



## Freshman's play helped decide Mercy vs. Marian girls rematch

SPORTS, 1B

CANTON

# OBSERVER

SUNDAY, JANUARY 30, 2022 | HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

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35TH DISTRICT COURT

## Cannabis, COVID-19 factors in budget deficit

### Unprecedented projected shortfall for 2022 at \$562K

Ed Wright Hometownlife.com  
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

A perfect storm of circumstances has rocked western Wayne County's 35th District Court's financial boat for the first time in recent memory.

One of 107 district courts in Michigan, the 35th was a financial efficiency machine until 2020, annually operating in the black, a distinction few other courts of its kind could boast.

However, an approximate 40% reduction in the volume of tickets and

finances in recent years — thanks most notably to fewer drivers on the road due to COVID-19 and the legalization of marijuana, to name two — resulted in a projected 2022 budget deficit of \$562,000. That follows nearly a half-million dollar deficit last year.

The financial shortfall requires the court to collect reimbursements from

the communities it serves, the percentages of which are based on a formula that includes the number of tickets and fines distributed.

The deficit, along with the realization that operating in the red will be a new normal without changes in protocols,

See DEFICIT, Page 4A



Livonia Animal Control Officers Keri Brandon, left, and Shellean Polovich demonstrate their rig's ramp, used for loading large dogs. Brandon has been an Animal Control officer for seven years and Polovich, for 37. JOHN HEIDER/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

## Animal control officers talk about pets and cold weather

Shelby Tankersley Hometownlife.com  
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

Animal control offices get a spike in calls anytime it's exceptionally cold or hot outdoors.

In Livonia, opinions became particularly heated last winter after pet safety came into focus and neighbors began advocating for dogs at one household that were left outdoors for long periods.

Livonia Animal Control was contacted repeatedly, but officers found the pet owner committed no violations.

Livonia Animal Control Officer Keri Brandon said she and her colleagues are always going out to check on dogs they know live in doghouses when it's particularly hot or cold outside. Their job requires a lot of discretion, and they have to consider every situation within its particular context.

"It's typically a case-by-case basis," Brandon said. "Animal control is a very gray area. You have your bare minimums, but there's a lot of flexibility

See ANIMAL CONTROL, Page 4A

**"Animal control is a very gray area. You have your bare minimums, but there's a lot of flexibility when it comes to what's considered excessive."**

Keri Brandon Livonia Animal Control officer

## Pharmacist in Farmington Hills sentenced to 77 months in \$10M fraud case

Susan Vela Hometownlife.com  
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

A licensed Farmington Hills pharmacist was sentenced to at least six years in prison for his role in a \$9.8 million health care fraud scheme.

Mohamad Ali Makki, 46, of Dearborn Heights must pay the nearly \$10 million in restitution. U.S. Judge Linda Parker also ordered him to forfeit about \$1 million from his seized bank accounts during the sentencing earlier this month.

His three co-defendants, which include his sister, await either sentencing or trial.

Federal prosecutors said Makki was the pharmacist at Lifecare Pharmacy on Orchard Lake Road. His sister Wansa Makki owned the pharmacy.

In court documents, prosecutors alleged Mohamad Makki, his sister and another co-conspirator defrauded Medicare, Medicaid and Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan by submitting claims for pharmaceuticals the pharmacy did not actually purchase.

Apparently, Mohamad Makki created false invoices to get reimbursements for the non-purchased pharmaceuticals. His sentence of 77 months was the result of his guilty plea.

"Fraud by health care professionals will be aggressively pursued by our office," U.S. Attorney Dawn Ison said. "We hope that prosecutions like this one will deter health care professionals from stealing money from those who genuinely need it to order to line their own pockets."

Special federal agents investigated the fraud scheme, along with the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services.

Other defendants in the fraud

See FRAUD, Page 4A

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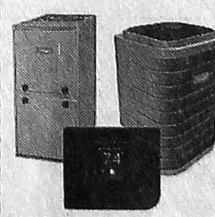


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# Canton's 2022 goals include EV charging stations

Ed Wright Hometownlife.com  
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

The key word for Canton Township in 2022 could be "rebuild" — from the crater-infested sections of Canton Center Road that eats up tires like Cookie Monster gobbles up cookies, to a barn-like facility to replace the burned-to-the-ground Cady-Boyer Barn in 2021.

Cautioning the township's 2022 goals are filtered by the unpredictable behavior of COVID-19, Supervisor Anne Marie Graham-Hudak said the township is seeking to fix a couple of well-traveled roadways as soon as possible.

"We're working with Wayne County (which owns most of the major roads in Canton) to do a full reconstruction of Canton Center Road between Ford Road and Warren Road," Graham-Hudak revealed. "Our plan is a total reconstruction of the two northbound lanes and a partial reconstruction of the southbound lanes."

Graham Hudak said improving Warren Road from Haggerty to Lilley roads is also on the township's docket.

"We've put in funding requests to the

state to help pay for these important improvements; we're really pushing for these projects to happen," Graham-Hudak said.

Less than four years removed from a \$2 million-plus improvement project by the Wayne County Roads Division, the targeted stretch of Canton Center is littered with gaping potholes and uneven patches of pavement that have been filled with temporary-patching compounds.

Graham-Hudak noted that Canton Center from Ford Road south to Cherry Hill Road was underwent a significant improvement project in 2021.

Roads upgrades are just a few of the items on what should be an ambitious let's-get-this-done 2022 agenda in Canton.

Graham-Hudak announced the township has secured a \$40,000 grant from the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments that will go toward hiring consultants who will determine where electric vehicle charging stations will be installed throughout the township.

"With the automotive industry moving toward building more electric vehi-

cles, we want to make sure our residents and visitors have plenty of options to charge these vehicles," she said, adding the township's fleet of emergency vehicles has already made a shift toward using EVs.

In the wake of an insurance company's thumbs-up to replace the popular Cady-Boyer Barn, a popular gathering place at 500 Ridge Road that was destroyed by a swift-moving fire May 30, 2021, a committee has been formed, Graham-Hudak said, to develop replacement ideas.

"The hot thing now is to hold important family events — wedding receptions, baby showers, graduation parties — in barns similar to the Cady-Boyer facility," Graham Hudak said. "That barn was booked up for months with future events at the time of the fire."

"Above all else, we want the barn-like building that replaces it to be a safe venue. We've already received several suggestions, but we want it built with fire-suppression materials and sprinklers."

With an eye on improving the township's livability index, Graham-Hudak said a sidewalk gap program will shift

into a higher gear, with new walkways planned to run parallel to newly-paved Ridge Road, among other sites.

"One of our goals is that residents can walk out their front door and be within a 10-minute walk of a park," Graham-Hudak said. "That requires filling in sidewalk gaps and finding sites for pocket parks."

Graham-Hudak said fine-tuning transparency of township public safety departments is also a priority for 2022.

"This includes adding a virtual dashboard to our website so people can see how many runs our police and fire make," she said. "We'd also like to expand our community policing program. Once the weather warms up, we'll put more police officers on bikes, which makes it easier for them to meet residents and build relationships."

Graham-Hudak emphasized that all of the projects township leaders have their sights set on within financial stability guidelines.

"We want to make sure everything is done within the budget," she asserted.

Contact reporter Ed Wright at [edwright@hometownlife.com](mailto:edwright@hometownlife.com).



Actors Cynthia Tupper, left, and Gary Weinstein. Both live in Farmington Hills. COURTESY OF DAVE REINKE

## Farmington Players prep for Valentine-themed production

Courtesy of Barry Cutler  
Farmington Players

Take your Valentine to a fun romantic comedy at the Farmington Players Barn in Farmington Hills.

"Tokens of Affection," written by Topher Payne, opens Feb. 11. The show is directed by Dave Reinke of Novi, and it shines a spotlight on what commitment looks like two or three decades later.

The story follows Frank Garrett, who's stunned by his wife Jackie's decision to leave him after 37 years of marriage, as well as siblings Charlie and Claire, who team up to try and save their parents' relationship.

Reinke says "Tokens of Affection" is a perfect Valentine's show exploring two people who need to rekindle their love. To do so, they must first embrace the little things in life: "the compliments, the greetings at the door, the tokens of affection."

"From the moment I read the script I fell in love with the show," Reinke said. "These are real people that audience members can relate to. It is not your typical A plus B equals love connection."

The playwright, Topher Payne, has been quoted as saying: "The core conflict of the show is recognizing that finding someone with whom to build a life is a dicey proposition. And if you manage

to find that, no matter what that looks like, it's worth celebrating."

"I hope audience members will leave with a happy heart and never lose sight of the little things that make love grand," Reinke added.

Tickets for Tokens of Affection are available now at [farmingtonplayers.org](http://farmingtonplayers.org) or at the box office at 248-553-2955. The show will run on a variety of dates between Feb. 11 and Feb. 26.

Adult tickets cost \$22 and tickets students or seniors cost \$20.

Due to the uncertainty of the times and in order to protect the safety of our cast, crew and patrons all attendees ages 12 and older are required to have been fully vaccinated against COVID-19.

Patrons must provide proof of vaccination and ID to gain entry to the theater. Mask wearing is required while attending performances. The house, at 32332 West 12 Mile Road, will open by 7:15 p.m., and ushers will encourage patrons to take their seats promptly — both pre-show and at intermission — rather than congregate in the lobby. Those who don't feel well or have cold symptoms, even if they've been vaccinated, are asked to please stay home and schedule another day to see a show at The Farmington Players Barn.

## Plymouth-Canton Schools custodial firm hampered by shortage

Ed Wright Hometownlife.com  
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

America's ongoing labor shortage has not been kind to Plymouth-Canton Community Schools' first-year custodial firm ABM Industry Group, whose first-quarter presentation to the board of education Jan. 11 was met with tough love.

Hired to replace Grand Rapids Building Services effective July 2021, ABM's staff size is hovering around 60% of what was expected by school district leaders when it agreed to terms with the Troy-based cleaning company.

The worker shortage has created less-than-desired standards of cleanliness in the district's 15 elementary, five middle and four high schools, ABM's team of administrators were repeatedly reminded following their 15-minute presentation.

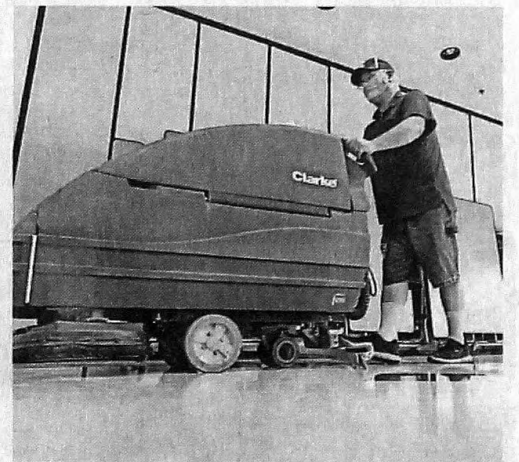
"I commend you for your professionalism and the strong process you bring to work," Board of Education Treasurer Patrick Kehoe said. "It's clear you have a continuous improvement mindset and you have data to help you improve the process."

"If you can ever get fully staffed, I think we'll be happy. That said, we're not close (to being fully staffed). You were supposed to have 104 cleaners on staff and we're currently at 70.5 (as of Jan. 11)."

Board President Patti McCoin said the firm's understaffing has forced district teachers to clean their rooms before students arrive in the mornings.

"There is nothing worse for a teacher in the morning to walk into a classroom and having to make sure it's cleaned before the students arrive," said McCoin, a Detroit Public Schools educator. "The cleaning of classrooms needs to be prioritized."

Six schools in the district — Canton and Starkweather high schools; and



A custodian cleans an elementary school cafeteria floor in 2021. Custodial firms are dealing with labor shortages during the 2021-22 school year. JOHN HEIDER/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

Hoben, Smith, Miller and Workman elementary schools — had not been formally inspected by ABM during the first quarter, a statistic that bothered Kehoe and other board members.

"That's a big miss on your part," Kehoe said. "Completely missing schools (for inspections) is not a good activity. ABM is supposed to be an expert in this process. We expect better. I do not want to be sitting here during your second quarter presentation hearing about the same issues."

ABM was praised for its retention rate and its 87.19% inspection score for the first quarter, considering the short-staffing issues.

ABM Account Manager Melissa Mascarello explained the firm is offering unprecedented incentives — including \$1,000 signing bonuses, \$500 referral bonuses and \$150 monthly attendance bonuses — to prospective and active employees to help increase its workforce.

Hourly salaries for custodians have been raised from \$14.21 to \$16.15, with ABM and the district splitting the extra costs related to the raises.

"We've only lost 13 employees in seven months, which is a turnover rate of 18%," Mascarello said, adding that the average turnover rate in northern states is generally around 40%. "We're not where we need to be yet with staffing, but as far as keeping staff, we're doing a good job."

Board member LaRonda Chastang said ABM's close-to-88% inspection score should be applauded, but noted "consistently low" scores for classroom cleanliness needed to improve.

"Because we're short-staffed, we have some staff covering more than one building," Mascarello said. "Once we hire more people, it will relieve some stress on employees we have."

Mascarello said there is some good news on the horizon.

"We have 16 people in the final stages of (the hiring) process," she said.

In terms of inspection scores for areas of school buildings, storage rooms, lobbies, stairwells, kitchens, equipment rooms and cafeterias earned the highest scores throughout the first quarter. Low-scoring areas included commons areas, classrooms and high school break rooms.

### CITY OF PLYMOUTH, MICHIGAN ORDINANCE NO. 22 - 01

#### AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE PLYMOUTH CITY CODE.

Chapter 74 - UTILITIES  
ARTICLE III - SEWERS  
DIVISION 5 - STORM SEWERS

#### Sec. 74-173. Adoption of the Wayne County Storm Water Management Ordinance and Wayne County Storm Water Control Program.

A certain document, one copy of which is on file in the office of the Department of Municipal Services of the city and one copy of which is on file in the office of the city clerk, being marked and designated as the Wayne County Stormwater Management Ordinance (Wayne County Enrolled Ordinance No. 2021-526a), the Wayne County Storm Water Management Administrative Rules (Wayne County Resolution No. 2021-526b) and, the Wayne County Storm Water Standards Manual (Adopted September 2021); Collectively referred to as the Wayne County Storm Water Control Program, and each is hereby adopted as the ordinances of the city and made a part hereof as if fully set out in this article. Adopted by reference to: <https://www.waynecounty.com/departments/environmental/waterquality/ordinance-administrative.aspx>

Introduced - 1-3-2022  
Enacted - 1-18-2022  
Publication - 1-30-2022  
Effective - 1-31-2022

For Complete Ordinance Text Follow the Link Below:  
[https://library.municode.com/mi/plymouth/codes/code\\_of\\_ordinances](https://library.municode.com/mi/plymouth/codes/code_of_ordinances)

Publish: January 30, 2021

LO-0000961020 3x4.5

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Observer & Eccentric Newspapers  
PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK  
Published Sunday and Thursday by  
Observer & Eccentric Media

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# Foundry Flask property on verge of redevelopment

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

Transforming downtown Northville's historic four-acre industrial property known affectionately as Foundry Flask from gritty to pretty gained steam this month when the Northville Historic District Commission approved (with conditions) Utah Development, LLC's new construction application.

The value of the mixed-use building slotted for 456 Cady St. is \$20 million, according to the application form.

If the project clears a series of late-game hurdles as expected, a three-story structure with industrial-themed exterior elements will start to rise on the long-dormant property that was the home of components manufacturers including Stinson Aircraft and Stimpson Scale and Manufacturing.

Historic district Commissioner Jeff Gaines sought assurances from building designer Robb Burroughs of OX Studio, Inc. that the new building would pay homage to the property's manufacturing-coated heritage.

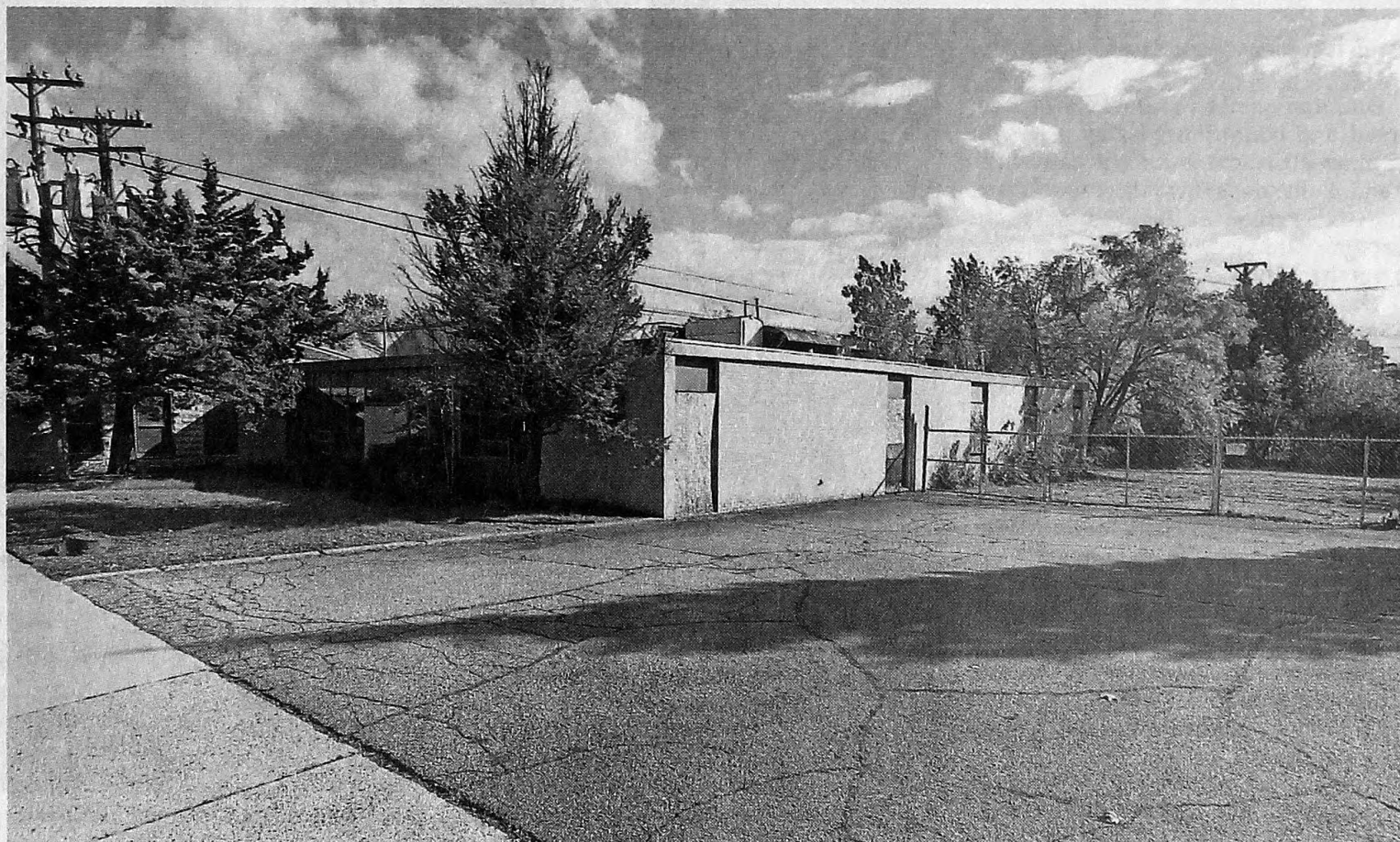
"It is very important that this site's legacy and history are preserved," Gaines said Dec. 14. "The neighborhood I lived in — Beal Town — and the neighborhood to the north — Cabbage Town — wouldn't exist without the manufacturing companies that functioned on this property."

"These manufacturing companies provided the livelihoods of several residents of this area. This is where they worked. This was their community."

Gaines, who said he would have preferred a series of buildings erected on the property to give it more of a community feel, emphasized that he doesn't want the property's rich history "white-washed" or erased by a modern new development.

"For a lot of folks, (new development) is what they want ... they see what's there now as an eyesore that's been there for the past 10 years," Gaines said. "Personally, I'd like to see the best of both worlds: retaining the history while moving into the 21st century with active and robust uses."

Robb Burroughs, an OX Studio, Inc. architect leading the design phase of the project, said his team is committed to



The Former Foundry Flask site at 456 E. Cady in Northville. JOHN HEIDER/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

retaining the property's impactful heritage. Burroughs noted that a timber frame from one of the existing buildings on the site built in 1910 can be salvaged for use in the design of the development.

"Using the salvaged wood on an exterior part of the building would be challenging, so we're looking at interior usage, potentially as a decorative feature in the public lobby," Burroughs said. "I think the worst thing you can do is put something in a time capsule and let it sit there; it's better to try to make something like this active as part of the lobby or in another location."

Jim Long, a representative of the developer, said he'd like to see the building's commons area resemble the corridors of Comerica Park, the Detroit Tigers' relatively new home, with multiple pictures of the site's now-demolished factories viewable alongside documentation describing how important the site was to Northville's history.

"I was born and raised in this town, so I am very sensitive to its history," Long said.

The first floor of the development is scheduled to include a combination of parking, residential amenities and commercial space — ideally a grocery store, Burroughs' presentation explained.

The second and third levels will be exclusively residential rental spaces, totaling 79 units with one-, two- and three-bedroom layouts.

In May, the HDC granted the developer's request for demolition of the site's existing buildings — one built in 1910 and others constructed in the 1960s — provided that it obtain the Northville Planning Commission's approval of the new development proposal and that it document the existing buildings on site as a historical record (through photographs and drawings), and provide that record to the city and Northville Historical Society.

The HDC unanimously approved the

new construction application with conditions that the developer provide elevation records and floorplans of the existing buildings before they are razed.

The developer is working through a Planned Unit Development (PUD) process in the Zoning Ordinance. The property is currently zoned as PR-1: performance regulated industrial district.

A mix of commercial and residential uses on this site is in sync with the Master Plan, the city's website revealed.

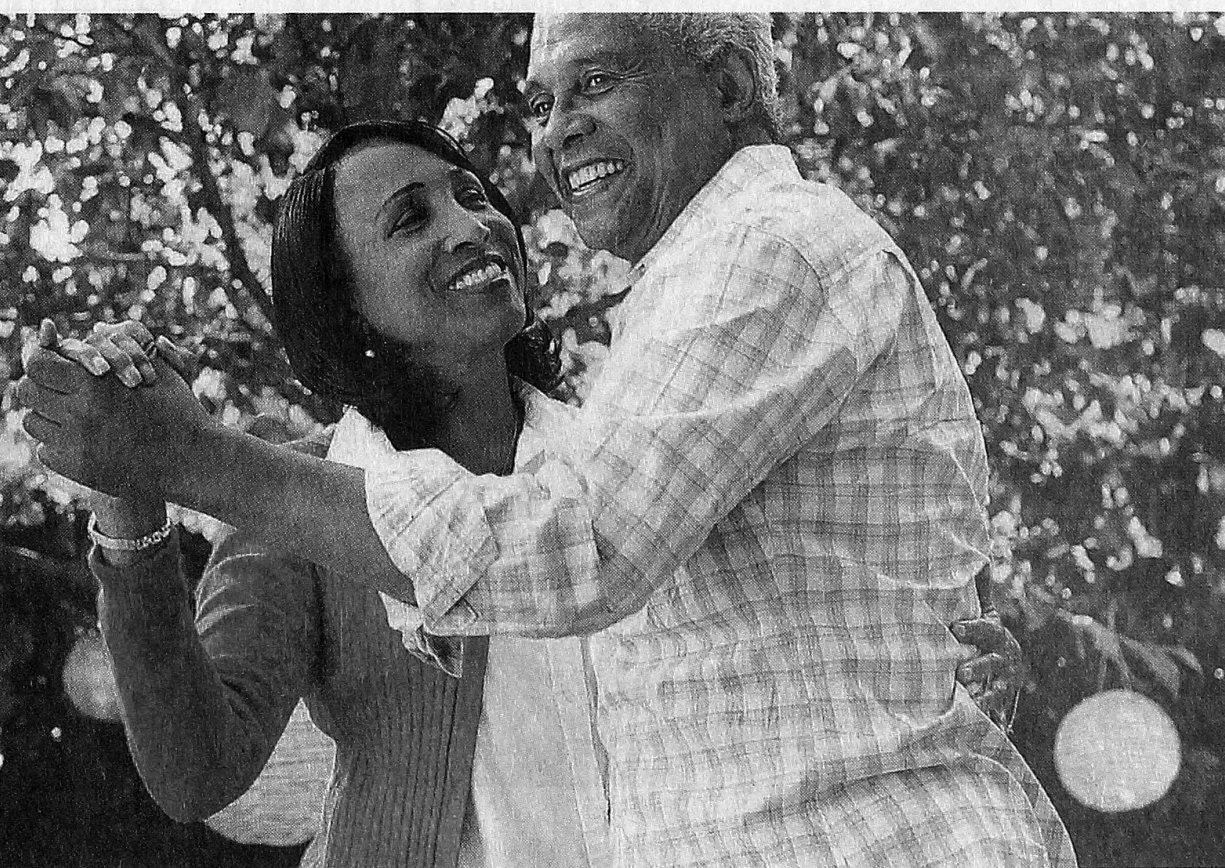
The site's final manufacturer was Foundry Flask & Equipment Co., which produced foundry components including molds, shovels and ladles.

One rendering included in the architect's presentation showed "The Foundry" painted on one side of the building, but Burroughs said the name of the development has not been determined.

"Although," he added, "The Foundry" would be a pretty cool name for it."

Contact reporter Ed Wright at [ewright@hometownlife.com](mailto:ewright@hometownlife.com).

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# Animal control

Continued from Page 1A

when it comes to what's considered excessive."

Brandon said an animal's size, age, breed and condition all play a role in what weather conditions it can withstand. Some dogs, Livonia Animal Control Officer Shellean Polovich said, are just fine outside year-round if they're given the right tools.

Though some may not choose a doghouse for their family pet, the officers said people who prefer to keep dogs outdoors can still give their dogs long, happy lives. Polovich added there's no law requiring people to dress their dogs in cold weather.

"There's a lot of people who never bring their dogs in," Polovich said. "They might be hunting dogs, they're not trained to be in the house or sometimes they're not good with kids. As long as they're well taken care of - healthy weight, extra food, insulated doghouse - they'll be just fine outside."

The targeted dog owner last winter has been the subject of harsh criticism for keeping his three hunting beagles outside. The owner, who declined to share his name, said he's always kept his dogs outdoors, and his beagles have lived healthy lives outside.

Brandon and Polovich visit the house often and confirmed the beagles are well-cared for.

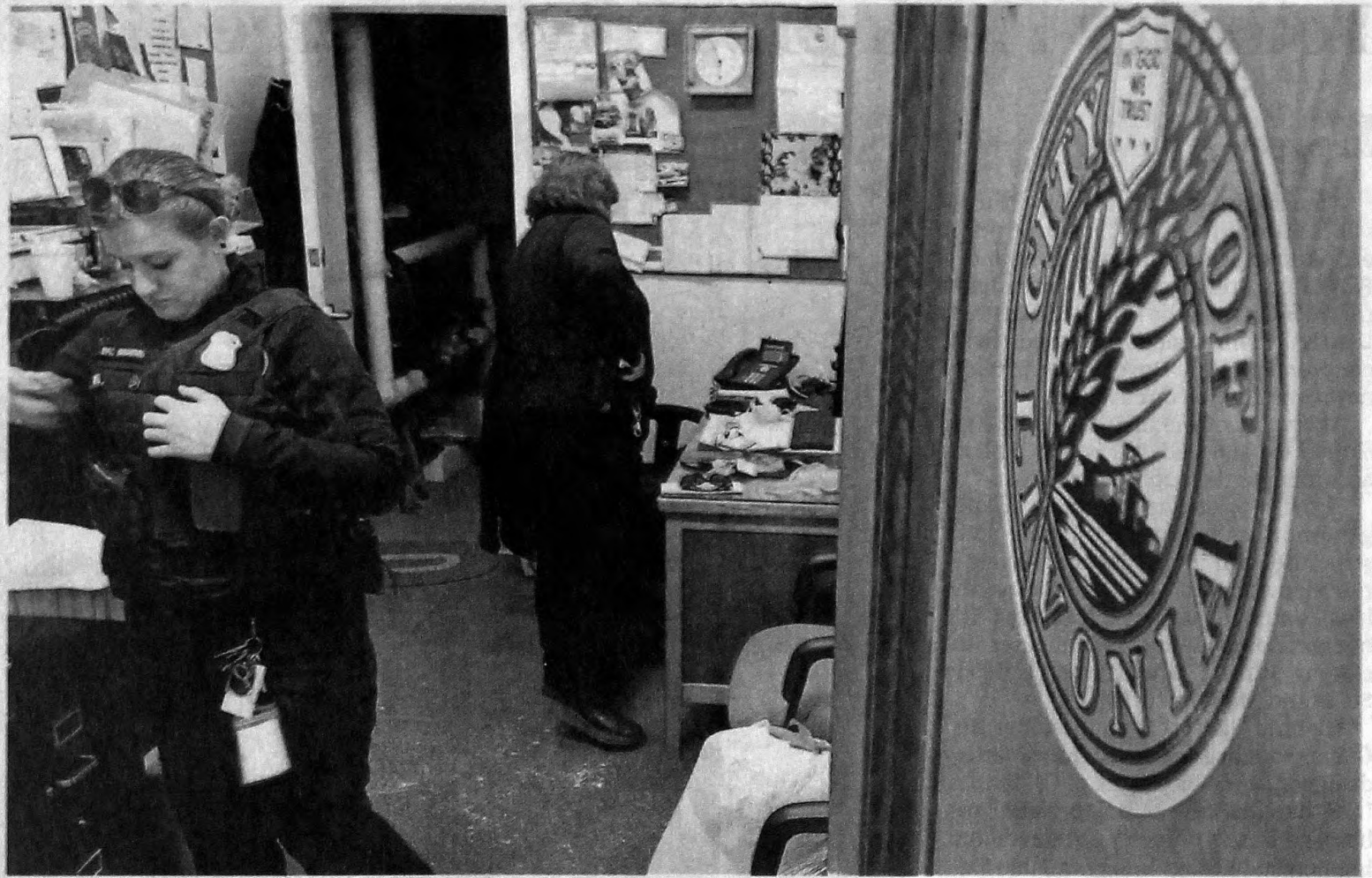
Andy Seltz, who leads cruelty investigations and field agents for Michigan Humane (formerly Michigan Humane Society), agreed that a good doghouse - snug, insulated with straw, dry and off the ground - can go a long way.

"As a human, you don't want to stand out there without any protection for more than five minutes," he said. "So, do the right thing and get a doghouse packed with straw so the animal can keep itself warm."

Last winter's discussions spawned attempts to address animals and extreme weather at the local and state levels. An ordinance at the city level was shot down and proposed legislation in Lansing is still in committee.

## Pet advocates want a higher standard

While animal control and Michigan



Livonia Animal Control officers Keri Brandon, left, and Shellean Polovich get their gear on before heading out from the city's Department of Public Works yard. JOHN HEIDER/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

Humane say year-round outdoor living arrangements can work for pets, there's a vocal pet-loving community that finds keeping animals outdoors cruel.

Karissa Parran, a Westland resident who was among people in and outside Livonia asking local officials to create pet-related ordinances last year, is circulating a petition to get such laws passed. She said her dogs are usually equipped with musers and coats in the winter. Parran owns Cozy Care Pet Services, a dog sitting, training and walking business.

"There are days when I can't even feel my fingers when I'm out walking pets, and at least I can go to my car and warm up," she said. "I hate to see any living being suffer, regardless of what it is."

The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, known as ASPCA, says animals should be brought indoors when weather gets extreme.

"Remember, if it's too cold for you, it's probably too cold for your pet, so keep your animals inside," the organization's

website reads. "If left outdoors, pets can freeze, become disoriented, lost, stolen, injured or killed."

## Handling animal cruelty calls

Other common calls to Livonia Animal Control include those from neighbors who report dogs barking outside for extended periods. Brandon and Polovich said those calls usually help them unearth more serious issues.

"Sometimes we just go for a barking dog (complaint) and then it turns out to be a cruelty situation for us," Polovich said. "It can start off as a different call and then it turns into something that's a worse situation."

Livonia Animal Control conducts roughly 30 cruelty investigations per year.

When officers encounter an animal left in inhumane conditions, they take it until the owner addresses the issues. Officers then follow up periodically.

Animal control and Michigan Hu-

mane also provide education and can help people obtain food, doghouses or straw when needed.

"Most of the time it's going to be educational," Seltz said. "People generally don't know what the law says, so it's educating them to let them know what the standards are. A good majority of the time, people adhere to that standard. If not, we help them get where they need to be."

But even when there's no problem, officers would rather people call them to check things out.

Polovich and Brandon said concerned residents should call their office with concerns and, if they want to take things a step further, volunteer with organizations like Michigan Humane.

"If they see something, they need to report it," Polovich said. "We would much rather go check on an animal and see what the situation is, give some education or give some help."

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

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# Deficit

Continued from Page 1A

spurred the court's executive board, three judges and a contingent of community financial experts to congregate for a study session Jan. 13.

"The court administration and the finance committee (comprised of the five finance directors of the five municipalities) met to review what opportunities were available to reduce the deficit," 35th District Court Administrator Pam Avdoulos said. "That analysis and study session resulted in proposals to the board to reduce the deficit by approximately \$450,000. ... There was no vote taken as of yet as there is more research and review to be completed."

Northville Mayor Brian Turnbull, who was elected the court's chairman Jan. 13, said the session was productive.

"We shared some outstanding discussions on the court's financials going forward and different options we can use to help ease the financial burdens in the future," Turnbull said. "Our financial committee recommended four options, which we will vote on at our next meeting. ...

"It's been a very efficient court, but when the volume of cases is down 40%, something has to give."

The executive board is made up of Turnbull, Canton Township Supervisor Anne Marie Graham Hudak, Plymouth Supervisor Kurt Heise, Northville Township Supervisor Mark Abbo and Plymouth Mayor Nick Mroz.

"Times are changing, laws are changing. It's important that district courts look at other models for revenue other than ticketing," Graham Hudak said. "Obviously, you still have to bring in drunk drivers, but to just go out and ticket people to raise revenues is not the

way to do it."

Heise said every community handles policing differently, which in turn affects the court's financial standing.

"In Plymouth Township, we've always been a law-and-order community. Our officers tend to issue a lot of tickets. We tend to go after speeders and things like that," Heise said. "I don't know how policing is in other communities; they all have their own way of doing things. That becomes a matter between the administration and their police chiefs and how they administer justice."

Statistics provided to Hometown Life by the 35th District Court show that 81% of the court's decline in cases over the past five years has been the decreased issuance of traffic tickets. The court sees about 13,600 fewer cases annually now compared to 2016. About 11,000 of those cases were traffic citations.

Ordinance misdemeanors declined by 7.3%, including 1,000 cases in 2018, the year Michigan legalized marijuana.

"Marijuana-related cases have all but disappeared," said 35th District Court Judge Michael Gerou. "We get some heroin or cocaine and paraphernalia cases, but nowhere near the volume of the marijuana cases we used to see."

The court, which is divided into three divisions - civil, traffic and criminal and probation - handles approximately 35,000 new cases annually, according to its website.

The 35th is a court limited jurisdiction, meaning it will hear cases that fall within its jurisdictional boundaries for both civil and criminal cases. The court also serves as the court of initial jurisdiction in felony matters; preliminary examinations for felonies are held in the 35th District Court and are generally sent to the 3rd Circuit Court of Wayne County for trial.

Contact reporter Ed Wright at [ewright@hometownlife.com](mailto:ewright@hometownlife.com).

# Fraud

Continued from Page 1A

scheme are Hossam Tanana, who is married to Wansa Makki, and Mahmoud Makki, who is her brother.

Proceeds from the fraud scheme were laundered by overpaying consult-

ing and delivery companies that Tanana and Mahmoud Makki owned, federal prosecutors alleged.

Tanana pleaded guilty to money laundering proceeds. Wansa Makki and Mahmoud Makki are awaiting trial.

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

# Ichabod, a malamute once destined for dog meat, now home in Oakland

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

Ichabod, an Alaskan malamute, could have been dog meat in China two years ago.

But a rescue intercepted the truck containing Ichabod and about 100 other dogs on its way to the slaughterhouse. Now, thanks to No Dogs Left Behind and Gayle Elias, the malamute with a disability has a forever home and a new purpose in Michigan as a therapy dog.

"He gives a message that you can endure something unimaginable, but it doesn't define you," Elias, a White Lake resident and Ichabod's human companion, said. "People and dogs, we heal and life goes on and we can still experience joy and pleasure."

Ichabod's destiny has dramatically changed in the 2 years since Elias first saw photos of him as a dog available for adoption in March 2020 on No Dogs Left Behind, a 501c3 non-profit founded four years before by Jeff Beri and dedicated to rescuing dogs from the dog meat trade in Asia.

COVID-19 was just hitting the U.S. and would turn the globe upside down, but Elias was focused on a furry face across the globe. She had five dogs already, but this brown and white malamute was calling to her.

Elias knew that malamutes are already a difficult breed to place — they are large and shed a huge amount of fur. And this one had additional challenges, as well. Ichabod has luxated patellas, deformed kneecaps which hinders his ability to walk normally. He would also need to be flown to the United States at her expense.

But watching videos of him playing with the other dogs, she thought he seemed very chill. He made her laugh. She didn't know if he could be a therapy dog or if his condition could be corrected surgically, but she felt he could fit in with her pack and she knew she wanted to give him the best life possible.

Due to COVID-19, she began an online relationship with Ichabod for nine



Gayle Elias with her dog, Ichabod. The malamute was rescued from China and is now a certified Alliance of Therapy Dogs volunteer. JOHN HEIDER/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

months, before meeting him upon his arrival at the JFK Airport in New York on Valentine's Day nearly a year ago.

Upon meeting him, her sense that Ichabod had a great personality and would be a wonderful therapy dog was confirmed.

But while he would need training for that from the Alliance of Therapy Dogs, there was no changing his physical disability. A veterinary orthopedic specialist told Elias he had never seen knees like Ichabod's in his career. She was advised against having surgical correction attempted on Ichabod, who walks in what she describes as a "permanent yoga squat."

Elias obtained a custom-made wheelchair for Ichabod, and he shows zero interest in it.

"He just doesn't believe he is disabled and I don't think I'm going to tell him," she said.

Instead, Ichabod, who is about 5-years-old, is perfectly content to be what he was always meant to be: a beloved pet, a member of a pack, a comfort in his new role as a therapy dog.

The malamute who was saved from a horrific end half way around the world has a home here now, and Elias, an outpatient therapist, hopes the dog saved from suffering now eases pain and gives comfort to others. Ichabod offered solace to Oxford students after their endurance of a shooting tragedy at their high school. On a regular basis, he now serves as a furry pal at the Friendship Circle in West Bloomfield, a non-profit intended to provide every individual

with special needs the support friendship and inclusion they deserve.

"Therapy dogs make such a positive difference in the lives of children with special needs," Bassie Shemtov, co-founder of Friendship Circle, said. "They help with the emotional well being of children as well as being a source for sensory integration. Having Ichabod visit Friendship Circle means so much to our families. Our participants gravitate toward him and enjoy their special time together."

Elias notes that some children are very afraid of dogs and she is so proud of how Ichabod lies still and wags his tail, sensing what is needed for each child.

"He is good at reading kids," she said. "He is very calm and if someone is excited, he remains calm. Kids make noise or move quickly and gesture and it doesn't phase him. His temperament is really solid."

Ichabod might not be as calm at home when his favorite treat is offered. When a can of sardines is opened, he gets "the zoomies," Elias laughs.

He also "worms," tilting his head and digging at the ground like a bird, and he tends to get a second wind at 2 in the morning.

His life is good now and Ichabod shows no signs of holding a grudge from the life he came from. Instead, Ichabod simply exemplifies love and perseverance and gives back as good dogs do.

In the spring, Elias will publish a children's rhyming book she wrote titled, "Ichabod: Where is the Glory?"

The glory is here in Michigan for Ichabod, in not only surviving, but thriving. Elias hopes to introduce her special malamute to not only children, but also perhaps to military veterans, by taking Ichabod to VA hospitals.

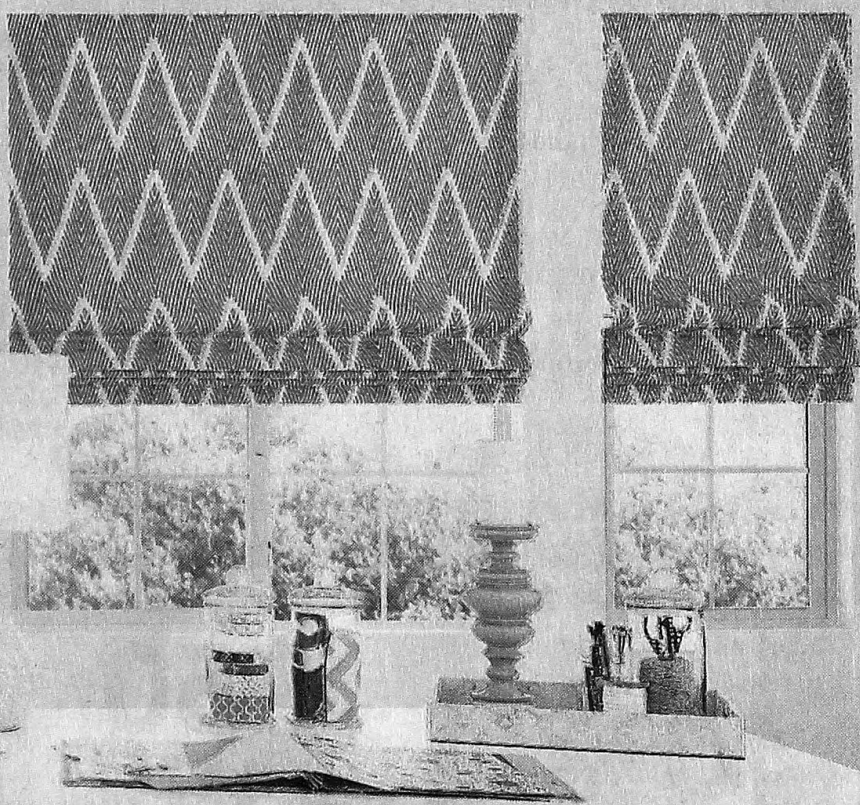
"He has enhanced my life," Elias said. "He has such a connection with people... He holds no grudges. As a human race, we have so much to learn from dogs... They are forever forgiving."

Contact reporter Susan Bromley at [sbromley@hometownlife.com](mailto:sbromley@hometownlife.com) or 517-281-2412.



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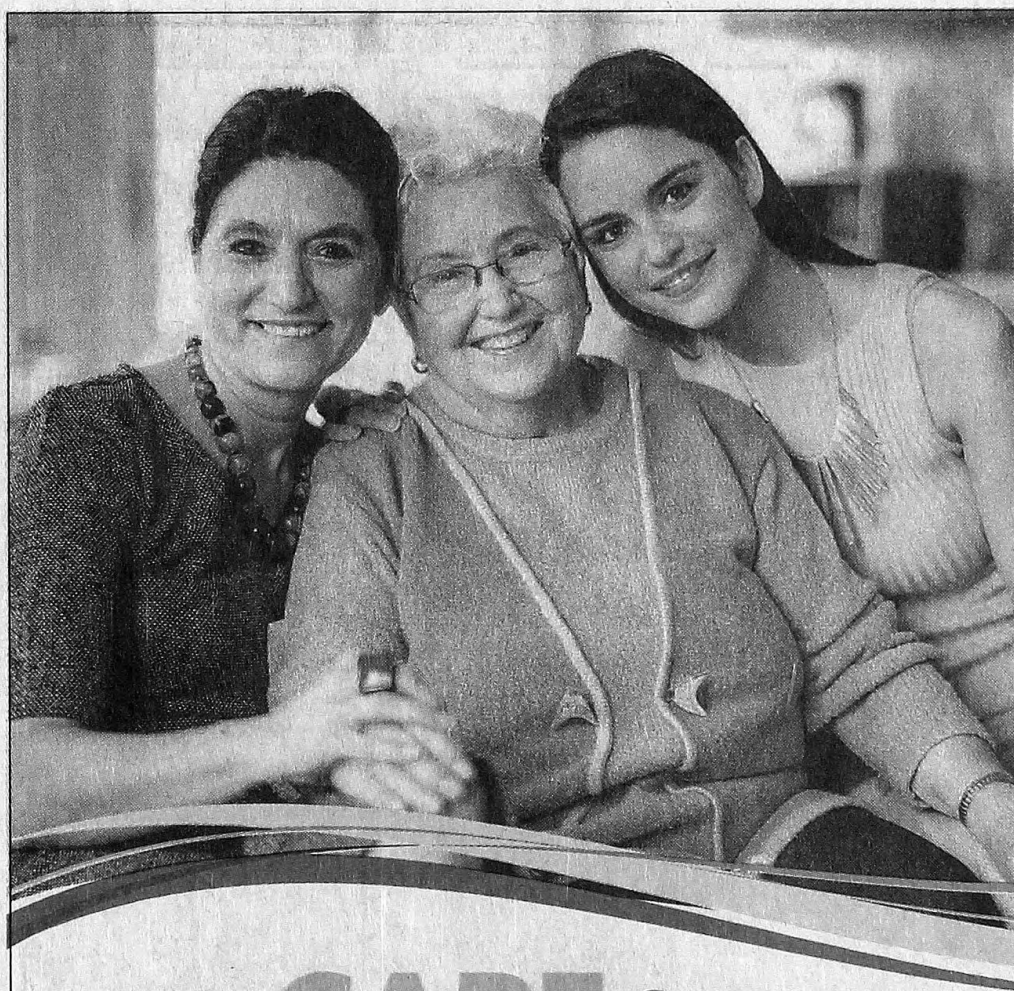
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# Mr. Peace shares anti-bullying message with kids

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

Maybe now more than ever, peace is needed in a world suffering through a pandemic.

Kevin Szawala sought to bring some with him to South Lyon children throughout January, speaking and rapping to dozens of elementary students after school this month in an anti-bullying crusade.

The visits from the 2003 South Lyon High School valedictorian known as "Mr. Peace," coincided with the annual observation of Martin Luther King Jr. Day, and Szawala incorporated the slain Civil Rights leader's mantra: "The time is always right to do what is right."

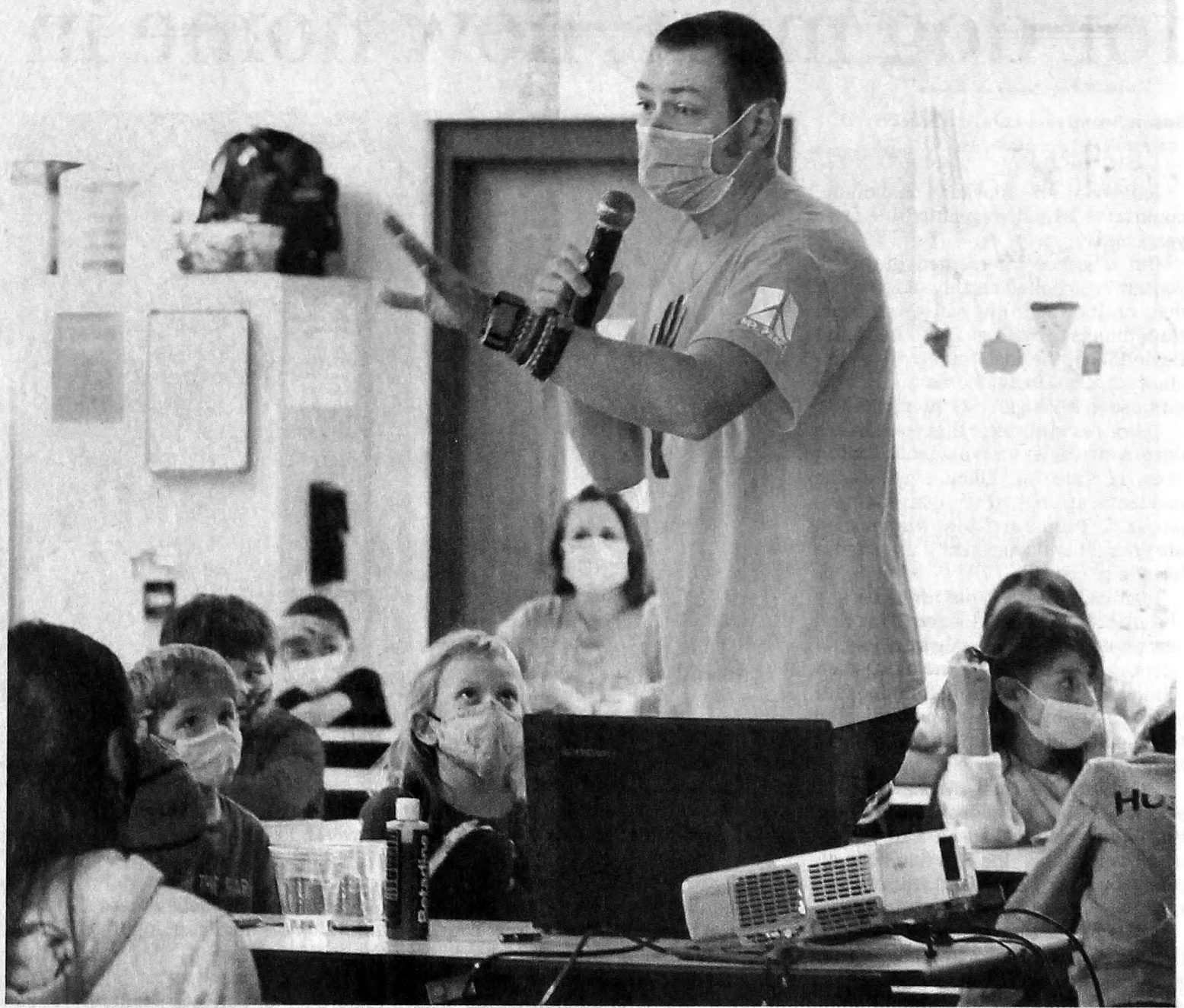
"Darkness can't drive out darkness, only light can, and hate can't drive out hate, only love can," Szawala said. "My other key themes are treat everyone like you treat your best friend, see them for their heart first. Hurt people hurt people — it's a big reason for bullying, but I let them know they can also choose to be healed people that heal people."

Szawala, a Commerce Township resident, preaches positivity and has traveled to more than 20 states, speaking to more than a million people in 1,100 schools across the country. He has returned close to home to launch his latest presentation, "Look at the Heart First."

Paige George, director of the South Lyon Community Coalition, brought him to the district through grant funds from the Oakland County Health Network. The program has been a "real eye-opener" for the kids she has watched line up to tell Szawala stories about being uncomfortable on the playground and more.

"My hope is the kids walk away knowing who they are is enough," George said. "Right now in this world, we need love and kindness and that is what he teaches."

Szawala is far from the initial path he lit out on after his high school graduation—attending the University of Michigan where he majored in economics and later earned a master's in business administration before going to work in the auto industry. In 2010, he detoured to a road less traveled, becoming a youth motivational speaker who aims to



Kevin Szawala, Mister Peace, addresses a gathering Jan. 18 at South Lyon's Brummer Elementary. The peace and unity speaker/rapper was brought to the school by the South Lyon Community Coalition. JOHN HEIDER/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

change hearts and minds.

Szawala tailors topics to the audience he is addressing, offering presentations on not only anti-bullying, but also substance abuse prevention, suicide awareness, leadership, diversity, and overcoming limiting beliefs.

He connects with his young audiences through hip-hop and as a spoken word poet and at least equally as important, he listens to their stories and

shares them with others to let them know they are not alone.

"That is what unites us," Szawala said. "Kids that are 5 to 7 years old are already going through a lot and they can still choose kindness. Usually you can hear a pin drop, because they really respond."

No matter what his speech, Szawala aims to improve mental health, something he said has been really impacted

in the pandemic. He notes too, that people often carry things with them for far longer—sometimes decades of not forgetting past hurts. He encourages forgiveness.

"There are a lot of opinions out there, but not all of them matter," he noted. "The biggest thing is to empower these kids."

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

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# Obituaries

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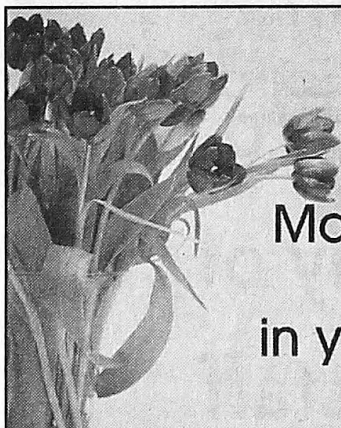
## Elsie McKeown

Elsie McKeown, age 91, passed away Friday, January 14, 2022. She was born in Detroit, Michigan. She graduated from Holy Redeemer High School and worked for Michigan Bell. After raising her family, she was employed with the City of Farmington Hills, where she later retired.



She was very active with Keep Michigan Beautiful, BCSEM and the Farmington Optimists. She loved gardening, playing Pinnacle, and writing monthly newsletters for fellow retirees. Elsie was preceded in death by her parents and two brothers. She is survived by her six children, three granddaughters, two great-grandsons, and three siblings. Per her wishes, cremation has taken place and no funeral will be held. A memorial tree planting ceremony and reception will be scheduled for the spring. Online condolences may be shared at [www.mccabefuneralhome.com](http://www.mccabefuneralhome.com)

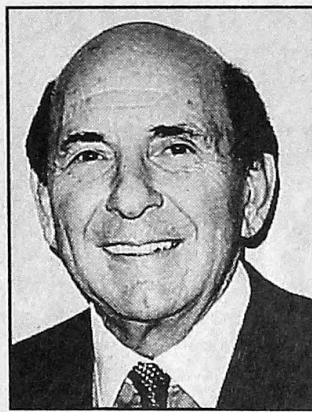
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peace  
in your time of  
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## Mario Trafeli, Jr., D.D.S.

-- Known fondly to most as simply "Mario", a Michigan sports legend, Farmington dentist, a loving husband, father, grandfather, great-grandfather, and friend, passed away at age 93, on January 22, 2022 surrounded by his loving family. Mario was born in Detroit, Michigan in 1928. He started skating at age 14, was nationally ranked by 15 and at age 18 emerged as the youngest, the first Detroiter, and the first Italian-American to win the 1947 Outdoor North American Speed Skating Championship. Over the ten-year period 1945-1955, he was one of North America's top skaters. Following his 1947 North American Championship he was invited five years in a row to the two-mile invitational Race of Champions held at New York's Madison Square Garden, a race he won twice, set the two mile record in 1952, and placed each other year. Between 1946 and 1953 he was a six time Michigan Indoor Champion, setting records in the 3/4 mile, the 440 yard, the 800 yard, the 1 mile, and 2 mile Michigan Championships. In 1948 Mario was an alternate to the US Olympic speed skating team and additionally played as Quarterback on the Wayne (State) University Tartans football team. In 1982 Mario was inducted into the Michigan Amateur Sports Hall of Fame and in 2010 was inducted into both the U.S. Speed Skating Hall of Fame as well as the Italian-American Sports Hall of Fame, the honor for which he was most personally proud. In the 1970s he took an interest in thoroughbred horse racing and became owner and trainer of many race-winning thoroughbreds. Also, at age 45 he took up the sport of tennis. Within ten years Mario was top ranked in Michigan in Midwest Men's singles and, in his mid-70s, Mario started playing doubles and at age 83 he and his partner were ranked number one in Men's Midwest Doubles. Mario attended Hampton Elementary, U of D High School, Wayne (State) University, and the U of D Dental School, and served as a dentist in the US Navy. In 1955, Mario married his love and best friend Marjorie Anne Busch. They had 6 children. Mario and Marjorie would celebrate their 67th wedding anniversary this year. He is also survived by his daughters Barbara Trafeli Fenton (George), Janet Trafeli, JD, sons Robert Trafeli, DO (Kerstin), John Paul Trafeli, MD, and Mark Trafeli, JD (Kate), his 12 grandchildren, 2 great-grandchildren and sisters Elaine Palmer and Diana Chronert Wallach. Mario is pre-deceased by his parents Louise (Iacovacci) and Mario Trafeli Sr., and his daughter Karen. Services have been held. In lieu of flowers memorial tributes to Alzheimer's Association or University of Detroit Jesuit High School. A.J. Desmond & Sons, 248-362-2500.



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# SPORTS

## Someone recruit Bloomfield Hills senior Ben Canty before it's too late

The 6-foot-5 senior guard scored 15 points

**Brandon Folsom**  
Hometownlife.com  
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

Ben Canty lasered a perfectly-placed bounce pass in transition to Derrick Lee Jr., who had *just* enough time to finish at

the rim without turning it over or falling out of bounds.

As Canty backpedaled back on defense, he made a pair of goggles with his hands and gave Lee a funny stare.

That kind of ball-handling wizardry from the guard helped the Bloomfield Hills boys basketball team grab a nine-point halftime lead during Monday's Oakland Activities Association-White opener against Troy.

But, wait, there was more.

The 6-foot-5 senior came up with a steal to open the second half. He quickly passed up the floor to Carson Brodsky, and then he sprinted past the Colts' entire defense, catching them by surprise. So Brodsky sent the ball back to Canty, who threw down a two-handed dunk in the paint.

And then, in the fourth quarter with the Black Hawks clinging to a 10-point

lead and Troy attempting to make a comeback, Canty jumped a passing lane and tipped a loose ball out of bounds to halt a Colts' possession. The play was so impressive, in fact, Bloomfield Hills coach Phil Kurajian walked onto the floor and slapped five with Canty between whistles.

Those were just three of Canty's

See **BASKETBALL**, Page 3B

## This freshman's play helped decide the Mercy, Marian rematch

Rookie Aizlyn Albanese buried four 3-pointers and scored 14 points

**Brandon Folsom**  
Hometownlife.com  
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

The stakes were too high and the spotlight should have been too bright for a freshman to be doing *THAT*.

That's right.

The Farmington Hills Mercy girls basketball team hosted rival Bloomfield Hills Marian for the rematch Tuesday night.

The first meeting earlier this month was an absolute fistfight. The two squads traded blows back and forth until, finally, the Marlins put together enough offense late to run away with the six-point victory on the road.

So much more was on the line this time.

The Marlins needed another win over the Mustangs to keep pace in the Catholic League-Central standings with Dearborn Divine Child, which is still unbeaten with six of its 12 wins coming in division play.

And then there's the Mustangs, who are trying to keep the train on the tracks after injuries have decimated their roster. They had only three bench players against the Marlins, and they were missing some heavy hitters. That included guard Anna Herberholz, who's

the key cog in making their offensive machine zoom down the court.

Oh, yeah, there's also the 800-pound gorilla in the room: Marian coach Mary Cicerone is still one victory away from her 700th career win. She plans on retiring following this season.

So it wasn't a surprise to see the two teams duke it out again early in the evening.

Nor was it a surprise to see Mercy's seniors such as Sarah Cunningham and Sophie Dugas and juniors Lauren Smiley and Maya White take full advantage of Marian's short bench with their full-court defense throughout the game.

What was a surprise, however, was the Marlins' secret weapon: Freshman Aizlyn Albanese.

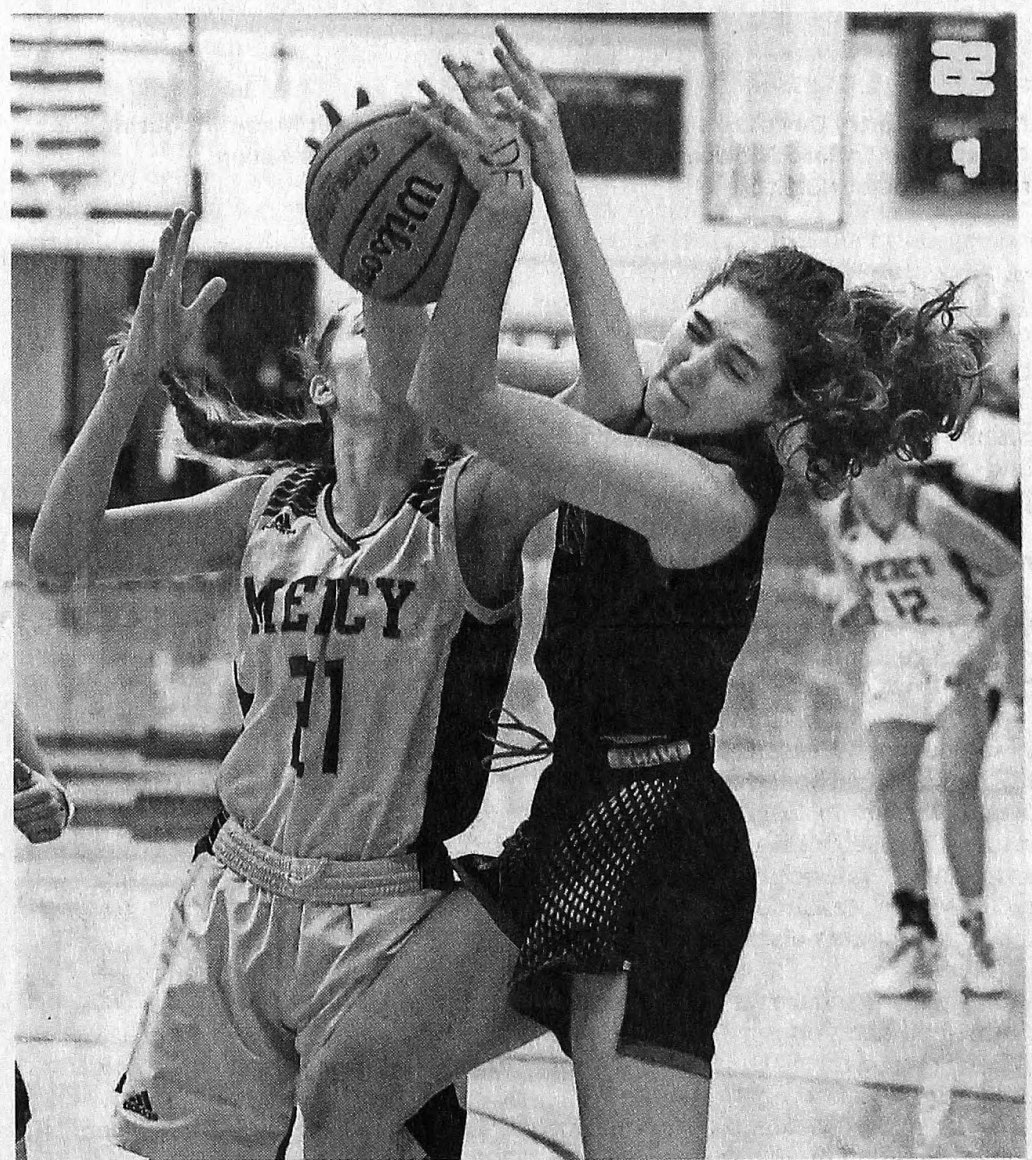
The rookie has been a great spot shooter this winter, but she picked the right time to have a breakout game.

The 5-foot-10 guard scored 14 points, including burying four 3-pointers. She scored eight points in the third quarter alone to help turn a close game into a blowout as the Marlins went on to beat Marian, 59-33.

"She's been shooting the ball really well," Mercy coach Gary Morris said. "We have a lot of confidence in her shooting the ball. We have high expectations of her, and she lived up to them tonight."

Cunningham, who scored a team-high 15 points, nabbed a steal at halftime and finished at the rim for an easy

See **REMATCH**, Page 4B



Marian High's Abby Lucchesi, right, tries to rip a rebound away from Mercy's Aizlyn Albanese. JOHN HEIDER/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

## Why Kareem Aburashed picked Macomb CC basketball over Division II schools

Macomb CC commit Kareem Aburashed scored 27 points in the Chris Leflore Showcase

**Brandon Folsom**  
Hometownlife.com  
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

Detroit Country Day big man Kareem Aburashed is a family-oriented teammate.

And sometimes that can hinder his own play.

Take the Yellowjackets' Chris Leflore Showcase game Saturday against De-

troit Mumford, for example.

The 6-foot-9 senior got the ball in the paint early in the second quarter. Normally, it's nothing for him to throw down a two-handed dunk or draw an and-one foul while laying in a contested shot down low.

Except, on this particular play, he passed it to a teammate on the opposite block who had just entered the game for the first time off the bench. But the

teammate fumbled the ball. Aburashed regained possession and, once again, forced a pass to the same teammate off the bench. The teammate couldn't quite corral the ball all while Aburashed was standing in the paint, so the referees nailed the power forward for a three-second call.

"That's your fault!" Country Day coach Mark Bray yelled at Aburashed as the senior jogged back on defense. Bray then pointed at him, gave him a good hollering and reiterated, "That's your fault!"

The eventual 75-40 victory over the

Mustangs was already well in hand. So the turnover really didn't matter. But the moment was a perfect snapshot of the type of player Aburashed really is: He puts his teammates above himself.

Always.

**Hot junior college basketball program in Macomb**

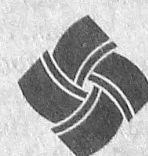
So that's why it was unsurprising when Aburashed announced on Twitter that he had committed to Macomb Com-

See **MACOMB**, Page 2B

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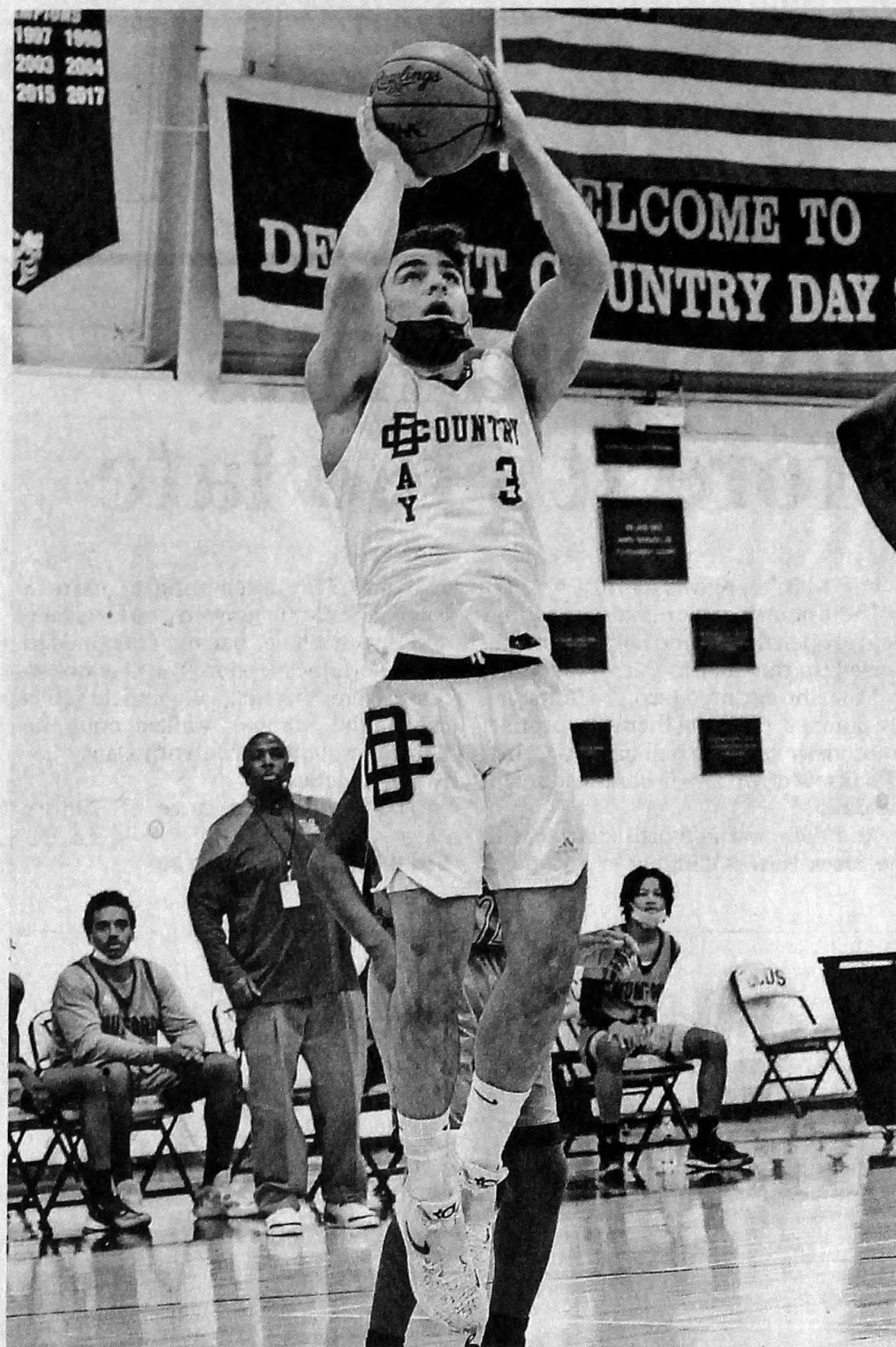
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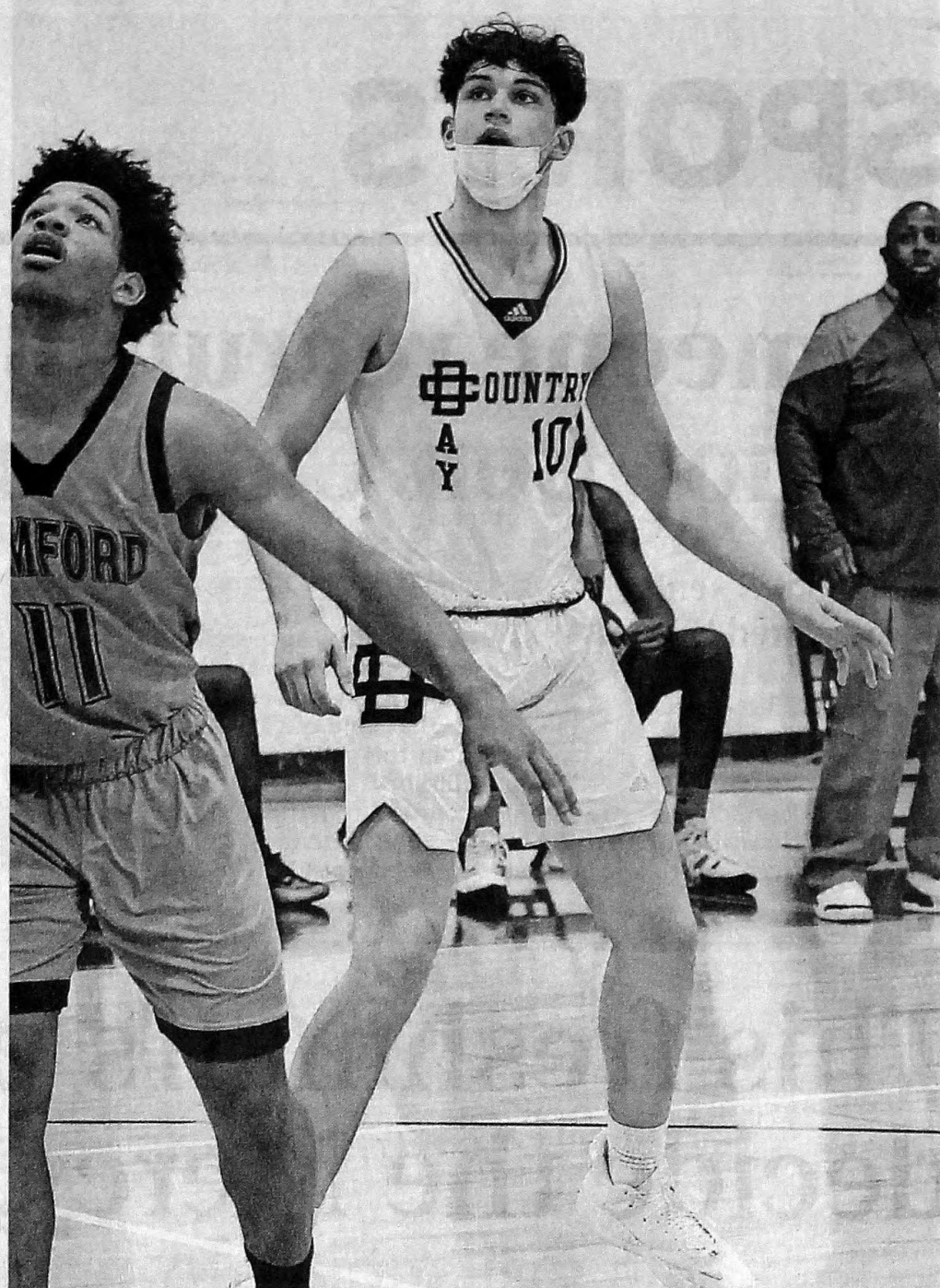


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Detroit Country Day's Luke Ammori shoots against Detroit Mumford during the Christopher Leflore Showcase on Saturday, Jan. 22, 2022. BRANDON FOLSOM/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM



Detroit Country Day's Kareem Aburashed looks to rebound against Detroit Mumford during the Christopher Leflore Showcase on Saturday, Jan. 22, 2022. BRANDON FOLSOM/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

## Macomb

Continued from Page 1B

munity College, one of the hottest up-and-coming junior college basketball programs in the country.

As of this writing, the Monarchs are ranked No. 13 in the most recent Division II poll, and they're doing it with a brand new coaching staff that has put building relationships with recruits at the forefront of its to-do list.

Last off-season, they hired former Roseville coach Hassan Nizam, a former Michigan high school Coach of the Year award winner in 2019, and he's surrounded himself with a who's who list of assistants. That included recruiting director Marko Maksimovski, an absolute mover and shaker on the travel basketball scene.

In fact, Maksimovski even coached Aburashed and Country Day teammate Julian Scott on the AAU circuit as part of the M&M Boyz 17-U program.

What makes Macomb CC stand out above the rest of the JUCOs in metro Detroit is its knack for getting in front of recruits. If the Monarchs aren't playing in an actual game, their coaches are out recruiting. Whether it's watching open gyms on a lazy Sunday night or bringing an entourage of four or five coaches to a small-school high school game, they're constantly showing up.

Just last week, a fan on Twitter pointed out how often they've seen Macomb CC's staff at games. "Those dudes are always in the gym. It's no secret Macomb basketball is where it's at," part of their tweet read.

What's more, their entire staff is on social media. They're liking, retweeting and boasting any offers recruits in metro Detroit are getting, whether that hinders their chances of signing the recruit or not. These guys don't care about stealing D-I or D-II players away from bigger colleges. They just want to see kids get as far as they can go.

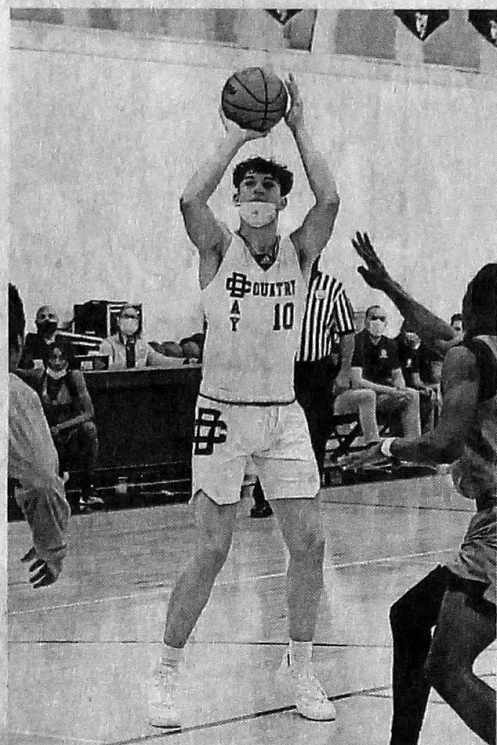
Aburashed holds official offers from D-II schools such as Lake Erie College and Walsh University in Ohio as well as NAIA interest from Concordia-Ann Arbor, Madonna University and Rochester University, among others.

### Macomb basketball has inviting family feel

Instead of playing at a higher level, he went with Macomb CC's family atmosphere.

"I minimized all of my options. I had D-II options and some walk-ons," Aburashed said. "I really realized that I am better than what I had (offers-wise). So I just had to go the right route. The coaches are like family. I know it's going to be the right decision in the long run."

"That's probably one of the reasons I committed. They're just so involved, and they just know what's going on.



Detroit Country Day's Kareem Aburashed shoots against Detroit Mumford during the Christopher Leflore Showcase on Saturday, Jan. 22, 2022. BRANDON FOLSOM/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

They know their players very well. Marko has been with me. He coached me in AAU. They know how I play and stuff like that. They're all around the game pretty much their whole lives. I know their coaching is just immaculate."

Aburashed will be expected to fill the shoes of out-going sophomore John Ukomadu, a 6-7 two-star who has been tearing it up for the Monarchs. Ukomadu, a 2019 Roseville graduate, already holds seven D-I offers, including interest from Central Michigan, Kent State and, most recently, Stony Brook.

"The coaches have said I'm going to have a big impact right off the rip," Aburashed said. "I'm ready to work no matter what when this season is done, but I'm ready to work with my team (Country Day) all the way through. But after that, I've got to get in the gym and get ready for the next level."

Fans got a glimpse of what Aburashed will bring to the Monarchs next season during Saturday's showcase.

He scored a game-high 27 points, despite hardly playing in the fourth quarter. He got it done in the paint, with medium-ranged jumpers and in transition. He was 5 of 6 from the foul line, which included two and-one opportunities.

Perhaps the highlight of his afternoon was when he jumped from just past the foul line and soared through the air for a one-handed dunk in transition. His future is bright at Macomb CC.

"He's built a great relationship with that coaching staff, and he's going to continue his development there," Bray said. "Obviously, the max he's going to be there is two years to get his associates, but he's going there to get some free schooling, develop as a player and, obviously, he's going to end up some-



Detroit Country Day's Julian Scott attempts a layup against Detroit Mumford during the Christopher Leflore Showcase on Saturday, Jan. 22, 2022. BRANDON FOLSOM/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

place else in the future. That's a great place to be to develop. Those are good coaches and good people. They're kind of part of his family. They've coached him for a while. He's known them for a while. I feel great about it."

Most high school squads carry a 12-player roster, but Bray has 15 this year because of how the pandemic has short-changed most of his seniors' playing time.

The Yellowjackets missed out on their district final game in 2020, and they played in just nine games a year ago. So he's giving players who wouldn't normally see the floor a chance to play right now.

In the fourth, Country Day was on the verge of a 40-point lead when an entire lineup of backups was on the floor. Jamal Newberry hit back-to-back 3-pointers, Eric Grenadier made a basket and James Blair hit some free throws.

Leading the cheering section for them on the bench was Aburashed, who stood and started waving his hands. Shortly afterward, each of his teammates sitting next to him stood and

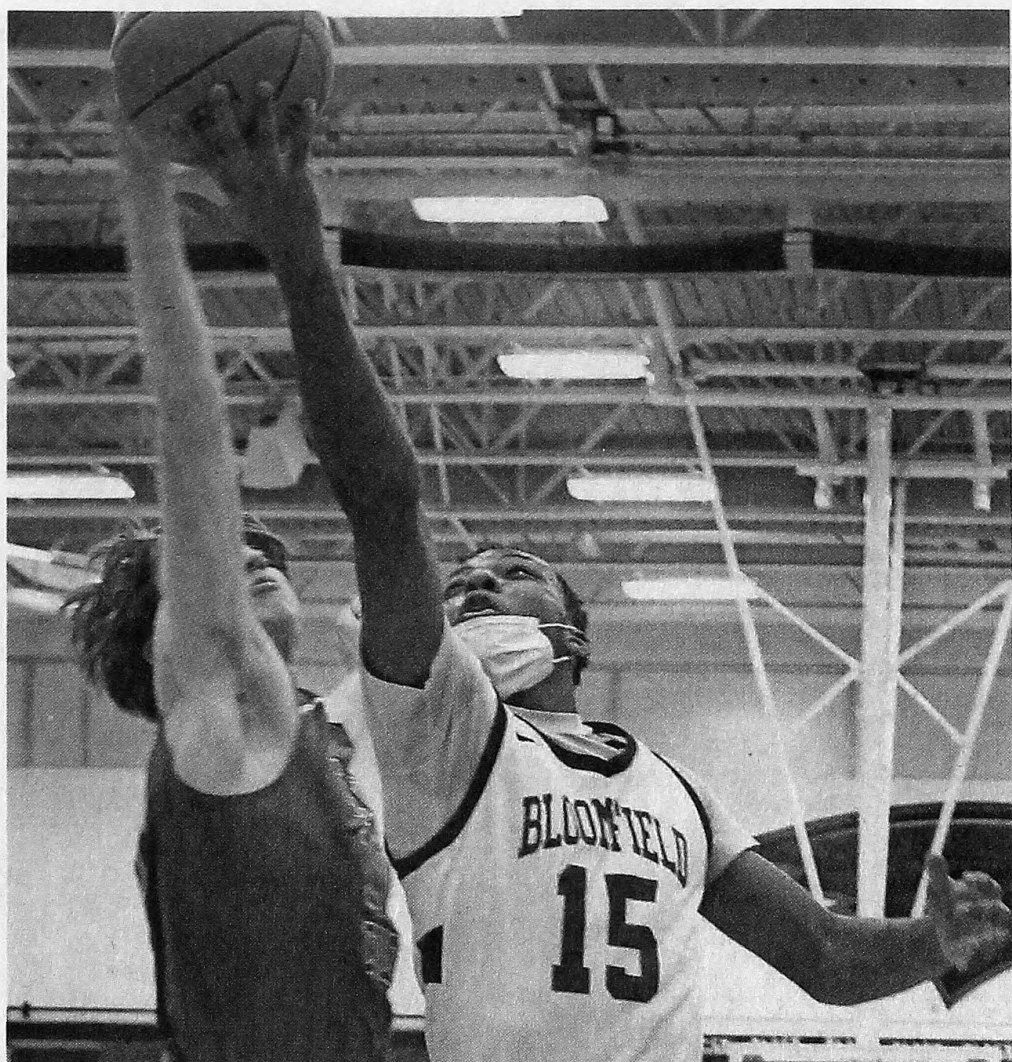
started hollering.

As the final 15 seconds ticked off the scoreboard, a referee started waving to Aburashed and the rest of the Yellowjackets to sit down. They didn't comply. So a bench warning was issued.

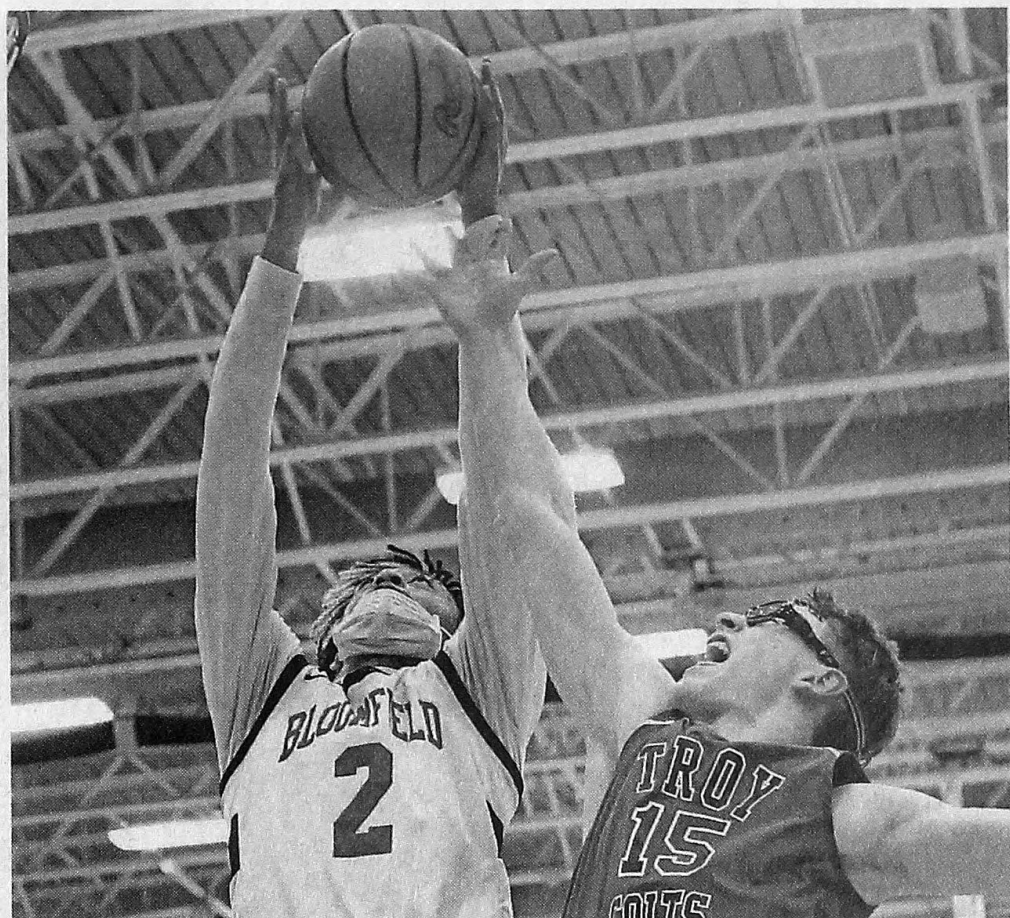
After the final horn, Aburashed quickly ran onto the court to celebrate with his buddies. Bray could only smile, despite being upset with Aburashed earlier in the game for being too passive.

"He is a team-first kid," Bray added. "He wants to share the ball, and that's kind of what our system is. You see all of our guys make the extra pass. ... That's who we are. But part of the maturity of understanding when it's your turn to take it and lay it in. That's part of his development, and that's what he's got to learn the rest of this year and at Macomb."

Brandon Folsom covers high school sports in metro Detroit for Hometown Life. Follow him on Twitter @folsombrandonj.



Bloomfield High Black Hawk Derrick Lee Jr. tries to block a Troy Colt shot. JOHN HEIDER/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM



Bloomfield High's Ben Canty, left, grabs a rebound in front of Troy Colt Zach Penzo. JOHN HEIDER/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

# Basketball

Continued from Page 1B

highlights during the 57-41 victory. There were many, many more.

The janitorial staff does a great job keeping the Black Hawks' court in pristine condition. But when Canty's diving on the floor for loose balls and scrapping for rebounds and jump balls, his white uniform does a more thorough job than whatever brooms and mops the custodians are using. The black grime on the back of his shorts sure doesn't lie.

And Canty's effort is what's helping the Black Hawks (9-2, 1-0) excel right now. He's a high-energy guy who gets the job done in all phases of the game. His junkyard dog hustle is inspiring his teammates to work just as hard as him.

"He's a blast to coach. The best thing about him is he's the first guy to put the

team ahead of himself," Kurajian said. "He won't take credit for anything. That's just a credit to him. Coaching him is an absolute blast because not only is he a great player but he's also just a really great kid.

"When Ben plays with this energy, man, that's a special talent to have at the high school level. The best thing about him is he truly just cares about the team first. Ben, in the last week or two, has been one of the best high school players on the floor in every single game. It starts with his defense, his energy and his leadership."

Right now, Canty is too important to take off the floor.

He's giving give-and-go passes from the high post to forwards such as Lee (11 points, 7 of 8 from the foul line) and Brodsky.

He's whipping the ball around the arc to help sharpshooter Noah Adamczyk (19 points, four 3-pointers) and sixth

man CJ Jackson (two 3s) bury shots from downtown.

He's outleaping every defender for rebounds and rifling passes to his outlet guards such as Adamczyk and Julian Manna to kickstart transition offense.

He's Bloomfield Hills' Mr. Everything.

"I don't put myself first. I think that's my best quality," said Canty, who scored 15 points, including going 4 of 5 from the foul line down the stretch to ice the win. "My mindset, after having a long talk with the coaching staff and stuff like that, is that what I need to do to help this team is by playing at my highest level. And I can do that by just getting that energy out through the team, in the locker room, doing the dirty work, getting the rebounds, and that's just what I thrive off of."

It's certainly working.

Kurajian said the Black Hawks have made a ton of improvement since the beginning of the year, and they've been on an absolute tear so far.

Their only two losses were against great teams. We're talking a close-call loss to Detroit Renaissance, which has been ranked in the top 20 of The D Zone

100 at various points this year, as well as being blown out by Detroit Catholic Central, a top-five team that currently sits in first place of the Catholic League-Central, the best conference in Michigan.

They've won five straight since losing those games back-to-back in December.

Canty wasn't playing his best ball back then. Now he's the rising tide lifting all boats in the Bloomfield Hills harbor.

"It's amazing," he said.

Kurajian calls Canty the least selfish player on the team, but the senior does have one selfish goal in mind: He wants to play college basketball.

He's received some Division I and II interest, but a bulk of his recruitment has come from D-III Olivet College and NAIA Concordia-Ann Arbor, among other small schools.

He knows what skill sets he has to add to whichever school lands his services.

Recruiters better hurry up and find him before his own high school asks him to come back after graduation to be the gym's janitor.

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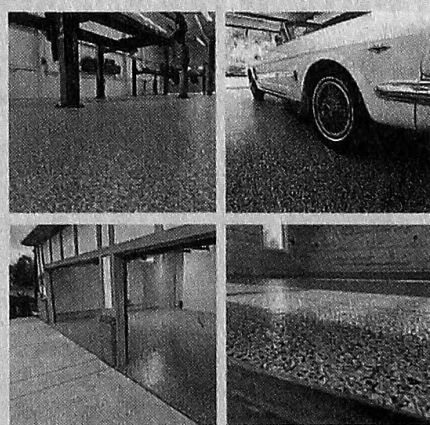
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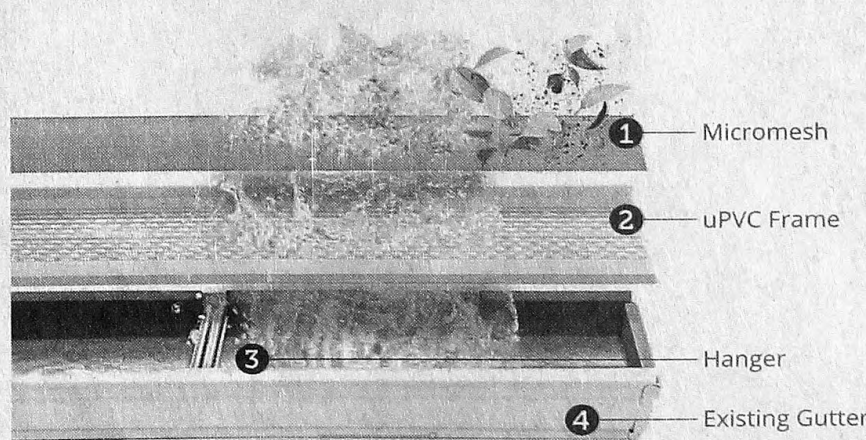
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## Rematch

Continued from Page 1B

layup with 49 seconds left in the opening quarter. The play ensured the Marlins (10-2, 6-1) a 15-8 lead at the intermission.

But, like most Mercy-Marian matchups, the Mustangs didn't back down. They scored 10 of the final 15 points in the second quarter to make sure they trailed just 24-19 entering halftime.

And that's when Albanese started to get hot.

The freshmen buried two 3s early in the third, and then she ended the quarter with a layup from a steal that Mercy's full-court defense drummed up. Mercy took a 40-24 lead into the fourth thanks to a 9-2 run.

That scoring spree inspired the Marlins to finish off the night strongly. They went on a 17-2 run in the waning moments and never looked back. Dugas (six points) sank a technical free throw to give them a 20-point lead late in the fourth.

With 1:01 left, Morris subbed in an entire lineup of bench players to finish off the game.

White finished with 13 points for Mercy, while Sarah Sylvester led Marian with 20 points, which included a pair of and-one three-point plays, and Grace Rotter chipped in nine points.

"I just went out with a lot of energy," Albanese said. "I was relaxed before the game because we were all laughing before the game and having a good time. We weren't thinking about it too much. I always breathe a whole lot and take really deep breaths to calm my nerves down. Being relaxed helps me have a lot of fun in the game, and that really works."

Albanese has always taken an even-keeled approach to basketball.

Before she was hitting key 3-pointers in CHSL games, she needed to pass the tryouts *BEFORE* the tryouts.

Albanese attended Plymouth Scholars Charter Academy for middle school, so she was pretty unfamiliar to Morris when she was looking for a high school to attend. In fact, she had only one year of junior high basketball under her belt. The rest of her experience was playing for the Westland Factory Basketball travel program.

After the Albanese family decided



Mercy High coach Gary Morris, left, talks to his troops. JOHN HEIDER/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

Mercy was the best place for her, from both an academic and basketball standpoint, she needed to convince Morris she was worthy of being in the program. He got to see her once in the gym before the Marlins went up to Gaylord's annual team camp in northern Michigan.

Albanese had the perfect approach to winning favor with Morris during the camp.

"When I got to play with them, I had to show them what I could do because I hadn't been playing with them all summer," she said. "I wanted to make varsity at this school, so before the tryouts, I had to show him (I was good enough to make the varsity). I said, 'You know what? I do have backup skills (as a role player),' so I'm just going to play and just have fun."

She made the most of her opportuni-

ty.

She's one of just three freshmen currently on the roster (along with Alison Smiley and Emily Walker).

Now she's fitting in well with the Marlins' talented crop of upperclassmen.

"We didn't see her until the summer. Just seeing her play summer basketball, (we knew she was good)," Morris said. "We had a pretty good feel for seeing her in the summer. It's a combination of her being skilled but also she has a feel for the game as a freshman. The girls, they've been very welcoming and accepting of her, and I think they realize she's a good player who can help us. They want to make her a good part of the team, and they're doing that."

Albanese, who recently tried out and made the Michigan Storm AAU pro-

gram, looks like she belongs out there with the rest of the girls. She can shoot well like Cunningham and White. She can hustle on defense like Lauren Smiley and Dugas.

And now she's stepping up in key moments to help Mercy beat tough opponents such as Marian.

"Basketball has always been my passion, and I just really wanted to beat Marian and show them that we didn't have a lucky first win against them and that we could beat them," Albanese said. "I think how much we beat them by shows that we're a really good team and we did what we needed to do with them missing a few really good players."

Brandon Folsom covers high school sports in metro Detroit for Hometown Life. Follow him on Twitter @folsombrandonj.

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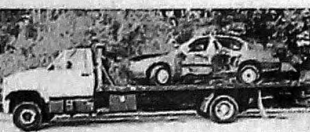
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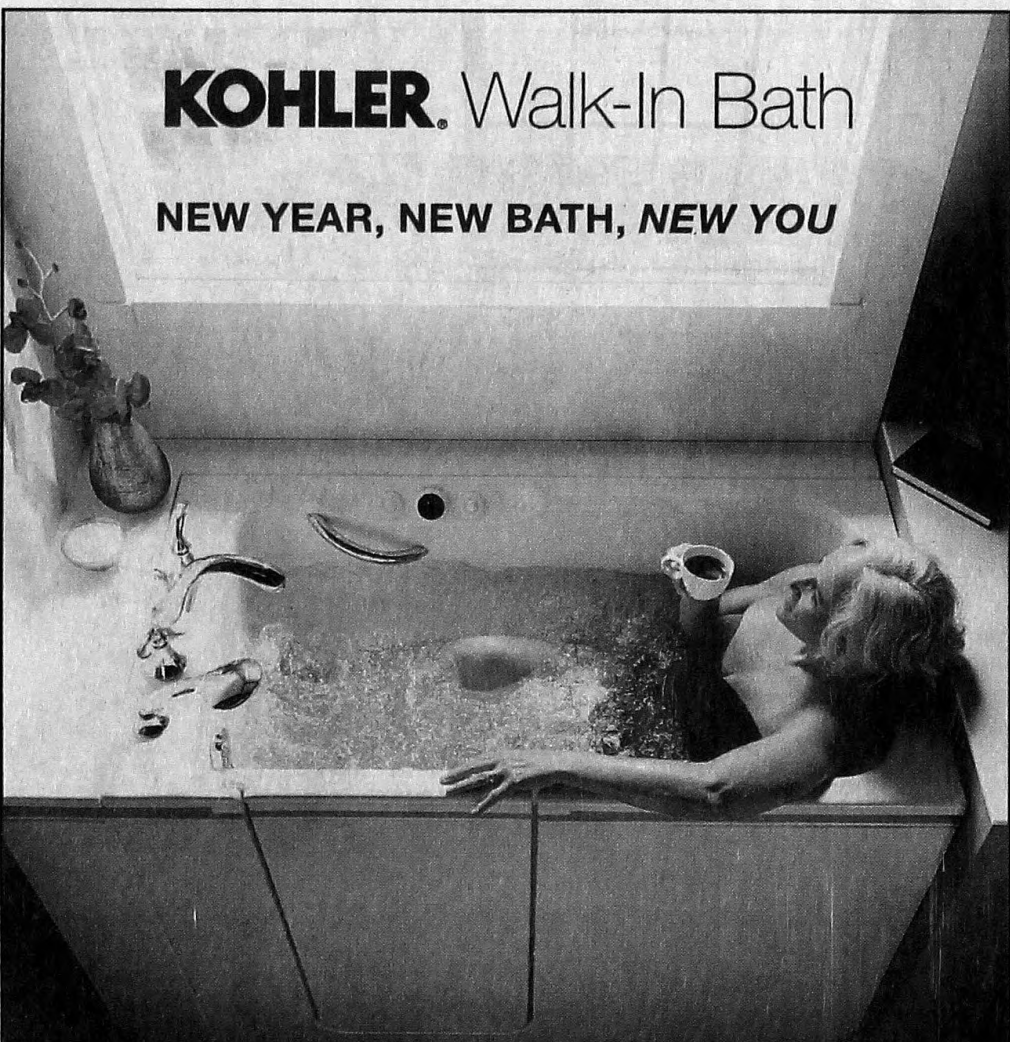
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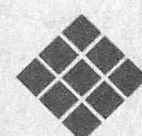
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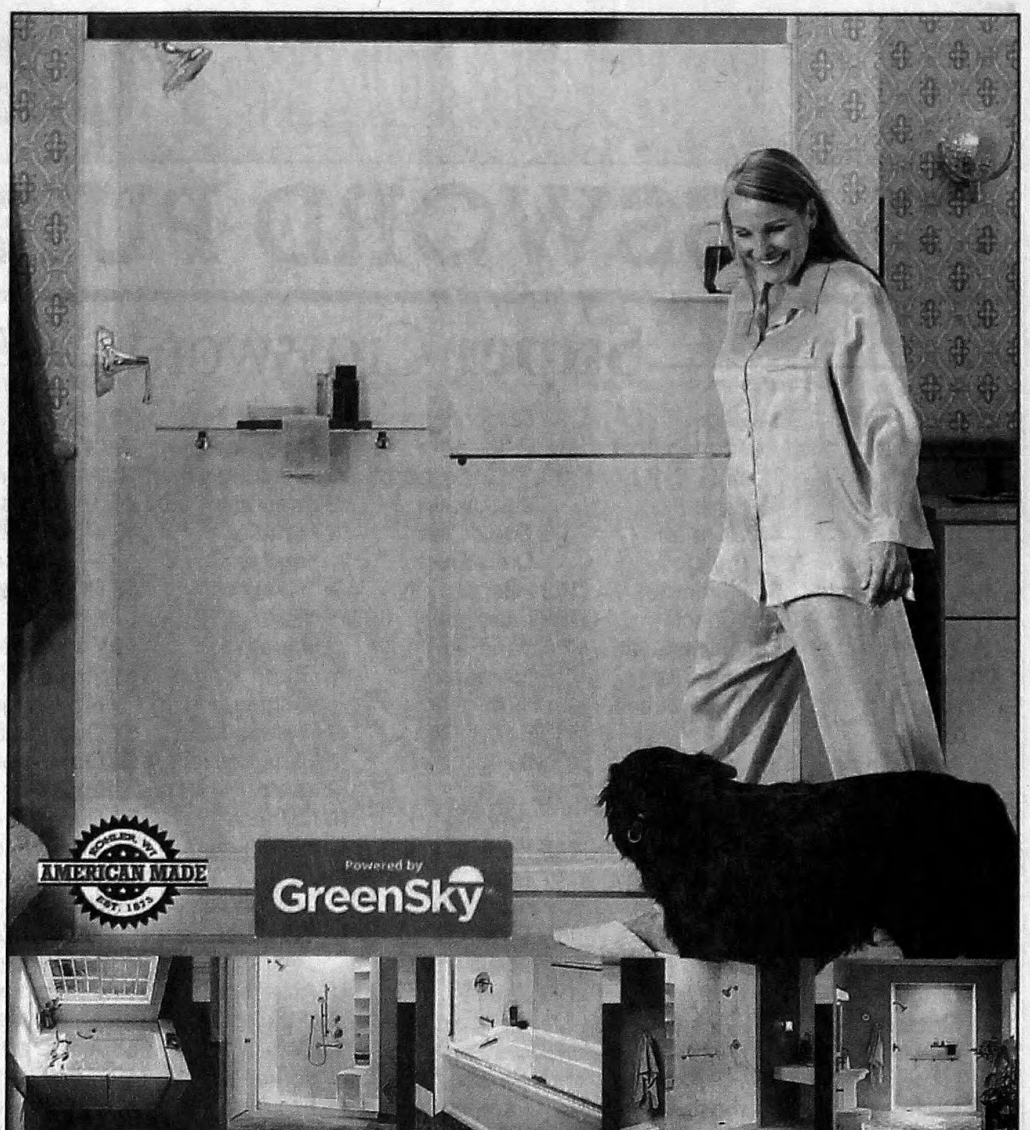
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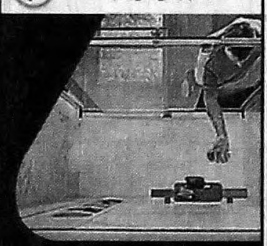
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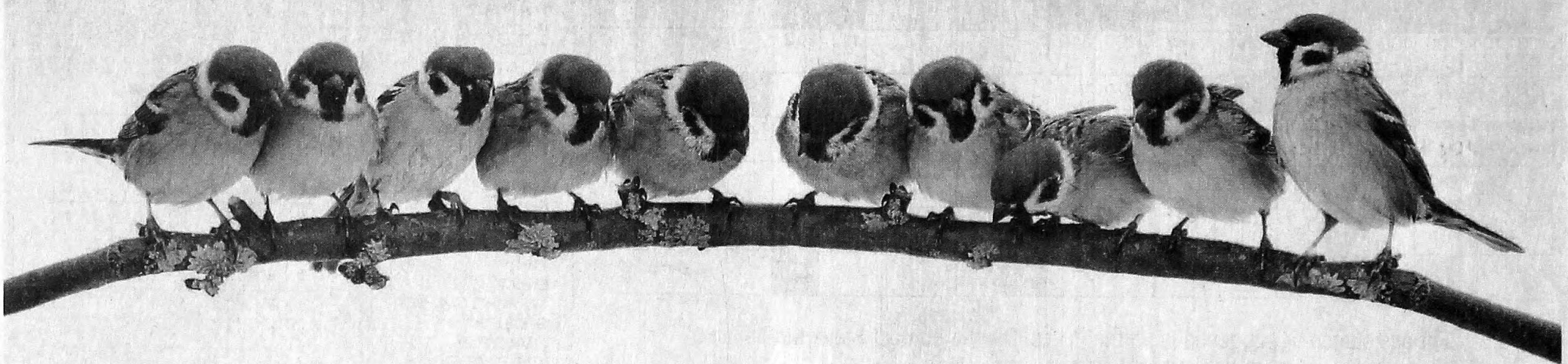
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