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Livonia officials look to build new senior center

Shelby Tankersley Hometownlife.com
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

About 19,000, or 20%, of Livonia residents are at or over the age of 65, according to U.S. Census data.

Mayor Maureen Miller Brosnan says the city's senior center at the corner of Five Mile and Farmington roads is outdated and doesn't meet the needs of the

city's vast senior population and people from neighboring communities who use the building.

So, she's looking to build a new one. "It's an outdated facility," Brosnan said. "It's an old church that was built in the 1960s that has been renovated, rehabbed and stretched to its limits. ... We can do better."

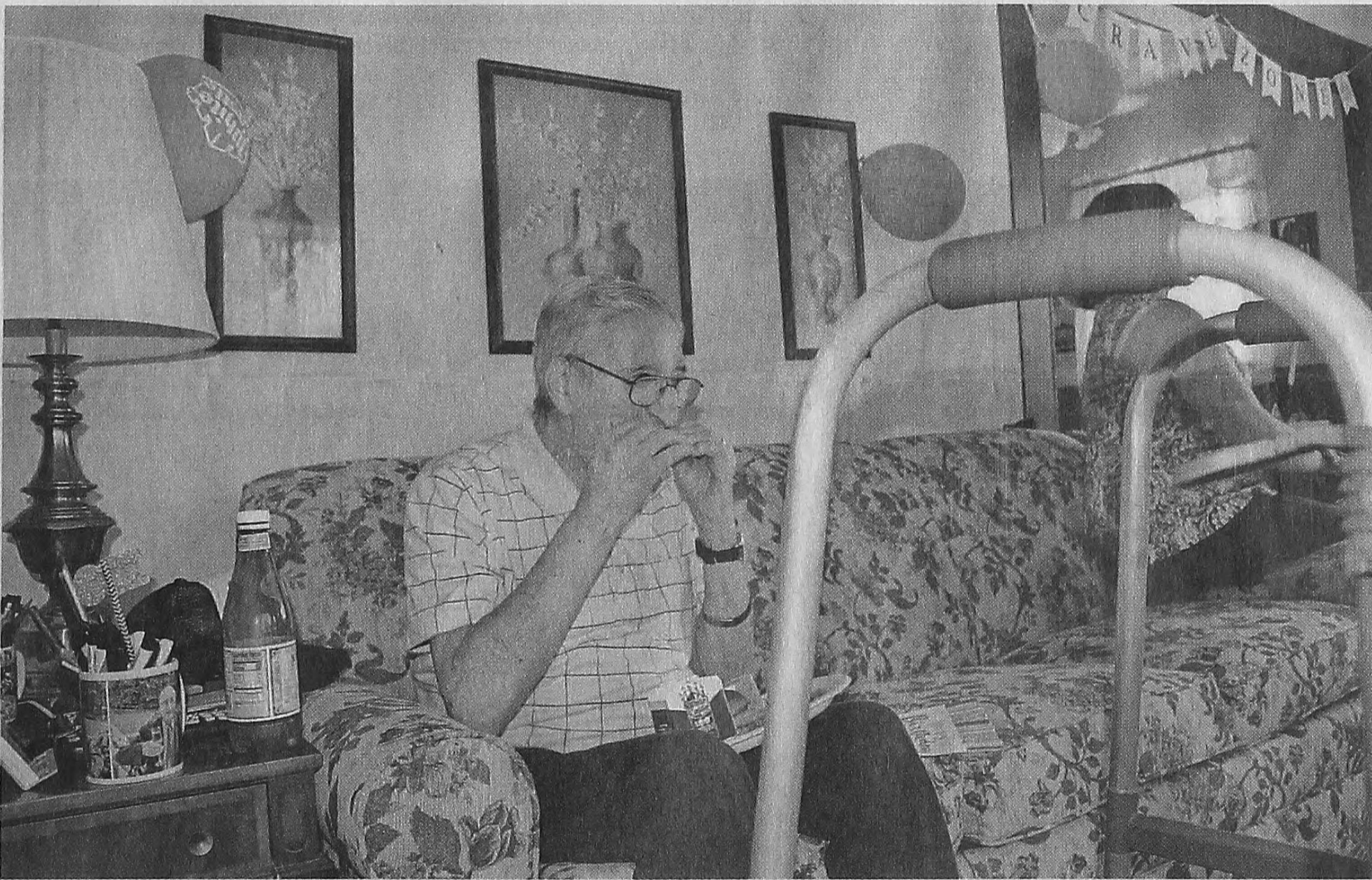
Not bigger, but 'better'

In line with the Livonia Vision 21 master plan, the new facility would be built near the Kirksey Recreation Center, just down the road from where the senior center is now, and would likely connect to that building. Officials and residents who worked on the master plan said it makes sense to place the

center by the recreation building, "We've already created a sense of place there; we're already driving a million visitors a year there," said Ted Davis, Livonia superintendent of parks and recreation. "We have gyms, a walking track, a fitness center, multiple indoor pools."

See SENIOR CENTER, Page 5A

CELEBRATING 100 YEARS



Joseph Girolamo enjoys a White Castle slider June 5 as part of his 100th birthday celebration. SUSAN VELA/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

WWII vet, White Castle mark century with free slider party

Susan Vela Hometownlife.com
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

White Castle sliders have been the go-to snack for so many Girolamo family reunions, so White Castle gifted Joseph Girolamo with their famous burger treats for a 100th birthday party.

The bounty was delivered to his Lathers Street home on June 5, which also was his daughter Joyce Hermann's 64th birthday.

She inspired the company's benevolence when she wrote them a letter, wondering if there was a 100th birthday mug available for her father.

Also celebrating its 100th year in business, White Castle responded with a birthday cup, coupons, party favors and the free burgers.

That got Hermann thinking about the sacks and crates of inexpensive

See PARTY, Page 2A

Plymouth rain gardens prevent flooding

Ed Wright Hometownlife.com
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

Wearing mulch-stained jeans and armed with mini shovels and giant-sized goals to assist the environment, a contingent of green-thumbed DTE Energy employees played a role earlier this month to plant 20,000 square feet of rain gardens at the Plymouth Arts & Recreation Complex.

The efforts of the volunteers — a good percentage of them Plymouth residents — will create gardens that will absorb as much as 225,000 gallons of water per rainstorm event to help mitigate flood-

ing in Plymouth, Canton and beyond, and provide a native habitat for birds, butterflies and other vital pollinators.

The gardens also serve a purpose during extended dry periods like southeast Michigan has experienced recently when creeks and tributaries that flow through subdivisions become a series of shallow puddles.

"Prior to planting these rain gardens, rain would fall off the parking lot here, go into drains and into a creek and immediately flush out of the system," Friends of the Rouge Restoration

See RAIN GARDENS, Page 2A



This rain garden used to be part of a parking lot covered by asphalt. ED WRIGHT/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

Asper removed from ballot in Westland mayor race

Shelby Tankersley Hometownlife.com
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

Westland mayoral candidate William Asper has been deemed ineligible to run for the city's top job.

The city's election commission met June 2 and voted to remove Asper from the race.

The board concluded Asper, who owns multiple properties in the city, is not actually a resident. Asper said he was unable to attend the meeting due to a scheduling conflict.



Asper

The former candidate claims he was between living situations and was fixing up one of his rental properties in the city for himself to live in.

"I believe what they did was wrongful; I think it was the wrong thing to do," Asper said. "I am a Westland resident and the fact is I wasn't at the property because I was fixing it up. If I was off at college for nine months out of the year, I'd still be a Westland resident."

The city's election commission is comprised of Mayor Bill Wild, Clerk Richard LeBlanc and City Council President Jim Hart.

LeBlanc could not be reached for comment.

Both Wild and Hart are seeking reelection this year.

Asper, 37, has long been a vocal critic of Wild. He has drawn some controversy on social media — there's a Facebook page called Women Against William Asper for Westland Mayor — and is serving probation for a 2019 aggravated stalking attempt conviction, according to court records.

Asper said he feels the city's administration is simply threatened by his candidacy and said he will try to get reinstated.

"I'm going to try and get back on the ballot it even though it's late and the primary is in August," he said. "I believe there will be legal action because of this."

"They slandered my name and defamed my character."

Four candidates remain in the city's

See ASPER, Page 2A





Joseph Girolamo and his wife, Lillian.
PHOTOS BY SUSAN VELA/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM



A White Castle manager delivers free sliders to Joseph Girolamo on June 5 for his 100th birthday party.

Party

Continued from Page 1A

sliders that her dad used to buy to seal family bonds. "We always had White Castles whether things were sad, whether things were happy," she said. "They've just been part of us."

Guests were arriving as White Castle general manager Jessica Worthen pulled up with 100 burgers, along with some veggie sliders, chicken rings, condiments and fries.

The fare was prepared at a nearby White Castle at Plymouth and Middlebelt roads.

"Happy birthday!" Worthen said to Girolamo. "You're our craver. We're 100 this year, too."

"We really hope you enjoy your birthday. We were really excited to do this for you guys. We really hope you guys have a great celebration."

Hermann asked her father if he was ready for a burger and prepared him a plate. The burger did not last long.

Girolamo is a World War II veteran who served in

the U.S. Army. His birthday actually was March 9.

He appeared in the "Congressional Record" for serving under General George Patton and once being known as the "Boogie Woogie Bugler." He and his wife were known as champion buglers.

The widower also worked in Ford Motor Co.'s tool and die division and was active in local veterans groups.

He instructed marching and drill units and drum and bugle corps members. He also taught flag etiquette to scouts.

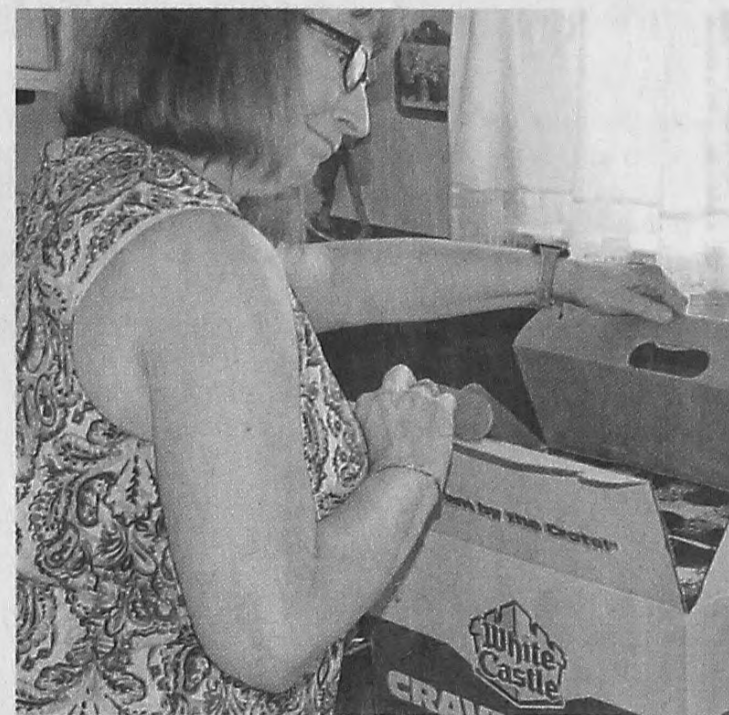
At 100 years of age, he speaks softly. His daughter wouldn't be surprised if White Castle sliders are one of the secrets to his longevity.

"I had two brothers," the centenarian said. "I had four sisters. I had a father and a mother. I'm the only guy left."

Asked what it was like to have a White Castle themed birthday party for herself and her father, Hermann said "very cool."

"It's really neat," she said.

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



Girolamo's daughter, Joyce Hermann, said White Castle really delivered when she wrote them in search of a 100th birthday mug for her dad.

Asper

Continued from Page 1A

mayor race: Daniel Beier, Councilwoman Tasha Green, Edward Pruett and Wild.

Voters will narrow the race to two candidates in an August primary.

The top two vote-getters will face one another in the November general election with the winner serving a four-year term.

The mayor position is non-partisan and draws a \$121,574 annual salary.

Also on the August ballot are 13 candidates seeking four available city council seats.

Eight candidates will advance to the November general election.

Contact reporter Shelby Tankersley at stankersle@hometownlife.com or 248-305-0448. Follow her on Twitter @shelby_tankk.

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DTE employees spent the morning of June 4 building rain gardens at the Plymouth Arts & Recreation Complex to help prevent flooding of the Rouge River and its tributaries. ED WRIGHT/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

Rain gardens

Continued from Page 1A

Coordinator Matthew Bertrand explained. "We've received reports that homes nearby this site have been affected by flooding due to the set up."

"The idea of the rain gardens is to plant something that will store the rainwater in the ground so that it will travel over weeks and even months; not only helping to prevent flooding but getting water to the creeks during dry times. The gardens these volunteers are planting today will help the Tonquish Creek maintain water levels even during extremely dry periods."

DTE employee and rain garden volunteer Eric Younan said environmental issues are important to the energy company considering it is one of Michigan's largest property owners.

"We know how important it is to preserve the environment and wildlife," said Younan, a resident of Plymouth. "We have a lot of environmental engineers and a lot of scientists here today in addition to several employees whose jobs are not necessarily related to the environment because we want to be stewards of the environment."

"When we found out about this project Friends of the Rouge was organizing, we put together two shifts of DTE volunteers to lend a hand and help make it happen. These gardens will soak up millions of gallons of rainwater over the course of a year. That's impressive stuff."

The 35-day project to install 23 rain gardens and a walking trail throughout the PARC property is being funded mostly by a \$400,000 grant Friends of the Rouge received from the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy. PARC also

donated a significant sum of money to make the project possible, Bertrand added.

"This parking lot used to be in rough shape," Bertrand said, gesturing toward the newly-paved surface, gardens strategically planted throughout. "The potholes were so big, we'd lose cars in them. When PARC decided to improve the space, Friends of the Rouge saw it as an opportunity to make this a demonstration-type parking lot for the gardens."

"We have close to 300 volunteers signed up for the project that is scheduled to run through the end of June, with some work probably stretching into August and September. It's a true community effort with a lot of corporations, including DTE, pitching in."

The eye-catching gardens will include butterfly and hummingbird gardens and the planting of more than 10,000 native Michigan planting plugs and shrubs.

"This area used to be wall-to-wall concrete," noted DTE Communications Strategist Dana Blankenship, who attended middle school from 2006-2009 in the building now known as PARC. "It's satisfying knowing I can be a part of the planting of the rain gardens and the complete transformation of this area. I love anything that has the intersectionality between the community and the environment."

Bertrand said rain gardens can be installed in everyone's yard, regardless of where they live.

"I always tell folks, 'Get your lawn a job!'" Bertrand said. "Every lawn has the potential to help solve some very big problems, like flooding. It's just a matter of picking out the area of your yard that you want to keep for recreation and choosing a space for a rain garden. I can help consult with people who are interested."

Additional information on creating at-home rain gardens can be found on the Friends of the Rouge website at <https://therouge.org/>.

Contact reporter Ed Wright at ewright@hometownlife.com or 517-375-1113.

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Market grows as COVID-19 restrictions ease



Walt Gajewski
Guest columnist

"The Farmers Market is open!" I remember standing on the south bricks of the Sundquist Pavilion on Opening Day, May 8, shouting out those words as the market bell rang. But it didn't seem open. COVID-19 restrictions were very much in place from last summer – hurricane fencing around Riley Park, forced entrances and exits, strict guidance for navigating the market and, of course, mask mandates.

But last Saturday, our fifth market of the year, was different. With Art on the Grand's scores of people and our market shoppers filling downtown Farmington, we truly were open: no fencing, no forced entrances, no masks. This time I could say it and mean it: The market is open.

We took our guidance from the Governor's office and the Michigan Farmers Market Association, who agreed that as of June 1 outdoor markets – and I emphasize outdoor – no longer require masks, whether you're vaccinated or not. It's a tell-tale sign that the vaccination rate is high enough to make mask wearing discretionary.

Sanitizer machines still dot the market, and free masks are available at our Information Tent. But in some ways these remain the last vestiges of what will be remembered as "another time" in our lives. Which brings me to ...

Mona Lisas and Mad Hatters

It happens every week: A call goes out for market volunteers. It's the same call issued last season when the pandemic raged. Our volunteers, in service to community, raised their hands week in and week out to man the entrances and exits, help with curbside pickups, direct traffic flow, assist customers to find their way and make vendors feel safe while we collected weekly COVID-19 screening forms.

It was during this time of the greatest exposure to the virus that I honestly felt safest – in a circle of fellowship that



The Mona Lisas and Mad Hatters of the Farmington Farmers Market – the best volunteers anywhere.

COURTESY OF FARMINGTON FARMERS MARKET

forged friendship and the camaraderie of family.

(Oddly enough, I felt the most isolated and vulnerable in the safety of my own home, watching the dire headlines and bitter political discourse pour into my house through the nightly news. Weird.)

I can't help but think of a concert given by Elton John in October 2001 in New York's Madison Square Garden. It was in tribute to the city's police, fire and Emergency Medical Services who kept working in the rubble of the World Trade Center day and night. John dedicated to them and the city his song, "Mona Lisas and Mad Hatters":

*While Mona Lisas and Mad Hatters ...
Turn around and say good morning
to the night ...*

*I thank the Lord there are people out
there like you.*

*I thank the Lord there are people out
there like you...*

I am grateful for the quiet dignity and courage shown by our own Mona Lisas and Mad Hatters who faced down the rabbit hole of the virus week after week.

*I thank the Lord there are people out
there like you.*

Coming in, heading out, coming up at market

The market is an ever-changing dynamic. Because we are a Michigan grower market, we offer food only in season. That's why, when you come once to market, you find you must come the next week and the next and the next because it's always a different market.

For instance, asparagus has been headlining our marquee for much of the past five weeks, but it and the early greens are now running their course. So we welcome a relative newcomer, Michigan strawberries. To me nothing says summer is coming quite like biting into a juicy, sweet, fresh-picked strawberry from our Michigan farms. So let's celebrate.

June 19 marks the Market's seventh annual Strawberry Shortcake Day at the market hosted by Kapnick Orchards of Britton and Calder Dairy of Carleton. Friends of the Market volunteers will

assemble 500 servings of fresh strawberries on scratch-made biscuits topped with freshly whipped cream, the operative words being fresh and scratch-made. I will have more to say in a special column next week about this Farmers Market fundraiser.

Also on June 19, we welcome the Farmington & Farmington Hills Foundations for Youth & Families, which is celebrating 25 years of community support. Part of that support can be found in our children's Power of Produce (POP!) program, which helps teach kids where food comes from. Sidelined last year by the pandemic, I am happy to announce that POP! will return this summer. I will stay in touch and you can, too, by visiting www.farmingtonfarmersmarket.com.

It's time to get ready for another week at the Market, so here's saying, as always, "Until next time, see you at the Market."

Walt Gajewski is the Farmington Farmers Market manager. The market runs 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturdays in downtown Farmington.

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Against long odds, Northville Downs overcomes shutdowns



A race gets underway at Northville Downs on May 21 as spectators press against the fence to get a good look. PHOTOS BY JOHN HEIDER/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

Horse races continue at state's only live harness race track

Ed Wright | HometownLife.com | USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

When your industry survives a pair of potentially devastating pandemic-induced shutdowns, even the foul odors in a horse barn can smell like a bed of roses.

On May 21, less than an hour before the first race of a 12-race card at Northville Downs — the only live-racing venue remaining in Michigan — lifelong harness-racing owner/trainer/driver Kim Pluta discussed the sloppy conditions his livelihood navigated since March 16, 2020, when the United States was locked down in an effort to contain COVID-19.

"This is how I make a living, so the beginning of the first shutdown was really, really tough," said Pluta, already decked out in his gold-and-white racing silks. "Most of us in here live (financially) week to week ... and the horses have to eat.

"When we came back the first time (in August), there was a lot of happiness, obviously. But at the same time, we didn't know if we'd be racing for a week, two weeks, whatever, and then get shut down again. I think that is why everybody here followed the rules so closely. We wanted to keep racing. We needed to keep racing."

Northville Downs Operations Manager Mike Carlo, whose great uncle started horse racing near the northeast corner of the intersection of Center Street and Seven Mile Road in 1944, acknowledged the robust return to racing required sacrifice, patience and teamwork.

Following protocols

Although the track lost half of its racing dates in 2020, it stayed the course and is once again a one-of-a-kind entertainment option for residents of southeast Michigan and beyond.

Strictly enforced protocols including mask-wearing, social-distancing and crowd-capacity restrictions in the grandstand and paddock areas were embraced by patrons and horsemen alike, Carlo said.

"When we reopened in August after the first (five-month) shutdown, one of our regular patrons came up to me and said, 'This is just my place to hang out. I'd do anything to just come back and hang out with my friends.' It was great to see that nothing — wearing a mask, social-distancing — was going to stop this guy from coming back.

"One of the nicest things I observed was that even though everybody had a lot to complain about when everything was taken away, these horsemen were so thrilled to be able to come back and say, 'Thank God we're racing again.' We didn't care who the governor was, who the President was; it was just, 'I get to go back to living my life again.'"

Reminders that the pandemic is still a dangerous contender are apparent to racetrack patrons the second they enter the doors to the clubhouse and are greeted by longtime employee Bess Thomas, who completes a forehead temperature check.

A safety-coated vibe also flows through the barns, which are far less crowded — with fewer horses and people alike — and less frenetic than normal times due to social-distancing guidelines.

"Before the pandemic, we ran a five-race paddock, so all of the horses who were running in the first five races could be in the barn," Carlo said. "Now, because of COVID, we're running a three-race paddock so that there are always open stalls between the horses.

"The number of people in the barns is also significantly reduced. Before COVID, on any given night there were up to six helpers allowed for each trainer to help care for the horses. Now, each trainer is allowed one helper

for every two horses. If they have a third horse running, they're allowed a second helper."

Carlo said the horsemen understand and follow the capacity rules, but they're not necessarily fans of the camaraderie-dissipating protocols.

"During normal times, the backside of the racetrack is so communal and friendly," Carlo said. "Sure you see a few arguments, but whenever you're back there you'll see people helping their neighbor in a stall.

"You'll hear, 'Can you put this line on the horse for me?' 'Absolutely!' And once the race starts, they're all lined up on the ramp (that leads to the barns), screaming at the top of their lungs as the horses head around the corner. We all miss that part of it and we hope things return to normal soon."

Carlo said he doesn't have statistical proof that the pandemic created a financial burden too great to overcome for some horsemen, but he assumes there have been casualties.

"What's encouraging, though, is that we've had enough horses to run 10, 11 or 12 races a night, which is our aim," he said. "Most of the horses that run here are Michigan born or bred, too."

Love of racing

Arthur McIlmurray, 62, has been involved in the harness-racing industry for 46 years. His late father, Wally McIlmurray, was a driver in the first race ever run at Northville Downs in September of 1944.

The veteran horseman said the pandemic has generated the most daunting obstacles he's witnessed for all-in horse lovers like himself.

"March of last year was very hard because all of the horses had just qualified and were ready to go," McIlmurray said. "We were able to stay afloat during the shutdown because of the county fairs that allowed us to race. There was no betting and no patrons, so we were racing just for the purses.

"I felt especially bad for all the young guys that are coming up. It's satisfying to be able to offer them advice when I can. I still love racing, too; I'm still competitive and love to win. I don't know how much longer I'm going to be able to drive, but I'm going to do it into my 70s, at least, God willing."

By the time the starting gate rolled down the dusty track for the first race May 21, an impressive crowd had gathered along the rail — not far from where \$2 beers and \$1 hot dogs were being sold from a makeshift concession stand — and inside the 50-year-old grandstand.

The maximum capacity as of mid-May was 1,200, Carlo said. "Horse racing is such a unique form of entertainment," he said. "A lot of patrons like it better than casinos because you can bet, but it's also a sporting event unto itself."

Good friends Lori Kartmann, Mary Suiter and Chelsea Chandler headed to the viewing area about 20 minutes before the first race, hoping for a big pay day, but ready to settle for a night of low-stakes gambling and high-caliber fun.

"I haven't been here for a long time," Chandler said. "But the second you walk in this place and look around, you remember why you wanted to come back: because you had so much fun the last time you were here."

"We're here to bet a little, drink a little and laugh a lot," Suiter added. Winning isn't everything these days at Northville Downs — especially one year after the iconic venue sat quiet and empty, waiting for the sound of pounding hooves to return.



Northville Downs Operations Manager Mike Carlo talks about his and his family's decades of ownership and management of Northville Downs.

Garden City educator/coach dies unexpectedly

Ed Wright hometownlife.com
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

During his 30-plus years as an educator and coach at Garden City High School, Mark Cramton's enthusiasm for teaching still resonates with students he taught decades earlier.

"One of Mark's former students who graduated from Garden City 20 years ago said lessons he learned in Mark's classes are the only ones he still utilizes," said Bridgette Cramton, Mark's wife. "Mark's favorite saying was, 'If it doesn't make you better, stronger or smarter, why put effort into it.'"

Mark Cramton, who turned 60 on March 1, died unexpectedly May 30 at his home in Canton. Doctors believe the cause of death was a massive heart attack, his wife said.

"What makes this so shocking was that Mark regularly lifted weights and did regular cardio workouts on the elliptical right up until he died," Bridgette Cramton said. "Fitness and good nutrition were such an important parts of his life."

Cramton's death sent shockwaves

through the Garden City community, where he carved out a legacy as a difference-maker, both as a physical education instructor and coach of several sports. At the time of his death, he was Garden City High School's boys cross country coach.

Nicknamed "Sharky," Cramton was an admired old-school coach who challenged his athletes and students to get the most out of their ability, his brother Kevin shared.

"His coaching style reminded me of Tom Izzo's; he used tough love to help people reach their full potential."

Cramton's two daughters — Sarah and Faith — have both excelled in athletics in part because of their dad's sup-



Mark Cramton. SUBMITTED

port. Sarah was a three-sport star at Livonia Franklin while Faith, who is generating interest in Division 1 college softball programs, is a three-sport standout at Canton High School.

"Growing up, our parents didn't have money to spend on specialized coaches," Kevin Cramton recalled. "Mark made sure his daughters had that extra training; he wanted to make sure they had everything they needed to be successful. The most important thing he gave them was his time."

Cramton was a tremendous athlete at Garden City West High School, from which he graduated in 1979. His older brother remembers when as a 6-foot-2 sophomore he could throw down two-handed dunks.

"By the time he went to Michigan State, he was a 6-foot-4 leaper," Kevin Cramton recounted. "He played for MSU's junior varsity basketball team and was suite mates with the Brkovich brothers, Mike and Don, who played on the national championship team."

"Looking back, he was kind of like a present-day Draymond Green. He could do everything pretty well."

Cramton earned a bachelor's degree in education from Michigan State before adding a master's degree from Wayne State University.

Up until recent years, Cramton taught physical education at Garden City High School alongside his younger brother, Scott.

"Can you imagine doing something you love alongside your brother?" Kevin Cramton said. "I know Mark and Scott felt blessed to be able to work together for close to 30 years"

Bridgette Cramton said she has been inundated with messages from people who knew and loved her husband, letting her know how he impacted their lives in a positive way.

"I thought we had another 25 years together, at least," she said. "It's hard to believe he's gone."

In addition to his daughters and wife, Cramton is survived by his stepson Alec Murphy; brothers Kevin (Faye), Scott (Michele) and David (Dawn).

Memorial contributions can be made to the Capuchin Soup Kitchen, 1820 Mt. Elliott St., Detroit.

ewright@hometownlife.com

Senior center

Continued from Page 1A

"So you don't have to rebuild something in a different location, you can just do it right there. It's only going to improve access to those amenities for those seniors."

A new facility, planned for 25,000 square feet in a space used now as a retention basin, wouldn't be larger than the current center. It would just better fit the community's needs.

"It's not bigger, it's smarter," Davis said. "There will be more spaces that are larger and more multi-purpose. Right now, if you go through the senior center, there's a lot of small classrooms that are effectively useless, unfortunately. In a post-COVID world, I don't know what people's tolerances are going to be for being packed into tight spaces."

"It's not bigger, it's smarter. There will be more spaces that are larger and more multi-purpose."

Ted Davis
Livonia superintendent of parks and recreation

Though a new building would be attached to the Kirksey center, it would have its own entrance and people would not need to be Kirksey members to use the facility.

If a new senior center gets built, the old building would be torn down and the land would become part of the Civic Park campus' reimagining, which is also outlined in Livonia Vision 21.

"The master plan calls for us to re-envision this corner at Five and Farmington and really look at some kind of public-private partnership that would drive us closer to some kind of downtown environment," Brosnan said. "The specifi-

ics of that have not been determined, but that's what the community has said they wanted."

Finding the funds

Brosnan said she doesn't want to use city tax dollars to fund the project, which she expects will cost around \$13 million when all is said and done. Instead, the mayor thinks the city can get a mix of federal, state and county funding. Her office has been in touch with Congresswoman Haley Stevens (D-Livonia) and County Commissioner Terry Marecki (R-Livonia) to see what can be done.

Brosnan thinks the city can get around \$4 million for the project through the \$1.9-trillion American Rescue Plan approved by Congress in March, something she's hoping Stevens can help with. The mayor said the new facility's construction is completely de-

pendent on when the city can secure funds for it.

"The only timeline we have to work with right now, because the source of funding is the American Rescue Plan, is their timeline," Brosnan said. "Their timeline says they'd like to have projects selected and determined shovel ready in the next three years and then built in the next five years."

If the project is funded, Brosnan said it's "basically shovel-ready" and would take between 1.5 and 2 years to complete.

Until then, seniors can rest assured their building isn't going anywhere.

"If we get this funding, the senior center is not going to close until a new center is open and ready to go," Davis said. "There is no plan to simply shut the doors."

Contact reporter Shelby Tankersley at stankersle@hometownlife.com or 248-305-0448. Twitter: @shelby_tankk.

Obituaries

Carol Jane Fortin

PLYMOUTH - Carol Jane Fortin, of Plymouth, Michigan, was born on April 6, 1940 in Detroit to her parents, Theodore and Frances Fortin. She passed away on May 18, 2021 at Brighton Gardens of Northville.

Carol grew up in Detroit, and then she and her family lived in Livonia for many years before moving to Plymouth in 1979. Carol graduated from Coolsey High School in 1957. She then went on to the University of Michigan School of Education, where she earned her B. Ed., in 1961. She later completed a Master of Education degree as well. Carol taught in the Farmington School System for three years, 1961-1964.

In 1964, Carol stated teaching in Livonia Public Schools at McKinley Elementary School, where she taught for the next 32 years until her retirement in 1996. In that time, she taught several different grade levels, always providing enriched learning experiences for her students in a nourishing learning environment. Parents and students appreciated the excellence of the time with Miss Fortin.

For several years she taught a Gifted and Talented program for upper grade students. She was very involved in building activities as well and mentored student teachers. Carol was known, respected, and esteemed throughout the district. She was the first elementary teacher to receive the Livonia Public Schools Teacher of the Year Award. She was very active on curriculum committees, her opinions always valued.

Carol was also active in the Livonia Education Association and attended several National Education Association conventions.

Carol had many interests and hobbies. Like her approach to teaching, anything she chose to do would be done very well. She was skilled in sewing, quilting, knitting, crocheting, gardening, and lawn care. She was an excellent swimmer, enjoyed biking, reading and other activities. She traveled extensively over the years to many destinations.

Most of all, Carol was a good friend: genuinely kind, caring, thoughtful, generous, and helpful — with a quick sense of humor. She will be greatly missed by those close to her, and the shared memories will be cherished.

She is survived by her brother, Dean Fortin and his wife, Susanna Morehouse; her niece Jennifer Callen and her husband, Dan; and her nephews Andrew Brauer, Evan Brauer, and Jake Callen.

She is predeceased by her parents, Dean's first wife, Carol, and her niece, Shannon Billings.

The family would like to thank the staff at Brighton Gardens and Heart to Heart Hospice for the care given to Carol.

There will be a Visitation for Carol Fortin on June 12, 2021 from 2:30-3:00pm, with a brief Memorial Service at 3:00pm to be held at: Shradler-Howell Funeral Home

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Family flowers only. Donations in her memory may be made to the charity of one's choice.



Leone Marion Kiscaden

Leone Marion Kiscaden, age 96, returned home to the Lord on May 26, 2021, surrounded by her loving family and friends at Lourdes Senior Community of Waterford. A beloved wife, mother, grandmother and great-grandmother, Leone behind left a legacy of love and dedication to her family, friends, church and community. Born in Minneapolis, Minnesota, to parents Alfred and Tina (Danielson) Linderholm, Leone met her beloved husband, Mahlon, while they were still in high school. They married when he returned from military service in the Army Air Corps. For many years, Leone was the receptionist at the Livonia Observer newspaper, where she was often referred to as "the voice of the Observer." She was a gifted seamstress and, together with her husband, was active at her church. Leone was predeceased by her husband, Mahlon, and son, Paul. She is survived by her daughter Barbara Mendelson (Joseph), grandsons Brian Claassen (Anna-Marie) and Scott Claassen (Maribeth), and great-grandchildren Wright, Turner, Henry, James and Amos. The family extends warmest thanks to Clausen Manor at Lourdes Senior Community who cared so well for our mother. Arrangements entrusted to COATS FUNERAL HOME - WATERFORD.



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Inspire Theatre returns to live performances

Courtesy of Inspire Theatre

Inspire Theatre is returning to in-person performances with an outdoor presentation of John Buchan's adaptation of Alfred Hitchcock's film "The 39 Steps."

Set in 1935, the play follows Richard Hannay, a bored, lonely bachelor on a wild chase through the Scottish countryside as he attempts to save the country from foreign spies. Along the way, Hannay is entranced by beautiful women while being hunted down by would-be assassins. The script is full of allusions to other Alfred Hitchcock films.

Originally slated for 2019, Inspire is kicking off its 2021-22 season with this murder-mystery-spy thriller-farcical-parody of Patrick Barlow's original 1910 book. All 29 scenes are played on a single-set stage and all of the characters are played by a ridiculously talented four-plus person cast.

Michael Whitcher of Westland plays the lead, Richard Hannay, while Sara Overwater of Livonia fills the parts of three beautiful women - Anabella, Pamela, and Margaret. The other two cast members, John Thiede of Romulus and Dave Zolotarchuk of Ypsilanti, are affectionately known as "the clowns."

The clowns transform into a wide variety of characters from milkmen and hotel proprietors to villainous scoundrels. Thiede also has the assignment of several gender-bending roles. Our plus, or fifth, cast member is our own addition - a creative scene setter known affectionately as the Stage Meister - played by Gary Burton of Westland. The Stage Meister fills the roles of crowds, marching bands, dancing girls, sheep and furniture.

With the uncertainty of gathering restrictions, Inspire Theatre constructed an outdoor stage directly behind the theater in the rear parking area. Len

Fisher of Wayne, Inspire's managing director, says plans are to use this area for this show and future performances. Already slated is an outdoor recital of YPY School of Performing Arts in August.

Attendees should bring a comfortable chair and sunscreen for matinees. Parking will be at Warren Road Church, next to theater.

Weekend performances run 7 p.m. June 11, 12, 18, 19, 25 and 26; and 2 p.m. June 13, 19, 20, 26 and 27. Tickets are available at inspiretheatre.ticketleap.com or by calling the theater at 734-751-7057. Inspire Theatre is located at 33455 Warren Road in Westland.

Livonia councilman returns from deployment

Shelby Tankersley HometownLife.com
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

Rob Donovic has learned it's the little things that make home, home.

Following a more than seven-month deployment to the Middle East as part of his service with the U.S. Army National Guard, the Livonia councilman is enjoying seeing green trees, eating a slice of pizza and being with his family again.

"It's the littlest things - just jumping in my truck, turning on country music and driving down Five Mile or driving down Plymouth Road and seeing friendly faces," Donovic said.

Throughout his deployment, which began in late September, the councilman tuned into council meetings virtually like his colleagues. The only difference was a 7 p.m. meeting in Livonia was a 2 a.m. event for Donovic.

Throughout his deployment, he operated in Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Syria.

On a council meeting day, Donovic would get up around 6:30 a.m., work until about 3 or 4 p.m., eat, sleep a little, and be up by midnight to prep for the meeting.

He'd typically find privacy in a community space nobody would be using in the wee hours of the morning.



Livonia City Councilman Rob Donovic, right, during his deployment.

COURTESY OF ROB DONOVIC

"I couldn't do council meetings in my tent because, of course, I have roommates and the last thing they want to hear about is water rates or people's

trash cans at two in the morning," Donovic said.

Council meetings would generally last until 5 or 6 a.m. his time, at which

point he'd just stay up and go through another day.

Donovic said his military leadership, council colleagues and city officials were "incredibly" helpful. He added having so much community support made it easier to be far from home for so long.

"The outpouring and level of support I got was just amazing," he said. "A lot of people I'd never met would just send me care packages all the time or the occasional postcard. That was just such an amazing experience."

"It was really motivating and, for me at least, it kind of helped put things in perspective as to why I wanted to join the military and why I wanted to serve a country that's given so much to my family specifically."

Donovic's unit, which included servicemembers from Michigan and Ohio, supported Operation Inherent Resolve. It performed strategic movement of soldiers and equipment as part of a military intervention against the militant group ISIL, also known as ISIS.

Donovic served as a door gunner on a chinook helicopter as part of that work, providing security for the aircraft's crew.

Contact reporter Shelby Tankersley at stankersle@hometownlife.com or 248-305-0448. Twitter: @shelby_tank.



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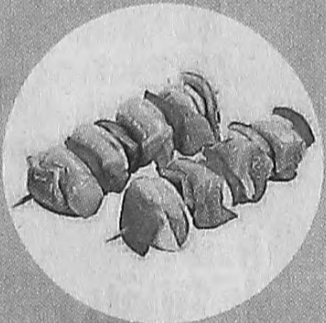
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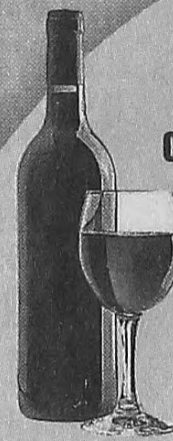


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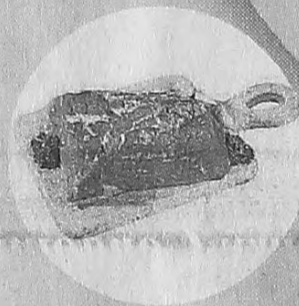
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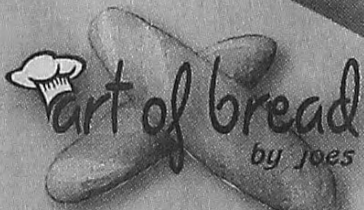
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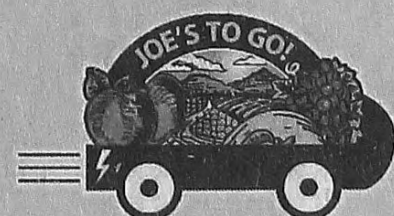
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SPORTS

Canton soccer stuns Salem for district title

Colin Gay Hometownlife.com
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

Canton knew what it was going to get from its defense.

If anything, the Chiefs girls soccer team was going to try and emulate what it had done against Plymouth-Canton Educational Park rival Salem in each of

its regular season matchups: keep the Rocks scoreless.

The defense was not the worry of Canton head coach Jeannine Reddy. She knew Canton could stop Salem. The question was whether Canton could beat Salem's defense.

This had been a struggle all year for the Chiefs, who only allowed 12 goals in

17 games, but had finished the regular season with a record of 5-5-5. The balance of experience was heavily favoring the defense, something junior Emily Woods knew well.

In the final moments, Woods just wanted to give those seniors a chance to play again.

"We've had our whole senior back

line, they've been so good all season and our offense it took us a little bit — we don't have any seniors up there," Woods said. "I've just been wanting to step up for those seniors, with the year we didn't have last year, I just want to give them a long season."

See **SOCCER**, Page 2B

Plymouth overcomes adversity to win D1 district baseball title

Ed Wright Hometownlife.com
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

After enduring the immense challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic and adapting to a late-season head-coaching change, overcoming a 5-1 deficit midway through Saturday's Division 1 District 16 championship game against Belleville must have seemed like a walk in the park for members of Plymouth's resilient baseball team.

Fueled by contributions from players throughout their roster, the Wildcats rallied for an emotional 8-6 victory over the Tigers to win a title few saw coming just a couple weeks ago.

The championship performance was orchestrated by interim head coach Matt Penn, who took the reins of the program on May 14 after former head coach Scott McGregor and Plymouth's athletics administration agreed to part ways.

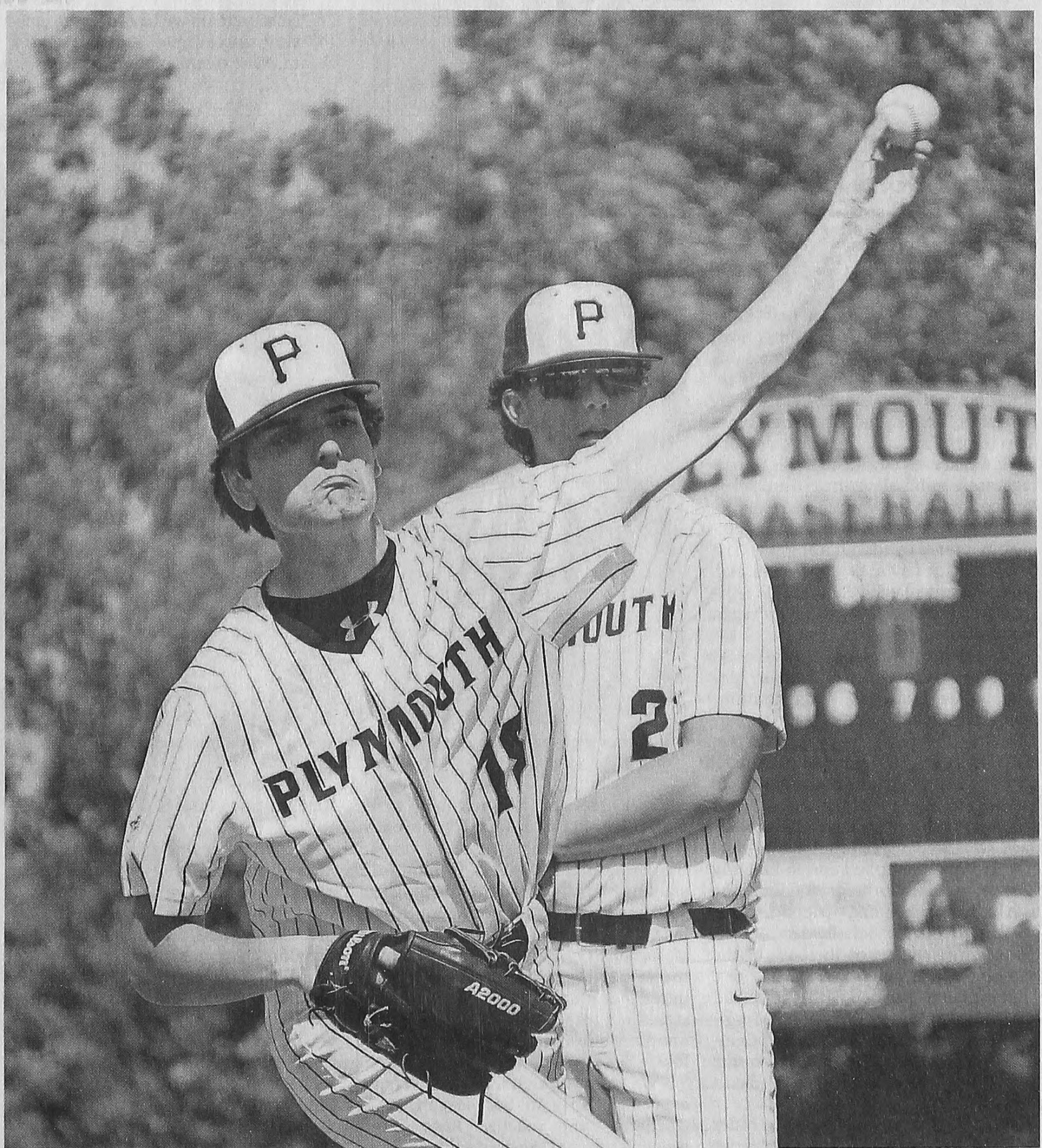
Penn, a former head baseball coach at Garden City High School, is an employee for the Plymouth-Canton Schools maintenance department and defensive coordinator of the Wildcats' varsity football team, but he was not part of the Wildcats' baseball coaching staff at the time of his hiring last month.

Plymouth was 7-21 before Penn took over. It has won eight of 10 games since.

"When I got the call from (Plymouth Athletic Director) Ray Miller on May 14, I thought I was in trouble at first," Penn said, smiling. "I thought, 'Uh, oh, what have I done.' When Ray offered me the interim job, I was shocked since it was so close to districts. I thought, 'OK, I'm a member of the community here, I think I can get them to districts and through districts because I've done it before (as head coach at Garden City).'"

Penn credited assistant coaches James O'Farrell, Ricardo Rojas and Shannon Withem with making the head-coaching transition as smooth as possible.

During a lengthy get-together in right field moments after the victory over

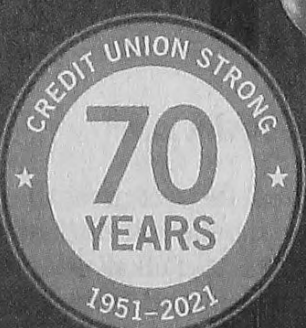



Wildcat William Holmes warms up to enter for Plymouth against Belleville. JOHN HEIDER/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

See **BASEBALL**, Page 2B

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Soccer

Continued from Page 1B

In the final two minutes of a tie game against Salem (15-1-3), Woods took a pass from junior Avery Coykendall in stride, finding the left corner of the net past Rocks goalkeeper Ava Holloway to give Canton (8-5-5) the 2-1 victory and a district title.

The Chiefs earned its first district title since the 2018 season.

"It's hard being at a Park school, listening to everybody, 'Oh, you're not going to win, you're not going to win,'" Canton head coach Jeannine Reddy said. "I tell them 'Play your heart out and leave everything on the field,' and that's what they did."

But for Canton to end Salem's undefeated campaign, it had to come from behind.

With the Rocks controlling possession through most of the first half, Salem senior Macayla Harris struck first, taking a rebound off a Canton defender, adjusted and fired it past Canton senior goalkeeper Lauren Kubacki for the first goal scored between the two teams since May 28, 2019 — the last time these two teams faced off in the playoffs.

Nearly four minutes later, the Chiefs tied it up, using a combination set of Leah Truman and Woods to find Taylor Steinagel for the score.

The game remained scoreless until the final two minutes, but Kubacki and the rest of Canton's defense remained busy.

The Chiefs senior goalkeeper stepped up in a major way with 10:58 left: diving to her right and batting the ball away from her net off a strike from Salem senior Paige Skaff to keep the game tied.

"It was huge because any time you're down, you just have to move on," Kubacki said. "It's so hard not to get in your head, but you have to push past it and move forward to the next thing. The game happens so quickly. We could have been down three, but we are not. We have to keep pushing."

With multiple stops in the first 30 minutes of the second half, Kubacki watched as Woods finished the go-ahead score — Canton's 24th score of



The Canton girls soccer team celebrates its first district title since 2018. PHOTOS BY JOHN KEMSKI/SPECIAL TO HOMETOWNLIFE.COM



Salem's Ava Holloway tries to save a shot attempt by Canton's Emily Woods.

the season — with jubilee, but knowing she had to shut Canton down for the final 118 seconds.

"This is a team we have been so close to every single time," Kubacki said of Salem. "The talent is there, and it's on

our team too. It was a really great feeling when we scored that second goal. It's like all our hard work paid off."

This is how Reddy encouraged her players heading into her team's seemingly daunting task of beating Salem in a district final: the Rocks have beaten a lot of teams in 2021, but they had never beaten Canton.

After that seemingly daunting task was conquered in 80 minutes of play, that aspect was only part of the Chiefs reason for celebrating. The other part was what comes next.

"It's unreal," Woods said. "We get to go to practice Monday."

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

Baseball

Continued from Page 1B

Belleville, emotions ran strong, Penn said.

"I'm incredibly proud of how these guys came together," Penn said. "I don't think that — the way things were going early in the season — they had any inclination that they would be standing here today holding a district championship trophy."

The Wildcats advanced to the June 9 regional semifinal against Ann Arbor Pioneer.

Plymouth advanced to the championship game by dominating Canton, 9-0, in Saturday's 10 a.m. semifinal. Belleville squeaked by Salem, 7-6, in the 12:30 p.m. semifinal to punch its ticket to the title game.

The Wildcats trailed Belleville 5-1 heading into the bottom of the fourth inning before mounting a momentum-changing rally.

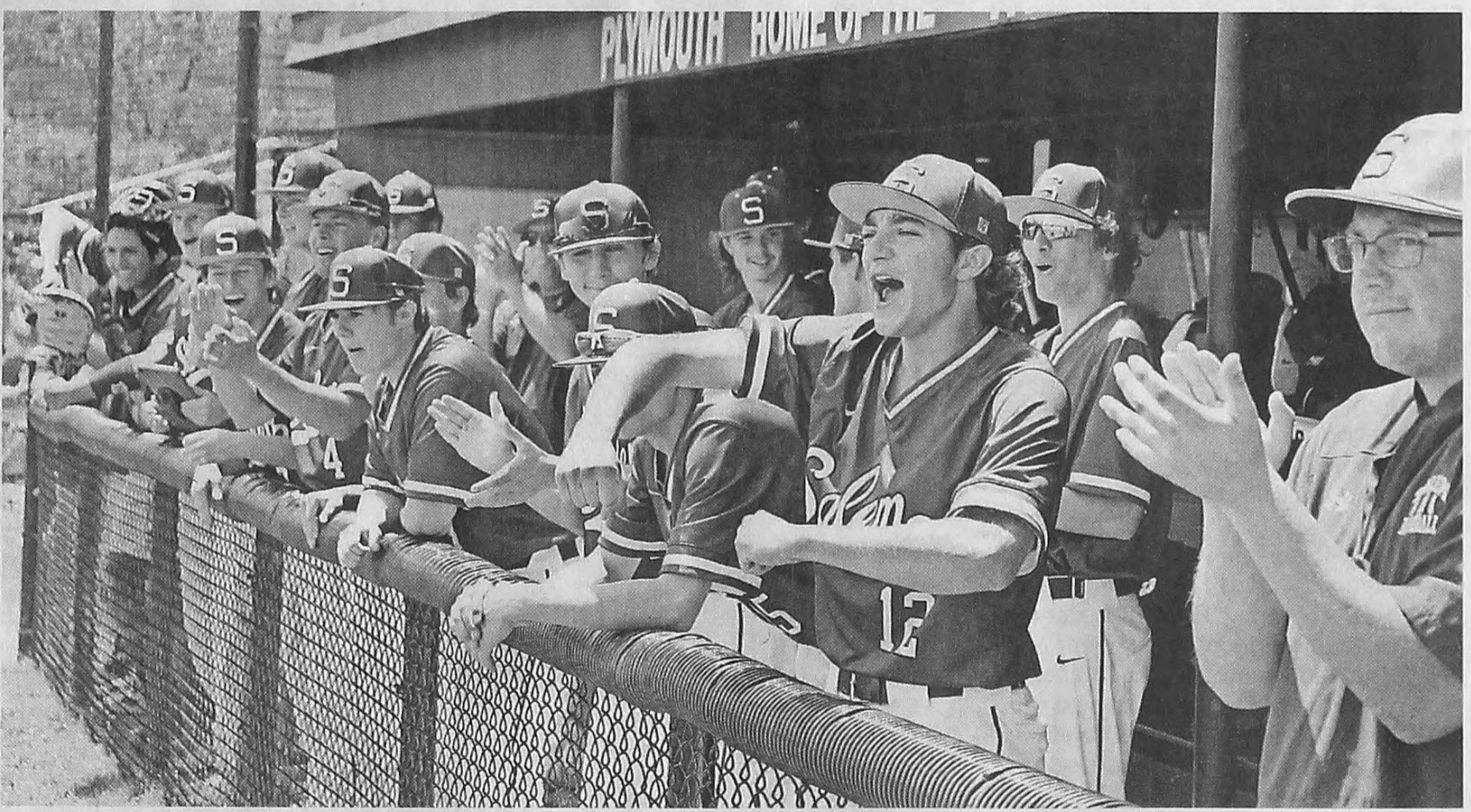
Plymouth loaded the bases with two outs when Jake Taylor and Lucas Powell sandwiched singles around a walk to Tanner Younglas. Devin Beauchamp and Ryan Ouellette delivered back-to-back two-run singles to knot the game at 5-all. Ryan Campbell and Kane Elmy followed with walks before Taylor — the 10th batter in the inning — ripped a rocket that Belleville left-fielder Garrett Meggison's snagged at the base of the left-center field wall.

Belleville responded with a go-ahead run in the top of the fifth when Meggison's two-out infield single plated Cameron McKiddie, who led off the frame with a double and advanced to third on a wild pitch.

After Plymouth went down in order in the bottom of the fifth, Belleville put runners on first and second with one out in the top of the sixth before Wildcat reliever Tanner Coffey came in and struck out Riley Folks and DeMarion Owens, both on called third strikes.

Plymouth's championship rally started in the bottom of the sixth with an infield single by pinch-hitter Nate Cain, who battled back from an 0-2 count. Cain advanced to second on a balk by freshman southpaw Andrew Matheny and scored on Beauchamp's single, deadlocking the game at 6-6.

Ouellette followed with a single before Campbell stroked an RBI single down the left-field line. Evan Berger delivered an insurance run with a scorching two-out single, scoring Ouellette to make it 8-6.



The Salem High bench cheers its baserunners on against Belleville. JOHN HEIDER/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

Coffey nailed down the win by striking out the side in the top of the seventh, generating a joyful wave of bedlam in the middle of the Wildcats' diamond — a sight no one affiliated with the program could have imagined even a month earlier.

Junior lefty William Holmes earned the mound win with four solid innings in relief of starter Ethan Todd. Holmes struck out three Tigers and allowed just one earned run before giving way to Coffey.

"We went through a lot of adversity, especially early in the season," said Ouellette, who reached base seven times Saturday. "We started the season by losing two games to Salem, then Belleville beat Salem, so we were a little nervous coming in. But sometimes you play better when you're nervous."

"Once one person gets a hit, it becomes contagious and the entire team starts hitting. That's what worked for us today."

Ouellette, who along with his fellow seniors saw his entire junior season wiped out by the COVID-19 pandemic, said he was fueled by one recurring thought Saturday.

"I'm not playing baseball in college, so I didn't want this to be my last game," he said. "It was an emotional day, knowing each at-bat, each play could be your last. That's what kept me fired up."

'Cats thump Chiefs

Plymouth senior righthander Kane Elmy's final pitching performance on his home field was a masterpiece. After working out of a bases-loaded, one-out first-inning jam, Elmy slammed the door on Canton in Saturday's district semifinal, striking out five while allowing just two hits — both by No. 9 hitter Justin Kozdron — as Plymouth prevailed, 9-0.

After loading the bases in the first on a hit-by-pitch, walk and Wildcat error, Canton did not advance a runner past first base the final six innings.

Offensively, Plymouth struck early and often, scoring at least one run in every inning but the seventh.

Ouellette was 4-for-4 with two triples, three RBI and two runs scored while Younglas blasted a two-run home run and walked twice.

Campbell was 2-for-4 with two runs and a pair of stolen bases while Berger went 1-for-3 with a sacrifice fly and towering double that one-hopped the left-field fence.

Tigers edge Rocks

In a back-and-forth contest that never lacked drama, Belleville outlasted Salem, 7-6, thanks to Folks' seventh-inning single that plated Kyler Warren, who opened the frame with a triple.

Warren pitched the first six innings to earn the win. Matheny struck out three in the bottom of the seventh to pick up the save.

Trailing 1-0 in the bottom of the first, the Rocks seized a 2-1 advantage on two-out RBI hits from Ben Cannon (triple) and Robert Ahlgren (single).

Belleville bounced back to grab a 5-2 lead with two runs in the third and fifth before Salem rallied to tie the game at 5-all with a three-spot in the bottom of the fifth. With two outs and the bases juiced, Ahlgren scolded a two-run single. Lucas Dieffenbaucher stroked a game-tying single, plating Cannon.

The Tigers regained the lead, 6-5, in the top of the sixth when William McCorry singled with one out, advanced to second on a sacrifice bunt and scored on an error.

Undaunted, Salem made it 6-6 in the bottom of the sixth when Nick Kroll singled, moved to second on a sacrifice bunt by Dylan Fleming and scored on a single by Zach Salinas.

Belleville advanced to the district final on Folks' hitting heroics and Matheny's lockdown pitching.

Salem starting pitcher Mark Szymanski worked the first five innings, yielding six hits and one walk while striking out three Tigers.

Contact reporter Ed Wright at eawright@hometownlife.com or 517-375-1113.

Novi soccer silences Northville in district final

Colin Gay Hometownlife.com
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

Each season, Novi has prided itself on its defense, no matter the level of talent or experience in had at forward.

"If you talk to Eva (Burns), even when she was a freshman, we talked about defense, defense, defense," Novi head coach Todd Pheiffer said. "Defense is what's going to win you championships. We keep the other team from scoring, we always feel like we'll get a chance."

Just like in the Wildcats' previous two matchups against KLAA West rival Northville, all that separated Novi from a district title was one goal. The Wildcats (10-6-4) let the defense do the rest, beating the Mustangs (12-9), 1-0, for their fifth-straight district title.

This was nothing like we were two years ago, three years ago. This is brand new," Novi senior goalkeeper Abbey Pheiffer said. "We were a fresh team, never having played together before. For us to come out and beat our rival in the district final, it feels great."

Holding firm on the mantra of "defense wins championships," a Novi defender proved the difference in the game



Novi celebrates after Eva Burns scores its only goal of the game against Northville.

JOHN KEMSKI/SPECIAL TO HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

on the scoreboard.

Taking a free kick from the far right side of the field with 21 minutes left in the first half, senior Eva Burns sliced the ball above Northville senior goalkeeper Samantha Pendelton's fingertips, landing in the top left corner of the net for her first goal of the season.

While 1-0 matchups were familiar between these two teams, Burns said the message at half was to put some distance between Novi and Northville in the final 40 minutes.

"We talked about going out and try-

ing to get more," Burns said. "If not, just trying to hold onto that lead. I think it was really good teamwork to keep that lead."

In the final 20 minutes, Northville gave everything to take that lead away from Novi, replicating the comeback victory the Mustangs had against Livonia Stevenson in the district semifinal.

"It definitely showed that they had a sense of urgency, that the energy picked up," Northville head coach Eric Brucker said.

"My kids, they gave all they had."

Novi's goalkeeper made sure the zero stayed right where it was.

Facing an increased attack, Abbey Pheiffer continued to make saves, making three in the final 20 minutes — including a free kick that she deflected away from the crowd in front of the net and a corner coming back the other way — to continue Novi's shutout streak to four games.

"They were definitely putting pressure on me in the end," Pheiffer said. "I just knew I had to step up. I knew I was a senior and I've been here before. I know what it feels like. I just had to step up and play my game."

Coming into the season having lost 13 seniors from the 2020 season lost to the COVID-19 pandemic, Todd Pheiffer didn't know what he was going to have in 2021.

Heading into districts with just a handful of players that had experienced playoff soccer before, he gave his seniors the voice, to give the sophomores and freshmen an idea of what to expect when it's time to win or go home.

But through three district games, outscoring their opponents collectively 5-0 and leaving Tom Holzer Ford Field in Northville ultimately with a trophy, Pheiffer is reminded of what Novi girls soccer has built, and will continue to build well beyond 2021.

"We'll lose some people here or there, but the next group steps up," he said. "I hear from the freshmen, I get emails from the middle schoolers about our program: They can't wait to be a part of it."

"This is what you're leaving your legacy. That's why it's never about defending a title, but about you getting yours, adding to the legacy that's Novi soccer."

Contact reporter Colin Gay at cgay@hometownlife.com.

SL East girls soccer earns first district title since 2015

From Staff Reports Hometownlife.com
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

South Lyon East earned its first district final win since 2015, beating Pinckney, 3-1, to advance to the regional round of the 2021 Michigan High School Athletic Association girls soccer playoffs.

Fifteen minutes into the first half, Cougars junior Jessi Boulard found Annika Gilson at midfield, who dribbled the ball up the field, found a way through Pinckney's defense and took a shot on net, scoring the first goal of the game.

Less than three minutes later, Pinckney tied it, keeping the score tied heading into half.

Sophomore Alyssa Melquist gave South Lyon East the lead in the second half, taking a pass from Emma Pompo

for the score. Pompo answered herself later with the Cougars' third goal of the game.

"After a long and grueling conference season I felt like the girls responded extremely well after traveling over an hour to Tecumseh for both our games and playing on grass together for the first time in over two years," South Lyon East head coach Pete Stoyanovich said. "The girls had a very good week of practice and were extremely focused and confident heading into Districts facing two very good teams in Milan, then Pinckney. ...

"Very proud of our girls in the way they stepped it up and played, now turning our focus to the Regionals."

South Lyon East last made a district final game in 2016, losing to Livonia Ladywood, 2-0.



South Lyon East girls soccer won its first district championship since 2015 with a 3-1 win against Pinckney. COURTESY OF MELISSA SAMLUK

Northville golf falls short in regional, wins KLAA

From Staff Reports Hometownlife.com
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

The Northville boys golf battled to a fourth-place finish at the Dunham Hills Regional. Host team Hartland finished first with a team score of 304. Brighton (306) and Catholic Central (317) were the other two teams advancing to the State Finals June 11-12 at Forest Akers.

The Mustangs totaled a team score of 320. Greg Braun led all Mustang golfers with a 77 (+6). Although he only managed seven greens in regulation during the round, Braun had the flat stick working and was able to card 10 pars and a birdie on the day.

"Dunham Hills and the greens a real challenge," Braun said. "My team and I fought all day but came up a little short. But I am proud of our performance and absolutely enjoyed the season."

Mason Sokolowski added a 78, but may have had the shot of the tournament.

In the 16th hole, Sokolowski glanced his "punch nine iron" off the flag stick, just missing a hole-in-one by two inches. He would tap in for the birdie.

Sokolowski, a newcomer this season, has been a big part of this team's success.

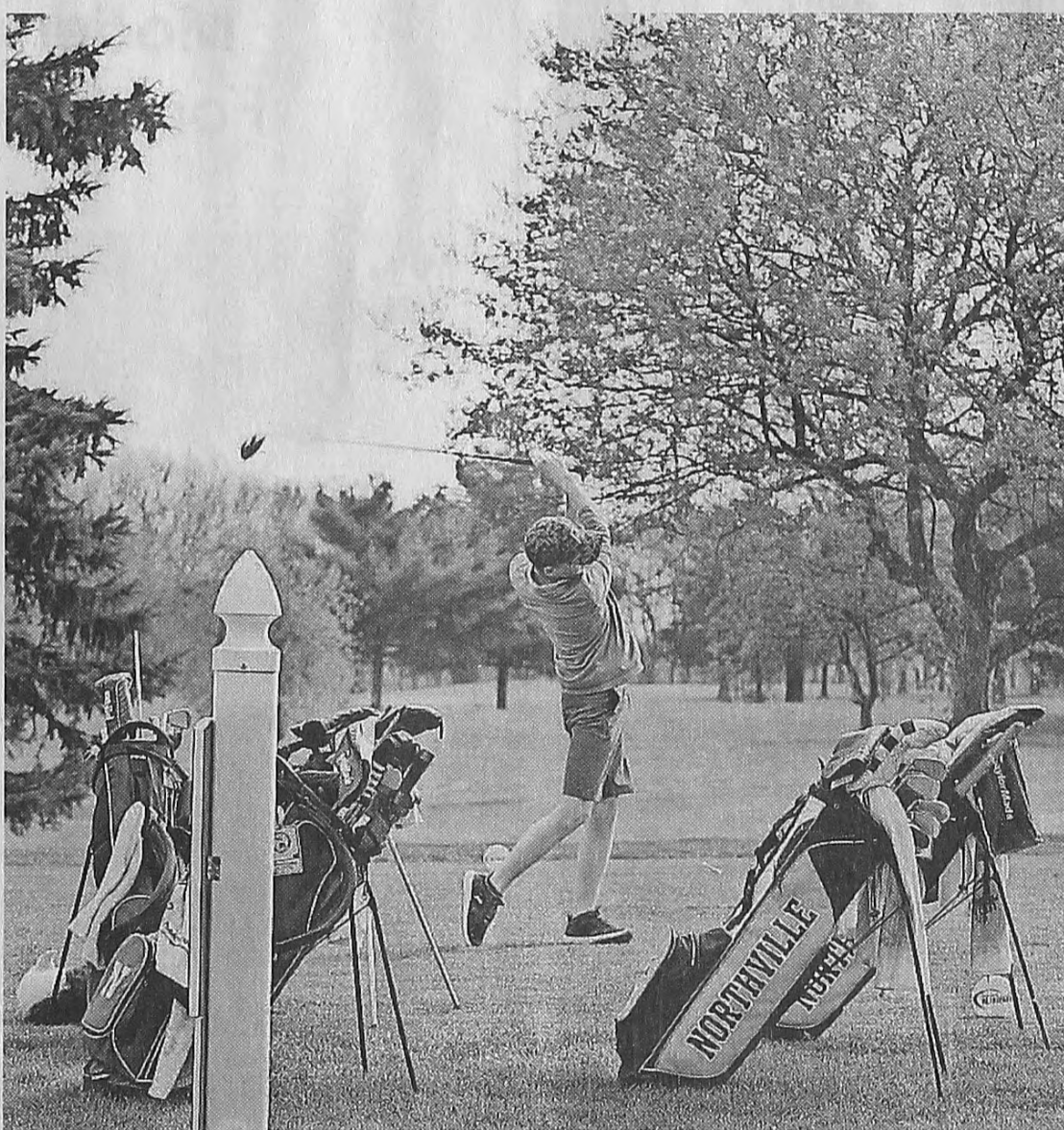
"Mason is on the cusp of taking his game to the next level, he'll be an exciting player to watch in the coming years," head coach Christopher Cronin said.

Playing in his last high school golf event, senior Griffin Blackman finished with an 81 on the day. Blackman had a tough start and end to his day, carding double-bogeys on his opening and closing holes.

"Even though he had a tough start and finish, Griffin stayed mentally locked in all day, playing the difficult front nine at Dunham Hills in one over par," Cronin said. "Griffin has always played the game with the knowledge that any shot can turn around a hole."

Jack Thallman finished the scoring for the Mustangs with an 83. After a slow start, that saw him five over par after four holes, Thallman made a birdie on the fourth hole to get his round back on track.

"Today was a struggle for Jack, but to his credit, he stayed with it and carded a score that contributed," Cronin said.



Northville's Mason Sokolowski played a big role in the Mustangs' KLAA win.

COURTESY OF CHRISTOPHER CRONIN

Not scoring for the Mustangs was senior Michael Gallagher, who posted an 89.

"Michael has been key to our success as a team this season. It was his first year of high school golf, but he plays like a four-year player," Cronin said. "He has been a terrific role model for our younger players, and his play this season has been outstanding."

Northville golf wins KLAA

The Northville boys golf team earned the KLAA West and overall conference title, combining their first-place performance in the preseason tournament and second-place finish in the postseason tournament to take the conference title over second-place Brighton and

third-place Novi.

In the postseason tournament, the Mustangs used a balanced scoring attack with all six players scoring between 73-78, combining for a team score of 297.

"When we have found success this year, our depth as a team has been on display," Cronin said.

The Mustangs were led by Braun who carded a 72 (one over par) for a second-place tie with Brighton's Winston Lerch. Braun finished the day with an eagle on the No. 5 hole and two birdies.

Earning All-Conference honors, Braun was expected by his head coach to have this level of performance.

"Greg's game has become crisper in the past two weeks; his driver is finding the fairway and his irons have on point,"

Cronin said. "He really works at his game, and that effort is really paying off."

The Mustangs also saw a solid performance from Gallagher, who posted a 73 (two over par). Gallagher got off to a hot start playing his first seven holes minus three par, and, although he gave those strokes back to the course, he finished tied with Novi's Sam Lewinski for fourth place in the tournament.

"Michael is a natural athlete, but he has a champion's demeanor when he is competing," Cronin said. "He never allows a bad hole to faze him, and, conversely, if he finds success, he handles it in stride. Whether he was three under or two over par, his approach never changed. In my opinion, Michael's ability to manage his emotions has been a big part of his success this season."

Cameron Charles finished with a 75 (three over par), which was good for an eighth-place finish at the tournament. It was the first varsity tournament for Charles since May 1, but the talented sophomore was ready when he was selected for the lineup. Charles had a slow start and was three over par after three holes, but he was able to use three birdies to play the remaining 15 holes in one over par and make a huge contribution to the team's success.

"Cameron's ball striking has been really solid the past two weeks, and I could see his confidence growing in practice and matches," Cronin said. "I wasn't surprised that he was able to put it together today."

Jack Thallman was the final scorer for Northville, posting a 77 (six over par). It was a roller coaster for Thallman, who had four birdies and only five pars on the day.

Thallman, who earned All-Conference honors, got his score down to plus-three before carding an unfortunate triple-bogey on his final hole.

"Jack has been one of our top players all season, but today was a struggle," Cronin said. "He didn't have much working during the round, but he never gave up on it and kept battling. Jack's mental game has really improved this season, and today he never quit trying to figure things out."

Send game results and stats to LivSports@hometownlife.com.

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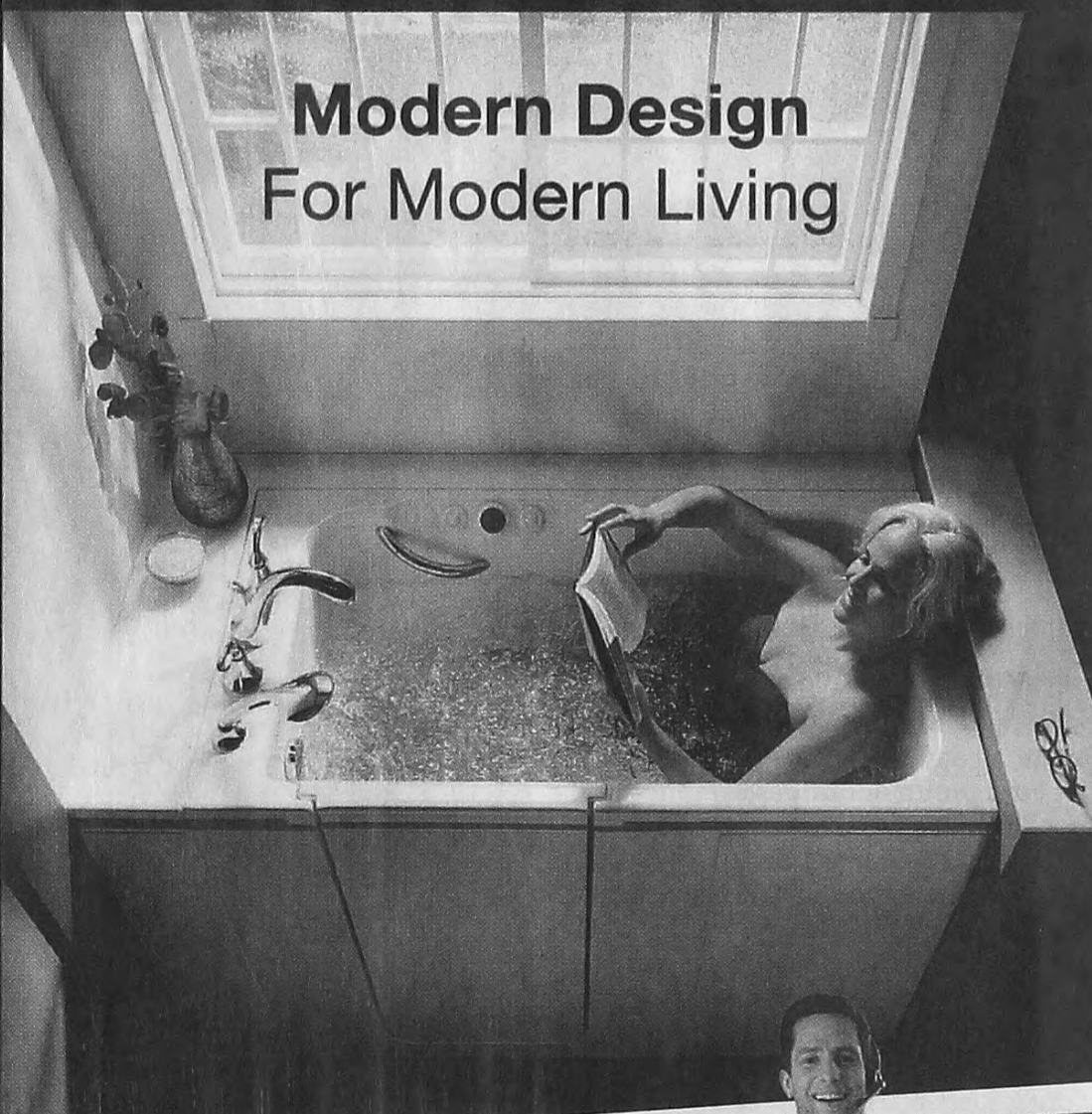
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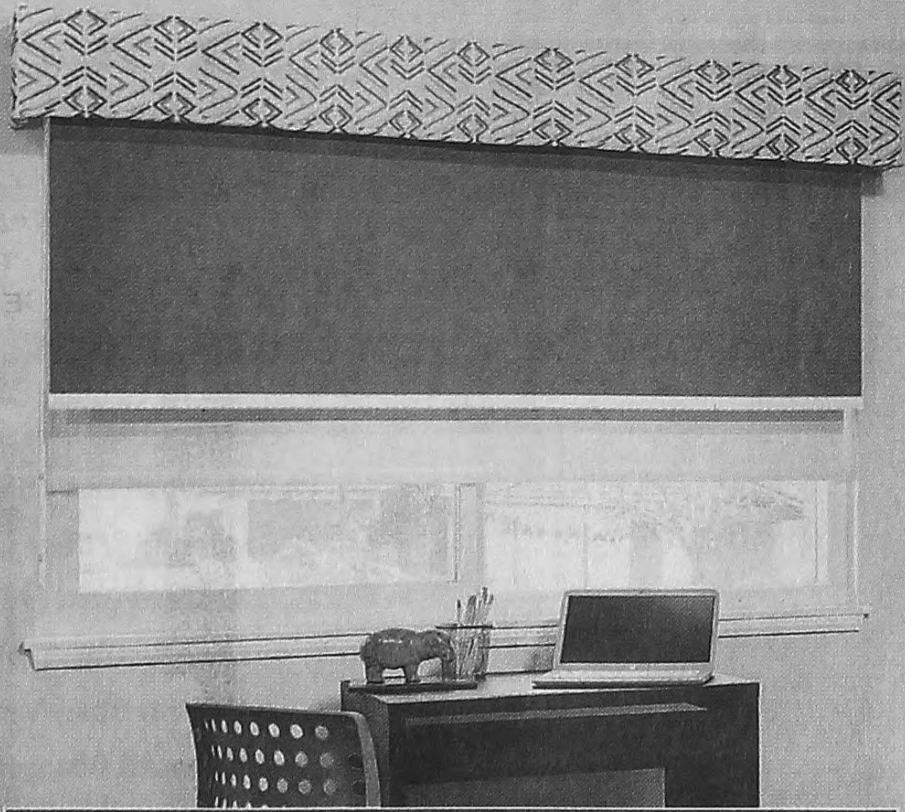
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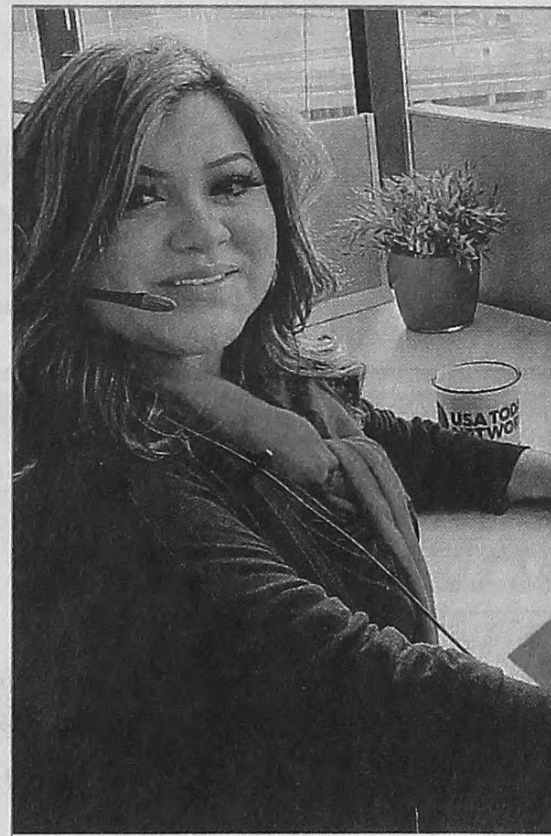
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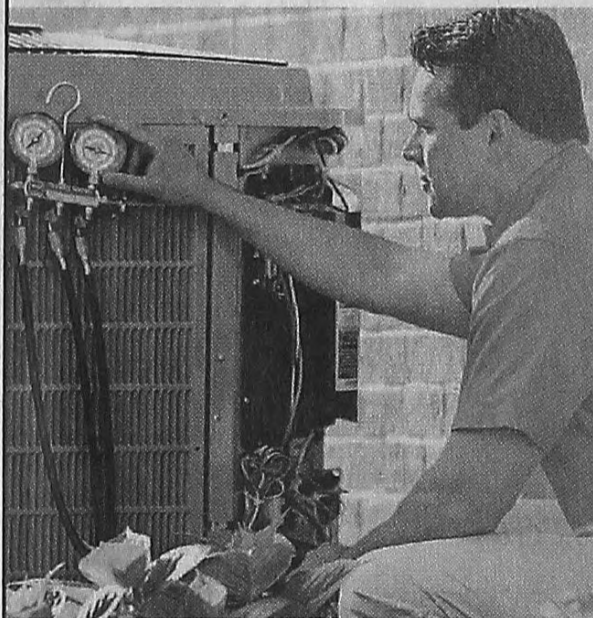
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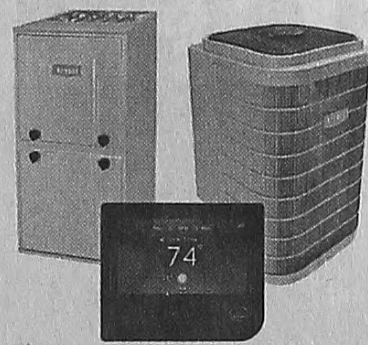


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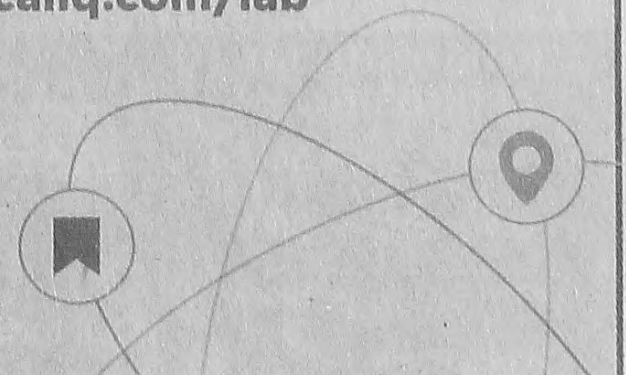
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