

Program brings healthy living to church

HEALTH - PAGE C6



Homecoming's a special time at John Glenn

LOCAL NEWS - PAGE A3



Volunteers make a difference the United Way

HOMETOWNLIFE - SECTION C

9/24

SUNDAY

September 24, 2006

WESTLAND Observer

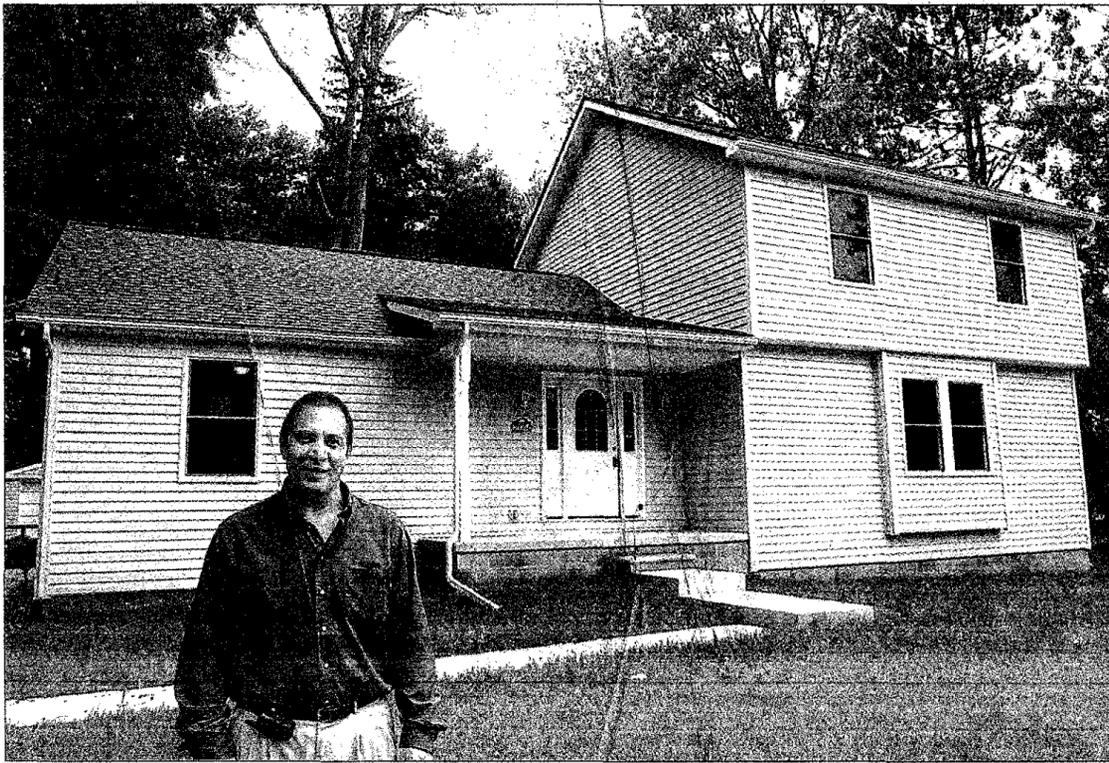
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PHOTOS BY TOM HAWLEY | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Lou Toarmina is hoping someone will buy the 2,400-square-foot home he built on Ravine Drive. The original deal fell through even before the four-bedroom, 3 1/2-bath home was finished. It's been up for sale for a year.

Weathering the downturn

Curb appeal, creativity help buyers, sellers in today's market



According to Realtor Noel Derr, there's one buyer for every nine homes up for sale in today's real estate market.

BY SUE MASON
STAFF WRITER

Lou Toarmina wonders what it will take to sell three new homes he's built in Westland in the past few years.

Two sit on lots in the Wayne-Palmer area of the city and are priced to sell at \$199,000, down from the original asking price of \$229,000. The third home is on Ravine Drive, a tony neighborhood in the north end. It sits on a one-acre parcel and while Toarmina had hoped to sell it for \$315,000-\$320,000, he's asking \$286,900.

"I've gotten very few nibbles and those that I do get, they have to sell their homes before they can buy," Toarmina said. "The temptation is to keep lowering the price."

Toarmina isn't alone in trying to sell a home these days. In Westland, as of Sept. 5, there were 731 homes, 220 condominiums and 35 multifamily residences listed for sale with real estate companies.

Those numbers don't include 94 homes that are bank properties, 36 HUD properties that are under contract or available, 31 vacant parcels and an unknown quantity of homes that are for sale by owner.

"It does seem like a large number," said Realtor Noel Derr, who is marketing Toarmina's properties through Century 21 Dynamic in Westland. "Homes aren't selling for what they were a year ago and they're on the market longer. Three years ago, there

weren't a lot of homes to live in under \$100,000. That's possible today."

According to Derr, 1,491 homes have been sold in Westland since January. The summer months, traditionally a busy time when parents look to relocate before school starts, has been sluggish with only 299 home sales.

BUYER'S MARKET

Derr has been a Realtor for nine years. When she started in 1997-98, homes were on the market a few hours, maybe a day, and sellers were getting multiple offers. Now, on average, homes can be on the market for 88 days before getting a deal. There's one buyer for every nine homes.

"In the first-time buyer market, things are selling, but not as quickly as they used to and for not as much," she said. "People are nervous. Until they know what's going to happen with the Ford plants in Wayne, they're staying put."

For some people, the reality of home ownership is hitting with a big thud. Those who used adjustable rate mortgages to buy high-end homes are now facing refinancing at

PLEASE SEE DOWNTURN, A5

Judge orders trial in child porn case

BY DARRELL CLEM
STAFF WRITER

A Westland man was ordered Thursday to stand trial in Wayne County Circuit Court on charges of downloading child pornographic images of young girls from his laptop computer.

John Kevin Spry, 50, faces trial after he waived his right to a preliminary hearing in Westland 18th District Court — a move that averted testimony.

As he awaits trial, Spry has been released from custody after he posted \$10,000 of a \$100,000/10 percent bond, police Sgt. Debra Mathews confirmed.

Spry was charged Sept. 9 with one count of child sexually abusive activity, three counts of having child sexually abusive material and one count of marijuana possession.

If convicted, he could face penalties ranging up to 20 years in prison.

Spry was arrested after police raided his home on Glen, near Wayne Road, and confiscated child porn images that he is accused of burning onto CDs.

Police haven't disclosed how they learned of the allegations against Spry, a single man who is employed as an electrician.

A not-guilty plea has been entered in his court file as he awaits trial in circuit court.

Spry wasn't at home when officers went to his house, rammaged the door, went inside and seized what Mathews has described as numerous pornographic images, including some of prepubescent girls.

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George Marvaso's Electropolitan has glitz and glamour in this artist rendering.

Businessman still wants his Electropolitan

BY DARRELL CLEM
STAFF WRITER

Worried that Michigan continues to lose jobs, a Westland businessman has revived hopes for a huge entertainment complex that he said would employ 400 workers.

George Marvaso still hopes to build a \$50 million business, Electropolitan, including such attractions as restaurants, bars, an arcade room, a dance club, a comedy club, a theater, a billiards hall and private suites.

Marvaso wants to build a multi-story, 140,000-square-foot facility along the I-275 or I-96 corridors, but he said economic development officials in the Chicago area have shown more interest than

PLEASE SEE ELECTROPOLITAN, A4

Deadline nears for voters to register

Westland residents who want to vote in the Nov. 7 election — and who aren't yet registered — face an Oct. 10 deadline, said City Clerk Eileen DeHart.

Residents may register at the clerk's office at Westland City Hall, on Ford Road between Newburgh and Wayne, or they may go to a Secretary of State office, DeHart said.

Those wishing to register must turn 18 by Election Day and be a resident of the city in which they're voting.

They should take a picture identification to the place where they register, DeHart said.

In other election-related news, anyone who wants an application for an absentee ballot should call the clerk's office at (734) 467-3188

or (734) 467-3187.

Voters who think they might not be able to make it to the polls are encouraged to ask for an absentee ballot.

DeHart's office will start sending them out the first week in October, but voters who need them may start calling anytime, the clerk said.

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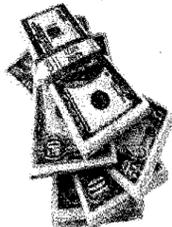


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Coming Thursday in Filter



Tiger Trivia and Tiger fun, catch it in the next issue of Filter.

Mobile caterer comes to rescue of annual dinner

BY SUE MASON
STAFF WRITER

For John Glenn High School football boosters, Dale Lockwood and his rolling barbecue grill are a godsend for preparing and serving 100 people at the annual Homecoming dinner Tuesday evening.

"He came through in a pinch," booster member Cathy Thorne said.

For Lockwood, the boosters' request to help with the meal is an opportunity to let more people know about his fledgling mobile catering business.

"I can use this to get graduation parties and even team parties," Lockwood said.

Lockwood brought his 16-foot smoker grill to the high school Tuesday evening to serve the traditional Homecoming dinner to the football team, cheerleading squad, their respective coaches and school administrators.

"It was wonderful," said

booster Mary Konopka. "Everyone loved the food and Dale was just great. The kids ran off the field, all you could smell was the food."

Lockwood filled in for the culinary arts program at the William D. Ford Career Technical Center, which because of the late start of school and an earlier than usual Homecoming couldn't accommodate the dinner at this time.

He started cooking at 10 a.m. Tuesday at his Westland home before relocating to the high school for the dinner. He's donating his time and effort, while the booster club is pretty much covering the cost of the "materials" — 11 slabs of ribs, 10 chickens and 30 pounds of pulled pork for sandwiches as well as cole slaw and baked beans.

Thorne and Lockwood are neighbors. Initially, she asked if he'd buy an ad in the football program for his Hickory Barbecue Grill, a mobile cater-



John Glenn football players Dennis Dillard (from left), Yannick Thompson, Blayre McCormick and Jesse Taylor enjoy the food at the annual Homecoming dinner.

ing business, and thought of him when the boosters ran into problems with the dinner, a long-standing tradition at the high school.

"The boys needed their dinner, they've been getting it for years, so I went across the street and asked him," she said. "I don't know him that well, but I saw his sign on his truck."

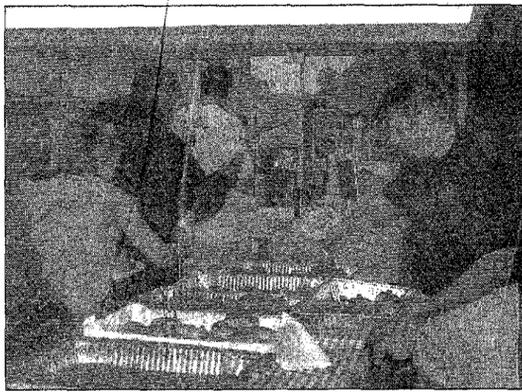
For Lockwood, it offers a chance to grow his business. He went to vocational school to be a chef, but shelved it when he got married "and had to get a real job."

He's owned a fireplace installation business for 12 years, and at the urging of his friends decided to fill the slow summer months with cooking.

"Every time I would do a barbecue, 50 people would show up," he said. "They kept telling me I should do this. I've catered parties for years."

Because of Lockwood's efforts, the crowd of more than 100 is getting two meals — the barbecue dinner that was served in the school cafeteria and the more formal sit-down steak and potato dinner at the Career Technical Center in October.

The dinner is just one of many things the boosters provide for the football program at John Glenn. They also are providing a dinner and sign night



Caterer Dale Lockwood replenishes serving trays at the John Glenn Homecoming dinner.

next week for the junior varsity squad, do the souvenir programs, provide the team with pop after the games and handle picture day.

Through fund-raising like a planned casino trip and 50/50 raffles — the Homecoming raffle tends to produce a large pot, as high as \$800, according to Thorne — the boosters raise about \$28,000 a year that goes back to the team, paying for any equipment it needs.

"It's a lot of work, but it pays off," Thorne said.

That's what Lockwood is hoping about the dinner. In

addition to the food, he gave each person who was there a \$50 gift certificate that they can use with Hickory Barbecue.

"I hope by this time next year, I'm doing just catering," he said.

Information about the John Glenn High School Football Boosters and Hickory Barbecue grill are available online. The boosters' Web site is www.rockefootball.com. Find Lockwood's business at www.hickorybbq.net.

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INFORMATION CENTRAL

Banned Books Week

The world is full of controversy, and even a free society like the United States is not exempt from the scrutiny of literature. Throughout American history, various pieces of literature have come under attack for a multitude of reasons and are eventually removed from establishments such as schools and libraries.

Such titles are recognized during Banned Book Week, Sept. 23-30 as a celebration of intellectual freedom regardless of controversial subject matter.

Quite a few books that are now considered an essential part of the American canon of literature were at one time highly controversial and banned from a variety of institutions. James Joyce's *Ulysses* was barred from the United States for years but is now a recurrent member of countless college reading lists.



Familiar titles such as *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley and Eliot's *Silas Marner* have been

removed from schools by school officials due to "inappropriate" content. Ironically, Orwell's *1984* has also experienced a precarious existence with respect to U.S. censorship, and can frequently be found on many "Most Censored" lists of books.

Banned books are a hot topic in the area of children's and young adult literature as well. Laura Ingalls Wilder may be shocked to learn that her classic children's book, *Little House on the Prairie*, was once removed from a classroom in South Dakota for allegedly fueling racist tendencies. Even the childhood favorite *Little Red Riding Hood* came under attack and was banned in two California schools as late as 1989.

In the young adult scene, Judy Blume is no stranger to controversy; *Blubber*, *Forever*, and *Deenie* are just several of her works that have been subjected to restrictions for sexual content.

Visit the library to view specific examples and displays of banned books from Sept. 23-30. Because the Westland library promotes intellectual freedom, most titles that have received a "banned" label are available for check-out. Call us at (734) 326-6123, or remotely search our catalog twenty-four hours a day at www.westland.lib.mi.us.

Mary Beth Fixler

Introduction to Scrapbooking: 7 p.m. Sept. 27.

Join Kristin Nutt, Independent Consultant for Creative Memories® as she demonstrates how to create a Short Story Card. Bring two or three related personal photos. All other supplies will be furnished. Seating is limited, so register for this free program at the Reference Desk or call (734) 326-6123.

Science Fiction and Fantasy Book Discussion: 7 p.m. Sept. 27.

Join in for what will prove to be an exciting discussion about Speculative Fiction. All adults with interests in the genre are welcome. Visit our blog, too! <http://sfwestlandlibmius.blogspot.com>

Internet 201: 10:30 a.m. Sept. 28. Learn about search engines — which ones do what, how to evaluate them, how to pick good Web sites. No registration is required. Walk-ins are welcome. Internet 101: 2 p.m. Sept. 30.

A beginner's guide to the Internet — how do I get around a website, what IS a website. No registration is required. Walk-ins are welcome.

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

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● THE ILLUSIONIST (PG-13) 12:00, 2:20, 4:40, 7:00, 9:20 FRIGAT LS 11:40

● ALL THE KINGS MEN (PG-13)

● LITTLE MISS SUNSHINE (R) 12:25, 2:35, 4:45, 6:55, 9:05

● BRIDGEMAN (PG-13)
12:00, 2:20, 4:40, 7:00, 9:20

● EVERYONE'S HERO (G) (11:10) 1:10, 3:10, 5:10, 7:10, 9:10 FRIGAT LS 11:10

● THE BLACK DAHLIA (R) (11:00) 1:00, 3:00, 5:00, 7:00 FRIGAT LS 11:00

● WICKER MAN (PG-13) FRIGAT LS 11:15

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Loss doesn't dampen homecoming

The red, the white and the blue ruled the day as students at John Glenn High School got pepped up for the annual Homecoming.

From tug of wars to tricycle races, students at Westland John Glenn High School, they packed the football stadium for some healthy competition.

While many of the contests had a clear-cut winner like the juniors winning the new obstacle relay race. The tug of war was undecided after the rope broke in both the freshman-sophomore and junior-senior tugs. However, true to upperclassmanship, the seniors were claiming victory.

But the rally wasn't enough to lift the Rockets to victory in the gridiron meeting against Walled Lake Central.

The highlight of the evening was the crowning of the Homecoming king and queen. The honor went to seniors Lindsay Bies and Frank Toarmina.

Members of their court also included Natalie Bower, Michelle Gutowski, Kayla Montague, Kija Colts, Robert Jones, Matt Kukulka, Angelo Brown and Shamir Garcia.

For more Homecoming photos, visit the Photo Gallery on our Web site at www.hometownlife.com.

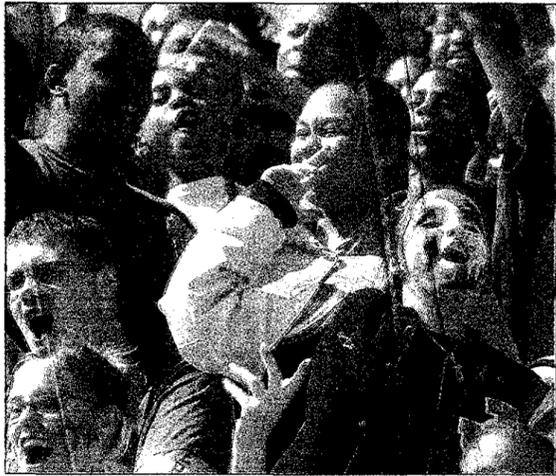


Senior Frank Toarmina is crowned homecoming king by last year's queen, Amanda Eck.



PHOTOS BY TOM HAWLEY | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

John Glenn senior Lindsay Bies (left) is all smiles Thursday evening after being crowned homecoming queen by last year's queen, Amanda Eck.



Her face painted in blue and white, sophomore Amelia Clark joins classmates in yelling in support of their team.



Seniors Cameron Couch (left) and homecoming king candidate Shamir Garcia show their true colors at the rally.



John Glenn junior Daris Smith finishes the last leg of the obstacle course relay to win the event over the other classes at the pep rally.

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SPORTS

2nd 'Body by God' challenge set to start

BY BRAD KADRICH
STAFF WRITER

About a week before his first "Body by God" makeover challenge in June, Dr. C.J. Trupp figures he had about 10 people signed up.

About a week before he gets ready to start the second one Thursday, some 60 people had already registered.

Trupp figures that's a testament both to the popularity and the success of the first challenge, held in partnership with the Livonia YMCA. And this time, he's vowing even more fun.

"We wanted to make this one even better," said Trupp, a Livonia chiropractor. "We're giv-

ing away more money and better prizes

Body by God, as explained by Trupp, isn't a diet plan or a health plan. To Trupp and, he hopes, to the program's initial participants, it's a "change your life" program designed to work on the total person.

For his part, Trupp is excited about the prospect. "By the end, I know we'll have changed some lives," he said.

Body by God was developed by Dr. Ben Lerner, an author and doctor who has served as the team doctor to the U.S. Olympic team. His program, brought to Michigan by Trupp, who calls Lerner his "mentor," following the "Extreme

Makeover God's Way" manual, is a 40-day exercise aimed at making changes that allow participants to live a better life.

It uses "food by God" (more natural foods like grains, fruits and veggies) vs. "food by man" (processed foods. Students also learn time- and stress-management techniques.

This time, Trupp wants to help participants make even better changes. He's using some of the more successful students from the first group as team leaders this time around. He's going to use more technology - computers, movie clips, etc. - and has added a financial expert to the team to help participants straighten out their finances.

"I'm going to try to find ways to attack every aspect of people's senses and spirits to try to get them to change their life," Trupp said. "We're creating a 'buddy' system, so people can meet with others just like them and maybe work out together, so people don't feel like they're going through it alone."

That drive to help people improve their lives doesn't surprise Trupp's partners at the YMCA.

"(Trupp's) mission in his office is to change people's lives, not just from a physician's standpoint," said Jamie Stepanian-Bennett, director of marketing and membership for the YMCA. "He wants to make a



BILL BRESLER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Livonia chiropractor Dr. C.J. Trupp hopes to have more than 60 people at his second 'Body by God' makeover challenge, which starts Thursday.

difference in people's lives. It's a partnership between a local physician dedicated to changing people's lives and the YMCA, which believes in the same things."

They've added blood pressure checks to the weekly accountability sessions, trying to get as much physical improvement as possible. Participants will also get a spa night to "give them

some pampering," Trupp said, and there's even a tailgate party for the Michigan-Michigan State football game.

"Now that we know how important it is to people, it's going to be a whole lot better," Trupp promised.

For more information on the program, call Trupp's office at (734) 261-5677.

bkadrich@hometownlife.com | (734) 459-2700

AROUND WESTLAND

Flu shots

The Village of Westland at 32001 Cherry Hill will offer flu shots to seniors age 62 and older 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Thursday and Friday, Oct. 5-6. Call (734) 762-8895 to schedule an appointment.

Westland Maple Drugs also will be offering flu and pneumonia shots and sponsoring a Diabetes Day 4-7 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 17, at the store on Ford Road at Hunter. A second round

of shots will be offered 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 9.

The shots will be available on a walk-in basis and cost \$25 for the flu shot and \$40 for the pneumonia shot. For people with Medicare Part B, there will be no co-pay.

As part of Diabetes Day, the store will be giving out free meters and free samples as well as providing education and answering questions about the disease.

For more information, call

Chuck or Danielle at (734) 729-2200.

Euchre returns

Friday Night Euchre/Pinochle Card Parties are back at St. Bernardine Parish in Westland.

Doors open at 7 p.m. and play starts at 7:30 p.m. No partner is needed.

Admission is \$5 admission includes refreshments, snacks and cash prizes. A 50/50 raffle also is available.

The scheduled dates are Sept.

29, Oct. 6, 13, 27, Nov. 3, 17, Dec. 1, 15, Jan. 7, 5 12, 26 and Feb. 2, 9, 16. Call (734) 427-5150.

Fall seminars

Barson's Greenhouse is offering a series of free fall seminars on winterizing ponds.

The winterizing seminar, which focuses on preparing the pond for cold weather, will be offered at 10 a.m. and 1 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 30 and 11 a.m. Sunday, Oct. 1. Call (734) 421-5959.

DOWNTURN

FROM PAGE A1

higher interest rates, in some cases putting their current mortgage payments out of reach. Derr recently had a client leave her big house in Canton and buy a smaller home in Westland because her mortgage payment jumped \$400 a month.

"I like to ask people what they're comfortable with," Derr said. "They need to know what they're comfortable with and use it as a stepping stone. If you qualify for a \$130,000 mortgage, don't buy a \$130,000 home, if you can't afford the \$950-a-month payments."

How many properties in the city are in some form of foreclosure is hard to pin down. According to RealtyTrac.com, Wayne County foreclosures have climbed by 143 percent over the past year and the state's rate has jumped 141 percent. The national rate is up 38 percent.

As of Sept. 15, the Web site listed 435 properties available in Westland, with more than half - 277 - owned by the lender, meaning the final phase of foreclosure.

For homeowners who are on the verge of losing their homes, creative financing is helping them escape financial ruin. If a home has been on the market for four months, some banks look at its trend and entertain an offer instead of doing a foreclosure.

Called a short sale, the homeowner is able to sell the house for less than what is owed and the bank forgave the rest of the debt. While it doesn't look good on a credit report, it does look better than a foreclosure, Derr said.

"I sold one on a short sale in Wayne where the owner had never lived in it," said Derr. "She mortgaged it at \$95,000, the bank took \$63,000 and netted \$59,000. She'd been refurbishing it for seven years and it was about 90 percent complete. It was her childhood home and she bought it from her mom. She worked at Ford and lost her job."



TOM HAWLEY | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Toarmina's Cape Cod style home has an open floor plan with a first floor master suite and laundry room.

Creative financing

Another technique is 80-20 mortgages, where the buyer actual carries two mortgages - one for 80 percent of the price and another for the remaining 20 percent. The idea is to avoid private mortgage insurance which is tacked on to the interest rate for mortgages with less than 20 percent down.

A buyer has to have a good credit rating and the interest rate is typically higher on the 20 percent mortgage, but the plus is that the extra cost is an income tax deduction, Derr said.

Another market trend is multi-listed leases.

Homeowners who find themselves stuck with two mortgage payments because they haven't been able to sell their old home are turning the property into a rental.

Derr gets two to three inquiries about buying and a like number about rentals each week. Rentals "are huge right now," and maybe two a month turn into actual buyers.

However, "because of the price range and seller concessions, it's still cheaper to buy," she said.

While those things can help get buyers into a new home, Derr said sellers also need to do more. In this housing market,

curb appeal is a must. In fact, it has to be outstanding, she said.

The home's exterior should be "as neat as a pin," and inside, she recommends getting rid of any flaw that attracts the buyer's eye.

"Small things make a difference," she said. "Buyers have so many choices, you have to get them out of the car. You have to make sure your home looks its best from the road."

"Curb appeal and price gets them interested, then you get them in the house."

For Toarmina, she's recommending he consider some landscaping to give the homes curb appeal. She wants to have a broker open house to get word out about the homes and has begun advertising them in several newspapers.

"I built nine homes before these, four in Wayne and five in Westland," said Toarmina. "The ones in Wayne sold quickly, the ones in Westland at Wayne and Palmer took two months and that seemed like a long time then."

The slow home sales have led Toarmina to make a decision about his future.

"I'm not doing anything until the market comes back," he said. "I'm putting it totally on hold." smason@hometownlife.com | (734) 953-2112

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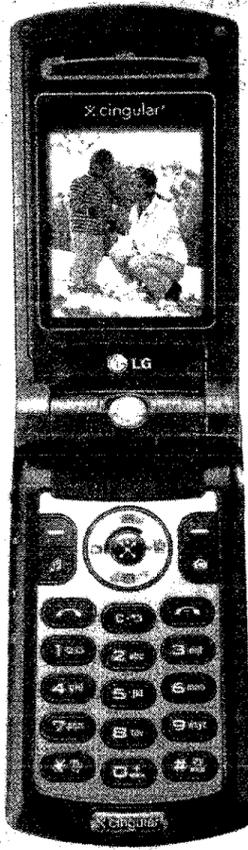
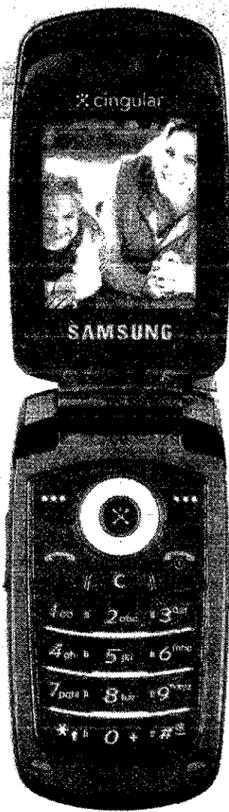
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