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PHOTOS BY TOM HAWLEY | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

'Jingle bell time, it's a swell time...'

A Christmas performance by the Churchill High School pompon squad last week featured senior Amanda Garza as Santa. The team performed to "Jingle Bell Rock" at a home basketball game.



Churchill junior Brynn Rosbury, dressed as an elf, performs with the pompon squad to "Jingle Bell Rock."



Wearing different Christmas socks and Santa hats, the Churchill High pompon squad kicks it up for the Christmas performance at halftime of the game.

Job wanted

Line is forming to fill city's political vacancies

BY DARRELL CLEM
STAFF WRITER

As two of Westland's veteran elected officials prepare to leave their positions for new jobs, political hopefuls are lining up in hopes of filling the vacancies.

Mayor Sandra Cicirelli will become a Westland district judge on Jan. 1, and Councilman Richard LeBlanc will start his new job as a state representative.

Barring a sudden power grab for the mayor's job, council President William Wild has been widely considered the likely appointee to replace Cicirelli until voters can fill the post next November, although it isn't a certainty.

If Wild or another council member becomes interim mayor, that means two council seats will be vacant in January. The part-time position pays \$12,515 a year.

Officially, the council will be charged with filling any vacancies during its first meeting of the year, at 7 p.m.

Wednesday, Jan. 3.

The shifting political winds have whipped up a flurry of council hopefuls who, according to Wild and Councilwoman Cheryl Graunstadt, have indicated an interest in being appointed until next November.

They are:

Gary Bulson, a local businessman long active in Westland Jaycees.

Sam Durante, who lost his Republican bid against LeBlanc, a Democrat, in the November state House race.

Debra Fowlkes, former Wayne-Westland school board president.

Adam Hammons, an alternate member of the Westland Zoning Board of Appeals.

Bill Johnson, United Auto Workers Local 900 plant chairman for the Wayne Assembly Plant.

Todd Kangas, long active in the Westland Youth Athletic Association.

Joseph Lezotte, a member of the Westland Zoning

PLEASE SEE VACANCIES, A2

Agency must move Hunters West office

BY DARRELL CLEM
STAFF WRITER

An agency that helps mentally ill patients will have to move from a high-rise Westland apartment building after illegally providing site-based care for 12 years.

The Medicaid-funded Neighborhood Service Organization will have to leave

Hunters West — a nine-story complex at Yale and Hunter — but it still will provide care for 14 clients who live there.

Without ever seeking approval from the city, NSO rented a top-floor apartment for 12 years and provided mentally ill residents with such services as psychiatric therapy, help with their medications, and rides to places like doctors' offices and grocery stores.

cery stores.

In a sweeping vote, the seven-member Westland City Council decided Monday night to force NSO to find an off-site office where it can bring patients for treatment and honor its contract with Wayne County.

"It's a commercial enterprise,"

PLEASE SEE AGENCY, A2

Plea averts jail time in child pornography case

BY DARRELL CLEM
STAFF WRITER

A 51-year-old Westland man has been placed on probation for five years for downloading pornographic images of young girls on his laptop computer.

John Kevin Spry has averted jail time by pleading guilty to having child sexually abusive material and by accepting a lengthy list of probationary conditions.

He could have faced penalties ranging up to 20 years in prison if he had rejected a plea agreement and chose to go to trial in Wayne

County Circuit Court.

Spry was charged in September after police raided his home on Glen Street, near Wayne Road and Avondale. Authorities, acting on a tip that he had child pornography, rammed his door, went inside and confiscated numerous pornographic images, including some of prepubescent girls, police Sgt. Debra Mathews has said. Spry, an electrician who wasn't at home during the raid, will remain on probation for five years after pleading guilty in front of Wayne County Circuit Judge James Chyliński.

The judge ordered Spry not to break any

more laws and to complete psychiatric treatment, according to authorities.

Spry also cannot own a computer or leave the state without court permission. He will be subject to drug testing and will have to report monthly for probation appointments.

Spry also must notify the court of any address changes, and he was ordered to pay court costs, although the amount wasn't immediately known.

He could be placed in prison unless he complies with all of Chyliński's orders.

dclem@hometownlife.com | (734) 953-2110

BY DARRELL CLEM
STAFF WRITER

They've never been what even the most casual political observer would consider political allies.

Even so, Mayor Sandra Cicirelli and Westland City Councilman Richard LeBlanc shared the spotlight — and a standing ovation — this week.

Barring an emergency session, Cicirelli and LeBlanc on Monday attended their last Westland City Council meeting before moving on to new jobs.

Cicirelli, 54, will become a Westland district judge Jan. 1. She will replace retiring Judge Gail McKnight.

LeBlanc, 48, will start his new job as the Democratic 18th District state representative.

He will succeed state Rep. Glenn Anderson, a newly elected state senator.

Cicirelli is wrapping up 17 years in office, including 12 years as a council member and five as mayor. She was one year into her second four-year term.

LeBlanc is ending nine years



Cicirelli LeBlanc as a council member.

The audience attending Monday's council meeting gave Cicirelli and LeBlanc a standing ovation after Councilman Michael Kehrer called for the show of respect.

Cicirelli and LeBlanc also received plaques from the council for their public service.

The departing officials had often been at political odds. They fought a hotly contested battle for the mayor's job in 2001. Cicirelli won.

On Monday, Councilman Charles Pickering noted that Cicirelli made Westland history by becoming the first official ever elected to all three branches of local government — as

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Coming Sunday in Health



The holidays are a good time to talk about family medical history.

SERVICE

FROM PAGE A1

council member, mayor and district judge.
 Resident Bob Johnson also praised Cicirelli for helping to improve the city's financial picture despite sagging state revenues.
 "We've come a long way since she took office," Johnson said.
 LeBlanc also drew much praise.
 Even Pickering, also not one of LeBlanc's political allies, commended him for his "dedicated" service to Westland.
 Councilwoman Cheryl Graunstadt has described LeBlanc as a mentor to her as she began her political career.
 "I'm so honored to have learned from him," she said Monday.
 Cicirelli lauded her administrative staff for helping to make her mayoral term a success.
 Their work, she said, "makes me look good."

LeBlanc reflected on his time as a council member and said, "It really has been a pleasure to be a councilman here. It's a wonderful job."
 LeBlanc vowed that someday, when he leaves Lansing, he will likely try to return to local office.
 "I'm not going anywhere," he said.
 In other honors Monday, departing Westland Historical Commission appointee Virginia Braun received a plaque for her 23 years of service.
 She led the charge on many historical projects, including the restoration of the one-room 1856 Perrinville Schoolhouse, on Warren Road west of Merriman.
 Elected officials lauded Braun's efforts, while local historian Ruth Dale commended her for her "impeccable standards" as a Westland historian.
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TOM HAWLEY | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Ho, Ho, Ho

Santa and Mrs. Claus - Harry and Iva Robertson of Westland - were in the partying mood when they walked, hand in hand, into the Maplewood Center last week for the seniors' Christmas dinner. The couple - he is 83 and she is 86 - have been married four years and enjoy being Santa's helpers at events this time of year.

VACANCIES

FROM PAGE A1

Board of Appeals.
 Robin Piché, an official with an insurance company.
 Dewey Reeves, who has strong backing from the Southeast Westland Homeowners Association.
 William Tremper, a Westland Historical Commission member.
 Frederick Weaver, Wayne-Westland school board president.
 Just because a council hopeful has submitted a name doesn't mean that he or she will even be considered for the post.
 On Jan. 3, council members will nominate those candidates they want to be considered for the job.
 Moreover, veteran Councilman Charles

Pickering said Monday that council members may choose to nominate people who haven't even submitted their names in writing.
 Some potential candidates hadn't formally tossed their hats in the ring as of Wednesday but were considering seeking an appointment. Former Councilman Kenneth Mehl, who served 12 years, is one of them.
 "I'm considering it," he said Wednesday, when asked by the *Observer*.
 Mehl indicated he will make a decision by week's end.
 According to an opinion from City Attorney Angelo Plakas, anyone appointed to one of the vacancies will serve until the next round of city elections in November 2007.
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CORRECTIONS

Junior guard Amanda Moody and senior forward Jenna Mrljak, both of Livonia Clarenceville, should have been listed as honorable mention selections in girls basketball in the A Galaxy of Stars 2006 Fall Sports All-Area Teams edition of the *Observer* on Dec. 17.
 A story in the Sunday, Dec. 17, issue of the *Westland Observer* should have stated that if appointed mayor, council President William Wild would serve until the city's November general election. At that time, voters would select a person to complete the remaining two years of the term.

AGENCY

FROM PAGE B1

Councilman James Godbout said. "It doesn't belong in a residential complex."
 He had indicated concerns that intruders could break into NSO's office to steal prescription narcotics, although agency officials said the drugs are locked up.
 Elected leaders also relied on a report from Westland fire officials, who strongly urged officials not to grant NSO special approval to remain at Hunters West.

Fire Capt. Colleen Pennington wrote in a fire marshal's report that the situation could pose a potential threat.
 "The fire marshal's office in no way wants to give the impression that just because someone has a mental illness they will start a fire or cause a problem. We know that most of the patients live very normal lives and cause no problem," Pennington wrote. "But it is important that the council be aware that there is a certain amount of unpredictability in the treatment of mental illness."
 Moreover, the report questioned how city leaders could

allow NSO care providers to work out of Hunters West but deny other medical agencies the same leniency.
 "The Westland Fire Marshal Division finds question in how a psychiatric type of office would be allowed to be opened in an apartment to serve its patients and not allow other types of disabilities to have their doctor's office or service at the site," Pennington wrote.
 She cited dialysis treatment as an example and asked, "If a company requested to place multiple dialysis patients in a multifamily dwelling complex and open an office on site to care for these patients, would it not be discriminatory to not allow this?"
 NSO's unit director, Mary Neff, called the Hunters West situation a model program for providing psychiatric services to older adults.

When the controversy arose in November, several patients pleaded with city officials not to force the agency to leave their building.
 On Monday, Councilwoman Cheryl Graunstadt called the situation "illegal" and said the agency, by contract, still must serve Hunters West residents. She said patients aren't being booted out.
 "This is not about putting anyone out of their home," Graunstadt said.
 City officials pledged to give NSO time to find a new office. Councilman Michael Kehrer urged agency officials to lease one of several nearby vacant storefronts.
 "We have offices vacant within 200 yards of that building - right around the corner," he said.
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Specialist Michael Perron of Westland takes questions from students at Our Lady of Good Counsel School in Plymouth. The students wrote Christmas cards to Perron to support his efforts in Iraq.

Soldier thanks kids for holiday cards

BY BRAD KADRICH
STAFF WRITER

When Spc. Michael Perron, a five-year U.S. Army veteran who'd been in Iraq for three months, found out students at Plymouth's Our Lady of Good Counsel School had written him nearly 100 Christmas cards, he was quite touched.

It didn't even matter that he hadn't gotten a single card.

Perron, a Westland resident, came home on leave before the cards could be sent, so he stopped by OLGCS School Monday to let the kids know just how much the cards, which he read when he got home, meant to him.

"A lot of (soldiers) don't get any (mail), so to have overwhelming support of people is great," said Perron, who heads back to Iraq on Christmas Day. "It didn't feel like just another class assignment. It felt like it came right from the kids."

Perron was the lucky recipient of the cards after a discussion between his aunt, Plymouth-Canton school bus driver Mary

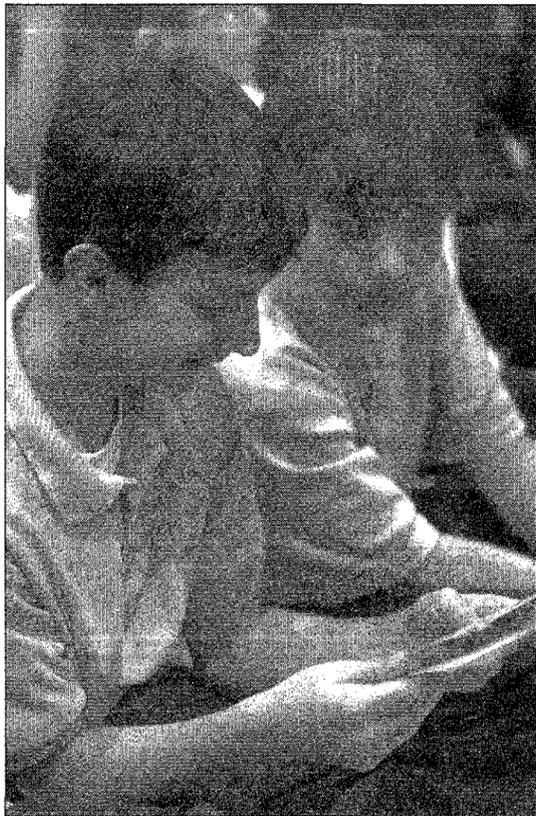
Anne Cranford, and a fellow driver, Beth Larson, who is the mother of an OLGCS student.

Larson, who lives in Canton, told Cranford, a Northville resident, about the card-writing effort, and Cranford asked Larson to add Perron's name to the list. Next thing you know, students in three OLGCS classrooms — the fourth-grade class of Emily Sikorsky and the sixth-graders of Barb Hecmanczuk and Gordon Cameron — were writing to the soldier.

"They loved it," said Sikorsky, the fourth-grade teacher. "They were thinking of people we could write cards to. They spent a lot of time writing, making sure they were thoughtful cards."

"We talked about what it meant to the soldiers to get cards," Sikorsky added. "They were very excited about it."

When the Army allowed Perron, who'd only been in Iraq three months, a chance at an early leave, he jumped at it. He called his mom, Jennifer Perron of Westland, from the airport in Atlanta, Ga., asking her if she could "pick someone up at the



David Walborn and Josh Somerville look at some of Michael Perron's photographs from his first three months in Iraq. They were among some 100 students who wrote Christmas cards to Perron.

airport."

When Jennifer Perron asked who, her son said, "Me," then asked her not to say anything to anyone. His mom found that difficult to do.

"I had a girlfriend on the other line, and she was surprised (when she found out later) that I was able to stay so calm," Jennifer Perron said. "But when I hung up from her, I just screamed."

When OLGCS Principal Kay Reilly found out Perron was home on leave, a surprise visit to the students was arranged. Perron spent some time with them Monday morning, thanking them for the thought and answering dozens of questions about life in the Army.

The students were eager to meet him and to thank him for what he's doing.

"I liked doing the cards because we got to spend time doing art instead of our regular work," said Elizabeth Somerville, a 9-year-old fourth-grader from Canton. "I wrote 'Thank you for fighting for us,' because he's fighting for us and I just wanted to thank him."

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3 churches come together for Christmas Eve service

BY SUE MASON
STAFF WRITER

Three Westland churches are coming together for what may be the first-of-its-kind Christmas Eve service.

The congregations of Good Shepherd Reformed Church, Westland United Pentecostal Church and Westwood Community Church will gather at 11 a.m. Sunday for a worship service filled with special music and a sermon delivered by the three pastors.

"It'll be the Christmas story from a different perspective," said the Rev. Louise Monacelli, pastor of Good Shepherd. "I'm the only woman so I'll take the role of Mary. Pastor Paul Pakizer will take the role of Joseph and pastor James Roberts will be the shepherd."

The combined service is the idea of Roberts, pastor of the Pentecostal church. All three churches worship at Good Shepherd at the corner of Wayne Road and Hunter. The congregations of Good Shepherd and Westwood hold services on Sunday mornings, while the Pentecostal congregation meets in the afternoon.

"The Pentecostal folks were interested in worshipping on Christmas Eve morning," said Monacelli. "He (Roberts) is the one who extended the invitation to see if it could work."

While the three churches' doctrines are different, Monacelli felt that a such a service could work because they all would have the same focus. While her congregation was apprehensive at first,

Monacelli's excitement about the possibility of having a service with special music and a choir caught on.

"It's a great boon for us," she said. "We're so small. We have 25 members on a Sunday morning and it's hard to have music and a choir."

The service will last about one hour. There will be the singing of traditional Christmas carols, including *Silent Night* with participants holding candles. A common fellowship will follow the service.

The service also accommodates the church's older members, many of whom live in the neighborhood.

"Many of the older people don't like coming out in the evening, so with this they can participate in a traditional Christmas Eve service," Monacelli said.

Good Shepherd has been in Westland more than 40 years and has been able to remain viable even with such a small congregation by renting out the church to small churches. It also rents out its parsonage and space for the McKinley Cooperative Preschool.

"We see our ministry as providing shelter for these smaller churches," said Monacelli. "We survive because of the rent, but it also allows us to be a nurturing point for small churches trying to get started."

Monacelli is hopeful the combined service will draw at least 100 people. The service is open to the public.

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OUR VIEWS

Christmas is time to celebrate humanity

Although you wouldn't know it by the unusually warm weather outside as of late, Christmas time is upon us.

For people of the Christian faith, it is one of the most significant times of the year. It marks the coming of the Messiah — the birth of Jesus Christ. Christians all over the world celebrate this great milestone with prayer and reverence.

But this time of year is also important to the followers of other religions. Jews, for example, are in the midst of celebrating Hanukkah, the eight-day "Festival of Lights," which began at sundown Dec. 15. During these eight days, marked by the candles of the menorah, Jews celebrate their ancient heroes and the survival of their culture with festive foods, games and blessings.

Although Hanukkah is considered to be a minor holiday on the Jewish calendar, it has taken on more significance, especially in America, because of its proximity to Christmas.

It is also at this time of year that many African Americans begin to celebrate Kwanzaa. Although not a religious holiday, Kwanzaa, which runs from Dec. 26 through Jan. 1, is a time when followers come together and celebrate family, community and tradition.

So in reality, the Christmas season means different things to different people, especially in America, where so many different cultures have been thrown together. The common denominator seems to be that it is a time of celebration, to hold dear the things that we might take for granted the rest of the year.

In recent years, some people have complained that there has been a war on Christmas. A debate has raged about whether or not the meaning of Christmas has been watered down by political correctness. It's an unfortunate debate, particularly at this time of year, because it seems to run counter to all the virtues that are celebrated during Christmas.

It is supposed to be a time of rejoicing, and a time to reflect on the common bond of man. There are so many people around the globe, including right here in our own backyard, who are not as fortunate. Many who are dealing with poverty, hunger or war.

In America, we are fortunate to have the freedom to celebrate Christmas or Hanukkah or Kwanzaa. That in itself is reason enough to celebrate this holiday season.

So whatever Christmas means for you, please take a few moments during this wonderful season to think of those in the world who are not as fortunate. And give thanks for all that we are blessed with here in America. Merry Christmas.

What will Santa give your state legislator?

Santa isn't the only one who will be checking his list to find out who's been naughty and nice.

Michigan voters should be closing out the year by doing the same, but it's not their kids whom they ought to have in mind. Instead, it's the Michigan Legislature.

Legislators were largely unproductive, but there are a few examples that merit either a lump of coal or a sweet treat.

How nice: Some argue legislators caved in to special interests, but many observers think the Legislature deserves a piece of candy for approving the cable competition bill shortly before ending this year's session. Largely championed by AT&T, the bill allows competitors to provide statewide service without negotiating with individual governments, develop new technology and lower costs.

Yet to be determined is how competitors will be held accountable for their service.

How naughty: The Legislature (read Republicans) deserves a whole bag of charcoal for its handling of the Single Business Tax debacle. Legislators ended this session with the job only half done, acting only to end the much maligned tax on business but not to replace the lost revenue. The truth is that no one wants to be labeled as having voted for a new tax with a broader base.

How nice: The year wasn't a total loss. The governor was successful in getting a state scholarship program through the Legislature to bolster her contention that it will take a better educated workforce to improve the state's jobs picture and the economy.

Legislators also approved new graduation requirements that will strengthen the future of those students who complete high school.

The Legislature further approved the so-called Jessica's Law, which increases penalties for child predators.

How nice, and naughty: While legislators touted passage of a \$210 increase in per pupil funding for education, school district administrators held their collective breath. And well they should have. The money may have been approved, but now it looks like cash in hand isn't going to be able to cover the entire increase. Some folks didn't do their homework.

No doubt voters will have their own items to add to the naughty/nice list. But whatever is on it, they should keep the list around for the next election.



LETTERS

Hoping for change

I believe there was a mistake in Sunday's paper about the position for mayor. It stated that Wild could be appointed to complete the remaining three years of Cicirelli's term. This is wrong.

If he is the one appointed, he would fill in until the city election in November 2007. He would then have to be elected by the people to fill out the last TWO YEARS of Cicirelli's term.

I would also like to tell people that it does NOT have to be a council person that fills the mayor's seat. ANY person who has been a Westland resident for two years may put in their name to be appointed for this seat. You just need to put your qualifications in a letter and submit it.

Please, to all the people who care about what is happening to our city, go to City Hall, pay your \$2 and pick up a copy of the city charter and READ it. The section 4.6 that the paper mentioned reads:

"If a vacancy occurs in any elective office, then the Council by a majority vote of its members shall fill such vacancy only until the next general City election, at which election the unexpired term, if any, shall be filled by vote of the qualified electors of the City."

Hoping for change,

Modena Seber-Kirby
Westland

Testing was a mess

Kudos to Georgia Becker on her complaints on how the lead testing went.

I, too, went to the Bailey Center to be tested and no one knew or could explain to me which forms to fill out or what to do. Well, I left without testing. On the way out, Bob Kosowski and the mayor's assistant, Terry Carroll, were coming out of the Bailey Center, heading toward City Hall. I expressed my disgust and they said they were going to see what to do. Things only got worse.

I left to run an errand. When I returned for the test, it was packed with children, decorating the trees. Barrels were blocking driveways and lots were filled. So again I had no choice but to leave. Whoever scheduled the testing at the same time as the tree decorating is at fault.

The mayor seems to be lacking interest in our city. Perhaps, because her days as being mayor will soon end.

Westland seems lately the place not to be!

Mary Bokan
Westland

Stand together for our youth

We don't live in a land of Utopia. The community needs to keep its head out of the sand and realize we are losing students — students that will never return. This problem is not only happening in the cities around us, it's alive and well in the cities of Livonia and Westland.

Our force shield has been compromised. Your child, your neighbor or neighbor's friend can be a victim. Did you know, some teens are taking pills from your medicine cabinet and sharing them with friends? It's happening in our own backyard. Ignorance is no excuse and it may cost someone's life. What is a person's life worth?

Save Our Youth Task Force has been formed to educate and help parents and students with the perils of drug and alcohol use. Its Web site, saveouryouthtaskforce.com, has a plethora of information to help, teach and reach all of us. It's a community effort.

The schools, realizing the priority, are working with the task force to inform and educate parents and students. Police liaisons are available at all high schools and middle schools; their contact numbers are listed in the staff directory for each of the schools. The Livonia Career Tech Center has appropriately provided the contact information for all high school liaisons on its "contact" page. Stevenson has detailed contact information for its liaison on its home page. The police liaisons are there for you. There is no excuse for not knowing who or how to contact someone.

Together — students, parents, businesses, schools, churches, neighbors — we stand strong.

Dianne Marietti
Livonia

Speak for yourself

Regarding Terry Ahwal's "There can be no winners from war and occupation" that ran in Sunday Perspectives on Nov. 26, I feel for the personal tribulations you and your family have had to endure while in Palestine. I also feel that putting your opinions to productive use in resolving the issues you state is the only valid use of your voice. Your opinion piece does neither.

To be a valid voice for the Palestinians, you need to be a voice for stopping the violence of Hamas and their unwillingness to negotiate a lasting peace with Israel. To rally against occupation without seeking to stop the rocket and suicide bomber attacks on Israel leaves Israel in a defensive position of "occupying" Palestine to stop the attacks.

You conveniently ignore the reasons for Israel's actions in your piece, like many who choose to ignore the actions of their own governments, cite heart-rendering stories and not be moved to self-responsibility to take action to stop the violence from your own people.

With regards to your comparison of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to Iraq, I think the Shiites, Chaldeans and Kurds would have definite issue with your opinion after having been bombed, shot, incarcerated, tortured and gassed for years by Saddam's Sunni "occupation" or dictatorship. You cite 650,000 killed in Iraq and then go on to write, "Regardless of whether they were killed by coalition military action or insurgents," leading the reader to believe the U.S. is at fault for the entire number of dead.

Where the Kurds in the north have taken control and put down the Sunni/Al Qaeda and yes, Hamas and Hezbollah-supported insurgency, the death toll is much lower. In the rest of Iraq, the continued attacks for religious reasons between the Sunnis and Shiites fueled by Al Qaeda and supported by Hamas and other Palestinian organizations, the terror continues and the death toll you state is the result.

If the U.S. were to pull out now, the country would surely fall into anarchy fueled by your own people just as

Palestine's Fauda (anarchy) internecine fighting has.

Before we can pull out of Iraq, the people of Iraq and its government as representative of the people of Iraq, need to take responsibility and control of their country, just as Palestinians need to do. This can only be accomplished through tolerance of other religions and their right to exist just as you are permitted to enjoy here in the U.S.A.

The insurgents are not "freedom fighters." They are terrorists against a free Iraq that will permit equality of all views — something Hamas, the Palestinian-elected representative of your people, does not support and by your lack of clear inward-looking voice, neither do you.

As Winston Churchill put it: "In both our lands, it is the people who control the Government, not the Government the people."

Dave Dobias
Canton

Alternative energy a priority

Gas prices falling! Yeah! Yes, I'm happy and thankful, but cautious.

My fellow citizens, we must not let the oil companies manipulate us like this. It should be a personal and national priority and goal to move toward alternative energy to power our transportation needs.

The prices go high and we all squawk and moan about it, declaring we will drive smaller cars, drive less and so on. We think about hybrid vehicles and such. Then the prices go down and we're back to guzzling our gasoline and being happy about it. We're getting fat and lazy!

I don't want to depend on foreign oil anymore! I don't want to drill in Alaska or our oceans either! I don't want to be at the mercy of the people in the East who want to kill us all!

I want to show the world what I know to be true — that we are the most innovative, intelligent country on earth. We can come up with the technology needed to make ourselves and the rest of the world free from oil. It should be our national agenda and a priority.

Be vigilant. Demand technology that doesn't enslave us to anyone else. We can do it. I don't want to keep funding the hatred and violence against us. Enjoy the lower gas prices for now, but please, look forward to our future!

Nancy Foltz
Clarkston

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

"We've heard a whole gamut of things from no proration to a \$200 cut. We'll just have to wait until January to see what happens."

- Linda Kempton, Wayne-Westland executive director of business and operations, about state school aid in 2007

WESTLAND
Observer
PUBLISHED THURSDAY AND SUNDAY

GANNETT

<p>Sue Mason Community Editor</p> <p>Hugh Gallagher Managing Editor</p>	<p>Susan Rosiek Executive Editor</p> <p>Marty Carry Advertising Director</p>	<p>Peter Neill Vice President General Manager</p>
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Richard Aginjan - Publisher Emeritus

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.

Leaving legislature means finding new ways to serve

Ralph Waldo Emerson once said, "Win as if you were used to it, lose as if you enjoyed it for a change."

For me, it has truly been a year of ups and downs. In March, my business of 28 years – Cardwell Florist – was named the 2006 Retailer of the Year by the Michigan Floral Association. In April, our family lost my mother to a long and painful battle with cancer.

The campaign was hard fought and at many times down-right ugly. Facts were twisted to form half-truths as they often are at election time. As one example, advertising attacking my voting record deceptively included every vote I had ever missed during eight years of service in the legislature – not just my service in the Senate. The same ads neglected to mention that the legislature takes literally thousands of votes each year or that I was present

for 95 percent of all those votes during my eight years of service.

When all the numbers are in, spending in my race will have easily climbed into the millions of dollars. And, in the end, many chose to cast their vote on the basis of party, rather than person, spurred by an impatience with the war in Iraq and scandals in Washington which have very little to do with my job in Lansing.

After eight years of service in the Michigan Legislature, I walk away with my head held high knowing in my heart that our work in the House of Representatives and the Senate touched and improved the lives of many that I served.

During my time in the legislature I was honored to be named Legislator of the Year by the Police Officers Association of Michigan, a YWCA of Western Wayne County Woman of Achievement Award recipient in Government and Law, and the recipient of a Significant Progress Award from the Donate Life Coalition of Michigan, an organ and tissue donation advocacy organization, just to name a few.

I was able to fight for increased funding for our public schools, for tax cuts to strengthen Michigan's economy, and for legislation to protect our state's seniors and children from harm. This included legislation to help the victims of identity theft, legislation to help create the Michigan Amber Alert System, and sponsorship of a Michigan version of Jessica's Law to lock up repeat child sexual predators for life without the possibility of parole.

I could not have done this alone and I express my deepest gratitude to so many steadfast supporters who continue to help me along the way.

Unfortunately, our state's outlook is not nearly

as bright as anyone would like. For several years now, Michigan has been stuck in a cycle of "things will get worse before they get even worse." And, despite the best efforts of government and industry, our state has yet to break this cycle. Economists at the University of Michigan predict that unemployment in Michigan will be higher in 2007 than in 2006 and higher in 2008 than in 2007.

Our economy is creating jobs in many areas, yet it is losing jobs faster in several others, particularly in the manufacturing sector. I continue to believe that Michigan should focus its energies on our natural strengths, such as automotive research and development, tourism, and agriculture – including the exploration of crop-based fuel alternatives.

We must continue to confront head-on the changes taking place in our new global economy which have left Michigan with much higher rates of unemployment than other states in our union. There are also issues of both quality and access left to be addressed in our healthcare and education systems. I am eager to remain engaged in these discussions, though no longer in the role of legislator.

Although we face many challenges, Michigan also has many strengths. Home of the Great Lakes, the birthplace of the assembly line and automotive capital of the world, we boast superb health-care facilities and institutions of higher education. We have the resources and the raw human talent to propel us through these difficult times and to emerge stronger than before.

My hope is for a Michigan that emerges as a leader in the new knowledge-based economy of the 21st Century. A Michigan where families are no longer torn apart by the economic realities we currently suffer and where sons and daughters are forced to leave our state to find work. It is no small job, but nothing is impossible to those with vision. And I was proud to play whatever role I was able in making this a reality during my past four years of service in the State Senate and my four years in the House of Representatives.

As for myself, as General Douglas MacArthur once said, I am not retreating – I am advancing in another direction. It has been my honor and privilege to serve the residents of Garden City, Livonia, Redford Township and Westland in the Michigan Senate and I look forward to finding new ways to continue my public service in the future. Until then, may God bless you and your family, the great state of Michigan, and may God continue to bless America. Let's continue to make great things happen in our great state.

Laura M. Toy of Livonia represents the State Senate's 6th District.



Laura Toy

Santa takes back seat to giving as preteen discovers Christmas

I'm confused. I was under the impression that the magic of Christmas goes out the window when the kids stop believing in Santa Claus. Just the opposite is the case around my house. My son is geeked about Christmas.

For the first time ever, he has helped get the house ready for Christmas. He helped wind the lights on the tree when we decorated outside and took over that job of decorating the tree inside.

He's slathering big black X's on the calendar as he counts down the days, something he hasn't done since kindergarten when he glued cotton balls on Santa's beard.

He's assumed the responsibility of keeping the family room cleaned and vacuumed, I think in an attempt to curry favor with Santa. Not THE Santa, but Santa as in his dad.

Cable channels have a way of airing reruns at the wrong time. Back in October I happened to be watching a re-rerun of *Homicide* that had a detective facing the task of telling a would-be Santa's son his father was dead.

My son walked through the room, saw the Christmas decorations on the screen and sat down to watch. I wasn't quick enough to change the channel as the kid told Richard Belzer he knew there was no Santa.

I swapped glances with my son who then told me, "Mom, I know there's no Santa. I just play along because Dad gives good presents."

I knew that day would come. There were clues last year when I caught him and his sister snooping around in the darkest recesses of basement where I had hid presents. Little did they know, we were stashing them in the trunk of his dad's car. Walked past them every day on the way to school and they never knew they were within a hair's breadth of them.

Now the gig is up with my son, so we've taken major steps to secure the stash. The spare bedroom door is closed ... and locked. Took my son a week to discover that his dad had changed the lock and a slip of my tongue to realize what was on the other side.

Now I'm sure the hunt is on to find the key. He has been good about not totally spilling the beans to his sister although indications are she's about to give in. In preparing to interview Santa, I asked if she had any questions she'd like me to ask. First and foremost was her position on the naughty and nice list. Next she wanted to know if there's an elf named Curtis?

Curtis? Curtis who? Where did she come up with that?

Santa confirmed there is indeed an elf named Curtis who is quite inventive, but it wasn't until I saw *The Santa Clause II* the other night that I realized who both of them were talking about.

She was delighted to know there is a Curtis, but does that confirm that Santa's real or a hoax in her mind? I haven't a clue.

All I know is I now have a child who is eagerly anticipating Christmas. First he wants presents under the tree and then he doesn't. What ones are there, he's counting to see how many he has, worried that that's all there is, and re-arranging them lest his gifts touch his sister's.

Of course, we've had to institute a no touch, no-feel rule. I'm good at disguising gifts but there's nothing you can do if they rattle and there are only so many boxes large enough to fit the odd-shaped stuff.

There's already a concern about the number of presents under the tree. At present, his sister has more.

We keep explaining that the cost of the gifts is commensurate with the increase in age. A 10-year-old's wants are less expensive than a 12-year-old's, especially one who wants a cell phone, a Wii, and assorted other electronic goodies. Cha-ching, cha-ching.

He keeps saying he understands, but he still keeps counting ... and hoping there's more behind that locked door. I'm keeping my mouth shut on that one.

His dad keeps saying we're done with Christmas shopping, but his modus operandi is a last-minute blitz. He claims he's getting stuff for the stockings and comes back with bags of stuff to wrap and put under the tree. Must I say who gets the wrapping job? I thought not.

Don't get me wrong, I'm not complaining about this sudden surge of interest in Christmas. It's quite refreshing. The greed is still there – what kid doesn't want everything under the tree – but the interest in giving gifts is new.

My son is growing up. He pointed that out to me at the buffet the other day when he corrected me after I told the cashier I had two children. "Mom, I'm almost a teenager."

Now I get to see the other magic kids discover when they move beyond Santa and realize that giving is just as much fun as receiving.

Sue Mason is editor of the *Westland and Garden City Observers*. To comment, e-mail her at smason@hometownlife.com.



Sue Mason

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Governor offers a 'Promise' to high school students

BY ALEX LUNDBERG
STAFF WRITER

Speaking to college-bound students from six different high schools, Gov. Jennifer Granholm unveiled her Michigan Promise Scholarship, available to high school seniors this year.

Gov. Granholm spoke to students in the Center for Advanced Studies and Arts at Ferndale High School Tuesday afternoon about the new program, which will tie good performance on the American College Test to a \$4,000 scholarship.

The program will replace the current Merit Award system which tied scholarships to performance on the Michigan Educational Assessment Program test.

Granholm, in introducing the award to the students, said a good education means something to the state as well as to the students who receive it.

"Why do you think Google set up in Ann Arbor from California?" she asked. "They came here because of the resource of educated workers here."

She said as the state generates more educated residents and pours more resources into its educational institutions, businesses needing a smarter workforce are going to come here to set up shop.

Students who perform well on the ACT will receive \$1,000 in their freshman and sophomore years and another \$2,000 after completing two



LAWRENCE MCKEE | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Gov. Jennifer Granholm (shown speaking at Birmingham Seaholm High School) carried to Ferndale High on Tuesday her message about the importance of a good education and offering them a 'promise' of help.

years of post high school classes.

Students who didn't perform well on the test can earn the entire \$4,000, if they complete two years of college or technical training and maintain a 2.5 grade point average.

State Rep. Andy Meisner (D-Ferndale), a Ferndale High School graduate, said this is the kind of boost the state's education needs.

"Education is truly everything," he said. "Of all the things the governor can focus on, to focus on this, to have this tool to help is very important."

U.S. Rep. Sander Levin (D-Royal Oak), said the governor has set high goals for the state's

educational system and, in this scholarship, a method as well. He said the federal government would soon be weighing in along the same lines.

"The federal government has to be an active partner, and it hasn't always done well," he said. "In the first 30 days (of the 110th Congress), we're going to cut the interest rate on student loans by half and increase funds to Pell grants."

Of course, there's more than one financial angle to consider.

"Compared to a high school diploma, you will earn more than \$1 million dollars more in your lifetime with a degree," Granholm said. "Be it a two-year, four-year or technical or vocational certification."

It doesn't hurt Lansing's future prospects either.

"We want to make sure when it's your turn to lead, you have an excellent education," she said.

The CASA students who were on hand to hear the governor's address were advanced placement students from Ferndale, Berkeley, Oak Park, Madison Heights, Lamphere and Clawson High Schools.

She spoke to students in Lansing earlier in the day and planned to make similar presentations at schools around the state later in the week. In addition programs were held in other parts of the state Tuesday to mark the signing of the bill, including at Schoolcraft College.

alundberg@oe.hometown.com | (248) 901-2536

County urges Granholm to sign bill on mental health board

BY HUGH GALLAGHER
STAFF WRITER

A bill to amend the mental health code to allow the Wayne County Commission to appoint all 12 members of the county Mental Health Board was approved Dec. 14 by the state House of Representatives.

The House approved 70-32, with eight not voting, Senate Bill 1289.

Now an intense effort is being made to lobby Gov. Jennifer Granholm to sign the bill, which places her in the middle of a dispute between two of her strongest political allies — Wayne County Executive Robert Ficano and Detroit Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick.

Currently Ficano, with the approval of the Commission, appoints six members of the Mental Health Board, and Kilpatrick appoints six members. Ficano has argued that, since Wayne County provides \$177 million to the Wayne County Health Agency's \$540 million annual budget and the city provides no funding, the county should have a greater representation on the board. At one point he had proposed a 13-member board with the county getting an extra appointment.

In May the county commission supported a resolution favoring a 13-member board.

The bill would create a 12-

member, county-appointed board, but with six members coming from the city of Detroit. The majority of the agency's 47,000 clients come from the city.

"Our concern is that the governor is going to be pressured or inclined to veto because of pressure brought to bear by the mayor," said Alan Helmkamp, assistant Wayne County Executive.

State Sens. Beverly Hammerstrom, R-Temperance, and Shirley Johnson, R-Royal Oak, have supported legislation to create an independent mental health authority or pressure the county to create an authority.

In November, Wayne County Circuit Judge Cynthia D. Stephens granted a preliminary injunction to prevent the state from withholding \$3.5 million a month from the Mental Health Agency for each month the county's failed to create a Mental Health Authority. The cuts were part of the state's 2006-2007 budget.

Helmkamp said the approval of a county-appointed board could be the first step toward creating an independent mental health authority.

"We would still have to work out issues like employee rights," Helmkamp said. But he said Ficano is open to

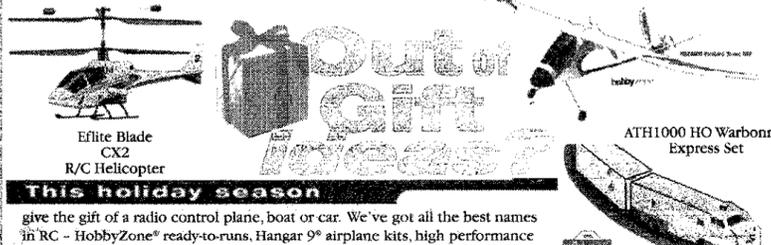
the idea of an authority. Helmkamp, a Democrat, said the majority of the bill's supporters were Republicans, though suburban representatives of both parties voted for the bill, including soon to be Speaker of the House Andy Dillon, D-Redford.

Helmkamp said he realizes that the bill places the governor in an awkward position, but he cited Granholm's veto of earlier legislation on changing the mental health board because the legislation did not address the six-six split that is addressed in the current bill. He also said that this is not a city-versus-suburbs problem, because Detroit members of the county commission have supported changes in the governance of the board.

The bill has also been supported by resolutions by the Conference of Western Wayne and the Downriver Community Council.

The current Mental Health Board voted 7-5 on Dec. 13 to support the Senate bill. The board had been divided in the past. In August, the six members appointed by the mayor, declined to attend a meeting, called by county appointees to handle contract extensions.

Bernard Kilpatrick is the chair of the Mental Health Board and the father of Mayor Kilpatrick.



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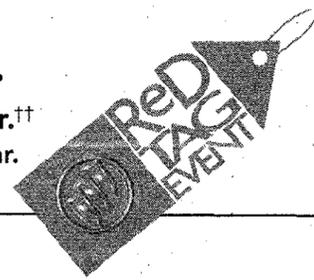


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† Turn-by-Turn not available in certain markets. Call 1-888-466-7827 for system limitations and details.

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ADAMS MIDDLE SCHOOL HONOR ROLL

Named to the honor roll for the first marking period at Adams Middle School were:

Erika Akubeno, Nicole Alt, Angela Altimus, Adjane Anderson, Michael Arbaugh, Elliot Arnold, Cayla Ball, Sydney Ball, Ryan Bartz, Dianne Joy Basco, Mintoria Battle, Kyle Bearden, Sabrina Bizon, Jacob Black, Chelsea Blackburn, Paul Bobin, Holland Boertje, La'Rashel Borom, Sarah Bouren, Cassandra Bowen, Marlee Bowser, Timothy Boyer, Erika Boyington.

Jezanna Bugaski, Isabella Bullock, Brianna Burgess, Kara Rose Burton, Daniel Callahan, Madeleine Camper, Ashley Carey, Jacob Chiles, Katherine Chuong, Breana Cohttero, Taylor Coleman, Rachel Cooper, Margarita Cortes, Pedro Cortes, Justin Coshatt, Chanelle Covin, Katelynn Craig, Kayleigh Crummey, Sheldon Crummey, Ericka Daniels, Robert Davidson.

Diamond Davis, Mark Dennis, Sheila DeShazer, Dartanian Dixon, Brandon Dombrowski, Dylan Dottor, Alex Draper, Austin Dykes, DáJalon Ellis, Kayla Ellis, Scholastica Enechukwu, Anthony Ewing, Aidreana Fikes, Taurrek Fikes, Jessica Fischer, Michael Frey, Amber Frost, Alexis Gable, Derek Galvan, Jaasmeen Gill, Delaney Gloger, Chelsea Godette.

Alexandrea Gossett, Austin Gottman, Melissa Grasele, Morgan Greig, Shakyra Griffin, Taylor Grondy,

Micaela Guenther, Zachary Hawkins, Mikaylah Heffernan, Sharif Hegazi, Tyler Hicks, Dajanay Hines, Breana Hix, Zandra Holland, Courtney Hooper, Justin Hooper, Kimberly Hooper, Shelby Hooper, Stephanie Hyams, Jesus Ibanez, Sierra Ingram, Jasmine Ivey.

Kevin Jensen, Ashley Johnson, Jessica Johnson, Kristen Johnson, Carlita Jones, Jalen Jones, Julia Jones, Jovie Jose, Dakota Kane, Adam Kay, Donald Keiper, Brandon Keiler, Tawni Kenyon, Samantha Kilburn, Thomas Killen, Breanne Koc, Shane Kommer, Charles Kuder, Amber Ladd, Jenna Langston, Heather Leblanc, Samantha LeBlanc, Alec Lee, Danny Lees.

Madeline Lefler, Kataland Leong, Samantha Leopardi, Morgan Levis, Elizabeth Lizyness, Remaile Lloyd, Kassandra Lodge, Briana Lucas, Dustin Malloy, Jessica Marshall, Jacob Massey, LeChrisa Mathews, Randolph Mathis, Christopher McCowan, Trisha McCune, Tyler McCurry, Jordan McDuffie, Meghan McGowan, Kenneth McKay, Paris McLeod.

Mara McQuillen, Tyler Mitchell, Chelsea Morneau, Brandon Mowry, Colin Mullins, Wayne Murphy, Alyssa Napier, Kathy Newborn, Chinyere Nkwocha, Chantell Nolden, Charles Oatten, Nicole Odom, Wendi Overstreet, Hannah Palmer, Leah Palmer, Alyssa Paraski, Jared Parker, Anthony Patania, Zachary Pechin, Kristen Peck, David Petosky,

Elizabeth Phelan.

Samuel Phillips, Brooke Pietruszka, Andrew Potter, Lyndsey Potter, Adam Pugh, Nicole Rau, Brandon Revell, Michael Ringholz, Demetrius Robinson, Ana Rodriguez, Chelsey Roe, Casey Roosa, Mark Rowland, Douglas Rutan, Aarti Sajani, Adora Sashington, Matthew Scaggs, Christopher Schmidt, David Schutler, Kally Scott, James Serman, Sarah Shefke.

Meriah Sherek, Billy Shillingburg, Kc Shrum, Caitlyn Siese, Adrianna Sigarto, Devyn Simkus, Imari Smiley, Danielle Smith, Hayden Smith, Heather Smith, Marisa Smith, Kayla Sparks, Khiry Sparks, Kristina Sparks, Melissa Spence, Jason Spurlock, Julie Stanfield, Jessie Starr, Lorenzo Stevens, Sean Stewart, Tyanna Stewart, Arthur Straw, Kyle Szalai.

Cailee Tatro, Tiana Tatum, Amber-Rose Taylor, Lawrence Tennille, Jamie Thayer, Rachael Thomas, Autumn Thornsberry, Nina Tolentino, Stephanie Tomlin, Jennifer Troost, Zachary Tykoski, Margaret Van Dyke, Jessica Vandbrook, Leo Veloz, Kailey Vowles, Kali Wadsworth, Savannah Walker, Ashley Weddle, Felicia Weir, Ashley Williams, Jenna Williams.

Kenneth Williams, Nicholas Williams, Jarret Williamson, Zachary Williamson, Barbara Wilson, Shane Wilson, Thomas Winkles, Brianna Winn, Zachary Wiper and Kaylynn Wright.

KB Toys collects gift cards for CLF

The Children's Leukemia Foundation of Michigan has more than \$1,300 in gift cards to give out, thanks to a fundraiser at the KB Toys store in Westland shopping Center.

Store manager Tonia Schneider presented the CLF with gift cards totaling \$1,360 on Nov. 27 to support their Holiday Toys Program. The money was raised during a store-sponsored gift card drive and raffle of a Tickle Me Elmo doll earlier in the month.

It also included a donation from Westland Shopping Center.

"These very generous gift cards are the result of many people working together, including Tonia, her staff, Westland mall management, and the many KB Toy's customers who donated," said Kristen West, CLF patient services director. "We are so appreciative of their efforts."

The cards will be used to purchase toys provided to child patients and their siblings and the children of adult patients throughout the state of Michigan that have been affected by leukemia and lymphoma through CLF's holiday toys program.

During the 2006 holiday season, CLF will deliver gift packages to more than 950 children



Denise Mills, Westland Shopping Center marketing manager, (left) and Tonia Schneider, KB Toys Westland store manager, stand by the sign showing how much in gift cards customers helped raise for CLF.

and teens around the state and in all 83 counties.

The Tickle Me Elmo raffle helped to generate the shopper's excitement and interest in the gift card drive to support CLF, according to Schneider, who developed the promotion for her store.

"I hope the gift card drive will eventually catch on with other area KB Toy stores because the last thing anyone in a family impacted by cancer thinks about is buying gifts," said Schneider. Joie Lewis of Westland was

the winner of the special 10th anniversary edition of Tickle Me Elmo.

Children's Leukemia Foundation of Michigan is an independent state-wide organization that provides information, financial assistance and emotional support to families of adults and children affected by leukemia, lymphoma and related blood disorders.

To learn more about the CLF holiday toys program, visit its Web site at www.leukemi-michigan.org.

AROUND WESTLAND

Author visits

Jim C. Hines, the author of *Goblin Quest* and the soon-to-be released *Goblin Hero*, will be at the William P. Faust Public Library Saturday, Jan. 13, for workshops for teens and writers.

The teen session will be 1-2 p.m., while the writer's workshop will be 2:30-4 p.m. Register at the reference desk or call the library at (734) 326-6123.

The library is at 6123 Central City Parkway, north of Ford.

New Year's Eve

Ring in the New Year with a New Year's Eve Party at the AMVETS Post 171 Hall, 1217 Merriman, north of Palmer, Westland.

Doors will open at 6:30 p.m., with dinner served at 7 p.m.

The cost is \$25 per person and includes an open bar, dinner and dancing. Tickets are available in advance at the post. Call (734) 721-9440.

Book group

The Science Fiction and Fantasy Discussion Group at the William P. Faust Public Library will be poring over the pages of *Variable Star* by Robert Heinlein and Spider Robinson when it meets at 7 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 31, in meeting room A.

For more information, call the library at (734) 326-6123.

Euchre games

Friday Night Euchre/Pinochle Card Parties start at 7:30 p.m. at St. Bernardine Parish in Westland. Doors open at 7 p.m. No partner is needed. Admission is \$5

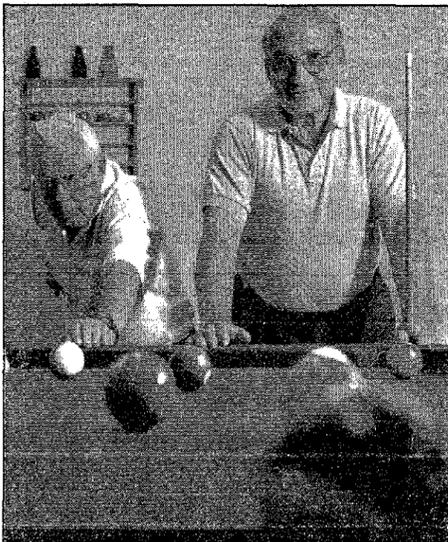
and includes refreshments, snacks and cash prizes. A 50/50 raffle also is available. The scheduled dates are Jan. 7, 5 12, 26 and Feb. 2, 9, 16. Call (734) 427-5150.

Bingo

The Dyer Senior Center invites residents to play bingo at 1 p.m. Wednesdays at the center, 36745 Marquette, Westland. For more information, call Mary Browe at (734) 419-2020.

Praise and worship

Westwood Community Church holds praise and worship services at 10 a.m. Sundays at 6500 N. Wayne Road at Hunter in Westland. The church also offers a children's church and nursery. For more information, call (734) 254-0093.



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Anything you can give right now will make a difference.

Your gift of \$30 feeds a child for one month. Even a gift of \$1.00 will provide breakfast, lunch and dinner for a hungry child today.

It's not too late to donate now - before the tax year closes. If you are a Michigan resident, you may get back 50% of your donation to Gleaners as a tax credit.

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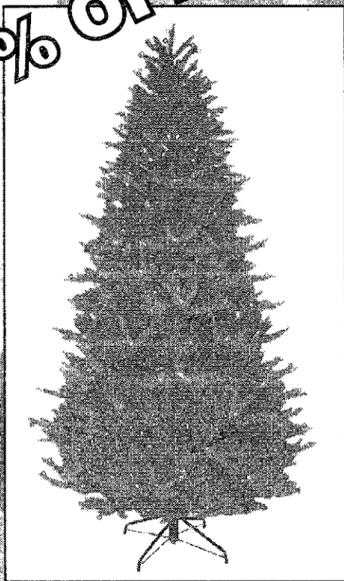


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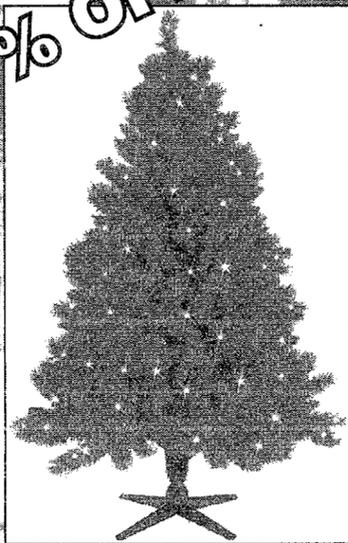


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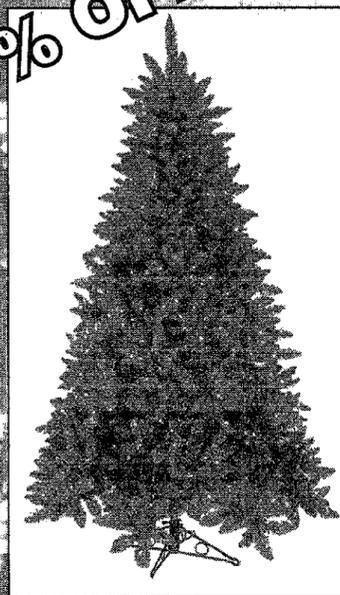
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If you want to submit an item for the religion calendar, fax it to (734) 591-7279 or write: Religion Calendar, Observer Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48150. The deadline for an announcement to appear in the Thursday edition is noon Monday.

DECEMBER

Christmas caroling

6 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 21, at St. Mary's Hospital, 36475 Five Mile, Livonia. A fun activity presented by Bethany Suburban West, a Catholic organization providing peer support for the divorced and separated of all faiths,

and Single Place. For details, call (734) 531-9479 or (248) 349-0911.

Festive Eve Eucharist

6 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 24, at Episcopal Church of the Holy Spirit, 9083 Newburgh, Livonia. Guest organist will be Joan Haggard. Christmas Day Holy Eucharist will be 10 a.m. Monday, Dec. 25.

Services

Worship at 9:30 a.m. and 11 a.m., Christmas Eve service with music and readings highlighting the wonderful events surrounding our Savior's birth in Bethlehem 7 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 24, in the auditorium at Memorial Church of Christ, 35475 Five Mile, Livonia. Bible School classes at 9:30 a.m. and

10:45 a.m. as usual. For more information, call (734) 464-6722.

Holiday services

Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve are both on Sunday this year. There will be one service those mornings at 10 a.m. On Dec. 24 we will observe the fourth Sunday in Advent with Lessons and Carols. Christmas will be celebrated later that day at 4:30 p.m., 7:30 p.m. and 11 p.m. at Holy Cross Evangelical Lutheran Church, 30650 Six Mile, between Middlebelt and Merriman, Livonia. Everyone in the community is welcome to attend!

Sermon series

Presented by Anglican Church of

Livonia (www.HisChurch.us/Virgin) Part 2 is Christmas a fairy tale? 10 a.m. Sunday, Dec. 24, Part 3 is God in the flesh 7 p.m. Dec. 24, Christmas Eve Service. All three parts take place at Livonia YMCA, 14255 Stark Road. For more information, call (248) 442-0422 or visit www.HisChurch.us.

Christmas services

Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, 28000 New Market Road, Farmington Hills, will hold special services on Christmas Eve, Sunday, Dec. 24 at 10 a.m., a family drama at 5 p.m. and traditional candlelight service at 7:30 p.m. Christmas Day service will be at 10 a.m. to ring in the King. More information available on Web site at www.popicms.org or by calling (248) 553-3380.

Prince of Peace Lutheran Church is a community site for the American Red Cross blanket drive. New twin size blankets are being collected for the homeless. This campaign runs through Jan. 1, 2007. The Red Cross would like to collect 7,000 blankets. Donations may be dropped off 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Christmas Eve services

9:30 a.m. Sunday, Dec. 24; 4 p.m. Family Service with child care provided; 9 p.m. Choir Concert, 9:30 p.m. Festival Candlelight Eucharist, at Trinity Episcopal Church, 11575 Belleville Road, Belleville. Call (734) 699-3361.

Christmas dinner

Noon to 2:30 p.m. Monday, Dec. 25, at Unity of Livonia, 28660 Five Mile, between Inkster and Middlebelt. Call (734) 421-1760. Twelve-step meetings follow the meal for those who wish to attend.

Christmas services

11 a.m. and 6 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 24 services feature music by concert violinist Melody Wootton and guest vocalists Jon and Jamie Vandenburg, at Grace Baptist Church, 280 East Lincoln, Birmingham. Nursery care provided. For more information, call (248) 646-2000, ext. 0 or 10.

Christmas Day dinner

Dinner for anyone who is alone or doesn't have anywhere to go on Christmas Day, dinner will be served 1:30 p.m. Monday, Dec. 25 (doors open at 1 p.m.) at Saint Dunstan Catholic Church, 1616 Belton, Garden City. There is no charge for the dinner but reservations are necessary. Call Mary or John at (734) 425-3282 for reservations or more information.

World Peace service

6:30 a.m. Sunday, Dec. 31, guest speaker is Robert Weir, Citizens for Peace facilitator for Western Michigan and author of Star of Hope, a biography of John McConnell, the founder of Earth Day, at Unity of Livonia, 28660 Five Mile, between Inkster and Middlebelt. Call (734) 421-1760.

New Year's Eve dance

Presented by Bethany Suburban West, a Catholic organization providing peer support for the divorced and separated of all faiths. Tickets \$35 and available now. First 100 ticket holders will have the chance for a cash prize, drawing will be at the dance. All separated, divorced and singles welcome. For details, call (313) 996-8644.

Singles New Year's Eve

Catholic Singles New Year's Eve Dinner & Dance catering to singles in their 30s, 40s and 50s 7 p.m. to 1 a.m. Sunday, Dec. 31. For tickets and information, visit www.CatholicSinglesNYE.com or call Kathleen at (734) 657-7750.

Worship service

All are welcome to attend 11 a.m. worship service Sundays, at Good Shepherd Reformed Church, 6500 N. Wayne at Hunter, Westland. Join us at 7 p.m. Tuesdays in November and December as Pastor Louise Monacelli introduces The Jesus Experience, a series of videos offering insight into the people and situations God used to expand the church around the world. For more information, call (734) 721-0800.

UPCOMING

Grief support

Widowed friends, a peer group, is offering a six week series covering phases of grief, dealing with loneliness and coping with the loss of a spouse beginning 2-3:30 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 7, at Prince of Peace Parish, 4300 Walnut Lake Road, west of Orchard Lake Road, West Bloomfield. A \$20 fee is payable at the first meeting and covers all materials. Call (248) 681-9424 to register before Jan. 4.

Monthly dance

Presented by Bethany Suburban West, a Catholic organization providing peer support for the divorced and separated of all faiths, 8 p.m. to midnight (doors open at 7:30 p.m.) Saturday, Jan. 6, at St. Robert Bellarmine, 27101 W. Chicago at Inkster. Cost is \$10, includes refreshments. For details, call (734) 261-5716.

Christmas concert

Amahl and the Night Visitors, a concert presentation of Gian Carlo Menotti's delightful one-act opera featuring boy treble Jonah Yousif in the title role, and the rest of the cast and chorus comprised of members of the Kirk Chancel, Boys and Girls Choirs 4:30 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 14, at Kirk in the Hills, 1340 West Long Lake Road, Bloomfield Hills. For details, call (248)

626, 2515, ext. 109. This event is of particular appeal to families.

A beautiful day

In the Neighborhood features the music of Mister Rogers 7:30 p.m. Friday-Saturday, Jan. 19-20, at First Presbyterian Church, 1669 West Maple, Birmingham. Mr. McFeeley (David Newell) is joined by local vocalists Judie Cochill, Marc Meyers and Tom Trenney and the Neighborhood Jazz Combo. No tickets required, no admission, but a freewill offering will be collected. Proceeds benefit Variety FAR Conservator, a nonprofit that provides creative arts therapy and recreation services for children with autism and other disabilities. Audience members are also encouraged to bring new or gently-used sweaters to contribute to the Mister Rogers' Sweater Drive for families who need extra warmth this winter. A meet the artists reception follow the concert. For more information, call (248) 540-9124.

Education pilgrimage

The third annual education pilgrimage of faith and hope to El Salvador is being organized by Our Lady of Good Counsel Catholic Church in Plymouth, assisted by CRISPAZ (Christians for Peace in El Salvador). The pilgrimage will take place from Feb. 11-18, 2007. This is an intensive learning experience with special emphasis given to the voice and experience of the poor and marginalized. You will visit martyr sites, grassroots organizations, a rural community, and hear speakers on the history, politics, and economy of El Salvador. For details, call coordinator Richard Dahlke at (734) 455-6474.

ONGOING

Worship services

Sunday Worship services are 8 a.m. (traditional) and 10:30 a.m. (contemporary). Sunday School & Adult Bible Study at 9:15 a.m. Sunday. Grace Lutheran Church, 46001 Warren, between Canton Center and Beck, Canton. For information, call (734) 637-8160.

Worship service

At 10:30 a.m. Sundays at New Beginnings United Methodist Church, 16175 Delaware at Puritan, Redford. Congregation is hearing lessons from 1 Peter. For more information, call (313) 255-6330.

Adult literacy classes

Available for those wishing to improve their reading and writing skills. Open to adults age 18 and over. Trained tutors available for day and evening hours. Call (734) 421-0472. Leave your name and phone number and someone will be in contact with you.

Ladies Bible studies

Began Tuesday, Sept. 12, at Detroit First Church of the Nazarene, 21260 Haggerty, Northville. Call (248) 348-7600.

Women of the Word offer the Life Change Study of the book of Genesis by NavPress from 9:30-11:15 a.m. (\$15 registration fee includes interdenominational materials and free child care for ages through 5, and a study of the Patriarchs by Beth Moor from 6:45-8:15 p.m. (\$20 fee and no child care).

Personal ministry

Due Season Christian Church is a non-denominational, multicultural, full gospel church that offers Sunday worship services at 10 a.m. and Tuesday night Bible study at 7:15 p.m. Services are currently held at Stevenson High School on Six Mile, west of Farmington Road, Livonia. All are welcome. For information, call (248) 960-8063 or visit www.DueSeason.org.

Farmington Women Aglow

Meets from 5-8 p.m. on the second Tuesday of the month at the Farmington Community Library, 32737 W. 12 Mile. For more information, call Linda Boone at (248) 476-1053.

Scripture studies

From 7-8:30 p.m. Mondays in the lower level of Our Lady of Loretto Church, Six Mile and Beech Daly, Redford. Call (313) 534-9000.

TOPS

Stands for Take Off Pounds Sensibly, the group meets at 7 p.m. every Thursday evening at St. Thomas a Becket Church, 555 S. Lilley, Canton. Weight-in is from 6:15-6:55 p.m. It is a weight support group that encourages members to lose weight sensibly and keep it off. For more information, call Mary at (734) 394-1328.

Learner's Bible study

At 7 p.m. Mondays, in Room A101, at Ward Presbyterian Church, 40000 W. Six Mile, Northville. Call (248) 374-5920.

Church service

Loving God by loving people, meets at 10 a.m. Sunday at Westwood Community Church, 6500 N. Wayne Road at Hunter, Westland. Doughnuts and coffee served. Call (734) 254-0093.

Senior activities

Gathering for seniors 50 years and older at 11:30 a.m. on the third Friday of every month at Riverside Park Church of God, 11771 Newburgh at Plymouth, Livonia. For more information, call (734) 464-0990. Put together a salad dish and come out and meet other seniors. Lunch is served followed by fellowship with some games and stories.

Church activities

St. James Presbyterian Church

offers a Thursday dinner at 6 p.m. for \$5 prepared by Susan Navarro.

The Cookie Lady, followed by Bible study at 7 p.m. and Chancel Choir rehearsal at 8 p.m., Thrift store is open from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. every Saturday; 10 a.m. women's study group second Saturday of the month, and Sunday worship at 10 a.m. (nursery available) and children's class at 10:15 a.m. at 25350 W. Six Mile, Redford. Call (313) 534-7730.

Eucharistic adoration

The monthly program of Parish Prayer and Eucharistic Adoration continues the third Wednesday of each month at St. Michael's Church of Livonia, corner of Plymouth and Hubbard roads. The church will be open for worship from 10 a.m. until the 7 p.m. Benediction service. For information, call (734) 261-5331.

Worship services

All are welcome to attend worship service at St. Paul's Presbyterian Church, Five Mile and Inkster roads, Livonia. Service is held at 10 a.m. every Sunday with an education hour all for ages at 9 a.m. Call (734) 422-1470.

Unity of Livonia

Services at 9:30 a.m. and 11 a.m. Sundays at 28660 Five Mile, between Middlebelt and Inkster roads. Call (734) 421-1760.

Shabbat services

The doors of Congregation Beit

Kodesh, a Conservative synagogue at 31840 W. Seven Mile, between Farmington and Merriman, Livonia, are open to the Jewish community of southeastern Michigan. Call (248) 477-8974.

Bet Chaverim

Services are open to all living in the western counties including Canton, Plymouth, Livonia, and Northville. The congregation follows traditions of Reform Judaism. Interfaith families welcome to attend services at 321 S. Ridge, south of Cherry Hill, Canton. Call (734) 646-3864 for information or visit www.betchaverim.com.

Detroit World Outreach

A nondenominational church with cutting edge drama productions, energized contemporary music, high-tech video and lighting, programs for kids and teens, for college students, singles, married adults and seniors. Services are at 8 a.m. and 11 a.m. Sunday (6:30 p.m. the first Sunday of the month), Sunday school for all ages at 10 a.m. and Wednesdays at 9 a.m. and 7 p.m. Call (313) 255-2222.

Trinity Episcopal Church

Sunday Services at 8 a.m. and 10 a.m., Wednesday service at 6:15 p.m., Bible Studies and Worship Center for all ages, at 11575 Belleville Road, (four miles south of Michigan Avenue), Belleville. Parents with Young Children Bible Study at 6 p.m. Sundays, includes dinner and child care. Call (734) 699-3361.

Shabbat Rocks

A musical celebration precedes traditional Shabbat service once a month at Adat Shalom Synagogue, 29901 Middlebelt in Farmington Hills. For more information, call (248) 851-5100 or visit www.adatshalom.org.

English classes

Conversational English as a Second Language classes are being offered for adults of all ages and backgrounds at 7 p.m. Monday and Tuesday at Christ Our Savior Lutheran Church, 14175 Farmington Road, Livonia. Tutors will work on a one-to-one ratio to help students better understand and speak the English language. No charge. To register, call (734) 525-0191 or (734) 522-6830.

Sunday school

Congregation Beit Kodesh, at 31840 Seven Mile, between Farmington and Merriman, Livonia, is registering children, age 4 and up, for Sunday school. Financial assistance available. Special discounts for new members. For more information, call (248) 477-8974.

Services

St. John Lutheran Church (23225 Gill Road, Farmington Hills) invites the community to a new worship service at 5:30 p.m. Saturdays. Also, Sunday traditional worship services are at 8:30 a.m. and 11 a.m.; contemporary service is at 9:50 a.m.; and Sunday school hour for all ages is at 9:45 a.m. Call (248) 474-0584 for more information.

Single Point Ministries

For ages 30 and older, join more than 350 single adults at 11:30 a.m. Sundays for fellowship and related topics in Knox Hall at Ward Evangelical Presbyterian Church, 40000 Six Mile, Northville. Coffee, doughnuts, conversations are present. Call (248) 374-5920. Tennis continues from 1-5 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays, and 4-7 p.m. weekdays any time the weather is above 45 degrees, at Rotary Park, Six Mile and Hubbard, Livonia.

Bible talks

4 p.m. Sundays at the Friendship Center, 1119 Newburgh, Westland. Call (734) 728-9157.

Worship services

All are welcome to attend worship services 10 a.m. Sundays at St. Paul's Presbyterian Church, Five Mile and Inkster roads, Livonia. For more information, call (734) 422-1470.

Passages

Obituaries, Memorials, Remembrances

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BILLY JOE YOUNG

Passed away November 23, 2006. Memorial service will be held Friday, December 22, 2006, 11AM at Grace United Methodist Church, 400 East Field Ave, Venice, FL 34285. Farley Funeral Home, Venice Chapel is in charge of arrangements.



EVELYN M. GILBERT

Age 85 of Plymouth, died December 17, 2006. She was born on January 24, 1921 in Dearborn. She was a resident of the Plymouth Community for 48 years and was past President of the National Farm and Garden Club of Plymouth. Beloved wife of the late James. Dear mother of Beverly (Michael) Gregory and James R. Gilbert. Grandmother of Timothy M. Gregory and Kristyn (Paul) Mullens and great-grandmother of Emerson G. Wigand and Arianna M. Mullens. Funeral Services were held on Thursday at 11 am from the Schrader-Howell Funeral Home of Plymouth.

FRANCES "BETTE" E. MUELLER (nee CHIPMAN)

Age 85 of Rochester Hills, died December 18, 2006. She had lived in the Boulevard Hills Nursing home, formerly Peachwood, for the last 18 years, first in Assisted Living and then in Nursing Care. Bette was born December 16, 1921 in Detroit. She lived and worked in Detroit all her life. In 1955, she married Karl E. Mueller. They spent most of their married life in Royal Oak. Bette worked as an executive secretary for several companies and her husband was a technical writer. Bette was predeceased by her husband in 1987. Having contracted polio at the age of eight, Bette lived with physical limitations caused by leg weakness. During her childhood, she loved the Easter Seal camp and lake vacations with her family. Approximately 19 years ago, she contracted Post-Polio Syndrome. Later, she became wheelchair bound. She was the youngest resident of Borden Court, the assisted living section of Peachwood in Rochester Hills, and was featured in a number of their early ads because she was so attractive and so enthusiastic about her new surroundings and care. Bette had a keen interest in the world around her, politics and nature, and read several magazines faithfully. Bette was a member of the Congregational Church of Birmingham in Bloomfield Hills. She was admired by church members who were her faithful friends and visitors and by others who visited her over the years for the indomitable spirit. Memorial visitation will take place from 10:30 am until the time of the service at 11 am at the Congregational Church of Birmingham on Thursday, December 28, 2006. Arrangements by Sawyer-Fuller Funeral Home. Interment will take place at Forest Lawn Cemetery in Detroit. Memorial contributions can be made to the Easter Seal Society or the Congregational Church of Birmingham.

JACK W. REYNOLDS

Age 89, of Plymouth, passed away December 17, 2006. He was born November 1, 1917 in Redford, Michigan to Walter J. and Verna E. (Wright) Reynolds. Jack was united in marriage to Janet (Stewart) Reynolds on September 1, 1945. He had been a resident of Plymouth for 45 years, and was formerly of Northville. Jack received a Bachelor of Science in Marketing from the University of Detroit and worked in Sales and Marketing for Gulf Oil. He proudly served his country as a Lieutenant (jg) with the Navy during WWII, where he received the American Campaign Medal, Asiatic-Pacific Area Medal, and WWII Victory Medal. Jack was a member of the VFW Post 4012 in Northville. He was an avid golfer, who also enjoyed bowling. He is survived by his sons Jay Reynolds of Birmingham and Jeff Reynolds of Plymouth. He was preceded in death by his wife, parents, and 1 sister. Private family services for Mr. Reynolds will be held. He will be laid to rest at Rural Hill Cemetery in Northville. The family would appreciate memorial contributions to American Red Cross, Southeastern Michigan Chapter, 100 E. Mack Ave., Detroit, MI 48201. Arrangements entrusted to Casterline Funeral Home, Inc. of Northville.

JOAN L. QUICK

Age 76, of Stuart, FL., beloved wife of Mack Quick for 54 years, passed away on December 14, 2006. Besides her devoted husband, she is survived by their two children and their families: Greg Quick, his wife Krystine, and their sons Joseph, James & Michael; and Jane Brennan, her husband Henry, and their daughters Kate, Clare, and Margaret. Her great love of children took her into teaching after graduating from Western Michigan University. Whether caring for her own children, her grandchildren, or the children in Indiantown, where she volunteered, Joan's greatest joy came from sharing her knowledge and love with the children. She gave these gifts of herself freely without desire for recognition, knowing the joy of this giving was its own infinite reward. Her genuine concern and caring for others was displayed in countless acts of kindness and in the sharing of her gifts with her many friends as an active member of the communities in which she lived, especially Mariner Sands, where she spent the last 20 years of her life. An unflinching optimist, she faced life's hardships with an uncommon grace and a determination to choose a positive attitude. For this, she earned the admiration and respect of her family & friends. Arrangements have been entrusted to the care of Martin Funeral Home & Crematory, 961 S. Kanner Highway, Stuart, FL. 1(772)223-5550.



LINDSEY LINNELL (PENSON) SANDERS

Age 35, of Southfield, daughter of Charles and Carol Penson and wife to Tyrone D. Sanders, Jr. Lindsey was born August 20, 1971 in Southfield. She graduated from Gesu Catholic School, Detroit Benedictine High School, and Michigan State University. On the morning of Wednesday, December 13th, Lindsey perished unexpectedly. She leaves to cherish her life, legacy and memory her loving husband, Tyrone D. Sanders, Jr.; two adorable children, Lauryn Linnell and Bryce Logan; parents Charles and Carol Penson; grandfathers Carroll B. Evans and Isaac N. Penson; in-laws, Troy and Pamela Rambo; grandparents Freeman and Ira Pickett; as well as a host of other family members and friends. Services were entrusted to HALEY FUNERAL DIRECTORS in Southfield. Funeral services were held on Tuesday, December 19, 2006, at Hope United Methodist Church in Southfield. In lieu of flowers, memorial donations in Memory of Lindsey Sanders may be made to the Southfield Community Foundation, 25630 Evergreen Road, Southfield, MI 48075.

Lindsey's Life-Story, Condolences & Directions can be found at www.haleyfuneraldirectors.com

WINIFRED HUGHES LONGLEY

Age 92, of Birmingham and Grosse Pointe, Michigan, died on December 17 of complications from a broken hip. She had resided at an assisted living community in Woodbridge, Connecticut for the past six years. Mrs. Longley was predeceased by her husband of 53 years, the late John H. Longley. The daughter of the late Frederick and Kathleen Hughes, "Winnie" was a beloved mother, volunteer, artist and silversmith. Her Michigan roots go back several generations and she was well known by many in Grosse Pointe and Birmingham over the 86 years she lived in the area. She was active in The Village Woman's Club, Libri, Ibox, Bayview Yacht Club and Grosse Pointe Memorial Church. She is survived by her three sons, James Longley of Olympia, Washington; William Longley of Atlanta, Georgia and John Longley Jr. of Fairfield, Connecticut as well as six grandchildren. Winifred Longley touched many lives in Michigan and she was loved and admired by all who knew her. She will be remembered for her optimism, consideration of others, generosity and service to the community. A memorial service will be held in the spring of 2007 for Winnie and her husband Jack in Grosse Pointe. In lieu of flowers, a donation may be made to the National Osteoporosis Foundation.

LLOYD ALLEN RHOADS

With deepest sorrow we announce the death of Lloyd Allen Rhoads, age 85, wife of 53 years Goldie Lucille (Carter) Rhoads, died Dec. 29, 1994. Survived by son, Larry Rhoads & daughter, Linda Rhoads and his sisters, Exie Manns & Charlotte Bruce. He was a Michigan Technological University graduate, WWII Vet & owned a commercial business building in Detroit. He traveled to Hawaii often and many other destinations. He was a Mason & Shriner supporting Shriners Crippled Children's Hospital. Memorial service to be held Friday, December 22, 2006, 7:00 P.M. at Thayer-Rock Funeral Home, 33603 Grand River Ave, Farmington, MI.

MARTIN GEORGE STOVER

Age 73, of Rochester Hills passed away December 18, 2006. Mr. Stover owned and operated Stover's Lawn Mowing and Landscaping for 32 years. He was an avid hunter and loved the outdoors. Beloved husband of Lois (nee: Moore) celebrating 52 years. Dearest dad of Richard (LouAnn) Stover, Ron Stover, and Myrtle (Art) Thompson. Dear grandpa of Tim (Cathy) Stover, Anna (Jeff) Maty, Paul (Christine) Stover, Stephanie and Katlyn Thompson. Dear great grandpa of Katelyn Stover and Elora Maty. Visitation will be Thursday 10:30-8:00 p.m. with Funeral Service Friday 10:30 a.m. at The Pixley Funeral Home, 322 W. University Drive in Rochester. Memorials to Kimberly Anne Gillary Foundation, 201 W. Big Beaver, Suite 1020, Troy, MI 48064 appreciated. Share a memory with the family visit www.mem.com



PATSY L. HERBERT

Age 84, passed away on December 13, 2006. A native of Louisville, KY, Patsy moved to MI and became an elementary teacher for Inkster Public Schools. During her 37 years of service, she became a vibrant force in the community as well. She retired in 1982 as principal of Carver School, traveling worldwide and staying active in numerous organizations. Patsy has received many honors most recently the YWCA Senior Woman of the Year. Patsy will be missed by her devoted relatives and all of her adoring friends. Services were held at Smith Chapel AME on December 20, 2006 with interment at United Memorial Gardens in Plymouth.



OBITUARY POLICY

The first five "billed" lines of an obituary are published at no cost. All additional lines will be charged at \$4 per line. You may place a picture of your loved one for an additional cost of only \$6. Symbolic emblems may be included at no cost (example: American Flags, religious symbols, etc.)

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Nippy winter reveals new nature tales

"Even in Castles I Have Felt The Searching Breath Of The Wintry Wind"

- Kyoroku

Winter's breath transformed the landscape. She changed the game plan.

Change came overnight. And winter's approach makes the mind ramble.

Forty-eight hours after that burst of Thanksgiving week warmth, a few confused blabber-mouth spring peepers figured out their seasonal error and fell silent. Within hours, first ice laced shorelines of woodland ponds with delicate design and incredible beauty. And as is their way, coyotes transformed from cryptic roadside scavengers of warm meat to bold, yet wary, open meadow hunters. Autumn's innocence gave way to winter's bite.

At first light I haul firewood from the four-cord pile, brushing off the occasional woolly bear caterpillar that sought



Michigan Naturally

Jonathan Schechter

sanctuary between the oak and cherry. And yes, I gently place the curled up caterpillars back in the pile of split and stacked wood. Will they survive? I have no idea. I do it anyway. A red squirrel watches from a limb, with an apple. My gift.

Wind bites my face in the moments of dawn. I embrace those pre-coffee moments, the wintry breath of a new season looming. I dream of snowshoeing and zombie-like patience ice fishing for perch with friends who understand. Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote, "Nature never wears a mean appearance." Very true: I remember that from hippie days in Vermont.

Nature becomes generous to predators — and naturalists — when first snows lace the land,



JONATHAN SCHECHTER

A red squirrel savors an apple.

for she gives up her secrets, betraying the movements of wild creatures.

This is a good time of the year, a woods-walking invigorating time. Intimacy is revealed. A rabbit track leads to a thicket. Meadow mice leave snaking trails under snow. The deep cut of a deer's hoof slices through snow and frost crystals of mud. And our great elusive predator, the coy-

ote, leaves trails and tales for those who can't resist studying the encounters.

Here and there that trail hesitates, as if the coyote wonders if it's too hard to dig out a hibernating woodchuck. It is too hard. And on the early December day I followed the coyote trail from the edge of my barn to the pond's edge, both she and I stopped at the water's edge, 50 feet shy of the snow-capped beaver lodge. She? Males mark to the side of their tracks. Females squat. Look to the urine trail for the gender answer.

I suspect that coyote knows nothing of the green frogs, bullfrogs and turtles at pond's bottom, in states of near motionless. And I wonder if the coyote knows of the treefrogs and wood frogs, frozen like ice cubes in breathless suspended animation under decomposing logs. For me, knowledge of the cryptic creatures of winter is just that, knowledge to appreciate, sometimes to

share. For the coyote: knowledge is life.

As the daylight wanes and a crackling cold night comes to life, a distant hoot carries on still air from the swamp beyond the iced pond. Not the great horned owl of last year, but the melodic melody of an elusive, less common, barred owl.

For that swamp owl and coyote, nature's way in winter is kinder than we think.

Rabbits and mice move about in darkness, across the meadows in their play for

life, search for food and ways to retain body fat. Follow tracks and look for tales in the early days of winter at first light — before rising sun ruins tracks — and the bold story of night predation; belly-happy predators and creatures turned to protein unfolds.

That is winter. But the woods and the ponds are not asleep. Just different.

Jonathan Schechter writes on nature's way. E-mail him at oaknature@aol.com.

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