

4/28

New opera about the African-American experience makes its debut at the Detroit Opera House - FILTER, INSERTED SECTION

Say sayonara to the shoebox!

AT HOME, SECTION B



Mom's in charge at
?How About Lunch

TASTE, PAGE B5



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April 28, 2005

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Youth Assistance program reaches crossroads

Council weighs changes to support its growth

BY DARRELL CLEM
STAFF WRITER

A Westland program that keeps local youngsters out of trouble - and potentially out of juvenile correctional facilities - has reached a crossroads that officials say will determine whether it continues to grow.
If trends early this year hold up, the Westland

Youth Assistance Program will receive more than 300 referrals from police, courts, schools and parents for youngsters who need help staying out of trouble, Director Ronaele Bowman said.
That would mark a second record-breaking year for the program, which boasts a 90 percent success rate. Last year, the program received 292 referrals, which reflected a 64 percent

increase over the previous year after police became more aggressive in referring youths.
The program pairs youngsters with adult mentors and provides a wide array of services, programs and classes. Its aim is to boost the youths' self-esteem and to steer them away from behaviors, such as stealing, skipping school and vandalism, that could ultimately ruin their lives.
Year after year, the program has an annual ceremony in which youngsters, mentors and parents give heartfelt accounts of its success.
"You get a good bang for your buck with our program," Bowman told city leaders Monday, as

Westland City Council members and Mayor Sandra Cicirelli met for a new round of budget talks.
"Our program does good work," she said. "Our staff does good work."
With a \$204,000 budget, including city dollars and grants, Bowman oversees the program as an independent contractor for herself and her two employees. Money is stretched thin to pay their salaries and the services they provide.
Moreover, the employees don't have their own
PLEASE SEE YOUTH, A6



BILL BRESLER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Looking back

Madison Elementary third-graders Camarah Steele and Danielle Robbins peek out the one-room Miller School at Greenfield Village. They were among 65 students who spent a day experiencing education 1800s style. For story and photos, see Page A4.

Manager faces trial over filing false report

BY DARRELL CLEM
STAFF WRITER

With hundreds of dollars still missing from Lone Star Steakhouse, the Westland restaurant's general manager is facing trial for accusations he made a false felony report to police alleging he was robbed at gunpoint.
Clarence Moon, 40, of Detroit could face penalties ranging up to four years in prison and a \$2,000 fine, if he's convicted in Wayne County Circuit Court.
Moon, free on a personal bond as he awaits trial, has denied any wrongdoing to police. He was ordered to stand trial after he voluntarily waived a preliminary hearing last Thursday in Westland 18th District Court.

Clarence Moon, 40, of Detroit could face penalties ranging up to four years in prison and a \$2,000 fine, if he's convicted in Wayne County Circuit Court.

According to police reports, Moon made a 9-1-1 call saying he had been robbed about 8:15 a.m. Tuesday, March 1, by a gunman who followed him into the back entrance of the restaurant at Ford Road and Central City Parkway.
Moon, a married man with two children, told police that a gun was held to the back of his head and that he was forced to empty the restaurant's safe of several hundred dollars, police Sgt. David Heater said.
However, Moon never mentioned a gun when he

statement about the incident, Heater said.
Authorities also became suspicious after he reported seeing not one - but two - bandits flee through Lone Star's front door. Police found no footprints in fresh snow that had fallen during the hours leading up to the reported robbery, Heater said.
"There had been a heavy snowfall that night," the detective said.
Moon's attorney couldn't be reached for comment.
Moon, who has been fired from his job, was described by Heater as a "respected man" by his Lone Star employees.
"He has no criminal history at all," Heater said.
Police searched the restaurant and Moon's vehicle after the reported robbery, Heater said, but they found no money. He confirmed this week that the money is still missing.
Authorities arrested Moon at the restaurant on April 11, and he waived his preliminary hearing 11 days later in Westland 18th District Court.
Moon isn't viewed as being a flight risk, and, therefore, he was released on a personal bond as he awaits trial, Heater said.

Turner wants schools to keep improving



Ed Turner

BY SUE MASON
STAFF WRITER

Ed Turner admits he gets teased when he tells people he has 14,000 kids, give or take a few. But that's how he looks at the students in the Wayne-Westland Community Schools.
"I'm a member of the school board for

the students first, parents second and the teachers and administrators third," he said.
Turner is running unopposed for a four-term on the Board of Education in Tuesday's school election. A member of the school board since 1996, he has served as its secretary and president and on the finance, policy and commu-

nity relations committees as well as a delegate to the Michigan Association of School Boards.
"I'm so proud of this district with its Golden Apples, Blue Ribbon and MEAP scores," said Turner, a retiree. "At one time Wayne-Westland was referred to as

PLEASE SEE TURNER, A6

Skating club gives its 'Regards to Broadway'

BY SUE MASON
STAFF WRITER

Sitting in the stands of the Mike Modano Ice Arena in Westland, Denise Gerschwender is focused on two things - her daughter Megan and how she is doing a layback.
She smiles and gives her a

double thumbs up.
"She's in doubles now ... double loop, double lutz, double axle," said Denise. "Anything can happen with a slight movement of the blade."
Megan was at the arena Tuesday afternoon for the first of several dress rehearsals in preparation for this weekend's ice show, "Regards to

Broadway," being staged by the Westland Figure Skating Club.
Seventy-eight skaters ages 4 to "fortysomething," who take group or private lessons at the arena, will perform in three shows Friday through Sunday.
"The club takes over the whole arena," said director Kate Wojtowicz. "They take the boards out, put up props, deco-

rate the lobby and locker rooms ... It's quite a production."
The 45 acts, averaging 1 1/2 minutes in length, will feature show tunes from such Broadway hits as "Sound of Music," "Cats," "The Producers," "Oliver!" and "Cabaret."
It was Wojtowicz who selected

PLEASE SEE ICE SHOW, A2

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Coming Sunday on the PINK page
Rockin' Fashion Shopping with Judy from The Mydols

Shop close to home, spending in New York City coming soon

FOR YOUR HEALTH

Women's Health Boutique in Livonia offers the option of a prostheses for post-mastectomy patients. Alyson Rosenfeld, a board-certified mastectomy fitter, will be available April 28-29 at the store.

"For a woman who has gone through mastectomy surgery, it is important that she return to her pre-diagnosis appearance and lifestyle as soon as possible," said Mimi San Pedro, breast cancer survivor and president of ContourMed, an external breast prosthesis company that uses 3D scanning technology. "Finding the right breast prosthesis can help her feel better both physically and emotionally."

Women's Health Boutique is located at 31209 Plymouth Road in Livonia. Schedule an appointment by calling (734) 762-9324.

MORE ROOM TO SHOP

Shoppers who frequent Marshall Fields at Twelve Oaks Mall in Novi will soon have more space in which to shop.

The store announced plans to renovate and remodel, increasing the store by about 25 percent.

"This will be one of the largest renovations at Marshall Field's in recent history," said Jennifer McNamara, public relations specialist. "As part of the remodel, our Novi store will expand by 60,000 square feet."

According to McNamara, the three-level store, which opened in 1977, will be completely renovated and updated. Expect to see new flooring, lighting and fixtures inside, and a contemporary update to the store's exterior. According to Frank Guzzetta, president and chief executive officer, more means more.

Following the renovation,



guests will find more spacious departments, expanded merchandise assortments, and several new brands to choose from," said Guzzetta. "We are committed to providing an exceptional shopping experience for our guests and the transformation of our Novi store is an illustration of that commitment."

Construction is slated to begin next year and conclude in 2007. Once complete, the store will total almost 300,000 square feet.

There are currently 62 Marshall Fields stores in eight states.

More information can be found at fields.com.

MAKEOVER FOR MOM

Value City Department Store employees know what Mom's like. They'd like a dream weekend and a makeover in New York City. If that sounds like a mother in your life, enter an essay contest and your "most deserving mom" might just win.

"Mothers are the backbone of our community, giving so much to their families throughout the year," said Michelle Levesque, marketing manager. "We are excited to give children the chance to think about why they appreciate their moms, tell us how great they think their moms are and nominate them to win a fabulous dream makeover."

In celebration of Mother's Day, May 8, Value City Department Stores are spon-

soring The Weekend Makeover contest. One grand prize winner will receive:

- Airfare for two on U.S. Airways to New York City
- Three days and two nights at the Hotel Roger Williams in Manhattan
- An exclusive spa day for a haircut, makeover, manicure, facial and massage
- Two Broadway show tickets

Limousine service to and from the airport

Spending money

Stop in at a Value City Department Store or go online at www.valuecity.com for contest entry forms now through May 7. In 125 words or less, convince judges why your mom deserves to win.

Essays may be turned in or mailed to participating store locations by the deadline. First prize winners from each store will receive a spa basket and be entered to win the grand prize.

In Wayne County the participating stores include those at 36901 Warren Road in Westland and 29560 Seven Mile Road in Livonia.

OPEN HOUSE FIESTA

Qdoba Mexican Grill is having an open house fiesta to benefit children with muscular dystrophy in the Farmington/Farmington Hills area 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Friday at the restaurant at 33224 12 Mile Road, Farmington Hills. Qdoba is offering a free entree and a fountain drink free while collecting for the Muscular Dystrophy Association. Balloons and coloring books will be available for children.

Stephanie Angelyn Casola writes about new and changing businesses for the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers. E-mail tips on your new, favorite Wayne County shop to scasola@oe.homecomm.net or call (734) 953-2054.

ICE SHOW

FROM PAGE A1

the theme, but it was recommended by a parent whose sister is a Broadway dancer.

"We're having a hard time getting music to fit all the ages," she said. "The club's been doing it for 29 years and I had to find out what they've done and what other clubs were doing because you don't want two arenas doing the same thing."

The skaters started preparing the show some five weeks ago. The individual skaters spent several hours a week practicing while the groups rehearsed for 45 minutes a week and squeezed in some all day practices, Wojtowicz said.

Featured in the show will be Brittany Carlton who recently passed the senior freestyle level. The show will be her farewell of sorts. She and fellow skater Sara LeDuc will leave on Monday to skate in an ice show at the Cypress Gardens Music Park in Florida.

As a treat the fathers of the skaters also will perform in the show. They couldn't agree on one Broadway tune, so they put together a routine to one by band Metallica, Wojtowicz said.

Parents provide the manpower for the production. According to Wojtowicz, some 20 parents have contributed heavily to the success of the production.

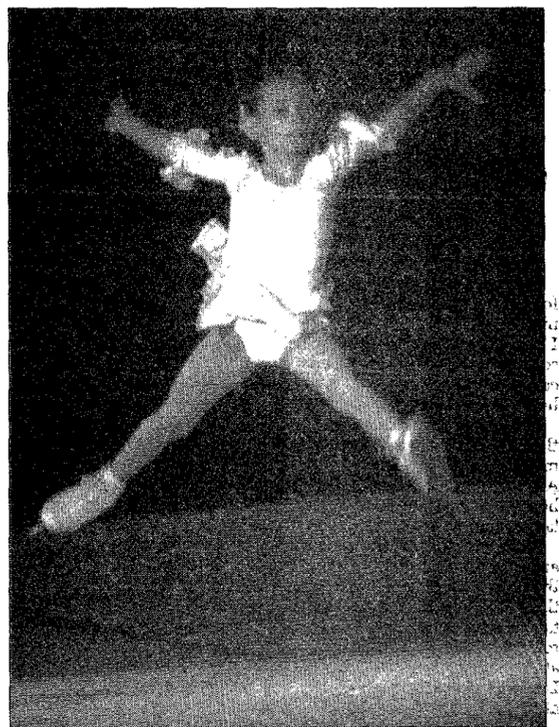
One side of the rink is decorated to look like a shopping district.

Hats hang in the window of the hat shop and floral arrangements fill the front of the flower shop. Parent and interior designer Noreen Desilets created the set. She started on it in February and had a father build the props which were then painted by parents.

"The six prop people have been here since February working on the props and decorating the lobby," said Wojtowicz, who is getting help from assistant director Krystal Heacock.

Amy Bray is the chair of the show overseeing everything from the director to the lights to the locker room. The fathers are manning the spotlights while three interns - Becky Bockstandz, Shanon Frost and April Zuk - handle the other lighting.

Wojtowicz is hoping to pack the stands for the show. At one time, skaters performed to a packed house, but attendance has dwindled to 70-90 people a show.



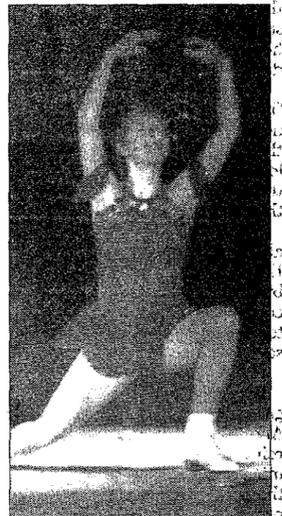
PHOTOS BY BILL BRESLER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Amanda Gutowski works on her solo routine during a dress rehearsal for the annual ice show.

ICE SHOW

The Westland Figure Skating Club's Regards to Broadway will be presented at 7 p.m. Friday, 6 p.m. Saturday and 1 p.m. Sunday at the Mike Modano Ice Arena, 6210 Wildwood at Hunter, Westland.

Tickets, which cost \$8 for adults and \$6 for children and senior citizens, will be available at the door. For more information, call the arena at (734) 729-4560.



Megan Geschwender of Redford is all smiles as she completes the run-through of her ice show routine.

"It's disappointing because the kids work very hard," she said. "They try out and they make a commitment to the show, so it's disappointing to have small crowds. I'd love to see other people come."

For Megan, the focus Tuesday evening was on her form. A sophomore at Thurston High School, she's appearing in her very first ice show.

"Oh, she's nervous and moms get nervous, too," said Denise. "You have to feel for your daughter."

Megan, who is in her fifth

year of ice skating, joined the Westland club because it's a member of the U.S. Figure Skating Association. "She skates daily," said Denise. "If she's not here, she's at open skating in Redford. She's been skating since sixth-grade."

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SHOWTIMES 4/29-5/5
TITLES & TIMES SUBJECT TO CHANGE

THE HITCHHIKER'S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY (PG) 2 PRINTS/2 SCREENS (SAT/SUN 12:00, 12:50) 2:15, 3:05, 4:30, 5:20, 7:00, 7:35, 9:15, 9:50
FRISAT LS 11:30, 12:05
MELINDA AND MELINDA (PG-13) (SAT/SUN 11:15) 1:20, 3:20, 5:25, 7:30, 9:35 FRISAT LS 11:48
THE INTERPRETER (PG-13) (SAT/SUN 11:00) 1:45, 4:20, 7:05, 9:45
SAHARA (PG-13) (SAT/SUN 11:25) 1:55, 4:25, 6:55, 9:25
FRISAT LS 11:55
BEAUTY SHOP (PG-13) 9:05 FRISAT LS 11:20
ICE PRINCESS (G) (SAT/SUN 11:05) 1:05, 3:15, 5:20
MISS CONGENIALITY 2: ARMED AND FABULOUS (PG-13) 7:25, 9:40 FRISAT LS 11:50
ROBOTS (PG) 1:15, 3:10, 5:10, 7:10, 9:15

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We're there!

Coffee and comment

Anderson connects with constituents at gatherings

BY SUE MASON
STAFF WRITER

"I've been back in Michigan for three weeks and I'm running into the same chuckholes I ran into before I left. Down south the roads are clean. I called the governor and told her it's a damn shame."

It was Douglas Vogan who threw out the opening comment at State Rep. Glenn Anderson's monthly coffee hour at the Big Boy Restaurant last week.

The coffee was hot and fresh and the conversation lively as the small group heard about the goings-on in the state capital. Anderson has held the get-togethers for several years, first at the William P. Faust Public Library and now at the Big Boy at Wayne and Hunter.

He uses the gatherings to discuss legislation pending in the legislature as well as hear the concerns of his constituents. For 1 1/2 hours they talked about everything from the state of the state's roads to school finances to the cost of health care and prescription drugs.

Prefacing his comments with "it's not a big controversy right now," Anderson told the group that cities are going to have to look at sharing services, "if things continue to go the way they are with the economy."

"The school districts are already doing it," he said. "The Livonia schools maintains buses for other districts under contract. The cities are going to have to look at other money saving things."

Other topics included:
■ A hot item is the price of gas and, according to Anderson, legislation has been reintroduced that would set a minimum level for the cost of the fuel. The measure aims to protect small gas station owners from stations at Costco, Wal-Mart and Meijer which

are able to sell for less.

"Competition does benefit the consumer in the long run, but they claim these large stations are selling below cost and running the little guy out of business," he said. "But I wonder if the consumer would be happy with being told how much to pay for gas."

"It's competition, it's a sad thing, but you have to market yourself. I have to question who would be next at the door asking us to eliminate the competition. Does the state have the right to say who has competition?"

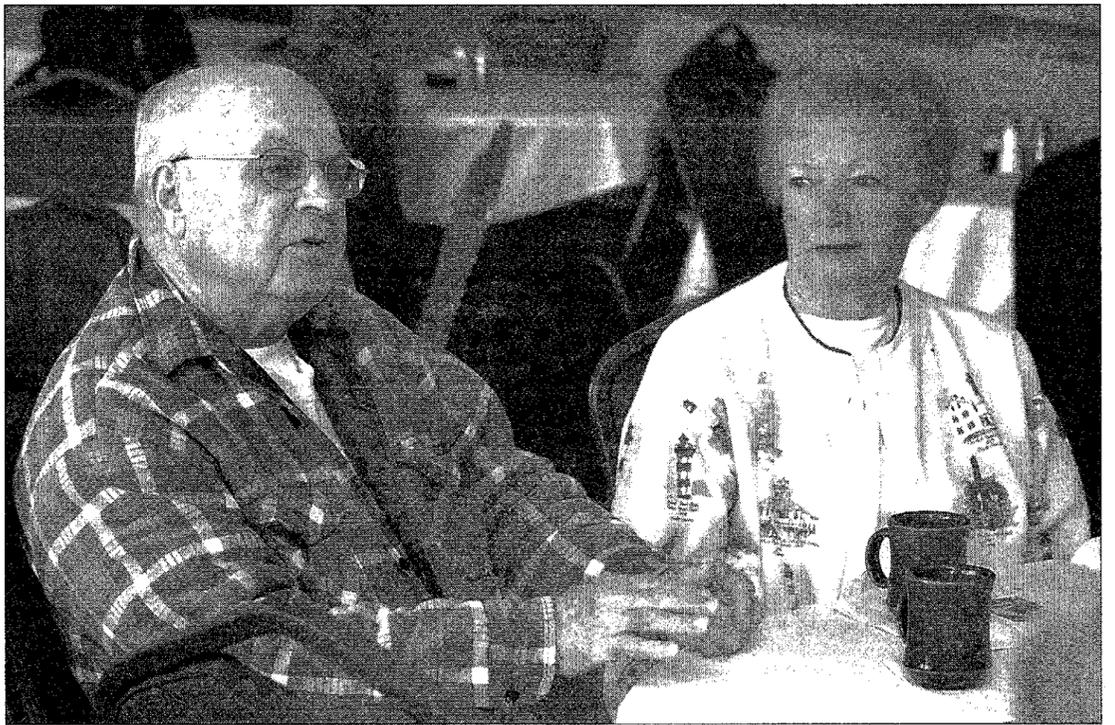
■ The cost of health care and prescription drug coverage. Pointing out that the "in the '90s, the Clintons looked at health care and were beaten up badly," Anderson speculated that with costs escalating, what the then president and first lady were looking at could come to pass "soon."

"I think what's caused some of this is the advertising," he said. "If you look at the budgets, in the top five costs is advertising. They promote drugs so that people go to their doctors and ask for that medicine."

Health care is a big issue with school districts which have turned to the state for help because of the escalating costs. Anderson is concerned that if lawmakers take the steps to help the districts, it may "open the floodgates and have everyone coming to Lansing and asking for help."

"Everything is about money," said a retired teacher who declined to be identified. "It's the school districts which need to do the negotiating and not dump the problem on someone else. A lot of teachers in a lot of districts forego pay increases to keep their health insurance."

■ Anderson also talked about an additional step the state treasury department must now take in an effort to



Douglas Vogan and his wife, Shirley, were among the group of Westlanders attending the coffee hour.

contact people about unclaimed property. The change is the result of difficulties in contacting people who have moved several times, Anderson said.

"I got a letter from California about how I might have some unclaimed property," said Vogan who was there with his wife Shirley. "It said send \$25. I took that one to the police and (Deputy Chief) Gary (Sikorski) called the number and told them, 'Don't be sending that stuff here. We know what you're doing.'"

Anderson also touched on the issue of using credit scores to determine insurance rates. The state insurance commissioner has ordered a rollback in base rates and an elimination of credit scores.

"If someone has a good or bad credit score doesn't have anything to do with being a

good or bad driver," he said. "What the insurance company has done is raise the base rate, then given scores based on credit histories."

The insurance companies are challenging the state, saying that the commissioner doesn't have the authority to order the rollback and that it should be done legislatively.

"But with the makeup of the legislature, they know that wouldn't be done," Anderson said.

Glenn Anderson holds his coffee hour for residents of the 18th House District 9-10:30 a.m. the third Monday of the month. For more information, call his Lansing office at (517) 373-2576.



State Rep. Glenn Anderson, D-Westland, talks about the politics of Lansing with constituents like Eleanor Swistak during his monthly coffee hours.

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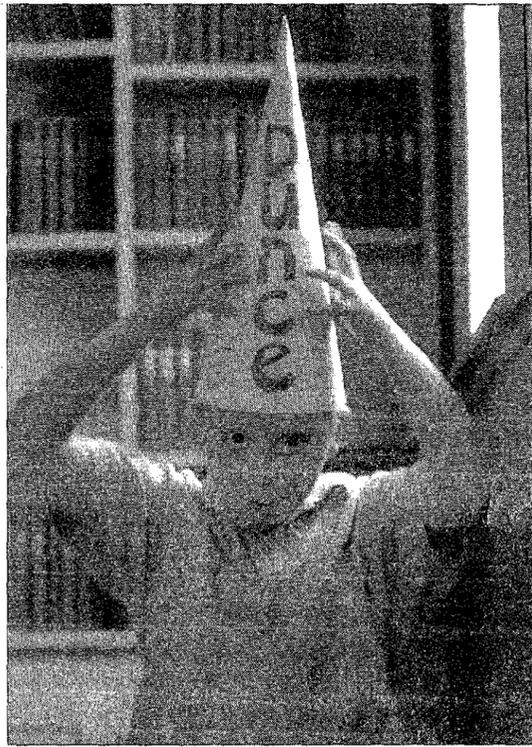


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At recess, Matt DeSmit and Lindsay Spencer play Toss the Ring.

PHOTOS BY BILL BRESLER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER



Alex Dumouchelle is no dunce, but he tried the duncecap on for size, anyway.

A step back in time 3rd-graders experience education 1800s-style

BY SUE MASON
STAFF WRITER

They traded their skorts and blue jeans for cotton dresses and pants with suspenders and left their Bratz and zippered lunch bags at home.

Sixty-five third-graders discovered what it was like to attend a one-room schoolhouse, keeping a tradition that spans more than 15 years alive at their elementary school.

"It's a delightful feeling going back and seeing what it's like to be a child 100 years ago," said teacher Patricia Kempner who became Mrs. McGillicutty for her stint as instructor at the one-room Miller School at the Greenfield Village.

Third-graders at Madison Elementary in Westland have been making the trip to the schoolhouse well before Kempner came to teach there some 12 years ago. She inherited the field trip from teacher Nikki Solomon.

"We used to say the exact

year we were going back to, but that was in the 1990s," Kempner said. "Now, we say about 100 years ago."

Youngsters are asked to dress in period clothing - cotton dresses with an apron, a small hat and a straw basket to carry their lunch. For the boys, it was trousers with suspenders, blousey white shirts, caps and a basket for books.

They also were asked to pack traditional lunches. No juice packs, Lunchables or similar 21st century specialties. Instead, they brought, hard-boiled eggs, fruit, buttered bread, pickles and the like and drank root beer provided by their teachers.

They practiced their elocution, sang songs like *She'll Be Coming Round the Mountain*, and did babble reading in which all the children read different passages of a book aloud all at the same time.

But, according to Kempner, the most popular part of the day came when the teacher did some disciplining like was



Zachary Tofilski dips water from the bucket.

done in the 1800s. Of course, there was the dunce hat, and Kempner had one girl, caught chewing gum, place it on her nose and state that she was "a stupid girl chewing gum."

The students were broken up into two groups. While one group was attending school, the other group walked around the village. They ate outside on the grass as a group and played games like Ring Around the Rosie.

According to Kempner, the field trip is usually done in May but was moved to mid-April. The date was perfect for what the teachers were hoping to create for their students.

"It was so much better," she said. "In May and June, the village is packed with people, but this time it was more authentic because there wasn't a lot of people there."

Kempner praised Greenfield Village for the job it has done in developing the visit to the

one-room school house into a true educational experience.

"It's been interesting to watch," she said, adding that on the survey she completed she recommended the village give the students a free train ride.

"The half of students that go off with the parent, the parent feels the need to buy them something," said Kempner. "We don't have the students bring money because they would focus on spending it and lose the educational value of the experience. A train ride would be entertaining and not cost the village anything."

As for Kempner the trip back in time was also a stroll down memory lane.

"When we walked through the village, it reminded me of going to my grandma's house," she said.

smason@oe.homecomm.net | (734) 953-2112

GARDEN CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT
6000 MIDDLEBELT
GARDEN CITY, MI 48135

The following vehicles have been deemed abandoned and will be sold at public auction on Tuesday, May 3, 2005 at 9:00 A.M. The auction is to be held at Westland Car Care Towing, 6375 Hix Rd., Westland, MI 48185.

Please Note: The bidding will start at the towing and storage charges.

YEAR & MAKE	STYLE	VIN #
1989 Ford Probe	2 DR	1ZVBT21C2K5218139
1993 Ford Aerostar	SW	1FMCA11U8PZA22380
1991 Buick Regal	4 DR	2G4WB54L2M1896183
1994 Pontiac Sunbird	2 DR	1 G2JB14H3R7590496
1992 Pontiac	4 DR	1G2HZ52L6N1270126
1999 Ford Escort	4 DR	1FAFP13PXXW252095
1989 Mercury	4 DR	2MEBM74FXKX640482

Publish: April 28, 2005

CITY OF GARDEN CITY
COUNTY OF WAYNE
STATE OF MICHIGAN
BOARD OF CANVASSERS MEETING
WEDNESDAY, MAY 4, 2005

This is your official notification of a Board of Canvassers meeting which is scheduled for Wednesday, May 4, 2005 AT 1:00 P.M. in the Civic Center, 6000 Middlebelt Road, Garden City, Michigan to consider the following:

1. Approval of the November 3, 2004 Board Minutes.
2. Canvass and certify results of the Special Election of May 3, 2005.
3. Adjournment.

ALLYSON M. BETTIS, City Clerk-Treasurer

Publish: April 24 and 28, 2005

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YOUTH

FROM PAGE A1

health insurance, unlike regular city employees. Some officials view the situation as unfair, and it could become an issue as a new director is sought to replace Bowman, who will retire at year's end. She has had the benefit of her husband's insurance.

The Westland Youth Assistance Program is the second largest of its kind in Wayne County, ranking behind only Detroit. Yet, programs in many other communities offer employee health insurance, Bowman said.

City officials can't provide insurance because the program is run by an independent contractor. However, some officials have indicated they may want to help the employees - possibly with additional funding - to get medical coverage.

"Maybe we can make a decision on it before we approve the (city) budget," council President Charles Pickering

said Monday.

Funding for the youth program and all other city departments is included in a newly proposed, \$56 million general budget that the council is expected to approve in early June.

A public hearing on Cicirelli's proposed budget is scheduled during a council meeting at 7 p.m. Monday, May 2.

Councilman Michael Kehrer has voiced support for providing some kind of additional help for the Youth Assistance Program.

"It's a very successful program," he said.

The issue arose as city leaders are continuing to review every city department in hopes of reaching a budget agreement.

Bowman provided statistics showing that a little money now can help avoid much larger costs that could be incurred by not helping troubled youngsters.

The youth program spends

an average of \$115 on each youngster who is enrolled in the program for four to six months. As Kehrer noted, that's about \$4 a week.

By comparison, Bowman said, it costs more than \$400 a day to place a youngster in juvenile detention. And, she said, it costs more than \$100,000 a year to place a youth in a maximum-security facility.

Bowman, director of the Youth Assistance Program since it was started in 1992, conceded that city officials have been struggling with a budget crunch.

However, with a city budget surplus that is expected to rise to \$1.5 million during the next year - up from \$200,000 early in Cicirelli's mayoral term - some local officials hope that a program can be found to help a program that they say has proved its worth.

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

S'craft board incumbents unopposed

BY HEATHER NEEDHAM
STAFF WRITER



Watson



Stempien



Cascade

No one has stepped forward to challenge three Schoolcraft College trustees for open seats on the community college's governing board.

Incumbents Patricia Watson, Gregory J. Stempien and Phillip Cascade are all seeking re-election in the May 3 elections, where voters also will choose local school board trustees. Residents living in Livonia, Garden City, Northville, Northville Township, Novi Township, Plymouth, Plymouth Township and portions of Canton, Farmington Hills, Lyon Township, Novi, Redford, Salem Township, Superior Township and Westland will be able to vote in the Schoolcraft election.

Watson, 52 of Northville is the longest serving of the three incumbent trustees, and was appointed in 1991. She was elected two more times - in 1993 and in 1999.

She is seeking a third six-year term. She has worked as a forensic psychologist at the State Forensic Center since 1985. She is married to Charles

Jerzycke.

Schoolcraft trustees are not compensated. Watson did not say whether she thought this was a factor in running unopposed.

"It's a pretty time-consuming and serious commitment," she said of the job. "But it's a very gratifying job. I think we get a lot back for serving on the board."

Stempien, 64, of Northville works as an attorney for Stempien & Stempien in Northville and has been an attorney since 1970. His wife, Jeanne, is a Wayne Circuit judge. He has been on the board since 1998 and is running for his second term.

Incumbent Schoolcraft trustees are rarely defeated, Stempien said, speculating why no challengers came forward.

"I really like Schoolcraft," Stempien said. "I think it's a

tremendous asset to the community. This community is really, really very fortunate to have Schoolcraft College."

Cascade, who is seeking to fill

the remaining four years of a six-year term, could not be reached for comment.

Schoolcraft College Marketing Director Marty Heator said that Schoolcraft has been forced to be creative in gaining new students, saving money and raising money.

Schoolcraft has offered early retirements to save money; leased property to local businesses to generate revenue and has added a number of new programs to attract new students.

Baking and pastry making has been added to the popular culinary arts program, and a therapeutic massage certification program will be available for students beginning this fall.

Schoolcraft has been beating the pavement, too.

"We're doing more recruiting in the schools in the community," Heator said.

TURNER

FROM PAGE A1

the lighthouse district and I think we've regained that title. We have a lot to offer. People should be proud of that."

At a time when many school districts are cutting programs and staff, Wayne-Westland has been able to keep its educational program intact. It has not had to resort to such things as pay-to-play for sports and has been able to continue reduced class sizes in early elementary.

"We have what these kids need and I can't think of any other district that has that," he said. "We've got a great community because the schools are so good. We may not have the expensive houses like other cities, but a community is made by the school district. If this were a bad school district, people would move to where their kids could get a good education."

According to Turner, funding

for schools and the increases in health care and retirement are the big issues facing the district which has worked hard to preserve programs during three years of no increases in state school aid.

Meant to equal the playing field for school funding, Turner believes that the situation has gotten worse with Proposal A.

Up until its passage, the state took care of retirement costs, but that was "dumped" on the schools, and the district now needs more from the state to cover those costs.

"That's a bottomless pit as far as I'm concerned," he said. "The \$175 per student increase the governor has proposed doesn't cut it. It's in the constitution that it's up to the state to educate the kids and fund education properly."

"We've gone through enough cost containment in this district. I want to see it continue to improve."

Turner also maintains that the state's residents have been "sold a bill of goods about the lottery." What lawmakers didn't

say when the lottery money was pledged to go to education was that the state would take away other funding.

"My biggest problem is the people in Lansing," he said. "They are more dedicated to their political parties than to the residents and to the kids in this state."

Turner is seeking his third four-year term on the board. He said he wants to continue to see the district provide the best education for the students.

He initially decided to run for school board to represent the citizens of the school district. Along the way, he fell in love with the children.

He spends more time in the schools because he has the time and his choice is to spend time in class "with my kids."

"I have an awful lot of fun with the kids," he said. "I had one kid run out of class because he had a joke to tell. That's the kind of rapport I have with my kids."

smason@oe.homecomm.net | (734) 953-2112

Cash raised to fight breast cancer

BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN
STAFF WRITER

Karen Calka is determined not to let another woman die of breast cancer as her sister did at age 41.

Diagnosed with stage one breast cancer at age 35, Judy Boback put up a long fight enduring chemotherapy, radiation, a double mastectomy, and finally stem cell replacement only to die in April of 2000.

On Saturday, April 30, Calka will honor her sister's memory by holding a fundraising Open House at 18433 Westbrook in the Seven Mile and Levan area of Livonia. There is no charge to attend, but 25-percent of the

sales from the products on display will go to the Barbara Ann Karmanos Cancer Institute. For more information, call Calka at (734) 657-0129.

In addition to being able to purchase everything from professional cookware to jewelry and handmade lotion and soap, guests will be able to learn more about breast cancer as a Karmanos representative will be on hand.

"I really wanted to do something in remembrance of my sister and bring more awareness to breast cancer," said Calka, a Livonia resident. "1 out of 4 local women get it. A quarter die from it. We have among the worse statistics in

the nation." To raise money to help eradicate the disease, Calka will be selling raffle tickets for 15 baskets filled with a variety of items from Arbonne's, Country Bunny and the Pampered Chef, to name a few.

"We all know people who have had this experience," stated Calka in an invitation to the event. "They are our friends, wives, mothers, sisters and sometimes even men who breast cancer had them going to war daily to live. Some were lucky and won. Some weren't so lucky and we are standing at their grave site. They were a part of our life and we lost that."

FOR THE RECORD

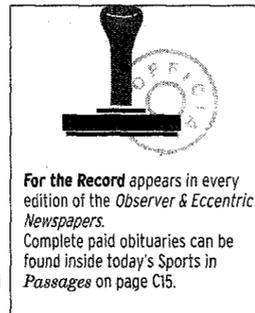
DEATHS

B
Helen Sophia Butler, of Clarkston, died April 22.

F
Blanche (Cullen) Flaherty, 99, died April 10.

H
Joy L. Hargreaves (Livecchi), 46, of Commerce, formerly of Rochester, died April 21.

J
Lawrence A. Johnson, 100, died April 24.



K
William C. Knudson, 87, of Rochester Hills, died April 22.

M
Ann McCubrey, 98, of Canton, died April 20.
Duncan McPherson, 78, died April 25.

R
Mary Helen Riddle, 79, died April 22.

S
Linda Catherine Schmittroth, 55, of Southfield, died April 24

V
Marvin H. Voight, 78, of Lathrup Village, died April 21.

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Cognac and black peppercorn sauce, portabella mushrooms,
mashed redskin potatoes and caramelized onion

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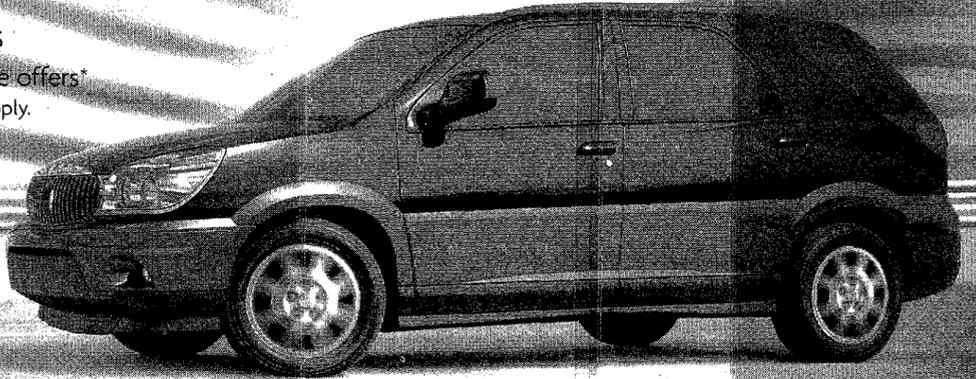
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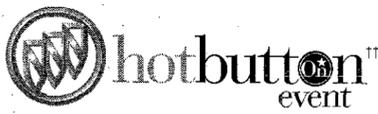
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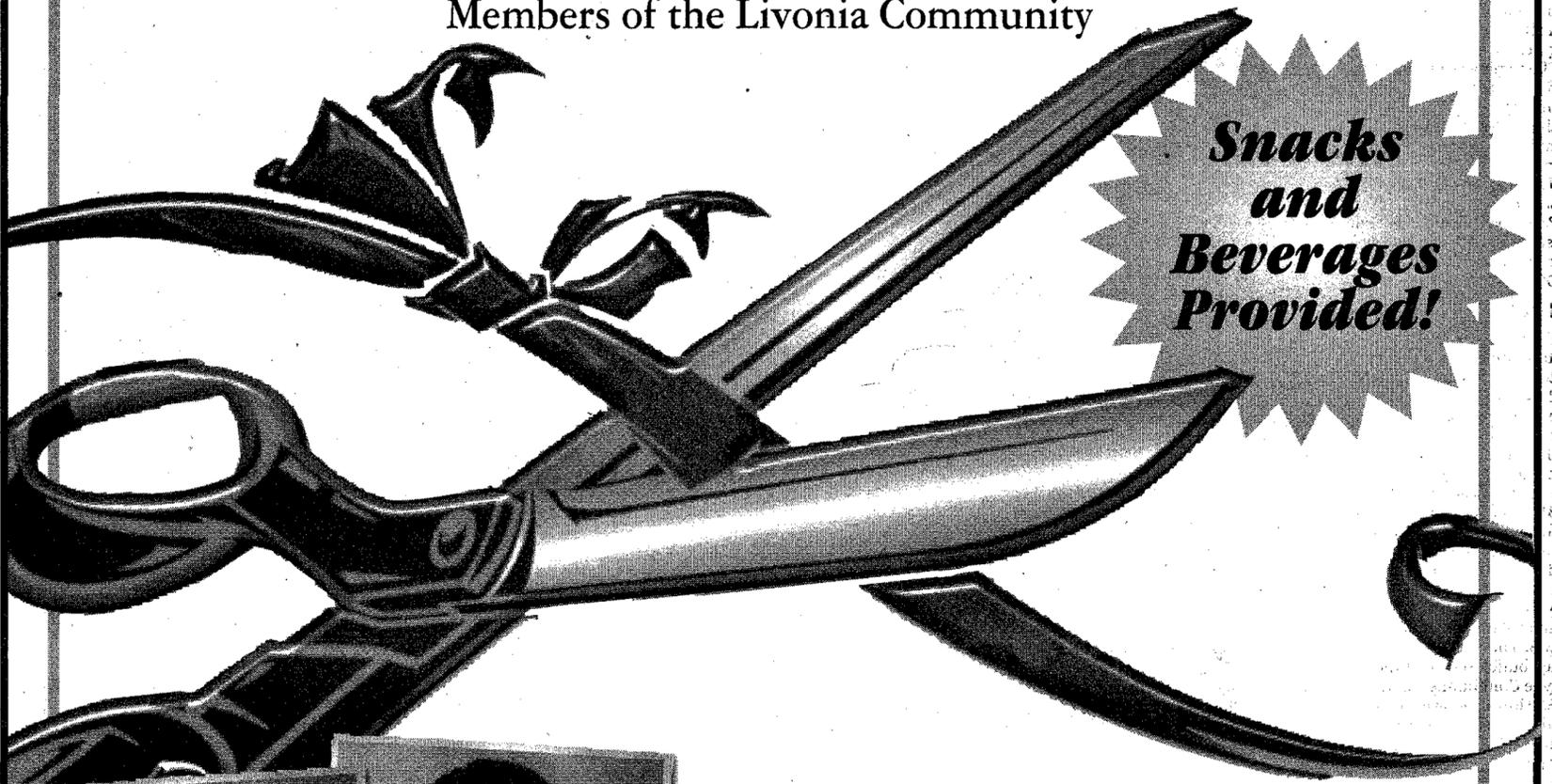
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Hazardous waste

Get rid of hazardous waste that doesn't belong in the trash during a drop-off 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday, April 30, in the parking lot of the Memorial Pool in City Park.

Materials accepted will include oil-based paints and varnishes, wood preservatives, cleaning solvents, pesticides and weed killers, household batteries, oven cleaners, moth-balls, transmission fluid, antifreeze, lead, pressurized cans, gasoline, smoke detectors and mercury.

The waste drop-off service is sponsored by the Central Wayne County Sanitation Authority and is limited to residents of the five member communities - Garden City, Westland, Wayne, Inkster and Dearborn Heights. Proof of residency will be needed.

For more information, call (313) 292-5854.

Parent seminar

The Wayne-Westland Community Schools' Family Resource Center in collaboration with Hegira Prevention is offering a parent seminar on Positive Discipline 5-6:30 p.m. Thursday, May 5, 12 and 19, at Vandenberg Elementary School, 32101 Stellwagen, Wayne.

The seminar 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.

Curtain call

The City of Wane Arts and Entertainment Department Actors Community Theatre will present Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Cinderella* at 8 p.m. Friday-Saturday, May 6-7, 13-14 and 20-21, and 2 p.m. 2 p.m. Sunday, May 8 and 15, at the State Wayne Theater, 35310 Michigan Ave., Wayne. Tickets cost \$15 for adults, \$13 for students and senior citizens and \$8 for children.

There also will be a Mothers Day Lunch - *Cinderella Spectacular* at noon Sunday, May 8. There will be a full lunch buffet, served at the Wayne Community Center, 4635 Howe, followed by the matinee performance of *Cinderella* at 2 p.m. at the State Wayne Theater. Tickets are \$20 for adults and \$15 for children 12 years and under. Package fees are available.

For more information, call (734) 721-7400.

What's in a day?

The Westland Parks and Recreation Department has postponed plans to fill planters around the Bailey Recreation Center to 4:30-6 p.m. Friday, May 6.

The event had been planned for Earth Day, April 22. Any group, including churches, schools, scout troops and civic groups are invited to sign up to help prepare the planter boxes outside the recreation center. Each group will be able to plant flowers or seeds in the box and tend to the plants throughout the summer.

All designs and plants must be pre-approved. Groups should register by Friday, April 29. For more information, call Program Supervisor Margaret Martin or Deputy Director Lesa Blackburn at (734) 722-7620.

Free seminar

Kate Ferrett, hospital liaison for Arbor Hospice and Home Care, will speak about such issues as advanced directives in a presentation 5-6 p.m. Thursday, May 19, at Westland Convalescent Center.

Ferrett will discuss such topics as what are advance directives, when is it time to think about advance directives, who needs advance directives, what is the difference between advance directives and a living will and how to get started.

The seminar is free of charge

and open to the public. Contact Judy Bianchi at (734) 728-6100 to sign up for this event.

Garage sale

It's like having more than 80 garage sales all in the same place at the same time. The Westland community garage sale will take place 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, May 7, in the parking lot west of Westland City Hall, 36601 Ford Road, next to the Police Department. For further information about reserving a spot, call Margaret Martin at (734) 722-7620.

Contest winner

Westland kindergartner Eva

Boncich has been named first-prize winner in the kindergarten category of the Michigan Dental Association's statewide coloring contest.

The contest was held in honor of National Children's Dental Health Month in February. More than 4,090 entries were received.

Eva will receive a \$100 U.S. savings bond, dental health posters, stickers, balloons, toothbrushes and coloring books. Her entry will be on display at MDA's annual session in Grand Rapids in May.

Golf outing

The Westland Rotary Club will hold a Centennial Golf

Celebration Thursday, May 26, at the Golden Fox at Fox Hills in Salem Township. The outing will have a scramble format and 11 a.m. shotgun start. It includes 18 holes of golf, lunch and beverages at the turn, door prizes and a filet mignon dinner and banquet.

The costs is \$160 per golfer or \$600 for a foursome. Sponsorships also are available. For more information, call Dr. Kim Shunkwiler at (734) 728-5533, Tom North at (734) 421-1300, Todd Blevins at (734) 425-7766 or Capt. Matt O'Neil at (734) 722-3660.

To register, send a check, payable to Westland Rotary to

the Rotary Golf Outing, Shunkwiler Chiropractic Health Center, 5978 N. Wayne Road, Westland, MI 48185. Proceeds will benefit the Salvation Army and Westland Rotary charities.

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.

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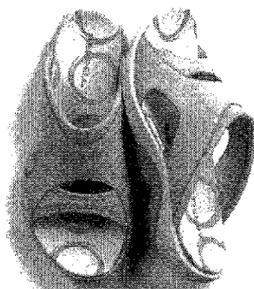
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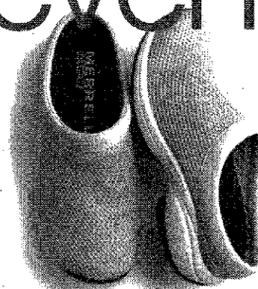
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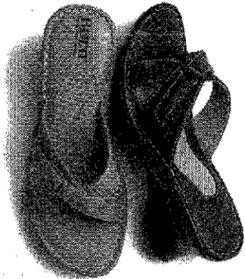
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Party people

Goldtones celebrate 25 years of music

BY DIANE GALE ANDREASSI
CORRESPONDENT

Go to a party where the Goldtones are performing and you might think that Mike and Debbie Brown are the most versatile singers you've ever seen with a repertoire ranging from today's music back to the '40s and anything from country to rap, pop, disco and rock and rock.

And the best thing is they sound exactly like the original performers.

In fact when Mike performs "I Left My Heart in San Francisco," it's actually old Blue Eyes himself.

"I become that person," he said.

Mike is lip-synching and adding a wonderful dose of entertainment to the disc jockey job that he started in 1979 at a fund-raiser at St.

Gerard's parish. Debbie joined him in 1984.

"Seventy-five to 80 percent of our party people think we're really singing - people like to be entertained," said Debbie, who also works part time at Bath and Body Works in Westland and served as the 2003 president of the Garden City Chamber of Commerce.

Mike talks about a magic that comes over him when emcees an event as he describes how the right words just seem to come to him.

Like, the time they were performing the Goldtones' trademark wedding song, "Let me Call You Sweetheart."

They give all their guests a candle and ask them to impart a wish for the bridal couple as they blow it out. One time, however, the hall manager blustered through the room extinguishing the

candles, saying they were a fire hazard.

Mike stopped the pandemonium by asking everyone to close their eyes and imagine the candles were lit and concentrate on the wish they were making for the couple.

"Everyone pretended they were blowing out the candle and turned out even more special than usual," he said.

A SCHOOL INTEREST

Mike has been drawn to music and the entertainment field since he was a kid. He wanted to be in the talent shows at school, but never took up an instrument. That interest lead to the creation of the illusion of a three-piece live band for Goldtones.

"We call ourselves DJ entertainers," Mike said "We're lip-synching and pantomiming with real instruments, real



BILL BRESLER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Mike and Debbie Brown are celebrating their 25th anniversary as the disc jockey group, The Goldtones.

guitars, saxes and trumpets, but the sounds come out of the CDs. The illusion is that most people do not know or recognize who's singing the song. People think we're the best band out there."

For 25 years, the Goldtones have performed at countless weddings, anniversaries, daddy-daughter dances, graduation parties, senior citizen home parties, bar mitzvahs and bat mitzvahs, corporate parties and just about any event where groups of people gather.

"If you go to a wedding and everyone is in black tie, we don't act like Animal House," Mike said. "We act more professional. Then there's parties we go to and it's an Animal House type party and you get down and you do the 'Turtle' with them."

"The different crowds you get bring out the best in you and we know how to get the best out of that show by giving them energy."

The Browns have six trailers filled with equipment and 15 employees. Her three children and his three children, all grown, also have helped in some way over the years.

Customers can choose from the traditional one-person DJ to the three-person illusion teams. They also have a

harpist available.

"With our leaders and other employees, we can do as many as three engagements in a night," said Mike, who works as a full-time maintenance supervisor for SRK Management in Farmington Hills.

3,000 AND COUNTING

The Goldtones carry more than 3,000 CDs to each function, Mike said, explaining that he has to come prepared, because when they walk into a party they never know exactly what the guests will want. Request slips are placed on each table.

"When bands go on a break, we go on a break from the show and we go into a DJ mode and motivate and manipulate the crowd into a hustle, or Cha-Cha Slide and do different things that people like to do to get involved," Mike said. "I appreciate the gift that God gave me and I love sharing it with others."

Married 15 years, Mike and Debbie refer to themselves as "old school DJs."

"You change your format to be with the times and to be in competition with the younger DJs," Debbie said. "But, we do things, like polkas and group dances that some of the

younger ones who are just starting out think they don't need."

Times have changed in the business, too, since Mike first started the Goldtones a quarter of century ago. In the early years, he would average 350 engagements annually. Today, the Goldtones have between 250 and 300 customers every year.

He attributes the decline to the thousands of people who entered the DJ business over the years.

"I want to thank every family that has ever put their trust in us to do their family party," Mike said. "It takes a lot of trust and we've had just so many great times with so many people and made friendships through our work. There are so many lives that we have touched. I know they are special and they make us feel special."

In a serious tone, Debbie said, "I hope we can get someone trained enough to take over."

She pauses and adds: "In 20 years."

"We love what we do and that's the big thing," Mike said. "When it becomes a job, then it's time to leave. As long as you're having fun that's what we want. The money is icing on the cake."

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'The Eyes of a Child'

Photographs by students from Buchanan and Cooper Elementary Schools will also be on display. 'The Eyes of a Child' is a joint effort between Livonia Public Schools, Laurel Park Place, and Monte Nagler.

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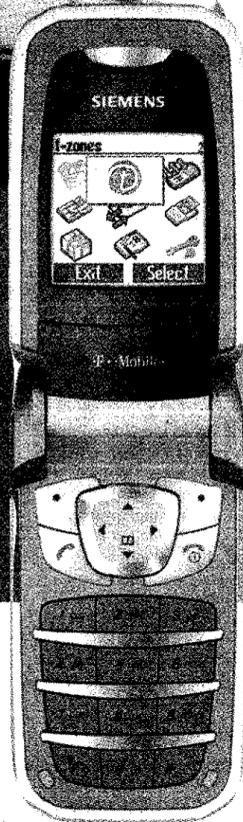
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OUR VIEWS

Turner, Becher deserve votes

On Tuesday, residents of the Wayne-Westland Community Schools will go to the polls to vote. And if the past school elections are any indication, very few residents will take the time to do that.

Some may rationalize their decision to stay home by saying it doesn't matter. Ed Turner and Stephen Becher are the only candidates for the two seats on the Board of Education.

Turner has made a commitment of his time and energy to making the Wayne-Westland schools the best they can be even in these troubling times.

Turner was first elected to the board in 1997 and has served as board secretary and president. He has repeatedly stated that he serves "students first, parents second and teachers and administrators third" and that is evident in all that he does.

Becher, a retired Wayne-Westland teacher, stepped forward last year, showing that he was willing to serve even though admittedly this is the worst of times. He has been quick to learn the ins and outs of the board, and we are impressed with his commitment to becoming a certified school board member through the Michigan Association of School Boards. He has accomplished that even with a full plate of volunteer and civic obligations.

Turner and Becher have not shirked their responsibility, and Wayne-Westland residents shouldn't either. Residents should not use the lack of competition as a way of disenfranchising themselves. They must vote in each and every election, no matter how unimportant they may seem.

That is why we encourage residents to take the time to vote Tuesday for **Ed Turner** and **Stephen Becher**. They may not face any competition, but they are good candidates who deserve to know that their community supports them.

Increasing trash fee a sensible proposal

According to the Department of Environmental Quality, Michigan took in 6 million tons of trash from other states and Canada in 2004, an increase of 870,000 tons from 2003. Waste from other states and Canada represented 28 percent of all solid waste disposed of in Michigan landfills.

Wayne County is the dump site of choice for all of Toronto's solid waste.

House Democrats believe there is a way to stop this — sharply increase the tipping fee from the current 21 cents a ton to \$7.50.

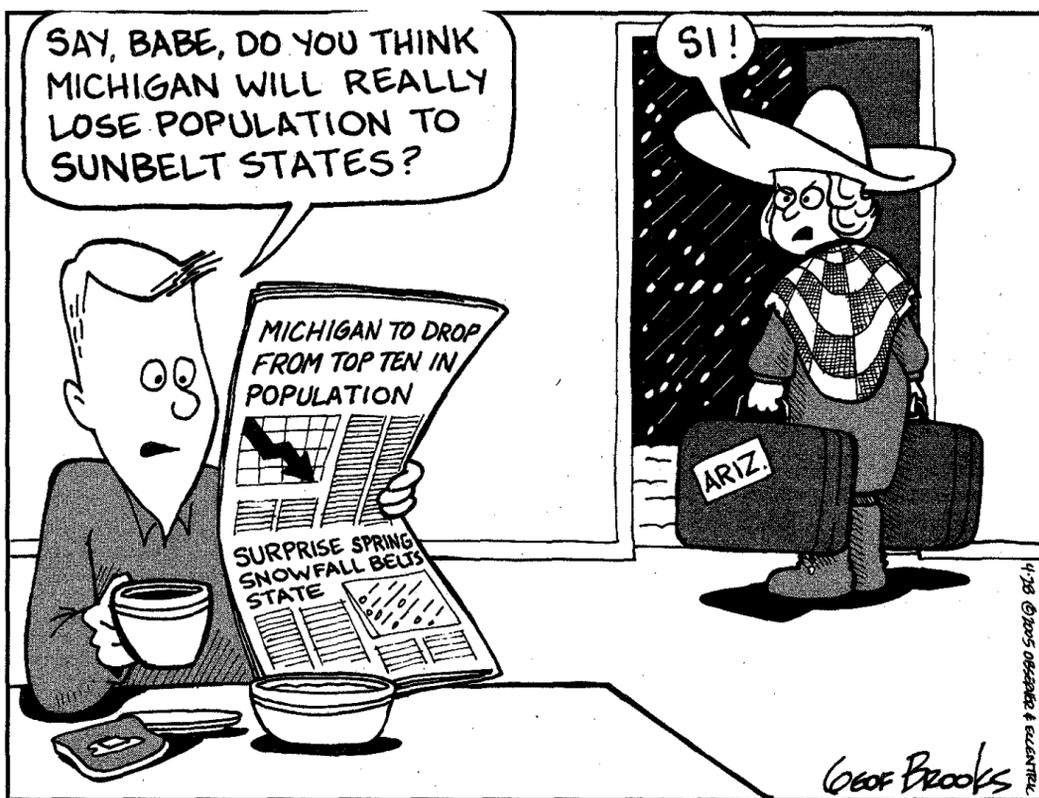
The increased fee is part of a package of bills dealing with the dumping issue that has been a controversy for several years. Democrats point to a Congressional report showing that Pennsylvania imported 1.5 million fewer tons in 2003 than in 2001 after imposing an additional \$5 a ton state fee, to \$7.25.

Democrats are also proposing tougher penalties for out-of-state jurisdictions that send toxic items such as car batteries and motor oil to Michigan landfills; a ban on landfill expansion; and tougher enforcement by increasing fines for transport and disposal violations.

Michigan's low tipping fee makes this an attractive place for other states and Ontario to dump their trash. Attempts by the state to limit foreign trash have been unsuccessful because the U.S. Constitution gives power over interstate trade to the Congress, not the individual states, and Congress hasn't been interested in taking sides on Michigan's behalf.

The Michigan Chamber of Commerce and the Michigan Waste Industries Association are opposed to the Democratic plan. They argue that the fee would result in a tax on Michigan residents, as the fee would apply to instate trash as well and they argue it also would harm the state's economy because of the added cost to businesses. Democrats counter that if the total dumping charge were passed on to Michigan households, the average charge would be around \$1 month. They also counter that the overall economy wouldn't be affected by the increase, pointing again to Pennsylvania, which showed an increase in employment and gross state product following its increase in its dumping fee to \$7.25 a ton.

We believe after years of debate and several false steps toward dealing with a problem that affects the safety, health and infrastructure of the state that the Democrats offer a viable plan for putting Michigan on a more equitable footing with its Great Lakes neighbors. We believe the issues need to be fully aired and action needs to be taken.



LETTERS

Not a nursing home

As a senior residing in Presbyterian Village in Westland, I was very pleased to see the article about The Seniors to Seniors event with the Plymouth Christian Academy. Everything in the article pointed out the wonderful time we had with the students the evening of Feb. 27, plus the other times at the Village as we became acquainted with our student partners. The young people were vivacious, very polite and genuinely interested in what we "seniors" had to say. We, in turn, were really interested in their future plans, and what their experiences had been, contrasted with our "high school senior year."

However, there was one glaring error in the article — Presbyterian Village is NOT A NURSING HOME! We are a Senior Living Community, open to all faiths, with a staff dedicated to keeping us healthy and able to live life to its fullest. Indeed, if you are in need of nursing care, you are not eligible to even move into our village. We, it is true, age after we arrive — but as long as we are independent, we are able to remain.

There are so many activities available (exercise classes, craft classes, quilting group, garden club, many, many outings, and outside entertainment and volunteers who join us in fun activities) that it is impossible for one person to take part in everything that is offered. We have to choose which activities fall within our "pleasure zone" and miss some of the fun.

We would invite you and any of your readers who would like to know more about living at the Village of Westland — a mission of Presbyterian Villages of Michigan — to drop around some time and take a tour.

Alice M. Wright
14-year resident,
Presbyterian Village in Westland

We must demand solutions

Our Livonia Public Schools have been in a fiscal crisis for at least the past 24 months. The last two annual budgets have spent more than each year's revenue, and the shortfall has been covered from district equity. Yet programs continue to be cut and class sizes increased. The only response from the board and administration is to seek more money from Lansing. If the required money is not received, then there will be additional program cuts and increased class sizes.

The first objective of the school board should be the financial health of the district, but this board is more concerned with favorable public image rather than boring district financial facts.

The board needs to tell the administration there will be no cuts in programs and no increases in class size. Every district communication should ask classroom teachers, non-teaching personnel, parents and the taxpayers for all suggestions on how to conserve dollars. Only by conserving resources can dollars be found to preserve the core function of education; academics, music, gym and a foreign language.

If you want a "can do" board member who will engage the entire district community all year, then I am asking for your vote on Tuesday, May 3. I will bring to the board a vote against cuts in programs

and a pledge not to increase class size. I will fight for a freeze in all expenses, no spending for ineffective testing that does not benefit the classroom teacher, and no unnecessary school elections.

I do not expect to affect changes overnight. The present board members have had 12 months to take effective action, but they have not acted. The one promise I will make is there will be no vote for a needless expense like the \$40,000 spent on the February 2005 election. Those dollars should have gone into classroom. The present policies are obviously not working. We must have new board members who will demand and vote for solutions, not just cut programs and increase class size.

William C. Fried
Livonia

Keep Lessard, Markarian

We are writing this because we know how very much you, our community, care about our Livonia Public Schools school district and its governance, and we know that you will want to make a difference for our children. Cynthia Markarian and Dan Lessard are both running for re-election this year, and we are strongly endorsing both to serve as our school board trustees.

Dan Lessard has been a loyal and trusted fellow board member for nine years now, serving not only our children, but children throughout the state. His leadership and advocacy with the Wayne County School Board Association and with the Michigan Association of School Boards have spread the good word about public education and the need to support our students with high standards and adequate funding. Dan believes in doing the best for all of our students, and his teamwork, experience and passion inspire us all. His nine years of experience bring a sense of history and perspective to the board — important in a time where four board members have two years experience or less. Dan has been and continues to be a mentor to other board members, leading by his example of always keeping our students first.

Cynthia Markarian was appointed to our school board just one year ago, and has proven to be a remarkable board member. Cynthia works collaboratively, takes every opportunity to learn, and asks good questions that get to the heart of the matters being discussed. Her fresh perspective has brought renewed energy and purpose to the board, particularly in her role as curriculum committee chairperson and in areas of technology. Cynthia values the education her middle and high school children have received in LPS, and strives to continue that excellence not just for her youngest child, but for all children in our district. Her vision and team work help keep our focus on student achievement, and the excellence of LPS, in providing the best education possible to our students.

Our board has continued to work hard this year in our ongoing efforts to establish an atmosphere of respect and trust, and to make student achievement our top priority. We believe that Cynthia Markarian and Dan Lessard are best suited to work with the board as we continue our teamwork and collaboration on

behalf of the district. Please remember to vote on May 3, 2005.

Joanne Morgan, Tom Bailey, Robert Freeman, Lynda Scheel and Kevin Whitehead

Vote for change: Fried, King

By and large, the folks serving on Livonia's school boards have been decent, ordinary citizens with an unselfish desire to help in the educational development of our kids. While all deserve our gratitude for freely given community service, some have served better than others.

Case in point is the recent board, at times in possession of the narrow scope of a political caucus rather than a public body responsible to a larger community. In their zeal to advocate for public education, they have completely disregarded the distinctions that exist in determining what is acceptable behavior for public, as opposed to private individuals and institutions.

Private individuals and institutions are free to participate in political activity as they wish. On the other hand, public employees and institutions are not. They were created to carry out public policy, not to make it. Indeed, that is the intent of both the Michigan Campaign Finance Act of 1976 and the federal Hatch Act.

In an act of questionable ethics, if not in direct conflict with the intent of those laws, the board created an "Advocacy Web site," within the Livonia Public Schools Web site. Centered in educational legislative issues, it provided clearly biased talking points and encouraged folks to express an opinion. A click of the mouse directed them to an elected official in Lansing or Washington.

Our citizens are best served when a wide range of ideas is present in public dialogue: an intellectual marketplace. Our freedom as citizens, as a community and nation, rests upon the presence of a free flow of information and thought. Given that the dialogue of board meetings is, at times, insular, and the board's inclination to use public resources as a means to "advocate" their personal political beliefs, there is a clear need for change on the board.

If you desire fresh, innovative ideas and independence of thought, give the others a well-earned thank you and vote for Steve King and Bill Fried.

Al Churchill
Livonia

SHARE YOUR OPINIONS

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

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QUOTABLE

"It's overdue. As everyone knows, the roof has been of high importance to me, and I will be happy when it's on."

— Westland historian Ruth Dale, about the possibility of roofing work starting as early as May on the Rowe House, of which she is a longtime supporter

WESTLAND
Observer

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

Too many elections, votes wasted in current system

Well, they may not be able to balance the budget, attract new industry or fix the roads, but our politicians do know how to do one thing right: Draw the lines of their congressional or legislative districts so they are sure to get re-elected or, failing that, to assure that their party will continue to control the district.

Both parties have become amazingly skilled at gerrymandering. And more often than not, they are engaged in a silent conspiracy that assures that most Democratic districts will stay Democratic and most Republican districts will reliably vote GOP year after year.

This is the nasty secret that underlies why our political system has become both so intensely partisan and so rigidly unchanging over recent years. Michigan's John Dingell, who as the currently longest-serving member of Congress should know, says that there are no more than 25 genuinely competitive congressional districts out of the 435 around the country.

Wayne County Probate Judge Milton Mack, one of the smarter people on the bench and a long-time student of Michigan voting behavior, adds that just a handful of Michigan state legislative districts are competitive these days.

Why is this a problem? Simple. In districts that are drawn to favor one party over the other, the important contest is not the general election. It's the primary, when a small minority of voters, usually a more strident group than the rest of us, picks their party's nominee, who then will waltz to certain victory in the November general election.

For Republicans, it's the passionate Right-to-Lifers and the religious/social conservatives who turn out and generally pick a candidate who is usually to the right of the majority of the party. For Democrats, it's their equally highly motivated ACLU members, union functionaries and "tree huggers," a.k.a. environmentalists, who tend to select nominees more liberal than most.

As respected veteran political columnist David Broder puts it, "Each party now only plays to its hard-core supporters, and the pragmatic center goes unrepresented." With general elections then coming down to a choice between extremes, it is any wonder partisan conflict has become so sharp? And with most voters more or less firmly in the middle of the road, is it any wonder many of us feel left out of the political process?

That's why there's been a lot of recent discussion about fiddling with election rules to make it easier for all of us to vote, or alternatively, to change the way the redistricting process works. In Michigan, state Rep. Christopher Ward (R-

Brighton) has introduced a bill that would allow voters with a photo ID to cast an absentee ballot at the local clerk's office, without having to give a reason, anytime during the week before the election. (As it now works, to get an absentee ballot you have to be older than 60 or declare you must be out of town on election day.) Ward says he has bipartisan support for his bill, although Gov. Jennifer Granholm and other Democrats object to requiring voters, some of whom may not work or drive, to produce an ID.

Elsewhere, people are talking about changing the way in which district lines are drawn. In Michigan, they are drawn up by the majority party in the state Legislature to favor their side. About the only legal limitations are those that require all districts to be the same size ("one man, one vote") and avoiding drawing lines that slice through normally recognized communities.

In California, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger wants to shift the line-drawing from the Legislature to a panel of retired judges. Maybe these are both good ideas. Especially appealing to me is the thought that drawing district lines is a task too important to be left to the politicians.

But the trouble is that neither strategy addresses the basic problem. Making it easier to vote absentee doesn't change the dynamic of each party playing to its hard-core supporters in primary elections. And retired judges, most of whom owed their seats on the bench to one party or another, are not immune to being almost as partisan as legislators.

Judge Mack has developed a fine 10-point "Voters' Bill of Rights" that neatly frames what a good voting system ought to do. Included are:

- The right to have their vote count. Consider Republican voters in an overwhelmingly Democratic district. Does their vote count for much? No.

- The right to vote in elections that matter. Consider Democratic voters in an overwhelmingly Republican district. Do November elections matter to them? Not in local races.

- The right to vote in election districts that are fairly drawn. The key notion here is "fairly." In Judge Mack's mind, fair means not gerrymandered for partisan advantage.

Judge Mack has succeeded in defining what a properly functioning democratic (with a small "d") voting system ought to do. Plainly, the system we now have is failing these tests. Next week's column will describe a simple, common sense solution that could go a long way toward healing our steadily more dysfunctional political system.

Phil Power, the former chairman of HomeTown Communications Network and regent of the University of Michigan, is a longtime observer of politics, economics and education issues in Michigan.



Phil Power

If you seek a fishing hole, look to the Clinton, Rouge

Is it just me, or did winter seem to retreat in an awful hurry this year? No complaints here, because I was definitely ready for it to go. And by the looks of the bustling golf courses and parks and the neighborhoods full of playing children, everyone else was ready for spring as well.

Certainly spring is one of the most lovely times of the year. The snow melts away, the birds begin to sing and the flowers take bloom.

For me, spring also means a new season to pull out the rod and reel, and begin the annual quest to outwit as many fish as possible. The traditional opener for trout fishing begins the last weekend of the April, a symbolic time many anglers like myself have thought about since the state's waters "hardened up" back in December and January.

Come that weekend, there will be a great pilgrimage of anglers, young and mostly old, from south-east Michigan, who will head up to the state's fabled trout waters. Streams like the Au Sable, Manistee, Pere Marquette and Jordan will again beckon familiar anglers with their ancient call. And that is to name just a few. We are fortunate to live in a state with thousands of miles of designated trout water.

In fact, our state offers so much to anglers of all stripes, whether you like to catch brook trout or walleye, bass or crappie, bluegill or pike. Instead of "If you seek a pleasant peninsula, look about you," Michigan's motto could easily be "If you seek a fishing hole, look about you."

Unfortunately, few anglers choose to look close to home. You don't have to travel several hours up north to wet a line. In addition to the Detroit River, Lake Erie, Lake St. Clair and all the wonderful lakes in Oakland County, which certainly see their share of fishing pressure, there are two wonderful resources that are mostly overlooked. I refer to the Clinton and Rouge rivers, which traverse the Detroit area like little freshwater arteries in a suburban landscape.

Regrettably, when most people think of these two rivers, they associate them with pollution and degradation. Yet in the last two decades, the water quality of both rivers has improved considerably, even dramatically. Not only have local municipalities implemented a whole host of projects that have made a positive impact on both rivers, there have also been countless volunteers who have helped

pull generations of junk from their waters. The Clinton watershed, in particular, offers some fine fishing. It still contains plenty of trout-holding tributaries, and there is an ongoing project to make the mainstream a trout fishery as well. The river is already known as a burgeoning fishery for steelhead, which are oversized rainbow trout prized by anglers as one of the best freshwater game fish. In fact, on Tuesday the state's Department of Natural Resources stocked the river in Shelby Township with thousands of hatchery-bred steelhead, just as it has for the last several years.

The Rouge River, on the other hand, still has a ways to go because of years of degradation. In fact, I can just hear some people chuckling at the notion of fishing the Rouge, which was once one of the most polluted rivers in the country. While the river certainly has its share of obstacles, there are sections of the watershed where fishing can be quite good.

My introduction to this fact took place a couple of summers ago when I was driving along Hines Drive and decided to stop and take a peek at the Middle Rouge. Surprisingly, the water looked inviting, and I just happened to have my fishing gear in the truck. I said, "What the heck, I'll give it a try." Lead a fisherman to water and, I promise, you won't have any problem getting him to fish.

To my great surprise, I caught more fish that day than any angler should be privileged enough to catch in a couple of hours time. Nothing huge, but plenty of fighters, mostly smallmouth bass and rock bass.

The Clinton and Rouge are two of the most populated and accessible watersheds in the state. This water is in our back yards. Yet so many of us anglers will jump in a car and drive several hours to fish water that is oftentimes less productive. And believe it or not, both rivers, particularly the Clinton, offer some great scenery, and the type of peace and quiet that many associate with trout streams up north.

The more people that use these resources, the more pressure there will be to continue the cleanup that began less than a quarter century ago, which benefits everyone in the region, not just us anglers. Property values will increase, as will other recreational and educational opportunities. Obviously, it will also benefit the fish and other aquatic wildlife that call the rivers home.

And that's where us anglers come into the picture. Ah, I love spring.

Kurt Kuban is editor of the *Canton Observer* and an avid fisherman. He welcomes comments at (734) 459-2700 or kkuban@oe.homecomm.net.



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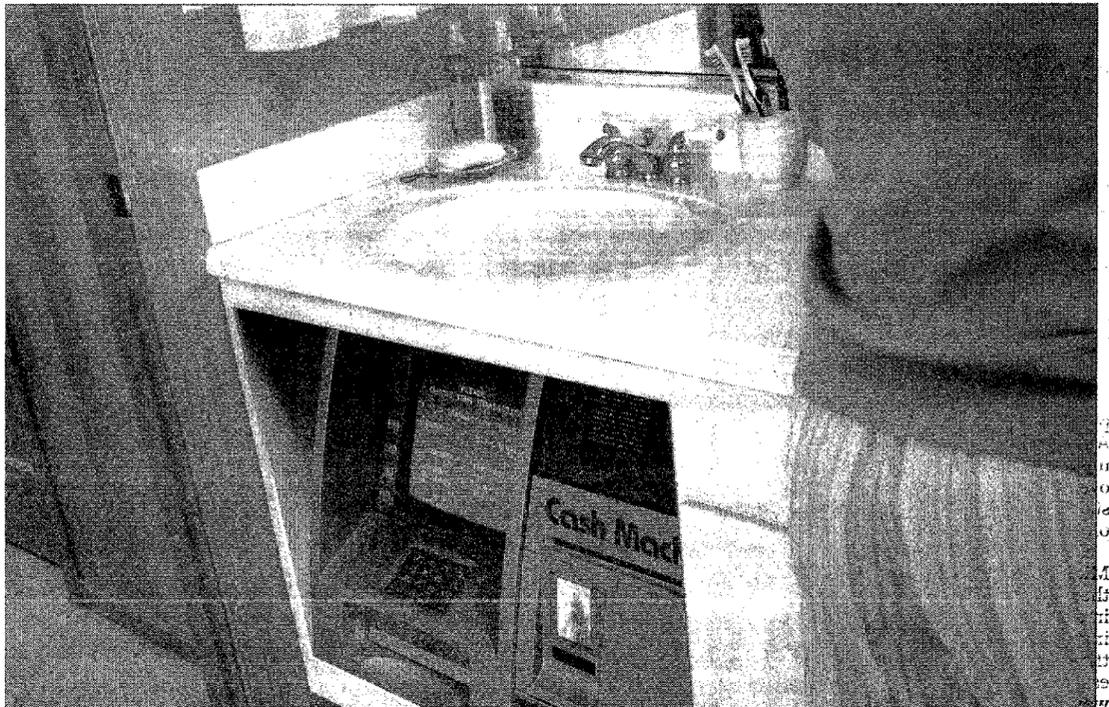
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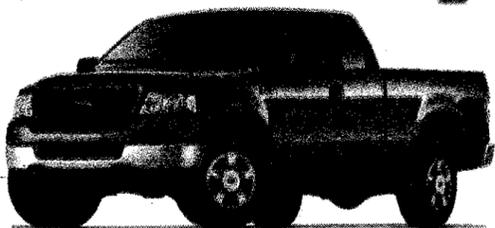
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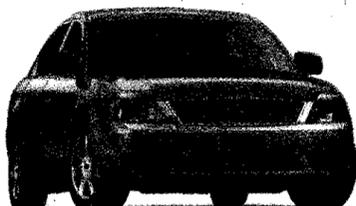
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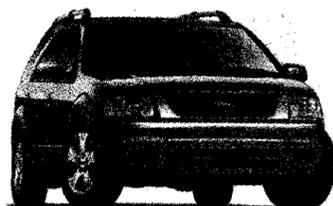


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