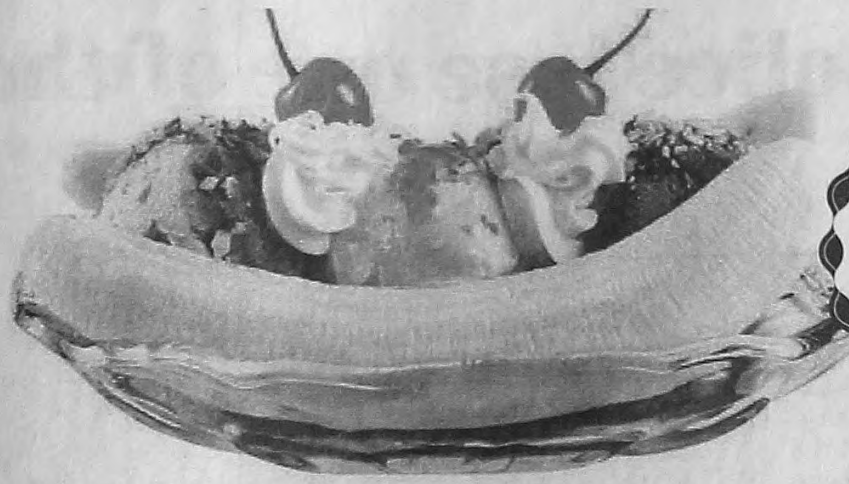


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CANTON

# OBSERVER

THURSDAY, AUGUST 5, 2021 | HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK

## Farmington Hills wants regional plan to address deer overpopulation

Shelby Tankersley

Hometownlife.com

USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

Most Oakland County residents agree the region has a deer overpopulation problem.

Farmington Hills residents say deer cause road hazards, ruin their landscaping and attack their pets. And just about everyone's had it with the years-long issue.

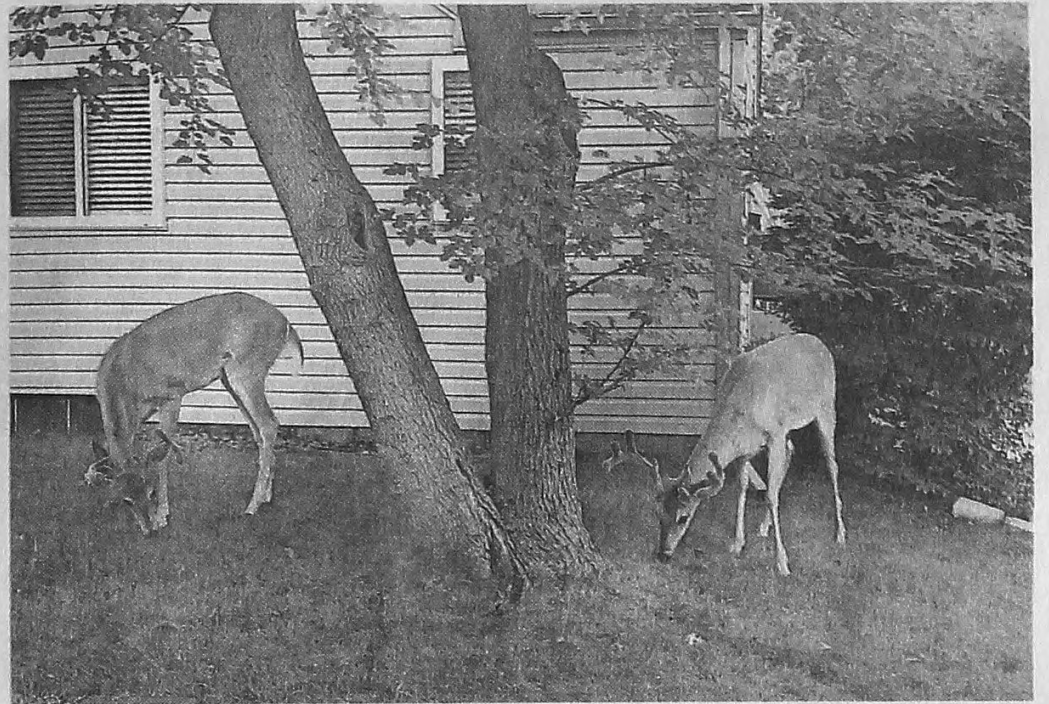
So, city officials are looking to bring neighboring communities together in a coalition to address the issue for good.

"We have got our arms around the

problem, I think, pretty well," City Manager Gary Mekjian said. "This is a regional issue; it is not a local issue that is specific to Farmington Hills. That's why we're trying to develop this."

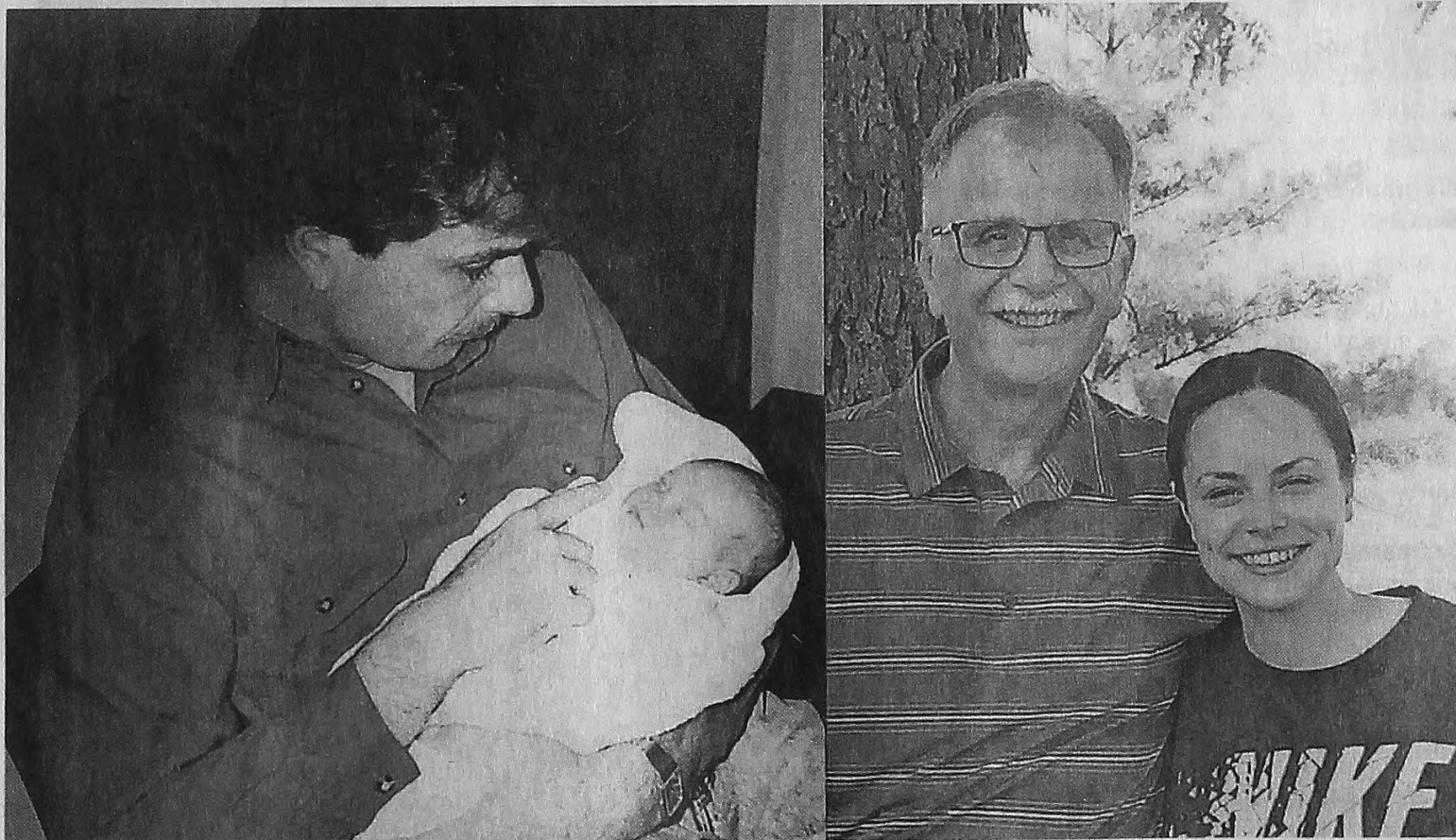
Mekjian said he's been in touch with about a dozen other communities to garner support for such a coalition. The group would create an action plan, which Mekjian hopes the whole county would use. City officials say state guidance isn't effective. The only solution currently offered is culling, or killing, deer, which often causes controversy

See DEER, Page 4A



In many Oakland County neighborhoods, dealing with deer is part of life. SUSAN BROMLEY/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

## 30 years later, adopted daughter finds birth father



At left, Bob Robinson in October 1990 with birth daughter Deanna just before Dean and Suzanne Swanson adopted her. At right, Robinson and Deanna, 30, earlier this year. The two recently reconnected. COURTESY PHOTOS

Rachel Greco

Lansing State Journal

USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

VERMONTVILLE - Bob Robinson and Deanna Swanson both know about their last moments together 30 years ago, just before Swanson, then 3 days old, was adopted.

For Swanson, 30, it was a comforting story about her biological father that she'd often heard from her adoptive parents, Suzanne and Dean Swanson.

"About Bob, they would say that he held me for hours and hours," Deanna Swanson said. "He was the last one to see me before my adoption."

Her parents told Swanson they

waited hours at the adoption agency in Lansing while Robinson said goodbye to her.

Then they'd show her a photo — Robinson, then 32, sitting in a chair at the adoption agency holding Swanson, who is wrapped in a blanket.

"He loved you so much," her adoptive parents would tell her. "He didn't want to let you go."

"It's a wonderful story and I always heard it, but he was a stranger to me," Swanson said.

That changed earlier this year when father and daughter reunited at a coffee shop in Northville.

Robinson said the recollection of that day still pains him.

Now 63, he had been divorced for a

year and was working as an insurance manager in Lansing when Swanson was born on Oct. 1, 1990. Her birth mother, who was married to another man, decided to put her up for adoption, he said.

A lawyer he'd consulted told him stopping it would require filing a lawsuit for custody, Robinson said.

He relented, and on Oct. 3, the adoption agency's staff asked him if he wanted to see Swanson before her adoptive parents took her home.

He doesn't remember how long he sat in the agency's office holding her.

"I did not want the moment to end," Robinson said. "They eventually said,

See ADOPTION, Page 4A

## Inn at St. John's property in Plymouth Township sold

David Veselenak

Hometownlife.com

USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

The Inn at St. John's property in western Wayne County has a new owner for the first time in decades.

The Archdiocese of Detroit announced Aug. 2 it had finalized a sale of the property along Five Mile between Northville and Sheldon roads in Plymouth Township to Pulte Family Management SJ LLC, a for-profit entity of the William J. Pulte Trust. The sale will transfer ownership of the property, which includes the hotel, golf course, banquet center and more from the Catholic archdiocese to a private company. The terms of the sale were not disclosed.

The property sale comes a few years after the death of William Pulte, the founder of home-building giant Pulte-Group Inc. A longtime philanthropist, he served with a small group of local Catholic business leaders who worked with Cardinal Adam Maida, who formerly led the Archdiocese of Detroit, to finance and develop the former St. John's Seminary campus into a hotel, conference center, and golf course.

"The Inn at St. John's was near and dear to my father's heart," said Mark Pulte, William Pulte's son, in a news release announcing the sale. "He was honored to work with Cardinal Maida on the transformation of this beautiful property and to have played a role in its success. When the Archdiocese expressed interest in selling the property, my father's estate was a natural choice. They knew that it would be in good hands."

St. John's Seminary opened in 1948 and operated for 40 years before closing in 1988. After that, plans were brought forth to revitalize the site in the mid-'90s, with work being done in

See INN, Page 4A

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# Redford police lose one of their own to cancer

Susan Vela

Hometownlife.com

USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

Redford Township police are mourning the loss of Lt. John Butler, a law enforcer they're remembering for his contributions to the department and his likability and empathy with nearly everyone he met. Butler, 51, of Orion left the department about a year ago to undergo cancer treatment. He had been with the department since 1997.

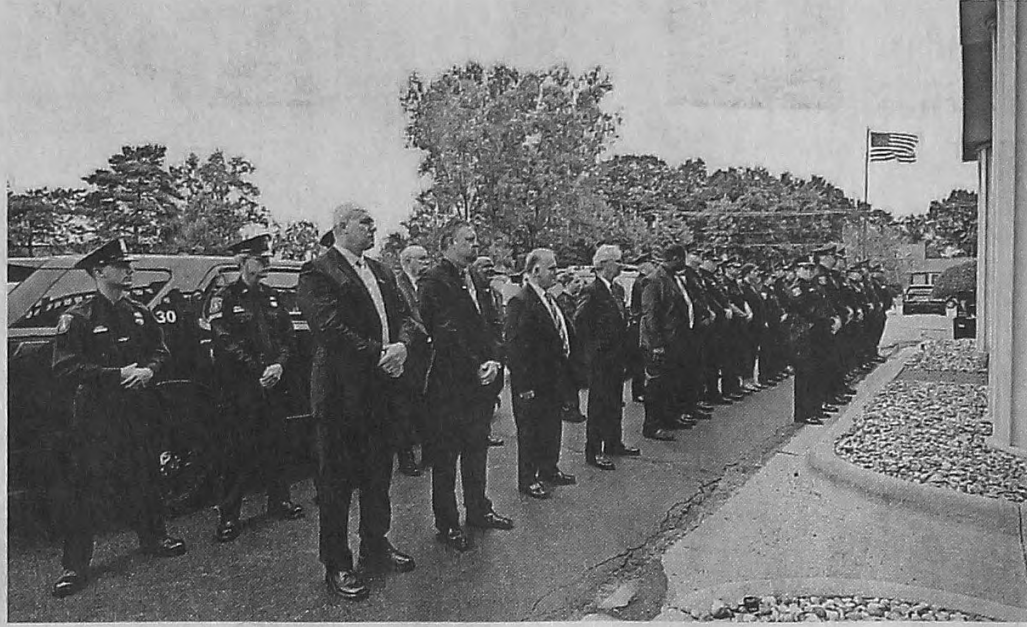
"It was a big blow to the department," Chief Nick Lentine said of his departure. "He had a lot of responsibilities around here. He was a well-liked supervisor, not to mention the fact that a good friend was seriously ill."

Butler died July 23. He was known as a loving husband to his wife, Julie, a dear father and an adored grandfather.

The police department has been crowding its Facebook page memorializing the man who served the department's SWAT team, perimeter rifle team, and firearms cadre.

He also was a field training officer and firearms training coordinator, whom Lentine said really was instrumental in the department getting more frequent, more routine training in necessities like firearms and officer safety.

Butler was named the department's 2009 Officer of the Year for the weight of his overall contributions.



The Redford Township Police Department lost Lt. John Butler to cancer on July 23, 2021. COURTESY OF REDFORD TOWNSHIP POLICE

"John was a tough-as-nails officer with a heart of gold," a recent post reads. "Truly one of the good guys in every way, John cared for everyone he came in contact with, both fellow officer and civilian, and often wore his heart on his sleeve for the world to see."

"JB could arrest someone, give them a life lesson talk, and have them laughing by the time he got them to jail."

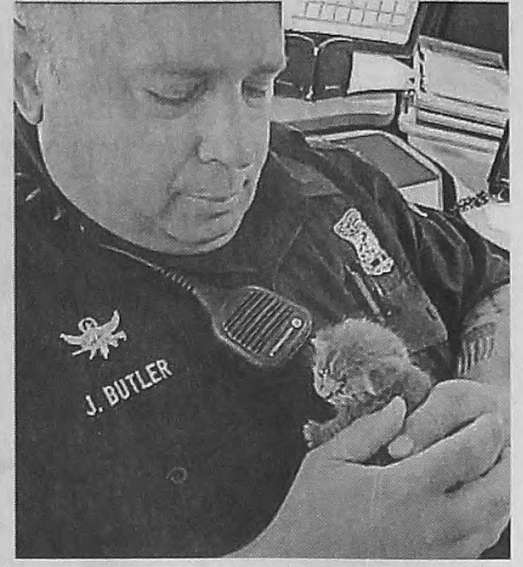
So that future generations think of his contributions, department officials

have a new name for its firing range: The Lt. John Butler Firearms Training Center.

"Definitely he was here to serve and that's something he took seriously," Lentine said.

A burial ceremony has taken place. Those wanting to honor Butler are asked to support The Thin Blue Line, which comforted his family through his cancer battle.

Donations can be made at



The Redford Township Police Department lost Lt. John Butler to cancer on July 23, 2021. COURTESY OF REDFORD TOWNSHIP POLICE

www.tblofmi.com or sent to The Thin Blue Line of Michigan, 13938 Inkster Rd, #400, Redford, MI 48239.

Redford police left a few last messages for Butler. Here's one that appeared in a Facebook post and obituary: "Rest easy, Johnny! We've got the watch from here."

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

## Canton Twp. creates six-figure deputy supervisor position

The Canton Township Board of Trustees voted 6-0 (Treasurer Dian Slavens was not present) July 27 to create a deputy supervisor position that will offer an initial annual compensation package in the range of \$178,000 and \$224,000.

Canton Supervisor Anne Marie Graham-Hudak, whose annual compensation package costs the township between \$155,000 and \$160,000, said it's not unusual for appointed township employees to earn more than elected officials.

Graham-Hudak said the deputy supervisor position will provide an additional layer of departmental oversight that will increase efficiency and accountability within the township while providing its residents with enhanced services.

"There has been so much disinvestment by the previous township regimes that programs and services the township's residents deserve have had to be pulled back and employees have been overworked," Graham-Hudak said.

Graham-Hudak said the newly-created position will not require an increase in residents' taxes.

"The money is already in the budget, but not being used," she said. "One of this board's primary goals is to serve residents while being fiscally responsible, which we are. It is a disservice to residents to not move forward with these fiscally-responsible changes."

Graham-Hudak said the township has funded positions similar to the new deputy supervisor job in the past, but has used different terminology to describe the position.

"For instance, former Public Safety Director John Santomauro was a director of directors for five years and he received a pay and pension upgrade (comparable to what the deputy supervisor will make), but his title didn't reflect it," Graham-Hudak said.

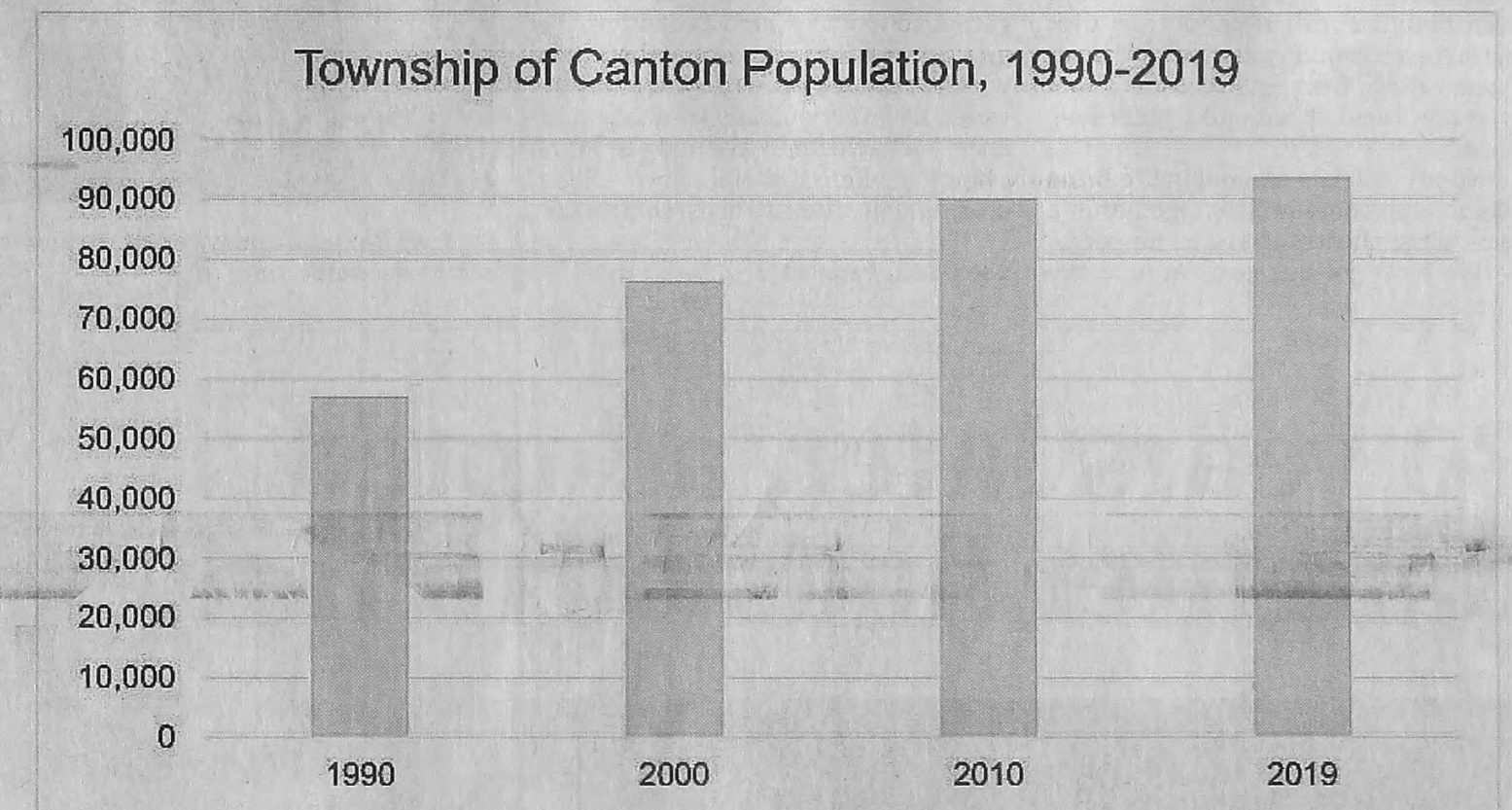


Figure 1: Township of Canton Population, 1990-2019

This graph created by consulting group Novak Raftelis shows Canton's population growth since 1990. COURTESY OF NOVAK RAFTELIS

Michigan's Charter Township Act allows supervisors to appoint a deputy. Graham-Hudak, who was elected in November 2020, revealed she has selected a person for the position and that contract details will be discussed during the board's Aug. 10 meeting.

Graham-Hudak said the targeted person's name will not be released until a contract is solidified.

"We would like to see the deputy supervisor start sometime in late August or early September," she said.

### Growing demands

Canton has grown to become the second most-populous township in Michigan, trailing only Clinton Township in the number of residents, Graham-Hudak said.

"This growth necessitates changes to our organizational structure," Graham-Hudak said. "Canton is one of the only municipalities of its size that did not have a position comparable to the deputy supervisor position."

Recommendation no. 15 in an organizational assessment compiled by consulting group Novak Raftelis in June urged the township to create a deputy supervisor position "to supplement the increased responsibilities of the supervisor's office."

"The successful implementation of the organization-wide initiatives identified by the Board and described in this assessment will create a need for high-level project oversight and management capacity in the Supervisor's Office," the consulting group's 72-page assessment read. "In addition, it is important to ensure that the Township Supervisor's span of control is reasonable and allows the Supervisor to focus on broader strategic issues, community relations, and Board relations."

Pat Williams, Graham-Hudak's pred-



Canton Township Supervisor Anne Marie Graham-Hudak will be assisted by a deputy supervisor. JOHN HEIDER | HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

ecessor, suggested a deputy supervisor-like position was not necessary in Canton for the previous 12 years when he and Phil LaJoy served as supervisor — Williams from 2016-2020 and LaJoy from 2008-2016 — because they both had organizational management experience.

"Phil and I both came into the supervisor position with several years of experience in handling millions of dollars in budgets and overseeing a large number of directors and employees," Williams said. "The township is doing very well financially. Ideally, if there's such a surplus of money in the budget, I'd rather see it refunded to taxpayers."

Canton's deputy supervisor will be a non-merit employee, so his or her term will end once Graham-Hudak's time in office is over. Graham-Hudak's successor can retain the existing deputy supervisor or appoint a new person for the job.

The township currently employs a deputy treasurer and deputy clerk, both of which are merit positions that are not affected by elections.

Township Clerk Michael Siegrist said the creation of the deputy supervisor position was "long overdue."

"Canton Township was an outlier when it came to having a bureaucratic layer between elected officials and the organization itself," Siegrist said. "The township has been fairly successful over the past several years, but imagine how much more could have been accomplished (with a deputy supervisor)."

"It's hard when you're scaling up; it's a culture shift. But we have the budget for it and a professional recommendation."

The official request for board action regarding the deputy supervisor position stated that when the latest census data is released, Canton Township is expected to be the eighth-largest municipality in Michigan with more than 100,000 residents.

"The needs of the community have also continued to grow due to the larger population, which lead to increased governmental services and governing functions and requirements," the document said. "Due to the requirements to meet community needs and board goals, several positions were recommended to be created."

Graham-Hudak said the deputy supervisor's day-to-day responsibilities will be multi-faceted, including taking over some human resources-related duties.

"We're trying to set in place a structure that can help us meet the goals our employees and residents have told us they would like to see," Graham-Hudak said. "For instance, one service we'd like to improve upon is the length of time residents have to wait for building permits to be reviewed. The restructuring we're doing now will go a long way toward making procedures like this more efficient."

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

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# The Big Tree Hunt contest is on. Get ready to throw some shade

**Susan Bromley**

Hometownlife.com  
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

The search is on for the most majestic trees in Michigan (and maybe the country) in the Big Tree Hunt.

ReLeaf Michigan seeks your assistance in identifying the state's largest trees, with the biggest in each of hundreds of species to be registered in a state database, in a contest that has been extended due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ashley Laux, project forester for the non-profit ReLeaf Michigan, said the biennial contest had more than 700 submissions in 2018-19 from 81 of the state's 83 counties and is hoping for even more this go around after the contest extension.

"There is a lot of scientific data that big trees provide and there is huge value in knowing where those trees are," Laux said, citing also the climate, cultural and historical information that can be gleaned. "Michigan's trees are hundreds of years old and when you look at trees and the surrounding environment, you can understand what happened historically in that region and we can make better management decisions around our forests and how we manage the land."

Many entries come from southeast Michigan, with oaks the majority species, but all tree species are wanted and there is a special prize category for white pine in addition to prizes for largest tree in each county

and more.

Michigan's Big Tree database currently has 547 trees standing tall as state champions of their species, with several from the Hometown Life communities, including ones making the list in just the past year.

Bloomfield Hills and Bloomfield Township have several, among them "Big Daddy," the moniker given by a family to the Norway spruce that graces their yard on Brookdale. The tree has a girth of 140.4 inches and stands 92 feet tall.

Another Norway spruce at 21937 Novi Road in Northville was damaged by a lightning strike, but was still standing strong in late October, registered with a girth of 176 inches and height of 84 feet.

Also making the list is a white fir at 58955 Ten Mile in South Lyon that was observed last October with a girth of 109 inches and height of 60 feet.

The represented species in the Hometown Life communities also include English, willow and scarlet oaks in Northville, a dawn redwood and saucer magnolia in Bloomfield Hills, a green ash in Bloomfield Township, and an American beech in Livonia.

According to the 2020 National Register of Champion Trees, Michigan currently holds only one title, for a white willow in Lansing which was last measured a decade ago with a trunk circumference of 389 inches, a height of 67.67 feet, and a crown spread of 81 feet.

"Since there are hun-



**Kris Bauer provides some perspective for the size of the spread of the branches of her saucer magnolia tree on the property of her Trowbridge Road home in Bloomfield Hills. Bauer said that the tree was probably around 70 years old.** JOHN HEIDER/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

dreds of tree species that don't yet have registered champions, the Big Tree Hunt is a great opportunity to add to this list and get Michigan trees noticed nationwide," Laux said.

Michigan has four tree species that have no registered state champion: Striped maple, mountain maple, choke cherry and white/paper birch. Any size of these could be a potential winner.

The overall largest trees on the National Register are found in California, home to the Sequoia Giant and Redwood Coast species.

The Big Tree Hunt contest, which offers prizes for identifying the biggest trees in Michigan, is open to participants of all ages. Trees are scored in a point system, taking into account circumference,

height and crown spread.

All accessible trees are eligible and can be found in yards, parks, or on hiking trails. Even if the tree submitted is not as large as a currently listed state champion, Laux said it is important to still submit, since the titleholding trees may have died or since been removed.

The contest, held every two years since 1993, helps ReLeaf Michigan track vital historical living landmarks and can land eligible trees on the National Registry, updated every spring and fall by American Forests, the nation's oldest conservation non-profit.

More contest details and the entry form are available online at [releafmichigan.org](http://releafmichigan.org). The contest will accept submissions until the deadline of Aug. 19, 2022.



**Kris Bauer provides some perspective for the size of her Big Tree Hunt saucer magnolia tree on the property of her Trowbridge Road home in Bloomfield Hills. Bauer said that the tree was probably around 70 years old.** JOHN HEIDER/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

Email [bigtreehunt@releafmichigan.org](mailto:bigtreehunt@releafmichigan.org) or call 800-642-7353.

Contact reporter Susan Bromley at [sbromley@hometownlife.com](mailto:sbromley@hometownlife.com)

or 517-281-2412. Follow her on Twitter @SusanBromley10.



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# Browndog Barlor plans to reopen

David Veselenak

Hometownlife.com

USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

Ice cream lovers rejoice: Browndog Barlor plans to make a return to downtown Farmington.

The shop, known for its ice cream, originally closed last year during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. CEO and co-founder Paul Gabriel said last fall the closure would be permanent, saying they weren't able to hire enough staff to reopen the shop at 33314 Grand River. So he decided to put the space up for sale.

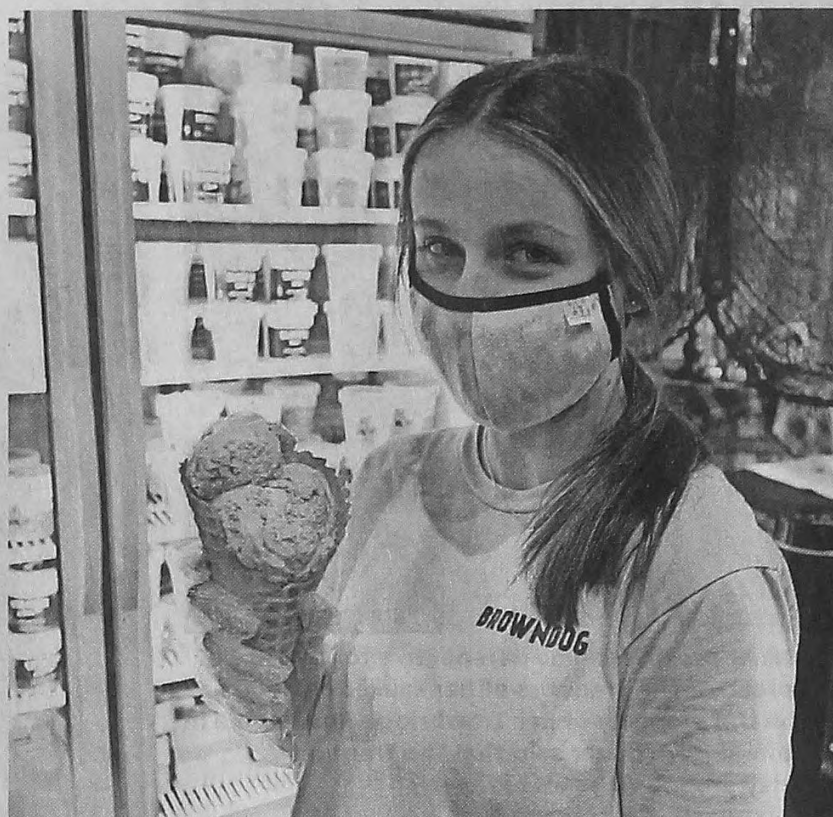
Now, with restrictions lifted, Gabriel said he's ready to give it another go in Farmington.

"At the time we had no idea how long the pandemic would last so we decided to try and sell the location. We had a buyer, but that deal fell through," he said via email. "Now that the pandemic restrictions have been lifted we're hopeful that we can put together enough staff to reopen."

There's no exact timetable for the reopening, though Gabriel said he hopes to begin serving scoops by September or October, as long as he can find staff. Those interested in applying can do so at [browndogbarlor.com/hiring](http://browndogbarlor.com/hiring).

Gabriel said guests can expect a "new and improved" experience at the reopened Farmington location. Browndog has continued operating a shop in downtown Northville and some of the changes made during the pandemic there will transfer to the reopened shop.

"Throughout the pandemic our Northville location has made a lot of



Natalie Carroll with two scoops of Browndog ice cream last fall at the Main Street Northville location. Browndog plans to reopen its shop serving ice cream and other items in downtown Farmington later this year. JOHN HEIDER | HOMETOWN LIFE.COM

changes to the menu, operations, social district options, and carry-out," he said. "We plan to bring a lot of those changes to our Farmington location as well."

In addition to the shop in Northville and soon once again in Farmington, Browndog has also expanded selling its ice cream in other places, including scoop shops such as Michigan Coffee + Creamery Co., in Beverly Hills and by the pint in grocery stores such as Busch's. Browndog opened a production facility last year in Oak Park.

Gabriel said he's heard plenty of praise from the community on their

shops during the pandemic, and is happy to be able to return to Farmington, a community where Browndog first opened back in 2016.

"We have had an outpouring of support at both location throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Making the decision to close our Farmington location in the first place was incredibly difficult," he said. "We are both humbled and excited to have the opportunity to reopen in Downtown Farmington."

Contact reporter David Veselenak at [dveselenak@hometownlife.com](mailto:dveselenak@hometownlife.com) or 734-678-6728. Follow him on Twitter @davidveselenak.



white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) TIMES RECORDER FILE PHOTO

## Deer

Continued from Page 1A

within the community.

"There is a uniqueness to this that needs to be addressed, and the way to do that is to work with other communities in the county," Assistant City Manager Joe Valentine said.

Oakland County had 1,855 deer-related vehicle crashes in 2020, the highest in Michigan. Nearly 100 of those happened in Farmington Hills. This year, the city has already seen 52.

Aerial tracking conducted by the city identified 729 deer living in Farmington and Farmington Hills. Those levels are four times what the state considers a healthy deer population for cities similar in size.

But even so, deer don't know borders and travel between communities. So officials suspect it will take a regional or whole county effort coming together to actually fix the problem.

"If we resolve this with management practices, it won't do anything because deer will continue to cross our borders," Deputy Public Services Director Bryan Farmer said. "So, we need to work with neighboring communities."

Local governments that participate in the coalition, including Farmington Hills, would need approval from their respective governing boards. Farmington Hills council members expressed a desire to move quickly on the issue at a July 26 meeting.

"They're beautiful animals and I remember years ago you would see one in your yard now and then and it was a treat," Councilwoman Valerie Knol said. "But now, the stories of seeing 14 in a yard is not uncommon."

Knol added she'd like council to hear from wildlife experts and learn more about culling.

"I think we need to get a lot of questions answered first and we need to learn about wildlife management techniques," she said.

Mayor Vicki Barnett said council will discuss the issue again at its Aug. 9 meeting.

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

## Adoption

Continued from Page 1A

'Are you okay?' and I said, 'Yeah.' I gave her a kiss and handed her over."

Last year Swanson, an English tutor who lives in Farmington, said the photo — of Robinson, now Eaton County's treasurer and a Vermontville resident, cradling her — was still there, in the back of her mind, when she decided to find him.

'...I had been missing something'

Swanson's adoptive parents, Suzanne a teacher and Dean a purchasing agent, talked openly with her and her older brother Eric about their adoptions.

"They're very caring and loving people," Swanson said. "It was the best childhood I could have had."

Growing up in Troy, she didn't feel compelled to connect with birth relatives.

"I thought about them a little bit but I never really thought too deeply," Swanson said. "What I thought was, 'They have their own lives now and I don't want to disrupt that.'"

Swanson graduated from high school, majored in Japanese at Oakland University and studied abroad in Japan before coming back to Michigan to become a private English tutor.

Two years ago, she received an email from a woman claiming to be her sister.

"I've known about you all of your life, and I've looked for you for years," the email read. The woman told Swanson they shared the same birth mother.

"I was just shocked because I hadn't thought about it for years and years," Swanson said.

The two women began corresponding, and it sparked a curiosity in Swanson about her biological parents.

"It made me realize I had been missing something that I now felt like I needed," she said.

But Swanson didn't decide to find Robinson until last summer after she started seeing a psychologist. The COVID-19 pandemic had triggered depression and anxiety she'd been diagnosed with at age 14, Swanson said, and her doctor happened to specialize in working with adoptees.

Through therapy, Swanson said, she began exploring the idea that being separated from her birth parents could have caused trauma.

"Adoption is wonderful if adoptive parents are ready and healthy people but it can create struggles for adoptees," she said. "It kind of clicked in my mind, 'Wow, maybe this is why I'm such an anxious person and I get so depressed.'"

With her adoptive parents' help, Swanson found an address for Robin-



Deanna Swanson (lower left) with her adoptive parents Dean and Suzanne Swanson and her older brother Eric when she was younger. "They're very caring and loving people," Deanna said of her adoptive parents. "It was the best childhood I could have had."

son.

"I wrote him a letter, and I put a picture of him holding me in there and a current picture of me. I told him I'd always heard about the story of him holding me and I thanked him for being selfless."

She sent it via registered mail and waited for notification that it had been delivered.

'I've lived with a hole in my heart for 30 years'

Robinson said he never stopped thinking about Swanson.

"I guess I would say that experience and the experience of the adoption was really the horror experience of my life," he said.

Walking out of the adoption agency after he'd handed her to her adoptive parents was gut-wrenching.

"It felt like it was a hundred miles," Robinson said. "That's when I thought about everything that I was giving up. I already had a child so I knew what it was like to be a parent. ... I realized I would never see her first step, her first day of school, and all those experiences that you have with your child."

Robinson remarried. He and his wife Amy had two daughters, Zoey, 25, and Keeley, 21. His eldest child, Jonathan, is 38.

Last October, Robinson received Swanson's letter.

He read it, then held up the photo Swanson had included of herself, standing barefoot on a balcony.

"It's kind of hard to explain the happiness of receiving that photograph," Robinson said. "I noticed almost instantly that her feet are very similar to mine. It was just kind of a humorous detail that I noticed right away."

The two of them corresponded via email for several months, agreeing not to meet in person until they had both been vaccinated against COVID-19.

They learned that they both struggle with anxiety, and Swanson said hearing how Robinson struggled with her adoption was eye-opening.

"It was very overwhelming," she said. "I think for the first time in my life I realized that my adoption impacted a lot of people's lives and that it was very tough for everyone. I could kind of feel his grief and his loss."

A poem Robinson wrote for Swanson on her first birthday entitled "Yours," that centers around the stars in the night sky, has since inspired her to begin making jewelry. She launched the side business, Nadia's Hope, this year.

The pair met for the first time this spring at a coffee shop in Northville, sitting at a table and talking until the business closed for the day.

"I've lived with a hole in my heart for 30 years," Robinson said. "I think that was the moment when that hole was patched."

A few weeks later, Swanson and her girlfriend, Agatha Lee, traveled to Vermontville to meet Robinson, Amy, and their two daughters.

"I was immediately comfortable," Swanson said.

She hopes to reintroduce Robinson to her adoptive parents, and although she hasn't connected with her birth mother yet, SwansonD hopes to in the future.

"I feel like there's a hole that's been filled up, a hole that I didn't know I had," she said.

Contact Rachel Greco at [rgreco@lsj.com](mailto:rgreco@lsj.com).

## Inn

Continued from Page 1A

phases. The St. John's Golf and Conference Center opened in 2000, and expansion on the facility to add the Grande Ballroom and room for 450 seats opened in 2005. The privately-owned Inn at St. John's opened in 2006.

The space's hotel, conference rooms, and reception centers will all remain operational, as will the golf course, according to a news release announcing the sale. The Archdiocese of Detroit will continue to lease space for the chapel, allowing for weddings to continue to take place on the grounds.

"This purchase is yet another example of the Pulte family's longstanding commitment to southeast Michigan and the local Church in Detroit," said Archbishop of Detroit Allen Vigneron in a statement. "The decision to sell was motivated in part by the considerable challenges of a Catholic organization operating a hotel conference center — especially during the pandemic — so we are grateful that Pulte Family Management SLLC has stepped forward to purchase the property and operate it going forward, ensuring its continued legacy and value in the local community."

More plans for the site are expected to be announced in the coming months.

Contact reporter David Veselenak at [dveselenak@hometownlife.com](mailto:dveselenak@hometownlife.com) or 734-678-6728. Follow him on Twitter @davidveselenak.

# GFL waste pick up delays cause some to drop struggling company

Susan Bromley

Hometownlife.com

USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

Garbage pickup has become messy lately.

Some homeowners are trashing their garbage pickup contracts with GFL Environmental amidst multiple missed or delayed waste collections over the past few months.

In Green Oak Township, the entire Greenock Hills subdivision — more than 140 homes — is dumping GFL after the company failed to pick up their yard waste.

"We had been with GFL for years," Erin Skyring, who has lived in the sub for five years, said. "About eight weeks ago, they did not pick up the yard waste... There was a lot of yard waste sitting out for multiple days and everyone was getting a different story."

Skyring said the situation escalated and then the company stopped picking up yard waste altogether and at the beginning of June there was pieces of trash strewn all over the street. She called the trash debacle "the biggest thing in Greenock Hills ever."

Joseph Munem, GFL Environmental USA director of government affairs, wrote in an emailed statement that the waste collection industry has been hit particularly hard by the current labor shortage and said "the company understands and shares in the frustrations caused by delays."

The problem is compounded, he explained, as the entire trucking industry experiences a shortage of parts needed to repair and maintain vehicles due to worldwide supply line disruptions. This interruption has affected GFL's fleet, reducing the number of trucks available for use.

These issues are impacting not only homeowners or associations who have individual contracts with waste collection service providers, but also entities who have community-wide contracts with a single provider, including Livonia, South Lyon, and Novi.

Livonia, in the midst of an 8-year contract with GFL, has been receiving numerous complaints from residents during the past two months regarding delays in the company's collection of solid waste, recycling and yard waste. Those complaints were passed on to GFL regularly, but this week, Mayor Maureen Brosnan took it a step further and met with GFL to provide a map of all reported delays in the city.

"We certainly understand our residents' frustrations with these unprecedented delays in service," Brosnan wrote in an email, asking for continued patience in what she hopes and believes will be a short-term problem. "At the same time, we also know the hiring issues GFL is facing — we're facing them here in the city also."

Brosnan said GFL shared "aggressive strategies they are using to address labor shortages" and the city also agreed to a new strategy shortening



A GFL employee picks up trash in Milford in this March 2020 photo. The company has come under fire from residents frustrated with delays in garbage pickups. SUSAN BROMLEY | HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

truck travel to GFL's yard waste site.

As an alternative, a post on the city's Facebook page reminded Livonia residents that they may take their own yard waste to a refuse disposal site Rat 32500 Glendale, open 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays.

South Lyon City Manager Paul Zeleznak said residents have been experiencing collection delays from GFL for the past few weeks, but it's difficult to measure how many have experienced the problem or how many complaints have been received.

"Everything is still being picked up, it may just be a day late," he said. "It might be a slight inconvenience, that is the biggest thing, but it's not piling up week after week. We are trying to be understanding with employers who are providing services to us."

GFL's contract with the city, which expires in a year, currently costs each resident \$37 per quarter, equivalent to \$148 per year.

In an attempt to resolve issues, Munem said GFL had implemented "operational changes," including offering incentives to attract and retain employees.

He added that while customers may continue to experience a one-day delay this week, "we hope for a return to normal service levels by next week."

Munem added that subscription customers have been issued credits for delayed service and call center operations have been enhanced to reduce call wait times, although recent calls to numbers on the GFL website resulted in waits of at least 30-45 minutes

without an answer.

In Novi, where the city just started an eight-year contract with GFL, Assistant City Manager Victor Cardenas said there have been 141 complaints on garbage pick-ups, 61 regarding yard waste pick-up, and 21 missed recycling pick-ups between July 1-27. He attributes this to new contractor hiccups, and also noted there has been larger than normal volume due to storms.

"We're happy with the new contractor and content with how they are working through issues we present, they seem quick to resolve them," Cardenas said. "Everyone can relate to the first month on the job, it's a learning process and as in August and into September and the fall, the number (of complaints) will drop dramatically."

Greenock Hills homeowners, long-time GFL customers, weren't waiting any longer.

Chuck Mason, the president of the Greenock Hills Homeowners Association, sent a letter to all the residents informing them of the HOA Board's decision to switch vendors, "After being very patient with GFL and trying valiantly to work our way out of the current trash/recycling/yard waste situation."

They went with Dougie's Disposal, the only waste collection company that responded to their inquiries out of four that were contacted.

Contact reporter Susan Bromley at sbromley@hometownlife.com or 517-281-2412. Follow her on Twitter @SusanBromley10.

# Farmington Hills putting public safety millage before voters

Shelby Tankersley

Hometownlife.com

USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

Farmington Hills' police and fire departments get about a third of their funding from two tax levies.

The city is asking voters to renew one of those collections in November.

On July 26, city council approved a Nov. 2 ballot proposal asking voters to enable the city to levy 17 mills for public safety for the next 10 years. If approved, the millage would generate \$6.3 million in 2022.

"Health, safety and welfare is what we're up here to do," Councilman Ken Massey said. "I think our citizens have enjoyed a very safe city, and this public safety question needs to be put on the ballot."

A mill is \$1 for every \$1,000 in taxable value on a property. So, a homeowner with a house valued at \$200,000 would pay about \$170 in taxes a year for the public safety millage.

This millage, which makes up 17% of the public safety budget and was first passed in 2011, will pay for operational costs like staffing and equipment. Should the millage not pass, both the fire and police departments would look at making staffing cuts.

"Our current staffing levels are supported solely by the 2011 millage," Fire Chief Jon Unruh said.

City Manager Gary Mekjian explained the millages helped supplement the departments since the state cut back on revenue sharing during the Great Recession.

"We're still suffering from the lack of revenue sharing from the state, and we will be for many years," he said.

Both departments are facing higher call volumes — the fire department alone is on track to respond to 11,000 calls this year — with the same or similar staffing levels they had 10 years ago.

Police Chief Jeff King said, despite stagnant staff numbers, Farmington Hills currently has "the lowest crime rates in our city's history" and is routinely named one of the safest cities in Michigan. The chief added his department has also taken steps to be more transparent and treat mental health calls like true health calls — something the fire department helps with — in recent years.

"By 2025, our entire executive and command staff can retire," King said. "So, we need to be focusing on succession and staff development moving forward."

Unruh and King said, should the millage fail, they'll look to put it before voters again next year.

The city's other public safety millage will be up for renewal in 2025. That millage brings in 15% of the departments' funding.

In November, Farmington Hills residents will also choose a mayor and three council members.

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

# Livonia man sentenced 13-20 years for trying to hire hitman

Susan Vela

Hometownlife.com

USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

A Livonia man accused of soliciting someone to kill his girlfriend's husband, as well as invading his ex-wife's home, was sentenced to up to 20 years in prison.

Scott Fraser Porter, 50, admitted he "screwed up" by making a terrible mistake that he's sorry for and begged Third Circuit Judge Chandra Baker for some leniency.

"I repented for my sins and asked God for his forgiveness," he said after reciting from the Bible. "Everyone deserves a second chance. I'm sorry. I need to be able to talk to my kids. I need my kids in my life, and they need me as well."

"I'm asking you now, Judge Baker, to have mercy on me."

His defense attorney Anjali Prasad also pleaded with the judge during the July 28 sentencing. She emphasized that the home invasion and solicitation convictions are Porter's first felonies.

She further protested that the former work supervisor at Loc Performance Inc. in Plymouth Township is a steady, stable college-educated man who fell into a deep depression and abused alcohol after a contentious divorce.

"He took it too far," Prasad said. "He went to work. He grumbled about his personal life, lamented about how the love of his life is married to somebody

else. And an individual working through the police said, 'Let me put you in touch with a hitman.'

"Scott took the number, called the hitman and said, 'Yes, would you please kill (the) husband because I want to be with my girlfriend.'"

While acknowledging it was a "bad crime," Prasad predicted that, if imprisoned, Porter would return to his children and the Livonia community without any chances of gainful employment upon release.

"The question for the court is where to go from here. Are we going to set him up for failure by warehousing him for another 10 years? Or are we going to fashion a sentence that's going to set him up for success? If we set him up for success now, it benefits all of us."

She pleaded for a sentence that would have been a mix of probation, therapy, counselors, reintegration and child support for Porter's children.

But the judge surpassed the possible minimum sentence of 126 months — or 10.5 years — when sentencing Porter.

Baker sentenced Porter to 2-15 years on the 2018 home invasion charge and 13-20 years on the 2019 murder solicitation charge, sentences that will run concurrently. Porter, who pleaded guilty to both charges, was given 846 days — or a little more than two years — credit for jail time already served.

The judge said she listened to what Porter had to say and never heard him

talk about deciding to kill his girlfriend's husband. Also referring to the break-in, she said Porter had been a threat to two women, both with children.

"Sometimes, we make mistakes just as David did in the Bible," Baker said. "He made many. Yes, he was forgiven. But there were always consequences and those consequences lasted until the very end. If you have a chance to read it, you will see that. So this will have consequences. I will not go below the guidelines, not on a solicitation of murder."

Prasad, a former federal prosecutor and a criminal defense attorney who owns Prasad Legal PLLC in Bloomfield Township, said there are some appealable issues that include Porter's friends and family not being in the courtroom and some inconsistent sentencing guideline factoring.

"I'm very disappointed that, at the end of the day, the judge chose to warehouse an individual with no criminal record," she said. "He's getting 13 years and nobody was harmed."

"I don't know if his sentence will hold up on appeal. No blood was shed. No harm was done. This is a tough sentence for a situation like that."

She said Porter will have to decide whether to appeal.

Porter's ex-wife also spoke in court, her voice occasionally trembling as she explained why she wanted the maximum sentence. She spoke of a violent husband who increasingly abused her

mentally and emotionally because of misplaced anger.

"Sometimes, it was a booming voice that shook the room with expletives or a door ripped clear off its hinges," she said. "Other times, it was more subtle like a handgun casually left in a nightstand drawer. But they were threats all the same."

She was somewhat relieved after agreeing to a divorce, which freed her from feeling like she had to walk on eggshells. But then he turned on her, complaining about assets he felt were his.

Then he took items from her home. "A new deeper level of fear took hold," she said. "Your honor, it makes me sick when I think about how relentless and obsessively dedicated he was at finding a hitman. For the better part of a year, he was calculating and steadfast in his commitment to end the lives of those who stood in the way of his happiness."

"He stopped only because he was caught."

Because of ongoing pandemic rules, Hometown Life viewed the sentencing online. The camera remained on the judge and some court staff.

Porter, wearing a jail jumpsuit, walked into the camera's view at the end of the proceeding. He was being escorted out of the courtroom.

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

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# Fish Oil Failure Shines a Grim Light on America's Memory Crisis

America's top memory M.D. reveals the startling reason why "senior moments" may be caused by fish oil — and the #1 way to fix it fast

More than 16 million Americans suffer age-associated cognitive impairment. And according to nationwide research, these numbers are only rising.

Thankfully, anti-aging specialist and bestselling author, Dr. Al Sears, says there's an easy way to banish senior moments for good. It's a safe, natural compound that can grow the brain significantly bigger.

And unlike failed solutions that promise what they can't deliver, this one actually works — at least, according to studies from Framingham, Stanford, and other reputable universities.

But in order for it to work, you must avoid using run-of-the-mill fish oil supplements. "The worst thing you can do for your memory," explains Dr. Sears, "is to supplement with fish oil."

Dr. Al Sears, a highly-acclaimed MD — who has published more than 500 studies — says today's low-grade supermarket fish oil is causing the surge in America's memory crisis. "These cheap oils are no longer as nutrient-dense as they once were," he explains.

If you want to get rid of embarrassing senior moments and grow the brain significantly bigger, Dr. Sears recommends a different approach.

## THE SECRET TO A LASTING MEMORY

Research has shown our paleo ancestors were able to grow bigger and smarter brains by eating foods rich in one ingredient — DHA. "Our hippocampus thrives off DHA, and grows because of it," explains Dr. Sears. "Without DHA, our brains would shrink, and our memories would quickly fade."

A groundbreaking study from the University of Alberta confirmed this. Animals given a diet rich in DHA saw a 29% boost in their hippocampus — the part of the brain responsible for learning and memory. As a result, these animals became smarter.

The same was found in human studies, too. Stanford University analyzed the brains of over 1,100 women. And according to brain scans, DHA grew significantly bigger hippocampal brain regions.

Conversely, after analyzing more than 1,500 seniors, the Framingham study found that those whose brains were deficient in DHA, also had significantly smaller brains — a characteristic of accelerated aging and a weakened memory.

And lastly, a randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled study from Columbia found something remarkable. 485 senior men and women were put through a series of rigorous mental and visual tests.

They were asked to remember weird shapes and images that made the task so challenging, some compared it to an IQ test. Remarkably, after 6 months, those who took DHA had a significant edge in learning, memory, and brain function over those who didn't.

"Unfortunately, it's almost impossible to boost levels of DHA simply by eating more fish or fish oil," explains Dr. Sears. "DHA in fish oil has plummeted over the years."

The ingredient Dr. Sears is referring to is called ALA — a compound found in cheap, grocery store fish oil.

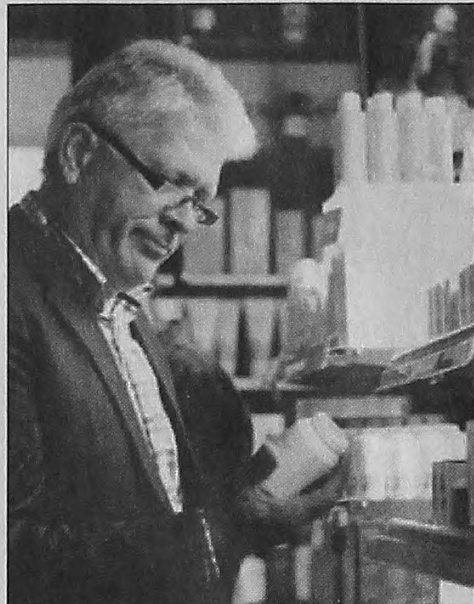
## PEOPLE ARE TALKING

Fish farming has caused DHA levels to plummet and ALA levels to rise, according to Dr. Sears.

"In order to produce DHA," he explains, "fish need to eat a natural, marine diet, like the one they'd eat in the wild." Without a marine-rich diet, most fish won't produce DHA.

Dr. Sears uncovered that sometime during the 1990s, fish farmers stopped giving their animals a natural, DHA-rich diet and began feeding them a diet that was 70% vegetarian.

"It became too expensive for farmers to feed fish what they'd eat in the wild," explains Dr. Sears. "And since more than 80% of fish oil comes from farms, it's no wonder the country is experiencing a memory crisis. Most people's brains are shrinking and they don't even know it."



Why the 'brain fuel' ingredient in fish oil is slowly drying up.

"Since fish farmers are depriving these animals of their natural diet, ALA levels in fish oil are going up, while DHA levels are being cut in half. It's no wonder people's brains are shrinking," explains Dr. Sears.

When asked, what can people do to improve their memory and brain function in the most effective way possible? Dr. Sears replied, "Find a quality DHA that doesn't come from a farmed source. Only this will help improve memory by growing the brain significantly bigger."

Dr. Sears and his team have been working tirelessly for the last 24-months developing a unique brain-boosting formula called **Omega Rejuvenol**. It's made from the most powerful source of DHA in the ocean, squid and krill — two species that cannot be farmed

According to Dr. Sears, these are the purest and most potent sources of DHA in the world, because they haven't been tampered with. "**Omega Rejuvenol** is sourced from the most sustainable fishery in Antarctica. You won't find this oil in any stores."

## MORE IMPRESSIVE RESULTS

Already, the formula has sold more than 27,000 bottles. And for a good reason, too. Satisfied customers can't stop raving about the memory-boosting benefits of quality-sourced DHA oil.

"I see a noticeable increase in my brain function. I'm experiencing a noticeable increase in my concentration level and productivity throughout the day," says satisfied customer, Timothy B.

"It's great to remember everyone who played in the '75 World Series. My memory has never been sharper," says Mike T.

"After the first time I took it, I experienced mental clarity and focus. I noticed my mental function improve and I could concentrate better and be more productive throughout the day," raves John F.

And 70-year-old Mark K. says, "My focus and memory are back to age-30 levels."

These are just a handful of the thousands of reviews Dr. Sears receives on a regular basis thanks to his breakthrough memory formula, **Omega Rejuvenol**.

## WHERE TO FIND OMEGA REJUVENOL

To secure bottles of this brain-booster, buyers should contact the Sears Health Hotline at 1-800-688-3576 within the next 48 hours. "It takes time to manufacture these bottles," says Dr. Sears. "The Hotline allows us to ship the product directly to customers who need it most."

Dr. Sears feels so strongly about this product, he is offering a 100%, money-back guarantee on every order. "Send back any used or unused bottles within 90 days and I'll rush you a refund," says Dr. Sears.

The Hotline is taking orders for the next 48 hours. After that, the phone number will shut off to allow for inventory restocking.

Call 1-800-688-3576 to secure your limited supply of **Omega Rejuvenol**. Readers of this newspaper immediately qualify for a steep discount, but only if they call within the first 24 hours. To take advantage of this great offer use Promo Code **NP721OR424** when you call.

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# Hegira Health has a new CEO

Courtesy of Erickson Strategies

Hegira Health, Inc., a behavioral healthcare provider in Wayne County, announced a new corporate structure starting Oct. 1, 2021.

Hegira Health CEO Ed Forry worked with his board of directors on a succession plan that reconfigures the corporation's executive management. In May, the board unanimously approved the plan, which includes the promotion of Executive Director Carol Zuniga as the new CEO and Forry, who has held the top position for 48 years, continuing in the corporation as president and vice chairman of the board.

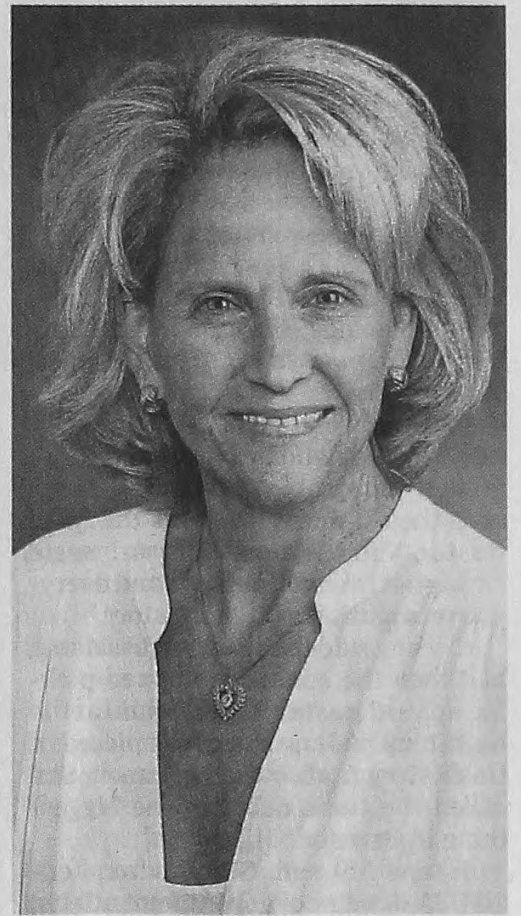
"The board's goal is to provide a seamless transition of the CEO's role and authority to Carol Zuniga, who will be fully vested with the responsibilities and authority as prescribed by our board to operate, manage, and oversee all aspects of the corporation," Forry said in a release. "As president, I shall continue to provide consultation and leadership in expanding and enhancing Hegira Health's scope of business."

Zuniga has more than three decades of experience in the healthcare industry and has dedicated her career to ensuring that quality behavioral health care services are readily available to residents of all income levels across southeastern Michigan.

Originally from St. Clair Shores, Zuniga graduated from Radford University where she completed her master's in clinical psychology and from Macalester College where she received her bachelor's in psychology. She has been licensed as a limited licensed psychologist (LLP) in Michigan since 1987.

Zuniga is a strong, visible leader in the community and at Hegira Health. She has recruited, built and retained a top-performing leadership team that focuses on patient care and community services while pushing continuous expansion for the organization.

During her 27-year career at Hegira Health, she has spearheaded ongoing



Carol Zuniga COURTESY OF ERICKSON STRATEGIES

service expansion, including the development of a children's specialty services division, and designing and contracting for Wayne County's current adult psychiatric crisis service.

The fruits of her passion-filled service to addressing gaps in community health care helped provide access to thousands of people while doubling Hegira Health's staff size to reach 400 and tripling revenue to \$27 million in 2018. In addition, she has repeatedly demonstrated her abilities to stay ahead of ever-changing healthcare industry trends, with a penchant for engaging her management team in forward-thinking strategic planning and implementations, all while maintaining the agency's focus on the quality of care.

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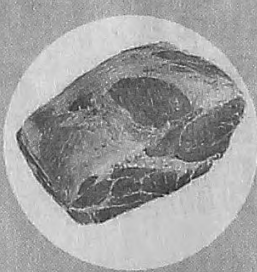
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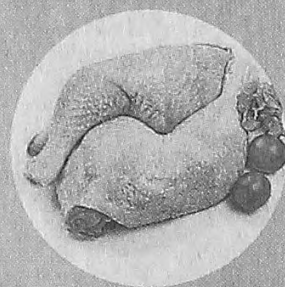
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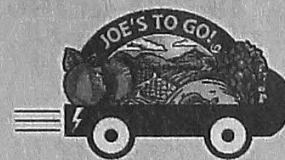
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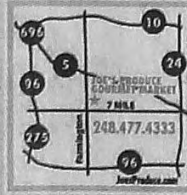


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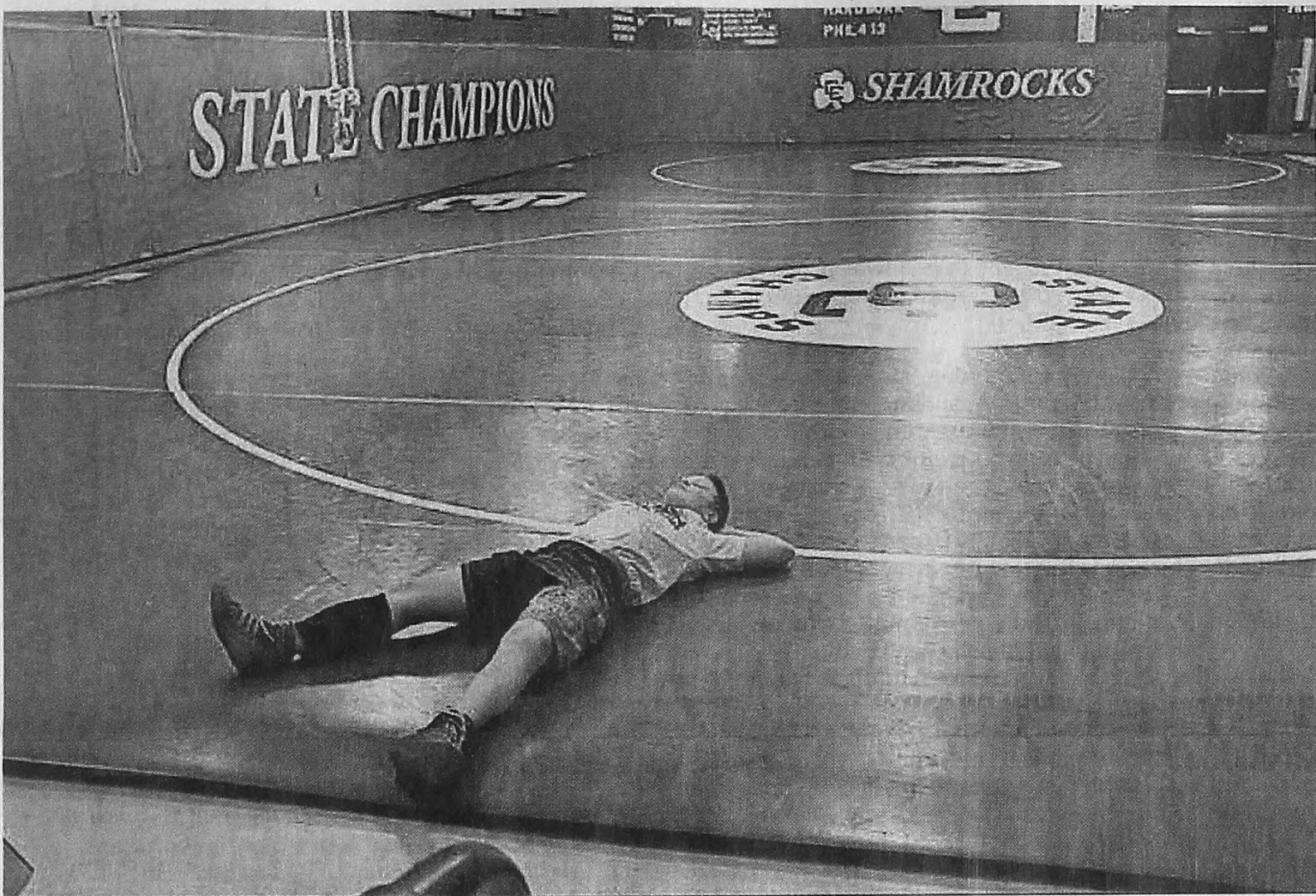


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# SPORTS

## Rojas looks to carry on CC wrestling's tradition



Manny Rojas' focus for his senior season at Detroit Catholic Central is to leave his legacy on those younger than him. COURTESY OF NATALIE ROJAS

### Senior year offers shot to add more achievements to his resume

**Colin Gay**  
Hometownlife.com  
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

Manuel Rojas started to wrestle because of his brother.

Mike Rojas Jr. joined the wrestling team in eighth grade as offseason training for football, later helping Bay City Western to a regional title and spot in the team state tournament in 2014.

Manuel Rojas was always by Mike's side.

"We pull out all of (Mike's) team photos and the tournaments, Manny's in every single photo with the whole team," Natalie Rojas, their mother, said. "He just loved it. He loved being around the other wrestlers. He was always smiling."

The smiles continued when Manuel Rojas got on the wrestling mat himself, pinning opponents with that same confident grin.

He knew he was good. He knew he would fit right into the Detroit Catholic Central wrestling room, already holding his own with future Division 1 wrestlers as a seventh grader.

Now heading into his final year with the Shamrocks, there really isn't much

that Rojas hasn't accomplished.

He's won two team state titles, two individual state titles at 189, a junior national title at 170 - something that no Shamrock has ever done - and a Super 32 title, all while earning a college scholarship to wrestle at Iowa State starting in 2022.

Tack on earning Hometown Life's Male Athlete of the Year award for 2020-21, and none of the accolades really shock Rojas.

Pressure for him is minor. Confidence is always something he's embraced, learning to hone his ability with help from the wrestlers who came before him.

In his senior year at CC, one of his only goals is to continue to pass that tradition on.

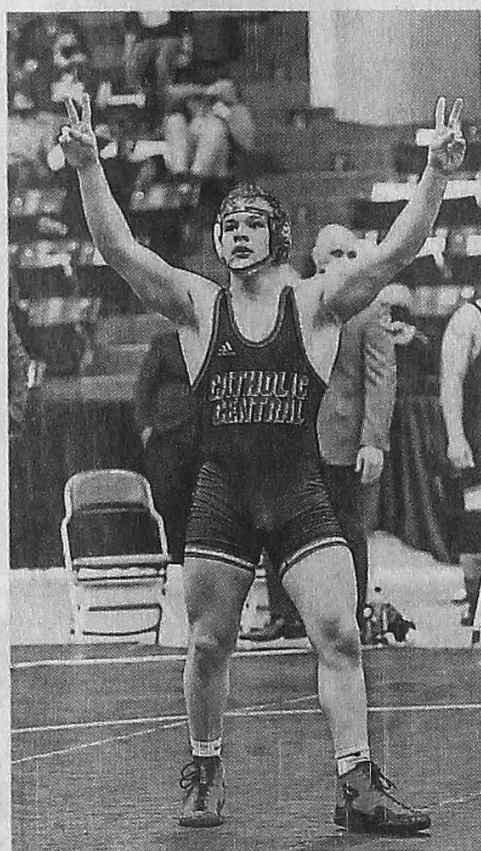
"I'm trying to set the expectation for the room," Rojas said. "This is how it has to be. You do this, you will be good."

#### Learning from the best

Mitch Hancock remembers Rojas as an All-State talent from his first day in CC's wrestling room.

The head coach could see the fresh-

See ROJAS, Page 3B



Catholic Central junior Manuel Rojas has won back-to-back state titles. SCOTT CONFER/SPECIAL TO HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

## Lakeland football taking the next step

### New head coach leading the way

**Colin Gay**  
Hometownlife.com  
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

James Calhoun thought being an assistant coach was the best job in the world.

"If things go awry it's, 'he's the guy that runs the show,'" he said laughing, having spent the past 33 years as an assistant, his past four with Lakeland football.

As the Eagles continued its summer workouts in July, it was Calhoun's show to run, taking over the program from former head coach Joe Woodruff who left Lakeland after six seasons to take the head coaching job at Zeeland East.

Calhoun's transition to the head coaching role has not been too difficult, inheriting what he calls a stable, productive and quality program from the previous regime. But it's a program that has not been able to get over the hump.

Despite winning seven games in each of the past four seasons along with securing its first Lakes Valley Conference title in school history in 2020, Lakeland has lost each of its last three district final appearances - twice to Detroit Catholic Central and once to Clarkston - by an average of over three touchdowns.

Calhoun's focus for Lakeland ahead of his first season is to show them what they need to do to get further, building upon the foundation that Woodruff had already set.

"To me, there's no substitution for effort," Calhoun said. "You always have to turn it up a notch. Every day, you can do one of two things: you are going to be better or something less than better. That's what we're looking for. We're looking for small steps and the big word is effort and progress."

"If we get that, the other piece to the puzzle should fall together."

In terms of what Lakeland will look like on the field, Calhoun is still trying to figure that out. Bringing in a few new assistant coaches who have the same style, scheme and philosophy as the head coach, the Lakeland staff is focused on watching their players figure out what they do well and molding an offense and defense to fit their strengths.

To senior right guard and defensive lineman Dillon Gacki, the new faces on the field has led to an increased at-

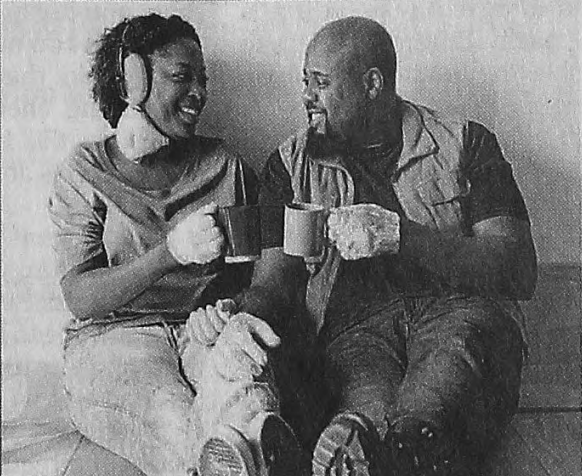
See LAKELAND, Page 2B


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# Runners make connections, find camaraderie along streets, trails

Colin Gay

Hometownlife.com

USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

Sara Bowman was first introduced to running by her father.

He was a "maintenance runner," never getting into the big races: the marathons or half-marathons. But he continued to run three-five miles multiple times per week. Bowman would go with him sometimes, taking the loop around Ridgewood and Farmington Rd. in Farmington Hills, talking, catching up on life.

Camaraderie was the thing that kept Bowman going, bringing those relationships to the middle school cross country and track meets before dropping running altogether in high school to focus on music. And when she returned to the sport, it's what she found waiting for her, even as she laced up her running shoes and left the house at 4:30 a.m.

"There's a whole subculture of runners out there. Every pace, every distance, every personality," Bowman said. "That's the thing that I love the most is you can be out running and you can have absolutely nothing in common with the person you are running next to except that one thing, that one common thing that you both enjoy running."

"Now you have this great opportunity to get to know somebody that in your real life, you would never stumble across. Like I would never cross paths with all these people that have all these interesting stories and all these interesting life adventures if we didn't have that one thing in common."

Even as Bowman's schedule filled up, running still serves a prominent role. If anything, it's expanded, having run over 30 half-marathons, 20 marathons, three 50K trail races and a 50-mile trail race since she began to run again in 2004.

For the past 10 years, Bowman ran with a group of women in Farmington for eight miles at 5 a.m. three days per week.

"I think I had this mind block that eight miles was the longest distance I would ever run," Bowman said. "It took me months and months with that run group from four miles to six miles to eight miles to feel confident. For years and years, I was like 'eight miles, that feels like plenty.'"

But as she continued to meet people, Bowman continued to hear encouragement that she could do so much more. One half-marathon was the lightbulb for the Farmington mayor, leading to running marathons in Detroit, Boston, New York City, Chicago, San Francisco and San Diego, starting to run a full 26.2 mile race every three or four months.

"It became probably an obsession; I think that's a fair word," Bowman said with a chuckle.

Running was also something that connected Bowman with her sister Cory Paul, who share a training plan despite the distance between them, with Bowman living in metro Detroit and her sister living in California.

The sisters started to train together when Bowman



Farmington mayor Sara Bowman poses with her son Nate and her husband John after her 50-mile run in Pinckney. PHOTOS COURTESY OF SARA BOWMAN

got back into running, training together for races across the country, including a bucket-list goal of running a half-marathon through each National Park.

"Our mom, who is not a runner, keeps telling us, 'You know, people can just go on vacation. You don't have to run a marathon,'" Bowman said. "But these events, they take you to parts of the towns and neighborhoods that you would have never seen as a tourist."

Bowman has backed off a bit on her mileage, not training for 50K or 50-mile races anymore. She's learned what her body can handle.

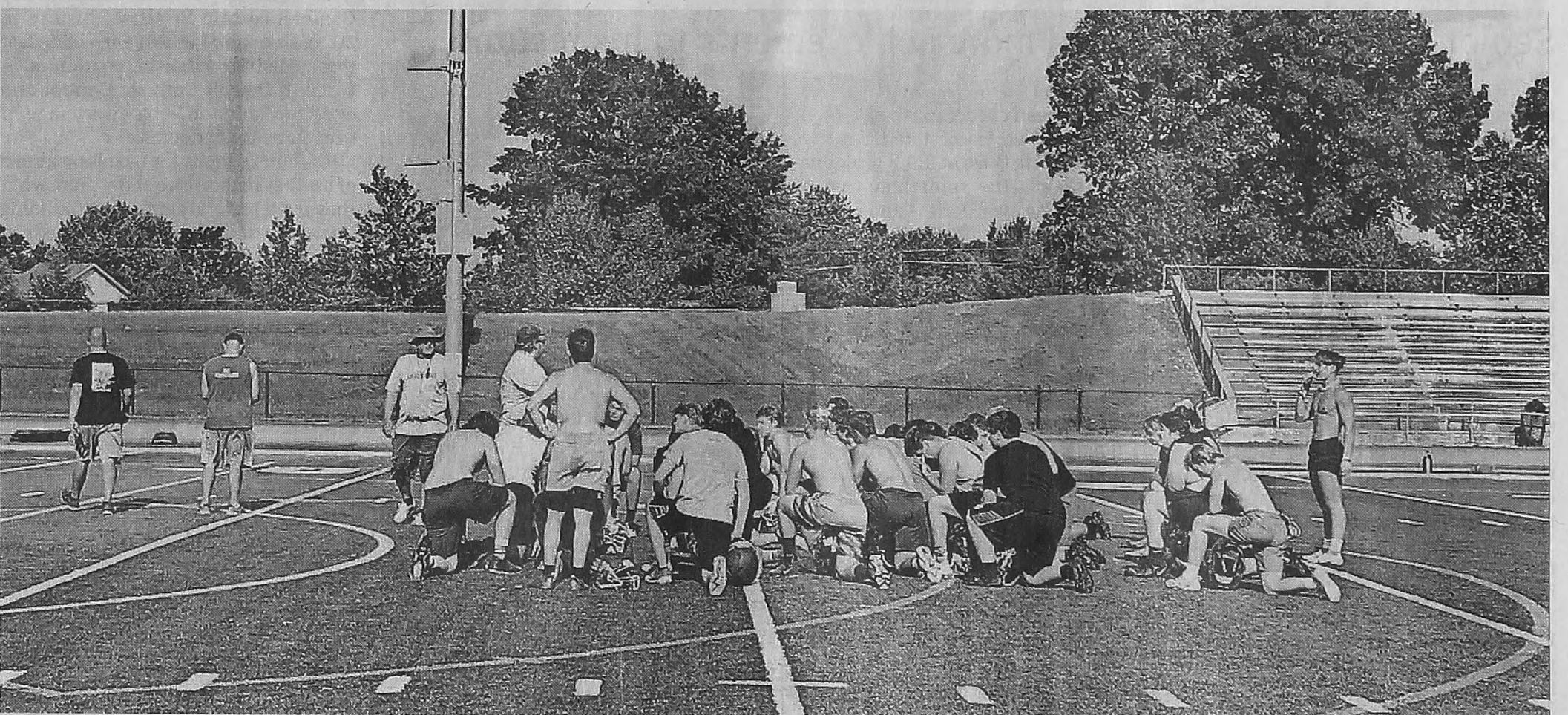
But that doesn't mean that she's stopping anytime soon, especially when her 74-year-old father just placed in his age group at a Color Run 5K.

"We don't stop, my family," Bowman said.

Contact reporter Colin Gay at [cgay@hometownlife.com](mailto:cgay@hometownlife.com) or 248-330-6710. Follow him on Twitter @ColinGay17. Send game results and stats to [LivSports@hometownlife.com](mailto:LivSports@hometownlife.com).



Sara Bowman and her sister Cory Paul have a goal to run half-marathons in each National Park, starting the bucket-list goal with a race through Zion National Park in Utah.



Lakeland first-year head coach James Calhoun speaks to his team after a summer workout session. COLIN GAY/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

## Lakeland

Continued from Page 1B

tempt to stand out in practice drills and in 7-on-7 work.

"There was almost new tryouts," Gacki said. "We don't know the coaches and they don't know us. So, you are just trying to prove yourself to the coaches which has really bumped up the competition."

After leading the Lakeland baseball team to its third-straight LVC championship and to the district final, senior quarterback Tate Farquhar said it didn't take long for him to return to the football field.

Last year, he said, learning the of-

fense was a bit of a struggle, coming into his first year as the starter.

He helped the Eagles average 27.1 points per game.

Ahead of his final year with Lakeland, Farquhar said offensive installation is coming more easily to him, striving to take Lakeland farther in the postseason than it has ever been.

"What we're doing, we know it can get us there, but we have to take that extra step," Farquhar said. "More focus in practice, getting another rep, another rep, just to get past that district final to that regional. That extra step, that one extra rep will probably get us there in our minds."

As he leads Lakeland in its offensive and defensive installation, Calhoun encouraged his players to focus on doing

"five things right" instead of "10 things half right."

"I honestly believe that if you can do something and do it well, you keep doing that," Calhoun said. "As you grow, as that sponge can absorb more, absolutely we will add more."

To Gacki, that simply comes down to developing chemistry with his teammates on the field, having trust that each player is doing the job they are supposed to.

That's what Gacki feels separates Lakeland from other high school football teams in the LVC, and something he will continue to preach to those younger than him starting at summer workouts heading into fall camp.

"Even if we may not have a lot of skill or a lot of athletes left and right - like D1

kids - we have a bunch of kids that work together and know how we play and really work well," Gacki said.

And while that has gotten Lakeland to winning football for the past four years, Gacki's confident that it get them to games the Eagles have never played in before.

But that journey and that focus starts now for him and his teammates.

"I want to get past that brick wall of losing in the district finals," Gacki said.

Contact reporter Colin Gay at [cgay@hometownlife.com](mailto:cgay@hometownlife.com) or 248-330-6710.

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# Rojas

Continued from Page 1B

man had developed in youth wrestling. But he knew with the existing talent in the room, Rojas would have to wait his turn.

"You had three Division I prospects in (Josh) Edmond, (Kevon) Davenport and (Cameron) Amine," Hancock said. "So he had to be patient and wait for those guys to pay their dues."

Rojas was around those top wrestlers from the age of 10, picking up on their work habits in the practice gym. Each one was a wrestler Rojas looked up to, working hard to be on the varsity team from his first season with the Shamrocks just to be with them every day.

"They accept (him) with open arms, and that's why Manny caught on and was welcomed in that CC room because he didn't mind being a second-fiddle to those guys," Mike Rojas, Manuel's father, said. "We knew going into freshman year that we're going to do everything we can to use those guys as workout partners and learn from them. Our time's going to come."

Success didn't click immediately for Rojas, losing to Brighton's Dane Donabedian in the second round of the individual state finals at 160 as a freshman – knowing he should have been competing either at 152 or 145.

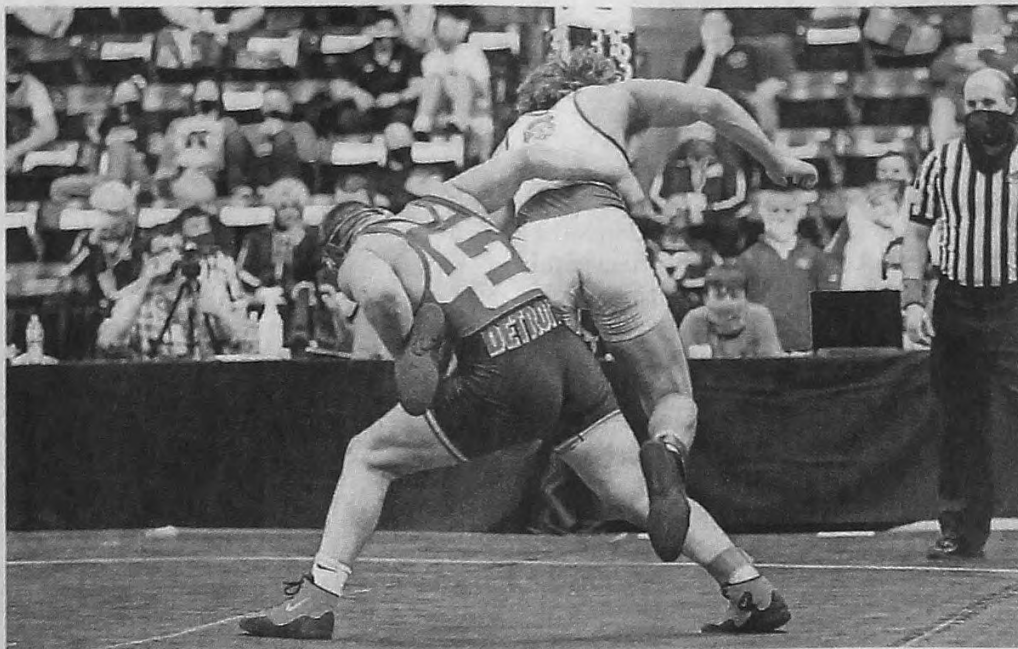
Losing in the state tournament was something he swore would never happen again.

"Coach Hancock really just preached that no one could keep up with me," Rojas said. "In three periods, if they are going to hang in there, they won't last until the third period and I will just break them."

Rojas was not challenged much in individual bouts, winning 50-of-51 matches to his first individual state title at 189. But the sophomore's ability was still questioned, highlighted by a match against a former workout partner in the 2020 MHSAA team state finals.

Trailing 5-2 against Davison's Alex Facundo, who started with Rojas on the same youth wrestling team, Rojas fell to the ground after a hit, later getting the match win at 189 after an illegal slam was called, helping the Shamrocks to their 14th team state title.

"To me, I think it was very hard for him to go through that, what had happened between him and Alex," Natalie



CC junior Manuel Rojas wins his second-straight state title at 189.

SCOTT CONFER/SPECIAL TO HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

Rojas said. "To him, wrestling is everything, and it almost felt like a lot of that hate he was seeing or that negativity he was getting, especially online and in private messages and things like that. I think that kind of almost made him upset and pushed him to be better. He had more to prove."

To Manuel's father, that was his son's turning point.

"Before that it was fun," Mike Rojas added. "After that, it was more business."

### 'I want everyone to know my name'

Despite the challenges, Rojas continued to build up his resume.

After beating Traverse City Central sophomore Remy Cotton for his second individual state title at 189, the incoming senior won a junior national freestyle title at 170, an unprecedented step for the CC wrestling program.

Twenty-one years after wrestling in Fargo, North Dakota, himself, Hancock was in Rojas' corner, watching him "tech falling and pinning" his way through the tournament before beating Frankfort, Illinois', Brayden Thompson, 5-2, for the championship.

"By him winning that tournament, it establishes him as a full-ride athlete to any university he would want to go to," Hancock said. "If he didn't already commit to Iowa State on a full ride, any university, every university in the country

would have offered him a full ride after this tournament."

Offers had already been flowing in, receiving 21 to different programs across the country. But Rojas already had his mind made up.

He described Iowa State as an "old wrestling powerhouse," saying the Cyclones' pitch was for him to help build the team back up.

Once Rojas took his unofficial visit to Ames, Iowa, he found a place where he would be known.

"That was one thing that Manny said: 'Dad, when I go on campus, I want everyone to know my name,'" Mike Rojas said. "When I walk into the arena, I want them to yell my name."

"Well Iowa's where it's at. You aren't going to get that anywhere else."

### Nothing to prove

Everyone in the Shamrocks wrestling room knows Rojas' name.

His workouts are unparalleled, something, he says, that keeps teammates away when it comes to training. Hitchcock had to match the incoming senior with either himself or assistant coach Kevin Beazley – a former All-American at Old Dominion – to challenge Rojas.

The senior waited his turn. Now, the CC wrestling room is his.

Rojas is the wrestler everyone wants to replicate. He's their Amine, Edmond, Davenport and Derek Gilcher. And Rojas

plans on taking advantage of that, coaching up the younger athletes to continue the legacy.

"I want to get the freshmen in, talk to them a bit, sit down the freshmen and sophomores: 'Hey, you guys aren't just little kids. You guys can start now,'" Rojas said. "Make a name for yourself in Michigan. It starts now."

Personally, Rojas has already made a name for himself in Michigan. His goal is to continue to make his name known nationally, agreeing to compete in FloWrestling's "Who's Number One?" competition in Dallas this September.

It's all about what's next. It's something Rojas' parents will continue to support, driving the incoming senior to wrestling practices from Bay City every day.

"He's won so many tournaments, but as a dad, as his coach, you always question it because people are out there, 'Is it a fluke? Did he get lucky?'" Mike Rojas said. "At a certain time, like now, he's wrestled everybody. Doesn't matter where, didn't matter what, whatever weight and he's beat them."

"He's really the real deal. He's finally reached that pinnacle."

But wrestling's just what Manuel Rojas does. It's not what defines him.

To Natalie Rojas, "Manny" is a "goofy kid who loves to dance and makes his friends laugh." He's the youngest of three and the "biggest Teddy Bear." He's hardworking, resilient, respectful, fun-loving and fearless.

"He'll give you the shirt off (his) back," she said.

Hancock calls "Manny" a sweetheart. He's likeable, able to strike up a conversation with each person he meets, always with a smile on his face – that same smile that used to take down opponents on a youth wrestling mat.

That's the person Hancock and Rojas' parents expect to see in CC's wrestling room each day. He's not there to prove anything for himself anymore. It's all about what he can leave behind.

"I would say just don't hold back," Manuel Rojas said when asked what advice he has for the younger wrestlers in the room. "Enjoy the time while you have it. It will definitely go by fast."

"And don't give Coach Hancock too hard of a time."

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

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# Keller's girls hockey camp may inspire Olympians

## Gold medalist gives lessons in sport at Farmington Hills

**Mia Berry**  
 Detroit Free Press  
 USA TODAY NETWORK

Megan Keller's legacy is forever etched into the Farmington hockey community.

By the age of 23, Megan was a four-time world champion and an Olympic gold medalist.

A red, white and blue banner embroidered with her Olympic No. 5 and "2018 Olympic gold medalist" underneath hangs center ice at Suburban Ice Farmington Hills.

Her memories at that rink are what led to Megan Keller's Gold Medal Hockey Camp in her hometown, designed for girls only.

"I started playing hockey with the boys and I didn't make the switch over to girls until I was in high school eighth grade just because there weren't really many girls teams in the area (nor) opportunities for girls to play on all-girls teams," Keller said Wednesday, the third day of four-day camp. "Now it's so exciting to see that I have like four to five teams worth of girls out there altogether."

"So there are so many more opportunities in the sport continue to grow. I just want to be a part of that and hopefully give these girls a place to come play with their peers."

Keller intentionally sought out an all-female coaching staff for the campers. All eight coaches shared a wealth of knowledge with players stemming from collegiate and professional experience.

"I did do camps like this (with women coaches) but it wasn't all-female staff, which I wish we would have had like this because it makes it so much better for all the little girls if you have two older girls," Riley Johnson said, a camp volunteer who's playing hockey Mercyhurst this fall. "We always had boys, which were older than us so it's nice to see the girls look up to older girls."

Over the years, Keller has participated in various camps, but is still in awe she was able to see months of planning

and coordination come into fruition.

"I've always wanted to do something like this and start my own camp. I have a lot of teammates that have done the same so to be able to come back and have about 100 girls out here this week, and just get them on the ice, get them off the ice talking to them, introducing the game and different skills has been so awesome," she said. "They've been a joy to be around (and) I hope they're having fun."

Camp participants took turns in drill rotations working on their puck handling and goal shots, but the biggest draw for campers was playing soccer on ice. While fun, combining the two Olympic sports in the rink aims to help improve their skating skills and get younger and inexperienced players accustomed to using their feet.

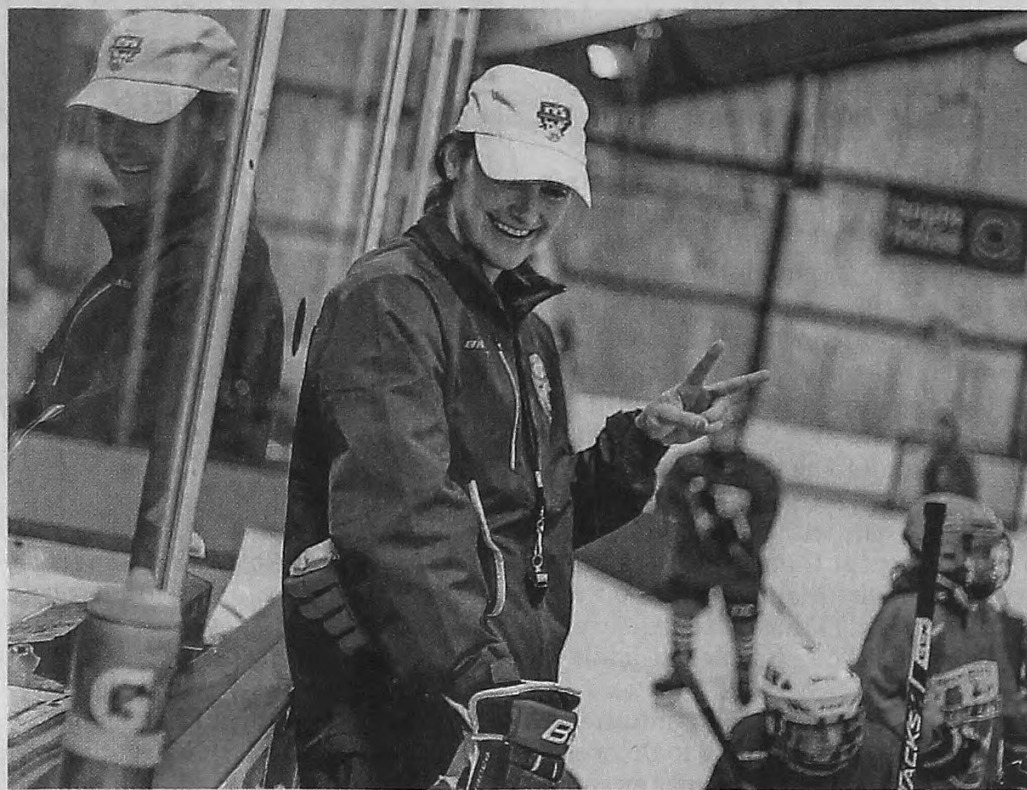
With the Tokyo Olympics starting this week and the 2022 Winter Olympics around the corner, Keller remembers her favorite memories from the 2018 Games.

"I had such a great time. I want to do it again," Keller said. "I think just for me, a lot of my teammates, and just all Team USA athletes when you walk through opening ceremonies, you hear over the speakers, they announced the United States of America. It's not just your team, but it's amazing athletes from all over the world in the country and you walk out together behind your flag. I think that's one of the moments that I'll always remember. It just gets everything started for the whole Olympic Games and makes it really feel like a dream come true."

During the off-ice instruction, the girls passed around Keller's gold medal, which she hopes inspires them to focus on their passions and aim high.

"I didn't even know girls hockey really was a thing until I saw it on TV at the Olympics," Keller said. "That's when I was like, 'OK, I want to do that I want to go to the Olympics,' and that's when I first realized my dreams. So to be able to hopefully spark some of these girls that are here today, spark their dreams and inspire them. I think little Megan would definitely be happy about that and proud because that's what the girls before me did for (me)."

*Mia Berry is a sports reporting intern with the Free Press. Reach out via email: mberry@freepress.com.*



Megan Keller talks to campers at Megan Keller's Gold Medal Hockey Camp at Suburban Ice in Farmington Hills on July 21, 2021. The camp consisted of fundamental skills, age-appropriate concepts, training on forward and backward skating, playmaking, scoring, puck handling, and defense. There was three age group at the camp. PHOTOS BY RODNEY COLEMAN-ROBINSON



Campers work on drills.

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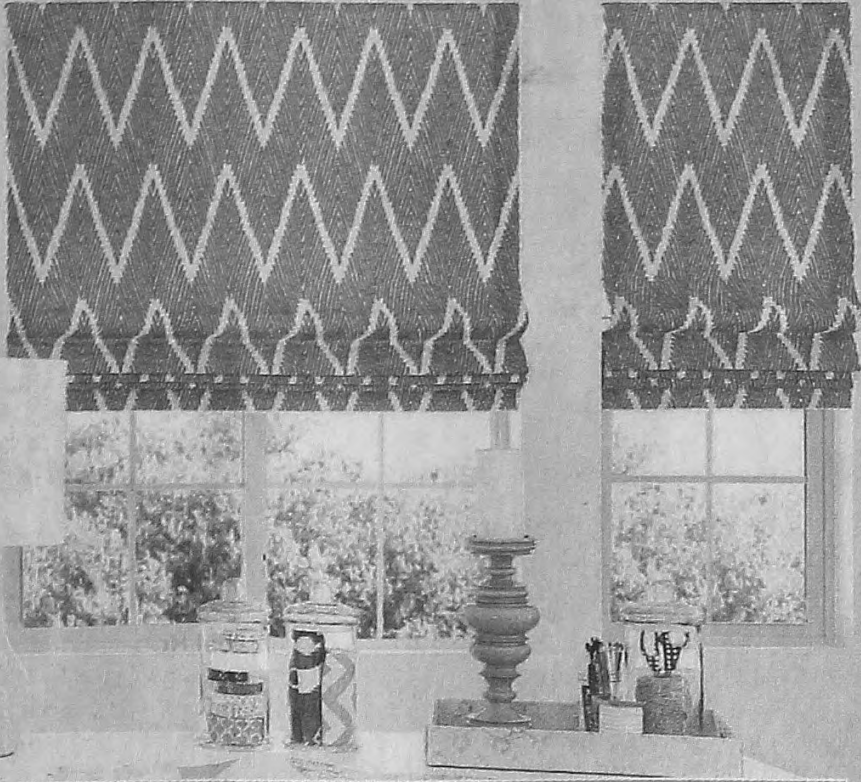
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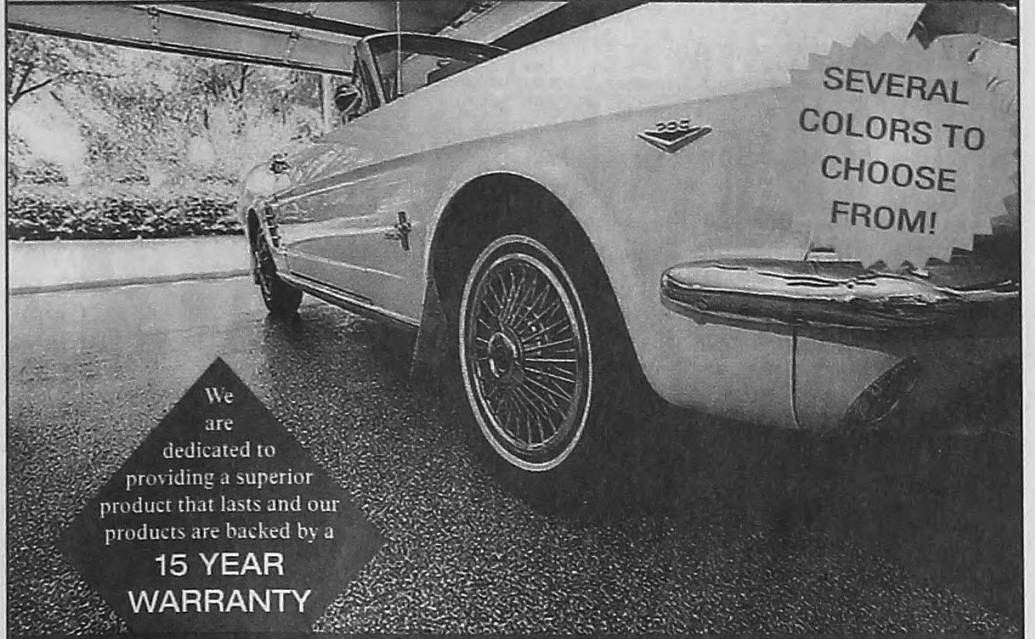
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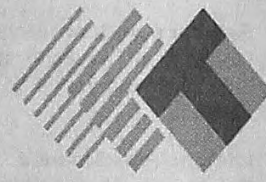


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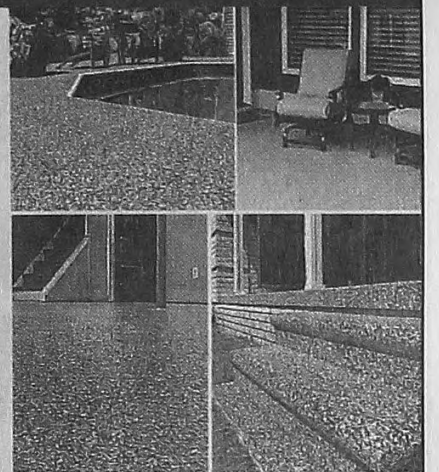
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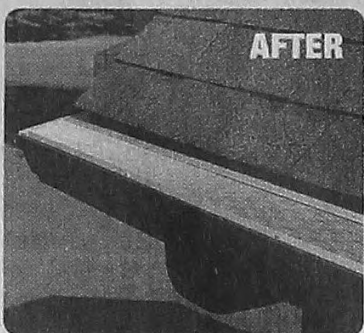
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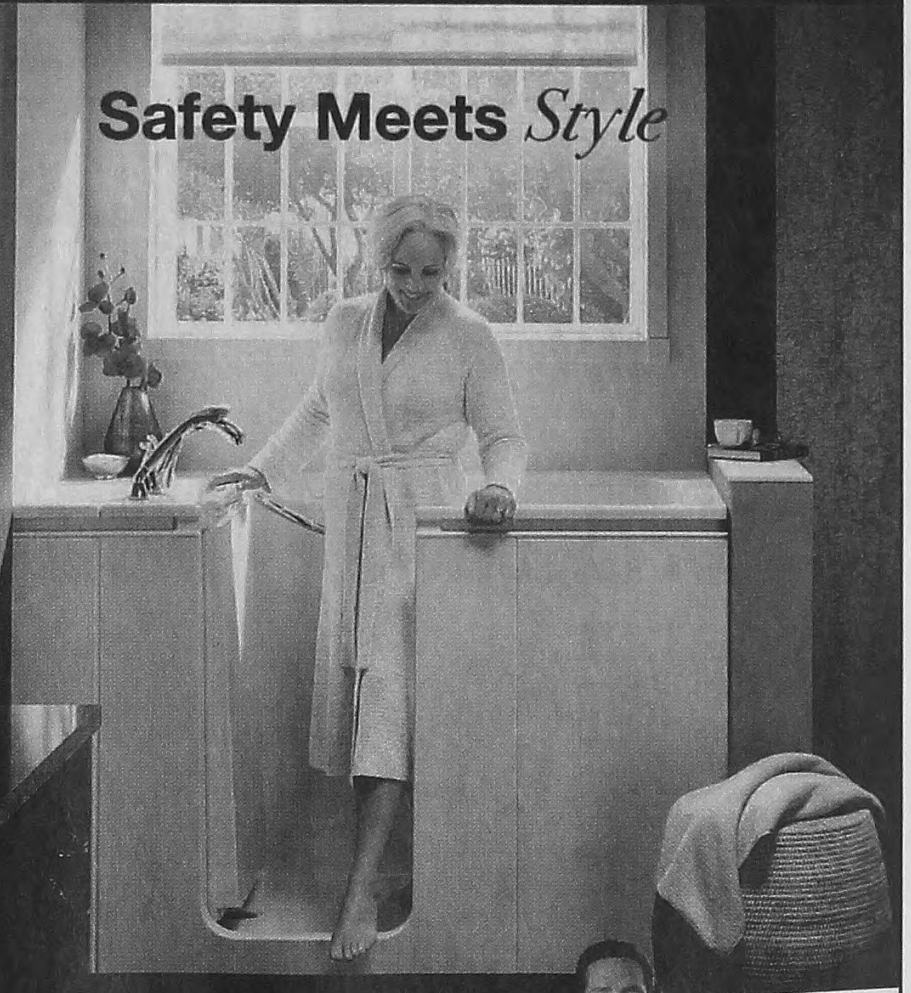


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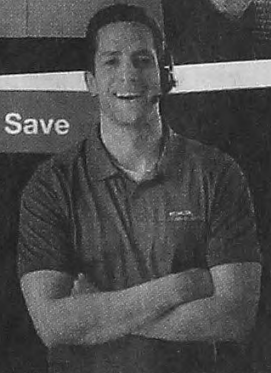
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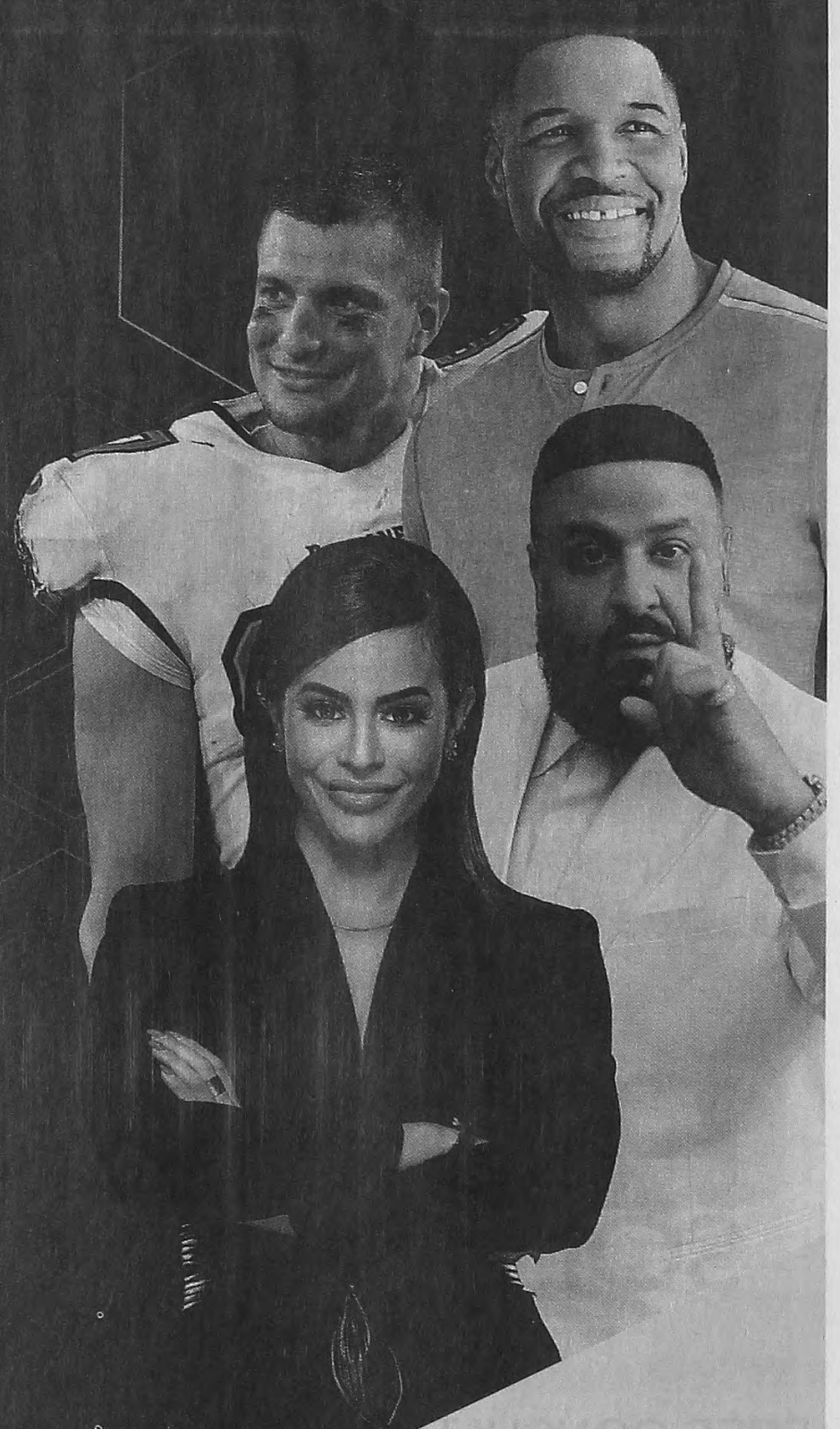
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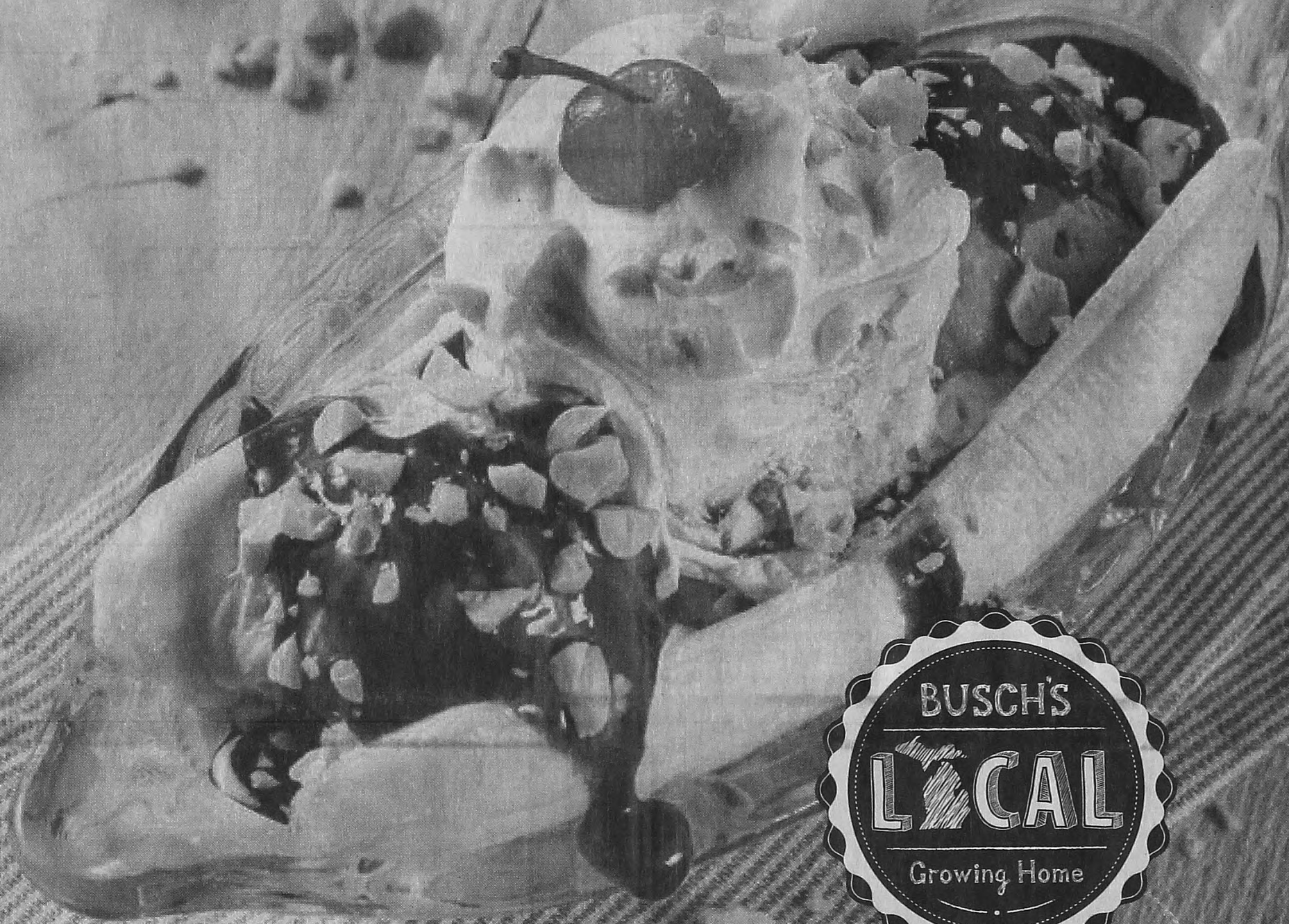
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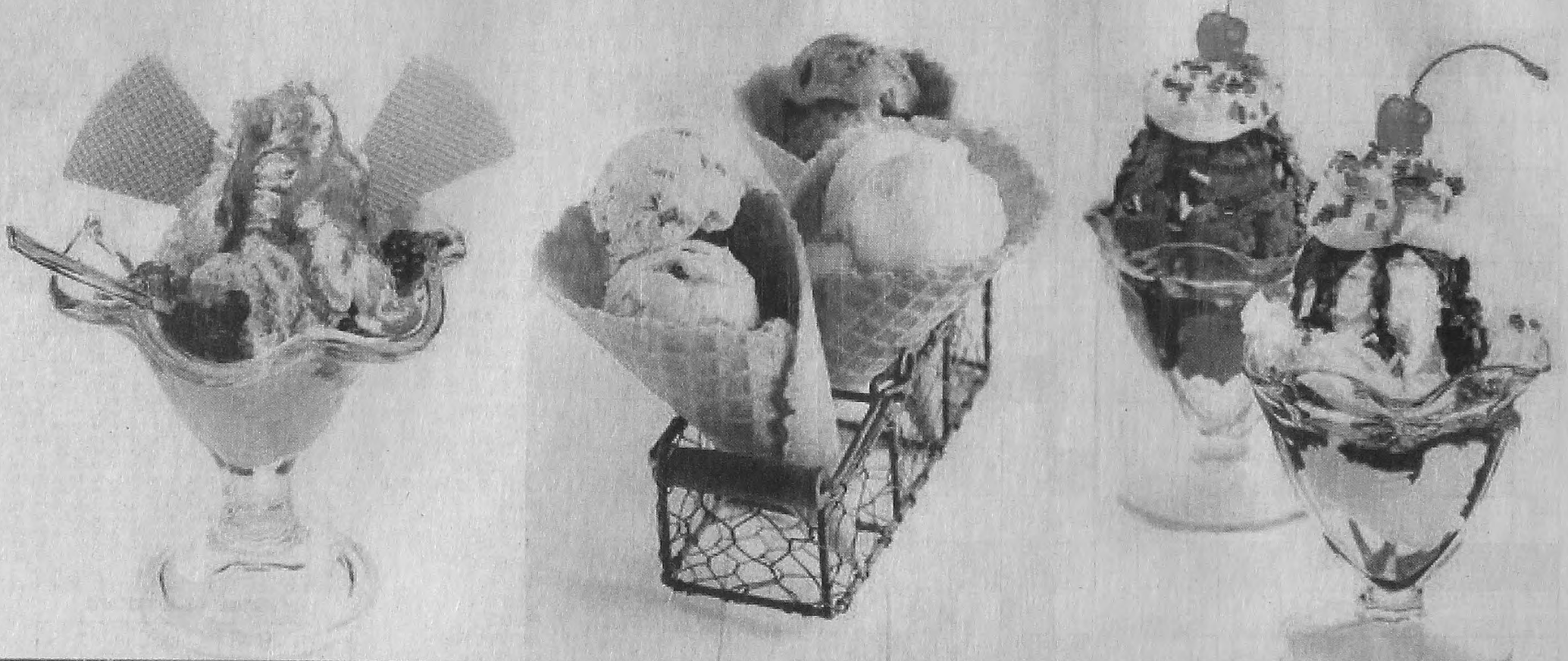
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