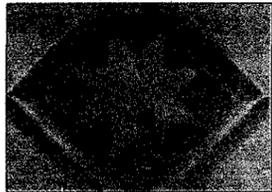


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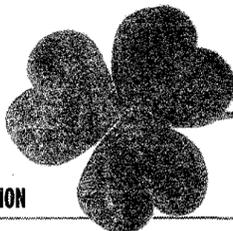
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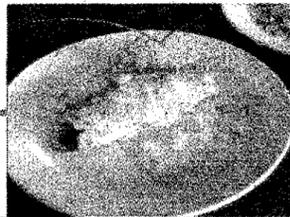


AT HOME, SECTION B

WHERE TO
GO AND
WHAT TO DO



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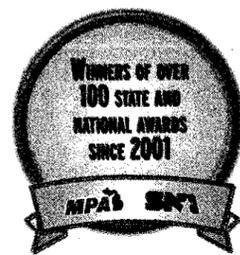


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TASTE, PAGE B5

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Resolution 'demands' state fix Proposal A

BY SUE MASON
STAFF WRITER

The Wayne-Westland school board is turning to district residents to help get state officials to address public education's funding crisis.

The board Monday without comment voted unanimously to approve a resolution that demands that lawmakers consider "funding mechanisms to address the structural deficit" for financing public education.

The vote comes some three months after school officials and supporters of public education gathered at Edsel Ford High School in Dearborn to develop a plan of action, Our Kids Can't Wait - Fair Funding for Schools, to get lawmakers to fix Proposal A.

In reading the resolution into the meeting minutes, board Secretary Martha Pitsenbarger said, "As elected officials responsible for the education of our children, the future leaders of our communities, state and nation, it is our responsibility to speak out when that mandate is threatened."

Pointing out that the tax structure that has been changed since the implementation of Proposal A "has worsened" the funding problem, creating a budget shortfall, the board resolution offered four "funding mechanisms" for lawmakers to consider:

- Identify other revenue sources to address the deficit and to adequately fund education.
- Support legislation that would provide annual improvements to the per-pupil foundation allowance at key categorical.
- Support legislation to help schools control statewide retirement costs.
- Support legislation to help schools control health insurance costs.

The resolution also calls on the district to get copies of the document to all residents,

PLEASE SEE FIX, A4



DONALD J. ALLEY

Olympic challenge

Logan Guzik, 3 of Westland, attempts to catch balloons in a net during the Saturday's Nursery School Olympics at the Bailey Recreation Center. Toddlers put their skills to the test in a variety of 'Olympic' events, with the balloon catch one of the favorite attractions. For more photos, see page A3.

'Justice served'

Oehler pleads guilty in murder of William Paul

BY DARRELL CLEM
STAFF WRITER

Westland murderer James Oehler admitted in court Monday that he killed a Garden City man and buried the body in his back yard for seven years.

Oehler, 44, pleaded guilty to second-degree murder and felony firearm charges for the shooting death of William David Paul, 24, whose body was unearched in Oehler's back yard last July 28.

"I believe that justice was served in a terrible incident that happened over seven years ago," Assistant Wayne

County Prosecutor Patrick Muscat said. "I believe that justice was served with the conviction of the guilty individual."

Oehler admitted his guilt to Wayne County Circuit Judge Annette Berry after Muscat and defense attorney Robert Mitchell reached a plea agreement, averting a trial that was supposed to begin Monday.

Oehler will face 23-40 years in prison for murder and two years for the felony firearm charge. He will officially be sentenced March 21.

Oehler would have faced life in prison without the possibility of parole, if he had gone to trial and been convicted of an original charge of first-degree murder.

FAMILY ACCEPTANCE

Paul's family accepted the plea agreement after talking with authorities for several hours, Muscat said. The outcome spared Paul's relatives of even more grueling testimony than they heard last August during a preliminary hearing in Westland 18th District Court.

"It's good to bring this case to closure," said police Lt. James Ridener, who is in charge of a Westland detective bureau that ultimately solved the case.

Oehler and Paul grew marijuana together in Oehler's house, and

PLEASE SEE GUILTY, A5

Environment work begins at Cooper site next week

BY DAN WEST
STAFF WRITER

Environmental specialists are set to analyze air quality inside the old Cooper School next week as months of work to level the building begins.

"This is monumental," said Livonia Public Schools Supt. Randy Liepa. "We're pleased we're moving forward. After many, many meetings, some-

thing is finally going to happen."

The 37-acre site has been surrounded by fences since soil contamination was discovered in 1991 near the former elementary school on Ann Arbor Trail between Inkster and Middlebelt. The property is owned by Livonia Public Schools.

Starting Monday, private con-

PLEASE SEE COOPER, A8

Westland's 'classy lady' gets birthday treat

BY DARRELL CLEM
STAFF WRITER

Westland's first lady Justine Barns smiled graciously Monday as friends and political supporters lined up to give her kisses, hugs and flowers for her 80th birthday.

"I didn't expect anything like this. It's beautiful," she said, as her admirers packed Westland City Council chambers to honor this trailblazer for local women in politics.

"These are wonderful people," said Barns, whose political career took her

from school PTA president to the state House of Representatives.

Barns - the first woman ever elected to the city council - had a seat when the council hired former City Clerk Diane Fritz, who had the job for 21 years.

"She was one of the people who talked me into taking the position," Fritz said of Barns, warmly called "Jaye" by her friends.

"She deserves all of the recognition she gets," Fritz said. "She has had so

PLEASE SEE BARNs, A8



Veteran Westland politician Justine Barns shows off a resolution she received from City Council President Charles Pickering (left) and Mayor Sandra Cicirelli.

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Coming Sunday on
the PINK page

See PINK Picks
for what to
send a friend,
for good luck.



CAPA dedicates performances

Livonia's Creative And Performing Arts (CAPA) program will stage Tennessee William's Pulitzer Prize-winning play, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, on Friday-Saturday, March 11-12 and Friday, March 18, at Churchill High School's Black Box Theatre.

It was back in 1949 that a relatively unknown stage actor named Marlon Brando took on the role of Stanley alongside Broadway veteran Uta Hagen's Blanche in the play. Both went on to become acting legends and both passed away in 2004.

Now, over half a century after Brando and Hagen brought the show to life, the CAPA students are dedicating their performances to the memory of the two stage and screen legends.

Shows will be at 7:30 p.m., with a matinee at 2 p.m. March 12.

Set against the steamy backdrop of New Orleans' gritty French Quarter, *A Streetcar Named Desire* is the dramatic story of Blanche Du Bois, a faded Southern belle, driven to madness by her animalistic brother-in-law, Stanley Kowalski. Starring as Blanche Du Bois is senior Laura Heikkinen, with Stanley Kowalski played by senior Jon Wright. Eden Malyn takes on the role of Stanley's wife and Blanche's younger sister, Stella; and Stefan Micah portrays Stanley's pal, Mitch.

The production takes on special significance to CAPA Director Gail Susan Mack.



At a rehearsal of CAPA's upcoming performance of "A Streetcar Named Desire" are Jon Wright as Stanley, Eden Malyn (standing) as Stella, and Laura Heikkinen as Blanche.

Mack, who studied with Hagen and teaches many of Hagen's acting techniques to her students at Churchill.

Tickets are \$12 for adults

and \$10 for students and seniors. To reserve or purchase tickets call (734) 425-5942 or log onto www.starringcapa.com.

Transportation officials get earful from critics about roads

BY KEVIN BROWN
STAFF WRITER

How would you fix Michigan's roads?

Citizens and interest group advocates told state legislators gathered Monday in Canton how to improve transportation in Michigan — with solutions ranging from European-style deep concrete road beds to prohibiting heavy trucks, and having more of a focus on mass transit. But Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) officials maintained they're doing their best with the money that's available.

"What's happening here is happening in 49 other states," said Kirk Steudle, MDOT chief deputy director. But some on hand for the hearing said roads in Indiana and Ohio are superior.

"It's going to be a tough job to fight the trucking industry, but you're going to have to do it," said Robert McCausland of Canton, adding that Michigan allows heavier trucks than are allowed in most states, and these trucks damage the roads.

"It's just physics. You got to beat the lobbyists back because it's a safety issue also," he said.

"The state took the money for the truck plates; where did it go?" asked Dan McCausland of Canton. "There's all these fines

and fees and permits and where is this money at?"

According to Ron DeCook, MDOT director of governmental affairs, "License and registration fees go into the Michigan Transportation Fund as required by the state constitution," and the money is then distributed to counties, cities and villages for road work. Townships are excluded because they are not responsible for road work. The comments came at the first of six hearings scheduled around Michigan, hosted by state Rep. Phil LaJoy, R-Canton, who is the new chairman of the House Transportation Committee. The hearings are a joint effort between the House and Senate transportation committees.

Monday's hearing opened with comments from three MDOT representatives, who said their department follows a rolling five-year plan to evaluate and maintain roads. Legislators took turns posing questions.

"We have a real problem, an enormous problem getting off I-275 (at Ford)," said Sen. Bruce Patterson, R-Canton. He said MDOT has not supported plans for improved exit ramps at Ford Road to give better access to Haggerty.

"We need relief in Canton Township," he said, adding Michigan townships aren't get-

ting the service that cities get.

Rep. Shelley Goodman-Taub, R-Bloomfield Hills, said a test stretch of I-75 in metro Detroit using the longer-lasting deep concrete European construction model is "beautiful."

"I think what I'm hearing from my constituents is why don't we build it (roads), but build it right," she said.

Steudle responded, "We have to manage an entire system with the money we have."

MDOT engineer Greg Johnson added, "We can't just take all our money and invest in 5 percent of our system — or even less than that."

Nancy Austin of Canton was among a handful of speakers urging more attention to mass transit. Ed McArdle of the Sierra Club, which has more than 6,000 metro Detroit members, said an adequate mass transit system "makes a city robust and a joy to visit."

Richard Lieberknecht of Garden City joined Ferndale City Manager Tom Barwin in criticizing sprawl, saying that building one infrastructure system then abandoning it to build another is costly.

"It just seems totally insane what we're doing," he said.

Other hearings are scheduled for Grand Rapids, Waterford, Cadillac, Brighton and Port Huron.

Doggie dining, keepsakes: Shoppers have new options

PURE PET TREATS

Something is cooking at the Canton home of pet-lovers Cathy and John Fuerstnau. But the treats are strictly for dogs.

The local couple started an all natural dog treat business — called First Gnaw — this past December, and delivers those biscuits, cookies and even homemade dog birthday cakes right to your door. Inspired by their own pup, Harley, the Fuerstnau's have been spreading the word at area veterinary clinics, doggie day cares and



other community organizations from Plymouth to Ann Arbor. The treats are homemade, freshly-baked, all natural and preservative-free, said Cathy Fuerstnau. Popular biscuit flavors include peanut

butter, cheese or applesauce and cheese. Since John Fuerstnau does all of the baking, they can also accommodate special needs like high fiber or low protein diets.

Doggie birthday cakes are shaped like a bone and frosted especially for the hound of the hour. They require three to five days notice. Cookies biscuits come in all sorts of shapes — from hearts, fire engines and dog houses to bones and even kitty cats. Sizes range from 2 to 4 inches, and they are priced by size accordingly. A dozen

peanut butter biscuits range from \$2.50 to \$4.50.

"We've gotten a great response," said Cathy Fuerstnau. "We field tested (flavors) with our neighbor's dogs. They have had no problems with these. Harley loves them."

To keep their own pup, and taste-tester, in top shape, she said, "we make sure he runs every day."

Place orders for delivery directly from First Gnaw by calling (313) 981-6139.

RED HATS UNITE

Members of the Red Hat Society look no further for those special edition Grasshopper shoes by Keds. Livonia's The Perfect Present is taking orders now, though the shoes won't hit the market until next month. Reserve a pair with a \$20 deposit.

The Perfect Present, which opened last July, has more than doubled its inventory of

gift items. The store features everything from linens, jewelry, candles, coffee and teas, to keepsakes, music boxes and crystal. Prices range from \$5 to \$100.

"Red Hatters" as owner Cheryl Williams calls them, are regular customers.

"There are quite a few women who come into the store and go straight to the Red Hat section and play dress up," said Williams. "They just love the selection and the freedom that the shop allows."

Williams places a focus on customer service. Visitors may enjoy a complimentary cup of coffee. Gift wrapping is free. Senior citizens receive 10 percent off any purchase, any time. The store is open 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Friday, and 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday. Find The Perfect Present at 33018 Seven Mile east of Farmington Road in Livonia. Call (248) 478-GIFT or see

www.perfectpresentllc.com for more information.

NEW MEXICAN FARE

Livonia comes in just behind college towns East Lansing and Ann Arbor for residents with an appetite for fresh Mexican fare. At least that's what the owners of the newly-opened Pancho's Mexican Grill are banking on.

The quick service, deli-style restaurant first opened in Michigan State territory in 1992 and now boasts more than 25 locations throughout the Midwest. Owner Rodney L. Anderson said he seeks out strong communities.

"We know that Livonia is just that, and it's a great place to start our Metro Detroit area growth," he said.

A second metro area location, in Southfield, is planned for May. In the meantime, visit Pancho's at 17390 Haggerty Road, north of Six Mile. Call (734) 432-7910.

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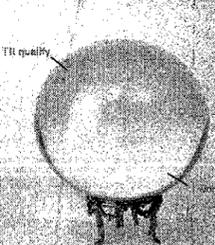
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FTC clears way for Gannett to buy O&E's parent company

Officials at HomeTown Communications Network Inc., parent company of the *Observer & Eccentric Newspapers*, are working on a smooth transition of the Livonia-based newspaper chain to Gannett ownership.

The sale received antitrust clearance Monday when the Federal Trade Commission terminated its review of the deal and recommended no action.

"The U.S. Department of Justice has concluded that the sale may now proceed," wrote Richard Aginian, president and CEO of HomeTown Communications Network Inc., in a memo e-mailed Tuesday afternoon to the company's more than 780 employees in Michigan, Ohio and Kentucky.

"With that behind us, we've now begun our discussions with Gannett about setting a closing date. We'll also begin to assist them with whatever plans they are developing for the transfer of operations to their ownership," said Aginian.

HCN officials said no closing date has been set for the sale.

The Livonia-based HomeTown Communications Network is the parent company of the *Observer & Eccentric Newspapers* which publishes the

Birmingham, West Bloomfield, Rochester, Clarkston, Lake Orion, Oxford, Troy and Southfield Eccentrics along with the *Farmington, Livonia, Plymouth, Canton, Redford, Westland and Garden City Observers*.

Last November, Gannett announced it was purchasing the corporation from Philip Power, the Ann Arbor resident who built HCN into a Midwest community newspaper company that publishes 62 weekly and twice-weekly newspapers, one daily in Livingston County, telephone directories, shoppers and niche publications in Michigan, Ohio and Kentucky. The newspapers have a combined circulation of more than 740,000 in the tri-state region. The network also includes a digital operation, with Web sites and Web-based services including design and production, as well as commercial typesetting and printing from four plants.

HomeTown has approximately 780 employees and 2004 estimated revenues of more than \$86 million.

The U.S. Department of Justice spent the last 3 1/2 months reviewing the proposed sale.

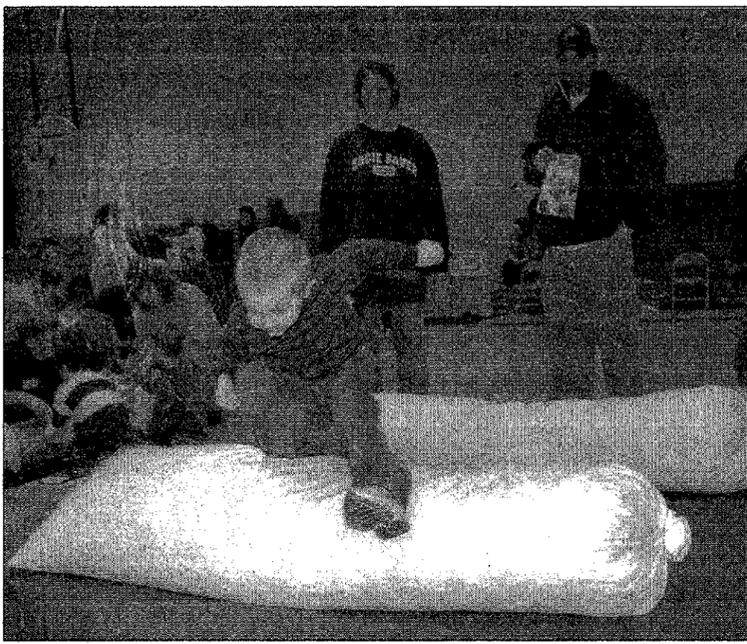
The Associated Press reported that a Justice Department spokesman said "we looked at it and we closed it and felt that no action was necessary."

Terms of the sale have not been released but annual revenues for the company were estimated at about \$86 million.

When the proposed sale was announced last year, Power said Gannett "has a track record of capable professional management, great financial stability and high community involvement. I wanted the newspapers, telephone directories and other publications that I spent so much of my career building to wind up in good hands after I left. I believe Gannett's hands are the best available."

Gannett, which publishes *The Detroit News*, is an international company with headquarters in McLean, Va., and operations in 43 states, the District of Columbia, Guam, the United Kingdom, Canada, Belgium, Germany, Hong Kong and Singapore. Gannett is this country's largest newspaper group in terms of circulation.

The company's 101 daily newspapers in the U.S. have a combined daily paid circulation of 7.6 million.



PHOTOS BY DONALD J. ALLEY

Going for 'gold'

Brendan Schema, 3, of Westland, show his Olympic form as he hurdles stuffed sacks while his parents, Larry and Jennie, watch during the Nursery School Olympics at the Bailey Recreation Center Saturday.



Colleen Harding of Westland helps her son Tommy, 2, hunt for dinosaur eggs and other things in the Dino Dig.



Kim Peters of Livonia helps her daughter, Loren, 2, get a stuffed fish from a barrel.

PRESCHOOLS

Preschool listings should be submitted in writing. They can be mailed to Sue Mason at 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150, by fax at (734) 591-7279 or by e-mail at smason@oe.homecomm.net. For more information, call (734) 953-2112.

Development Center, on Marquette between Wayne and Wildwood. Included are an early intervention program, Head Start, Kids/Plus Preschool, a preprimary impaired program and Sparkey Preschool. Registration takes place 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Call (734) 419-2635.

McKinley
Looking for a great preschool? Choose McKinley Cooperative Preschool at 6500 N. Wayne Road in Westland. Nondiscriminatory and fully

licensed, the program is open to youngsters ages 2-4. Morning and afternoon classes are offered. For information, call (734) 729-7222 or visit the Web site at www.mckinleypreschool.org.

YWCA Readiness
The YWCA of Western Wayne County Early Childhood School Readiness Program is available to 4- and 5-year-old children. The YWCA is at 26279 Michigan in Inkster. Call (313) 561-4110.

Preschool program

The Wayne-Westland Community Schools district has registration for preschool programs at Stottlemeyer Early Childhood and Family

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District set to focus on budget cuts

Livonia Public Schools is gearing up for another round of spending cuts, with a shortfall estimated at \$3.5 million to \$7 million. Lisa Levesque, director of finance, said it's "that time of year."

The school district must adopt its budget by the end of June each year. Though the process is ongoing, the final months of the school year prove busiest for board members.

The district's budget committee is made up of administrators from all different departments. They meet continuously to discuss the budget and the best ways to save and spend funds.

But early next month, those recommendations will become public as the Board of Education reviews them for the first time.

Levesque said a public hearing will be set in mid-April, after which the board will deliberate on how to handle its budget.

The district currently receives \$8,105 per pupil in its foundation allowance. Gov. Jennifer Granholm recently announced a \$175 per pupil increase in funding.

Despite the increase, Levesque said she expects the district to need to trim spending, though it's too early to tell just how much.

She gave a broad range of \$3.5 to \$7 million for next year's deficit.

Much of that is attributed to an increase in the cost of doing business - retirement and health care cost increases for staff, rising gasoline prices for the buses, and rising heat costs for school buildings.

The district does have the option of spending fund equity to cover its shortfall, though it's too early to tell how the budget will be handled.

"That's exactly what the board will deliberate in March," said Levesque. "We do have fund equity. That's an option."

By Stephanie A. Casola

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DEATHS

B
Helen Bolitho, 106, of Albion, formerly of Farmington, died March 2.

D
Walter Gerard Doherty, 70, of Clearwater, Fla., died Feb. 25.

F
Elizabeth (Betty) A. Frank, 78, of Hot Springs Village, Ariz., formerly of Birmingham, died Feb. 24.

K
Carol Ann Kiffner, 63, of Cadillac, died March 7.

L
Wendell Eugene Lloyd, of Emerald Isle, N.C., died March 4.

P
Ardis M. Peck, 89, of Waterford, died March 5.

R
Henry P. Rupert, 90, of Westland, formerly of Canton.

S
Robert Earl Scheffer, 74, of Grand Rapids, formerly of Birmingham, died March 5.

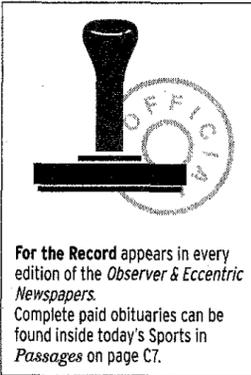
T
Dorothy A. Thorne, 69, of Barryton, died March 5.

V
Brian T. Valade, 63, died March 5.

INFORMATION CENTRAL

I am 15 and I am dreaming of... Who do you know that would like to open a clinic in Iraq for women and children? Or change the way foster care is handled? Compete in the Olympics, sing the National Anthem at a professional baseball game, or run a soup kitchen?

Teens. These are some of the dreams laid out in the book, *Every Girl Tells a Story: A Celebration of Girls Speaking Their Minds*, compiled by Carolyn Jones. Encouraging books



For the Record appears in every edition of the *Observer & Eccentric Newspapers*. Complete paid obituaries can be found inside today's Sports in *Passages* on page C7.

dealing with young adults and their goals can be found everywhere in the library.

Beyond having a day without pimples or wondering if "the dog ate my homework" will work again, teens do have experiences that lead to higher aspirations. In *Chocolate for a Teen's Dreams: Heartwarming Stories About Making Your Wishes Come True*, selected by Kay Allenbaugh, memories during teenage years such as giving a speech for the first time, choosing the right prom dress, or praying to wake up thin, can sometimes change a person's life.

But isn't being a teenager all about manipulating parents, drugs and alcohol, testing the waters, violence, making mistakes and compounding them even further? One would think so, reading Elizabeth Caldwell's book, *Teenagers: A Bewildered Parent's Guide*.

Are teens' dreams just as bewildering? No, says Michael Riera and Joseph De Prisco in *Field Guide to the American Teenager: Appreciating the Teenager You Live With*. Almost every problem is tackled through stories and

conversations about and with teens.

What does a teen dream of while asleep? Being chased, flying, or performing onstage completely unprepared? The library has a large collection of books to help with dream analysis, such as *Dreams* by Tucker Shaw or *Dream Symbols* by Georg Fink.

Attend the dream interpretation lecture given by Rev. Linda Newman, an astrologer, mystic student and holistic wellness practitioner. This free library program is open to both teens and adults, and will take place at 2 p.m. Sunday, March 13. Register at the Reference Desk or by phone.

Teens who want to catch a dream or two can also register for a free Dream Catcher Workshop which will happen right after the lecture. Call (734) 326-6123 for more information. Sweet dreams ...

Arthur Day @ the Library - 11 a.m. Saturday, March 12. Registration required. Children ages 3-5 visit the library and have some fun while we celebrate Arthur Day @ the Library. There will be crafts, activities and, of course, *Arthur* stories.

Adult Book Discussion - 7 p.m. Tuesday, March 15. No registration required. The book for the meeting is *Niagara Falls All Over Again*. These are informal open forum discussions. Please read the book before attending.

Teen Advisory Board - 7 p.m. Wednesday, March 16. Call Rori at (734) 326-6123 to sign up. Help out at the library by doing cool stuff like choosing books, planning programs, doing displays and selecting prizes for the Young Adult Department. Come join the Teen Advisory Board and make the library an awesome place for teens. Refreshments will be served.

The William P. Faust Public Library is at 6123 Central City Parkway, Westland. For More information, call (734) 326-6123.

SCHOOLS OF CHOICE

Parents interested in participating in Wayne-Westland Community

Schools' elementary Schools of Choice program for the 2005-2006 school year for students in kindergarten through fifth-grade have until April 8 to sign up.

The Schools of Choice program provides parents the opportunity to move their child from one school to another within the boundaries of the school district provided there is room available in the school. Transportation to and from the school of choices must be provided by the parents or legal guardian.

Schools of Choice applications for elementary students are being accepted in the Pupil Accounting Office at the Board of Education, 36745 Marquette Rd., Westland.

Applications received according to the timeline will permit, if space is available, selected students to begin the 2005-2006 school year in their school of choice.

If more students apply for a grade/building than there are openings, a random selection process will be used to select students. The names of students not selected at this time will be placed on a waiting list for the 2005-2006 school year.

Current Schools of Choice students must reapply to remain eligible for the program.

After the deadlines, Schools of Choice applications will be accepted until Sept. 9, at the elementary the parent/guardian would like the child to attend. These names will be added to the 2005-2006 school year waiting lists on a first-come, first-served basis. Building principals will use the waiting lists to notify qualified students of an opening. Building principals will be allowed to place Schools of Choice students only through Sept. 30.

A Schools of Choice student will be moved back to his/her home school if an overcrowding situation occurs within the first 10 weeks of the school year. After 10 weeks, the student will be permitted to remain in the school of choice for the remainder of the school year, provided all other conditions continue to be satisfied.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Power Soccer Clinic

The Westland Parks and Recreation Department will host a Power Soccer Team Clinic 2-5:30 p.m. Saturday, April 23, at the Bailey Recreation Center, 36651 Ford.

Power soccer is a team sport for individuals with disabilities who use power wheelchairs. It is the first sport designed specifically for power wheelchair users. The game is usually played in a gymnasium on a regulation basketball court. Teams of two power wheelchair users attack, defend and maneuver an oversized ball into a designated goal to score points.

The clinic is designed to build a Westland power soccer team. For more information, call Margaret Martin at (734) 722-7620, Jerry Frick, power soccer executive in Atlanta, Ga., at (770) 654-0715, Alan Pomranka of Michigan Wheelchair Veterans at (517) 490-3893 or Ken Britton at (734) 595-4157.

Brunch with the Easter Bunny

Star your Easter celebration off with brunch with the Easter Bunny 9 a.m. to noon Saturday, March 19, at the Harris-Keherer VFW Post 3323, 1055 S. Wayne Road.

The cost is \$3 per child up to age 12 and \$4 for adults. The brunch includes homemade, hot-off-the-griddle pancakes, sausage, juice, coffee, tea and milk, a photograph with the Easter Bunny (additional photos cost \$2) and Easter bonnet parade. Children should make bonnets or hats to wear to the brunch.

Tickets are available in advance at the Bailey Recreation Center, 36651 Ford, or at the door. For more information, call Donna Jensen at (734) 728-8075.

The brunch is sponsored by the Westland Parks and Recreation Department and the Westland Civitan Club.

Tickets are now on sale for the Bunny Breakfast at 10:30 a.m. Friday, March 25, at the Wayne Community Center, 4635 Howe, Wayne. The cost includes pancakes, sausage, juice, arts and crafts and clowns. Pictures with the Easter Bunny cost \$2. Call (734) 721-7400

for more information.

Easter Egg Scramble

The Westland Parks and Recreation Department and the Westland Jaycees are sponsoring an Easter Egg Scramble 1-4 p.m. Saturday, March 19, at Jaycee Park adjacent to the Mike Modano Ice Arena at Wildwood at Hunter.

The first scramble begins at 1 p.m. Youngsters will be broken up according to ages - up to 3 years, 4-6 years, 7-10 years and 11-14 years. Youngsters should bring a basket or bag for their eggs.

There also will be inflated games, surprises and activities. Juice and cookies also will be served.

For more information, call (734) 522-8402. The event will be canceled if there is inclement weather. Call the recreation department at (734) 722-7620 after 11:30 a.m. the day of the event to verify if the event is canceled.

Marshmallow Drop

The Wayne Parks and Recreation Department's 26th annual Marshmallow Drop will be Friday, March 25, at the Anderson Ballfield, next to the Wayne Community Center, 4635 Howe, Wayne.

The first drop will be at 10 a.m. for children ages 4 and under and children with a disability.

The second drop is for ages 5-7 and the third drop for ages 8-10.

The program is free. For more information, call (734)721-7400.

Earth Day

Scout groups, classes, church groups, home school groups, civic clubs or preschools looking for an Earth Day activity can adopt a planter box outside the Bailey Recreation Center. The planting will take place 4:30-6 p.m. Friday, April 22.

For more information, call the Bailey Center at (734) 722-7620.

Community Garage Sale

More than 80 garage sales all in the same place at the same time in the parking lot west of Westland City Hall, 36601 Ford Road, next to the Police Department.

For further information about how you can reserve a spot, call Margaret Martin at (734) 722-7620.

**Wayne-Westland Community Schools
Westland, Michigan 48185**

ADVERTISEMENT FOR BIDS

Sealed bids for Wayne-Westland Community Schools' Bid Package #15,

Consisting of: **Parking Lot & Bus Loop Expansions at Edison, Elliott, Hamilton, Lincoln, and Vandenberg Elementary Schools**

will be received until **1:00 P.M. local time on Wednesday, March 23, 2005** at which time they will be opened and read publicly at Wayne-Westland Community School Board of Education Office, located at 36745 Marquette, Westland, Michigan 48185. Bids received after this time and date will be returned unopened.

Faxed proposals will not be accepted.

This Bid Package will consist of a separate sealed bid for the following Bid Divisions:

Bid Division Description	
102 Earthwork/Site Utilities/Asphalt Paving/Site Concrete	
143 Electrical	
148 Landscaping	

Bidding documents prepared by **TMP Associates, Inc.** will be available for public inspection at the office of the Construction Manager, **McCarthy & Smith, Inc.**, 24317 Indoplex Circle, Farmington Hills, MI 48335; the FW Dodge Plan Room, Southfield; the Construction Association of Michigan Plan Room, Bloomfield Hills; and the Daily Construction Reports Plan Room, Detroit.

Bidders may obtain one (1) set of bidding documents, beginning Friday, March 4, 2005, by contacting the Construction Manager, **McCarthy & Smith, Inc.**, at (248) 427-8400. Additional plans may be ordered and purchased directly from Dunn Blue Reprographics Technology, (248) 353-2950. Bids are to be submitted in a sealed envelope supplied by the Construction Manager, **McCarthy & Smith, Inc.** The bid division(s) being bid is/are to be identified on the outside of the envelope.

A sworn and notarized statement disclosing any familial relationship existing between the bidder and any member of the school board, school superintendents, or chief executive must accompany each bid. A board shall not accept a bid that does not include this statement. This statement is on the proposal execution form.

Each bid shall be accompanied by a Bid Bond in the amount of five (5) percent of the amount of the bid, payable to Wayne-Westland Community Schools, as a guarantee that if the proposal is accepted, the bidder will execute the contract and file the required bonds within ten (10) days after notice of award of contract.

If awarded a contract, the successful bidder will be required to furnish a Performance Bond and Labor and Material Payment Bond. Wayne-Westland Community Schools reserves the right to reject any or all bids received and to waive any informalities and irregularities in the bidding.

This project is to be bid at the prevailing wage rate.

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FIX

FROM PAGE A1

PTA/PTSA groups and booster organizations "by every means available."

The goal is to generate a public outcry heard in Lansing and across the nation "that Michigan put its funding priorities in place and that its leaders find the courage to take the difficult steps necessary to put the education of its young people first," Pitsenbarger read.

State Rep. John Stewart, R-Plymouth, briefly spoke to the board in advance of the vote, telling them: "I'm a Republican who strongly supports my schools."

"We have a thriving school system and we've got to fight for whatever we can," he said.

The resolution is a prelude to a March 23 Wayne County Association of School Boards meeting during which Wayne-Westland and two other districts will make presentations on what they have done related to the campaign.

Wayne-Westland Parent Funding Committee is coordinating the letter-writing campaign, and Superintendent Greg Baracy has been making presentations to parents groups around the district about the problems facing the district.

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GUILTY

FROM PAGE A1

authorities learned that the two men had argued in April 1997, when Paul was shot at least twice in the chest.

Oehler and another defendant, 59-year-old William Jay Nickerson of Wayne, put Paul's body in Oehler's basement until the next day, when Paul was buried under Oehler's backyard patio.

Nickerson faces sentencing March 18 after pleading guilty to being an accessory after the fact to murder. Nickerson, who was prepared to testify against Oehler, is expected to receive probation for the five-year felony charge against him, Muscat said.

With help from Michigan State Police and a dog that sniffs out dead bodies, Westland police dug up Paul's body last July 28. Neighbors on Oehler's street - Hively near Carlson and Cherry Hill - sat in lawn chairs on the opposite side of the street as the drama unfolded.

Westland police had received a tip from a still-anonymous informant that they could find Paul's body under Oehler's backyard patio.

"We were going to dig there anyway, but with the cadaver dog indicating that a body was in that area, it helped us know we were on the right track," Ridener said.

POLICE WORK PRAISED

Ridener also commended the investigative work of police Sgts. Steve Borisch and David Heater for their work on the

case. Borisch took a confession from Oehler after Paul's body was found.

Neighbors had described Oehler as a friendly neighbor who worked as a house painter and who played guitar as a hobby. Oehler had spent his recent years overcoming his one-time drinking problem by getting involved in Alcoholics Anonymous meetings.

Oehler's court hearing last August centered on testimony by Borisch, who said Paul had come by Oehler's house to tend to marijuana plants before he was killed. The two men had been drinking and smoking.

Oehler told Borisch that he went into his bedroom and got an SKS Chinese assault rifle that he planned to give to Paul as a gift - and that he was drunk when he pulled the trigger.

But a report from the Wayne County Medical Examiner's Office indicated that Paul had been shot at least twice in the chest, Muscat said.

Oehler initially denied burying Paul's body and told Borisch that anyone who attended wild parties at his house could have dug the grave and buried Paul.

Defense attorney Robert Mitchell argued in August that Oehler shouldn't face murder charges for "a bad set of circumstances between two families that have known each other forever."

But then-prosecutor Robert Donaldson said Oehler's decision to bury Paul's body showed evidence of a guilty conscience.

dclm@oe.homecomm.net | (734) 953-2110

Spring Quilt Show

Grange No. 389 will have its annual spring quilt show 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday, March 12, at the senior Friendship Center, 1119 S. Newburgh, Westland.

The show will feature quilt classes - a cathedral window quilted pillow and special kids classes 9 a.m. to noon, quilted book cover class 1-4 p.m. and paper piece project 1-6 p.m. - quilt displays, demonstrations, appraisals and lunch. There also will be a display of old, new, unfinished quilts, wall hangings and quilted clothing. The entry fee is \$1 per piece to be judged.

For tickets, call Sharon Strebbing at (734) 722-4857.

Youth help

Westland Youth Assistance is inviting its supporters to attend a fund-raiser 4-9 p.m. Wednesday, March 16, at Johnny Carino's Italian restaurant on Warren Road, between Wayne and Newburgh.

Food servers will donate their tips to the program, and donations will be accepted

from diners. Director Ronalee Bowman said.

The program provides mentors and a variety of services to youngsters who are improving their lives after getting into trouble.

For more information, call (734) 467-7904.

Blood drive

Wayne Memorial High School, 3001 Fourth Street, Wayne will host its annual Red Cross blood drive 7:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Tuesday, March 22, in the gymnasium of the school, 3001 Fourth St., Wayne.

The blood drive is open to the public and no appointment is necessary. Blood donors must be 17 years old or older and weigh more than 110 pounds. Piercing is acceptable, if it was done at a place that uses sterile needles or studs. Tattoos requires a 12-month waiting period.

For more information, call Vickie Lewis at (734) 419-2204.

Poker Tournament

The Westland Jaycees is

PLACES AND FACES

sponsoring a Texas Holdem Tournament and Vegas Night Saturday, April 16, at the Bailey Recreation Center, 36651 Ford.

The tournament starts promptly at 6 p.m. and runs until 11 p.m. Pre-register by mail by April 1 for \$40. Send your name, address, phone number and e-mail address to the Westland Jaycees, P.O. Box 85191, Westland, MI 48185. Register at the door for \$50, beginning at 4:30 p.m. There will be no rebuy-ins during the tournament.

The Vegas Night will open at 7 p.m. and include blackjack, Let It Ride, Holdem and seven-card poker. Food, beer and pop also will be available.

For more information, call (734) 228-0400 or by e-mail at wjholdem@yahoo.com.

Spring bazaar

The Edison Elementary PTO will have its Spring Bazaar 6-9 p.m. Wednesday, April 20.

The bazaar will feature a collection of 25 vendors, mostly direct-sell businesses like Tupperware, DK Books and Party-Lite candles along with a

few cash-and-carry vendors selling jewelry, denim purses, stamped greeting cards and other fun items. There will also be a bake sale held in conjunction with the bazaar, which will be held in the gym.

No children will be allowed in the gym, however, baby-sitting will be available. Edison School is at 34505 Hunter, Westland.

Art Auction

The Wayne Rotary Club and the Wayne Parks and Recreation Department are sponsoring and art auction and silent auction at 6:30 p.m. Friday, March 18, at the Wayne Community Center, 4635 Howe Road, Wayne.

The art auction will feature a wide variety of artistic styles. The silent auction will include such items as ice cream cakes, beer memorabilia, gift baskets and Detroit Piston tickets. The benefit will raise money for a playscape at Rotary Park No. 1.

Tickets cost \$10 per person and include wine, cheese, hors d'oeuvres, dessert and coffee. A cash bar will be available. Call (734) 721-1185.

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OUR VIEWS

Party perfect to honor Barns

Westland city officials know how to throw a birthday party. Monday evening, they invited the community to come to City Hall to help celebrate Justine Barns' 80th birthday.

The celebration was a bit late — Barns turned 80 Feb. 2 — but that's neither here nor there. It was a perfect occasion to honor a woman who has done so much for the community.

Barns came to the forefront in politics in Westland at a time when the women's liberation movement was just getting started. A diminutive woman, she was anything but small in what she accomplished during her 16 years on the city council.

She was committed to do what was right for the city. Among the ordinances she authored was the city's anti-pornography ordinance, which has kept adult bookstores out of the city. She also helped get the city's main north-south thoroughfare widened to five lanes through her work on the Ford Road Task Force.

And her commitment continued when she went on to represent the city in the state House of Representatives. In her 1982 House campaign, Barns said "Westland needs a strong voice that's sensitive to the people and aware of the type of community we are."

She did just that while in Lansing, most notably her effectiveness in organizing opposition to the housing of 1,000 state prisoners in the former N building on the grounds of the former county hospital.

Westland Police have control over its lockup because of a bill she co-sponsored early on in her tenure, and the county has saved taxpayers millions of dollars through her double-bunking bill which allows two prisoners in a jail cell.

Barns has received numerous awards over the years for what she has done and they are all well-deserved, even the birthday cake.

We applaud city officials for taking the time to recognize Barns. It's nice to see something like this done for someone who has done so much for the city. And we'd like to join in the well wishes: Belated happy birthday, Jaye. You are Westland's greatest treasure.

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— Gillian Strickland, *The Reading Mother*

March is Reading Month, and schools across Oakland and Wayne counties are emphasizing the importance of reading with special programs, contests and celebrity readers.

Reading deserves the monthlong attention it gets from educators because it is the foundation of all learning. Without the ability to make sense out of letters and words on the printed page, a child's success at school is severely limited. Even math assignments require reading the instructions.

That's why it's important for parents to also emphasize reading at home.

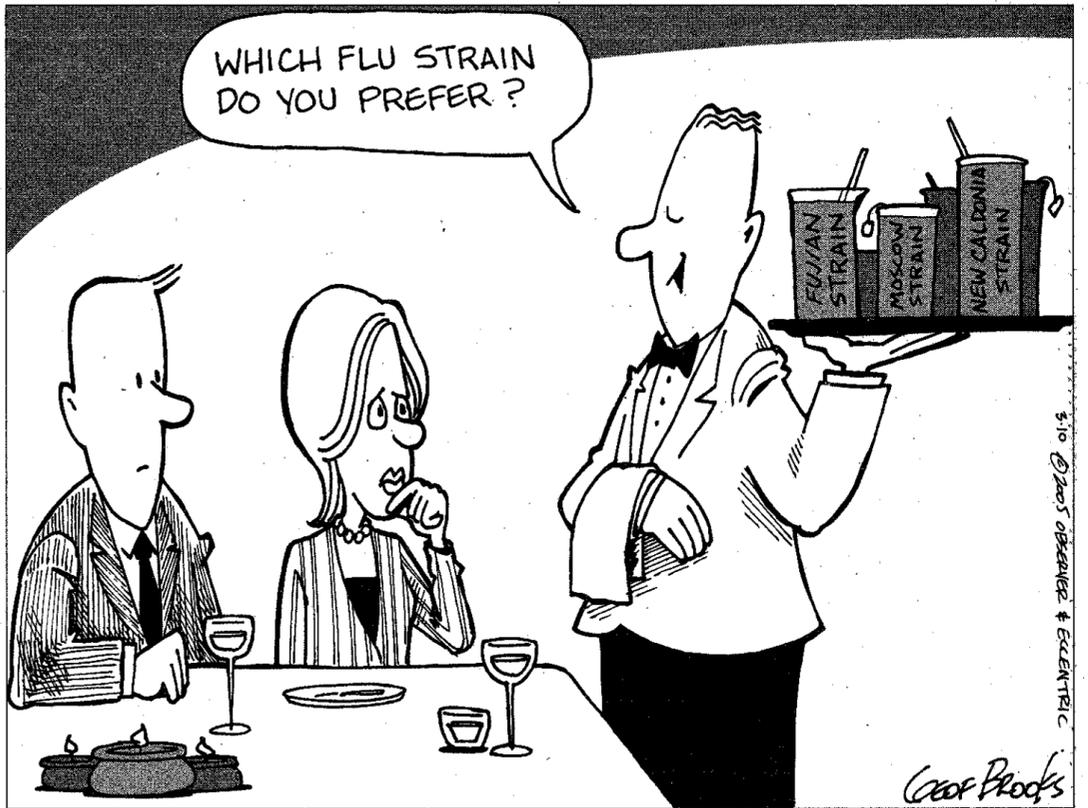
If you have young children, you need to read to them regularly. Babies, toddlers, preschoolers and elementary-age youngsters should be immersed in a language-rich environment, where they are exposed daily to the written word. As you read out loud to them, ask them questions to hone their comprehension and critical-thinking skills. Ask them what they think about what they just heard and what they think will happen next.

If you have older children, you need to model reading for them so that it becomes a lifelong habit. Turn off the TV and pick up a newspaper, magazine or book. Show them that people read not only to learn something, but to have fun.

Remember, parents are their children's first and most influential teachers.

If your children are grown, consider tutoring someone else in reading. In the last decade, a government report, "The State of Literacy in America," found that 47 percent of Detroiters, nearly one out of two adults, are functionally illiterate.

The Oakland Literacy Council is one organization that is always seeking volunteers, especially as the number of English as a Second Language students increases. To help, call (248) 232-4664 for more information.



Park not necessary

In a time when many are losing their jobs, and replacement jobs are paying much less than what was earned before, when there are people who are struggling to pay not only their property tax bills, heating and water bills which keep going up, we don't need a tax burden like the Frontier Park.

I have been a Westland resident for 38 years, and in those 38 years I have attended two hockey games at the arena and I've never used the Bailey Center.

I've asked a few of my neighbors, and they don't use the recreational facilities the city has. So I wonder about the recreation department. How many citizens or what percentage of citizens actually use the facilities? Do we generate enough revenues from the rec department for it to survive on its own?

I don't want a Frontier Park that is city owned. I feel this should be a private enterprise, operated by someone other than our city and paid for by the people or families who use it. The Westland Youth Athletic Association should stop asking the city for help with their visions.

At a time when the state keeps cutting our shared revenue, we should be cutting back on the extras in the city, not look for new ways to spend money we don't have?

We need to curtail the frontier park and other extras and learn to live within our means instead of expecting Westland taxpayers to continue to pay for the visions of others.

Judi Cornfoot Musolf
Westland

Should be 'front page'

Thank you for printing the article on Sunday about Capt. Larry Smith and his wife Gina. ("Returning soldier calls service a blessing," page A10). He and the men and women that serve with him has bless us all with their testimony and service to our country. I always look forward to reading articles on these fine young men and women. They inspire me.

Thank you, Larry and Gina. You are my TRUE hero's. We pray for all the troops AND their spouses. May God go before you. My only regret with this article is that it should have been "Front Page" news. By the way, did I say Thank You?

Mark V. Randazzo
Garden City

Granholt must be bold

I am writing in response to Phil Power's column "Granholt typically cautious in revamping of tax system" (Feb. 3).

I am still learning about the single business tax and what it taxes.

I was astounded working at a major auto company to see a tax staff working all year to keep track of personal property tax on all company vehicles used on plant property, number of pallets, and number and value of production machines.

Another problem was a World War II

LETTERS

policy that the major company purchased the production machines used by suppliers, and has to keep track of these machines and pay the personal property tax on these. There was no tax staff in the field to track these production machines. Some supplier companies went out of business and the machines were sold at discount because ownership was ignored. Some machines were scrapped. Some machines were pushed out in the lot to rust in the rain.

I now understand that a payroll and personal property tax is very perverse, a tax on capital. The tax should be on profits or transactions, or specifically profitable transactions. That is, if at the end of fiscal year, the company does not make a profit, the accumulated transaction tax should be refunded. That would be novel.

I am curious to search to see what other states and territories have payroll and personal property taxes. Michigan needs new high tech businesses and Michigan is ready to tax the new million dollar machines. I can see why Intel is not here with its million dollar photolithographic chip making machines.

No, Gov. Granholm cannot be cautious, but must be bold.

Neil Karl
Livonia

Animal worth

Are you considered an owner of a child/family member or a guardian? Why would you think of an animal differently? Sixty-two percent of American households have companion dogs and/or cats. These days more people look at animals as part of their family rather than their property. Using the term "guardian" simply reflects the growing respect that people feel toward animals.

In order to render animal abuse, neglect, and abandonment socially unacceptable, it is important that society begin to recognize animals as individuals who have individual needs. By changing our language, we are changing our attitudes toward animals.

Acknowledging the deep bond that forms between people and their animal companions through this verbal change reinforces that animals are not ours to abuse at our whim.

Incorporating the term "animal guardian" into local and state ordinances helps to accomplish historical shifts toward a more humane public standard regarding animals.

As more people consider using the updated term "animal guardian," evidence of society's deep personal relationship with dogs, cats and other animal companions comes to light.

Society's views change over time and every so often society calls for a language facelift. It was not so long ago that women, children and others were seen, in legal terms, as merely property. It appears that society is ready to acknowledge that animals, too, are worth something more than their price tag.

George Sarkisian
Farmington Hills

No privatization

How can the present Washington administration promote privatization for Social Security by manufacturing untrue imminent fiscal crisis that is false? Those Republican officeholders who dare to sign any legislation to privatize Social Security will most certainly be turned out of office in the next elections by Republicans and Democrats alike.

Newt Gingrich, a Republican and former House speaker, remarked in the *New York Times* in "Quotation of The Day" (Jan. 6, 2005): "Anything that changes benefits on an involuntary basis will allow the Democrats, the AARP and the unions to beat our brains in, it isn't politically doable."

In other words, Republican office holders would be signing away their political careers if they support privatizing Social Security.

Harvey Moon
Livonia

Where are the funds?

In its latest report the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund reports that 90 million children are starving.

How is the United States responding to this great human tragedy?

For fiscal years '03, '04 and '05 Congress approved more than \$30 million each year for the United Nations Fund for Population Activities. These funds would have been used by UNFPA to help women in poor countries engage in family planning programs, prevent disease, space their children, determine the healthiest time for bearing children, reduce unwanted pregnancies, avoid maternal death and reduce the number of abortions.

But each year, President Bush, apparently carrying out his faith-based administration of government has refused to approve these funds.

Frederic Adams
Beverly Hills

SHARE YOUR OPINIONS

We welcome your letters to the editor. Please include your name, address and phone number for verification. We ask that your letters be 400 words or less. We may edit for clarity, space and content.

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QUOTABLE

"Our young people must be taught our rich history, our great heroes — and they must be taught that there is greatness in all of them despite the odds stacked against them."

— the Rev. Terrance McClain, speaking during a Black History Month program at the William P. Faust Public Library

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Our fundamental purposes are to enhance the lives of our readers, nurture the hometowns we serve and contribute to the business success of our customers.

Governor's lack of response is puzzling

Suppose you are Michigan's governor. Your state has nearly the highest unemployment rate in the nation. Your historic economic base of good-paying, low-skilled manufacturing jobs is evaporating before your eyes. You are having trouble balancing your state's budget, in part because people who aren't working aren't paying taxes.

Further suppose you had — right in front of you — an economic development project that would produce at least 3,000 new jobs in a couple of years. And suppose the chief elected officer of your largest county has asked your help in pushing forward a much larger proposal that could produce as many as 100,000 new jobs over the next decade.

Wouldn't you jump at it? You bet you would. In a heartbeat. Which is why I'm puzzled at the, well, muted reaction from the Granholm administration to requests for help for the Pinnacle Aeropark project near Detroit Metropolitan Airport and for the far larger "aerotropolis" scheme.

Pinnacle, a mixed-use office and technology development slated for 1,250 acres of wetlands owned by Wayne County southeast of the airport, is the first step toward a new airport city that could arise on land between Detroit Metro and Willow Run Airport to the west. Similar airport city projects around the globe — Hong Kong, Los Angeles, Amsterdam — have generated literally hundreds of thousands of jobs. International experts think that the combination of new passenger facilities at Detroit Metro and cargo at Willow Run offers the best chance in the world for such a development.

So, too, does Wayne County Executive Bob Ficano. In his State of the County speech last month, he said, "For years there has been talk about this land that the county owns near Metro Airport called Pinnacle. Time for talk is over. Construction crews will be at work this year opening Pinnacle Park."

"More than \$7 million will be invested in new roads and sewers as we prepare the first 150 acres for new business. We will announce the first of many new tenants very soon — and it's about time!" When I talked with Mulugetta Birru, the newly appointed Wayne County economic development director, he was enthusiastic. "I'm confident this project will go forward," he said. "It will produce 3,000 new jobs ... easy."

Birru has been busy rounding up support for this project. He's had meetings with officials from the city of Romulus and Huron Township — "They're on board," he says — and he has talks

Pinnacle, a mixed-use office and technology development slated for 1,250 acres of wetlands owned by Wayne County southeast of the airport, is the first step toward a new airport city that could arise on land between Detroit Metro and Willow Run Airport to the west.

scheduled with Washtenaw County. And he's pulling together the financial wherewithal, as well. He has \$300,000 in approved Wayne County funds and expects to obtain another \$1 million in community economic development block grant money. And he's applied for \$2.5 million from the federal Economic Development Administration.

All of which makes the non-response from Lansing to Wayne County's requests for help so puzzling. In a letter from Ficano to his fellow Democrat, Gov. Jennifer Granholm, dated Nov. 23, 2004, Ficano wrote, "It is my belief that the I-94 corridor with both Detroit Metro and Willow Run airports at the center offers significant development opportunity for southeastern Michigan. The county owns 1,250 acres, and there is an estimated 23,000 acres of land owned by the private sector between the two airports. We are now in discussion with private owners to master plan the entire site to develop the airport city or aerotropolis concept."

Ficano closed his letter: "This is a development I want to pursue, and I am hoping you would bless it and direct your staff to work with my staff, and make a long-term funding commitment, but probably look for a new development designation to develop a world-class airport city." Any response? "Not yet," Birru says.

When I asked one Lansing insider about what's going on with the airport city project, he sniffed, "Too many working parts." And, of course, there's always the state's budget problems to blame for inaction.

Maybe so, but if you were a governor nervous about high and rising unemployment and could see the potential of 100,000 jobs or more in a new airport city development, wouldn't you jump at it? I would.

Phil Power is the chairman of the board of the company that owns this newspaper. He would be pleased to get your reactions to this column either at (734) 953-2047 or at ppower@homecomm.net.



Phil Power

SMART bus system proving to be anything but smart

At a time when services to the public are being cut, eliminated and threatened on all levels of government — municipal, county, state and national — it behooves everyone to replace wasteful spending with wise spending.

I challenge anyone to show me a more wasteful spending than the operation of the oversized SMART buses that run through Farmington Hills and surrounding communities hour after hour, day after day, completely empty or near empty.

Several months ago, I noticed every time I passed a SMART bus that there were seldom any passengers in them. I then started to make careful note each time I could clearly see in order to determine just how many passengers were actually carried in Farmington Hills and neighboring communities.

Of 87 buses that I was able to clearly observe, only nine carried any passengers at all. Six of the nine had one passenger, two had two passengers and one had three. At this point I decided to ride the Orchard Lake/Grand River/Middlebelt line (Route 285) all the way to Metro Airport and return. I did this on Monday, July 19, 2004, and learned first-hand.

Only two persons boarded the bus in Farmington Hills and West Bloomfield. Five people got on in Livonia and four in Inkster. Only one went all the way to Metro Airport. The most on the bus at one time was five people. On the return trip, only seven passengers boarded, including one who got on and off in Farmington Hills. The bus driver advised upon inquiry that this was a "busy day."

These buses have been operating for more than five years, certainly a long enough period to determine if there was a real need. Obviously, there is next to none.

Wondering what it has been costing the taxpayers of Farmington Hills to support the operation of these giant buses in this community, I inquired of the city treasurer's office and was informed that in 2003 the amount of taxes levied was \$2,285,190.

I have lived in Farmington Hills for more than 45 years, served 18 years on the township board and city council, including two terms as mayor, but never have I witnessed such a waste of public funds. Never have so many people paid more in taxes for the benefit of so few. Such a waste is scandalous.

When the millage to operate these buses was approved years ago, the "spin" was that they were

I have lived in Farmington Hills for more than 45 years, served 18 years on the township board and city council, including two terms as mayor, but never have I witnessed such a waste of public funds.

Never have so many people paid more in taxes for the benefit of so few. Such a waste is scandalous.

necessary for the economic development of the community. Years and millions of dollars later, it is apparent that the operation of SMART is anything but smart — in fact it is dumb.

You don't swat flies with a sledgehammer. You don't run buses at the time of day when no one rides them. You don't run big buses when small buses would be more than adequate for the few people that may ride them.

The Farmington library has a voted millage (0.6-mill levy for main branch expansion, renovations and operations). Additional funds have been approved from the general fund of Farmington and Farmington Hills for the library's operation. A few months ago, these funds were cut and the library was forced to reduce hours, staff and services.

Tragically, the millage to operate the library is less than the millage levied to operate the empty or near empty SMART bus system.

In my view, the SMART bus system should be either eliminated altogether in this community or rationalized to meet the true needs, if any in fact do exist. In addition, the cities of Farmington Hills and Farmington should refrain from supporting any future assessments for the dumb SMART system.

If the taxpayers don't have to pay for the wasteful SMART operation, I am sure they would be happy to support an increase in funds for the library.

The good news is that the millage for SMART expires this year. I hope that the citizens of this community remember that. If they are asked to approve an increase in millage for the library, they should say "yes." If they are asked to renew one for SMART (O.C.P.T.A.), they should look at the empty buses first and make a smart decision by saying "no" to the dumb SMART millage.

Earl Opperthausser is a resident of Farmington Hills.



Earl Opperthausser

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COOPER

FROM PAGE A1
tractors and Michigan Department of Environmental Quality inspectors will analyze air quality in an area of the building scorched by a vandal's fire years ago. The blaze burned numerous computer components and plastic pieces, which produced toxic soot resulting in interior air quality at dangerous levels as recently as two years ago.

"There's a chance time might have removed the harmful impact of the soot, but they have to go in there and inspect it," said Jack Kirksey, the former Livonia mayor who serves as a consultant on the Cooper project. "They have to determine how to improve the air quality."

These workers will don special Hazardous Materials-protecting suits to complete the task. After troubles in the area impacted by the fire are corrected, workers can start eliminating asbestos from ceilings and pipes. This must be done before the building is demolished, Kirksey said.

"We need to provide access for people in this part of the building without wearing a haz-mat suit," Kirksey said. "If they have to wear a haz-mat suit all the time, it will really slow down the project and make it more expensive."

The goal is to remove interior contamination before the building is razed this summer. Kirksey said the DEQ has approved a work plan that will contain the spread of harmful air, soil and storm water run-off onto neighboring properties.

Westland Mayor Sandra Cicirelli said she did not want demolition to take place until June, after classes ended across the street at the new Cooper Elementary School.

"We won't have to deal with bus transportation, children playing outside or walking to and from school at that time," Cicirelli said. "It's a careful, deliberate process and we want to make sure everyone is comfortable with it."

After demolition is completed sometime in August, Kirksey said a number of soil tests will be conducted to determine the

best way to remediate the contaminated earth on the property that once served as a landfill decades ago. The school district and city has secured \$2.3 million in a state grant and loan to pay for the environmental remedy.

Developer Frank Jonna, who has a deal to purchase the property, plans to construct a medical office building, independent living facility and golf driving range. Cicirelli said Jonna is working on a formal site plan, but nothing has been submitted to Westland City Hall yet. She said she hopes construction will begin sometime in 2006.

Sometime after the demolition, Liepa and Cicirelli said they will host another town hall meeting before any site work or construction begins. Cicirelli said this forum will be in addition to public meetings by the Westland Planning Commission and Westland City Council to review Jonna's plans.

A letter was sent to 2,500 residents around the Cooper property this week to inform them of latest developments.

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Justine Barns talks with some of the people who showed up Monday night to celebrate her 80th birthday and her many accomplishments in government.

BARNs

FROM PAGE A1
many accomplishments, and she gives back to her community 100 percent."

LIBRARY SUPPORTER

Fritz specifically mentioned how Barns has been a long-time donor to the William P. Faust Public Library of Westland - named after the late senator who shared Barns' loyalty to the Democratic Party.

Former 12-year Mayor Robert Thomas recalled how he and Barns got off to a rocky start when he was first elected in 1989.

"We didn't start off on good terms, but we ended up being really good friends, and I love the woman," Thomas said. "She has always put the people first. She always kept that as her main focus when she made decisions."

"She's a classy lady, and she has been good for us," he said.

Barns, who marked her 80th birthday on Feb. 2, started her community involvement in 1952 as PTA president of what is now Jefferson-Barns Elementary School.

She served as a Democratic precinct delegate for several years and held an appointed Westland Planning Commission post as she began to rise as a political star.

During Monday's party, a video was shown that captured old photographs of Barns, such as when she became the only woman elected to a charter commission that helped create Westland out of the former Nankin Township.

She became the first woman to serve as city council president in 1976.

"She has been a promoter of women," said longtime friend Sharon Scott, a former councilwoman and Wayne-Westland school board trustee. "Jaye has done so much for this community. She's a real philanthropist, and she's one of my best friends."

State Rep. Glenn Anderson, D-Westland, honored Barns with a proclamation that he and Gov. Jennifer Granholm signed. State Sen. Laura Toy gave Barns a copy of the official state seal, signed by all 38 Michigan senators.

Barns received numerous other tributes, including proclamations from longtime Wayne County Commissioner Kay Beard and Metro Wayne Democratic Club President Cliff Johnson.

KUDOS FOR BARNs

In sponsoring Barns' birthday party, Mayor Sandra Cicirelli and the city council adopted a proclamation that mentioned such accomplishments as Barns being named Citizen of the Year in 1967 by

Ford Motor Co. and honored as Westland Woman of the Year in 1975 by the Westland Jaycees.

Barns served in the state House for 12 years starting in 1983. She has been praised for such issues as her successful fight to block the old Eloise property from being converted to a state prison in 1985.

Barns and her late husband, Johnny, lived many years in the city's Norwayne subdivision. Councilman Richard LeBlanc recently recalled how Barns later donated a house she owned in Norwayne to First Step - an organization that provides shelter to abused women and their children.

Barns and her husband had two sons, Duane and Scott. Scott - the younger of the two at age 50 - said Monday that the birthday celebration for his mother was a welcome tribute.

"It makes me proud," he said. "She's just overwhelmed by all this. She really is appreciative."

After the party had ended, Barns stayed for the first few moments of Monday's council meeting, where she received a standing ovation from the crowd.

After shaking hands with council members, she faced an admiring crowd as she walked from the room - smiling all the way out.

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COOPER SITE TIME LINE

- In 1991, the school site was closed due to environmental concerns because it was built on a former landfill. The property was fenced off, and the building used as storage.
- In 1996, new Brownfield legislation was passed that provided a financing vehicle to clean up contaminated sites.
- In 1997, the school district formed a relationship with Consumers Renaissance Development Corp., an arm of Consumers Energy that specialized in Brownfield site redevelopment. The firm brought in specialists, state agencies (Michigan Department of Environmental Quality) and leading Brownfield attorneys to work with city and school district. A developer was

- identified to explore a redevelopment of the site. First step was to look at the site again, but from an environmental standpoint.
- On Jan. 13, 1998, the first community meeting was held to update residents about what the city and school district wanted to explore and the environmental review to be undertaken.
- In the summer of 1998, additional testing on site was done.
- On Sept. 6, 1998, a second community meeting was held to describe the testing that was done. The initial characterization was that the property could be developed.
- On Jan. 24, 2000, a public meeting was held to present the first possible development ideas.
- In February 2000, a purchase agreement was entered into with

- Jonna Companies for sale of property contingent upon MDEQ approval, city approvals and remediation funding.
- On Sept. 9, 2002, the Westland City Council received an update and the city created Brownfield Authority.
- On Oct. 17, 2002, a community meeting was held to highlight a possible development and funding source. The plan called for a golf range and housing.
- That plan, however, stalled, and potential site grant money disappeared. There also was concern about developing a market for the for sale housing. Remediation costs also were too high for Brownfield payback.
- In the spring of 2004, talks renewed and a state grant became available. A different development concept was identified with no homes and less moving of materials. Redevelopment became financially feasible and a good reuse.
- In September 2002, the state awarded \$1.3 million grant to the school district and \$1 million loan to the city for site remediation.
- In October 2002, a community meeting was held and the new development concept unveiled.

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FRI/SAT LS 11:00, 11:30, 12:00
- **THE JACKET (R)**
(SAT/SUN 11:15) 4:20, 6:50
FRI/SAT LS 11:55
- **MAN OF THE HOUSE (PG-13)**
3:05, 5:10, 7:15, 9:20
FRI/SAT LS 11:35
- **CURSED (PG-13)**
(SAT/SUN 11:45) 1:45, 3:45, 5:45, 7:45, 9:45 FRI/SAT LS 11:50
- **DIARY OF A MAD BLACK WOMAN (PG-13)** (SAT/SUN 11:20) 1:50, 4:25, 6:55, 9:25 FRI/SAT LS 11:45
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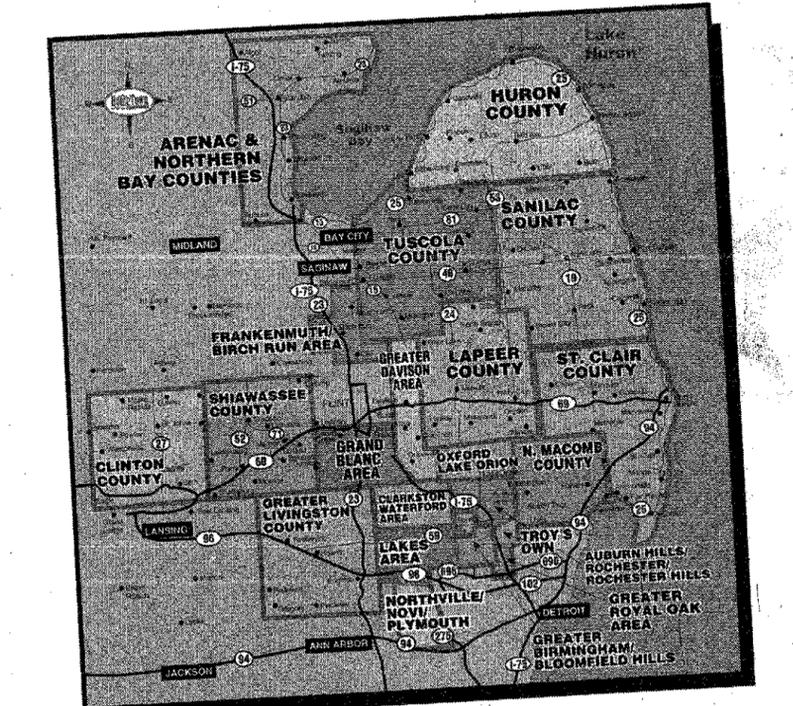
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