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# OBSERVER

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 23, 2022 | HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK

## MDOT begins rebuild of I-696 in Oakland County

Shelby Tankersley

Hometownlife.com

USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

The Michigan Department of Transportation recently started preparing Interstate 696 between Evergreen Road and Interstate 275 for a rebuild. The project, slated to end in 2024, is MDOT's third major highway project in metro Detroit.

MDOT is in the middle of projects on I-275 and Interstate 96, as well.

"Anyone who's driven 696 through Oakland County over the last few years knows we are out there regularly doing repairs," Diane Cross, a spokesperson for MDOT, said of I-696. "The roadway has held up as long as it possibly can, and it's now time to reconstruct the entire roadway."

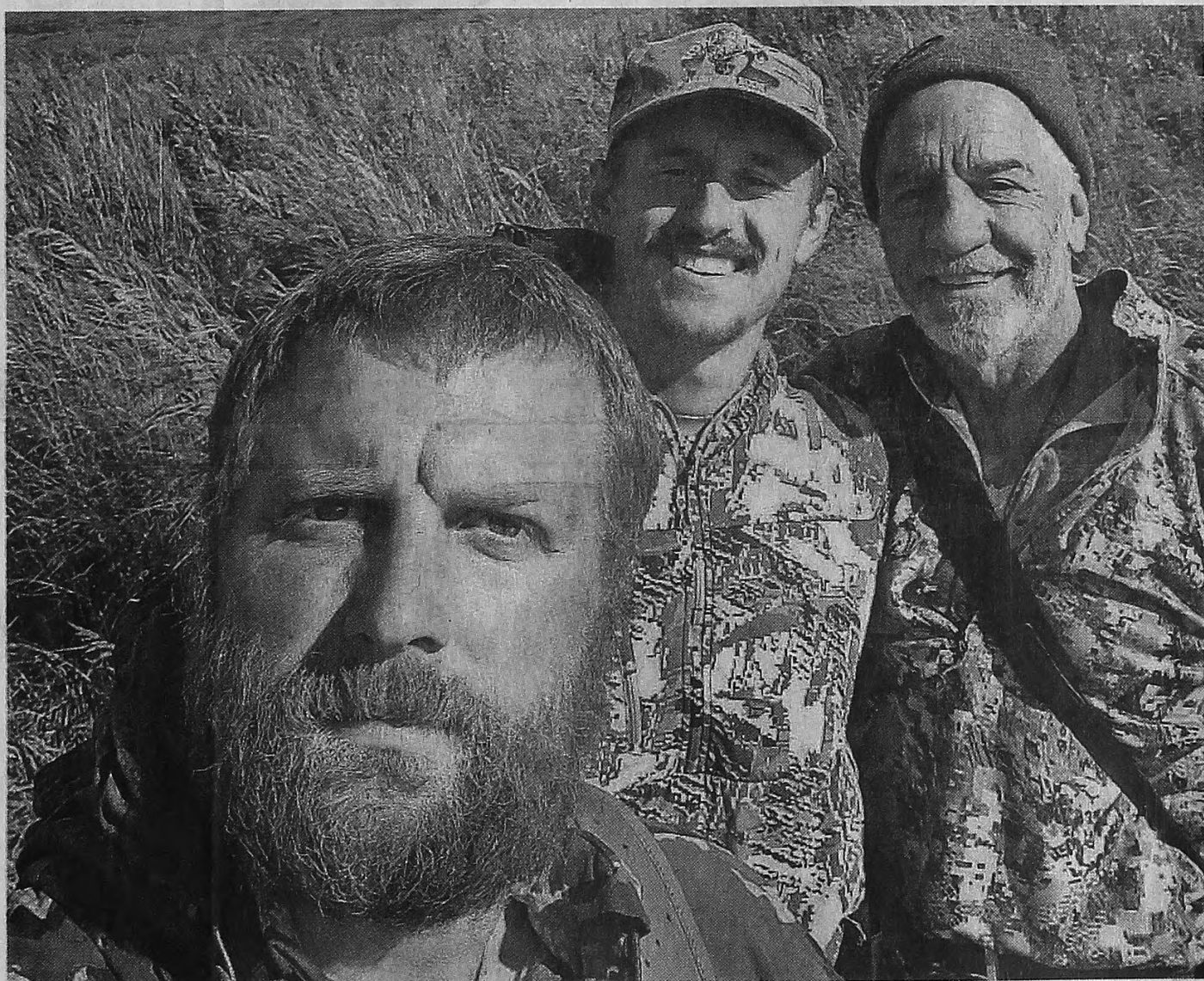
MDOT was expected to close westbound I-696 beginning Oct. 21 between Telegraph Road and I-275. The closure will last through 5 a.m. Oct. 24.

The I-696 project will mostly affect drivers heading through Farmington Hills and Southfield. MDOT is re-

building nine miles of the highway, most of which will happen in 2023 and 2024. However, drivers will experience delays this year as crews close lanes to widen the westbound shoulder and make some temporary repairs. The eastbound side will be rebuilt next year, and MDOT will turn its attention to the westbound side in 2024.

Each side will have access to two lanes of traffic throughout the project.

See **REBUILD**, Page 7A



Casey West with Cal and Craig Stefanko in Alaska. The trio went on a moose-hunting trip and got way more than they bargained for when their bush plane crashed. PHOTOS COURTESY OF CASEY WEST

## Michigan man's Alaskan adventure ends with crash

Susan Bromley

Hometownlife.com

USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

Casey West left Michigan and headed into the Alaskan wild for an unforgettable adventure.

He feels lucky to have gotten out alive after it ended in a plane crash.

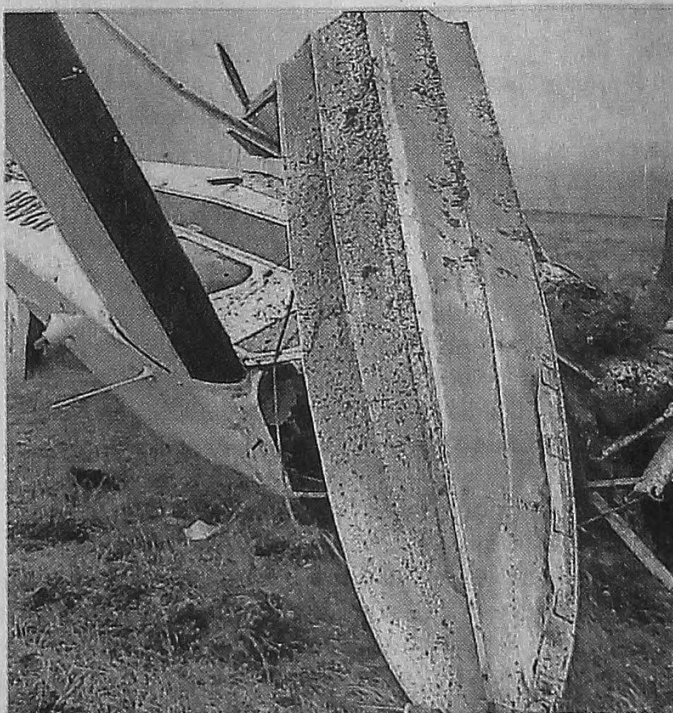
"It was an experience," said West, a 36-year-old Brandon Township resident. "Hopefully I never have this exact experience again, but it was an adventure."

West, a nurse at Ascension Genesys Hospital in Grand Blanc, was excited and worry-free as he set out on his lifetime dream of an Alaskan moose hunt.

This was a stark contrast to his wife, Samantha, who increased her husband's life insurance policy ahead of the trip. She was concerned over the safety of a bush plane, the biggest risk of such a trip, with about 10 crashes per season.

"That is the only way to get around out there — flying by bush plane," West said.

Her fears were well-founded, although West noted that flying by a bush, or float, plane is the only way to



The plane crashed in Alaska on Sept. 18. West, Cal Stefanko, and the pilot all survived. Craig Stefanko was in another plane at the time.

See **CRASH**, Page 6A

## Two new industrial buildings planned in Canton corporate park

David Veselenak

Hometownlife.com

USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

More industry is coming to the south side of Canton Township 25 years after several original approvals were granted.

The township's planning commission recently reviewed plans to construct two warehouses along Haggerty Circle. The new buildings — which would be located on the eastern portion of the property — would be more than 37,000 square feet each in size.

The site was originally approved for industrial buildings back in 1997, where several were eventually added.

Despite those old approvals still being place, township Planner Patrick Sloan said there were some issues with the new building that required additional approvals by both the planning commission and the township board of trustees.

"In some cases where there are some discretionary decisions with an industrial special land use, then the use automatically goes to the planning commission and subsequently the township board," he said during the Oct. 3 planning commission meeting. "In the proposed site plan, there are a handful of discretionary decisions that the planning commission have to review."

See **CANTON**, Page 4A

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A Mercedes C-43 convertible in the lobby of Mercedes-Benz Financial Services in Farmington Hills. PHOTOS BY DAVID VESELENAK/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

# Look inside new Mercedes-Benz Financial Services headquarters

**David Veselenak**

Hometownlife.com  
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

It's been a long journey for the hundreds of employees who work for Mercedes-Benz Financial Services.

The business, which services customers with financing when they purchase vehicles, announced in 2019 it would relocate into a new corporate headquarters down the street in a new building on the southwest corner of Drake and 12 Mile roads. It's a move the company hopes will help it grow and push forward.

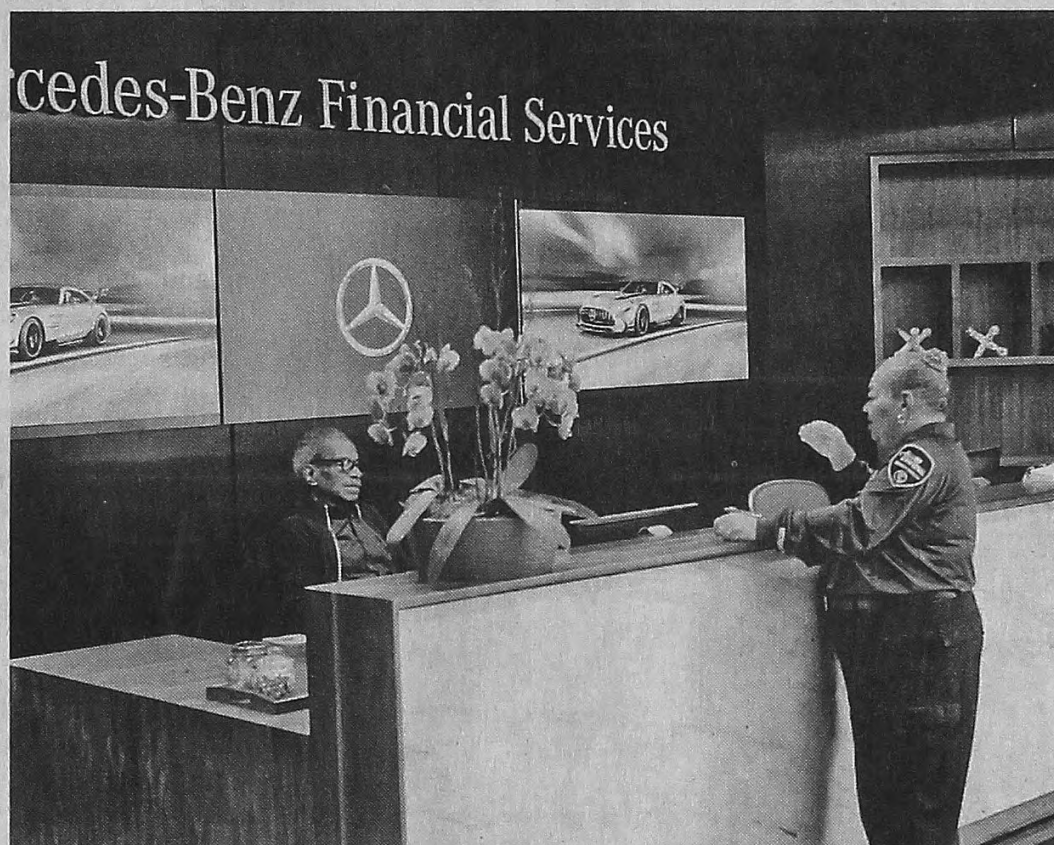
"We knew we wanted to upgrade the space in terms of the workspace itself, and it just ended up being more cost effective to build in a new space," said Humza Ahmad, manager for corporate communications for the company. "It just made more sense for us to move to a different space."

"There are certain things that wouldn't have been possible at the previous space."

Mercedes-Benz Financial Services began constructing its new headquarters at the end of 2019 on the site that formerly held soccer fields in Farmington Hills. Then COVID-19 hit, sending most of the company's employees to work from home.

That left some changes needing to be made at the new headquarters for how work would take place in a world after COVID-19 arrived.

"In the middle of the project, we had to redesign the office spaces so that greater space were between the desks," said Humza Ahmad, manager for corporate communications for the company.



The front desk at the new Mercedes-Benz Financial Services headquarters.



Mercedes-Benz vehicles parked outside the new financial services headquarters.

The building, located at 35555 W. 12 Mile, stands three stories tall and houses more than 1,000 people, with the majority of them working for Mercedes-Benz Financial Services. The other employees in the building work for Daimler Truck Financial, which split from the company and became its own entity last year.

Employees began moving in in the spring, with all employees now calling the building their workspace.

The building has a vast amount of amenities for employees, including a new cafeteria, a coffee shop, an IT desk and plenty more to assist with employees and their work.

For those times workers need to step away, there's plenty of options influenced by the tech sphere, including a gym, a game room and a quiet room, which can be used for meditation or prayer.

Despite all the delays, including the mandatory construction shutdown at the beginning of the pandemic and issues plaguing the industry with acquiring materials, the development was completed on time and on budget, Ahmad said.

"That was on the construction company," he said. "They made it happen."

Today, the building is occupied by all employees just a handful of times a month, Ahmad said. Most employees are on a hybrid work schedule, splitting their time between working at home and in the office. It's a concept, Ahmad said, that's worked well since everyone was sent home to work in March 2020.

"One part is that we have people that are able to work in different spaces as they want," Ahmad said. "With that hybrid working model where we have people splitting their time between working at home and working in the office, different department and different teams



One of several employee pantries inside the building, where workers can grab snacks and other items.

will use it in a different way."

In addition to the Farmington Hills location, Mercedes-Benz Financial Services has locations in Fort Worth, Texas, and Atlanta, Georgia. The company's headquarters has called Farmington Hills home for 20 years and wanted to stay in place, Ahmad said, because of the employees it has in the area.

"Our new headquarters is a testament to our vision for where we are going as a company and our dedication to being an employer of choice," said Peter Henn, President and CEO of Mercedes-Benz Financial Services USA, in a state-

ment. "Our building represents our continuing commitment to our community, but also our focus on a forward direction...sustainability, flexibility, innovation and the unmistakable spirit of luxury of the Mercedes-Benz brand are at the heart of this space. Through numerous changes and challenges, this project team proved to be second to none, creating something that exceeded our expectations."

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

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ELECTION COVERAGE

# Views split on transit millage request

Susan Bromley

HometownLife.com  
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

Jan Hawke hasn't driven for 22 years. The 72-year-old Walled Lake resident had a brain aneurysm when she was 50 that affected her eyesight and consequently, her independence.

But public transit has given her back her get up and go, and she will support a countywide public transportation millage proposal on the Nov. 8 ballot that she hopes can help others.

"It's such a good feeling to get back some independence," Hawke said.

Western Oakland Transportation Authority bus driver Kelly Hughes picked Hawke up for her retail therapy appointment, a ride Hawke takes a few times per month for \$1 each way. She admitted the fare is so low, she has often wanted to give more.

If the public transit millage is approved by voters, she and every taxpayer in Oakland County will be giving more, regardless if they use the service. The .97 mills would be levied for 10 years and is expected to raise \$66 million in the first year. Wayne County has a 4-year, .994 SMART millage renewal on the November ballot, as well.

Not everyone thinks the millage is a bargain. The issue has deeply divided communities, particularly in areas where SMART bus service isn't offered, including Milford, Novi, and South Lyon.

The Milford Township Board unanimously approved a resolution in August opposing the millage, which Supervisor Don Green called "taxation without representation." Green said the millage would cost township residents about a total of \$1 million per year, while the township already offers bus service through People's Express at a cost of about \$100,000 per year.

People's Express, which also serves Lyon Township, is not a proposed contractor. The millage would direct funds to the county, SMART, the Western Oakland Transportation Authority, the Northern Oakland Transportation Authority and the Older Person's Commission to provide service.

## Diverse county, deep divisions

Green notes that other rural communities in the county are also opposed, including Rose, Holly, Brandon, Independence and Addison townships.

"None of us want it, because we're not getting the service and we are the ones with all the money. And that's why they want to include us," he said.

Groveland Township resident and 14th District state Sen. Ruth Johnson expressed her outrage over the proposed millage at a recent Novi City Council meeting. Like Green, she cited her rural constituency and bus service currently offered to seniors and disabled residents at a lower cost than what the millage would levy.

"I've never seen such extortion for a plan that is going to hurt poor people in this county," Johnson said. "They won't use this or if they do, it will be expensive."

Oakland County Commissioners David Woodward and Gwen Markham spoke in favor of the proposal.

Woodward noted it was developed to specifically address county transit solutions to get people where they need and want to go, including workers to jobs, patients to healthcare, and students to education opportunities.

"Many destinations across the county are currently not reachable by our transit system," he said. "The proposal is designed to identify additional resources to increase access to destinations that are unreachable by people today."

Markham said that 36 percent of Novi's population, or 12,172 residents, are 60 or older, and 5,873 households earn under \$50,000 annually, according to SEMCOG data and the 2020 Census.

She added that in addition to the 56,092 jobs in the city, Novi is also home to four regional destinations — Twelve Oaks Mall, Ascension Providence Hospital, Suburban Collection Showplace, and the Novi Towne Center.

Woodward noted that some of the existing transit services offered are primarily "schedule ahead" services to get seniors or residents with disabilities to healthcare or the grocery store, while

SMART is an on-demand service similar to Uber or Lyft. The transit proposal would fund current service, while also addressing gaps and allowing for expansion to unserved or underserved residents like the western and northern portions of the county.

Several citizens at the meeting took to the podium, speaking for or against the proposal.

## Ridership down in pandemic; demand debated

Novi resident Jean Jax said passage of the proposal would be a gamechanger for her family, which includes her 62-year-old brother who resides in a group home. The transportation system allows him dignity and autonomy and she wants to see it improved along the 10 Mile and Novi corridor.

A Farmington Hills man said he would patronize Novi businesses if the bus didn't stop at the Haggerty Road boundary.

But other residents questioned the wisdom of passing a millage with inflation rising, more people working from home and online shopping.

Johnson and Rocky Raczkowski, Oakland County Republican Party chair, also questioned the demand for bus service.

"You often see buses empty," Johnson said. "Ridership is down 57 percent since the pandemic, and it was already dropping before the pandemic."

Brandon Adolph, communications manager for SMART, did not immediately provide SMART ridership numbers requested from the past five years, but agreed the pandemic affected ridership. It has also resulted in a dramatic shift in peak travel times.

"Certainly, the work from home/remote work does not require the need for large buses to move large groups of people in one direction," Adolph wrote in an email. "So, transit needs to be more flexible and dynamic for people to travel where they need to go when they need to go. SMART is looking to assist with mobility in the region and is taking transformative steps to be the leader in mobility management in SE Michigan,

connecting people to places they want to go and making travel options easier to understand and convenient for all to use."

## If millage is approved, here's what's coming to west Oakland

Transit will be available to all county residents if the millage is approved, but what that looks like from SMART in terms of routes, times, and stops, the type of vehicles used and more remains to be seen. Adolph said SMART intends to hold public meetings in each community upon passage of the millage to gather input.

Western Oakland Transportation Authority Director Kim Viener acknowledged that implementation of a plan would take some time.

WOTA has offered door-to-door service for residents who are 55 and over or disabled in Walled Lake, as well as Highland Township, White Lake and Waterford since being formed in 2020 through an interlocal government agreement.

In 2021, WOTA gave 27,600 rides. So far in 2022, it has exceeded 24,000 stops and with less than three months to go, anticipates reaching 30,000 by the end of the year.

"We expect the ridership to more than double with any expansion," Viener said. "Transportation has high demand. The elderly and disabled don't have rides. Their friends are in the same boat, and family is scattered everywhere."

WOTA currently gives 130-170 rides per day, with service from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. weekdays in a 270-square-mile radius, with 20 buses in the fleet and a staff of 30.

Viener said if the millage is approved, WOTA would double the size of the fleet just to take on three or four more communities and would extend hours to the evenings and weekends.

Initially, Viener said that transit would still be for the elderly and disabled. She expects a deluge of phone calls requesting service if the millage passes, but said it will take coordinated effort and time to expand service to meet the demand.



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# Franklin student wins grant to provide free pads, tampons

**Shelby Tankersley**

Hometownlife.com

USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

Plenty of girls know the stress that comes with getting caught without a pad or tampon.

Emma Apap wants that feeling to be a thing of the past at Livonia Franklin High School.

The senior class president won a \$1,000 grant over the summer through The Pad Project, a nonprofit that works to end the stigma around periods. She used the money to buy 1,000 pads, 1,000 tampons and two dispensers for Franklin. Apap has also added baskets to teachers bathrooms, the girls locker room and classrooms where teachers have requested them.

"I thought of what I could do for my class," she said. "So, I thought something I never have access to is menstrual products at school. It's difficult - we're busy, we have jobs and we don't always remember to pack things in our bag."

The products are free and easy to access. Apap says the dispensers are well-used and she refills them once a week.

"After the first week, they were completely empty," she said. "It was such a shock, but I'm happy to see it's used."

Apap hopes to the district will support similar services at its other high schools and its middle schools. Franklin has submitted Apap as an option for "Points of Pride," a fixture of the school board's voting meetings that highlights good news throughout the district.



Franklin senior Emma Apap received a \$1,000 grant to provide free pads and tampons at her school.

SHELBY TANKERSLEY/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

At Franklin, student council plans to use revenue from the annual Powderpuff football game to buy future menstrual products. Money generated at Powderpuff usually benefits prom, and council had already been considering funding a charitable initiative instead. Apap is also working to organize a council committee to keep the project alive after she graduates.

"I just want girls to not feel uncomfortable if they ever need a tampon or pad," she said. "The stigma really needs to end. I just want it to be normalized at

school."

Livonia students who need menstrual products can get them for free by visiting the front office or, for some, a trusted female teacher. But, Franklin Assistant Principal Tera Woodruff said having the free dispensers has been good for students.

"It's been great," she said. "Girls have made comments in the bathroom about how great it is and everyone has been treating them appropriately. I'm super proud of Emma."

It's also been beneficial for class at-

tendance. When pads are easy to find, girls don't need to walk to the office or meet a friend to get one.

"Kids were being tardy because a girl would run a tampon or pad to another girl," Woodruff said. "Trying to get it just seemed like such a delayed process. It's actually cut down on girls hiding out in the bathroom or being late to class for that reason."

After all, products half the world's population need shouldn't be a luxury.

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

## Canton

Continued from Page 1A

Those issues include:

- Potentially fewer parking spots than what current ordinance requires;
- A reduction in the amount of brick used to construct the building; and
- A shorter distance of seven feet from the minimum foundation landscape depth of 10 feet.

Sloan said these changes would not cause many issues and recommended the approval to the planning commis-

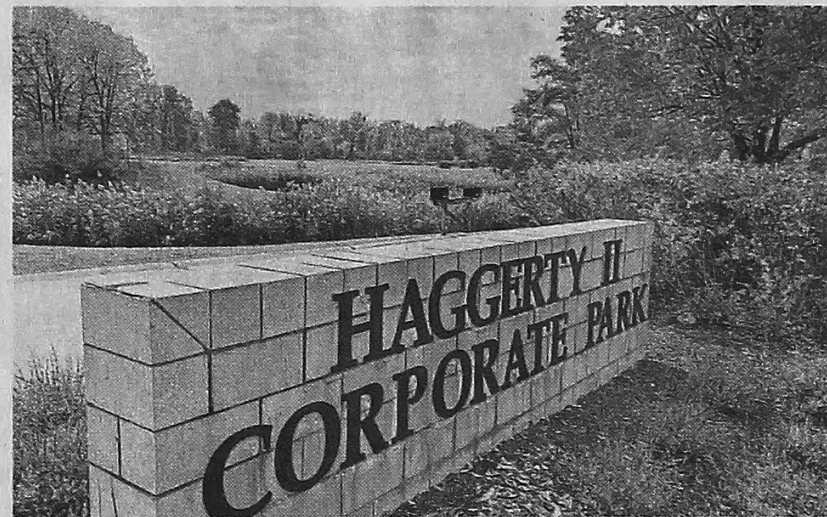
sion. There was no immediate word what business would occupy the new buildings if constructed.

The issue was not a controversial one with the planning commission, with no members expressing any concerns over the development.

"No problems with this project whatsoever," Chairman Greg Greene said.

With the recommendation, the project goes to the township board of trustees for its final determination.

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




Two industrial buildings are planned for the vacant lot in the distance to the south of the Haggerty II Corporate Park in southern Canton Township.


DAVID VESELENAK/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

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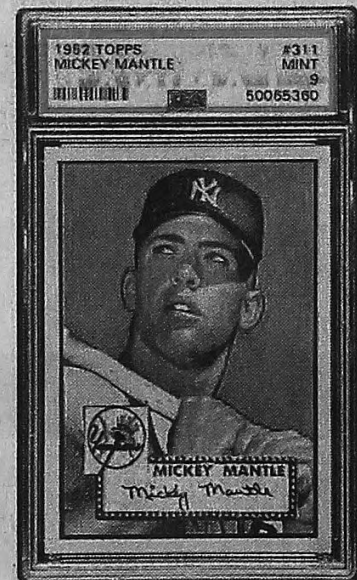
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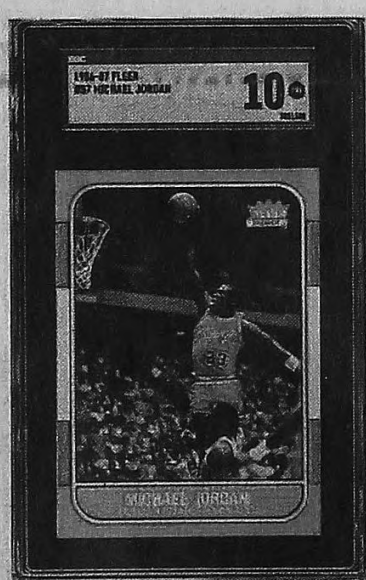
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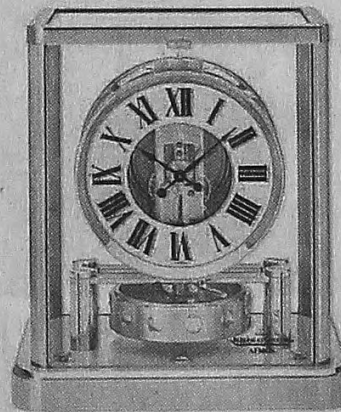


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# Crash

Continued from Page 1A

get around Alaska, and a car accident would be more likely.

Usually, West and his friends Cal and Craig Stefanko arrived in King Salmon on Sept. 11. The following day, a bush pilot flew them without incident to Unit 9E, a game management area in the Alaska Peninsula.

The trio then hiked a half-mile to set up camp in tents. The next day, the hunt was on and West wasted no time getting his moose, described as the hardest hunt he's ever done.

"I was not prepared for how big these animals are," he said, noting that he had shot elk before, but the moose was twice as large.

The moose was easy to spot from nearly 2 miles away, and West stalked the animal until he was within 140 yards, from which he got a clean shot. It took two full days to pack out more than 700 pounds of meat from the kill, carrying it in a backpack as he slogged miles through boggy terrain where he sank to his kneecaps with each step.

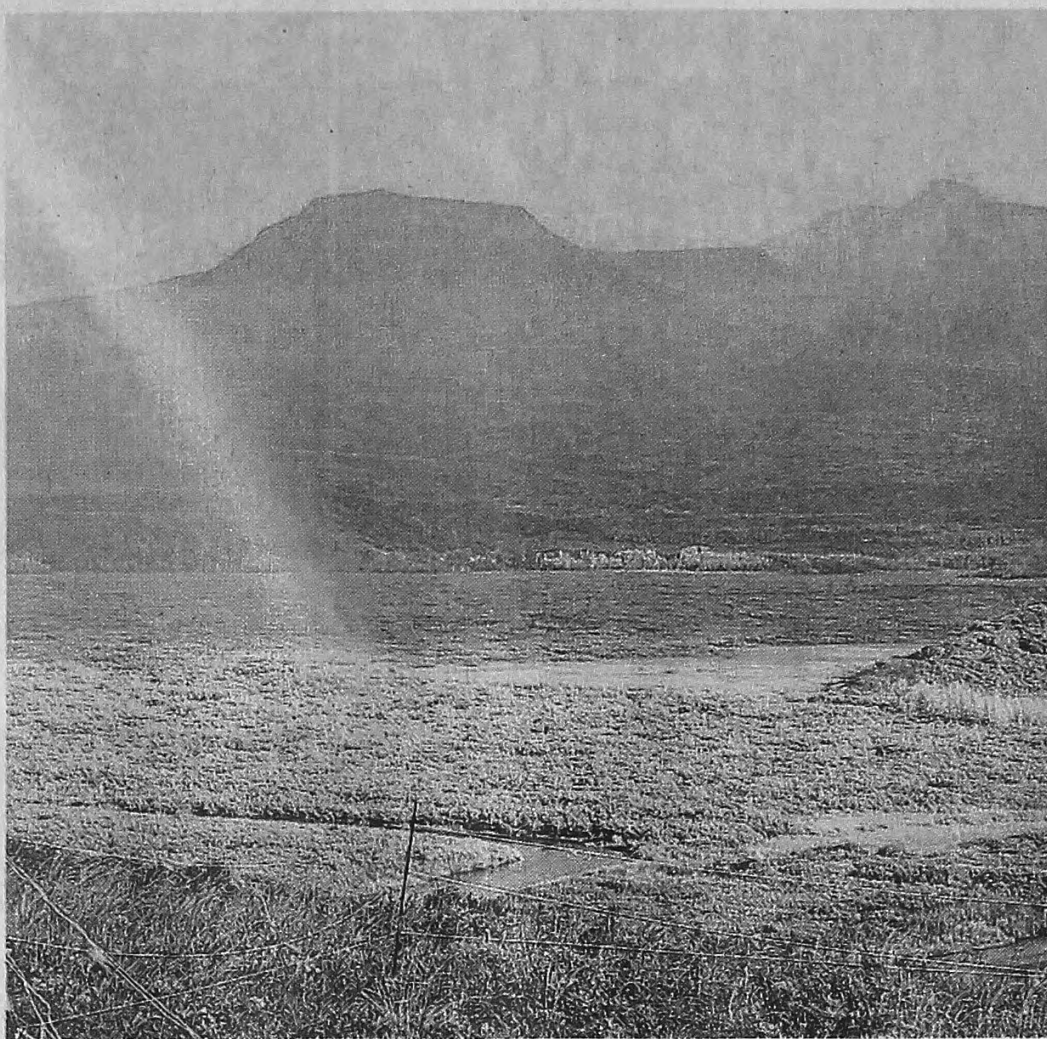
It was cold, wet and miserable, he recalled. Conditions were about to deteriorate dramatically with a tsunami and 50-70 mph winds forcing them trio to shelter in the tents for two days.

Chaos resumed the next day when one of the hunters nearly got trampled by a bull moose that did two fake charges, coming within five feet. Due to hunting restrictions, the animal was not large enough to kill.

The weather had turned again with pouring rain and low visibility. But early that evening, with visibility increased to about 4-5 miles and a 15 mph wind out of the north, two planes arrived to pick up the travelers and the moose meat, ensuring even weight distribution.

West described what happened next as his plane rose from a lake with 15-foot embankments on three sides.

"We took off north because there was no bank — we're going, going, going, and all of a sudden, we got hit by a huge wind gust," he said. "We weren't high enough off the water and the wing hit the water and dragged and spun us to the left. The pilot was pulling at the lever to get the



Casey West was treated to a double rainbow in Alaska after two days of rain resulting from a tsunami. PHOTOS COURTESY OF CASEY WEST



The bush plane crashed in Alaska on Sept. 18. Everyone survived with minor injuries, but the pilot had cuts to his head requiring 17 stitches.



West and Cal Stefanko with the results of their hunting trip. "I was not prepared for how big these animals are," West said.

See CRASH, Page 7A

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## Rebuild

Continued from Page 1A

Cross said the rebuild also includes storm sewer and ramp replacements. The impacted ramps are at Orchard Lake Road, American Drive, Franklin Road, Northwestern Highway and Telegraph Road.

Work will cost \$275 million and support roughly 3,500 jobs.

Road funding normally comes with a window of use. Cross said nobody wants to cause drivers more frustration, but federal and state funds have aligned this year to pay for many, many state and county projects.

"For years, we have underinvested in our freeways and put what I call Band-Aids on areas that need surgery," she said. "But now, between the gas tax from a few years ago that's started hitting this year, money from (Gov. Gretchen Whitmer) and extra money from (Washington, D.C.), we now have money to fix the damn roads. So, we are."

Cross implored drivers to be patient and exercise common sense when driving through areas with work crews or during inclement weather.

The same day crews began work on I-696, a driver fatally struck a pedestrian along the highway.



Orchard Lake Road near the entrance ramp to Interstate 696 westbound. HOMETOWNLIFE.COM FILE

"We know it's frustrating and we know people might be late, but it's not worth the risk to yourself and to our workers out there on the side of the road

just doing their job," Cross said. "Please follow the rules and drive to the conditions. Please realize there's people working out there."

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

## Obituaries

To place an ad, call 586-826-7171 or visit [mideathnotices.com/place.php](http://mideathnotices.com/place.php)

### Terry Scott Stillwagon

Terry Scott Stillwagon passed away peacefully on September 5, 2022 with his sister Rebecca, by his side, holding his hand. Terry lived on his terms with a positive outlook and good humor. He was a bright light and the world will miss his spark.

Terry was born to Ruth and Scott Stillwagon on March 21, 1942, in Detroit, Michigan, the oldest of five children. He overcame childhood polio to become adept at many sports including swimming, sailing, and golf. As a youngster, he amazed people by catching and throwing a baseball with the same hand. The physical impact of polio never defined him and he taught us to face adversity without complaint. He was skilled in electronics and wood-working, rebuilding a radio, a recording machine for vinyls, and making everything from dressers to wooden rocking horses.

His interpersonal skills served him well in a very long career as a real estate professional, which he pursued until recently. On birthdays and holidays, his calls were consistent and memorable. National politics, Detroit sports, Civil War history, and religion were his favorite topics. His faith journey gave him much comfort, especially during his final days.

Terry had a great sense of humor, both clever and edgy, but always with perfect timing to lighten any mood, whether at a wedding or a funeral. He loved to laugh and execute practical jokes, such as during a dominoes game with family and at his sister Rebecca's wedding. Along with his brother, Dennis, there was plenty of mischief. His lighthearted manner will be deeply missed.

Terry is survived by his daughters, Beth (Joe) Straub and Jennifer Stillwagon, brother, Dennis (Connie) Stillwagon, and sisters, Ruth Ellen (Bob) Kucab, Rebecca (Tom) Brent, and Gwendolyn Stillwagon. He leaves his beloved aunt, Gwendolyn Joseph, former spouse and longtime friend, Karen Jackson Stillwagon, many cousins, nieces, nephews, and supportive close friends and coworkers. A remembrance of Terry's life is planned for the spring. The family wishes to thank Beaumont of Farmington Hills for their kind support and care. Memorial donations may be made to the Michigan Humane Society, 900 N. Newburgh Road, Westland, MI, 48185.



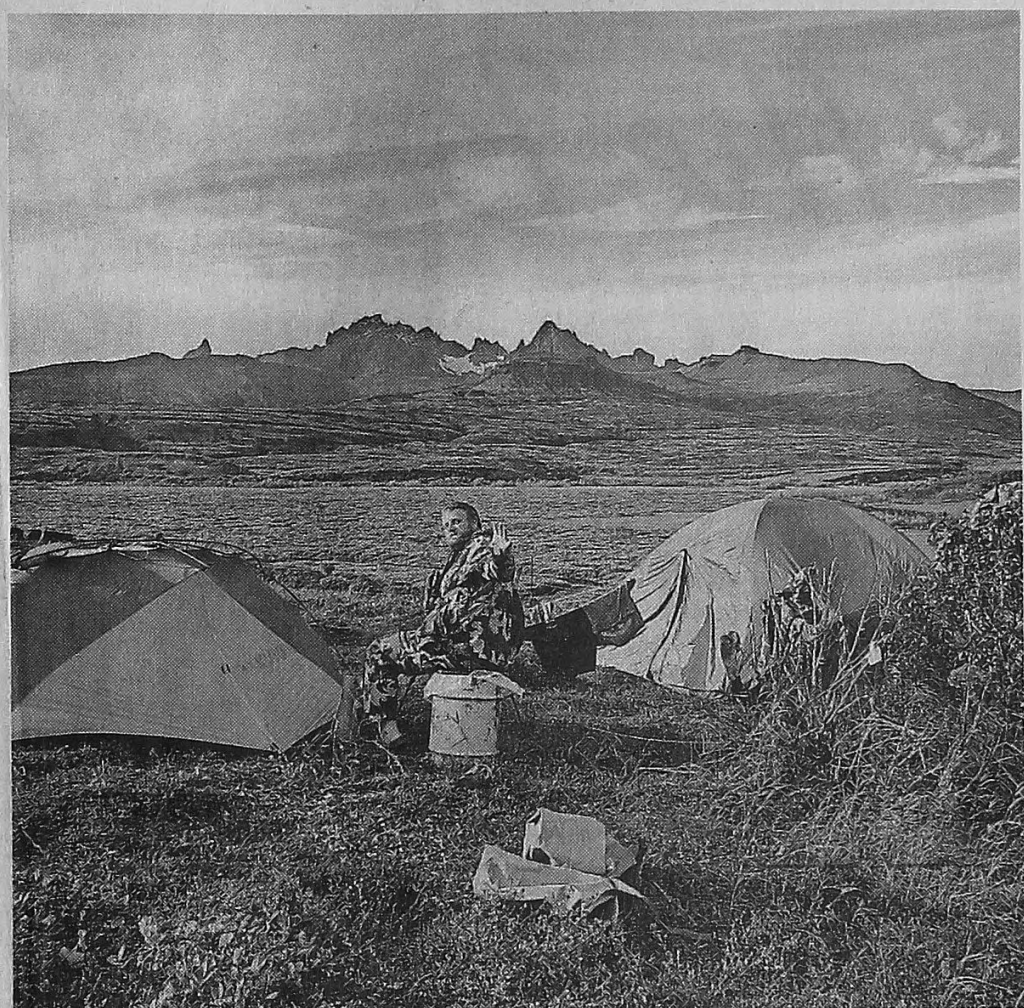
### Nancy J. Braden

Nancy J. Braden Passed away on October 14, 2022 at age 87. Beloved wife of the late H. Ward Keith and the late Robert J. Braden. Loving mother of David Keith, Susan Cook, Patricia Byler (Rick) and Barbara Underwood (Ed). Dear sister of Mary E. Bain (life-partner, Art Bull). Adoring grandmother of Richard and Jessica Byler; Ryan, Laura and Daniel Cook; and Nicholas and Nathan Underwood. Four honorary great-grandchildren, Samantha, Laurel, Abel and Asher Braden. Cremation has taken place and her remains will be interred in the Memorial Garden at her church. A memorial celebration of her life was held at the First United Methodist Church, 45201 N. Territorial Rd., Plymouth, MI on Saturday, October 22, 2022. In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to her church or to a charity of your choice. Share memories at [www.schrader-howell.com](http://www.schrader-howell.com)



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Upon  
Them

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Casey West waves from his camp in the wilds of Alaska during a period of calm weather in September. PHOTOS COURTESY OF CASEY WEST

## Crash

Continued from Page 6A

plane up, and I said, 'Oh my God, we're gonna hit the bank.' And we hit it so hard, we shot up into the air 70 to 80 yards, spinning and then nose-dived right into the earth."

West had just enough time to put his right hand over his head and stick his left hand out to brace for impact, while yelling a few obscenities.

The entire episode was over in seconds as the crash flipped the aircraft upside down. West struck his head and had bruises over an eighth of his body, but his left hand sustained the most visible damage with numerous cuts.

"Cal, you OK?" he yelled, receiving an answer in the affirmative as he unstrapped his seatbelt and fell to the ceiling.

The pilot, who sustained a head injury that required 17 stitches, yelled at West to get out of the plane by the front window. The three ran from the wreckage to the shock and relief of those in the other plane, who thought they had just seen a crash no one survived.

West couldn't believe they were alive either as he sent an SOS text to emergency responders, notifying them of the plane crash.

National Transportation Safety Board Spokesman Peter Knudson said in any given year, there are on average 1,100 aviation accidents in the United States.

Nearly all of those, about 98 percent, are accidents categorized as general aviation (typically recreational flights and small planes) as opposed to involving the major air carriers. An aviation accident is defined as any event that involves substantial damage to an airplane.

In 2019, there were 82 general aviation accidents in Alaska. Thirteen of those accidents involved fatalities

with a total of 32 people dying. The causes of the crashes were found to be pilot error, equipment malfunction, weather conditions, or a combination of these factors.

Knudson said that flight regulations are the same in Alaska as elsewhere, but the environment is more challenging, including infrastructure, weather, and terrain.

It could be up to two years before the investigation into West's plane crash is completed, but West said the pilot, who he described as a very nice guy, admitted his error.

"The pilot didn't have too much to say other than 'I f\*\*\*\*d up,' and that he should have hit the kill switch and pulled up," West said. "It's very unfortunate it happened to him."

"He said he is done. He's retiring after 40 years and it was probably his last flight."

It won't be the last for West, who came home to Michigan with a couple hundred pounds of moose meat after donating about 1,200 pounds to native Alaskans. He and Cal Stefanko also gave some of the meat to the keepers of the Antlers Inn who showed great hospitality to them, and where they became local celebrities.

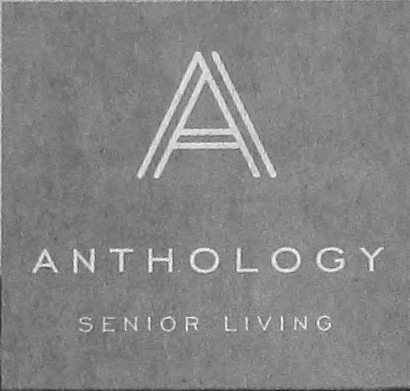
He got a warm reception of smiles, tears, and many hugs when he came home.

West took a lighthearted approach in recounting his adventure, telling his three children that daddy hurt his hand punching the earth to stop the plane, and asking Samantha if she was happy or mad that she missed out on a \$1.3 million life insurance payout. Still, he is deeply touched to learn how many people cared.

He admitted he may have to "butter up" his wife to go out west on an elk hunt in October, and he hopes to return to Alaska, too.

"It was crazy," West said. "But I can't wait to go back. I'd do it again."

Contact reporter Susan Bromley at [sbromley@hometownlife.com](mailto:sbromley@hometownlife.com) or 517-281-2412. Twitter: @SusanBromley10.



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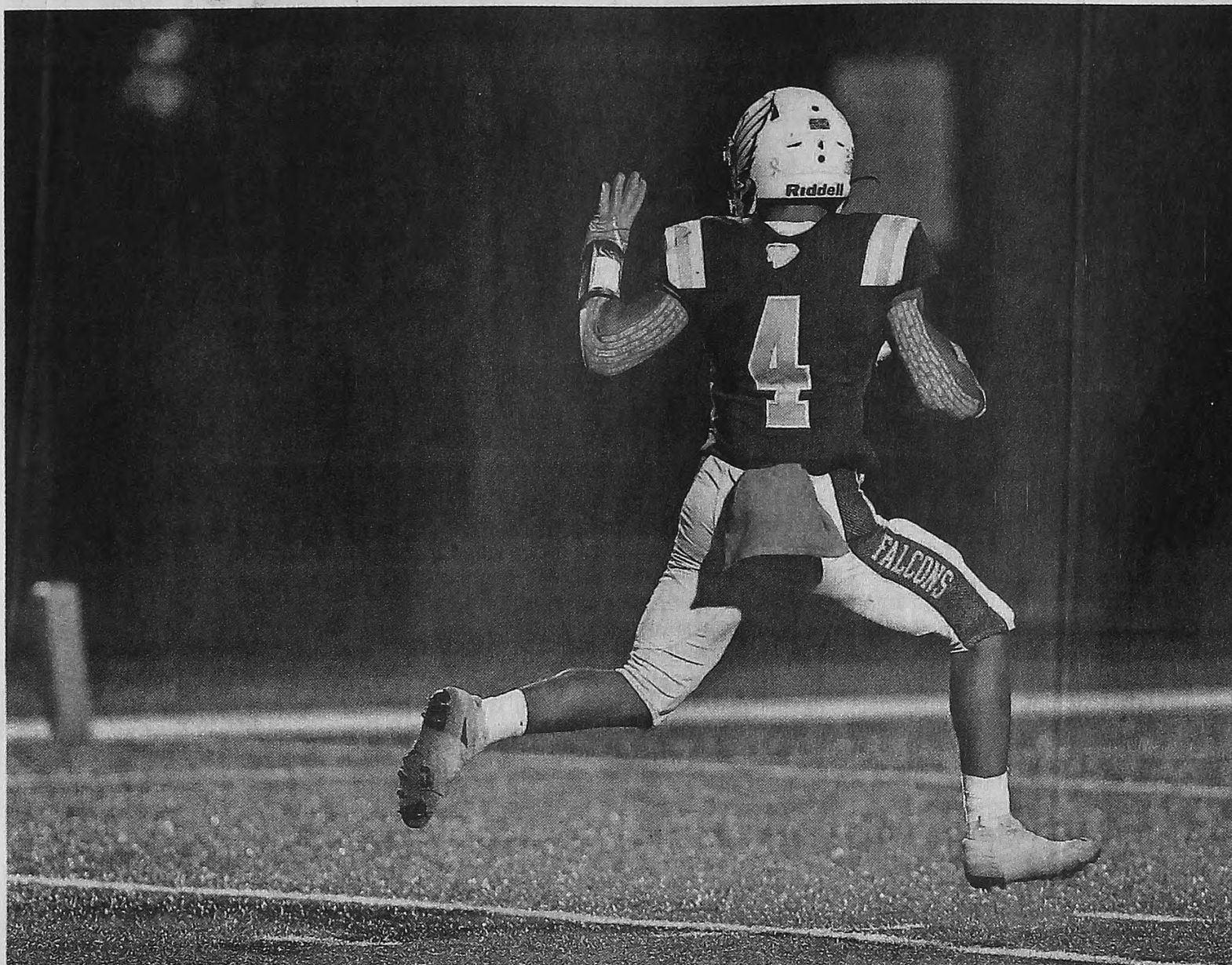
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# SPORTS

## HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL



Farmington's Cam Pettaway waves goodbye en route to a touchdown against Birmingham Seaholm on Oct. 14.  
BRANDON FOLSOM/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

# How Farmington stole league title from Seaholm

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

The parents of the Farmington football team must make their end of the stadium more lively on gameday. Never mind that the Falcons played undefeated Birmingham Seaholm for the Oakland Activities Association-Blue championship last Friday night. The marching band was just too good for the parents to act like wallflowers for 48 minutes.

Did you hear the band play "All I Do Is Win?" Their version of one of DJ Khaled's best songs was worth the price of admission alone. But, of course, the players gave us quite the show, too. And the student section fed off both performances. The parents could learn a thing or two from the kids. There they were chanting, "Overrated! Overrated! Overrated!" after Cam Pettaway threw a 14-yard halfback pass to Owen Matteson that went for a touchdown and put the Falcons ahead of 7-0

Seaholm by 10 points with just 4:28 remaining. And when the Maples' run-first, old-fashioned veer offense had only a few minutes left to close the gap, the students were ready for it. "Stick to running!" they chanted as Seaholm quarterback Colton Kinnie tossed an incomplete pass, his first passing attempt of the game. "Stick to running! Stick to running!" On the next attempt, Farmington

See **FARMINGTON**, Page 2B

## Bloomfield Hills brings home D-1 boys tennis state title

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

Teams from the Hometown Life coverage area had plenty to celebrate following the Michigan High School Athletic Association boys tennis state championship tournaments over the weekend. Bloomfield Hills won a state championship in Division 1, Northville and Cranbrook became state runner-ups in their respective divisions, Birmingham Seaholm and Detroit Country Day each placed third as a team and there were plenty of individuals who put together all-state finishes. Let's take a look at the top individual performances from our local tennis players at the state finals:

### SINGLES Daniel Stojanov, Bloomfield Hills

The top-seeded senior defeated Patrick Cretu from Brother Rice 4-6, 6-1, 6-2 to win an individual D-1 state championship in No. 2 singles.

### Connor Shaya, Bloomfield Hills

The top-seeded freshman defeated Troy's Dhruv Gupta 6-2, 6-3 to claim an individual D-1 state championship in No. 4 singles.

### Patrick Cretu, Brother Rice

The No. 2-seeded sophomore was the Warriors' top finisher in the D-1 state finals, as he faced Bloomfield Hills' Daniel Stojanov in the No. 2 singles championship match. Stojanov earned a comeback win, 4-6, 6-1, 6-2.

### Owen DeMuth, Cranbrook

The senior upset No. 1-seeded Chakor Rajendra from Ann Arbor Green-

See **TENNIS**, Page 2B

## Mercy wins Division 2 girls golf state championship

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

Teams from the Hometown Life coverage area had plenty to celebrate following the Michigan High School Athletic Association girls golf state championship tournaments over the weekend.

Farmington Hills Mercy won a state championship in Division 2, South Lyon and Cranbrook became state runner-ups and there were plenty of individuals who put together all-state finishes. Let's take a look at the top individual performances from our local golfers at the state finals:


### Brooke Bugajewski, Bloomfield Hills

As the Black Hawks' lone competitor, the senior shot rounds of 84 and 85 for a two-day score of 169, which was good enough for 25th place individually in the D-1 field.

### Colleen Hand, Bloomfield Hills Marian

The senior placed 31st individually after carding rounds of 89 and 84 for a two-day 173. The Mustangs took 11th as a team with the help of senior Shannon

See **GOLF**, Page 4B



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# Top performers in Week 8 of high school football

**Brandon Folsom**

Hometownlife.com  
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

Week 8 of the Michigan high school football season is in the books.

Let's take a look at the stat leaders in the Hometown Life coverage area.

Is your team missing stat leaders? Encourage your coaches to send stats to sports reporter Brandon Folsom at [bfolsom@hometownlife.com](mailto:bfolsom@hometownlife.com).

## Catholic League

**Brother Rice 28,**  
**Detroit Country Day 6**

The Warriors improved to 3-4 overall. The Yellowjackets fell to 5-2 overall.

**Detroit Catholic Central 31,**  
**Cincinnati La Salle (Ohio) 21**

Beau Jackson tossed TD passes to DJ Lee and Brady Blakita for the Shamrocks (6-2), while Jaden Pydyn and Spencer Lyons rushed for scores and Jake Matigian booted in a 38-yard field goal.

**Riverview Gabriel Richard 46,**  
**Cranbrook 7 (CHSL-Intersectional 1)**

The Cranes fell to 2-6 overall and 1-4 in the division.

## Independent

**Tecumseh 52,**  
**Livonia Clarenceville 46**

The Trojans fell to 5-3 overall.

## Kensington Lakes Activities Association

**Northville 21, Novi 10 (KLAA-West)**

Luca Prior was 8 of 17 passing for 113 yards and one TD for the Mustangs (7-1, 6-1). Caleb Moore rushed 19 times for 88 yards and one TD, while Nolan Thomson caught four passes for 41 yards and a TD and Caden Besco hauled in two passes for 59 yards. Zachary Groot returned a punt 65 yards for a TD. Owen Ross led the defense with 14 tackles (six solo, one for loss) and one sack, Evan Deak added nine tackles (five solo, two for loss) and a sack, Hunter Ladach totaled nine tackles (four solo, one for loss) and a sack and Ferris Jordan had seven tackles.

Caleb Walker was 17 of 28 passing for 133 yards and one TD for the Wildcats (5-3, 5-2). Lance Galliard rushed 18 times for 97 yards, Color Shires added 49 yards rushing, Boden Fernsler caught seven passes for 60 yards and Luke Aurilia hauled in six catches for 35 yards and a score. Antonio Cappella made a 25-yard field goal. Preston Johnston led the defense with nine tackles (seven solo, one for loss), Niko Krall added seven tackles (two for loss) and one sack and Cole Shires finished with five tackles.

**Hartland 34,**  
**Canton 18 (KLAA-West)**

The Chiefs fell to 2-6 overall and 2-6 in the division, despite Aiden Carr rushing six times for 132 yards and two TDs. Joe Najduk added 16 carries for 80 yards, Devon Pettus rushed 12 times for 59 yards and Caleb Williams had 41 yards rushing.

**Plymouth 49,**  
**Salem 0 (KLAA-West)**

QB Sam Plencner was 6 of 7 passing for 29 yards and two TDs and rushed 12 times for 79 yards and one score for the Wildcats (2-6, 2-5). Nathan Gillick carried 12 times for 78 yards, while Evan Cosgrove had eight rushes for 60 yards and two scores. Hunter Dohring and Luc Damiani each caught TD passes. Garard Noel led the defense with five tackle (three solo, 1.5 for loss) and a half sack, Cosgrove and Dohring each had 3.5 tackles, Terrell May and Orlando Daniels each had sacks and Damiani nabbed two interceptions. Logan Pheiffer was 7 of 7 kicking extra points.

Robert Jones rushed 15 times for 74 yards for the Rocks (0-8, 0-7). Tyler Bond caught three passes for 32 yards.

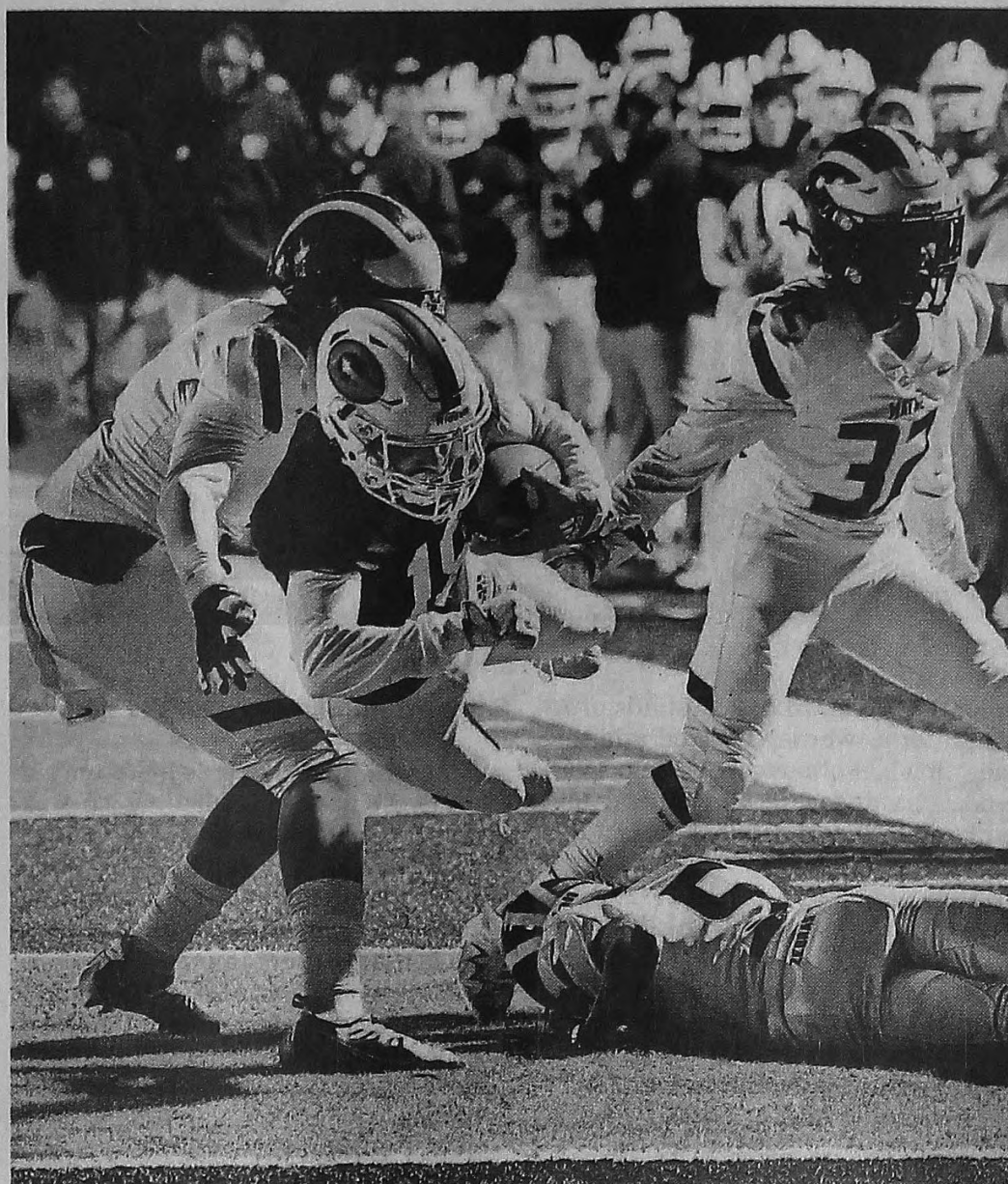
**Livonia Stevenson 21,**  
**Livonia Churchill 20 (KLAA-East)**

QB ArJon Thompson rushed 21 times for 193 yards and two TDs for the Spartans (4-4, 4-3). Alex Bowser added 15 carries for 54 yards and a TD and caught one pass for 19 yards.

QB Evan Snead was 10 of 16 passing for 298 yards and two TDs for the Chargers (2-6, 1-6). Jon Lytle-Montgomery rushed 17 times for 86 yards and caught two passes for 87 yards, David Anderson scored a 14-yard rushing TD and Jayden Allen caught six passes for 201 yards and TD receptions of 64 and 35 yards. Miles Lueck led the defense with 7.5 tackles (five solo, 1.5 for loss), Corey Gilbert added 5.5 tackles (three solo, 1.5 for loss) and Peyton Sitarski (three solo) and Mahmoud Alsafadi each had 3.5 tackles.

**Belleville 42,**  
**Livonia Franklin 14 (KLAA-East)**

Cordell Mabins Jr. rushed 19 times for 74 yards and one TD for the Patriots (7-1,



Westland John Glenn's Carter Blair dives for a touchdown against Wayne Memorial on Oct. 14. TOM BEAUDOIN/SPECIAL TO HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

6-1). Dominic Simpson added eight carries for 42 yards and one score, while Jon Jasionowski had six rushes for 40 yards. Simpson led the defense with seven tackles and one interception, followed by Tyler Garrett with five tackles, Jasionowski and Mendale Broaden with four tackles apiece and Owen Hawley with a fumble recovery.

**Westland John Glenn 47,**  
**Wayne Memorial 14 (KLAA-East)**

The Rockets improved to 3-5 overall and 3-4 in the division.

Dwayne Jones rushed 16 times for 75 yards and two TDs for the Zebras (0-8, 0-7). Brandon Britton carried 17 times for 109 yards, while Javion Gibson added six carries for 42 yards. Zaquan Olive led the defense with seven tackles, while Jones totaled five.

## Lakes Valley Conference

**Waterford Mott 43,**  
**South Lyon 42 (LVC)**

Tommy Donovan rushed 20 times for 263 yards and five TDs for the Lions (6-2, 5-2). Braden Fracassi was 7 of 14 passing for 65 yards, one interception and one 14-yard TD pass to Simeon Mardossian. Mardossian led the defense with nine tackles (one for loss), Ryan Henderson added seven and Wyatt Douglass added five. Ben Radley pitched in four tackles (two for loss) and one sack, while Brody Weaver had three tackles (two for loss) and two sacks and Owen Mitchell nabbed an interception.

**South Lyon East 10, Milford 0 (LVC)**

QB Dominic Giovannini was 13 of 19 passing for 127 yards for the Cougars, who improved to 6-2 overall and 5-2 in the league. Jordan Newbill caught nine passes for 80 yards, and Daedricco Fizer rushed 27 times for 78 yards. Jayden LaPerna led the defense with eight tackles, followed by Carter Hamilton with 7.5. Jackson Makara added three tackles and two sacks, Jake Fannon returned an interception 45 yards for a score and Manake Watanabe booted in a 31-yard field goal.

QB Ryan Allen was 15 of 28 passing for 144 yards and one interception and added 16 rushes for 94 yards for the Mavericks, who fell to 4-4 overall and 3-4 in the LVC. Peyton Chamberlain totaled 29 yards rushing and 46 yards receiving, Noel Deland caught five passes for 40 yards and Alex Phipps had two receptions for 37 yards. Wyatt Lesnew paced the defense with 12 tackles (three for loss), Tyler Freer added 11 (two for loss), Ike Stufft had seven, Danny Sternberg chipped in six (two for loss) and Max Cremeans totaled five.

**Gibraltar Carlson 30,**  
**White Lake Lakeland 14**

The Eagles fell to 4-4 overall.

## Michigan Independent Athletic Conference

**Ecorse 22, Lutheran Westland 8**

QB Noah Etnyre led the Warriors (5-3) on offense, going 4 of 10 passing for 71 yards and rushing 16 times for 61 yards. Micah Lavigne added three carries for 52 yards. Lavigne and Nathan Klann led the defense in tackles.

runs of 2 and 27 yards, while Jailin Samuel and Anthony Cameron each rushed for scores. Chris Little intercepted two passes, including one he returned 43 yards for a score. Crane pulled down an interception, while Braden Hall totaled five tackles (one for loss) and Aiden Leung had four tackles.

**Farmington 39,**  
**Birmingham Seaholm 21**  
**(OAA-Blue)**

RB Cam Pettaway caught a 79-yard TD pass from Dominic Pesci, rushed for a 34-yard score and tossed a 14-yard TD to Owen Matteson as the Falcons (6-2, 3-1) earned a share of the division title with Seaholm. Keichean Wilson returned a kickoff 78 yards for a score and added TD runs of 5 and 2 yards. Aaren McCray, Darmel Moore, Ekene Uzosike and Cooper Williams each recovered fumbles, and Joshua Walker had an interception.

QB Colton Kinnie rushed for a 2-yard TD for the Maples (7-1, 3-1), while Granden Kinnie and Kyle Robbins each rushed for 11-yard TDs.

**Lake Orion 42, North Farmington 7**

QB Thomas Balazovic threw for 78 yards, including a TD pass to Robert Bridges, who had 60 yards receiving. Leading the Raiders (2-6) on defense were Duke Blanch, Thomas Thakady, Vinnie Lee and Trainier Alexander.

## Western Wayne Athletic Conference

**Redford Union 36,**  
**Redford Thurston 0 (WWAC)**

QB Cory Chavis tossed TD passes of 35 and 37 yards to Jeremiah Alston-Jackson and a 78-yarder to Kyren Ware as the Panthers (8-0, 7-0) won both the league title and the City championship. Daquan Davis rushed for a 9-yard score, while Javerious Shepherd capped off the win with a 1-yard plunge. Davis caught a two-point conversion pass from Ware, and Alston-Jackson forced a fumble on defense.

Bryce Gilmore nabbed an interception for the Eagles (0-8, 0-7).

**Garden City 34, Dearborn Heights Robichaud 28 (F/OT) (WWAC)**

QB Nathan Wasil tossed an 8-yard TD to Nic Emond in overtime for the Cougars (5-3, 5-2).

## Oakland Activities Association

**Bloomfield Hills 7, Oxford 3**

QB CJ Jackson was 10 of 22 passing for 118 yards and one TD for the Black Hawks (2-6). Aaron Zekman caught six passes for 92 yards and one TD. Ahmad Taylor led the defense with six tackles (four solo, three for loss), one sack and two passes broken up, while Jack Friesen had four solo tackles.

**Birmingham Groves 56, Berkley 7**

RB Joshua Woods rushed seven times for 116 yards and TDs of 6, 28 and 39 yards for the Falcons, who improved to 5-3 overall. Jackson Crane added TD



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# Golf

Continued from Page 1B

Snyder (191), junior Stella Lowman (191), freshman Pippa Dawson (189) and a two-round split with junior Lauren Kopera (101) and sophomore Campbell Whitty (107).

## Mackenzie Behnke, Cranbrook

The Cranes were state runner-ups in D-3 thanks to an all-state performance by this junior. She carded rounds of 77 and 83 for a two-day 160, which was good enough to tie for ninth place individually with Freeland's Averie Pumford and Ludington's Emma McKinley.

Others performing well for Cranbrook included juniors Sienna Illitch (171) and Anya Samsonov (171), sophomore Sophia Kouza (176) and a two-day split between sophomore Chiara Martella (85) and freshman Sydney Behnke (105).

## Ruisi Ma, Detroit Country Day

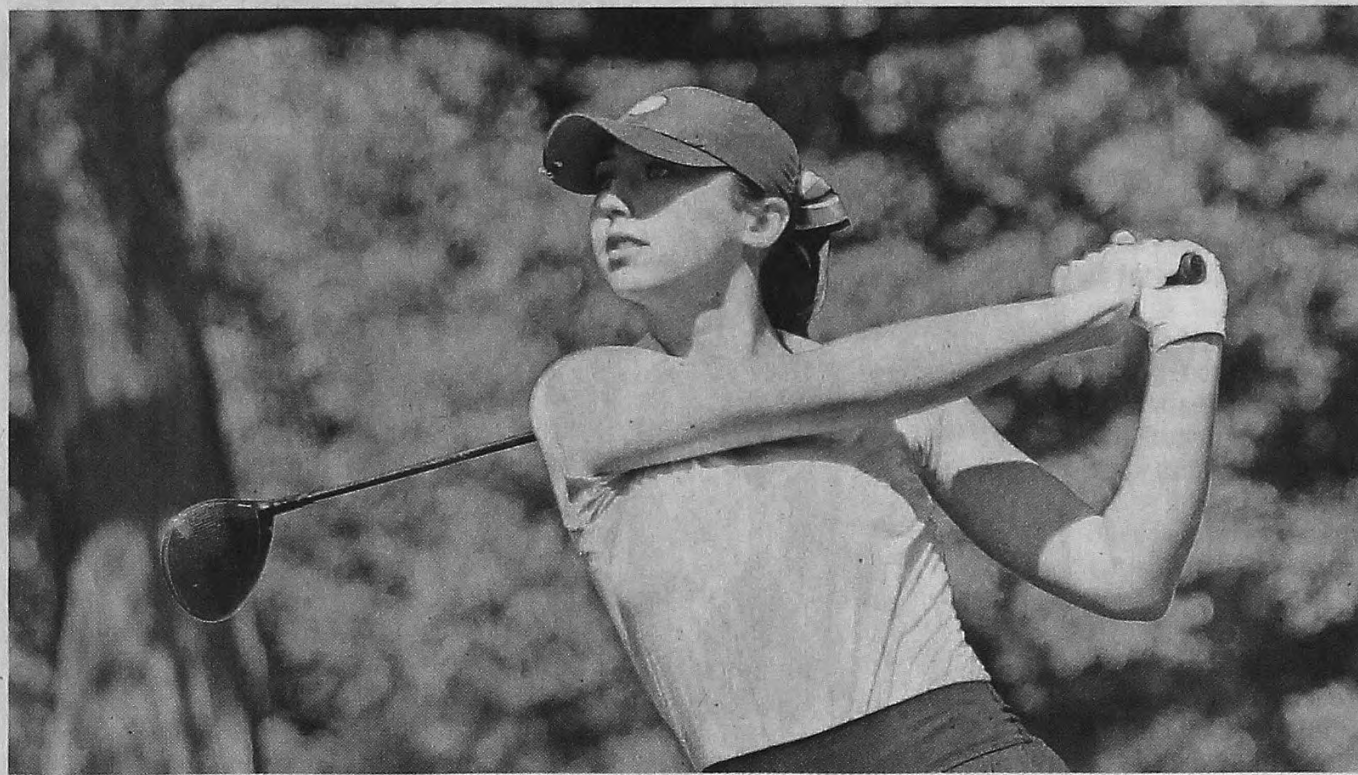
The Yellowjackets placed seventh as a team in the D-3 state finals following this senior's 17th-place effort as an individual. She shot a pair of 82s for a two-day 164. Joining her at the tournament were juniors Becca Borgia (182), Trinity Chen (197) and Riley McAlpine (210) and sophomore Rebekah Maibach (170).

## Venetia Chap, Farmington

The junior tied for 10th place individually with Plymouth's Brooke Morris and Rochester's Madison Yang after carding rounds of 84 and 76 for a two-day 160. The Falcons finished 17th as a team in the D-1 tournament. Helping Chap, who finished as an all-stater, were seniors Lucy Kent (192) and Brynn Brown (237), junior Allie Nowak (243) and sophomore Madelina Rider (249).

## Maeve Casey, Farmington Hills Mercy

The Marlins became the D-2 state champions thanks to a pair of all-state individual performances, one of which came from Casey, a sophomore. She shot rounds of 79 and 80 for a two-day 159, which was good enough for fourth place individually. The other came from



Northville's Samantha Coleman shot rounds of 78 and 81 for a two-day score of 159 during the Michigan High School Athletic Association girls golf championship, which earned her ninth place individually.

LIVINGSTON DAILY FILE

senior Chloe Vig, who had rounds of 78 and 88 for a two-day 166 and a ninth-place finish. Both received help from senior Mia Juday (202), junior Abby Slankster (181) and sophomore Lila Polakowski (178).

## Alexis Perez, Livonia Franklin

As only a sophomore, she represented the Patriots well by placing 96th individually following a two-day effort of 226. She was the only Franklin player who qualified for the D-1 tournament.

## Grace Brees, Livonia Stevenson

The senior was the Spartans' top finisher at the D-1 tournament. She carded rounds of 99 and 97 for a two-day 196, which earned her 70th place individually. Joining her at the state finals were seniors Tiffany Finzel (189), Brianna Waranauckas (218) and junior Amelia Curtis (221).

## Ava Moore, Milford

As the only Maverick to make the D-1 tournament, the senior shot rounds of 84 and 88 for a two-day score of 172. She tied for 28th individually with Novi's Saanvitha Mullapudi and Brighton's Madison Martens.

## Samantha Coleman, Northville

The senior shot rounds of 78 and 81 for a two-day score of 159, which was good enough for ninth place individually and earned her all-state honors. What's more, her effort ensured the Mustangs a fourth-place finish as a team in the D-1 tournament. Their score of 683 was just two strokes behind third-place Rochester. Helping Coleman were seniors Ally Zuidema (173) and Avi Gill (175), junior Meera Sankar (181) and sophomore Sanya Singhal (185).

## Saanvitha Mullapudi, Novi

The junior was the Wildcats' lone competitor in the D-1 tournament, but she carded rounds of 85 and 87 for a two-day score of 172, which tied her for 28th individually with Milford's Ava Moore and Brighton's Madison Martens.

## Brooke Morris, Plymouth

Carding 80s in both rounds ensured this junior would tie for 10th place individually with Farmington's Venetia Chap and Rochester's Madison Young and secure all-state honors as well. The Wildcats placed 10th as a team in the D-1 field thanks to contributions from senior Natalie Cusmano (202), junior Sydney Mazur (178), sophomore Regan

Brydges (208) and freshman Annie Flavin (179).

## Gabriella Tapp, South Lyon

Not only was this senior the state runner-up and an all-state finisher after shooting rounds of 73 and 80 for a two-day 153 but she also helped the Lions become the state runner-ups as a team in the D-2 tournament. Joining Tapp at the state finals were seniors Ellen Albert (180) and Lea Faust (191) and sophomores Kaylyn Wisniewski (189) and Eva Weaver (203).

## Grace Sturgill, South Lyon East

The sophomore placed 16th individually after her two rounds of 89 pushed the Cougars to a 10th-place finish in the D-2 state finals. She scored a two-day 178. Helping her were seniors Lauren Han (198), Isabella Salamon (205), Kaylee Griffin (210) and Colette Maurer (217).

## Rachel Fay, Wixom St. Catherine

The only player from her team to qualify for the D-3 state final, this sophomore shot rounds of 83 and 80 for a two-day 163, which allowed her to tie for 13th place individually with Riverview's Megan Rogers.

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This is a theme puzzle with the subject stated at right. Find the listed words in the grid. They may run in any direction but always in a straight line. Some letters are used more than once. Ring each word as you find it and when you have completed the puzzle, there will be 18 letters left over. They spell out the alternative theme of the puzzle.

- |              |         |        |        |
|--------------|---------|--------|--------|
| Aloe         | Eggs    | Lime   | Sage   |
| Apricot      | Figs    | Market | Shoes  |
| Arts         | Fish    | Metal  | Skis   |
| Axes         | Food    | Mint   | Slices |
| Bike         | Gai lan | Novels | Soap   |
| Blackberry   | Games   | Okra   | Spend  |
| Cakes        | Grow    | Orange | Stamps |
| Celery       | Guava   | Peach  | Teas   |
| Chai         | Herbs   | Pets   | Tools  |
| City         | Jeans   | Pick   | Trash  |
| Conversation | Junk    | Pies   | Turnip |
| Corn         | Leek    | Plum   | Yams   |
| Craft        | Lemon   | Potato |        |

**TODAY'S ANSWER**

From paddock to plate

**Farmers' market**

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 C L O T K S S K I S S L D R R  
 S H I G A I L A N C P A O K E  
 S B B C C T D E S U O D O E L  
 T G L I E O O B V A J T F T E  
 E S G A K S R P T O G R O W C  
 P G O E C E C N E D N E P S I  
 O I M L H K G U A V A L O E T  
 R F P I C K B M S R T H H A Y  
 A S K M N R E E K T S R C X K  
 N O M E L T A O R I M O A E P  
 G A S N A E J F F R A L E S A  
 E P T L S P M A T S Y L P E H

**NEWSDAY CROSSWORD**

**ACROSS**

1 Sweater for the small  
 11 Plunder  
 15 A question of effort  
 16 Call when things go wrong  
 17 Square off  
 18 2019 acquirer of the BrickLink fan site  
 19 Spring gatherings  
 20 Rose by another name?  
 22 Military band  
 25 Two different groups working with wires  
 26 Often-steamy stories  
 29 Tends to tender  
 30 Fantastic shortcuts  
 32 Pitchers' battle  
 35 *Rouge comme tomate*  
 36 Henchwoman, e.g.  
 38 Back  
 39 Prone to chafing  
 41 Genesis through Deuteronomy  
 43 Military leader for nearly 700 years  
 45 Traveler in a tour  
 46 39 Across picnicker?  
 48 Yertle the Turtle's domain  
 49 Less sound  
 50 You can't top these  
 54 Curative prefix  
 55 Penguin ritual  
 60 Things to eat and drink  
 61 Unimagined?

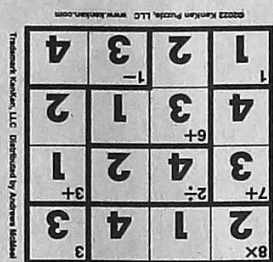
**DOWN**

1 Minimal bit  
 2 Fighters' support group  
 3 Dinner invitation  
 4 Shout after a swiping  
 5 Head home  
 6 "On from island island . . .": Tennyson  
 7 Providence is far from it  
 8 A lot of nerve  
 9 Booster beneficiary  
 10 Subjects for debate  
 11 Calmed down  
 12 *The Great Picture Hunt!* is the sixth in its series  
 13 Get hopping?  
 14 They're moving out of the mall  
 21 Home to 100+ First Nations communities  
 22 Took all the way to the top, maybe  
 23 Right things  
 24 User visiting toomuchonherplate.com  
 25 When courses aren't taken  
 27 Mexican summer squash  
 28 Express distress  
 29 Back for more?  
 31 Fox-faced primate  
 33 As before  
 34 Went at it  
 37 Instrument of metaphorical meddling  
 40 What an *Inferno* pair inspired Rodin to create  
 42 Doctor's frequent prescription  
 44 Rat relative  
 46 Mass in motion  
 47 Where Dinesen once dwelt  
 50 wine  
 51 Squeezes (out)  
 52 Regrettably  
 53 Choice for chips  
 56 Day  
 57 Writer read the same in reverse  
 58 Forecaster in a high place  
 59 Hang on or cut off

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1. Each row and column must contain the numbers 1 through 4 (easy) or 1 through 6 (challenging) without repeating.
2. The numbers within the heavily outlined boxes, called cages, must combine using the given operation (in any order) to produce the target numbers in the top-left corners.
3. Freebies: fill in single-box cages with the number in the top-left corner.



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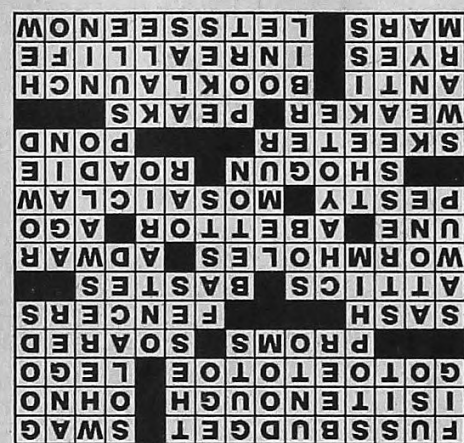
Insert numbers 1-9 in each box with every row, column and 3x3 box containing the digits just once. Difficulty level ranges from Bronze (easiest) to Silver to Gold (hardest) **RATING: GOLD**

**TODAY'S ANSWER**

6	7			7		1		
8		9		5	6			5
7	2			1	3			
4			7			2		
	1	3				6	7	
	4	1		8		3		
9		3			4		2	
7		4						

				7		1		
6	7				8			5
	8	9		5	6			
7	2			1	3			
	4			7		2		
	1	3				6	7	
	4	1		8		3		
9		3			4		2	
7		4						

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## How to prepare for your Zoom Interview

**Rachel Look**  
University of Maryland's Robert H. Smith School of Business

Many organizations have returned to the office in recent months. But if you're called for a job interview, there's a good chance it will still be conducted remotely.

That means preparing for the interview in a slightly different way.

Some aspects of your standard interview prep won't change. You'll still need to research the company and the interviewer's background, and be ready to describe how your education and experience are a solid match for the position. You'll want to prepare answers and anecdotes that demonstrate your core competencies, as you normally would. And you'll want to prepare a list of questions to pose to your interviewer when it's your turn to ask them.

But there are some differences in preparing for a virtual interview.

As a career and leadership coach at the University of Maryland's Robert H. Smith School of Business, I've helped lots of people get ready for their Zoom interview in the past. Here's my advice:

**Test the tech:** We're all much more familiar with Zoom, Microsoft Teams and Google Meets than we were 18 months ago. But a little practice never hurts. Enlist a friend or family member to perform a test run of the technology. Doing so will help alleviate potential glitches.

**Set the stage:** Take a look at everything the camera puts in view during your online interview, including the

background. Position your camera somewhere that is free of background noise and visual distractions. Natural or soft lighting, slightly above and behind the camera, will help you look your best. If you can create a serene, professional setting, styled with houseplants and books or use a background that's already been created, that's great. But a plain, neutral-colored wall works just as well. Zoom's "Touch Up My Appearance Setting" is another option you might want to use.

**Adjust your settings:** Make sure your account includes a professional looking headshot and your full name, as it appears on your resume. Both will

appear when you join the call — making them an important part of your first impression.

**Dress to impress:** In-person or via-computer, you should always dress for the job you want. Don't skip the shoes and dress slacks just because you don't expect anyone to see them from your webcam. Dress like the hiring team is in the room. If you need to stand up to move to another room or to adjust the lighting, you won't have to worry that you are wearing stretchy pants instead of trousers.

**Create some space:** Interviewees should strive to recreate the same distance from their camera that they

would have sitting behind a desk at an interview. Your interviewers should be able to see your hand gestures and facial expressions — but they shouldn't be so close that they can see up your nose.

**Check your posture:** Body language is important and does convey over video. Remember to sit up straight and lean in slightly. Nod or smile at appropriate moments to project enthusiasm.

**Check in:** When there are multiple people on the call, it can be a challenge to properly address everyone. Don't hesitate to backtrack on a question, verifying that an individual interviewer feels you answered it sufficiently. Address the interviewer(s) by name, where possible. For questions that speak directly to your core competencies or experiences, ask the group if they would like more examples, anecdotes, or if anyone wants you to elaborate. Those simple check-in questions can make sure you're tending to and connecting with everyone on the call.

**And, scene:** After you've answered the interviewers' questions and they've answered yours, thank them for their time. Pause for a moment after you've ended the call to make sure your microphone and camera are turned off, and then take a deep breath. Relax your shoulders and get started writing personalized thank-you emails to everyone in the interview, just as you would if it had been conducted in person.

Rachel Look is the associate director of Executive MBA Career Coaching, Programming and Outreach at the University of Maryland's Robert H. Smith School of Business.



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