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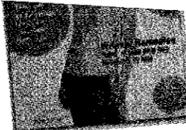
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SUNDAY

January 16, 2005

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VOLUME 40 NUMBER 67

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City takes over annual school board election

BY SUE MASON
STAFF WRITER

The Wayne-Westland Community Schools isn't leaving anything to chance when it comes to this year's school election, even if it means skirting a new state law.

The district took the initiative last week to call for the annual election, which will be held on Tuesday, May 3. The vote by the Board of Education comes less than a month before nominating petitions are due for the election.

Under the state's election consolidation law, the district no longer operates an election office. Filing for school board offices must now be done through the Westland city clerk's office.



Turner



Becher

Up for grabs in the election are two seats currently held by veteran board trustee Ed Turner and newcomer Steve Becher who was elected to school board last June to fill the remaining year of a term held by the late Mathew McCusker. Both are four-year terms.

"I absolutely can tell you there is a May election," said Assistant Westland City Clerk Nancy Bonaparte.

The filing deadline is 4 p.m. Feb. 8 for the election. The deadline comes more than two months earlier than in previous years because the school board opted for the May date for its annual elections. It was one of four dates provided by the new law.

But, not only did the election date change, the law also moved responsibility for the election from the school district to the county clerk or local clerk.

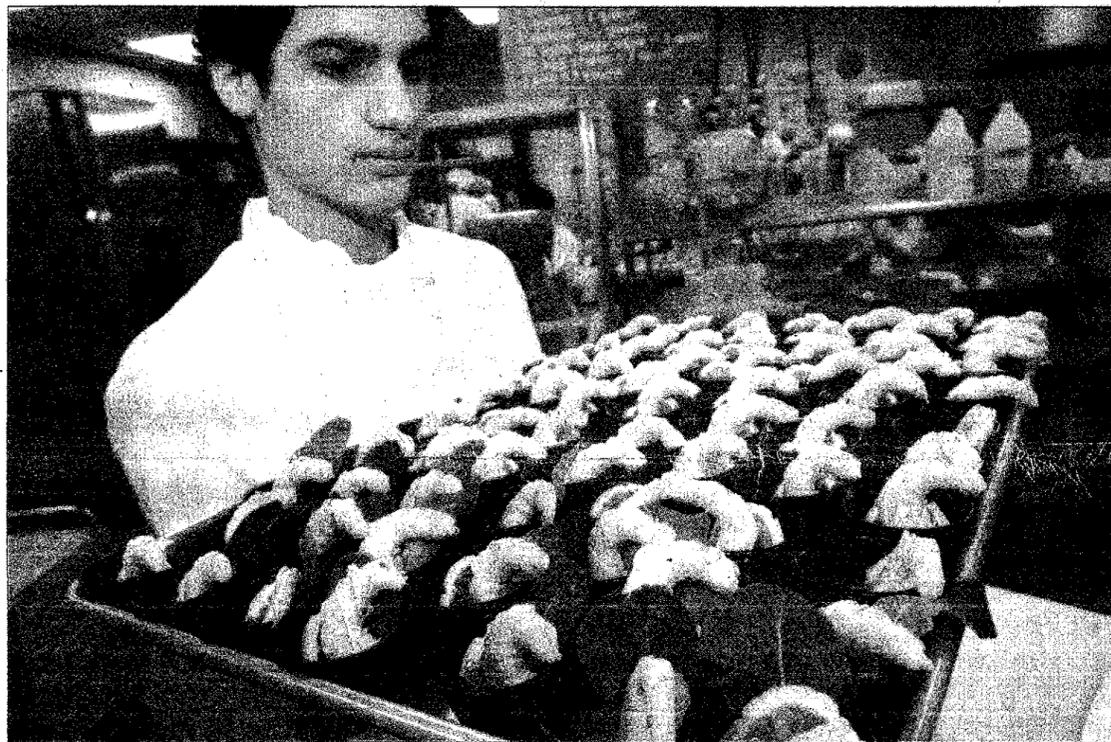
In the case of districts like Wayne-Westland which takes in all of Wayne, a large portion of Westland and portions of Canton Township, Inkster and Romulus, the responsibility falls with the county clerk to run the election, unless a local clerk opts to be the election coordinator.

Westland City Clerk Eileen DeHart has said she will do that for the school district.

As a result, candidate petition packets are now available at the clerk's office in Westland City Hall, 36601 Ford. Residents can get their names on the ballot by gathering the signatures of 40 registered voters or by paying a \$100 filing fee, payable to the city of Westland. Candidates also must complete affidavit of identity forms for the election. The documents must be filed at the Westland clerk's office.

Candidates who circulate petitions will have to be careful in gathering the signatures of registered voters, according to Bonaparte. There

PLEASE SEE ELECTION, A4



PHOTOS BY TOM HAWLEY | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

William D. Ford Career Technical Center student Dan Masserang moves a partially complete tray of shrimp cocktails to another work area in the culinary arts kitchen. The shrimp were served to guests at the North American International Auto Show Preview Gala Friday evening. Masserang is a senior at Wayne Memorial High School.

New computer would link city departments

BY DARRELL CLEM
STAFF WRITER

Westland city leaders are embarking on a new technology plan that will streamline city business and ultimately improve services for residents.

Using \$247,850 in cable-TV franchise fees, city officials plan to start implementing a new computer system that will link city buildings and make it easier for employees to communicate.

"I think we're really antiquated when it comes to technology," Mayor Sandra Cicirelli said.

The plan will dramatically boost e-mail capabilities and allow departments to quickly share information about issues ranging from broken water lines to building department documents to which streets need snowplowing.

Eventually, as other technology phases are implemented, local residents will be able to pay their taxes and water bills online or handle other business, such as

PLEASE SEE COMPUTER, A4

Show time

Students find niche at auto extravaganza

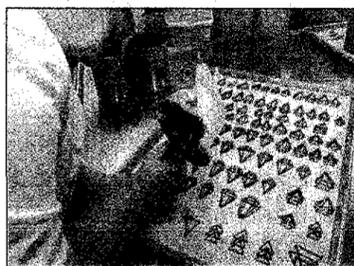
BY SUE MASON
STAFF WRITER

Astrology, numerology, whatever. It's good news for the culinary students at the William D. Ford Career Technical Center that Tony Paquette is a chef and not a fortune teller.

Three years ago Paquette was saying the appearance of his students at the Auto Show Gala was a one-shot deal. Last year, he again predicted that the Detroit Auto Dealers Association would be replacing his group with students from another program. Neither happened.

Friday evening, when Gov. Jennifer Granholm cut the ribbon for the preview party, he was back with his students, serving shrimp cocktail, charbroiled chicken with pasta and panera sauce, french pastries and punch.

"It's exciting," he said. "It's exciting for us



Culinary arts student Kassandra Kierpaul, a senior at John Glenn, creates chocolate triangles to decorate some of the french pastries.

and very exciting for the students. For us, we don't know who's who. It could be a president of a company to a worker who stops at our booth. It's glamorous, but it

allows the students a chance to shine."

Fifteen students represented the center at the fund-raising party, traditionally held the night before the auto show opens to the public.

For three years, the center's culinary arts students have prepared enough food to serve 6,000 guests - 140 pounds of dry pasta, 100 pounds of chicken breasts, thousands of shrimp and 6,000 pieces of french pastry.

The culinary arts staff selected the 15 students who work at the Cobo Hall event. This year's group had just one veteran of the gala, Angie Cetrone. The remainder were a combination of first- and second-year students.

"We're 105 students strong and there's no possible way we could do it without all 105 of those students," said Paquette. "The 15

PLEASE SEE STUDENTS, A2

Calling all former Academic All-Stars

Since 1985, the Observer & Eccentric has honored outstanding students through its Academic All-Star program.

This year marks the Observer's 20th year of honoring local students and we'd like to hear from our former Academic All-Stars.

If you were an Observer Academic All-Star, let us know what you have been doing since your selection. What did you study? What careers did you have? What's your life been like since that time? Tell us your story and include your high school graduation photo and a recent photo, too.

Special annual sections about the Academic All-Stars have saluted the intelligence, involvement and industry of the best and brightest students in public and private high schools around Oakland and Wayne counties.

This year, we're planning a special edition in honor of the program's 20th anniversary.

If you're a former All-Star or a parent who can provide information and photos about your former All-Star, e-mail Special Editor Mary Klemic at mklemic@oe.homecomm.net or mail to Observer & Eccentric, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham 48009 Attn: Mary Klemic. Be sure to include a phone number where you can be reached. You can e-mail photos in a jpeg format (please send largest size possible) and make sure photos are identified.

The special section will be published in May 2005.

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Kids! Grab your Crayons!

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Look for Big Bird in today's paper

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Committee studies needs of disabled

Mayor Sandra Cicirelli has formed a committee to study whether the needs of the city's disabled residents are being met.

"They will identify the needs of the community and how we can address those needs," Cicirelli said.

She has named four people to the panel - Michael Harris, Ernie Whaley, Ray Schuholz and Henry Johnson - and she will soon fill a fifth post. The members either have disabilities or work with the disabled.

"They can certainly bring their own personal experience to the table, as well as their professional experience in

some cases," the mayor said.

Federal law regulates what the city must do to make its buildings accessible to the disabled, but Cicirelli said the committee will ensure that no problems have been overlooked.

The group also may initiate educational programs to help the public better understand and accommodate the needs of disabled people, Cicirelli said. The committee may seek grants for such programs.

The committee hasn't started its work yet, but Cicirelli said she expects that its first meeting will be sometime in February.

STUDENTS

FROM PAGE A1

students that go down represent all of them."

Serving food at the gala is somewhat of a culmination of what the program has done for the DADA. In December, the students tapped to be at the gala went to Troy to serve the DADA board of directors a surf and turf lunch.

And on Wednesday, they provided 100 box lunches. Instead of using the traditional plastic foam containers, the students packed the lunches - turkey and Swiss or ham and cheese of croissants, pasta salad, chips and pickles - into white market bags and decorated them with tags listing the contents and attached with raffia.

Of course, it let the recipient know the lunch was by the culinary arts program.

For Friday evening's gala, six students worked as chefs, assembling the chicken and pasta with panera sauce. The others greeted guests, kept the serving trays filled, picked up empty plates and even handed out napkins.

Keeping with the auto show theme, the cam shaft, pistons and rotor, car parts were again used as props to help serve the food.

"It's real nice," Paquette said of the food station. "We're pulling out all the stops. But the big thing is going to be putting some showmanship in it with the food preparation."

The students also are discovering that gala regulars are looking for their food station.

According to Paquette, last year students heard one party-goer say, "Hey, hey, hey, they're here again," and another comment on their serving "real shrimp."

"Our students anticipate what their customers need," said Paquette. "The candles, the smells, it draws the people to us. It's crazy. It's a good time. We have a lot of fun, but by the end of the night, we're tired."

The culinary arts students aren't the only Career Tech students shining at the auto show.



PHOTOS BY TOM HAWLEY | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

John Glenn High School junior Samantha Passalacqua (left) receives instructions from pastry chef Mary Dobbs (right) on the chocolate dipped pretzels which were made for the auto show.

Students in the center's Auto Tech program along with instructors Mark Batko and Jim Schimer were at Cobo last Wednesday to participate in the Industry Preview Day's Tech Trek. The trek is made up of 50 questions which students answer by looking for answer in the displays at the show, said Cindy Candela, the center's job placement coordinator.

"The preview day is awesome," she said. "The students receive lunch and the industry sponsors fabulous prizes like Snap-On tool boxes, money and gifts. The auto dealers sponsor the kids for lunch and the show."

According to Candela, the auto dealers give the opportunity to see what careers are available to as many students as possible by keeping the cost at \$10 per student.

"They have a career day where they learn about marketing and design trends," she added. "GM, DaimlerChrysler, BMW, Center for Creative Studies are among those present."



Students Josh Matchinkowski junior at Melvindale High School (from left), Rachael LaSalle, a senior at Wayne Memorial High School, and Samantha Wojciechowski, a junior at John Glenn High School, work on the shrimp cups.

On Monday and Saturday, four Auto Tech students will work two shifts at the show's Automotive Youth Educational System exhibit.

The students, who are still in high school, work at dealerships.

"It's so phenomenal," said Candela. "They're so into cars. They talk to young people about auto careers."

Those students are assigned

job coaches and mentors and between their junior and senior years work with their mentor. The program comes with a \$3,600 Snap-On tool kit as a scholarship, "so you know these kids are serious about their work," Candela said. "It's not just about being an engineer, it's all the other automotive careers. It's a big deal."

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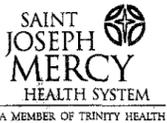
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Starfish appoints new COO

Starfish Family Services, the Inkster-based human services agency, has announced the appointment of DeWayne Wells as the agency's chief operating officer.

Wells, recognized as one of *Crain's Detroit Business* "40 under 40" in 2000, is former executive director of Capuchin Soup Kitchen in Detroit.

In his new position, he oversees all program activities and support personnel for Starfish Family Services, which represents more than 75 percent of the agency's \$10 million annual budget and more than 90 percent of its staff.

Wells, a Southfield resident, also serves on the board of directors for Southwest Counseling and Development Services, Gleaners Community Food Bank and Mercy High School.

"DeWayne brings both tremendous business acumen and a great sense of compassion to our agency," said Dr. Ouida Cash, Starfish chief executive officer. "As Starfish develops its national Family Success Model program, DeWayne's financial expertise and intimate knowledge of the business of running successful nonprofits is a significant asset."

Last year, Starfish Family Services served 8,252 at-risk adults and children throughout southeast Michigan through a broad variety of programs based on its unique Family Success Model.

Its programs include Head Start, Striving to Excel Professionally (STEP), Counterpoint Shelter and Crisis Center, GED training, and Safe Stay Nursery and Respite Center, among other programs.

Starfish Family Services is at 30000 Hively, Inkster. For more information, call the agency at (734) 728-3400.

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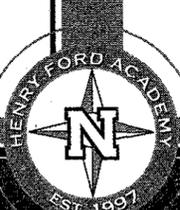
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Incredible opportunity for students of Wayne County entering the ninth grade in the fall of 2005.



Henry Ford Academy, an innovative four-year public high school that emphasizes the application of math, science and technology, is accepting ninth-grade applications from Wayne County residents for the 2005-2006 school year. The academy is culturally rich and provides students with an academically rigorous curriculum within a unique educational setting.

To download an application and learn more, visit: www.hfacademy.org. Or join us at our open house.

Wednesday, January 19, 5:30 - 7:30 p.m.

Sunday, January 23, 1:00 - 3:00 p.m.

Thursday, January 27, 5:30 - 7:30 p.m.

The Henry Ford Academy entrance is on the west end of Henry Ford Museum facing Oakwood Boulevard.

Henry Ford Academy

P.O. Box 1148, 20900 Oakwood Blvd., Dearborn, Michigan 48121-1148 Call 313.982.6200 to request an application and visit us online at www.HFAcademy.org.

Henry Ford Academy is a partnership between The Henry Ford and Ford Motor Company and is chartered by Wayne County Regional Educational Service Agency.

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Auto show has something for everyone

Cars and trucks have taken center stage at Cobo Hall with opening to the public this weekend of the 2005 North American International Auto Show (NAIAS).

The show is offering a jam-packed weekend of family-friendly entertainment, celebrity appearances and attractions. On the list of fun things to see and do at NAIAS 2005:

- Chevrolet - Z06 downloadable cell phone features. Visitors with video-enabled cell phones will be able to download custom Corvette ring tones, interviews and other video at Chevrolet's Corvette display area

- DUB Magazine Exhibit - DUB Magazine will be displaying such customized cars and trucks as the Chicago rapper Twista's 2005 DUB-edition Chrysler 300C, R&B duo Nina Sky's 2005 DUB-edition Chrysler Crossfire roadster and Pepsi, Co.'s 2005 DUB-edition Dodge Magnum, all in the Michigan Hall.

- Personal appearances by Lindsey Hunter of the Detroit Pistons and his 2003 Hummer H2, featuring 28-inch wheels, and Maurice Taylor of the Houston Rockets and his 1972 Chevrolet Monte Carlo

- Ford's SYN(US) Concept Car, featuring a 45-inch flat screen monitor imbedded in rear tailgate. Visitors can watch the monitor in the back seat, which turns 180 degrees to face the screen

- Orange County Choppers' customized Mark LT Chopper built by the cast of Discovery Channel's *American Chopper* on display at the Lincoln exhibit.

- Mazda's driving simulator, an interactive video game featuring choice of cars, including the Mazda Crossport and a choice of virtual cities in which to race.

- Mercury's reconfigurable dashboard display featuring a kiosk where visitors can reconfigure and personalize the dashboard of Mercury vehicles. Dashboard features include a navigation system, MP3 player and push-button transmission

- Lane Departure Warning safety feature simulator where visitors are able to experience



The North American International Auto Show opened Saturday, at Cobo Hall.

the Lane Departure Warning safety feature, which sends vibrations through the driver's seat when the car drifts out of its lane.

- Interactive driving simulator that forces the "driver" to avoid obstacles, then offers an evaluation of the driver's performance.

- Manual-transmission simulator allowing the "driver" to shift virtual gears.

- Mini photo booth that allows visitors to pose inside a Mini, select the colors, background and passenger and take a customized photo

- Subaru's interactive racing video game with a hydraulic chair that simulates the movements of a virtual race car.

- Volkswagen's VW's SchnellDriver. Similar to a game show, visitors will be asked questions and given prizes for correct answers.

- Volvo's V70 environmental display.

Modeled after a car in which every window is a video monitor, the display explains, both with audio and video, the benefits of low emissions, recycled interior material and other environmentally friendly features.

Live entertainment in Cobo Arena today features Dal Bouey



The North American International Auto Show features exhibits from all the top automakers.

11 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Matthew McNabb 5-10 p.m.

The public days for the NAIAS are now through Saturday, Jan. 22. Hours are 9 a.m. to 10 p.m., and 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 23.

Ticket cost \$12 for adults, \$6 for senior citizens age 65 and older (tickets must be purchased on-site), children 12 and under are free when accompanied by a parent and do not require a ticket.

Tickets are available at the door.

Visitors also can purchase eTickets online at www.naias.com. Orders for eTickets provide a voucher to be redeemed for show tickets at

the eTicket window at the Oakland Hall entrance of Cobo Center.

Tickets are also available through Ticketmaster at www.ticketmaster.com, or by calling (248) 645-6666.

Entering its 17th year as an international event, the North American International Auto Show is one of the largest media events in North America. It's the only auto show in the United States to earn the distinguished sanction of the Organisation Internationale des Constructeurs d'Automobiles, the Paris-based alliance of automotive trade associations and manufacturers from around the world.

PLACES AND FACES

Toys and trains

SS. Simon & Jude Church's usher club is sponsoring a buy-and-swap toys and trains show noon to 4 p.m. today (Jan. 16) at the church hall, 32500 Palmer, one mile west of Merriman. Admission is \$2 per person and \$4 per family.

Speaking of toys, the Westland Rotary Club will host a toy show 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Sunday, March 6, at Joy Manor, 28999 Joy, east of Middlebelt.

The show will feature new and antique toys, collectibles, Beanie Babies, action figures, die cast toys, slot and model cars, Matchbox, Hot Wheels and more. There also will be 50/50 raffles and drawings for door prizes.

Show admission is \$3 for adults with children under age 12 free. Proceeds will support Rotary charities.

Table space is available at \$30 per table and is available by writing to Westland Rotary Toy Show, 6600 Burnly, Garden City, MI 48135. For more information, call Mary McGraw at (734) 748-8515.

In his honor

Longtime area Democratic activist Cliff Johnson will be honored by the Metropolitan Detroit AFL-CIO Wednesday, Jan. 19. Johnson will be recognized for his "hard work and dedication" during a 5:30-7:30 p.m. reception following the union's delegate body meeting at the Teamsters Health and Welfare Building on Trumbull in Detroit.

Blood drive

Bova VFW Post 9885 will host an American Red Cross blood drive 2-8 p.m. Monday, Jan. 24, at the post hall, 6400 Hix, south of Warren. Walk-ins are welcome, although appointments can be scheduled by calling the post surgeon Terry Dana at (517) 521-5646 or blood drive chairman Larry Tebor at (734) 377-8329.

All donors will be placed in a drawing for three free games of bowling at Vision Lanes in Westland.

Surplus food

The city of Westland will distribute surplus federal food 10

a.m. to 2 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 20, at the Dorsey Community Center for residents who live north of Michigan Avenue.

Residents south of the avenue always pick up their commodities on the third Monday of the month at St. James United Methodist Church, 30055 Annapolis, between Henry Ruff and Middlebelt roads.

Senior citizens living in Taylor Towers will pick up their food at the towers but should contact the building manager for the day of distribution.

Food for the month of January will include corn flakes cereal, powdered milk and frozen strawberries.

For more information, call the Dorsey Center hotline at (734) 595-0366.

Beautiful baby

Does your baby have a face that delights everyone? If so, you won't want to miss New Star Discovery Inc.'s regional Most Beautiful Baby Contest Saturday, Feb. 5, at Westland Shopping Center at Wayne Road and Warren.

The contest will include categories for infants up to seven months of age, eight-14 months, 15-23 months, 24-35 months, three-four years and five-six years for boys and for girls.

The entry fee for the main age division is \$45. There also are eight optional categories to enter with fees of \$5 each. Registration starts at 9 a.m. for up to seven months and eight-14 months, and at 1 p.m. for the remaining four age divisions.

The winner of each age division will win their entry fee paid to the state competition, a trophy, crown or medallion and a test photo shoot with a Chicago-based fashion photographer. The first four runners-up in each age division and special award winners will receive trophies and their entry fees paid for the state competition.

New Star Discovery also will award a trophy and \$50 savings bond to the contestant with the highest overall points. A \$100 Westland Shopping Center shopping spree will be given to one winner who qualifies by entering all contest categories.

For more information, call New Star Discovery at (877) 330-BABY.

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ELECTION

FROM PAGE A1
 can be only one municipality per page of the petition. If the candidate plans to circulate petitions in several communities, he or she will need a page for each community.
 The city also will be responsible for the election day duties, including establishing where school district residents will vote. Yet to be determined is which election equipment and workers - the city's or the district's - will be used.
 In the case of the precincts, Bonaparte said the city plans "to use school district-designated precincts to avoid confusion."
 "We have different guidelines for the number of voters in a precinct," said Bonaparte. "If we have to split a precinct. We will keep it in the same location. Instead of a Precinct 15, it could be Precinct 15A and Precinct 15B. At this juncture, we're utilizing the precincts the district has used in the past."
 City officials will be meeting with county officials this week to draw up plans for running the election.
 For now, residents interested in running for one of the seats on the board must make their intentions known by the 4 p.m. Feb. 8 deadline. Those who choose to withdraw their names from the ballot must do

Petitions due Feb. 8 in Livonia district

Those interested in running for one of two seats on the Livonia Board of Education also must make those intentions known by 4 p.m. Feb. 8 by filing petitions with the Livonia city clerk.
 The Livonia Public Schools takes in northern Westland. Candidates in the election are required to obtain and submit 40 signatures from registered voters within the district, or to pay a \$100 filing fee. Petitions and affidavit of identity forms are available at the city clerk's office, within Livonia's City Hall, 33000 Civic Center Dr.
 The two seats currently belong to board Vice President Daniel Lessard, who is serving his ninth year on the school board, and Trustee Cynthia Markarian, who was appointed to fill a vacancy last spring after former Trustee Terri Godfroid-Marecki left the board to join the Livonia City Council.
 Markarian has decided to run in the election for a full term.

By Stephanie A. Casola

so by 4 p.m. Friday, Feb. 11. The terms up for election will begin on July 1, 2005, and end on June 30, 2009.
 Those interested in running for election must meet the following criteria:
 ■ Candidates must be at least 18 years old.
 ■ They must be U.S. citizens and have lived in the state of Michigan for at least 30 days.
 ■ Candidates must be a resi-

dent of the school district for at least 30 days prior to the date of the election.
 Bonaparte agrees with school officials about the new law. There is "a lot of confusion" about it. "It really should have been phased in, there should have been time for planning before it was implemented," said Bonaparte.
 smason@oe.homecomm.net | (734) 953-212

COMPUTER

FROM PAGE A1
 getting a pet license, Westland City Councilman James Godbout said.
 The new computer system and software will follow a city effort to install fiber optic lines that will make the improvements possible.
 "We're crawling now. We're going to start walking. We'll try jogging next," said Godbout, who headed up a technology committee.
 The new system will not be bought with the city's general fund, which has taken a beating due to state revenue cuts. Rather, cable-TV franchise fees that cable companies pay to the city will be used.
 The system will interlink City Hall and several departments: police, fire, cable, parks and recreation, public services, planning, senior citizen resources and community development.
 Whereas a rash of broken water lines now requires Public Services Director Tom Wilson to make time-consuming telephone calls to various departments, the new computer system will allow him to notify all departments immediately, giving employees the information they need to handle inquiries from residents.
 "This is just the start," Godbout said of the new system, "and it's an aggressive start."

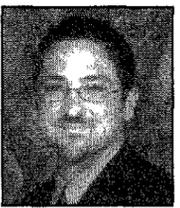
The new system will not be bought with the city's general fund.

The new system will reduce the flow of paper work and make it easier to communicate efficiently. It will help the city run more smoothly, officials said.
 Consultant Mark Thudium of Sterling Heights-based Automation Management Services is helping the city plan and implement the new technology. He said the system will be secure from computer hackers.
 "I can assure you it's not going to be easily hack-able," he said Monday, during a council session.
 An official vote on the new technology is expected in February. The \$247,850 cost will be paid out of a \$1.6 million cable fund, although officials may try to seek grants to replace the money.
 Much of the new system could be in place this spring, with only 50 employees initially trained to use it. It will be expanded in coming years until virtually all workers are using it.
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Girl Scouts accept car donations

If you thought vehicle donation programs would run out of gas after Congress included a provision in a corporate tax bill limiting donor tax deductions, think again, says Gail Scott, CEO Girl Scout of the Huron Valley Council.
 The new legislation limits the tax deduction donors can claim to the actual price the charity receives for the vehicle and not the fair market value.
 The legislation also will increase the amount of documentation charities are required to process and record which will increase by several weeks the turnaround time between the vehicle pick up and the mailing of a donor receipt because of the new requirement to track vehicles until they are resold.
 "The car program is anything but dead," said Scott. "Despite the new rules, this gift-in-kind program remains a viable option for individual and corporate donors who wish to support Girl Scouts. Over the last four years, the car program has helped us raise more than \$50,000 to support programs for girls and we are moving forward even with the new regulations in place. "We believe our donors' primary motivation is not the tax deduction."
 According to Scott, recent surveys indicate that the number one reason for donating is because it is simple, fast and free method of disposing of unwanted cars while helping a good cause.
 Getting a tax deduction was the number two reason for donating.
 In fact, only 30 percent of Americans itemize on their tax returns and those who do not itemize cannot claim the tax deduction for a car donation, she said.
 People interested in donating a car, truck or boat to benefit the Girl Scouts call (800) 936-3734 for further information and to arrange a free pickup of the vehicle.
 Girl Scouts of the Huron Valley Council serves one in five girls living in Livingston, Monroe, Washtenaw and parts of Oakland and Wayne counties.
 To become a Girl Scout volunteer or member, call (800) 49-SCOUT.

Do You Have An IRA or 401 K? You May Be Getting Trapped Free Yourself Now!



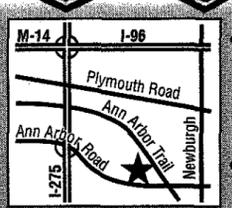
Most Americans who are concerned about preparing for retirement are lured into contributing pre-tax dollars into 401K plans or tax-deductible contributions into IRAs. Such "Qualified Plans" only give you tax-favored advantages during the contribution and accumulation phase of your retirement account. What about the most important phases - when you withdraw the money for retirement income or transfer any remaining funds to your heirs? Has anyone told you "The rest of the story?"
 A Michigan couple filing a joint tax return with a taxable income in excess of \$56,800 will be in a 29% marginal tax bracket. If they were fortunate enough to both qualify for deductible contributions to their IRAs, they would save \$1160 a year in taxes on a total contribution of \$4000 a year. However, most retirees will pay back every dollar to Uncle Sam that they saved in taxes in the first 18-24 months of their retirement. In fact, the average retired couple will pay 8 - 12 times the taxes during their retirement years than the taxes they saved during their contribution/accumulation years.
 One of the original IRA/401K tenets held that deferring tax until retirement was advantageous because funds would likely be taxed at a lower rate. That is no longer universal true. You may well spend retirement in the same or higher bracket if you accumulate a respectable retirement nest egg. In fact, tax rates will likely rise in the future. So why postpone the inevitable and compound the tax problems?
 Is there a way to "Have your cake and eat it too?" Through proper planning, a homeowner may safely utilize an equity retirement plan that may provide tax advantages during the contribution and accumulation years, but more importantly, you may enjoy tax-free income during the retirement years and transfer any remaining funds to your heirs tax-free. This strategy can increase your net spendable retirement income by as much as 50%!
 To understand how to determine if participation in a Roth IRA, traditional IRA or 401K plans is wise in your circumstances, Equity Enhancement Specialist, L.L.C. is conducting an educational seminar entitled, "Common Sense Strategies for Successful Equity Management." It will be held on Wednesday, January 19, 2005 from 7:00-10:00 p.m. at The Sheraton Detroit Novi, located at 2111 Haggerty Rd., Novi, MI. 48375. There is easy access from I-275 8 Mile exit with plenty of parking.
 This education seminar is taught nationally at a normal tuition of \$100.00. However, Metropolitan Detroit homeowners are cordially invited to attend this presentation at no charge. For guaranteed seating, please RSVP at 248-357-0848.

Dan Stavale, President Equity Enhancement Specialist, L.L.C.

Wayne BPW offers career scholarship

The Wayne Business and Professional Women's Club is accepting applications for its Career Development Scholarship.
 The scholarship recognizes and supports women entering or re-entering the workforce or seeking to advance their career.
 To qualify a candidate must meet the following criteria:
 ■ Demonstrate financial need.
 ■ Live and/or work in the cities of Wayne or Westland.
 ■ Formal acceptance into a college or vocational/technical program.
 ■ Minimum 2.8 grade point average, if already enrolled.
 Candidates can get application forms by sending a stamped, self address envelope to the Wayne Business and Professional Women's Club, Career Development Scholarship Committee, 14201 Robbe Road, Belleville, MI 48111.
 Completed applications must be postmarked by Jan. 21.
 The Wayne Business and Professional Women's Club (BPW) is a local chapter of the State and National BPW USA Federations.
 The BPW's objective is to elevate the standards and interest for women in business, to bring about a spirit of cooperation among business and professional women of the United States of America, as well as extend opportunities to all women who are interested in the industrial, scientific and vocational careers available to them.

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Fresh Hot or Regular ITALIAN SAUSAGEOnly \$1.99 lb.	Flavorite PEANUT BUTTER18 oz. jar 99¢
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 Jan. 29, Feb. 18, Mar. 5, Apr. 1 - Canterbury Castle, Lake Orion
 Feb. 5, Mar. 19 - Lakeland Manor, St. Clair Shores
 Feb. 12, Mar. 25 - Fox Hills, Plymouth
 Feb. 19, Apr. 16 - Wolverine Golf Club, Macomb Twp.
 Feb. 26 - Crystal Gardens, Southgate
 More Show Dates Available!

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DEATHS

L
Harold "Hal" Lawson, of Bloomfield Hills, died Jan. 10.
Frank Lipa, of Westland, died Jan. 11.

M
Mary Riley Monroe, 88, of Birmingham, died Jan. 11.

Q
June W. Quigley, 82, of West Bloomfield, died Jan. 13.

R
Loella Roehm, 92, formerly of Franklin, died Jan. 11.
Robert Edward Ross, died Jan. 8.

W
Mike Waldecker, 74, formerly of Plymouth, died Jan. 10.

MIKE MODANO ICE ARENA

Open Skating
Open skating is available noon-1:45 p.m. Tuesday, Thursday and Friday now through March 31. Cost is \$3.50 for children and seniors and \$4.50 for adults. Get \$1 off on weekdays admissions. Skate rental is \$2.50, and skate sharpening \$4.

Drop-in Hockey
Drop-in hockey is available 10-11:45 a.m. Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. Cost is \$5 per player (daytime hours) and goalies skate free. There also is a Friday evening session 10 p.m. to 12:45 a.m. Cost is \$10. Full equipment is required.

Freestyle Ice
Ice time for freestyle skating is available 2:30-4:50 p.m. Monday, 6-8 a.m. and 2:30-5:50 p.m. Tuesday, 2:30-5:50 p.m. Wednesday 6-8 a.m. and 2:30-4:20 p.m. Thursday and 2:30-5:50 p.m. Friday. Fifty-minute sessions cost \$5.25, while 30-minute sessions are \$3.50. There's an additional \$1 charge for drop-in.
The area at 6210 N. Wildwood, just south of Hunter. For additional information, call the arena at (74) 729-4560.

BAILEY RECREATION CENTER

Court Use
Court costs are based on prime time hours - 4-10 p.m. Monday-Friday and all day Saturday and Sunday - and non-prime time hours - 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday-Friday.

- Racquetball Courts - \$9 per hour prime time and \$8 per hour non-prime time for residents and \$11 per hour non-prime time and \$12 per hour prime time for non-residents.
- Wallyball Courts - \$11 per hour non-prime time and \$12 per hour prime time for residents and \$16 per hour non-prime time \$18 per hour prime time for non-residents.
- Brewball - \$7 per hour non-prime time and \$8 per hour prime time for residents and \$10 per hour non-prime time and \$11 per hour prime time for non-residents.

Court Gold Cards (10 hours of time) are available at \$80 resident racquetball and \$110 for non-resident racquetball; \$110 for resident wallyball and \$170 for non-resident wallyball; and \$70 for resident brewball and \$100 non-resident brewball.

Open Gym
The hours vary, so call ahead for times. Cost is \$2 for residents and \$4 for non-residents. Students pay \$1, but must show middle school or high school identification card.

Weight/Fitness Room
The weight/fitness room is open 9 a.m. to 10 p.m. seven days a week. Residents pay \$4 daily (walk-in), with contracts for unlimited use costing \$25 per month, \$80 for six months and \$150 for a year. Non-residents pay \$6 daily (walk-in), with contracts for unlimited use costing \$35 per month, \$120 for six months and \$225 for a year.

Facility and Park Rentals
Various room sizes are available for all occasions, including showers, wedding receptions, parties, classes, business meetings, etc.

THE CONCRETE JUNGLE!

Opened in 2002, The Concrete Jungle is designed for those who are just learning the ins and outs of skate boarding as well as the more experienced skateboarder.

Fall rates - through Nov. 26 - are child/Wayne County resident: all day pass, \$3, child/non-Wayne County resident all day pass - \$5, adult/Wayne County resident all day pass - \$5 and adult/non-Wayne County resident all day pass - \$7. Rates and session times are subject to change. Call the Bailey Center at (734)722-7620 for daily session times.



For the Record appears in every edition of the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers. Complete paid obituaries can be found inside today's Community Life section in Passages on page C5.

SENIOR FRIENDSHIP CENTER

Programs, Activities, Services
■ Alterations: The Friendship Center offers alterations for a nominal fee every Tuesday.
■ Advisory Council: A group of elected individuals representing their various clubs within the city and Friendship Center. The Advisory Council discusses and determines various senior needs and deliberates which issues should be presented to the Commission on Aging. Meets the first Friday of the month.
■ Angel Wings: 5 p.m. Tuesdays.
■ Blood Pressure Check: Offered 9:30 a.m. first and third Mondays and Wednesdays and 11 a.m. every Friday.
■ Book Club: 1 p.m. Fridays.
■ Bridge Class: 1 p.m. Wednesdays.



It's official
Deanna Haupt (left) and her husband, Robert (right), joined Rep. Glenn Anderson, D-Westland, in watching Gov. Jennifer Granholm sign into a law which states that calling card companies have to advise customers how to get a rate quote before placing a call. It was Haupt's conversation with her neighbor - Anderson - about a calling card call that cost \$7 that prompted introduction of the legislation.

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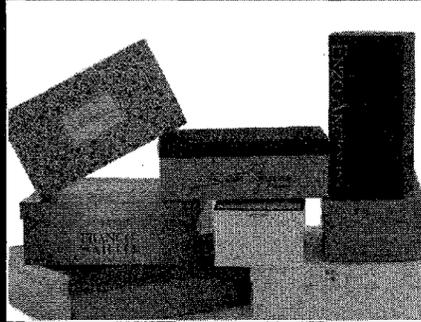


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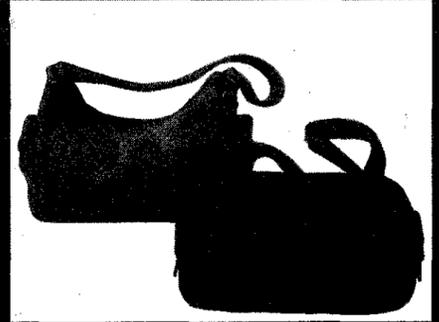
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extra 50% off Semiannual handbag clearance. Save on handbags and small leather goods. Orig. 28.00-250.00, sale 19.99-186.99, now 9.99-93.50. IN HANDBAGS AND ACCESSORIES.

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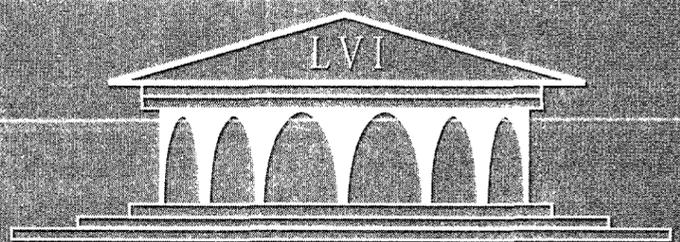


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State's education system needs complete overhaul

The Chinese character for "crisis" is a compound of two other characters, one meaning "danger" and the other "opportunity." And this may be the most hopeful way to look at Michigan's looming financial crisis, which is the product of a chronic structural deficit in the state's budget combined with the persistent inability of the politicians we've sent to Lansing to really tackle the problem in a comprehensive way.

Case in point: our schools.

Eleven years ago, Proposal A, combined with the earlier Headlee Amendment to the state constitution, ended our public schools' longtime reliance on ever-increasing property values and the property taxes they generated. This has meant that school funding has become Lansing's responsibility. So it should come as no surprise that per-pupil state funding has been essentially flat for three straight years.

At the same time, schools have been forced to absorb cost increases. Some come from general price hikes owing to inflation; others, from double-digit increases in health insurance and pension costs. That all means when it comes to state funding, staying even really equals falling behind, as State Board of Education President Kathleen Straus has pointed out.

This problem isn't confined to chronically dysfunctional school systems like Detroit. It affects every district in the state, from Livonia to East Lansing, from Birmingham to Howell.

And, worse, the problem isn't going to be solved and couldn't be solved by more money alone. Imagine for a moment that the governor and the Legislature decided, in spite of the looming deficit, to increase per-pupil funding by \$300 for the next three years. Two-thirds of this — two-thirds! — would be consumed just to meet soaring health care and pension costs.

Plainly, this is a broken financial model and it simply isn't sustainable, even assuming we had lots of money to throw at the problem. Instead, we need to take a hard-eyed look at radical — the polite term here is "structural" — ways to reconstruct the entire system. To their credit, the State Board of Education and state Supt. Tom Watkins have decided to undertake exactly that kind of look. They intend to consult with the governor and Legislature, to invite public input and to turn the dialogue about our schools into an inquiry

into fundamental design and cost issues.

Here are some of the hard questions they — and we — need to ask:

■ Can we really justify having 750 public school districts and public charter schools along with 57 intermediate school districts in Michigan?

■ Can we really afford to have tiny vestigial districts like Clarenceville, wedged uneasily between Livonia and Farmington, with only 1,994 students but an entire load of overhead? I realize lots of local families would prefer to keep things the way they are, but does it make any sense at all to tolerate tiny school districts with a disproportionately top-heavy overhead structure?

■ Do we really need to pay hundreds of school superintendents around the state annual salaries that nearly all exceed \$100,000 a year?

■ Are we getting anything meaningful out of all these expensive intermediate school districts? They are institutions that might have had a recognizable purpose a decade or so ago, but today seem about as useful as an appendix. But could they now be empowered to manage all local school districts within their boundaries, which mostly follow county lines?

Think of the savings if all administrative functions — purchasing, information technology, food service, bus fleet management — were consolidated.

The last time anyone subjected our state schools to such a far-reaching scrutiny was 1968. The time is ripe for a new effort, and Watkins and the state board deserve big pats on the back for pushing into the uncharted waters of a radical review of the entire system.

As board President Straus pointed out, "The state and nation that gets its education system 'right' and provides its citizens with lifelong learning opportunities will be the state or nation that will rule economically. It behooves us all to make Michigan that state."

Amen. By the way, you can be part of this process, too. Just go to the Michigan Department of Education's Web site: <http://www.michigan.gov/mde>, navigate to the "What's New" section and click on "Structural Issues Surrounding School Funding in the 21st Century." You may just teach the bureaucrats something. In any event, it's a good way to roll up your sleeves and get involved in something that really matters as we start off this new year.

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



Phil Power

Term limits still a bad idea that enables a lazy electorate

In the business world, people tend to trust people who have more experience compared to a green counterpart.

In the classroom, parents tend to be more comfortable with a veteran teacher than an educator who's only a year removed from college.

Experience is viewed by most people as a positive attribute, however, many turn the tables when it comes to politics.

When Michigan voters approved term limits for state offices in 1992, it was viewed as a quick-fix for the perception that all career

politicians were bad. It was believed that government would become more efficient and new people would have a chance to serve. While the latter is true, the former has not panned out.

Since 1998, Michigan senators, governor, attorney general and secretary of state can be elected to no more than two, four-year terms. Members of the Michigan House of Representatives can be elected to only three, two-year terms. Those limits produced some interesting developments in the Michigan Legislature.

■ There are 25 members of the Michigan House who are under the age of 30, a few of whom still live with their parents.

■ A new speaker of the house, who's third in line to run the state, takes over next month. He is 34-year-old Craig DeRoche, a Novi Republican, who's in the midst of completing only his first two-year term in Lansing. He will appoint a number of lawmakers to committee leadership positions who have a comparable amount of legislative experience.

■ At a time state finances have been in a quandary for several years, there will be a one-third turnover in the Michigan House at month's end, a situation primarily created by term limits.

This means dozens of new lawmakers need months to get acclimated to their new jobs, learn how the state spends \$39 billion a year and be prepared to make some significant votes on funding for state programs.

■ After leaving office, a number of term-limited legislators have been hired to work as lobbyists.

These lawmakers-turned-lobbyists have more institutional memory and carry much influence over new lawmakers learning their duties. Also, these new lobbyists are using their lawmaking experience to promote their

employer's agenda instead of promoting the public's agenda.

■ Veteran legislative staffers often have more institutional knowledge and influence on legislation instead of those elected to vote on bills.

■ In 2000, as the current economic doldrums were starting, state lawmakers collected more than a \$20,000 a year pay raise. Since a number of term-limited lawmakers would be forced out of office in 2002, there was little motivation for these lame-duck legislators to heed public cries to block these raises.

There's a common joke in Lansing: Members of the state House use one term looking for the bathroom at the Capitol, another term learning who they work with, they finally start working on some legislation in the third term, then they have to leave.

Our country's Democratic processes are cumbersome and time-consuming because of the number of checks and balances designed to protect citizens and discourage corruption. With such short opportunities available for competent individuals to serve in Lansing, the process handcuffs their ability to make a difference, especially for those serving in the minority party.

The term-limit policy is a gimmick that needs to be abolished. If not, Michigan voters need to at least extend the current periods lawmakers can serve.

It is not fair to assume all politicians are corrupt. Many people who run for office have the best of intentions and deserve opportunities to be elected if they do a good job. It's not a bad idea to give some motivated, effective lawmakers a chance to serve for an extended period of time.

Top-notch legislators can play a vital leadership role at times of transition.

There's another important element that makes our Democratic process work well: A participatory public who actively and fairly scrutinizes elected representatives, their activities and their votes.

There are some bad apples who get elected to office, and there is a mechanism to remove troublesome lawmakers, vote them out.

In the House, the voters have a chance to grade their representative every two years.

If a more-involved electorate does its job, then there's a better chance their lawmakers will do a better job.

A civic-minded public does far more for government's effectiveness than term limits.



Dan West

Dan West is a staff writer for the *Livonia Observer*. He can be reached at (734) 953-2109, or at dwest@oe.homecomm.net.

What Did You Say?

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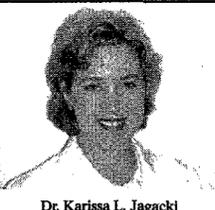
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Holocaust film premieres at UM-Dearborn

A new PBS documentary titled "Auschwitz: Inside the Nazi State" will get its first local screening at a preview and discussion to be held at the University of Michigan-Dearborn on Sunday, Jan. 16. "Auschwitz: Inside the Nazi State," a six-hour television series, is a chronological portrait of Auschwitz, the site of the greatest mechanized mass murder in history. The program will be broadcast in three parts beginning Jan. 19 on most PBS stations across the country.

UM-Dearborn has partnered with Michigan Television (WFUM PBS-TV 28), the university's public broadcasting service, to preview the program for Detroit-area viewers. The program, and panel discussion to follow, will begin at 1 p.m. Jan. 16, in the Social Science Building on the Dearborn campus. Parts two and three of the program also will be presented at 1 p.m. Jan. 23 and 30 at the Social Science Building at UM-Dearborn.

This is the first time that Michigan Television and UM-Dearborn have collaborated on an event of this type.

"We chose UM-Dearborn as the site for this special screening because the campus has done so much to document this history through the Voice/Vision Holocaust

Survivor Oral History Archive, directed by history professor Sidney Bolkosky," according to Jennifer White, interim station manager of Michigan Television. "Guests attending these events will get the benefit of excellent PBS programming and access to an outstanding academic and community resource."

UM-Dearborn's Voice/Vision project has recorded interviews with hundreds of Holocaust survivors in the Detroit area over the past 20 years. Christopher Browning, professor of history at the University of North Carolina and author of numerous books on the history of the Holocaust, has described the UM-Dearborn effort as "a model program." The recordings are available at <http://holocaust.umd.umich.edu/>.

Bolkosky will be one of the speakers on a panel discussion and conversation following the screening.

Other speakers are Jamie L. Wright, historian and curator of the Voice/Vision Holocaust Survivor Oral History Archive, and Larry Wilcox, professor of history at the University of Toledo.

The program is open to the public, but reservations are requested by Jan. 12 at (866) 203-1136 or by e-mail to dheys@umich.edu.

Chinese piano sensation offers free master class

Lang Lang, a 22-year-old piano prodigy who was featured on the television program 60 Minutes Jan. 9, will present a free master class at Schoolcraft College 11 a.m. Saturday, Jan. 15. The class will take place in the VisTaTech Center Presentation Room.

Seating is limited and those wishing to attend must call Hammell Music for a reservation at (734)427-0040.

Lang Lang will critique the work of three local piano stu-

dents during the master class. In the area to perform with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra Jan. 14, 15 and 16, his visit to Schoolcraft is made possible through Hammell Music in Livonia.

A reception will follow the two-hour class to meet and speak with the artist.

Donald Morelock, Schoolcraft professor of music, described Lang Lang as "one of the most exciting and charismatic pianists to appear on the scene since Van Cliburn won

the Tchaikovsky competition in the 1950s."

Lang Lang records for Deutsche Gramophone. His signature piece is Rachmaninoff's 3rd Piano Concerto.

He began formal lessons at age 3, was a standout student at the Beijing Conservatory, and won the International Tchaikovsky Competition for Young Musicians.

At 15, Lang Lang moved to Philadelphia where he had won a music scholarship, and

at 17 was tapped as a last-minute replacement at a Chicago music festival. He made his Carnegie Hall debut at 21, and performs 150 concerts a year.

For information, call the Schoolcraft Music Department at 734-462-4403. Schoolcraft College is a public two-year college, offering classes at the Livonia campus on Haggerty Road between Six and Seven Mile roads, at the Radcliff Center in Garden City and online.

ACT-SO holds organizing meeting Jan. 18

An organizing meeting for the Western Wayne County NAACP's second annual ACT-SO competition will be 6-8 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 18, at Smith Chapel A.M.E. Church, 3505 Walnut, Inkster. There will be an orientation video, discussion about the program and assignments. The meeting is for students, mentors, judges and other volunteers.

The NAACP's Afro-Academic, Cultural, Technological and Scientific

Olympics (ACT-SO) was developed to enhance and showcase the academic and artistic achievement of African-American high school students (grades 9 through 12).

ACT-SO is a yearlong enrichment program that culminates in a local and national competition where students compete for awards and scholarships totaling over \$50,000.

ACT-SO, the "Olympics of the Mind," seeks to promote positive self-esteem, academic and

artistic excellence, positive interaction between our youth and the adult professional community. Furthermore, ACT-SO encourages more African-American youths to pursue higher education.

The local competition is scheduled for Saturday, April 16, 2004.

Additional information about ACT-SO can be found at www.naacp.org or by contacting Raymond G. Mullins at (734)485-7515 or email at

atraymullins@provide.net.

The Branch is seeking students in 15 communities of Western Wayne County, including: Belleville, Canton, Dearborn, Dearborn Heights, Garden City, Inkster, Livonia, Lincoln Park, Sumpter Township, Plymouth, Redford, Taylor, Romulus, Wayne and Westland.

The Branch is also opening up the competition to students in Ecorse, River Rouge, and Monroe County.

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Battle for auto supremacy will test Big Three's mettle

For automotive buffs and car maniacs across Michigan, this week is what amounts to the Motor City's Mardi Gras — the North American International Auto Show. For the next week, thousands will brave traffic jams and unpredictable January weather to sneak a peek at the new cars.

They hold this show in Detroit, because that is where the modern motor industry was born. It is hard now to imagine how completely Detroit dominated the auto business a few decades ago. But back in the late 1940s, more than half of all the cars built in the world were assembled within the borders of the city. Those were the days when Ford was

offered Volkswagen for nothing — and turned up its nose; who would ever want to buy a car like that? Nobody worried about imports, styling was everything and obsolescence was planned.

Now, it is a different world. Each of the "Big Three" has suffered shakeout and trauma in little more than a decade. General Motors crashed in the early 1990s, and had to be rescued by a toothpaste salesman. Chrysler is now a wholly-owned subsidiary of a German firm. Ford is losing money and market share, and many fear it will eventually cease to be a full-service automaker.

Last weekend, as crews worked overtime to set up the auto show exhibits in Cobo Hall, Detroit's convention center, a panel of experts a block away held a little-noticed conference for the nation's news media on the auto industry's future.

Their conclusions might best be summarized in the title David Cole gave to his presentation: "The Auto Future: It's the Law

of the Jungle." Indeed, all agreed that for some automakers, especially those who are insufficiently smart or insufficiently flexible, the future will likely be nasty, brutish and short.

"The old business model is broken," said Cole, a former University of Michigan professor who chairs the highly regarded Center for Automotive Research (CAR) in Ann Arbor. The world industry is highly unstable, not anywhere close to its final form, he noted, and Detroit's old solution of attempting to solve its problems just by boosting sales doesn't work anymore.

Sean McAlinden, CAR's chief economist and a man with a puckish wit, laid it on the line. The auto business is the world's biggest industry and likely to stay that way. But while Detroit isn't exactly going out of business, the trend lines are slowly sloping in one direction: down. Employment in vehicle and parts manufacturing has fallen dramatically in the last five years, especially in Michigan and Ohio, which have each lost more than 20 percent of these jobs. And, for the most part, they are never coming back.

"Profit margins are low, and will stay that way in developed markets," he said. "Firms are going to compete by cutting capital spending," but this is likely to lead to a shakeout in the industry, and some casualties.

"Nobody can make money unless they utilize at least 90 percent of their manufacturing capacity," he said. American manufacturers face two big problems.

Demand is likely to remain low for the next several years, in part because auto sales didn't decline that much during the last recession.

What is even more of a handicap is that most experts agree it costs domestic manufacturers an estimated \$2,000-\$2,500 more to make a vehicle in this country than it does in many overseas markets

There is no great mystery why: Auto production workers in the United States average \$31.67 an hour. (Germans make even more.) Those in Mexico make \$5.12; auto workers in China, 90 cents.

Add to that the problem of "legacy costs" — there are more than twice as many General Motors retirees on pensions as active workers — and the scope of the problem becomes even greater.

Yet not all is doom and gloom. Michael Robinet, vice president of Global Forecast Services in Farmington Hills, has spent a career forecasting trends in the auto industry. He thinks better days may be coming for Detroit. For one thing, many of the "legacy costs" will greatly diminish as nature takes its course, and the new U.S. work force is leaner, meaner and a whole lot younger.

And he was fairly optimistic about the long term. "What is more important is the stability of the growth," he said. In the near term, he sees steel and oil prices peaking or declining — good news for the car business — and world vehicle sales rising from 57 million in 2003 to nearly 70 million by decade's end.

North America's share of that market is becoming "a smaller piece of the global pie." But domestic manufacturers can take heart from one development: Thanks to what he called "Generations Y and Z" new consumers will swell the market by 104.7 million new drivers by 2020.

What nobody knows yet is whose cars they will be driving, although some of them will probably be Chinese. About all that seems certain is when it comes to worldwide competition for the car market, we've barely seen anything yet.

Jack Lessenberry is editorial vice president of Hometown Communications. He can be reached by phone at (248) 901-2561 or by e-mail at jlessenberry@hometown.com.



Jack Lessenberry

The fight against racism goes beyond boundaries

Greg Kowalski's column "New Detroit needs to get real on addressing racism" was a perfect example of the obstacles we face in south-east Michigan as we work to confront in a constructive manner the issue of race.

The column was prompted by New Detroit board Chair John Rakolta Jr.'s presentation to the Birmingham Bloomfield Race Relations and Diversity Task Force. In his presentation, Mr. Rakolta discussed his experiences hosting a series of dinners at his Bloomfield Hills



Shirley Stancato

home to discuss racial issues and improve communication among New Detroit board members. The writer found it "outrageous" that the discussion was taking place in Bloomfield Hills, asserting, "Meaningful bridges have to be built, but they are not going to be built in Bloomfield Hills."

His assumption seems to be that race relations is a "Detroit" issue. But race is not a "Detroit" issue. It is a human issue that is just as important to Bloomfield Hills or Birmingham or any other suburban community as it is to Detroit. If this region is going to make progress on resolving the very real problems that revolve around race, it must start with that realization.

The importance of the dinners and discussions hosted by Mr. Rakolta is not their geographic location, but their content. These dinners have provided a forum — a safe forum — for people of goodwill from widely diverse backgrounds and experiences to let down their guard and start to grapple with this issue that is so problematic for our region.

Make no mistake, this is tough stuff to deal with. That is true even when the people at the table are committed to the discussion and seeking to achieve some common ground.

Race is an emotionally charged issue to which we each bring our own unique perspective, shaped by our own background and life experience.

In his landmark book, *Democracy in America*, Alexis DeToqueville observed

People want to make progress in resolving the dilemma of race in America in 2005. But often they don't know how to start that process.

in 1831 that in the United States, "whites and emancipated Negroes face each other like two foreign people on the same soil." While the phrase "emancipated Negroes" belongs back in 1831, the description of race relations is all too accurate in 2005.

What the Rakolta dinners have provided is a structured environment where people of goodwill can start to explore their own attitudes and assumptions in the presence of other people who do not look like them and have different attitudes and assumptions. In the process, we all have learned a great deal, both about ourselves and about others.

That is why the race relations panel at last year's Detroit Regional Chamber Mackinac Conference was the highlight of the conference. It's why that panel provided the basis for a highly watched special on WDIV-TV.

People want to make progress in resolving the dilemma of race in America in 2005. But often they don't know how to start that process.

The dinners have provided a place and a structured environment to make a start. They have been equally beneficial for people from Bloomfield Hills, Detroit, Dearborn, Livonia and the rest of this region.

Our discussions are about race. They aren't about Detroit or Bloomfield Hills or Warren or Dearborn. They are about race and the very major impact it has had and continues to have on our progress, or lack of progress, as a region.

If bridges are going to be built, they must be built in Bloomfield Hills, in Detroit and everywhere throughout this region, this state and this nation. If we are going to get hung up on where that building begins, it will never start.

Shirley Stancato is president and CEO of New Detroit Inc.

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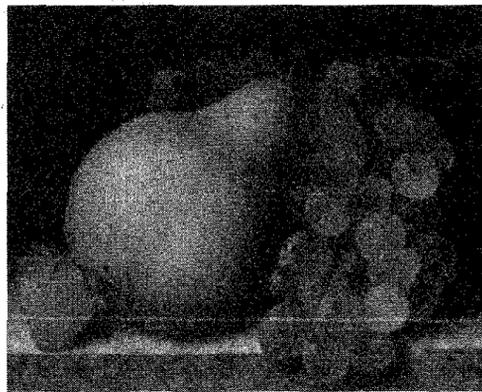
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Detroit one of 5 cities where Iraq citizens can vote in U.S.

BY ALEX LUNDBERG
STAFF WRITER

With Iraq's first open elections in history just a few weeks away, activists and political experts don't see much hope of the outcome being a peaceful, western democracy in the cradle of civilization.

Voters in Iraq and five cities in the United States will cast ballots to decide the future leadership of that desert country. In the U.S., qualified voters can vote in Detroit, Los Angeles, Chicago, Washington, D.C., and Nashville.

The site for the out-of-country vote in Wayne County will be set up at 15800 Northline in Southgate, near I-75 and Northline Road, based on a request from United States International Organization for Migration.

Iraq voters can vote for the National Assembly if:

- They have current, or had in the past, Iraqi citizenship or were born in Iraq, or have a father who is Iraqi

- They were at least 18 years-old by Dec. 31, 2004

- They can present official documents to prove all of the above.

Qualified voters need to bring all official documents when they come to register Jan. 17-23.

After Iraqi's have registered, they will be able to vote Jan. 28-30.

Head of the Detroit field office of the Out of Country Voting Program, John Gattorn, set up his office in Detroit this week and has had Internet access for almost that long. He arrived Dec. 22, set up an office in Dearborn and hired a staff. In the coming days, he said he's going to be printing fliers and hitting Iraqi media outlets in preparation for the upcoming vote in Iraq.

He said the election is going to be hot.

"The response has been overwhelming," Gattorn said. "The timeline makes it really challenging. We still don't

know how many people are going to show."

Martin Manna, president of the Chaldean American Chamber of Commerce, said his whole family is very excited about the upcoming election. That said, he's also skeptical of how the election is coming together.

"They don't have their act together," he said. "This election is incredibly important to Chaldeans, they're a minority in Iraq, but I don't think the election is going to get the numbers they're expecting."

Oakland University Assistant Professor of Political Science Paul Kubicek said the chances of a legitimate election in Iraq are very poor.

"Violence could disrupt the polling, that's a serious concern," he said. "Also, leaders in the Sunni (Muslim) community have called for a boycott of the election. That's 20 percent of the population who are unlikely to vote."

The third problem facing the election is that there are no international observers on the ground in Iraq. There hasn't ever been an election in that country and coupled with the fact there will be no one to watch it happen, the chances of the international community endorsing the outcome is very slim.

Some people have said the vote needs to be postponed in order to shore up some of these problems. That, according to the professor, is a real Hobson's Choice.

"If you push back the election the security situation might improve and more Sunnis might participate," Kubicek said. "But it's also likely that the insurgents might be emboldened by any postponement and the security situation might deteriorate."

The Jan. 30 deadline for the elections, he said, was a completely arbitrary one. He said there is no constitutional requirement for any date and this one was chosen half out of hope that things would have calmed down by then and half

out of concern they would influence the U.S. presidential race if they had not.

The Bush administration has stood firmly on the date and have said there is no plan to postpone. Kubicek said that could change if the right people ask for a new date.

"If a substantial number of Iraqis push for a new date, it might change," he said. "If enough did ask, that would give the Bush administration the cover they need to change the date."

But not everyone agrees changing the date of the vote will change Iraq's prospects. Immigration Attorney Ashley Mammow, a member of the Chaldean Democratic Caucus, said worrying about the date of the election is like arranging deck chairs on the Titanic.

"It's a total farce," Mammow said. "I don't know how you can have an election in a militarily controlled state with an unelected government. There are people on the ballot, but they weren't placed there by Iraqis."

With the country in a state of chaos and insurgent attacks on U.S. forces and civilians on the rise, she said the election was an empty exercise — a ceremonial gesture so someone can say "we have democracy."

Of course, she said, all of this goes on under the auspices of a U.S. controlled military force, something that isn't endearing anyone to the process.

"The Iraqi people don't want us there," Mammow said. "They don't want to be under our occupation for the next two decades."

Imam Husham Al-Husainy of the Karbala Islamic Center in Detroit says the upcoming election in Iraq is important. He is working to get people registered to vote and educating them on the issues and candidates around an election he was "very eager" to take part in.

That said, he thinks the

election is a scam.

"This is a political scandal," Al-Husainy said. "The government in Iraq does not want a real election because they know no one will vote for them. In my analysis, they were told to hold an election but they are indirectly killing it."

He said the International Organization for Migration, the body that is coordinating the out of country voting

process, isn't helping either. With only five voting areas for the entire United States, he said tens of thousands will be denied a chance to cast a ballot.

"There are 5,000 Iraqis living in the Seattle area of Washington," he said. "They would have to drive 20 hours to make it to L.A. to vote. It's impossible for them to make it."

He says the whole situation

reminds him of Saddam Hussein's rule. Democratic reform has to happen in Iraq, he said, and the Jan. 30 elections are the foundation of that reform. If the foundation isn't built correctly the whole experiment will fail.

"The election is not being held in a democratic way, and that will give ammunition to the terrorists," Al-Husainy said. "Let's have a real election, not a cosmetic election."

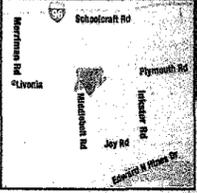
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Meredith tipped the scales at 230 pounds. After making the commitment to regular exercise at Fitness USA and sticking with a balanced, nutritious eating plan, Meredith has lost 95 pounds and now sports a size 3 figure.



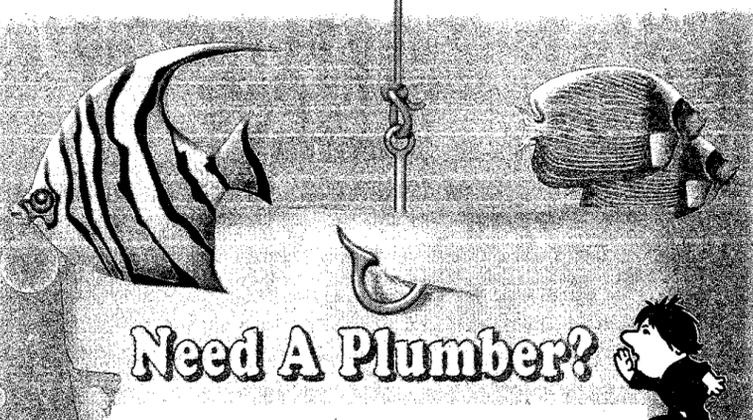
Robert was 430 pounds. Today, thanks to Fitness USA, he dropped from a size 64 waist to a size 32 and has lost more than 220 pounds!

Fitness USA

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