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OBSERVER LIFE, SECTION C

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SUNDAY  
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VOLUME 40 NUMBER 89

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# Judge orders trial in molestation case

BY DARRELL CLEM  
STAFF WRITER

A Livonia man faces trial for accusations he sexually molested two mentally impaired women in Westland. Karl Mandel Robinson, 35, was ordered to stand trial during a preliminary hearing Thursday in front of Westland 18th District Judge C. Charles

Bokos. Bokos ordered Robinson to stand trial in Wayne County Circuit Court following testimony that he sexually molested the two women, ages 22 and 29, while he worked for a company that provided them with transportation.

Bokos ordered Robinson to remain jailed in lieu of a \$150,000 cash bond. The

defendant could face penalties ranging up to life in prison, if convicted of one count of first-degree criminal sexual conduct and four counts of third-degree CSC.

Robinson's defense attorney, Samuel Posner, has described him as innocent.

"All I can tell you is, he's not guilty," Posner told the *Observer* in February, after the

charges surfaced.

The 22-year-old woman told police that Robinson forced her to perform oral sex on him in his van, while he was giving her a ride. She also said the defendant later groped her after he gave her a ride to a friend's house in Westland.

The 29-year-old victim told police that Robinson, in a sep-

arate incident, groped her at the same house. The two women have a mutual friend who lives there, police Sgt. Steve Borisch has said.

Robinson is accused of molesting the women in January. A not-guilty plea has been entered in his court file as he now awaits trial in circuit court.

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



Phil Power

# Sale begins new era for O&E papers

On Thursday, March 31, I sold the assets of my company, HomeTown Communications Network, Inc., to the Gannett Co.

Gannett is one of the largest newspaper companies in the world, with a demonstrated track record of capable management, great financial stability and responsible journalistic ethics. I wanted the fine newspapers, telephone directories and other publications that I built during my career to wind up in good hands after I left. I believe Gannett's hands are the best available.

That was important to me. I got into the newspaper business nearly 40 years ago when I started my company. It's been a long run and a good one. But I turned 65 a couple of years ago, a symbolic anniversary that helped my wife, Kathy, and me focus on our personal plans and on the future of the company. Neither of our children is interested in following our careers in the newspaper field. So we decided it was a good time to sell the business, move on to new things and find other ways to contribute to our state and our society.

I had four goals when I first bought six struggling *Observer Newspapers* in December 1965:

■ I wanted to publish quality hometown newspapers, ones that truly enhanced the lives of their readers and nurtured the communities they served. Taken together and over the years, my newspapers won more state and national awards for excellence than any other group of community newspapers in the country. I believe we've consistently set a high standard for our readers, for ourselves and for our industry.

■ I hoped to build a solid and ethical company over the long haul, one that would grow and innovate, contribute to our advertisers' business success, provide fulfilling careers for its staffers and earn a fair profit. What started out as an entrepreneurial effort long ago gradually evolved into a professionally managed corporation, while at the same time remaining a family company.

Today, HomeTown Communications Network is widely regarded as among the very best outfits of its sort in the nation. We publish one daily newspaper, 62 weekly or twice-weekly newspapers, 24 telephone directories and numerous shopping guides and specialty publications. Our operations cover three states,

PLEASE SEE POWER, A8

# Parolee faces 3 break-in charges

The 46-year-old Westland man arrested for a Livonia home invasion early Tuesday was charged in Livonia's 16th District Court on Thursday.

Donald Ray Rocker was charged with three felonies: second-degree home invasion, larceny in a building and for being a habitual offender, fourth offense. A plea of not guilty was entered on his behalf.

Rocker, a parolee, is being held in the Wayne County Jail in lieu of a \$250,000 bond. He is scheduled to face Judge Kathleen McCann for a preliminary examination at 9 a.m. April 12.

These charges stem from a break-in at a home on Houghton in the Ann Arbor Trail-Ann Arbor Road area shortly after midnight Tuesday. A home security alarm company notified Livonia police after a perpetrator busted a window and entered the home. Officers stopped the vehicle Rocker was driving as he attempted to leave the neighborhood. Police found a number of pieces of jewelry, cameras and collectibles in the trunk. Livonia police Lt. Greg Winn said Rocker is the subject of investigations into home invasions in other communities. Winn had talked to detectives in Westland and Ann Arbor as of Thursday.



BILL BRESLER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Media and police department representatives browse through recovered belongings found in the suspect's car.



PHOTOS BY TOM HAWLEY | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Marshall Middle School eighth-grader Marketa Hudson (right) watches as seventh-grader Chanelle White hugs NáKol Bullard during the World Language Arts class fund-raiser for the Muscular Dystrophy Association. Bullard's son, André, died from the disease this past summer.

# In honor of André

## Students use fund-raiser to remember classmate

BY SUE MASON  
STAFF WRITER

NáKol Bullard's first reaction was to cry, then she said she smiled. And then she went to Marshall Middle School to meet the students who were spending a day raising money in honor of her late son, André.

"I believe a lot of students were surprised to see me, but I told the teacher I didn't want to miss it for the world," said Bullard. "It was really nice.

Even when I walked into the classroom, I could feel their energy. They were happy to do it."

"They were really touched, when they walked into school and saw one class with André's picture on signs," said World Languages teacher Sue Carlson who with student teacher Sarah Abbott staged this year's fund-raiser. "They know he'll always be a part of Marshall."

This was the seventh annual

World Language Day in which students wore costumes and carried signs, offering to perform songs, rhymes, phrases and poems in Spanish and other languages in exchange for cash donations from students and staff members.

They raised \$520 and the money will be donated to the Muscular Dystrophy Association in André's memory



Seventh-grader Elizabeth Sampson sings a song in exchange for a donation.

PLEASE SEE CLASSMATE, A5

# Court set to hear evidence in exposure case

BY DARRELL CLEM  
STAFF WRITER

A Westland man is expected to learn Thursday whether he will face trial for accusations he drove by young girls and exposed himself to them.

Christopher Hardy, 20, will return to Westland 18th District Court for a preliminary hearing that has twice been delayed.

He remains jailed on a \$1 million cash bond. He could face penalties ranging from probation to life in prison, if convicted as charged.

Hardy faces a hearing on four counts of indecent exposure, amid allegations he drove by young girls and masturbated in front of them on four occasions in February.

His indecent exposure charges carry a possible one-year jail term. However, police Sgt. Debra Mathews said the penalties could be increased to as much as life in prison, because Hardy is charged as a sexual delinquent due to earlier incidents.

Hardy's latest arrest came after he was accused of exposing himself on Feb. 21 to two teenage girls outside the Mervyn's store on Warren Road.

He also is charged in a similar incident that police said happened just two days earlier outside of Michael's arts and crafts store, near Wayne and Warren. Two women in their early 20s told police that a man drove by them and exposed himself.

The remaining two charges stem from incidents that, according to police, hap-

pened Feb. 11 and 12 near the Farmer Jack grocery store at Merriman and Cherry Hill.

Even before the latest four indecent exposure charges emerged, Hardy had pleaded guilty Dec. 7 for an incident that happened three months earlier outside of Westland Shopping Center.

One day after he pleaded guilty, he was arrested Dec. 8 for an incident that police said occurred outside of a Garden City 7-Eleven store at Warren and Middlebelt.

At one point, Westland District Judge Gail McKnight had ordered Hardy jailed for 30 days for violating his probation orders. Ultimately, she imposed a \$1 million cash bond after the latest four charges emerged.

Not-guilty pleas have been placed in Hardy's court file.

## CONTACT US

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## Coming Thursday in Filter



### Awards time

It's time for the annual Detroit Music Awards, when the city salutes its own well-known and not-so-well-known musical talent.

# Winter Guard team prepares for national competition

BY STEPHANIE ANGELYN CASOLA  
STAFF WRITER

Franklin High School's Winter Guard team is soaring to new heights - which includes competition at the state and national level.

Saturday marked the state championship in Saginaw, where at least 13 teams were to compete. On Wednesday, Franklin's Winter Guard will host a performance in their home gym at 8 p.m., prior to leaving for the national championships in Dayton, Ohio.

"Winter Guard is a pretty special activity," said Mike Robinson, Franklin's coach. "There are only 60 groups in the state."

Schools, colleges and independent groups perform in Winter Guard competitions, but Robinson guessed his students would make it among the top two this weekend.

About 12 girls make up this year's team. Senior Jessie Weldon said she joined Winter and Color Guard teams during her freshman year at Franklin, thanks to a friend's urging.

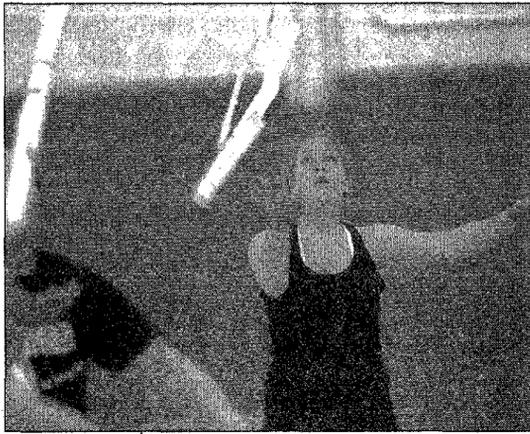
"It's just a lot of fun to perform," she said. "All of my friends are in it."

Janelle Thomas, also a senior, said she first found out about the opportunity while playing with the Marching Band her freshman year. She joined Winter Guard that fall and has been involved ever since. Janelle said it takes "a lot of dedication."

Participants practice or perform about four days a week, including Saturdays and events. In competition, they are scored on their use of equipment, movement, ensemble and general effect.

In their program, which lasts over four minutes, the students use dance and coordinated movements to express emotion and convey the meaning of the music. Robinson said connecting to the music is the biggest challenge in Winter Guard.

For this show, titled *The Mission*, the group has incor-



Senior Courtney Hale practices Thursday for the weekend's state-level competition.



Franklin High School's Winter Guard team practiced through spring break for upcoming competitions.

porated props like a rifle, a dagger and two different flags into a performance set to the song *Gabriel's Oboe*.

Parents are just as involved as students in making the program a success. They even assist with setting up and breaking down the props and set during a performance.

Robinson chooses the music, creates the choreography and costumes for performances, all based on the students participating and their strengths. He called Winter Guard "the sport

of the arts," for its physical demands and focus on performance. But it's the students themselves that keep him involved.

"These are great kids," Robinson said. The seniors have been with him since he began coaching at Franklin.

For more information on Color Guard or Winter Guard, contact band director Kristi Jasin at [kjasin@livonia.k12.mi.us](mailto:kjasin@livonia.k12.mi.us) or call the school at (734) 744-2655, Ext. 70468.

PHOTOS BY BILL BRESLER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

# Rite of spring: Composting, chipping resume in city

Serious about spring cleaning? The city of Westland is ready to help. City officials have issued the following guidelines to help local residents.

## RUBBISH RULES

The city of Westland's rubbish transfer site, 37137 Marquette, opened Friday and will remain open through Saturday, Oct. 29.

Hours will be 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays. Only Westland residents may use the transfer site. No commercial vehicles or contractors may use it. Proof of Westland residency must be shown.

To cover disposal costs, the city will charge a fee at the site before dumping is allowed. It's \$13 for a car, sport utility vehicle or minivan; \$23 for a small pickup or van; \$31 for a standard pickup or a 4-by-6 trailer; \$46 for a trailer that's 4-by-8 or 5-by-8; and \$62 for large trailers 5-by-10 or 5-by-12.

Car and truck parts and tires will not be accepted. Household furniture and appliances are to be removed at the residential premises by the city's waste disposal contractor. Call (734) 728-1770 prior to the regular trash pickup day.

Tree branches, shrubs, stumps, dirt and roof shingles will not be accepted at the transfer site. Used motor oil will only be accepted on Friday and Saturday by an attendant on duty.

## RECYCLING CENTER

Starting Monday through Oct. 21, the city's recyclable drop-off center will open for summer hours from 7:30 p.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday and from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturdays. The site will be closed Sundays and holidays.

- Here's what's accepted:
- Glass bottles and jars: They must be washed clean with lids and metal rings removed. No plate glass is accepted and no ceramics, Pyrex cookware, Mr. Coffee pots, dirty containers with food, and no mirrors.
  - Newspapers: They must be stacked neatly 6 to 15 inches high and tied with twine or packed into paper bags. They should be dry and have no mold. No junk mail, catalogs, magazines or phone books are accepted, and no office paper, computer paper or cardboard.
  - Metal aluminum that won't stick to a magnet: This applies to cans only, no scrap metal. No foil or foil containers will be accepted.
  - Metal steel that will stick to a magnet: This includes tin cans, which should be rinsed clean with both ends removed and

flattened to save room in the Dumpster. No paint, aerosol cans or scrap metal will be accepted.

■ Plastics: This includes plastic drink jugs and colored laundry detergent jugs, and they must be cleaned out. The following will not be accepted: lids, plastic bags, caustic material containers, such as drain cleaner, oil or antifreeze containers.

■ Batteries: Accepted will be flashlight type dry cell batteries, watch batteries, camera batteries, hearing aid batteries, NICD batteries and automotive batteries.

■ Used motor oil: It will be accepted 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Friday and Saturday.

No medical waste will be accepted. To dispose of hazardous waste, such as antifreeze, gasoline and paint, contact Painter & Ruthenberg at (313) 561-0303 or the state Department of Environmental Quality at (800) 662-9278. They can provide suggestions for disposal.

## CHIPPING SEASON

The city's public service department will begin chipping tree branches March 28. Scheduling already has begun. Residents who want to use this service should call (734) 728-1770.

Branches will be disposed of on the day following trash day. They should be at least four feet in length and no larger than three inches in diameter, neatly stacked with the butt end facing the curb.

The city will chip branches only, not stumps, roots, shrubs or trunks.

## COMPOST SEASON

The city's compost season will begin Monday and continue through Dec. 9. Compost will be picked up the same day as regular trash.

Compost must be in cans labeled yard waste or in Kraft-type brown paper bags specifically designed for yard waste. Leaves and other yard waste in plastic bags will not be picked up.

Compost must be separated from regular trash by at least 10 feet. All brush and limbs must be tied in bundles of 4-foot length and can't be more than 60 pounds. No stumps or roots will be accepted.

Cardboard boxes containing compost will not be picked up. Sod, dirt, wood chips, vines or landscaping material will not be picked up. Residents will have the responsibility of disposal. Bundles of hay/straw must be broken down and put into cans or paper bags.

Questions may be addressed to the public service department at (734) 728-1770.

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## ACHIEVERS

Named to the honor roll for the marking period at the Tinkham Center Alternative High School were Chanta Christopher, Whitney Flum, Gerald Gulyas, Ashley Holloway, Derek Lawson, Rachel Ponish, Gina Warnecke and Ronald Washick.

Westland Chamber of Commerce President and CEO Lori Brist was among 24 current and future leaders who graduated from Michigan State University's Michigan Political Leadership Program on March 3.

The Michigan Political

Leadership Program at Michigan State University recruits, trains, and inspires tomorrow's public policy leaders. It prepares them with vision, commitment and the skills for effective governance, policy analysis and process, personal leadership development, effective governance and campaigning.

"I was impressed by the diversity of my MPLP colleagues," said Brist.

"It was great to be exposed to other points of view and to see that my own ideas fit in. I consider it an honor to have been chosen to participate in this

outstanding leadership program."

Brist was recently invited to serve on the Government Affairs Committee in Michigan for the International Council of Shopping Centers.

Founded in 1957, ICSC is the global trade association of the shopping center industry. Its 50,000 members in the U.S., Canada and more than 80 other countries include shopping center owners, developers, managers, marketing specialists, investors, lenders, retailers and other professionals as well as academics and public officials.

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# Kalinski: Support music, trim school administration

BY STEPHANIE ANGELYN CASOLA  
STAFF WRITER

Frank Kalinski became heavily involved in Livonia Public Schools when his daughter was diagnosed with diabetes. He chose to run for school board trustee after he saw the district reduce music programs to cope with a budget deficit.

Kalinski, a 48-year-old licensed builder and owner of Frank's Rain Gutter Service, is a father of two. His son is a freshman at Franklin High School, and his daughter attends Emerson Middle School. Kalinski has lived in Livonia since 1993.

If chosen as a trustee, he would lend support to the district's music program. He said music education requires students to gather knowledge, practice, and earn the opportunity to perform. He likened it to learning a foreign language, in that it is easier for younger students to learn and retain.

He said he supports "that entire process" which can be found in the arts and sports as well.

"You don't get that from taking the MEAP test," he said.

Kalinski doesn't want the budget



Kalinski

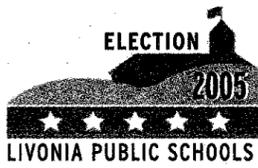
process to get in the way of this type of learning. He suggested the district could find savings elsewhere, like funds set aside for new technology improvements.

He would like to see the reorganization of the administration, too. Kalinski said he would support eliminating assistant superintendent positions and having elementary and middle school principals report to their correlating high school principals. He said the "flow of information" about students would be more effectively communicated.

He's also combing through the operating budget, and sees items like "travel expenses between schools" as possibly expendable.

"When the ship's heading for an iceberg, somebody's going to have to get a hold of the thing and steer it away," he said.

Kalinski disagreed with the board's decision to hold a special election for its millage, in February. It cost the district \$42,000, said Kalinski, who



works at the polls during elections. He would support having one election every two years for board members, combined with city elections, in order to save money.

When it comes to neighborhood schools, Kalinski shared new ideas to deal with the slipping enrollment. He could imagine a centralized approach where school offices, libraries, gymnasiums and other "backbone" departments would remain in school buildings.

Those buildings would become more community-focused and available to the public. Classrooms could be moved to into several modular buildings - which are built and changed as needed. Kalinski said this could effect a big savings, particularly in student transportation. He envisions students can walk to school, rather than ride a bus.

Editor's note: The following is the second in a series of candidate profiles for Livonia Public Schools Board of Education candidates. District voters will elect two people to four-year terms in the Tuesday, May 3, election. Candidates are William C. Fried, Frank Kalinski, Steve King, Dan Lessard and Cynthia Markarian. Candidate Christopher C. Kaufman filed, but has chosen not to campaign.

"That time could be better spent," he said.

Kalinski supports the district maintaining ownership of vacant property - like the land where Bryant once stood. He said he would look into ways to make the land profitable by leasing a portion of it out, perhaps to a builder.

"You have to look at the whole thing, from start to finish," he said.

## Workshop offers lawn care tips

Common-sense tips for lawn and landscape care will be offered during a free workshop sponsored by the city of Westland.

Tom Smith, executive director of the Michigan Turfgrass Foundation, will be the featured speaker during the workshop, scheduled for 7-8:30 p.m. Monday, April 25, at the city's Friendship Center, 1119 N. Newburgh.

Registration will start at 6:30 p.m. Topics will include achieving your goals for low-maintenance landscapes; how plants grow; soil testing for nutrients; earth-friendly fertilizers; lawn care that's safe for the Rouge River; managing weeds without pesticides; and native wildflowers. Smith also will answer audience questions.

Smith has expertise with turfgrass management, landscape planning and maintenance, native plants and more. He teaches university and community college courses and is a regular speaker at local gardening events.

Smith received his master's degree from Michigan State University. Register in advance by calling the Westland Community Relations Department at (734) 467-3198 or by e-mailing to LFDean@aol.com.

## 'Bells Ring for Laura' benefit concert set for Sunday, April 10

A benefit handbell concert, "Bells Ring for Laura," will be held at 4 p.m. Sunday, April 10, at St. Paul's Presbyterian Church in Livonia.

The concert will raise funds to help pay for the rehabilitation and physical therapy of Laura Jackson, a Livonia 10th-grader who was injured in May 2003 while trying out for cheerleading.

The concert will be put on by Classical Bells, one of the premiere handbell ensembles. The group is made up of 15 musicians from the metropolitan Detroit area and creates music using six octaves of handbells and six octaves of choir chimes.

Laura, the daughter of Daryl and Melody Jackson of Livonia, injured her spine and was left a quadriplegic and needs assistance to breathe.

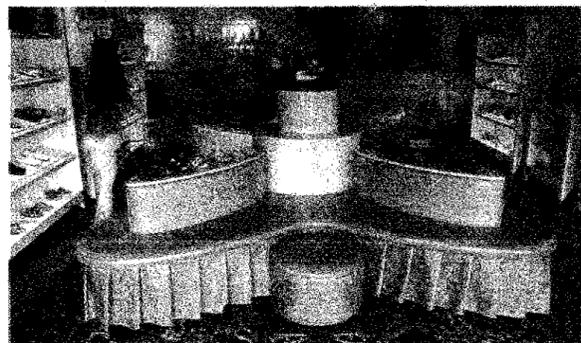
The concert will feature musical selections in a wide variety of genres, including classical, jazz, inspirational, ragtime and swing. Classical Bells has been entertaining audiences since 1983 with their unique and colorful performances which include choreography, artistry and humor to entertain the eye as well as the ear. Under the direction of Darlene Ebersole, the ensemble has

**Laura, the daughter of Daryl and Melody Jackson of Livonia, injured her spine and was left a quadriplegic.**

traveled nationwide and appeared as featured performers with the Detroit Symphony, Michigan Opera Theater, Birmingham First Night and many events sponsored by the American Guild of English Handbell Ringers.

Classical Bells is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting the artistry of handbells through educational programs, workshops and concerts in communities, churches and schools.

Tickets are \$10 each, suggested donation, and groups of 15 or more are \$8 each, suggested donation. For more details or to purchase tickets, call St. Paul's Presbyterian Church at (734) 422-1470. The church is located at Five Mile and Inkster roads.



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**Parent seminars**

The Wayne-Westland Community Schools' Family Resource Center in collaboration with Hegira Prevention is offering two parent seminars on Positive Discipline 5-6:30 p.m. Wednesday, April 6, 13 and 20, at Edison Elementary School, 345050 Hunter, Westland, and 5-6:30 p.m. Thursday, May 5, 12 and 19, at Vandenburg Elementary School, 32101 Stellwagen, Wayne.

The seminars will cover the difference between punishment and discipline, how parenting styles affect how children learn and more. Each participant will receive a copy of Jane Nelson's *Positive Discipline*. Participants can attend one session or all three. For more information, call (734) 419-2709.

**Night Off**

Parents looking for an evening out should circle Friday, April 22, and June 3. Those nights the Westland Parks and Recreation Department and Hoops Stars Basketball and Academic Tutoring will offer Parents' Night Off.

Parents can leave their children at the Bailey Recreation Center 6-10 p.m. both evenings and enjoy a night out while the kids enjoy a pizza dinner (chips and a beverage included) and two activities. The choices include basketball, cheerleading, math games and arts and crafts, and kids can choose the

same activity for both sessions. The event is for children in first through eighth grades and cost \$20 for one child per night off or \$35 per child for both. Register by April 19 for the first night off and by May 30 for the June 30 program at the Bailey Recreation Center, 3351 Ford.

For more information, call Ron Levin at (248) 496-3268.

**Historic fashions**

Local historians will sponsor an "old-time" fashion show and luncheon at 11:30 a.m. Wednesday, April 13, to raise money to help repair the city's historic Octagon House.

Cost is \$12 per person. The event will be held at the Bailey Recreation Center. The show will be held in memory of the late Howard Becker, a supporter of the Octagon House.

For ticket information, call (734) 729-1605, (734) 522-3918 or (734) 729-2953.

**Off and running**

North Brothers Ford and the City of Westland are sponsoring the seventh annual 5K Fun Run and Walk Saturday, May 14, for the benefit of the Karmanos Cancer Institute.

Runners and walkers collect donation in advance of the race/walk which will start at 9 a.m. at the Bailey Recreation Center. Prizes and recognition will be awarded to the top three females and top three males in seven age groups - ages 1-10, 11-19, 20-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, 60 and over.

The pre-registration deadline is May 7 and T-shirts are guaranteed for all registered by

that date. The registration fee is \$12 for students age 18 and under and \$15 for adults. After May 7, the fee is \$18. Registration starts at 8 a.m. on race day.

For more information, contact Erin Jackson at North Brothers Ford at (734) 524-1232. Registrations can be sent to her attention at the dealership, 33300 Ford Road, Westland, MI 48185. Checks should be made payable to North Brothers Ford.

**Let's hear a cheer**

The Westland Stars Cheer and Dance Team is offering three clinics in April in advance of tryouts slated for 6-8 p.m. Thursday, May 5.

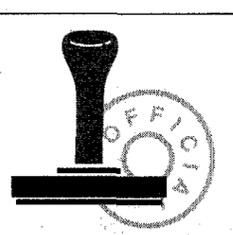
The clinics will be 6-8:30 p.m. Thursdays, April 14, 21 and 28, in the multipurpose room of the Bailey Recreation Center, 36651 Ford, behind Westland City Hall.

Everything you need to know will be taught at the clinics. If you are interested come dressed to work out (no jeans) and bring water (no pop or food).

The coaches are Toni Lay, a Wayne-Westland school teacher with 22 years of coaching experience and former cheerleader; Keri Morten, a former high school dancer and college cheerleader, and Jillian Wehrheim, a Junior Olympic champion dancer and high school cheerleader.

The program is \$5 per class or \$25 per month. The Stars also will have a summer camp at Oakland University. All members will be invited to attend.

**FOR THE RECORD**



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

More than 80 garage sales all in the same place at the same time in the parking lot west of Westland City Hall, 36601 Ford Road, next to the Police Department. For further information about how you can reserve a spot, call Margaret Martin at (734) 722-7620.

**THERAPEUTIC PROGRAM**

**Classes/field trips**  
The Westland Parks and Recreation Department sponsors a variety of activities and field trips for people with special needs through its Therapeutic Recreation Program now through June.

The program includes classes in golf, cooking, exercise and arts and crafts for those 13 years and older. There also is bowling and fun nights, swimming fishing and a dance planned.

There is at least one field trip each month, including seeing the Harlem Globetrotters, the Detroit Tigers, a Michigan State-University of Michigan hockey game and a mystery trip.

**Baseball**  
Children age 3-12 can participate in the program's T-Ball/coach-pitch baseball during the summer. Registration will be April 1-May 1, with practices and games taking place on Thursdays May 19-July 28 at Jaycee Park, Wildwood at Hunter in Westland. All practices and games will be 6:30-7:30 p.m. at Jaycee Park, Hunter at Wildwood. In case of inclement weather, games and practice will be in the gymnasium at the Bailey Recreation Center, 36651 Ford.

The program is open to siblings. Cost is \$50 for residents and their siblings without fund-raiser and \$51 for non-resident and siblings without fund-raiser or \$10 for residents and \$11 for non-residents with fund-raiser (selling \$104 candy bars at \$1 each). For more information about the T-Ball/coach-pitch program or to obtain a Therapeutic Recreation Program application, call (734) 722-7620.

**Swimming**  
The Therapeutic Program also offers swimming at the Dyer Orthopedic Pool on Marquette west of Carlson 6:30-8 p.m. Tuesdays now through May 31. The cost is \$2 per night or \$10 for five swims for Westland residents and \$3 per night or \$15 for five swims for non-residents. The Dyer pool is heated to 90 degrees and is wheelchair accessible. Those requiring one-on-one assistance or supervision in the pool or locker room must bring and aide or family member. Private swim lessons and water exercise classes also are available. For more information, call (734) 722-7620.

**Earth Day**  
Scout groups, classes, church groups, home school groups, civic clubs or preschools looking for an Earth Day activity can adopt a planter box outside the Bailey Recreation Center. The plating will take place 4:30-6 p.m. Friday, April 22. For more information, call the Bailey Center at (734) 722-7620. Community Garage Sale

**SPORTS GROUPS**  
Dad's Athletic Club of Westland - Softball for boys and girls ages 7-18. Sign up in March and April for summer season. Call Bud Prough at (734) 595-2951 or Michelle at (734) 721-7614 for more information. Wayne Dolphin Swim Team Come join one of the longest running recreational swim teams in the area. We need boys and girls ages 6-18 to continue a tradition of friendship and fun. For more information visit the Web site or contact President Mary Schirmer at (734) 397-8196, Vice-President Donna Fox at (734) 729-5049 or Treasurer Tammy Deck at (734) 728-1099.

**Warriors of Westland**  
The Warriors of Westland sports team for the physically challenged-trains people ages 5 and up to participate in track and field events. For more information, call head coach Cindy Hawk at (734) 513-8745.

**Wayne Ford Civic League**  
The Wayne Ford Civic League provides T-ball, coach pitch, baseball and spring and fall soccer for children ages 4-10. For more information, call Patricia Tatum at (734) 467-8243.

**Wayne-Westland Soccer Association**  
For more information, call (734) 467-5260.

**Westland Hockey Association**  
For more information, call Chris Simonian at (734) 326-2146.

**Westland Lawn Bowling Association**  
For more information call (734) 722-7630 or (734) 5282829.

**Westland Wizardz**  
The Westland Wizardz wheelchair basketball team is for individuals 16 years of age or older with any impairment that prevents them from playing regular basketball. There is also a junior team for ages 10-16. For more information, call Shaun Graham at (734) 762-9573 or Jose Zavalta at (734) 721-1835.

**Westland Youth Athletic Association**  
The Westland Youth Athletic Association offers youth basketball, baseball, cheerleading and volleyball. For information, call (734) 421-0640.

**FUN-4-ALL**  
This children's recreation scholarship program that was started by several concerned parents who wanted to find a way for children from financially stressed families who live in Westland to be able to participate in recreation programs. All applications must be turned in at least two weeks before the first class. Those who are interested in helping the program or need an application can contact Margaret Martin, program supervisor, at (734) 722-7620.

**ADULT SPORTS**  
The City of Westland offers several sport leagues for men and women throughout the year. For additional information about any of the leagues, call the Bailey Recreation Center at (734) 722-7620.

**Men's Spring basketball**  
Men's spring basketball registration begins in mid-March. Season play begins in mid-April. There are no playoffs in this league. There is a maximum of six teams allowed in each division of the league (Mondays and Wednesdays). Contact the Bailey Center at (734) 722-7620 for exact registration dates, registration forms, information sheets and fees.

**Men's Summer Basketball**  
Men's summer basketball registration begins in mid-June. Season begins in mid-July. There is a maximum of six teams in each division of the league (Monday and Wednesday). Contact the Bailey Center at (734) 722-7620 after May 15 for exact registration dates, registration forms, information sheets and fees.

**Women's Summer Basketball**  
Women's summer basketball registration begins in mid-May, the season begins in mid-June. There are no playoffs in this league. There is a maximum of six teams in each division of the league (Wednesday and Thursday). Contact the Bailey Center at (734) 722-7620 after April 15 for exact registration dates, registration forms, information sheets and fees.

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- YOUTH ATHLETICS**  
Westland Youth Athletic Association . . www.wyaa.org

**DEATHS**

- A**  
Edith Ellen Aton, 83, of Plymouth, died March 22.  
Mary V. Austin, of Livonia, died March 25.
- C**  
Sharlene Chapp, 69, of Garden City. Agatha J. Chowns, 91, of Rochester Hills, died March 24.
- E**  
Robert A. Eastman, 70, of Farmington Hills, died March 31.
- G**  
Florence C. "Bee" Gallnet, 83, of Farmington Hills, died March 26.  
Louis Bernard Golonka, of Livonia, died March 24.
- H**  
Dorothy S. Greene, 88, formerly of Livonia, died March 10.
- J**  
Michael Hier, of Redford Township, died March 10.  
Joyce R. Jaeger, 75, of Farmington Hills, died March 28.
- K**  
Hugh Kemp Jr., 82, of Dearborn, died March 20.  
Michael Kenneth Kesteloot, of Canton, died March 27.
- L**  
Andrew Liberis, of Canton, died March 24.
- M**  
Jack L. Maas, 66, of Clarkston, died March 19.  
Theresa Magary, 92, of Auburn Hills, died March 6.  
Elizabeth "Betty" Maitrott, 92, of Rochester, died March 19.  
Mary A. Martin, 81, formerly of Canton, died Feb. 22.  
Rosemary "Rosie" (Fisher) Miller, 82, formerly of Birmingham, died March 24.  
Sidney M. Millinoff, 85, of Farmington Hills, died March 25.
- N**  
Betty O'Neil, 78, of Sterling Heights, died March 14.  
Ruby L. Watson Newlin, 85, of Livonia, died March 31.
- P**  
Norman H. Phillips, 80, of Bloomfield Hills, died March 28.
- S**  
Shirley (nee Wallace) Sarver, 80, of Birmingham, died March 29.  
Wilbur "Bill" L. Smedley, 92, died March 27.  
Stanley F. Svoboda Sr., of Livonia, died March 22.
- W**  
Roger D. Wilson, 69, formerly of Livonia, died March 31.

**SPECIAL EVENTS**

**Power Soccer Clinic**  
The Westland Parks and Recreation Department will host a Power Soccer Team Clinic 2-5:30 p.m. Saturday, April 23, at the Bailey Recreation Center, 36651 Ford. Power soccer is a team sport for individuals with disabilities who use power wheelchairs. It is the first sport designed specifically for power wheelchair users. The game is usually played in a gymnasium on a regulation basketball court. Teams of two power wheelchair users attack, defend and maneuver an oversized ball into a designated goal to score points. The clinic is designed to build a Westland power soccer team. For more information, call Margaret Martin at (734) 722-7620. Jerry Frick, power soccer executive in Atlanta, Ga., at (770) 654-0715, Alan Pomranka of Michigan Wheelchair Veterans at (517) 490-3893 or Ken Britton at (734) 595-4157.

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**CLASSMATE**

FROM PAGE A1

to provide a scholarship to the MDA summer camp. The camp costs \$600, and while they fell a little short, the students were confident of reaching that amount with donations still coming in last Thursday.

André died last July just a week shy of his 14th birthday from complications of the disease. André loved summer camp. He enjoyed it because he was with his friends and because of the independence he experienced for that one week.

**ENCOURAGEMENT**

"It was adapted for kids with special needs," said his mother. "It gave him a chance to be with a lot of kids who had the disease. He got encouragement from them and realized that he wasn't alone, that there were other kids just like him."

"He loved the camp so much, it was near and dear to him and he'd be pleased to know his friends did this for him."

"We picked the summer camp because André was special to everybody here," said Carlson, who visited André at camp last June. "He was my messenger boy, he loved to do it. He was always volunteering to help."

In addition to André, the event also honored Robin Bennett, a former Marshall Middle School student and former Westland Junior Miss,



Marshall Middle School math teacher Jerry Harmon (left) pays the fee for eighth-grader Carly Pitrago (center) to sing '10 Little Puppies' in Spanish to raise money for muscular dystrophy. Right is classmate Alex Kleinschmidt.

who has muscular dystrophy. "She also is an inspiration to us because she went to Marshall and now she's a freshman in college," said Carlson.

Everything from the McDonald's "I'm loving it" jingle to the Pledge of Allegiance was said in Spanish, German, French, Japanese, Chinese and in the case of Gloria Girgis, Arabic. The eighth-grader wore an Arabic headdress in an Egyptian oud (a lute or King David's Instrument as it's called in the Bible).

Girgis offered a choice of America or Arabic songs, charging 50 cents per song. She was hoping to best her sister, who placed first in the event five years ago. Her \$18.31 was far short of her sister's \$80.

"I followed the rules, my sister didn't," she said.

She also fell well short of the

top fund-raiser, eighth-grader Marketa Hudson, who raised \$41.59. Hudson, according to Carlson was "very close with André and a classmate."

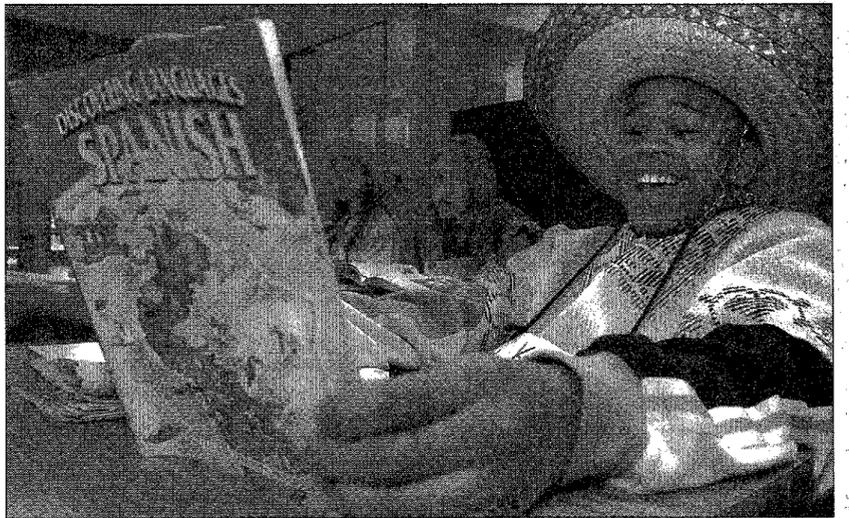
Second-place went to seventh-grader Shelby Eschker with \$37.65 and third was eighth-grader Katy Harris with \$37.45. The top three money earners won dictionaries in the language of their choice.

**DRESSED UP**

Students wore sombreros, serapes, shirts made from the curtains that hung in Carlson's first apartment and even the dress she wore on her honeymoon 24 years ago for the fund-raiser.

"I had to listen to a time share presentation in Mexico to get the serape," Carlson said.

The students carried signs listing their selections and the cost. The choices range from the pledge and McDonald's



Seventh-grader Keenam Johnson enjoys learning Spanish as part of his World Languages class.

jingle to a love poem, a mild insult and the weather report in Spanish. The students assigned, ranging from 10 cents to \$1. The cockroach song - "La Cucaracha" - went for 50 cents.

"I had \$7 in quarters," said eighth-grader Kate Smith. "A lot of the teachers had stacks of money, and some tried to spread it out throughout the day."

This was the second year Ed

Stone participated in World Languages Day.

He performed in Spanish, charging 50 cents for the McDonald's jingle and did the Pledge of Allegiance.

"I said the pledge twice and forgot the last line when I did over the PA system," he said. "I was nervous."

Bullard said her son took things one day at a time and fulfilled all of his dreams. Diagnosed with MD at 13

months, doctors had told his mother that they didn't think he would live to his second birthday.

"So it was a blessing," she said. "We called him a soldier because he was a fighter. Even this last time, he fought really hard. Even though it's months later, it's nice to know his friends still care. What a great legacy."

smason@oe.hometownlife.com | (734) 953-2112

**Anderson provides vacation guides**

With the snow melt and temperatures slowly rise, Westland residents are thinking about vacation, and a number of publications available, free of charge, courtesy of State Rep. Glenn Anderson, D-Westland.

Residents interested in fishing during their vacation would benefit from a copy of the Department of Natural Resources' 2005 Michigan Fishing Guide or the 2005 Michigan Inland Trout & Salmon Guide. Both publications contain a wealth of information about the rules and

regulations governing fishing in Michigan, identifying game fish and angler rights.

Anderson's office also has the 2005 Michigan Vacation Guide available.

The guide contains everything a potential vacationer needs to know about the Great Lakes State.

These publications are available at the William P. Faust Public Library and Westland City Hall. Residents also can have a copy sent to their home if they call Anderson's legislative office toll-free (888) 833-8494.

**Health fair set for April 10**

Gethsemane M.B. Church's body and soul health ministry will sponsor a free health fair noon to 3:30 p.m. Sunday, April 10, at 29066 Eton, Westland. The fair will focus on blood pressure, dental, PDA, family practice doctors, optometry, podiatry and more.

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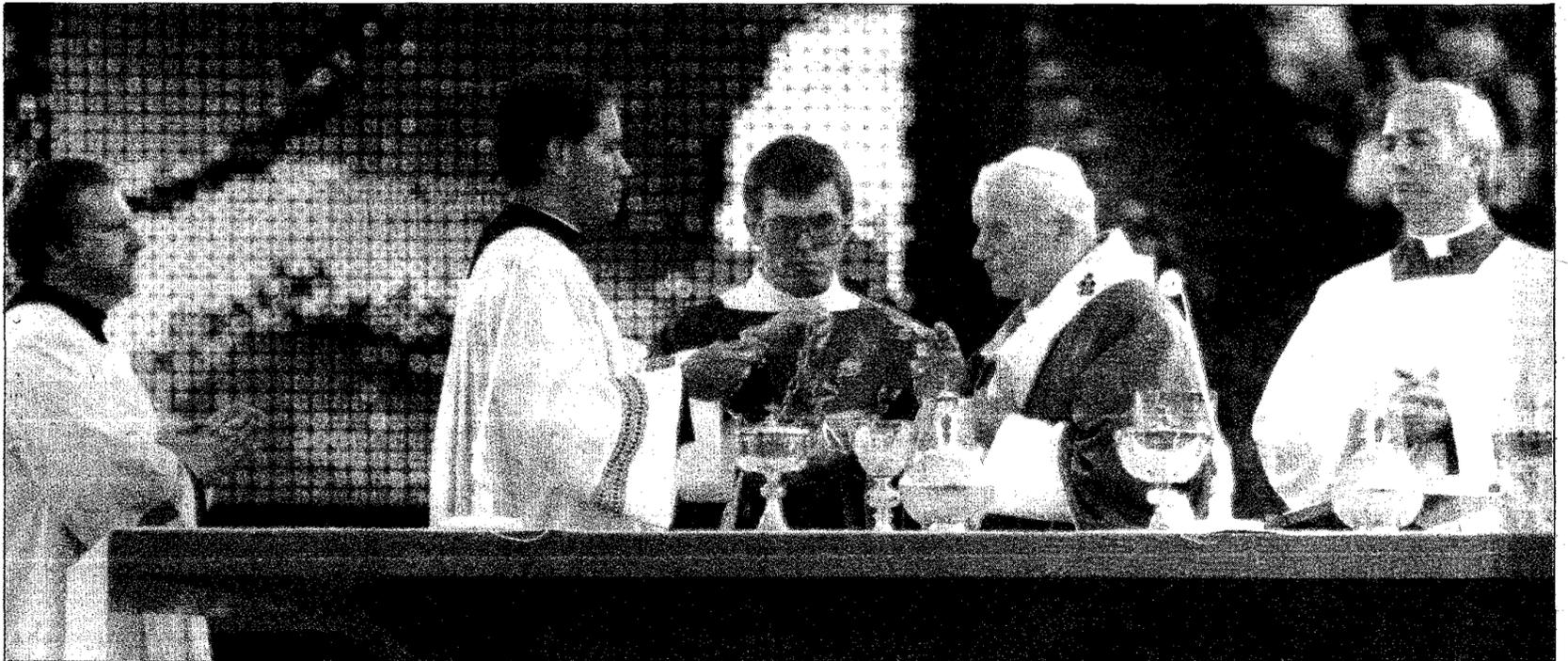
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# Faithful reflect on John Paul II's papal legacy



OBSERVER &amp; ECCENTRIC FILE PHOTOS

Pope John Paul II and concelebrants prepare to consecrate the bread and wine at the high Mass Sept. 19, 1987, in the Pontiac Silverdome. Pope John Paul II visited Detroit, Hamtramck and Pontiac in a 23-hour visit to the metro area.

## 'He raised the bar for what it means to be the pope of the Catholic Church'

BY ALEX LUNDBERG  
STAFF WRITER

After a long battle with Parkinson's disease and months of fighting infections, Pope John Paul II, one of the longest-serving heads of the worldwide Roman Catholic Church, died Saturday at the age of 84.

On Friday, the pope had refused to be taken to a hospital and had received the sacrament for the sick and dying. His health had been a concern for some time, with the situation becoming more troublesome after suffering heart failure following treatment for an infection Thursday.

Around the Detroit area, the Catholic faithful and religious people of all faiths had been watching and listening to the Vatican cautiously as reports of the pontiff's declining health continued to cast a dark shadow over the Holy See.

Archdiocese of Detroit theologian the Rev. John West, also the pastor of Our Lady of Sorrows Catholic Church in Farmington, said Pope John Paul II had forever changed the job description for the Bishop of Rome.

### PAPACY TRANSFORMED

"He has visited more than 100 countries; the pope usually never left the Vatican," he said. "He has transformed the papacy from the one-dimensional Bishop of Rome to the pilgrim pope to the world." Using a "great natural gift for lan-

guage," John Paul II traveled the world, switching between major languages easily to connect with the people he visited. His travels brought him to the Detroit area twice in his capacity as the Bishop of Krakow in both 1969 and 1976 and once as the pope in 1987.

Having been in the position as the leader of the church for 27 years, he was the third-longest serving pontiff and, for more than half the world's population, the only pope they have ever known.

His global mission over the 27 years of his papacy means future popes will not be able to stay unscathed within the Vatican.

"He raised the bar for what it means to be the pope of the Catholic Church," West said. "He had a great skill with languages, he knew the power of media and was very vigorous."

Madonna University President Sister Rose Marie Kujawa said John Paul II was the pope of the people and made himself accessible to people who, historically, would never lay eyes on someone of his stature. He also made inroads to people of other faiths without compromising the standards of his own.

"He opened the door to ecumenism within the church without sacrificing the dogma of the church," she said. "The dogma of the Eucharist."

A great deal of his legacy, she said Friday, will be his impact with the youth of the world, his ability to make connections with young people as a "great and holy leader."

"He had a link with the youth in ways many other popes did not," Sister Kujawa said. "Most other popes were quite distant to the average person, much more to youth. It was his love of sports, of theater, that made them feel he was active and interested in their lives."

She said that, unlike many popes in the past, John Paul II wrote almost all of the works attributed to his name and was a very prolific thinker and writer.

### PARTNERSHIP

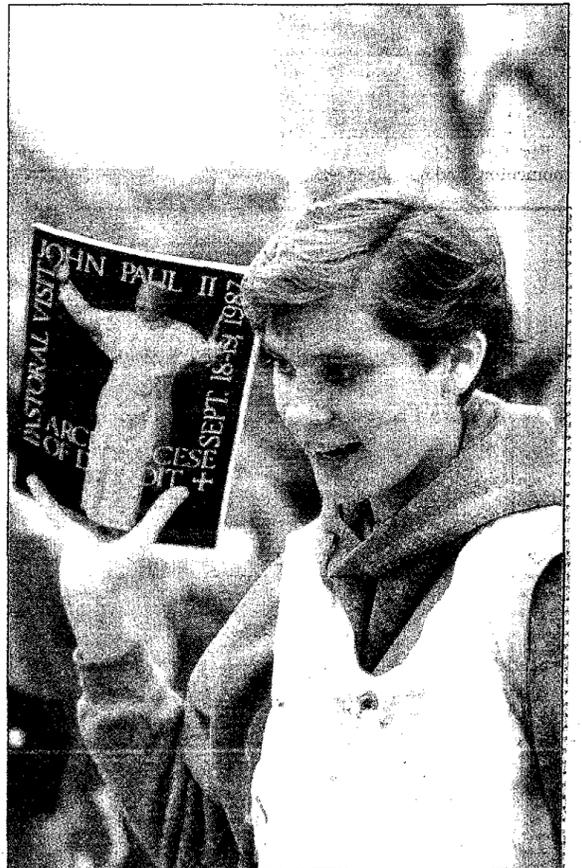
Rabbi Dan Syme of Temple Beth-El in Bloomfield Hills said Friday that his congregation had enjoyed a long partnership with the Archdiocese of Detroit and appreciated the pope's outlook on cooperation between faiths.

"We have been the beneficiary of the pope's wisdom and vision of a different kind of world," he said. "A world where people are more respectful of each other. He has been a courageous and wise leader."

John Paul II was the first pope to admit the church had made mistakes in dealing with the Holocaust during World War II and lauded the Jewish faith as "the older brother" of Christianity.

Syme said there have been disagreements between the two faiths, but those pale in comparison to the partnerships that have underscored the last 60 years.

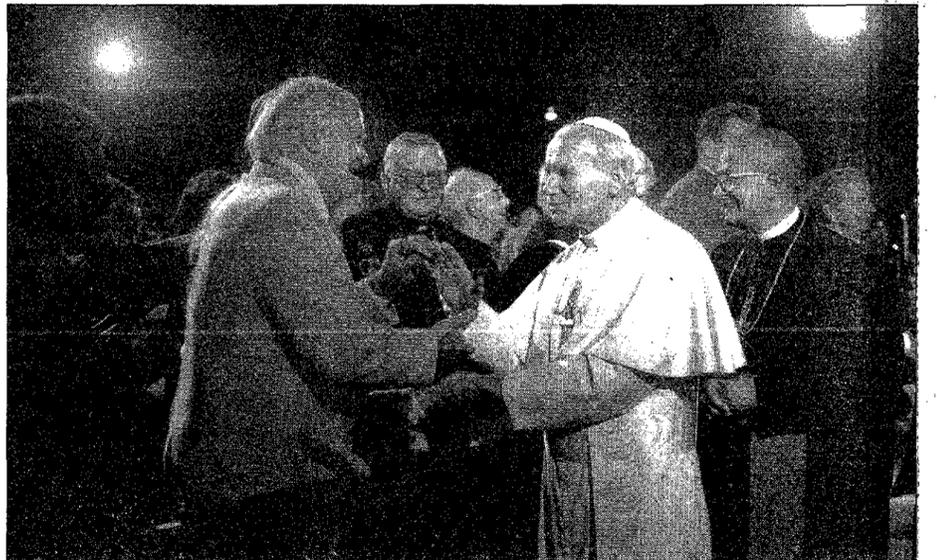
"I hope whoever follows him will have the same ecumenical sensibility that he does."



Mary Beth Widak of Northville is hard at work at Hart Plaza selling programs. She was a student at Mercy High School in Farmington Hills in 1987.



Then Vice President George Bush and his wife, Barbara, meet Pope John Paul II during the pontiff's departure ceremony at Metro Airport on Saturday, Sept. 19, 1987.



The pope greets well-wishers at Blessed Sacrament Cathedral. Following is then Archbishop Edmund Szoka, the leader of metro Detroit's Roman Catholic community. While in Detroit, the pope stayed at the archbishop's residence on Boston Boulevard in Detroit.

## Witness to history: A man of peace visits the White House

I had traveled to the McNamara Airport terminal to board a plane to Washington D.C. countless times before, but this time my trip felt different. I had been invited by the ambassador to the embassy of Lebanon many times before, but this time something about my visit was different. I had met His Eminence Patriarch Nasrallah Peter Sfeir numerous times before, but this time our talks were different. For three days last week, I was one of the lucky ones, granted a rare opportunity to witness an historic occasion in our nation's capital. For me, the culmination of this moment in time started long ago.

The year was 1982 and I was just a teenager concerned with all the nuances and joys of shedding adolescence and welcoming the pre-adulthood status that awaited me in the early part of that decade. Though with the excitement that surrounded the end of another school year and the beginning of summer came a black cloud that loomed overhead, as I could not escape the daily grim radio and television reports of what was to become a besieged Beirut.

Since 1975, Lebanon had been embroiled in a bloody civil war — one that had extracted thousands of lives and forced the exodus of those who could to European, American and other foreign lands. By the early summer of 1982, the war had intensified and seemed to headline every major news network, magazine, and newspaper.

Beirut had been divided by what was known as the "Green Line" and for years the Lebanese capital had withstood the constant bombardment of daily artillery shells, tanks, bombs, sniper fire and more. As if the presence of Lebanon's warring factions was not enough, more than 30,000 Syrian troops had earlier entered their tiny neighborhood and were stationed in and around parts of the city.

Beirut, once known as the Paris of the Middle East, had become a city of blood. And, for the first time in history, the armies of the state of Israel would invade an Arab capital. As the convoy of Israeli armies and tanks headed northward toward Beirut, people across the world witnessed firsthand the invasion of Israeli troops moving along the highways, streets and villages on their television screens. Beirut lay under siege experiencing its darkest days.

Three and a half years later, the prayers of many were answered. On April 19, 1986, His Beatitude Mar Nasrallah Boutros Cardinal Sfeir was elected Maronite Patriarch for Antioch and all the East. A small yet gentle man, he began his reign during the midst of a war that had been ongoing for 11 years.

Fast-forward to last week's significantly momentous and notable meeting between the

patriarch and U.S. President George W. Bush. A meeting borne out of mass rallies all over Lebanon and the international calling for the withdrawal of Syria's remaining troops and intelligence security forces.

Pleas like that of Druze leader Walid Jumblat who was quoted as saying, "Unchain us, leave us, you made us hate Syria," sprouted freely following the gruesome and horrific assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, the architect of the rebuilding of post-war Lebanon, along with 18 other innocents. A Cedar Revolution had begun and took wing from Lebanon's youth to bring freedom, democracy and independence to the nation and to find out the truth behind the shocking and ghastly killing of Hariri. As the patriarch was in the air throughout most of the Beirut rally, he was sure to be briefed on all that transpired once he reached American soil.

Accompanied by an entourage of nearly a hundred priests, monsignors and bishops from around the country, personal security and bodyguards, an advance team, secret service agents, a motorcade, global media coverage, well wishers and paparazzi, the now 85-year-old Patriarch made his way around Washington D.C.

Throughout it all, this kind and calm man of peace managed to keep a twinkle in his eye, a smile on his face and the future of millions of Lebanese in his heart and soul.

As he walked into the embassy, his eyes fixated on me and I could tell he was eager to embrace an old friend. I welcomed him back to the U.S., and asked God to grant him rest from his tireless work on Lebanon's behalf and to lengthen his life here on earth.

His words that night to the distinguished guests assembled, the Diplomatic Corps and his old friends were simple, "Lebanon has gone through difficult times in the past and it was able to overcome them. At this time, Lebanon is at crossroads that could lead it in various directions. Only our unity and cooperation could bring Lebanon to the harbor of safety and could ensure its prosperity and growth. Therefore, let us put our own personal differences aside and join our efforts for the sake of the free, sovereign and democratic Lebanon."

Today, when I am asked about that encounter along with the situation in Lebanon and the fact that images are being revealed in real time across television stations throughout the world, I must admit that at times it seems as though I am hearing and watching a rerun that mirrors a grim, not too distant past. But this time, however, there is something different — the stark difference is that I am witnessing these historic images live and in person before my very own eyes and that this time it's clearly peace all sides seek, not war.

Farmington Hills City Councilman John Akouri, an American of Lebanese descent, was Washington D.C. press secretary and senior advisor to U.S. Rep. Joe Knollenberg (R-Birmingham).



John Akouri

## Pope John Paul II touched many lives in his travels

There's no experience quite like seeing the pope in person.

Even non-Catholics — or non-Christians, for that matter — would find it intriguing if only because the pope is a recognized world leader with tremendous presence wherever he goes.

Pope John Paul II is the most-traveled pontiff in history. In his early years, especially, he visited countries around the world, keeping a dizzying schedule by traveling more than all the previous popes combined.

In September 1987, he came to Detroit and made a special stop in Hamtramck, where I had the opportunity to see and hear him up close.

John Paul II has had a special affection for Hamtramck, and it for him. He had visited the city in 1969 when he was a cardinal. His cousin was a former city councilman. And Hamtramck was still primarily a Polish-American town.

The Poles in general have a deep love of John Paul II, not only because Karol Wojtyla — his birth name — was from Poland, but also because of the work he did behind the scenes to support

the Solidarity movement, which brought down the hated Communist Party and forced the Russians to withdraw from their country.

Preparation for the pope's visit had begun weeks before when a gigantic stage was constructed on the site of a shopping center that was being built. A tradition had developed in the shipping town of Gdansk, Poland, to build huge ship-like stages for the pope to address the multitudes.

The Friday night before his visit saw the town filled with activity all night. Jos. Campau, the main street, was packed with people shopping and socializing. Stores carried all manner of souvenirs ranging from pope sun visors to pope soap-on-a-ropes.

Saturday morning dawned gloomy and rainy — and eerily quiet. The police and security officers had moved in the night before and virtually sealed off the city. There was basically no traffic as the flow of cars was tightly controlled. Residents were given security passes to allow free movement.

At around 9:30 a.m. the pope's entourage was spotted driving south on Jos. Campau in his famous "Popemobile." The city had hoped he would stop at the huge statue of his figure at "Pope Park," along the route, but there was a five-story building across the street and the police said it was too hard to secure.

So he drove on to the massive gathering place at the south end of town. Two blocks north stood the majestic steeple of St. Florian, one of the largest Polish parishes in the Detroit area, and where he had stayed during his earlier visit.



Greg Kowalski



Pope John Paul II won the hearts of Hamtramckans when he visited in 1987.

The crowd actually was smaller than expected — only about 30,000. There had been so many cautions given on the news about expected traffic jams and tight security as well as the poor weather that many people opted to see the pope at his other stops on his visit in Detroit and at the Pontiac Silverdome.

But that was OK. I was able to get within just a few dozen feet of the pope. He spoke clearly, in perfect English. I still have a copy of his speech.

But the words hardly mattered. Here was a chance to see the pope — our pope — who by even then had made a major impact on the world.

For some people, it was a deeply religious experience. For others, it was a chance to see a world figure. But judging from the silence among the crowd as the pope spoke, all appreciated the historic importance of the moment, regardless of their faith.

I don't remember exactly how long the speech lasted. It seems that it was about a half-hour, and then he was gone.

Today, there is a small but elegant monument commemorating the pope's visit, standing almost exactly where the pope stood.

But the greatest monument for us who were there are the memories. Pope John Paul II will live on for us as a man of epic proportions.

Greg Kowalski is editor of the *Birmingham Eccentric*. He can be reached at (248) 901-2570 or by e-mail at gkowalski@oe.homecomm.net.

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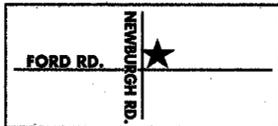


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FROM PAGE A1

use three printing plants and employ around 900 staffers.

I aimed to put community journalism on the map and to contribute some new thinking to the field. I helped found Suburban Newspapers of America, the leading trade association for our industry. Today there is no question that community newspapers have established a solid niche in American journalism.

In 2000, we started the *Livingston County Daily Press & Argus*, first new daily newspaper to be published in Michigan in nearly 50 years — a paper that is now the fastest-growing daily in the state. And today we are working on groundbreaking ways to link together our newspapers, our telephone directories and our Internet presence to add value for our readers and our advertisers.

And I hoped my weekly column would contribute perspective and insight to readers and to the ongoing public policy dialogue in Michigan. Judging from the many responses — pro and con — I've received over the years, it's fair to say at the very least that lots of people are reading the column.

None of this would have been possible without the hard and capable work of countless HomeTown Communications staffers, past and present. Nor would it have been possible without the active commen-

tary, both encouraging and critical, from readers, advertisers, journalistic colleagues and HCN staffers. Somebody once said that the only way you learn is by listening to others. Over the years, I have learned a whale of a lot and I am very grateful.

So, what's next? First, the word "retire" is not in my vocabulary. I certainly do not intend to withdraw from active engagement in our communities, our state and our society. Maybe the best way to express what's going on is that I am pivoting from one career to another. However, I will continue writing my regular column in this newspaper. I believe I offer a distinctive point of view and, besides, it's far too much fun for me to quit just now.

On a personal level, Kathy and I expect to be proud grandparents later this spring. And we're looking forward to a little black Labrador puppy joining our household at the end of April. (His name? "HomeTown," of course!) Having a little more time for family and friends is a wholly unmixed blessing.

The only thing that is constant in our lives is change. This particular change is a big one for me and Kathy, one that stirs strong and mixed emotions. At the top of the list is the appreciation and gratitude I have for so many people who helped make this portion of my life so rewarding and so satisfying — not least, you, the readers. So onward and upward, and best wishes to you all.

# Sale to Gannett completed; Aginian heads new group

McLEAN, Va. — Gannett Co., Inc. Thursday completed the acquisition of the assets of HomeTown Communications Network, Inc., a community publishing company with publications in Michigan, Ohio and Kentucky.

Richard Aginian has been named president and publisher of the *Observer & Eccentric* and the *Mirror* newspaper groups in suburban Detroit. Aginian also will serve as a consultant to Gannett to assist in the transition of the new acquisitions. Aginian previously was president and CEO of HomeTown Communications Network.

"We're excited the former HomeTown publications are officially joining Gannett," said Gary L. Watson, president of the Newspaper Division. "And I'm even more pleased that Dick Aginian has agreed to stay on with Gannett. His experience and knowledge will



Aginian

be a great help with the transition and with running the two Detroit suburban newspaper groups."

Aginian joined HomeTown in 1977. He is a graduate of Rutgers University and Wayne State University. He is active in numerous civic and charitable organizations in the Detroit area.

Watson said the various former HomeTown publications will be assimilated into the Newspaper Division on a geographic basis with the goal of increasing the synergies and service for readers and advertisers in the daily and non-daily newspaper markets.

In a letter to HomeTown staffers, chairman and long-time owner Phil Power said: "After nearly 40 years, it's been

a long run — and a good one." Power said he and his wife Kathy "decided it was a good time to sell the business, move on to new things and find other ways to contribute to our state and our society."

The acquisition includes one daily and 62 weekly and twice-weekly community newspapers; 24 community telephone directories; one shopping guide; other specialty and niche publications; as well as Web sites and commercial printing at four plants.

The newspaper group includes the recently launched *Daily Press & Argus* in fast-growing Livingston County and non-daily groups in the suburban areas near Detroit, Cincinnati/northern Kentucky and Lansing.

Gannett announced the acquisition, which was reviewed by the U.S. Department of Justice, in November. Terms were not dis-

closed.

Gannett Co., Inc. is a leading international news and information company that publishes 102 daily newspapers in the U.S., including *USA TODAY*, the nation's largest-selling daily newspaper. The company also owns more than 800 non-daily publications in the U.S. and *USA WEEKEND*, a weekly newspaper magazine. Gannett subsidiary Newsquest is the United Kingdom's second largest regional newspaper company. Newsquest publishes more than 300 titles, including 17 daily newspapers and a network of prize-winning Web sites. Gannett also operates 21 television stations in the U.S. and is an Internet leader with sites sponsored by its TV stations and newspapers including *USATODAY.com*, one of the most popular news sites on the Web.

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