System, the majority of long-haulers it has treated are between 20 and 40 years old, and most often women with no known underlying health conditions.

The bottom line, Hondorp emphasized to doubters, is that COVID-19 is the real deal.

It reminds her practically every waking moment.

Taxes

Continued from Page 1A

A homeowner with a house with a \$100,000 taxable value will see an extra \$1,300 on their tax bill when it arrives Dec. 1.

A long time coming

The city's pension problems date back to 2008.

At the council meeting Nov. 17, officials repeatedly stressed this was a problem they inherited, not created. None of the city's current administration was with the city in 2008.

"In early May, we'll have a much better idea of what's going to happen next year and if we'll have another lawsuit potentially."

Anthony Chubb Attorney, City of Wayne

"At the peak of the recession in 2008, the city decided to offer early retirement to a lot of full-time employees to reduce staff," Finance Director Katie Sample said. "They offered them with pretty good multipliers, as well. Right now, we're mostly part-time staff ... We have 72 full-time people and 170 retirees in the system."

In other words, only 72 employees pay into the pension plan while 170 for-

mer employees draw out of it.

Sample added the city's general fund balance has steadily fallen since 2008, thus creating the problem it now faces.

"It's very tough, especially with COVID and all that going on," Sample said. "But, this wasn't really a decision. MERS took us to court."

Looking ahead

Next year, another levy might be considered. Officials noted property owners could see a large winter tax bill for three or four more years.

"In early May, we'll have a much better idea of what's going to happen next year and if we'll have another lawsuit

potentially," City Attorney Anthony Chubb said.

If a large levy should happen again, officials said it will again go on the winter tax bills, which are generally smaller than the summer collection. After those three or four years, Sample said the city should have the assets needed to pay its pension obligation on its own.

Nocerini said the city has and will continue to cut costs however it can to take the burden off property owners as much as possible.

"We are going to be doing everything we can as is humanly possible to try and lower these mills as much as we can and try to save where we can ... There is nowhere to cut this amount of money from," she said.

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CITY OF PLYMOUTH, MICHIGAN
WINTER TAXES - 2020**

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CITY HALL WILL BE CLOSED Thursday, December 24, 2020 and Friday, December 25, 2020 also Thursday, December 31, 2020 and Friday, January 1, 2021. During this holiday season, the Treasurer's office will be **OPEN** on Monday, December 28, 2020 through Wednesday, December 30, 2020 for our taxpayers' convenience.

John Scanlon
City Finance Director / Treasurer

Publish: November 29, 2020 and December 3, 2020
LO-000357742 3x3

**1-800-Pack-Rat (MI-Plymouth-5514)
46201 5 Mile Rd
Plymouth, MI 48170
877-774-1537**

Notice of Sale

Tenant:	Unit #
Engel, Gina	D05172
Hunger, Crystal	D10507
Peters, Nita	D54346
Seymour, Regina	D56095
Tayton, Lawrence	D57516

1-800-Pack-Rat (MI-Plymouth-5514), 46201 5 Mile Rd, Plymouth, MI 48170, has possessory lien on all of the goods stored in the units above. All these items of personal property are being sold pursuant to the assertion of the lien on 12/7/2020 at 10:00 AM in order to collect the amounts due from you. The sale will take place on www.Acceleratedlisting.com from 12/7/2020 to 12/14/2020 at 6:00p.m.

Publish: November 22 & 29, 2020
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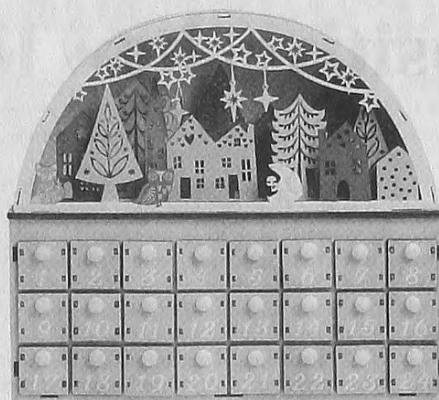
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Get in the holiday spirit by decking the halls, mantle and dining room table. Throw on a jolly playlist, pop some cookies in the oven and make your home merry.



Set a serene mood with the battery-operated Peace Marquee letters. \$129 at grandinroad.com.

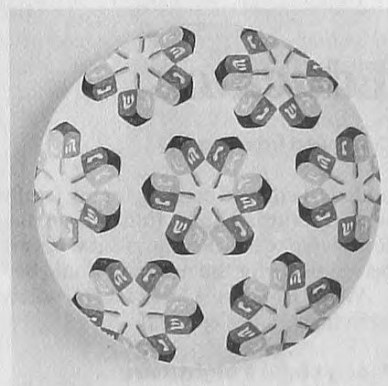


Count down to Christmas with the Nordic winter LED light up Advent calendar. \$39.99 at worldmarket.com.

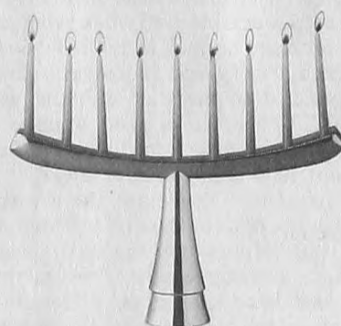
The ornate sparkling Christmas stocking features metallic threads and beads. \$129 at frontgate.com.



The All Is Bright cordless garland boasts lights with colorful bulbs and glittery twigs. \$159 at grandinroad.com.



Serve homemade treats on the Orli Hanukkah platter with blue dreidels. \$19.95 at crateandbarrel.com.



Celebrate the festival of lights with this sleek Illume alloy menorah. \$160 at wayfair.com.



Save space or decorate a confined area with this wall hanging Christmas tree. \$99 at grandinroad.com.

Work-from-home items fill holiday lists

Give the gift of connectivity this year



Talking Tech
Jefferson Graham
USA TODAY

Are you feeling practical? We're days away from Black Friday and intense holiday shopping time during an era of COVID-19. Do you know what you'll be purchasing?

Stephen Baker, a longtime analyst with the NPD Group, which tracks sales of consumer products, says to expect a holiday filled with non-sexy products such as computer monitors, external mice and keyboards and routers.

"You're not going to give a spa certificate or holiday tickets to Bermuda," said Baker. "Instead, we're seeing more tangible gifts like a router. Give your family the gift of better internet connectivity."

This year, the pandemic has put a twist on consumer electronics sales. Shoppers already have pushed huge sales gains for products that make it easier to work and learn from home, Baker said.

Router sales: up 50%. Computer monitors: up 80%. Big-screen TVs: up 35%.

Baker sees that trend continuing for the holiday shopping season, where the next generation video consoles from Sony and Microsoft (PlayStation 5 and Xbox Series X and S) are expected to be the hardest to get. New iPhones will be the biggest sellers of the holiday, along with Apple AirPods and other headsets, per Daniel Ives, an analyst with Wedbush Securities.

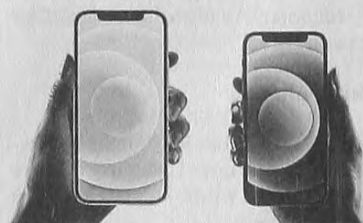
What else is hot?

- TVs traditionally are the best sellers for the holiday, as consumers opt for the bargain prices. Baker said to expect many 65-inch sets for as low as \$250, and even larger ones to be heavily discounted.

- Computer monitors. Baker said this is the fastest-growing category in consumer electronics. "Kids want a bigger



Standing in line to get an early jump on doorbuster sales is likely to be a thing of the past. TARGET



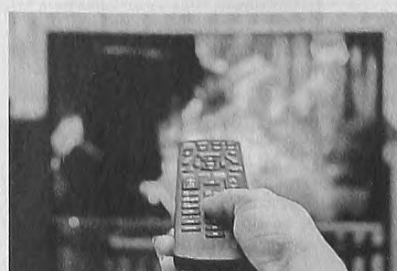
iPhone 12 Pro Max and Mini. APPLE



HomePod Mini. APPLE



Streaming sticks, including Roku's, are popular. ROKU



Expect lower prices on big-screen televisions. GETTY IMAGES

screen when they're doing education at home, parents are adding second or third screens to their home setup for work. Screens are clearly much more important than they've been before."

- Streaming sticks. With virtually every TV being a "smart" TV with built-in streaming now, you could expect sales of the Roku and Amazon Fire TV streaming sticks to take a hit. But no,

said Baker. They will continue to be among the most popular products. Sales are already up 40%, and for the past several years, Amazon traditionally lists the Fire TV streaming stick as one of its top sellers at holiday time.

What's not hot?

- Smart speakers. Amazon traditionally massively discounts the Echo speaker line during the holidays, but so far this year, Baker hasn't seen a "huge jump" in sales for these products during COVID-19 times. That said, he expects Apple's HomePod Mini, its first consumer priced smart speaker, at \$99, to be a big seller, fueled by Apple's marketing muscle. All of Apple's best-selling products, from iPhones, iPads, Macs and Apple Watches, have seen a boost from pandemic-era customers, the company has said.

- Smart home devices. These products have been heavily touted over the last few years, but getting smart locks and other automation products to work can take some skill. Baker says none of them are particularly strong sellers, except for the video doorbell category, which monitors what's going on outside your front door. Those products have seen a 30% lift this year, he said.

Meanwhile, the Black Friday of your memory, the one of massively discounted TVs that serve as "doorbusters" to bring in hundreds of people will be a thing of the past this year.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention classified "shopping at crowded stores just before, on or after Thanksgiving" on a list of higher-risk activities to avoid and in guidance issued ahead of the fall holidays also suggest more online shopping.

Neil Saunders, managing director of the retail consultancy Global Data, said the idea of any retailer driving crowds of people into their stores is a "non-starter."

"No retailer can run the risk of overcrowding, and so all will be looking to balance the need to drive sales with the need to keep people safe," Saunders said.

But have no fear, the lines and doorbusters will be back next year, Baker says.

Obituaries

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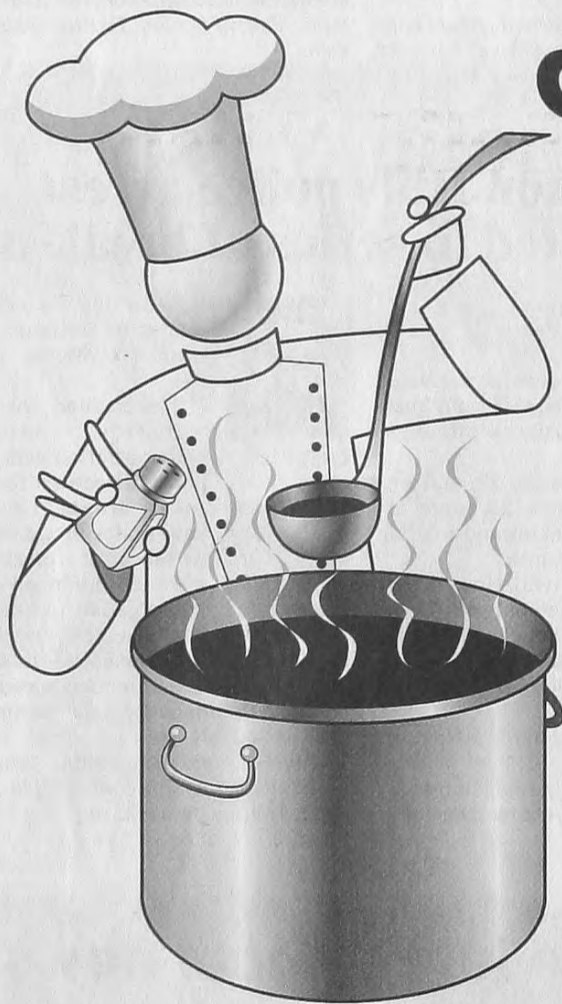
Thelma M. McIntosh

Thelma M. McIntosh, (nee Forberg) 98, passed away peacefully on November 21, 2020. She was born on June 2, 1922 in Woonsocket, Rhode Island to Roy and Mary (McCann) Forberg. A long time resident of Detroit, Thelma attended the College of New Rochelle in New Rochelle New York. She was married to the love of her life, Edward W. McIntosh on October 5, 1946. She was preceded in death by her husband, Edward and her son Paul.



Thelma will be sadly missed by many friends and family. She had the rare gift of making everyone who crossed her path feel so special. Thelma was a loving sister to the late Jack Forberg and late Carol (Schneider) Forberg, Charles Forberg and Mariette (Beuglet) Forberg. Loving sister-in-law of the late James McIntosh (Sally), Mary LeVeque Kaylor (Dean) and the late, Bonnie Palmer. Mother of Timothy, the late Paul and Kathy (Knighton) McIntosh, Edward and Mary Beth (Montroy) McIntosh, Mary (McIntosh) Rudzinski and Paul Rudzinski, grandmother of John and Lauren (Frith) Rudzinski, Lauren (Rudzinski) Meissen and Brad Meissen, Kelly (McIntosh) Nicholas and Christopher Nicholas, Scott McIntosh and Sara (Schafer) McIntosh, Caroline Rudzinski, Matthew McIntosh, Michael McIntosh and Caitlin Dwyer, Jacqueline (Rudzinski) Breen and Mark Breen, Erin McIntosh, great grandmother of 15 great grand children.

Her family wishes to thank the wonderful staff at McCormick Assisted Living in Green Bay and the compassionate caregivers of AseraCare Hospice. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to American Cancer Society. Due to Covid restrictions a Memorial mass will be held in Detroit at a later date.



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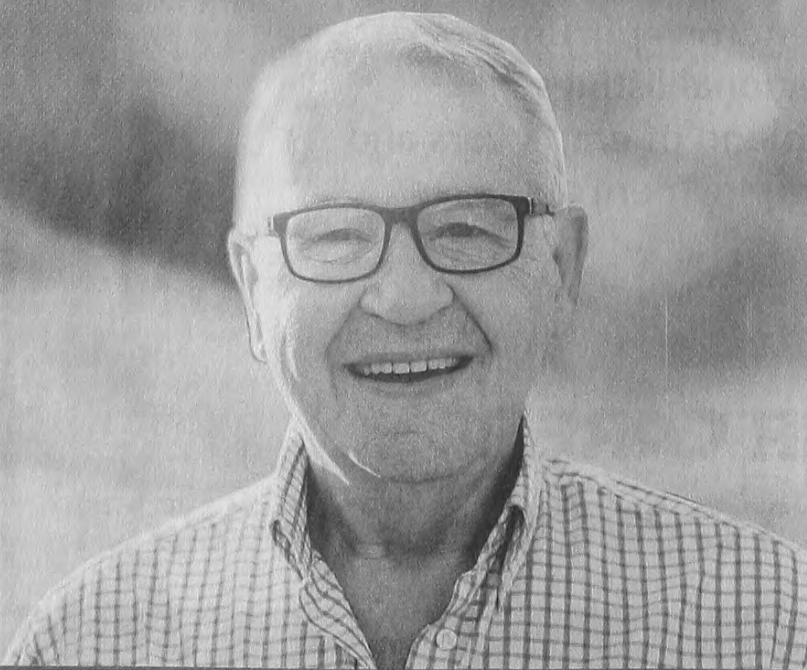
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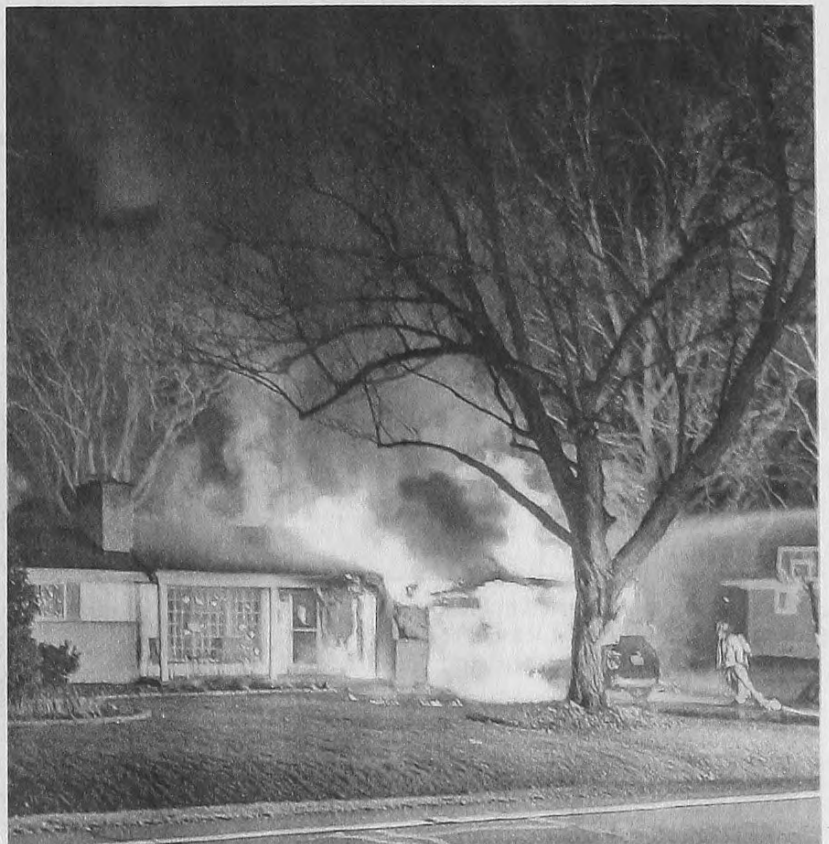
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Farmington Hills firefighters battled a blaze in a home's attached garage on Kendallwood Drive early Nov. 21. COURTESY OF THE CITY OF FARMINGTON HILLS

Fire damages garage in Farmington Hills

Susan Vela Hometownlife.com
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

Some Kendallwood Drive residents were sleeping when they smelled smoke in their Farmington Hills home early Saturday morning, according to fire officials.

They called 911 and escaped the one-story home by jumping out of a bedroom window. No one was injured.

Firefighters from all of the city's fire stations began pulling up to the blazing home in the 28000 block of Kendallwood Drive, northeast of the intersection of Farmington and Twelve Mile roads, at 1:25 a.m.

They found an attached garage containing two vehicles ablaze. Security

camera footage indicates the firefighters searched the home and placed flames under water within a minute, fire officials said.

"This is an excellent example of aggressive tactics used by our firefighters to stop the progression of fire," Fire Chief Jon Unruh said in a statement. "Due to the quick response, there was extraordinarily little damage done to the interior of the home."

The fire remains under investigation but officials said "all indications show that it was accidental."

No other information was available. Contact reporter Susan Vela at svela@hometownlife.com or 248-303-8432. Follow her on Twitter @susanvela.

Farmington Hills police arrest 2 suspected in series of break-ins

Susan Vela Hometownlife.com
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

Farmington Hills police have arrested a Detroit duo suspected of illegally busting into numerous businesses throughout the region.

Romelo Dtrona Buggs, 23, and Andrea Shanek Dawkins, 29, were arraigned on felony breaking and entering charges earlier this month.

He was charged with four felony counts of breaking and entering buildings and a misdemeanor charge of driving with a suspended license. She was charged with two felony breaking and entering counts.

Both are scheduled to return to court later this month.

Police Chief Jeff King said numerous other jurisdictions are now investigat-



Buggs



Dawkins

ing the duo for similar crimes in Oakland, Macomb and Wayne counties.

He credited the department's midnight shift patrol officers and police detectives for the recent arrests. He also gave kudos to a directed patrol unit practicing alert observations and investigative techniques leading to the arrests.

Anyone with additional information is asked to contact the department's command desk at 248-871-2610.

Contact reporter Susan Vela at svela@hometownlife.com or 248-303-8432. Twitter: @susanvela.

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Santa

Continued from Page 1A

shopping center," she said. "I think we obviously want to create that normalcy. (We're) just having to reimagine it a little different this year."

Those who typically see Santa at Laurel Park Place, 37700 Six Mile in Livonia, will have a few options this year. The jolly old elf returns to Livonia beginning Black Friday and will hold court through Christmas Eve. In addition to the in-person, socially-distanced visit in the food court available beginning Friday, parents can instead schedule a virtual visit with St. Nick. Appointments to meet with Santa online can be made through the Laurel Park Place website.

Families heading to Somerset Collection, 2800 W. Big Beaver in Troy, can partake in a few holiday events before seeing Santa at his castle from a safe distance. The mall will offer an experience called "Holiday Wander," an interactive holiday exhibit complete with make-and-take crafts as well as allowing guests to imagine themselves in a festive wonderland. Santa will meet with children who have a reservation at the mall noon to 7 p.m. Wednesday through Sunday.

All malls require reservations to meet with Santa beforehand.

Santa out and about

The mall isn't the only place Santa can be found this holiday season practicing social distancing. He'll make himself available at several community spots, including at least one new experience in a historic village.

Santa will visit with children from the porch of the Alexander Blue House at Livonia's Greenmead Historical Park, 20501 Newburgh. He'll stop by for a few Saturdays in December to meet with children and have photos taken with them.

Ted Davis, the city's superintendent of parks and recreation, said the hope is to eventually turn the historic little village at Eight Mile and Newburgh into a sort of "mini Campus Martius" every year for the holidays. Bringing Santa this year is just the first step toward that vision to continue enhancing the park, which could have its own master plan in



Children still have opportunities to visit Santa this year, but the rules will be a bit different. JOHN HEIDER/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

the future.

"This year's the first little taste of that," he said. "We can start and kind of get this on people's radars. We think they'll be interested."

Santa will be available 5-8 p.m. on Dec. 5, 12, 13, 19 and 20 at Greenmead. Visits can be scheduled through the city's parks and recreation website.

Novi will present Santa via drive-thru 5:30-9 p.m. Dec. 4 at the Civic Center, 45175 W. 10 Mile. For \$5/vehicle, visitors can stop to see Santa from their cars and receive hot chocolate, cookies and a craft. Register for the experience at cityofnovi.org before Nov. 30.

The Santa House in Birmingham returns for a new kind of experience in Shain Park. Families who make an appointment can visit with Santa under the pavilion at the park on Merrill Street. Santa returns Nov. 28 and appointments can be made through the Birmingham Shopping District's website.

Farmington Hills has replaced its typical Cookies with Santa event this year with an outdoor visit. Families can sign up for a time slot on either Dec. 2 or Dec. 5 for a visit at Heritage Park off Farmington Road. There, families can visit with Santa and enjoy a craft and campfire to warm up. Sign up for the visit at recreg.fhgov.com.

All visits from Santa could change depending on the current climate surrounding COVID-19.

Santa skips Maybury Farm

While most places are making some modifications to the typical holiday visits, not every place will bring Santa Claus back this year. Maybury Farm, 50165 Eight Mile in Northville Township, has opted to keep Santa at the North Pole this year as he prepares to deliver gifts.

Diana Wallace, executive director of the farm and the Northville Community

Foundation, said they felt the area in the barn where Santa typically greets families wasn't large enough to have enough distance to keep everyone safe.

"We don't have a lot of open floor space," she said. "As much as we didn't like making that decision, we didn't want families to lose that close connectivity with Santa at the farm."

Also canceled at the farm is "A Maybury Farm Country Christmas," a holiday event that would have opened the farm up for two weekends for families to come visit. The recent state health department order limiting gatherings would have left just one weekend available, and Wallace said the board wanted to err on the side of caution, as well as not alienate those who planned on coming the first weekend in December while the order was still in place.

Contact reporter David Veselenak at dveselenak@hometownlife.com or 734-678-6728. Follow him on Twitter @davidveselenak.

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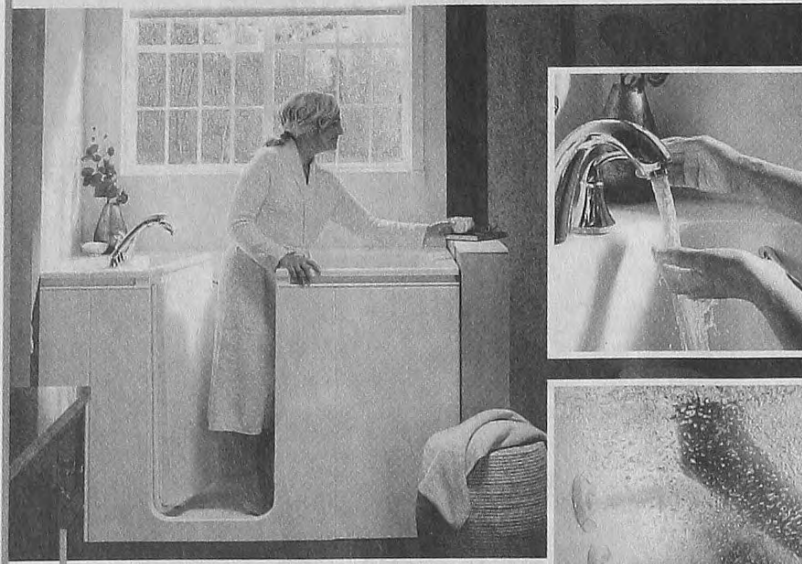
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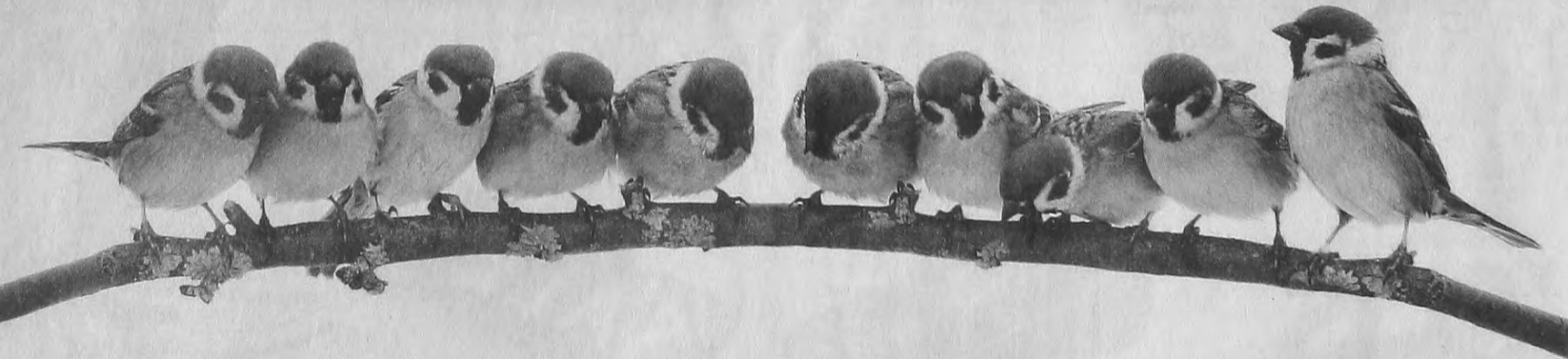
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SPORTS

WAITING GAME



Detroit Catholic Central had an "unfortunate ending" to its season, in which its senior-heavy squad and all other teams couldn't play any postseason tournament. JOHN HEIDER/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM FILE PHOTOS

Area hockey teams see start of season pushed back, hoping they get to finish

Colin Gay Hometownlife.com | USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

Detroit Catholic Central was ready to put March behind them. With a team of 15 seniors, the Shamrocks ended their season in limbo as the Michigan High School Athletic Association postponed and later canceled the postseason hockey tournament as the coronavirus pandemic began to sweep the state.

"We have a great group of returning guys from that team that certainly remember that feeling, remember the unfortunate ending, just the way that everything played out," head coach Brandon Kaleniecki said. "You could see on their faces they were really, really excited to get back out there and put the jersey back on and play for CC again."

Weeks prior to the start of the 2020-21 season, Kaleniecki said with the rising case numbers, he could see something coming down the pipe. He didn't know what the rules or regulations would be or when they

See HOCKEY, Page 2B



Livonia Stevenson head coach David Mitchell said his main goals for his players do not change when they are not able to be on the ice.



Mercy's Julia Bishop: "I don't want the senior year to go by without a single basketball game." JOHN HEIDER/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM FILE PHOTO

Area basketball teams keep positive attitude during latest pause by MHSAA

Colin Gay Hometownlife.com | USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

Northville boys basketball does not technically have a team yet. As the winter sports season was postponed due to a three-week "pause" instituted by the state in an attempt to curb the spread of the coronavirus, the Mustangs had not yet completed their tryouts for the 2020-21 season.

But head coach Todd Sander's thoughts immediately go to those that experienced this back in March.

Northville, which was holding a six-game win streak, was scheduled to take on Canton in the postseason district finals before the remainder of the winter sports season was postponed, then canceled, due to the pandemic.

"I feel so bad. They continue to keep a good attitude. I think it's getting a little bit harder because everyone went through the two weeks of conditioning, so now you are getting to the most fun part of the season," Sander said. "Now to have it halted again, it's a crazy range of emotions, ups and downs. You just kind of have to stay even-keeled."

This is the main approach basketball teams from around the area are taking with the latest regulations,

See BASKETBALL, Page 2B



Northville boys basketball coach Todd Sander. HOMETOWNLIFE.COM FILE PHOTO

GYMNASTICS

Halle Faulkner signs with Western Michigan

Colin Gay Hometownlife.com USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

Growing up, Halle Faulkner could not stop rolling around the house. So at age 3, with her mother not wanting her daughter to get hurt, placed her in gymnastics.

From that point forward, it was never "I have to go to gymnastics." It turned into a want, into a love.

"It was more, 'I get to go to gymnastics,'" Faulkner said. "It kept me going back to improve and get better and I always loved it."

When she was younger, Faulkner said she did not even think about college. But after she saw a teammate go through the recruiting process and get a scholarship to be a collegiate gymnast, Faulkner developed a new goal.

"When the college coaches actually came in to watch her, it showed me that

this could actually get me somewhere," Faulkner said. "I could keep doing this."

Joining Gym America in the latter part of 2017, Faulkner worked to achieve that goal, practicing five days per week after school and leaving the state for club competitions.

That dream became a reality prior to the start of Faulkner's 2020-21 club competition season, signing with West-

See FAULKNER, Page 3B



Halle Faulkner signed with the Western Michigan gymnastics team. COURTESY OF HALLE FAULKNER

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NFL

Pinckney's Sieler won't let money change him

Bill Khan

Livingston Daily
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

Zach Sieler is the last player in the NFL who is going to be complacent after finding success.

As a seventh-round draft pick who was a walk-on at an NCAA Division II program, the 2013 Pinckney High School graduate has had to prove himself every step of the way.

That doesn't change now that he's a regular in the Miami Dolphins' lineup and has a degree of security with a new contract extension through the 2023 season.

The Dolphins announced that Sieler has been re-signed for three more seasons. NFL Network reported the deal is worth \$8.041 million, with a \$1 million signing bonus. Sieler is making \$750,000 this season on a one-year contract.

"For me, I continue to keep working," said Sieler, who plans to continue living in a 35-foot recreation vehicle. "I've made a couple plays. I just feel like I can

do more. I'm the type of player who got here focusing on what I did bad, growing on that and improving those areas. That's the goal each week."

The new deal provides some security for Sieler, a defensive lineman who was on a four-year rookie contract when he was drafted 238th overall by the Ravens in 2018 after leaving Ferris State University one year early. Sieler played in two games as a rookie and four games in 2019 with Baltimore before being waived on Dec. 4, 2019.



Sieler

What could have been a low point for Sieler turned out to be a tremendous opportunity. He was picked up by the Dolphins immediately and took advantage of his brief audition with Miami, making eight tackles and one sack in three games at the end of the season.

"It was really just, 'Hey, I'm going somewhere else, no one knows me down there, I don't really know them,'" Sieler said. "Let me go play football and do what I can do.' They gave me the oppor-

tunity, which I was very happy for and grateful for. This year they have, as well. I continue to grow."

The Dolphins saw enough to sign Sieler to a one-year deal as an exclusive-rights free agent in March, but he was looking at being a restricted free agent after the season.

With a breakout 2020 season, Sieler has played his way into the Dolphins' plans for the future.

"It feels good," Sieler said. "It definitely shows they're going to back their guys and give you the opportunity to succeed, no matter where you come from, whether it's off waivers, high draft, whatever."

He has played in all nine games for a 6-3 team that has won five straight contests, starting in three. He has 28 tackles and 1.5 sacks as a rotational player in Miami's hybrid 3-4 scheme.

"I very much enjoy playing here for this team and in this defense," Sieler said. "The coaching staff definitely strives to put players in positions to succeed. They help get you to those positions. If you don't know what they're doing, if you need to work on stuff, they tell

you right away to work on it and get it done.

"From my rookie year, you start to understand it more. It's one of the things where you don't know what you don't know until you know kind of thing."

Sieler has earned the respect of his teammates.

"Sieler grinds hard every day," Dolphins cornerback Nik Needham told reporters in Miami. "You can see it out there on the field."

Even though he spent much of his first two seasons on the Ravens' practice squad, Sieler said his time in Baltimore was a valuable learning experience.

"The veterans they had there taught me how to be a pro, not only on the field, but off the field," he said. "How to take care of yourself, how to take care of your body. Now that I'm playing more in my third year, that stuff's definitely come into play. It's definitely helped me be the player I am and continue to grow and be able to continue to play in the NFL hopefully."

Contact Bill Khan at wkhan@gannett.com.

Basketball

Continued from Page 1B

pushing back practices at least until the end of the three-week period - Dec. 9 - while postponing the start of the regular season until at least Jan. 4.

'They were so hungry'

Julia Bishop plays basketball for the joy of the game.

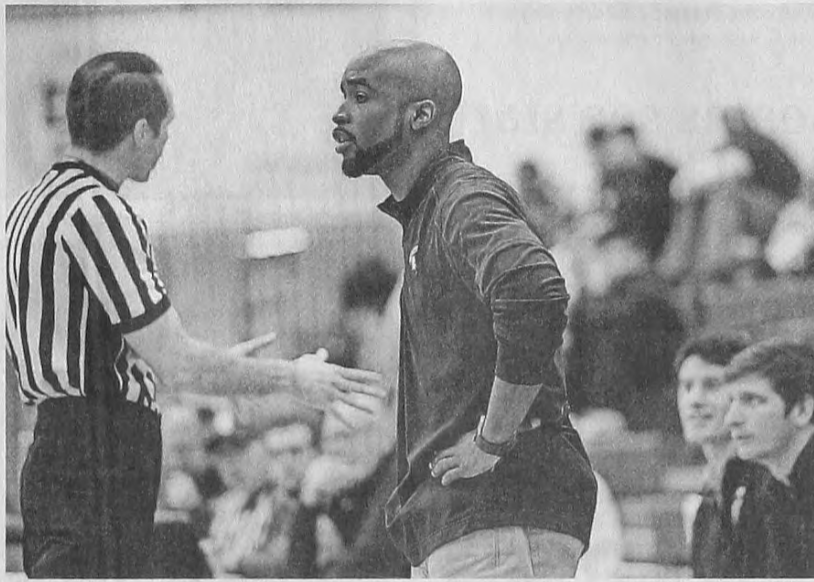
Already signed to play volleyball at Michigan State, the Mercy senior forward knows that basketball is different than her primary sport due to the amount of contact made on the court. But she is not focused on how much she will get to play. She just wants at least one chance.

"If that means three games a year because of all the crazy stuff happening, that means three games," Bishop said. "I just hope we can do all we can to just be able to stay safe and get on the court because I don't want the senior year to go by without a single basketball game."

Michigan High School Athletic Association Executive Director Mark Uyl remains confident that this will happen for Bishop and other teams throughout the state. Despite the pause in schedule, he stressed that the MHSAA will try in all its power to still have three distinct and complete sports seasons through the 2020-21 school year.

Along with the revised competition schedules, Uyl said he and the MHSAA Board of Directors will talk about either condensing the regular season schedules or pushing back the state finals to give players a full postseason experience.

While there was increased uncertainty heading into the 2020-21 winter sea-



Livonia Stevenson girls head coach Kareem Smartt encourages positive thinking and for players to get comfortable playing with a mask on, practicing through heavier and harder breathing to get endurance up.

BILL BRESLER/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM FILE PHOTO

son, Plymouth girls basketball coach Ryan Ballard saw increased fire from his players.

He said, players were at the Plymouth gym as early as 6 a.m., multiple days per week, getting shots up and working, making the six days of practice prior to the postponement.

"They were so hungry," Ballard said. "They are so hungry to be together and to come together as a team. These first six days, the energy was as good as we've ever had it."

New-look basketball

Sander said throughout the fall months numbers were about what they

had always been, but that kids were wearing masks through conditioning sessions and open gyms, getting used to what could be the future of the season.

Kareem Smartt, who takes over the head coaching role for the Livonia Stevenson girls basketball season, said the Spartans have made use of their three-court field house to be able to spread everyone out during practices.

"When you are in meetings, you have to be extra loud because you have a mask in your face and you have to talk through more of the drills that you do," Smartt said. "We want everyone to be separate."

However, the uncertainty brought questions from players: What will this

season look like? Will we miss this whole season?

Smartt was forthright with his players, telling them he knew as much as they did. But as teams wait for an answer, he encourages positive thinking and for players to get comfortable playing with a mask on, practicing through heavier and harder breathing to get endurance up.

To Ballard, he has already started to attack the "pause," resorting to Zoom meetings they used through the summer and into the fall to improve team culture. He said his main message is to have his players put the team first, taking care of their business off the court and not putting themselves in situations where they could be exposed.

Sander knows the resilience of his players, even though, he said, this blow will be hard to stomach.

But as they wait to return to the courts as a team, the Northville head coach, who said he has never been through anything like this before in his tenure with the Mustangs, said his focus needs to be on the kids.

"I wasn't real fired up about wearing a mask or having to coach in a mask, and no student sections... it would be such a unique experience and unlike anything I've ever experienced, an environment I've ever coached in," Sander said. "But at the same time, it would be selfish for me to worry about that because the kids want it so bad, so we desperately want to do anything we can do to give them the experience to have a senior year, a senior sports year."

"We will do anything we have to. I feel we owe it to our kids."

Contact reporter Colin Gay at cgay@hometownlife.com or 248-330-6710. Follow him on Twitter at @ColinGay17. Send game results and stats to Liv-Sports@hometownlife.com.

Hockey

Continued from Page 1B

would take effect, but he knew they were coming.

One day prior to the official start of the hockey season, the day before Catholic Central was scheduled to open its slate against Hartland, those rules and regulations arrived.

As the state announced a three-week "pause" in hopes to combat the rising COVID-19 cases, the MHSAA postponed the start of the winter sports season, halting competitions and practices for winter and the remaining fall sports until at least Dec. 9, with competitions not starting until at least Jan. 4.

Livonia Stevenson hockey head coach David Mitchell came into preparation for the season knowing a delay could be possible, but led his team on a day-by-day approach: not looking too far ahead and focusing on the task ahead of them.

Heading into his 13th season as the head coach of the Spartans, Mitchell said his main goals for his players do not change when they are not able to be on the ice.

"We have to continue to do the things that are being asked of us, to continually look at development from an individual standpoint that we have been talking about really since this happened back in spring," Mitchell said. "Where the focus would be more on each individual: mak-

ing sure they need to, number one, stay safe and number two, to develop as an athlete and as a person and to grow as much as they could through these times."

Thrown into the fire

When Farmington United head coach Grant Newton first took the ice with his team for tryout Nov. 3, he was just thankful to be there.

After two years as an assistant coach on the staff, Newton, a former Farmington player, accepted the job of head coach, replacing former head coach Brad Levick.

In his first year on the job, Newton said there has been a learning curve. But due to the coronavirus, every member of the team, from the assistant coaches to the players, are learning on the fly.

"I kind of looked at it as a cool opportunity because this year, I'm really not the new guy," Newton said. "Everyone is going through this 'how do we adapt hockey to be COVID-compliant' at the same time."

Darrin Silvester, who was a former assistant with the Wildcats and with Salem, said he found the perfect opportunity to make the jump to the top job with Plymouth, taking over from Jerry Vento, but did not expect what 2020 had brought.

"It's ridiculous. Let's just be honest: it's ridiculous. I'm old and I've been coaching a long time.... My life was perfect. Then there's this opening, and I de-

"I kind of looked at it as a cool opportunity because this year, I'm really not the new guy. Everyone is going through this 'how do we adapt hockey to be COVID-compliant' at the same time."

Grant Newton Farmington United head coach

cided to jump in on it," Silvester said. "Now I've become more of a medical manager of facilities and locker rooms and everything like that."

In the weeks of practices prior to the halt, Newton said he saw a level of drive, leadership and development from his players that he was not sure he would see in the first days. Now, his primary goal is keeping the team connected for however long the pause is.

"Especially for my seniors to go into their final year of high school hockey, to have that kind of put on pause right before we were ever able to play a game, is really hard for a 17-year-old to cope with, especially with the time frame being such a question mark," Newton said. "Like yes, we say three weeks now, but how realistic is that? We don't know."

Any time, anywhere

Mitchell is confident that, with the leadership of the MHSAA, some sort of season will be played.

The Stevenson head coach, who is

also a member of the Michigan High School Hockey Coaches Association Board, said he will do whatever he can to support the MHSAA and possible changes to the season, such as a consolidated schedule or extending the playoffs.

Mitchell said his team will be ready when the time comes.

"We would be ready to go as soon as another team would want to compete with us," Mitchell said. "We understand that this is something that we're all in the same boat, and if that means playing a game two or three days after we get going, I'm all for it."

"The message is 'Any time, anywhere.' Our players have to know that they need to do things on their own. We will be ready to go whenever we are allowed to go."

When the season starts, Kaleniecki has hopes that the Shamrocks will be back in USA Hockey Arena, fighting for what they thought they could accomplish back in March.

No matter when the season starts, he said, he just wants a chance for Catholic Central to finish.

"If it's a couple weeks time, three weeks' time, if it's in a month, if it's in two months, if it's in May, we're ready to go," Kaleniecki said. "We'll be ready to play."

Contact reporter Colin Gay at cgay@hometownlife.com or 248-330-6710. Follow him on Twitter at @ColinGay17. Send game results and stats to Liv-Sports@hometownlife.com.

MSU BASKETBALL SEASON PREVIEW

Rocket Watts holds the keys at the point



Graham Couch
Columnist
Lansing State Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICH.

Rocket Watts didn't want to be Michigan State's point guard. Not at first after last season. He knew from watching Cassius Winston how taxing and selfless the job can be. Besides, he was born to score. But he was also made to realize that if he's ever going to make an obscene amount of money playing this game he loves, it's not likely to be as a 6-foot-2-inch NBA shooting guard. Those don't really exist.

"My dad and Coach Iz (Tom Izzo) and all the coaches have been talking to me about my height and my position in the league and that's a point guard," Watts said.

"It's just a difficult position, playing point guard at Michigan State. But I feel like I'm ready for it. I've been watching a lot of film, watching a lot of Cassius."

He's all in now.

There is no player on this year's MSU team more critical to what this squad becomes than Watts. No position more determinative and in question than point guard. MSU is, after all, replacing Winston. For most of the last two years, the Spartans' world ran through him and he took care of them.

Watts isn't MSU's only option at the point. Foster Loyer is expected to play a larger role, allowing Watts to play off the ball, as well. More on that in a bit. Aaron Henry, too, will run the point from time to time, MSU's coaches say, and facilitate offense from his position on the wing.

But if the Spartans' best collective five-man lineup is going to include its best five players, then Watts is going to be the point guard.

He should get course credit for everything he's learned about Winston's game through film study.

"Just watching him being a leader, running everything, finding everybody shots. Just having confidence, talking to his team, leading every night," Watts said of Winston. "On bad nights, he doesn't get down. He just stayed in the game. I've just been watching his every move, his pace of the game - he doesn't



Rocket Watts takes over as MSU's starting point guard this season.
MIKE CARTER/USA TODAY SPORTS FILE PHOTO

rush anything. He finds his teammates and makes the right play every time."

Watts is trying to emulate Winston's decisions, his temperament, his leadership and, only to the degree that Winston "doesn't rush anything," his pace. But Watts has a clear understanding that MSU's offense under him has to look different than it did with Winston. Watts is driving a Ferrari. Winston was the craftiest Nissan Sentra you'd ever seen.

"(The offense) is a lot faster. Because I'm faster than Cassius," Watts said. "We run. Our main goal, our wings, they've got to run faster, they've got to get to the outlet faster. It's going to be real interesting."

"He's a one-man break," said MSU associate head coach Dwayne Stephens, who's running the show with Izzo sidelined with COVID-19. "He can get the ball from one end to the other as fast as anybody I've ever seen. Hence the nickname, Rocket. When he gets in the paint, he has that unbelievable ability to shoot that runner/floater. Now we're just adding the drop-offs and the kick-outs and then being able to make the right decision. But his speed gives us a great ad-

vantage in transition."

Stephens compared the challenge in front of Watts to what Keith Appling went through - a prolific high school scorer turned point guard. Watts, though, is ahead of where Appling was at this stage, because passing comes more natural to him, even if it isn't his first instinct. Watts played a lot of point guard in high school, but the position was defined differently. "Here I've got to get the other players involved," Watts said.

"That's the one thing that people don't realize and Rocket probably doesn't get enough credit for, is Rocket is a very good passer," Stephens said. "You have to get yourself in the mind frame that you're going to make your teammates better."

Watts is determined to do so. He's also determined to handle coaching differently. And he understands why. One of the more fascinating elements of this season will be his interactions with Izzo, who rides his point guards hard. Watts has been known to return a look that says, "No more."

"I feel like wasn't used to a person yelling at me," Watts said. "So I kind of

came off a little bit wrong. I feel like at the 1 (position), I can't really do that because a lot of eyes are going to be on me and I'm going to be a leader of the team, so I can't really show too many emotions at him. I've just got to listen and basically go on with the next play. There are going to be times we don't see eye to eye. But that happens."

MSU's next best option at point guard is Loyer, who's had a rough couple of years trying to live up to expectations after a dazzling high school career. Freshman A.J. Hoggard, the team's other point guard, is coming off an injury and still looks like a freshman, Stephens said.

No one in the program, including Watts and Stephens, seem shy about turning over the keys to Loyer right now.

"I think people are going to, when they see Foster play this year, they'll say, 'OK, this is the kid that we thought was coming to Michigan State all along,'" Stephens said. "He's playing with a lot more confidence. He's shooting the ball really well. And he's running the team."

"I think people are going to be shocked a little bit. I think he's going to have a heckuva year."

Loyer was never recruited for his defense, however. And it is on that end of the floor, with Watts, alongside Joshua Langford and Henry, that this team has a chance to be special.

"Our defense is going to be a lot better," Watts said. "Because I feel like, (positions) 1 through 5 we can guard and we're tough. It's going very interesting."

There is a sense among this year's players that this is truly THEIR team, that they are no longer ancillary parts of the Winston and Xavier Tillman show. That this is their time to build a legacy. You can hear it in Watts. He has studied Winston. He'd love to have that vision and court sense, but not at the expense of the body and athletic ability he's been given.

"Man, it feels different (this year)," Watts said. "Everybody on the team is good. All the guys, we've all come together because Cassius and X (are gone). It's going to be very exciting. You don't know who's going to come out and break out, because we all can play, because we've all got each other's back. It's going to be an exciting year."

Contact Graham Couch at gcouch@lsj.com.

SOFTBALL

Howell's Springer signs with CMU

Bill Khan
Livingston Daily
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

Playing college softball always seemed like an achievable goal for Howell senior Maddie Springer.

"I started playing when I was about 7," she said. "I only ever played for T2, which is the travel team I play for. It's kind of common to go to college when you play for this organization. So, when I was playing 14U, I saw all of my older friends signing and knew I just wanted to do it."

Springer found her college softball opportunity at Central Michigan University, signing with the Chippewas after also taking visits to Michigan State and Grand Valley State.

"As soon as I went on campus, it kind of took me by surprise how pretty it was," Springer said. "All the coaches made me

feel really comfortable. It just felt like home up there."

Springer got on the radar of CMU's coaches when they were still at Davenport University, a Division II school in Grand Rapids. Davenport head coach McCall Salmon took over at CMU from 40-year head coach Margo Jonker following the 2019 season, bringing assistant coach Brittini Merchant with her.

"The old coach had watched me play high school ball my freshman year," Springer said. "I actually met the new assistant coach at a different college's camp. I didn't know she was a Central Michigan coach. She went back to the head coaching staff and told them about me. They came out to some of my tournaments."

Springer was able to play four or five tournaments this summer after her high school season was canceled because of COVID-19 fears. She was looking forward to making another run at a state championship last spring after the Highlanders lost in extra innings in the state final in 2019.

"I'm really looking forward to high school this year," she said. "We've got a few returners, and the people who haven't played yet are super talented. So, I think it's going to be just as good a year this year, too."

Springer received honorable mention all-state at shortstop as a sophomore, hitting .444 with four homers, 16 doubles and 41 RBI.

"They said they recruit athletes overall, but they see me primarily as an infielder," Springer said. "Their philosophy is if you hit, you play."



Maddie Springer received honorable mention all-state honors at shortstop as a sophomore in 2019, hitting .444 with 41 RBI. USA TODAY NETWORK-MICHIGAN FILE PHOTO

Faulkner

Continued from Page 1B

ern Michigan to join the gymnastics team.

"When they first started talking to me, what I noticed was all the colleges, they would say 'We may have a spot for you' or 'We want you, but just not right now,'" Faulkner said. "Western was very interested in me and invested in me. So that really made me feel wanted."

Faulkner said the recruiting process was what she expected from watching teammates go through it from afar: going to different college camps and contacting programs she was interested in.

The college aspirations were what kept Faulkner dedicated to the club circuit, never choosing to participate in the gymnastics program at Salem High School.

But the club season kept Faulkner busy throughout high school, finishing her school day at 2:10 and having prac-

tice from 3 to 8:30 p.m. five days per week. In the competitive season, the Salem High School student said she would have to leave for out-of-state competitions on weekends, forcing her to be in constant communication with students and teachers in terms of what she missed.

The time had paid off, as Faulkner finished 19th at the 2019 Women's Junior Olympic National Championships.

When Western Michigan came on her radar at the end of her sophomore year, Faulkner soon knew she had met her match.

She said she met head coach Penny Jernigan and her future teammates, seeing how the program was set up and enjoying the feel of the team and the campus in Kalamazoo.

Faulkner said the program thought she would be a good fit, too.

"The coach, she said she liked my attitude," Faulkner said. "I'm very positive in the gym, so she thought that would be a great asset to bring to Western."

When Faulkner earned the offer to

join the Broncos, she said it was a "huge weight" off her shoulders, ending the recruiting process, which was something she had been thinking about for a while.

Even with the magnitude of the decision, Faulkner said Western Michigan made it easy.

"I wasn't getting any other offers, but I didn't really want anymore," Faulkner said. "It just felt like the right decision."

With her senior club competitive season still ahead, Faulkner is confident it will be one of her better ones, competing in the beams, bar, vault and floor events without the pressure of wondering what colleges think.

Instead, Faulkner will be back to why she continued with gymnastics in the first place: for pure love of the sport.

"I just try to do it for myself and try my absolute best," she said.

Contact reporter Colin Gay at cgay@hometownlife.com or 248-330-6710. Follow him on Twitter at @ColinGay17. Send game results and stats to Liv-Sports@hometownlife.com.



Halle Faulkner, a Salem High School student, has been a gymnast since she was 3. PHOTO PROVIDED BY HALLE FAULKNER

Businesses find new niches in pandemic

Companies discover how to keep revenue flowing

Tamara E. Holmes
Special to USA TODAY

While some businesses have struggled to maintain their customer base throughout the pandemic, others identified a need and target audience because of the COVID-19 crisis.

Siblings Yasmina and Nour Bizri were students at College of Charleston in South Carolina, and their brother Afif Bizri had just graduated when the pandemic led to the cancellation of their summer internships. Finding themselves with a lot more time on their hands, the siblings along with their mother, Tina Khouja, decided to develop masks for the family to wear. The idea came after Nour experienced an allergic reaction to a mask she had bought.

Initially, they donated the extra masks they created.

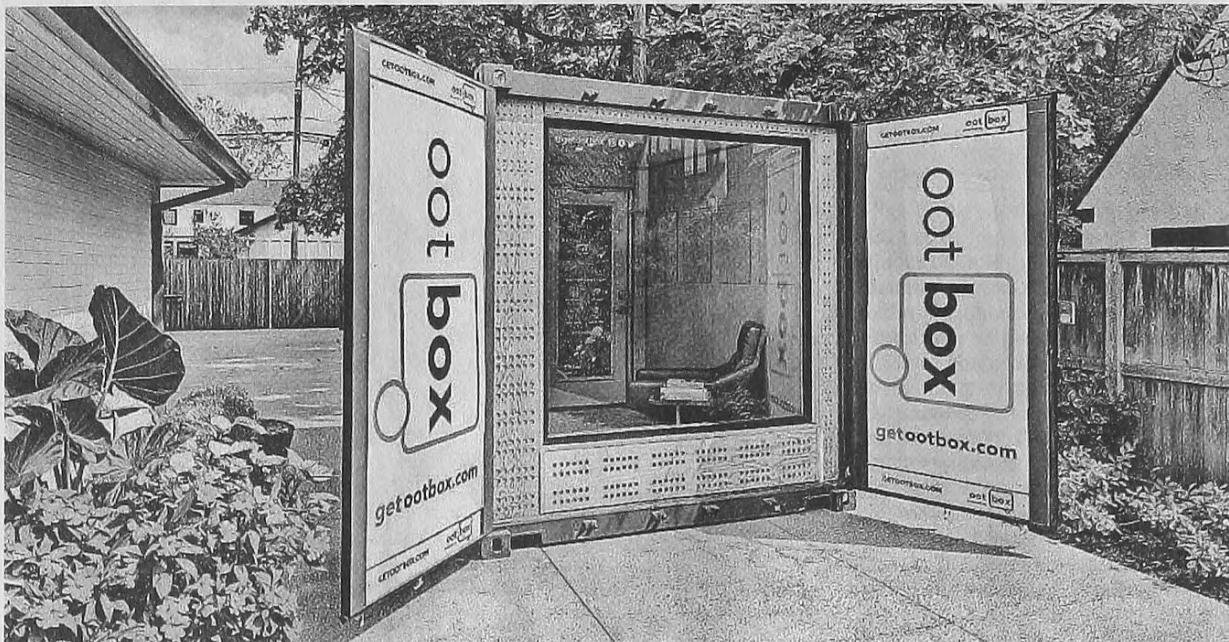
"Then people were like, 'Hey, we want to pay you to make us masks for our whole family,'" Yasmina Bizri said. "That's how the business really started."

Using Instagram and Facebook Marketplace to publicize their designs, interest spiked in the company they named MINO Charleston, and the family began growing their customer base. Shortly after, they landed an order for 500 masks by the United States Postal Service, followed by orders from companies in New York, Ohio and as far as London. They've since expanded their product line to include lanyards and other clothing items so their business will have staying power even when the pandemic subsides and masks are no longer in high demand.

Delving into different markets

While the pandemic prompted the Bizri family to go into business, it provided other companies with revenue streams they had never dreamed of.

In January, when Robbie Friedman and Allison Zofan were preparing to launch their business ootbox, they intended to lease their portable, temporary workspace pods to corporations running short on three- to four-person



Ootbox leases temporary workspace pods to corporations needing meeting spaces. OOTBOX



Without tourists, Juneau Food Tours brings Alaska home. JUNEAU FOOD TOURS

conference rooms. By the time the Columbus, Ohio-based company launched in June, companies had sent their workers home and Friedman and Zofan had to come up with a different plan.

One new market for the work pods was households where working parents conducted Zoom meetings and children logged onto laptops for virtual learning.

"Suddenly, every single person understood that it doesn't matter the size of your home; sometimes, you need a

place outside your house," Zofan said.

But they also found a unique customer in the health care industry as doctors started using the ootboxes to conduct telehealth visits in private, away from the rest of their family. The ootboxes also proved popular with some hospitals, who used them to conduct COVID-19 testing and other lab services.

While the business model was born out of the crisis, it has long-term appeal, Zofan said.

"We've talked to leadership at hospitals and they've told us they feel like it's going to be a long-term shift to provide some services outside," she said.

Reinventing to stay alive

Some businesses saw their revenue streams dry up and had to invent new ones that catered to the new normal. That's what happened to Juneau Food Tours in Juneau, Alaska, a company that made its mark providing culinary experiences for tourists. Had it not been for the pandemic "this year I would have seen nearly a 200% growth in sales over last year," owner Midgi Moore said. "To say the pandemic was devastating is an

understatement."

But Moore wasn't ready to quit. If the coronavirus was keeping tourists from traveling to Alaska, she would bring Alaska to them. She launched Taste Alaska!, a subscription box service that delivers treats and other goodies unique to the state.

"The impact on my business has been significant," Moore says. "While I am not going to see the gross income I expected from operating tours, I have generated a new revenue stream that will become a long-term business venture for me."

After the pandemic ends, Moore expects to continue selling subscriptions to "anyone who loves Alaska, who loves food and who loves adventure."

While entrepreneurship by its nature is unpredictable, 2020 has shown that business can turn on a dime. And while a crisis can make some products and services obsolete, it can birth the need for new offerings overnight.

"This pandemic has changed every part of daily life," Zofan said. For businesses who are looking for a way to pivot, "think about all the different angles of where your product can work."

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Jobs on the BALLOT

Key outcomes for workers in three states

By Julia Pollak
ZipRecruiter.com

In Nov. 3's election, voters had their say on ballot measures in several states that will affect millions of workers.

1. Florida approves a \$15 minimum wage
Voters in Florida approved an amendment to gradually increase the state's minimum wage to \$15 an hour by Sept. 30, 2027, raising it to \$10 on Sept. 30, 2021, then \$1 per year. Efforts to put similar measures on the ballot in Ohio and Idaho failed to obtain enough signatures. But the resounding result in Florida — 60.8% in favor — will likely encourage supporters of minimum wage increases to bring such measures to a vote in the future.

2. Colorado approves paid family leave
Voters in Colorado passed a ballot measure to establish a statewide program for paid family and medical leave, to be funded through a payroll tax on employers and employees. The measure will allow eligible workers to take 12 weeks of paid leave. An additional four weeks of leave will be allowed for pregnancy or childbirth-related complications. Workers who have earned at least \$2,500 with their employer and have been on the job for at least 180 days will be eligible for the job-protected paid-leave benefits. Businesses with fewer than 10 employees will be exempt from the employer tax premium. Companies will be allowed to opt out of the state program and create their own family leave programs instead, provided they meet certain criteria. Only three states — California, New Jersey and Rhode Island — currently require paid family leave. The success of Colorado's family leave proposition will likely encourage other states to pursue similar programs in future elections.

3. California approves independent-contractor model for app-based drivers
Voters in California passed a ballot measure (Proposition 22) to exempt drivers for app-based transportation and delivery companies from being classified as employees. California Assembly Bill 5, which went into effect Jan. 1,

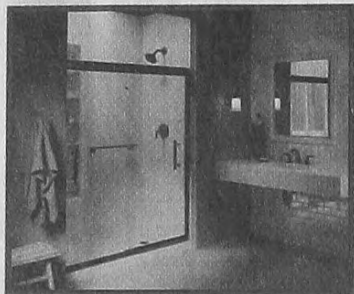
4. California rejects measure restoring affirmative action
Voters in California rejected the repeal of a measure that makes it unlawful for the state and local governments to discriminate against or grant preferential treatment to people based on race, ethnicity, national origin or sex. The repeal would have cleared the way for the state to restore race- and sex-based affirmative action in government agencies and public universities. Ten states in the U.S. have banned affirmative action since 1996: California, Texas, Washington, Florida, Michigan, Nebraska, Arizona, New Hampshire, Oklahoma and, most recently, Idaho. California's decision against affirmative action could make efforts to repeal such bans in other states less likely and boost efforts in other states to introduce similar bans.

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