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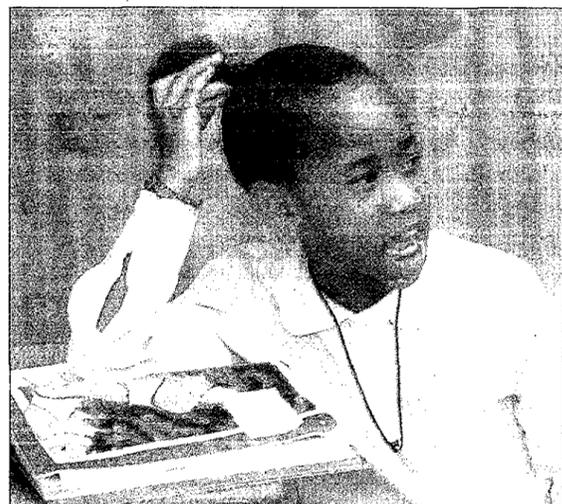
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PHOTOS BY TOM HAWLEY | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Academy of Detroit-Westland Principal Christopher Lindsay smiles proudly as he talks about the success of the charter school, celebrating its 10th anniversary.

Academy draws accolades from parents



Third-grader Azhane Finley answers her teacher's question in class at the Academy of Detroit-Westland.

BY DARRELL CLEM
STAFF WRITER

Carl Allen's first-grade son, Dmarco, comes all the way from Belleville to attend school at the Academy of Detroit-Westland.

"I like the one-on-one attention and the smaller class sizes here," Allen said, visiting the charter school his son attends on Henry Ruff Road south of Cherry Hill. "My son is getting the attention he doesn't get in a public school. He's reading at a third-grade level."

Parents and educators may endlessly debate the merits of charter schools versus public education, but the Academy of Detroit-Westland has drawn accolades as it celebrates its 10th year.

"It's very organized and structured, and what I really like is the discipline," said parent Janine Clark, whispering as her son, Marko, sat in teacher Jill Shork's first-grade classroom.

The discipline appears obvious as Principal Christopher Lindsay walks down an inviting, brightly decorated hallway where students are lined up. The pupils shush each other when they see him.

They don't seem to fear him. Rather, they appear to respect him as he smiles at them and compliments their

PLEASE SEE **ACADEMY, A4**

Wild requests opinion on how to fill vacancies

BY DARRELL CLEM
STAFF WRITER

A shakeup looms in January on the Westland City Council in the aftermath of the Nov. 7 elections - even though council positions didn't appear on the ballot.

Councilman Richard LeBlanc will leave his position after being elected as Westland's next state representative.

And, council President William Wild will assume the duties of Mayor Sandra Cicirelli, who was elected as a Westland district judge.

The Westland city charter appears to indicate that a council majority will have to vote to fill LeBlanc's and Cicirelli's positions until the next round of city elections in November 2007.

Then, next November, voters would fill the positions, the charter indicates.

Although the charter is wordier, it states that, "if a vacancy occurs in any elective office, then the council by a majority vote of its members shall fill such vacancy only until the next general city election, at which election the unexpired term, if any, shall be filled by vote of the qualified electors of the city."

Some political observers have long speculated at how the vacancies would be filled if, in fact, LeBlanc and Cicirelli won their respective political races.

As such - and to avoid any potential confusion - Wild has asked City Attorney Angelo Plakas for an opinion on how the council and mayoral posts should be filled.

In the past, council vacancies have been filled by a majority vote of remaining council members.

However, Cicirelli's election marks the first time that a Westland mayor has been elected as a district judge. She won her judicial race only one year into her second four-year term as mayor.

Wild has indicated to the *Observer* that he is ready and prepared to serve as mayor, and many political observers have indicated privately that Wild will likely have the support of a council majority to remain on the job through next November.

Nonetheless, Wild said he believed it was important to avoid any confusion by seeking an opinion from Plakas.

In his letter to Plakas, Wild wrote, "As you know, on Nov. 7, 2006, the city of Westland elected one of our (council) colleagues to the Michigan House of Representatives and our mayor to judge of the 18th District Court. It is my understanding that terms for both offices commence Jan. 1, 2007."

"In light of the foregoing," Wild wrote, "I am requesting guidance by way of an opinion from the law department as to the process the city should follow for filling both offices, as well as any other important issues related to this process I am inquiring about."

Wild has asked for Plakas' opinion by Monday, Dec. 4 - the day of the council's next business meeting.

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'Big' chance to help out a 'Little'

Mentoring group lets couple make difference in a young child's life

BY BRAD KADRICH
STAFF WRITER

When Allen and Vickie Coleman moved to Plymouth Township from St. Louis, they wanted to become involved in their community.

Allen eventually worked his way onto the board of directors of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Metropolitan Detroit (which he now chairs), then found it wasn't quite enough. He decided he wanted to actually be a "Big," but the group's bylaws didn't allow board members to mentor children.

So determined to help youngsters was he, Allen helped get the bylaws changed. Now three board members, including Coleman, are "Bigs."

"I wanted to give back to the community," said Allen Coleman, who is vice president at Strategic Staffing Solutions. "I had mentors

in my life, and it seemed like the right thing to do."

One of those mentors was a man named Jim Coppinger, the father of one of Coleman's best friends. When Coleman was getting ready to graduate high school, his parents hadn't the means to send him to college.

DIRECTION IN LIFE

Coppinger took Coleman under his wing, helping him get college grants, setting his mind straight.

"Going to college didn't seem real," remembered Coleman, who eventually graduated from Southeast Missouri State with a degree in computer science.

"(Coppinger) pulled me aside and said, 'You're going to college.' It changed my life."

PLEASE SEE **BIG BROTHER, A7**



Allen Coleman of Plymouth Township, chairman of the board of directors for Big Brothers Big Sisters, has been "Big Brother" to Micah Becker of Westland since 2004.

'...I had mentors in my life, and it seemed like the right thing to do.'

Allen Coleman
vice president at Strategic Staffing Solutions

Investigator looks for owner of illegal trap

BY SUE MASON
STAFF WRITER

Westland Animal Control Officer Frank Raymore is hoping someone will provide information about the owner of an illegal line trap that was on the leg of cat found wandering around a landscaping business last Wednesday.

The cat, dubbed Faith by employees at the Michigan Humane Society's Berman Center for Animal Care in Westland, was found at Phillips Landscaping on Warren east of Middlebelt. Employees at the business called Raymore, saying the animal had wandered in during the night and was "wan-



TOM HAWLEY | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

X-rays have shown that the cat suffered a fractured right front leg after getting caught in an illegal trap.

dering around with a piece of iron on its leg."

"They didn't even know it was a trap," he said.

PLEASE SEE **TRAP, A4**

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Coming Thursday
in Filter



Hot Spots: Turn to the next issue of
Filter for your guide on the bustling
nightlife of downtown Birmingham.

Board weighs in on using fund equity

BY REBECCA JONES
STAFF WRITER

An updated look at the Livonia Public Schools budget shows that the district will have to dip into its savings for more than \$2.6 million.

Due to the loss of 500 students - twice what was expected - the district will bring in about \$2.4 million less in state aid than it planned to receive.

School board members heard a presentation and discussed budget amendments at their Nov. 27 study meeting but said they need more information before voting for any changes.

The issue will likely be taken up again at a future committee of the whole meeting.

The district has almost \$11 million in savings, but only \$5.8 million of that money is available. The rest has been reserved for other uses.

After the proposed budget transfer, the district would have about 5 percent of its yearly costs in its fund equity account.

Revenue and expense projections are falling within a percent of the \$160 million budget set last spring, said Lisa Levesque, director of business services.

Revenue is down due to the enrollment, but Levesque told the board the district may bring in state funding in other areas, such as an \$85,000 grant for districts with declining enrollment. In addition, she predicted another \$940,000 in interest and revenue from leasing buildings.

Expenses are coming in slightly higher than expected, mostly due to staffing, salaries and benefits. Supt. Randy Liepa explained that when the budget was built last spring, the district wasn't sure which teachers and staff members would return and who would retire. The district usually amends its budget in the fall when those figures are solid, he said.

Liepa also recommended that the district set aside another \$250,000 from its fund equity to cover the cost of textbooks and

teaching materials associated with the new high school graduation requirements next year.

Another budget amendment could come this winter if state lawmakers decide to reduce the per-pupil foundation allowance.

The recommended budget amendments still make some assumptions.

For example, the district budgeted for a \$200 increase in per-pupil revenue. The state set the number at \$210, but many are now anticipating the state aid fund will fall short. No one will know how much the district will get in state aid until January or February.

Board member Cynthia Markarian said she didn't feel comfortable counting the extra \$10 per student as revenue.

"Let's not add money that we're scared may not come," said Markarian. "We're basing our future on what (the state is) telling us, and they're changing it midstream."

Markarian also raised concerns about next year's budget.

Levesque said the state was expecting higher revenues earlier this year, and basing the LPS budget on a \$200-per-student increase made sense at the time.

Trustee Robert Freeman said the district's budget assumptions weren't too far off. "I don't know that you could get much better than that based on all the things you're estimating," he told Levesque.

LPS also has a separate special education fund, with about \$6.5 million, reserved for future special education needs that the county or general fund might not be able to meet.

The district could transfer that money into the general fund, but Liepa said he is concerned is that the district will need it for special education in the next three or four years.

"It truly is an issue. How much money do we set aside for the future?" Liepa said. Special education costs continue to rise at a rate that is higher than inflation, he said.



Lansing visit

State Sen. Laura Toy, R-Livonia, joins Pastor Terrance R. McClain of Annapolis Park Church of Christ in Westland on the floor of the State Senate after he provided the invocation immediately before a recent session. McClain also is the vice president of the Wayne-Westland Board of Education.

Teen arrested after 3 holdup tries

BY MATT JACHMAN
STAFF WRITER

A 15-year-old Westland boy was arrested in three attempted street robberies on Redford's north side Monday evening. A pistol was found in the car in which he was riding.

Nothing was stolen in any of the holdup tries, and no serious injuries were reported. But a 50-year-old Redford woman was pistol-whipped by a gunman before he fled from her and her husband after trying to rob them on Wakenend Street, a police report said.

The first two holdups occurred within minutes of each other, around 8:30 p.m., in the area of Curtis and Wakenend.

In one, a husband and wife were out walking when a man approached and tried to rob them, a report said. He ran off without taking anything after striking the woman with the revolver he carried, they told police.

Another robbery, around the same time, occurred on Curtis near Wakenend. A 26-year-old Redford man told police he was

walking on Curtis and saw a male he had seen minutes before. He said, "Hi again," he told police, and the stranger demanded his wallet.

The 26-year-old asked if he was serious, and he responded by saying he was and pulling a silver revolver halfway out of a coat pocket, the victim said.

Told to empty his pockets, the victim started to pull out his iPod, keys and cellular phone, he said, but let them drop into his pockets and asked the gunman what he had done to offend him.

"It's what you done for 400 years," the black gunman replied, according to the victim, who is white.

The gunman fled after struggling with the 26-year-old over his phone. The victim told police he had been followed by a vehicle minutes before the holdup try.

The third robbery attempt occurred about 9 p.m. on MacArthur Street near Student Street. A Romulus man, 60, and a Redford woman, 44, were out walking when a car with four people in it pulled up and a passenger asked for

directions. He then said, "Give me everything you got," a police report said.

The man said he had no money, and the car, described as a silver Dodge Stratus with four people in it, went south on MacArthur and east on Five Mile.

The 15-year-old suspect, who was wearing a jacket and skullcap similar to items reportedly worn by the would-be robber in two of the incidents, was riding in a silver Dodge Intrepid that was pulled over by Livonia police on Middlebelt later Monday night, police said. There were three other people in the car. The revolver found in the Intrepid was similar to the pistol described in two of the robbery attempts, reports said.

The teen was taken to the Wayne County juvenile detention facility, said Police Chief John Buck. The driver of the Intrepid, a 21-year-old Westland man, was also arrested, but a warrant request was denied by the county prosecutor's office.

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Rotary gives winter clothing to 2 schools

BY DARRELL CLEM
STAFF WRITER

With temperatures dropping, many children from the low-income Norwayne neighborhood could have faced walks to school without the coats, hats and gloves they need to keep warm.

They'll be warmer thanks to Westland Rotary, a service club that spent more than \$2,000 to help students bundle up.

Rotarians have donated 91 coats along with hats, gloves, socks and underwear to children who attend Jefferson-Barns and Lincoln elementary schools.

"We've found that these

schoolkids don't have a lot of these things," Westland Rotary President Mark McConnell said. "They need them to keep warm."

Rotarians also gave out gift cards from such businesses as Sam's Club, Wal-Mart, Target and Meijer to help low-income families, McConnell said.

Wayne-Westland Community Schools Superintendent Greg Baracy applauded the Westland Rotary for helping students in the district he serves.

"We are very appreciative of the generous donation by the Rotary. It is especially significant at this point in time when our economy is in the state that

it's in," Baracy said. "We have a number of children that are in need of things like coats, gloves and hats. This will provide some relief for their parents' during the holiday season."

Westland Rotary had in previous years provided winter clothing for Jefferson-Barns students.

The club this year expanded its gift-giving to include youngsters at Lincoln Elementary School.

The club chose to help those schools because they have more students from low-income families than other Westland elementaries.

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INFORMATION CENTRAL

DECK THE HALLS

Now that all the turkey has been eaten it's time to direct your attention to what else but ... holiday decorating. Make the William P. Faust Public Library of Westland your first stop for holiday decorating ideas.

Whether your style leans toward the sublime to the outrageous - or anywhere in between - it's all here at the library.

Great holiday decorating ideas for those on the go can be found in *Quick Christmas Decoration Ideas* by Leslie Linsley and *Quick & Easy Christmas Crafts: 133 Projects for Gifts, Ornaments and Holiday Decorating*. Find ideas that will beautify your holiday surroundings without taking a lot of time, or clear out your budget.

How about sprucing up your table?

We've got you covered there, too. Check out *Napkin Folds: Beautifully Styled Napkins for Every Occasion* by Bridget Jones or *Five-Minute Centerpieces* by Jane Newdeck.

If you prefer a video, *Table Centerpieces and Impressive 1-Minute Napkins* might just be something to view during your down time.

What home would be complete without a wreath to grace its door? For some great wreath ideas *The Ultimate Wreath Book* by Ellen Spector Platt and *Holiday Wreath Book* by Eric Carlson might just do the trick.

For the naturalist at heart, *Fruits, Vegetables and Berries: An Arranger's Guide* by Kally Ellis and Ercole Moroni and *Better Homes and Gardens Wreaths and other Nature Crafts* offer great ideas for creating a wreath from items you can find in your very own backyard!

Interested in what the style gurus have to say about decorating your home for the holidays?

The library's array of books and videos by Martha Stewart and Christopher Lowell might just be what you're looking for. Check out *Holidays: Receipts, Gifts and Decoration, Handmade Christmas, Martha Stewart's Christmas and Interior Motives Christmas*, to name a few.

No matter what your decorating style, the William P. Faust Public Library of Westland can provide ideas to help you achieve your look. Just stop by or visit us on the Web. Call (734) 326-6123 or log on to www.westland.lib.mi.us.

HOLIDAY MUSIC AT THE LIBRARY

Bell Choir of Our Lady of Victory Parish: 1 p.m. Dec. 9.
Forever Blessed Ministries with Gospel Saxophonist Steven Thomas: 7 p.m. Dec. 11.

Featuring Deborah Thomas and Special Guest Frederick Storch Renaissance Chorus (a branch of the Barbershop Harmony Society): 7:30 p.m. Dec. 12.

Highlighted Activity Independent Movie Night: 6:30 p.m. Dec. 4.

Join us as we screen Hawaii, Oslo, the official Norwegian entry for "Best Foreign Language Film" at the 2005 Academy Awards. A film by Erik Poppe. Bring a friend or come alone to enjoy an evening of entertainment. No registration is required.

Information Central is compiled by Marilyn Kwik, at the William P. Faust Public Library, 6123 Central City Parkway, Westland. For more information, call (734) 326-6123.

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Franklin teen's quick recovery called a 'miracle'

BY REBECCA JONES
STAFF WRITER

It's back to laser tag and Mello Yellow for Nate Carlin, the Westland teenager who describes his quick recovery from a closed-head injury as a "miracle."

Playing paintball is off-limits for now, and the 16-year-old will have to wait another year before getting his driver's license because of the possibility of seizures.

Carlin, a sophomore at Franklin High School, was airlifted to Ann Arbor after he was assaulted in the cafeteria before school Nov. 22.

"I'm just happy to be alive," he said Friday.

"I knew he was going to be OK," said Nate's twin, Cori.

"It looked worse and sounded worse than it actually was," mom Debbie Carlin added.

Carlin went from critical condition when he arrived at University of Michigan Hospitals that Wednesday to eating Skittles and pumpkin pie Thanksgiving night. He was home Sunday and back in school after missing just two days. The principal had to warn classmates not to hug him too hard.

"Everybody was just happy to see me," Nate Carlin said.

Doctors expect a full recovery.

ery.

"There are so many people praying for him," Cori Carlin said. "It probably had something to do with it."

Debbie Carlin considered the worst - brain damage, paralysis - for only a split second that morning.

"I felt my body just literally shut down," she said. At the trauma center, a doctor tried to prepare her for bad news. "I didn't like what she said, so I ignored her. ... You don't want to hear that."

More reassuring were the words of a 28-year-old Livonia man, who said he was attacked last year and now has 100 screws in his head. He visited Debbie Carlin at the hospital.

"He told me what to expect, the mood swings, the attitude," Debbie Carlin said. "He said it might take a while."

The attack was caught on tape at school, and Nate Carlin plans to watch it. He doesn't remember even going to school that day.

A 16-year-old junior faces charges, as a juvenile, of assault with intent to commit murder. The suspect reportedly punched Nate Carlin from behind, swung him around and dropped him on his head.

It started over a rumor "saying I stole someone's girl-



Debbie Carlin discusses son Nate's recovery from the serious head and spinal injuries he received at the hands of a fellow student at Franklin on Nov. 22.

friend," Nate Carlin said.

NO SECURITY CHANGES

The school has building control paraprofessionals. One was in the cafeteria during breakfast when the alleged assault occurred, but that staffer didn't see or hear what led to the violence, said principal Dan Willenborg.

The incident hasn't prompted any security changes, he said. "It's not like we have additional resources to do it a whole lot differently," Willenborg said. "If someone thinks that having an adult at every corner would prevent a fight, that's a fallacy."

This case reminded students how serious fighting can be, he said.

Rumors are still going around, but Cori Carlin said she's sick of "high school drama."

"Now that something serious happened, things might start changing," she said.

Debbie Carlin is concerned about school violence in general and said kids are afraid to report their problems

because they don't want adults to get involved.

"It's OK to have boyfriends and girlfriends in high school, but don't take it so seriously," she said.

Break-ups are behind 80-90 percent of the fights Willenborg has seen in his seven years at Franklin, he said.

"If we eliminated kids from dating, that would do much more to solving fighting" than more adult supervision, he said.

However, parent Joe Grezlik isn't convinced. He has escorted his freshman daughter to her first hour class for the past week and thinks there should be an "increased authoritative presence."

Franklin junior Jessica Stailey said she sees teachers, Franklin's three assistant principals and Willenborg walking the halls between classes. The school has cliques, but fights are rare, she said. "That sort of thing happened out of nowhere," the volleyball player said.

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Court checks probationers on Thanksgiving Eve night

BY DARRELL CLEM
STAFF WRITER

The party's over. Westland 18th District Court has broadened its efforts to keep problem drinkers sober on traditional party nights.

Probation officials started a program a few years ago to select people randomly to report to court on St. Patrick's Day to prove their compliance with no-drinking orders.

Deemed a success, the program has been expanded to include Thanksgiving Eve - the year's busiest bar night, said Eric Lange, assistant chief probation officer.

Court workers randomly chose 305 people to report for alcohol testing 9-11:30 p.m. on the night before Thanksgiving.

In all, 277 people showed up and 28 didn't, Lange said.

"That's about average," he said. "That's about the number we've had come in before."

One man actually showed up even though he had been drinking, and he was slapped with jail time when he appeared before Judge Gail McKnight.

"She locked him up for five days," Lange said.

People who ignored their written warnings to report on Thanksgiving Eve will be sent notices to appear in court for violating their probation. They could face such penalties as fines, jail and time on the court's community work program.

People who ignored their written warnings to report on Thanksgiving Eve will be sent notices to appear in court for violating their probation. They could face such penalties as fines, jail and time on the court's community work program.

gram.

"It depends on the case and the person," Lange said.

The court also ordered about 30 people - those with repeat alcohol-related offenses - to report for testing on the morning after Thanksgiving.

Court officials place more emphasis on St. Patrick's Day and Thanksgiving Eve because both days can be tempting for those who are on probation and who may be trying to quit drinking, said David Wiacek, court administrator.

"Those are generally the two biggest bar nights of the year," he said. "We notify the people in advance that they've been chosen to come in due to conditions of their probation."

"I think this assists them and reinforces the idea that they shouldn't drink, particularly at a time when people are enticed to drink," Wiacek said.

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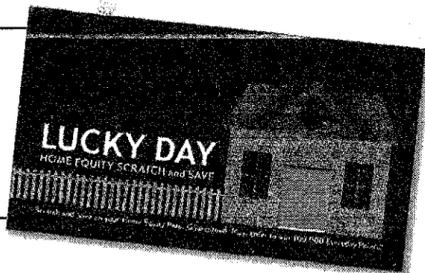
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TOM HAWLEY | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Human Society evaluator Chrissy Schmoock attends to Faith, a Calico cat, who was found caught in an animal trap last Wednesday.

TRAP

FROM PAGE A1

Raymore believes Faith got caught in the trap in Hines Park, an area where he has found at least six similar traps in the past three years. This is the first time he's come upon one with an animal, especially a live one, in the trap. In the past, he's discovered animal parts, like a raccoon leg, left after the animal gnawed it off to escape from the trap.

"Absolutely, there's someone trapping down there," he said. "It's county property and hard to patrol. I've pulled traps out of there, but never found anyone setting or checking the traps."

Berman Center Manager Marcy Sieggreen said Faith is lucky to have been found quickly. Her leg was badly swollen, but that had gone down enough Thursday afternoon to do X-rays. It was discovered that the leg was fractured. Surgery is planned to stabilize the leg. "She's in pretty good shape, she's likely an indoor cat," said Sieggreen. "She had a flea collar on,

I'm positive she's someone's pet," added Raymore.

Raymore said the trap is "very, very old," possibly dating back to the 1950s. He added that while "the potential is always there" for people to get caught in the traps, they're usually set in very secluded places in the park away from the walking paths.

Raymore is investigating the incident in hopes of identifying the owner of the trap. That person could face up to 93 days in jail and a \$500 fine for animal cruelty as well as state violations.

"The DNR prohibits trapping without permit and license," Raymore said. "The fines are a lot higher. Last time I looked it was \$1,000."

People with information about the illegal trapping should contact the Berman Center at (734) 721-7300.

"She's such a nice cat," said Raymore. "I offered to take her home to recuperate, but they found someone who has more time to spend with her."

smason@hometownlife.com (734) 953-2112

ACADEMY

FROM PAGE A1

behavior. A hallway poster reads, "Respect Is Not A Gift. You Have To Earn It."

In some ways, the Westland academy is similar to public schools. It receives state and federal funding. Its teachers are certified. Its students take the same achievement tests.

For three consecutive years, the school has met the state's criteria for adequate yearly progress, Lindsay said.

But the school is governed by its own board of directors, rather than by a publicly elected school board. Students wear uniforms — a rule that Lindsay said teaches professionalism and keeps the focus on academics.

Moreover, a common theme of entrepreneurship is taught across the curriculum. Even a simple Halloween candy fundraiser is treated like a manufacturing business with a name, Holiday Treats, a slogan of "We've got the treats that can't be beat," sales strategies, and lessons about inventory, product suppliers and profits.

"We want to prepare our children to have goals worth aspiring to," Lindsay said, "and we want to provide an environment that fosters academic excellence."

When the Academy of Detroit-Westland opened 10 years ago, it had 330 students in kindergarten through sixth grade. It now has 375 pupils and has been expanded to the eighth grade.

Students in grades six through eight attend classes in a modular building that was built about three years ago behind the older school, a former public education facility.

Lindsay credits the teachers



TOM HAWLEY | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

First-grade teacher Jill Shork, who has been at the Academy of Detroit-Westland for seven years, goes over a social studies lesson with her class.

for helping to make the academy a success. "They have made a name for themselves," he said.

An annual survey of parents has shown that, overwhelmingly, parents have confidence in the academy and its staff, Lindsay said. The school draws students from such cities as Westland, Garden City, Inkster and Detroit.

Many children are bused in from Detroit. Soon, the school hopes to start additional bus routes for students who live closer.

Some students who finish eighth grade move on to other charter schools, such as the Academy of Inkster or the Cherry Hill School of Performing Arts, also in

Inkster. Some move on to public schools.

"It's very important that parents make informed decisions about where they want their children to go," Lindsay said.

The academy's student population is predominantly African-American, although Caucasian pupils account for 5 percent of the student body and other ethnicities 1 percent, Lindsay said.

"We have an open enrollment," he added.

Class sizes are typically 19 students through grades five, and 23 pupils at the middle school level.

"I like our smaller class sizes and the fact that we're our own district," said Susan Bowden, a Title I facilitator for at-risk

students. "I know the students. I understand their needs."

Classes, including full-day kindergarten, start at 8:15 a.m. and finish at 3:15 p.m.

Third-grader Reguan Grier, 8, has attended the academy since he was in kindergarten.

"It's cool here, it's fun," he said.

Some responses from young students seem universal. When asked to name his favorite class, Reguan cited gym.

But, he quickly added, "I like writing and reading, too."

Reguan hopes to continue attending the Academy of Detroit-Westland.

"I like to come here because I like to learn," he said.

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

2 charged in massive coupon scam

BY DAVE VARGA
STAFF WRITER

A Livonia woman and her boyfriend faced a judge Thursday on charges involving the coupon scam that took thousands of dollars from Target and other area stores since March.

Suzanne Celeskey, 49, of Livonia and Stephen Najor, 39, of Clarkston were each charged with using a computer to commit identity theft, a seven-year felony; identity theft, a five-year felony; and larceny using false pretenses over \$1,000, a five-year felony.

Bond was set at 10 percent of \$5,000 for each of them, and it was posted so they were released. A preliminary exam is set for Dec. 12.

The couple is accused of creating department store coupons on their home computer, using them for purchases of appliances and other items, and then returning the items and pocketing the profit, according to police.

Often, they would present a coupon for \$20 off a kitchen appliance purchase of more than \$100, he said. After making the buy, they would return

the item to a variety of Target stores across Wayne and Oakland counties without a receipt and pocket the cash refund.

Target security officials identified the homemade coupons and then backtracked on security video to identify the woman and her partner.

In all, officials said they'd purchased more than \$14,000 in merchandise with about 526 coupons at Target alone. Several other stores were also involved based on receipts discovered at their house.

"We found big, big bags of

receipts. We can't even go through all of them," Winn said.

The woman would present the coupons, which often wouldn't scan on the computer. When a cashier would question the coupon, Winn said, the woman was "bold enough" to cause a scene and call for the manager, and the coupon would eventually be accepted.

Winn noted the police department was conducting a forensic search on the woman's home computer.

In all, police estimate they had made more than \$7,000 on the scheme.

CITY OF GARDEN CITY
December 12, 2006 - BOARD OF REVIEW

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN TO all property owners of the City of Garden City that the Board of Review will meet in session on Tuesday, December 12, 2006 from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. to correct mutual mistakes of fact or clerical errors. PA74 of 1995 authorizes the December Board of Review to hear appeals for poverty exemptions, but not for poverty exemptions denied by the March Board of Review. This applies to current year only.

ALLYSON BETTIS
Treasurer-City Clerk

Publish: November 30, 2006
December 3 & 7, 2006

CITY OF GARDEN CITY
NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING
DECEMBER 18, 2006

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Garden City Council will hold a Public Hearing at the Civic Center, 6000 Middlebelt Road, Garden City, Michigan on December 18, 2006 at 7:25 p.m. regarding the proposed use of Community Development Block Grant Funds. The following projects are being proposed for the use of these federal funds for the period beginning July 1, 2007:

OBJECTIVES:

- To provide the benefits of using CDBG funding directly to persons of low and moderate income and/or areas where 51 percent of the residents are of low and moderate income.
- To reduce negative environmental impacts.
- To maintain a high level of performance in the management of CDBG and non-federally funded programs, while offsetting administrative costs to the General Fund.
- To improve public facilities.

ESTIMATED ALLOCATION	POTENTIAL PROJECTS
\$50,000	City-wide Housing Rehabilitation
\$5,000	City Park Playscape - ADA Compliance
\$23,660	City Buildings - ADA Compliance
\$25,000	Improvements to Senior Center (Maplewood)
\$27,740	Public Service Activity (Funding for Senior Center Coordinator; 19% of Total Allocation)
\$7,300	CDBG Administration
\$7,300	CDBG Planning
	(Administration and Planning combined must not exceed 10% of Total Allocation)
\$146,000	Total Proposed Allocation (Estimate)

The Following Items are contingent upon the availability of funds and may vary depending upon:

- The availability of County-wide funds.
- The re-payment of previous housing rehabilitation loans through lieh captures.

\$30,000	City-wide Housing Rehabilitation
\$5,000	City Park Playscape - ADA Compliance
\$181,000	Possible Total Allocation (Estimate)

Everyone is encouraged to provide input regarding the allocations of the CDBG program. All documentation regarding the CDBG program is available at the Community Development Dept. 6000 Middlebelt Road, Garden City, Michigan 48135. (734) 793.1663.

ALLYSON M. BETTIS
Treasurer/City Clerk

Publish: December 3, 2006

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Breakfast Buffet @ 2:00AM	DJ with
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DJ with "Drop 'til yuh drop" dancing	

Reservations must be made on or before December 20, 2006 to qualify for the rates above. Bookings after this date will be charged at \$189.00 plus tax. PREPAYMENT IS REQUIRED ON ALL BOOKINGS.

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- FRISAT LS 11:30
- VAN WILDER 2: THE RISE OF TAJ (R) 12:55, 3:05, 5:15, 7:25, 9:35
- FRISAT LS 11:45
- DECK THE HALLS (PG) 11:05, 1:10, 3:15, 5:20, 7:25, 9:30
- FRISAT LS 11:35
- DEJA VU (PG-13) 11:05, 1:45, 4:25, 7:05, 9:45
- HAPPY FEET (PG) 11:40, 2:00, 4:20, 6:40, 9:00
- FRISAT LS 11:20
- CASINO ROYALE (PG-13) 12:40, 3:35, 6:30, 9:25
- SANTA CLAUSE 3: THE ESCAPE CLAUSE (G) 11:10, 1:15, 3:20, 5:25, 7:30, 9:35
- FRISAT LS 11:40

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Christmas play

Gethsemane Missionary Baptist Church in Westland has invited the public to a free Christmas play and dinner at 4 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 16, at the church, located at 29066 Eton.

For more information, call (734) 721-2557. Transportation may be provided upon request.

Pancake breakfast

There's a good chance Santa Claus will be on hand for a pancake breakfast, hosted by the Westland Jaycees, 8-10 a.m. Sunday, Dec. 10, at the Applebee's on Warren Road in Westland.

Tickets are \$6 for all-you-can eat pancakes, meat and juice. Proceeds will go to benefit various community projects, such as the Jaycees' annual Easter Egg Scramble and Spring Youth Dance.

To purchase tickets or for more information, call Jenn or Mike at (734) 437-6354.

Dining to Donate

Enjoy a meal that's filling and fulfilling Thursday, Dec. 14, at Applebee's Restaurant, Warren at Central City Parkway, in Westland.

Fliers are available to present that day to get 20 percent of the bill donated to the Westland Rotary. Participants also are asked to bring an unwrapped toy for the Salvation Army.

Christmas party

An unwrapped toy is the price of a ticket to the Westland Community Foundation's annual holiday event Tuesday, Dec. 12, in the media center of John Glenn High School.

The get-together will be 6-8 p.m. and feature classical holiday music performed by the John Glenn Singers and refreshments and hors d'oeuvres prepared by the culinary arts program at the William D. Ford Career Technical Center.

The toys will be given to the Salvation Army's Westland Corps.

John Glenn High School is on Marquette, west of Wayne Road. For more information, or to reserve a spot, call (734) 595-7727.

Hospital reunion

The 22nd annual holiday reunion of former Wayne County General Hospital's staff and retirees is scheduled for 5-9 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 5, at the Golden Corral restaurant, on Warren Road between Newburgh and Central City Parkway. The reunion will be held in a private dining room.

Anyone associated with the hospital is invited to attend. For more information, call Patricia Ibbotson at (734) 561-0177.

The hospital on Merriman Road closed in 1984, and the building was torn down in 2000. Many people have connections with the hospital or worked in the buildings on the grounds, including the Eloise Post Office, which closed in 1979, or the commissary, which is now used as a homeless shelter.

Got a cocktail?

Share a favorite non-alcoholic drink for a chance to win a gift certificate for stores at Westland Shopping Center.

The Southeast Michigan Community Alliance and Mothers Against Drunk Driving are looking for the tastiest holiday drinks to be featured at the Holiday Cocktail Mixer 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Friday, Dec. 8, at the mall's east court.

There will be first-, second- and third-place gift certificates awarded.

Drop off recipes at the mall Information Desk, e-mail them to Wendy Harless at wendyh@semca.org or mail them to 25363 Eureka, Taylor MI 48180. All entries must be received by Friday, Dec. 1.

For more information, visit www.semcaprevention.org.

Cookie Walk

The First United Methodist Church of Wayne will hold a Cookie Walk 9 a.m. to noon Saturday, Dec. 9, at the church, 3 Towne Square, across from the Wayne Post Office.

Featured will be specialty cookies, breads, pies and candies, all home made. Specialty orders also will be taken for pumpkin rolls - \$6 for a half roll and \$12 for a whole roll.

Prices are \$4 for a small container of cookies, \$8 for a medium container and \$12 for a large container. Candy will be sold by the pound.

For more information, call the church at (734) 721-4801.

Bowl with Santa

The Plymouth-Westland Grange 389 will host Bowling with Santa 1-3 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 10, at Town-N-Country Lanes at Wayne Road and Avondale in Westland.

The cost is \$7 per child and includes one game of bowling, shoes, hot dog and pop, present and a visit from Santa Claus. A portion of the proceeds will benefit Wildwood Elementary School and the Westland Goodfellow.

Tickets are available by sending a check, payable to Grange 389, to Bowl with Santa, 38015 Sherwood St., Westland, MI 48185, or by calling Jeffrey Goodfellow at (734) 722-8324.

Holiday music

The sounds of the season will echo through Westland Shopping Center with musical performances by local groups.

The five-piece Phil Gram All Stars will perform classic holiday music 6-8 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 5, 12 and 19, in the East Court, while 3 D's & W, a barbershop quartet, will perform throughout the mall 6-8 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 13 and 20, and Friday, Dec. 15 and 22.

Also performing will be Plymouth Baptist Church Choir 8-8:30 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 7, in the JC Penney Court, and Our Lay of Good Counsel Choir Group 11 a.m. to noon Friday, Dec. 15, also in the JC Penney Court.

Youngsters can stop by and see Santa 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. now through Saturday, Dec. 2, Dec. 4-9 and Dec. 11-14. Additional hours will be 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Dec. 10 and 17, 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. Dec. 15, 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. Dec. 16, 17 and 23 and 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Christmas Eve, Dec. 24.

With the holiday shopping season in full swing, the mall will be open a variety of hours during the month. It will be open 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. now through Thursday, Dec. 7. Other hours include 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Dec. 8 and 17, 9 a.m. to 10 p.m. Dec. 11-15, 8 a.m. to 11 p.m. Dec. 16, 18-23, and 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. Dec. 24.

The mall will be closed Christmas Day, but will re-open

8 a.m. to 9 p.m. Dec. 26. It will return to normal hours Dec. 27-30, then open 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Dec. 31 and Jan. 1.

Diabetes programs

The CVS Pharmacy at 31411 Cherry Hill, Westland, will offer a program on Managing Your Diabetes 3-6 p.m. today (Nov. 30).

Participants will learn how to control diabetes and manage their medications, as well as get tips on making healthy lifestyle choices. They also will have a chance to speak to an expert about diabetic supplies and get a free glucose screening.

For more information, call (734) 326-2990.

Food fest

Holiday Taste Fest, featuring food and drink from 19 vendors, mostly restaurants, will come to the Hellenic Cultural Center in Westland at 6 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 5.

Admission is \$20 per person for the event, sponsored by the Westland Chamber of Commerce.

The Hellenic Cultural Center is on Joy Road east of Newburgh.

Tickets may be bought 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. weekdays at chamber offices on Ford Road east of Newburgh. The event also will include entertainment.

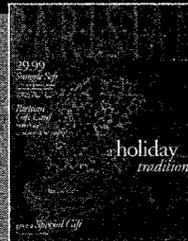
For more information, call the chamber at (734) 326-7222.

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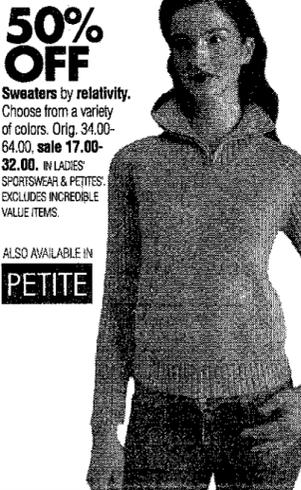
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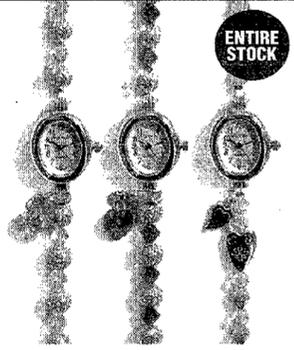
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'Bigs' needed for matches with 'Littles'

BY BRAD KADRICH
STAFF WRITER

When Laurie Lindblom worked for Val-Pak, her boss would regale her with tales of the adventures he had as a Big Brother with his "Little," a boy named Max, proud of the difference he made in Max's life.

When Lindblom's husband, Ken, died some nine weeks after being diagnosed with cancer, she remembered those tales and decided she wanted that for her son, Ross.

Imagine her surprise, then, when she approached Big Brothers Big Sisters of Metropolitan Detroit and was told, however politely, they wouldn't be able to help her because there were already too many boys on the waiting list.

Undeterred, Lindblom kept at it.

"They said very kindly, 'No way,' but I felt my situation was unique," said Lindblom, 42, who lives with Ross in Farmington. "My son's dad wasn't in prison, he didn't just walk out. My son's father had died. He didn't have a choice in it."

REACHING OUT

But here was the problem, and it's a big one for an organization which served some 1,200 kids last year alone: The waiting list is traditionally more than 100 names long. So Lindblom did what organization officials wish more people would do: She volunteered to help.

Lindblom now recruits mentors and handles fund-raising events for Big Brother Big Sisters. As a single mom, Lindblom doesn't have time to be a "Big," but she helps in other ways. It's not enough; the group, established in 1974 to help children in Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties, is still in need of more mentors, particularly men, to help the growing list of kids who need it.

"We served 1,200 children



Joanne Becker of Westland felt her son, Micah, needed a male role model and contacted Big Brothers Big Sisters of Metropolitan Detroit.

BILL BRESLER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

last year, and we're pacing at about 1,300 this year," said Raquel Thueme, president of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Metropolitan Detroit. "We have a lot of volunteers, so we're fortunate that way. But we can't keep up with the demand. Sometimes we can't match up the supply and demand."

Thueme said the demand is generally concentrated in urban areas like Detroit and Pontiac, but there is a need in all three counties served by Big Brother Big Sisters. More boys than girls are on the list, though there are plenty of both. The kids for whom the organization provides mentors hail from all different backgrounds and circumstances, Thueme said.

A FEW GOOD MEN

The group's waiting list for boys is longer, she pointed out, because traditionally more

women than men volunteer, creating a gap. Big Brother Big Sister doesn't match cross-gender volunteers; in its community-based mentoring, the program most commonly associated with Big Brothers Big Sisters, the group matches male "Bigs" with male "Littles," and women with female "Littles."

"Some of it is just family demographics," Thueme explained. "A lot of the 'Littles' are growing up in single-parent households. Many single-parent households are run by women, so if they're raising sons, they want to have a consistent male presence."

There really isn't much to being a "Big." The organization asks volunteers to be over 18, be able to drive, be a caring adult and be willing to be a friend to a child. They ask for a 12-month commitment, during which volunteers are asked to

consistently meet their "Littles" a couple times a month face-to-face.

Part of the problem is potential volunteers often think there's more to it than that.

"They don't need to be social workers, they don't need to be child development experts," Thueme said of mentors. "They just need to be a friend."

The enrollment process includes an application, face-to-face interview, personal references, series of background checks (including criminal and others) and a driving record check "because you'd be transporting a child," Thueme said.

"We look at all of those things when we assess a volunteer's suitability to be a mentor," she explained. "We do it to ensure the child's safety, and so we can understand a volunteer's interests, then use that information to match them with a child so they have a good

BEING A 'BIG'

- **What:** Big Brothers Big Sisters of Metro Detroit
- **Where:** Serves Oakland, Macomb and Wayne counties
- **Who:** More than 100 boys on waiting list; also girls who need mentors
- **How:** Criteria includes being over 18, being able to drive, being a caring adult, being a friend to a child and willing to make a 12-month commitment. Enrollment process includes an application, face-to-face interview, personal references, series of background checks (including criminal and others), and a driving record check because you'd be transporting a child.
- **Time:** A couple of times per month face-to-face; about four hours a month
- **Other ways:** Can't be a mentor? The group also needs people to work events and activities, holiday parties, fund-raising, etc.
- **Get involved:** Call (248) 569-0600

chance of having a good solid relationship.

"You're bringing two strangers together, often from very different backgrounds. That information is helpful in determining who might work well together."

COUPLES HELP

A relatively new phenomenon for Big Brothers Big Sisters is couple's mentoring, where a husband/wife team agree to mentor a little. Laurie Lindblom's son, Ross, is mentored by a Farmington couple, Chris and Melissa Smith.

"It's working out fabulously," Lindblom said. "Sometimes Chris just goes out in the yard with Ross and plays catch. They took him to his very first hockey game. They sat in the ninth or 10th row, and Ross thought it was awesome."

Alan and Vickie Coleman of Plymouth Township mentor a 14-year-old Westland boy, Micah Becker. When Big Brothers Big Sisters first approached Micah's mom, Joanne, about such an arrangement, Joanne hesitated, feeling a bit threatened and pointing out Micah didn't need a mother.

"That was tough at first," said Alan Coleman, who serves on the Board of Directors. "(But) I

think it's helpful (for Micah) to see our relationship as a couple. And Vickie absolutely loves Micah."

Lindblom has noticed benefits to her 8-year-old son, and she remembers listening to her boss talk about his relationship with his "Little," Max. Her boss got matched with Max when Max was 7 or 8, and recently helped him fill out college applications.

It's the kind of life-changing relationship Lindblom, who recruits for Big Brothers Big Sisters now, believes "Bigs" can have with their "Littles." She also said if more people could feel that feeling, recruiting would be much easier.

"(Potential mentors) don't realize how truly rewarding it is and, more importantly, they don't realize how easy it is," Lindblom said. "They match you geographically as well as by interests, so it's like signing up for a best friend who lives right next door."

"They don't realize the impact they can have on kids' lives," she added. "It changes your life, it changes their lives and it affects their future. (Mentors) will change the course of a young person's life, and for the better."

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BIG BROTHER

FROM PAGE A1

Now the Colemans wanted to make a similar impact on a young life. They submitted themselves to the screening process, which includes reference checks, a check of driving records and the like. Big Brothers Big Sisters matches adult volunteers ("Bigs") with children in need of mentoring ("Littles").

Matches are made, as much as possible, by geographic location and spheres of interest. In July 2004, the group put the Colemans with a then-12-year-old Westland boy, Micah Becker.

"Micah was on the waiting list for a 'Big,' and he lives in Westland, so it's convenient," Allen Coleman said.

Big Brothers asks mentors to have at least two face-to-face meetings per month, and the average time "Bigs" are asked to spend with "Littles" averages about four hours per month.

For Micah and the Colemans, the relationship has evolved to the point where Micah frequently spends weekends at the Coleman home in Plymouth Township.

While Micah and the Colemans are very close now, it wasn't always that way. "It was slow," Coleman admitted. "It takes a long time. It was pleasant enough, but we weren't really close. All of a sudden, we became close."

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

The turning point was a simple enough weekend, Coleman said. Micah hung out at their house, playing games, and then it was time for bed.

"We sent him to bed, tucked him in, gave him a hug," Coleman recalled. "It was more of an intimate weekend."

The relationship has grown since then. Earlier this year, as Micah prepared to start high school Coleman felt they weren't working hard enough on reading skills, which had troubled Micah earlier in his academic life. As



In addition to helping Micah Becker of Westland carve his Halloween pumpkins, Allen Coleman of Plymouth Township has helped the youngster improve his reading skills as part of his Big Brothers Big Sisters mentoring.

Allen and Micah prepared to play a game of back yard basketball, Micah, who at 14 stands 5-10 and wears a size 14 shoe, suggested he get to pick the pizza for dinner if he won.

"He basically told me, 'You're not going to win,'" Coleman recalled, smiling. "I said, 'But if I do, what do I get?'"

The decision was if Coleman won, Micah had to read an extra chapter in the book they were reading. Coleman won the game. The extra time reading helped Coleman as much as Micah, because Coleman felt he needed to step up his mentoring.

"It was just a few months ago I decided I wasn't doing what I needed to do as a Big Brother," Coleman said. "So we took it to the next level, and that's when we got into the reading. I'm starting to get more involved in that aspect of his life."

That's OK with Micah's mom, Joanne Becker, who has been a single mother all of Micah's life. Micah's father, serving in the U.S. Army, chose to walk away from his son's life. Like many single mothers, Joanne Becker felt her son needed a male role model.

"Micah was at that age where you just knew he needed a male role model, so I decided to see if (Big Brothers) could help put

handy as Micah moved into his teen years, a time when boys can become rebellious.

"Even now, I call Allen, because Micah will listen to Allen," Becker said. "As a boy they think, 'That's just my mom.' With Allen, (Micah) listens because he's the role model. Sometimes boys think mom's are pushovers. But Allen has gone way above and beyond the call of duty."

The Colemans decided to do the mentoring thing as a couple, something Big Brothers and Big Sisters is promoting more and more. At first, the couple looked for a brother/sister combination to mentor, but none were available.

"We both wanted to be involved," Vickie Coleman said. "We want to help children, and this is something we can do as a couple to help us grow, help us enhance our relationship."

At first, Joanne Becker resisted, figuring Micah didn't need a mother. But the Colemans, who have been married 20 years, pressed on, figuring it would do Micah good "to see our relationship as a couple," Allen said.

Eventually, the couple won over Micah's mom, and now Joanne Becker is completely

comfortable with all aspects of the relationship.

"I was kind of hesitant because I never had to share my son with anyone," Becker said. "Then I found out they go to my church, they share the same values. Allen and Vickie are absolutely wonderful people. I couldn't ask for two better people to be in his life. From the first year, they started doing things with Micah, and you could see having that male role model was helping a lot."

For their part, the Colemans feel the same way. Although Big Brothers only asks for an average of some four hours a month, the Colemans spend more time than that with Micah. While the time commitment is something that seems to scare many potential volunteers away, Coleman said the opposite is actually the case.

"People wonder how much time it takes," Coleman said. "But once you develop the relationship, you actually find yourself thinking, 'I really miss him when I can't see him.'"

Micah and the Colemans see each other frequently, with Micah spending some nights and some weekends at the Coleman home. When they aren't seeing each other, they talk on the phone a couple of times a week.

Coleman said only geography will ever separate them.

"We'll be together for life," Allen Coleman said. "Even if we're somehow separated, we'll be friends forever. That's how it works. Sometimes, a match ends. I can't imagine our relationship ending."

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some influence in his life," said Becker, who works at Complete Infusion in Livonia. "There's only so much a mom can give to her son. Allen has helped him deal with some emotions. Allen can reflect on some things when he was a child, and Micah knows it's OK for him to feel some things."

SOMEONE TO EMULATE

Joanne Becker figured the male role model would come in

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Car theft suspect to face charges in holdups

A 24-year-old Westland man, arrested by Canton police Wednesday on a car theft charge, will also face charges in several armed robberies including a Nov. 7 purse-snatching at gunpoint outside the Meijer store on Middlebelt.

In that incident, a woman was approached by a man wearing a ski mask, who pointed a gun, grabbed her purse and ran to a Ford Taurus for his getaway.

A Taurus had been reported at as many as a half-dozen robberies of parking lot attendants in Detroit and the holdup in Livonia - but often the car had different license plates on it, according to Lt. Greg Winn of the Livonia Police Department. He said police believe several

stolen license plate reports could be attributed to the suspect.

The arrest in Canton came in the parking lot of Basketball Planet, police reported, and followed the theft of a cell phone and set of keys from a backpack during the day Tuesday.

The suspect, who apparently had been playing basketball, apparently stole the car, but left behind a Taurus in the lot. Police kept watch and arrested the man when he returned at 1:30 a.m. the next morning to claim the vehicle.

In the car, they found a pellet gun and license plate stolen from Livonia two weeks after the Nov. 7 robbery.

By Dave Varga

Shopping day at IKEA benefits First Step

First Step, Western Wayne County's only agency providing comprehensive services to support victims of domestic and sexual violence, will benefit from an all-day shopping event Sunday, Dec. 10, hosted by IKEA in Canton.

The event will feature discounted shopping, food, fun, and entertainment. Tickets for the event cost \$25 and provide participants with the chance to save 15 percent on in-store purchases (limited to one check-out transaction per person) between 10 a.m. and 9 p.m. Food and live entertainment will be available 7-9 p.m.

"As a new member of this community, we are pleased to have the chance to support a local organization doing outstanding work," said Mark McCaslin, IKEA store manager. "During the holiday season, people look for opportunities

to help others. This event provides the chance to reach out to others while getting shopping done.

"We realize that, for some families dealing with domestic violence, holidays are especially difficult," McCaslin said. "For those who are living in the First Step shelter for the holidays and for all those touched by their programs, we gladly offer our support and encourage our customers and neighbors to attend this event."

One hundred percent of the proceeds from the event will be donated to First Step. The donations will be used to help First Step to provide essential services free of charge to clients.

Founded in 1978, First Step is a Wayne County-based service whose mission is to reduce the incidence of domestic and sexual violence and to provide

services to individuals affected by these crimes.

First Step offers shelter, 24-hour assault response, a 24-hour hotline, food, clothing, transportation, legal information, legal clinics, court accompaniment, parenting education, community education/prevention programs, group counseling, individual counseling, transitional supportive housing, aftercare, housing assistance, children's counseling, children's art therapy programs, information and referral.

Last year, more than 6,500 people were helped by First Step.

To purchase tickets or to request more information, visit the First Step Web site at www.firststep-mi.org or call (734) 416-1111. The First Step's 24-hour help line is (734) 459-5900.

DEATHS

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| A
Rickey Sean Arquette
Arquette, 32, of Westland, died Nov. 28. | K
Marian Virginia (Tuck) Koebnick
Koebnick, 87, formerly of Plymouth, died Nov. 28. | R
Margaret Eleanor Reno Rainey
Rainey, 89, of Birmingham, died. |
| D
James D. Deneau
Deneau, 86, of Franklin, died Nov. 30. | M
Norman McClure
McClure, 87, of Rochester, died Nov. 28. | S
Martha E. Saylor
Saylor, 82, died. |
| F
Col. Leroy Clark Felton
Felton, 87, formerly of Rochester, died Nov. 27. | P
John A. McHugh Sr.
McHugh, 78, of Wayne, died Dec. 1. | Complete paid obituaries can be found inside today's newspaper in Passages on page C4. |
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Parade shows us something for which we can be thankful

Actually, I don't love a parade. That is, until I went to the Detroit Thanksgiving Day parade downtown. It was the first time in 25 years I had seen the parade in person. The last time I saw it, I was in it. I worked for Blue Cross at the time and I walked with our team, taking pictures for the company magazine.



Greg Kowalski

It was cold, gray and miserable, which is pretty much what I expected for a November day in Michigan. And that particular parade was dimly lit and dreary.

This Thanksgiving Day parade could not have been more different. The weather was superb, chilly but not at all uncomfortable. But it wasn't the weather that warmed my heart as I sat alongside Woodward Avenue. It was the hundreds of thousands of people who sat next to me.

There were people everywhere. The sidewalks were crowded, the parking structure by Second City was filled with people at all levels overlooking the street. The whole area was jammed.

The parade itself was delightful. There was an assortment of creative floats and I was pleased to see the familiar maroon uniforms of the Seaholm Dance Team, which took part in the parade for the first time this year.

Looking down Woodward toward downtown, the floats, balloons, crowds and even the street itself drifted into a mist of fine haze and glowing sunlight that enveloped the cityscape. It was an almost surrealistic scene.

It is something I will never forget in what's left of my life. (I just had another birthday.)

That morning, all of downtown was brimming with life.

Much has been written about the need to revitalize downtown Detroit. In fact, much already has been done to accomplish that. New developments are going up all around the downtown area. In some cases, neighborhoods are changing from week to week as decayed buildings are torn down and new developments go up.

I've had occasion to spend a fair amount of time in the downtown area in the past year

for some projects I have been working on. Surely, there are a lot of rough edges there, but I have come to see that Detroit really isn't dying, as I once thought it was.

And so many people still do. Living south of Eight Mile myself, I constantly encounter the perception that (1) I must be crazy to live there; (2) I am certainly going to be robbed and murdered; and (3) the town is filled with (horrors!) black people.

Yes, my friends, people have said exactly that to me. Well, not exactly. They generally don't say "black people."

I might be crazy, but I don't think that has anything to do with where I live. I'll take my chances on the robbery and murder part and I am glad to share my neighborhood with black people as well as anyone else who cares about their community.

What I saw at the Thanksgiving Day parade was something to be genuinely thankful for: All kinds of people of many sizes, ages, shapes and colors were having fun together.

They saw past the perception that so many of us have of Detroit.

A few weeks ago, we welcomed to our offices in Birmingham representatives of a new group called One D: Transforming Regional Detroit, a consortium of high-level organizations including New Detroit and Detroit Renaissance, among others, which has been formed to address the city's many problems from a regional perspective.

Following that meeting, I sent a rather long e-mail to one of the people in the group outlining a perspective of what they are facing from someone who deals with urban issues on a daily basis.

My point is that the answers to Detroit's problems can only be found on the streets of Detroit. Realistic resolutions will not be generated in corporate board rooms or news rooms in Birmingham.

But from what I saw from ground level on Woodward Thanksgiving Day, I would say One D has a fighting chance to accomplish something good.

Greg Kowalski is editor of the *Birmingham Eccentric*. He can be reached at (248) 901-2570 or by e-mail at gkowskial@hometownlife.com.

Choose hope in the face of hardship to aid our great state

Jennifer Granholm will be the governor of the state of Michigan for four more years. The race was close. But in the end, Michigan voters blamed the failed economy on Washington and not on Lansing. If the Big Three are failing and Michigan's economy is the worst in the nation, it is part of a larger problem tied to the economy of the entire nation.



Rabbi Tamara Kolton

I, for one, am very relieved that Gov. Granholm was re-elected. But I am not naive. Gov. Granholm has a tremendous amount of work to do.

Recently, I had lunch with the governor. Along with about 20 other women, we gathered together to speak to her about what we felt were the top priority issues on the minds of women voters. In the last two weeks of what was turning out to be a close election, the governor was interested in hearing what was on the minds of women leaders in the community. I was honored and excited to speak and listen to key issues facing Michigan.

Gov. Granholm sat informally, poised on the hearth of a fireplace, listening to women speak. One woman spoke about the need to support women who head their households. These women must work and take care of their children often with little or no support. Another discussed the need to increase elder care. Yet another brought up the concern of trans-fat poisoning our children's food. The issues swarmed the room. Gov. Granholm assured us that they were all on her agenda. From health care to environmental care, she would tend to them all.

It was almost my turn to address her. What did I want to say? What would be my unique contribution to this conversation? I wanted my words to have impact. I did indeed have many concerns. I was concerned about poverty and the many families that will be facing hunger this year. I was concerned about drug use and child molestation, both of which Michigan rates amongst the highest in the nation. I was there as a rabbi. I decided to talk about healing.

As Jews, we believe that we are born into a broken world and that it is our responsibility to heal the world. We call this Tikkun Olam. Certainly Michigan is in a state of brokenness. It used to be that the country saw the city of Detroit as broken, but now the nation sees the entire state of Michigan as broken. Michigan now has a national reputation of a wounded animal. The problem is that no one wants to go near, let alone relocate their family near, a wounded animal.

The most important thing that we need to do as a state is to begin to behave as a healthy and strong animal. We are not victims. We are a

strong and beautiful state. As Jews, we believe that we are born into a broken world and that it is our responsibility to heal the world. We call this Tikkun Olam. Certainly Michigan is in a state of brokenness. It used to be that the country saw the city of Detroit as broken, but now the nation sees the entire state of Michigan as broken.

Above all, we have this incredible natural resource of fresh water and we can be givers. What we need is one big idea to create a momentum of healing, to give the giant boulder the first big shove in the right direction. Let us pair with a country in the world that needs water. Let us donate money and expertise to nurture a village in need of a water project. In many places in the world, girls under the age of 13 spend most of the day fetching fresh water for their families. They walk long distances with the greatest threat to them being not heat or disease, but rape.

Michigan can rebuild its image and help these villages at the same time. Let us be "The Fresh Water State Bringing Water to the World." I know it is not in our state budget. Maybe a donor would step forward? It is a great project for a great philanthropist or cooperative who cares deeply about our state and the state of our world.

Let us behave as a strong and healthy animal. Not the broken one. Not the victim. Not the wounded animal. But the beautiful and great state of Michigan.

In Judaism, we believe that no matter how bad you have it, you have to give Tzedaka. Even if you take Tzedaka, you have to give Tzedaka. Through the process of giving back, you affirm your dignity.

Jennifer Granholm has another four years. Let us stand behind her and our great state of Michigan. We are not victims. We are not wounded animals. We are living in a beautiful state with many opportunities.

Optimism is a choice. Choosing to affirm hope does not mean that you are naive or Pollyanna. It can mean that you are a realist. No one wants to board a sinking ship. If everyone in the nation believes that Michigan is going down, no one will climb aboard. We need a major image overhaul. We are not dying in hard times out here in the Midwest. We are living through hard times. There is light at the end of the tunnel. It is the light of good leadership, human ingenuity and citizens who choose hope.

Rabbi Tamara Kolton is the rabbi at The Birmingham Temple, located in Farmington Hills.

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Governor calls new tax plan a win-win for state

BY ALEX LUNDBERG
STAFF WRITER

Because voters wanted to revamp the way the state taxes business, the governor's office has announced a new plan which will change the dynamics of the tax structure while providing the same level of funding for state programs.

The Michigan Business Tax is Gov. Jennifer Granholm's replacement for the Single Business Tax set to sunset in the autumn of 2007.

The MBT, if approved, will

generate revenue by a tax gross receipts, assets which will be taxed at 0.125 percent and business income which will be taxed at 1.85 percent. Gov. Granholm said the new tax fills the bill.

The bill also changes the apportionment formula. Under the Granholm proposal, the MBT will be based 100 percent on a firm's percentage of Michigan sales, compared to the SBT which is based 92.5 percent on sales and 3.75 percent on payroll and property. The governor's office estimates

that Michigan businesses will receive a \$150 million tax cut.

Industrial and commercial businesses will receive a 46 percent personal property tax cut.

The new tax would eliminate the tax on payroll, benefits and health care.

Businesses with less than \$350,000 in gross receipts are not subject to taxation. The MBT would be phased in for businesses earning between \$350,000 and \$750,000.

Technology companies would receive a \$125 million tax cut.

Some businesses will see tax increases. Taxes would increase for insurance companies, banks and investment firms. Insurers will pay a tax of 1.25 percent instead of the current 1.07 percent and credits would be eliminated.

"The Michigan Business Tax is win-win," she said in a press release. "It's a competitive, pro-growth tax that will benefit more than three-fourths of businesses while protecting



Gov. Jennifer Granholm delivers her State of State address to the Legislature.

funding for critical programs."

The SBT was unpopular with business owners because it essentially created a kind of value added tax. The SBT was originally considered to be groundbreaking when first launched in the '70s but almost everyone agrees it had outlived its usefulness.

While Gov. Granholm and others in state government were amenable to seeing the tax changed, she was concerned that the revenues it generated, nearly \$2 billion,



Oakland County Executive L. Brooks Patterson.

were replaced.

The SBT's annual revenues represented about 22 percent of the state's revenues, or the equivalent of everything the state spent on higher education or corrections.

Oakland County Executive L. Brooks Patterson agitated for a repeal of the SBT in his 2006 State of the County Address and spearheaded a successful ballot initiative to get rid of it before its scheduled sunset in 2009. He said the tax represented a disincentive for businesses to locate or expand in Michigan.

Patterson didn't specify what should be done to replace the revenues. He did-

n't even specify that all of the revenues should be replaced in a new tax structure. He said less than the full amount, by several hundred million dollars, could be replaced and the rest of the funds could be raised by attracting new businesses to the state. He called the difference in funds "room to grow."

He said while parts of the Granholm proposal are good ideas, there's a poison pill in the mix.

"The asset tax would rival the SBT as a disincentive to do business in Michigan," Patterson said. "The financial sector in Oakland County is one of our fastest growing areas and this would kill that business. There's \$34 billion in assets that would be taxable."

Based on that, he said the new tax is dead on arrival if it retains the asset tax provisions. He said it would change.

"I think the legislation will take parts of the plan and some suggestion from some chambers of commerce and craft a better plan," Patterson said. "But it's not going to fly the way it is."

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Suburban Detroit - A new free report has recently been released that reveals an amazing new medical breakthrough that has proven 86% successful treating debilitating back pain. Even with multiple herniated discs. Find out how space travel solved astronauts back pain and how this accidental discovery has let to the most promising back pain treatment today. For your free report entitled, "How Space Age Technology Is Solving Back Pain Without Drugs Or Surgery!" call 1-800-469-3618 and listen to the toll-free 24 hr. recorded message for all the details. If phone lines are busy, visit: www.midischerniation.com

OE06485117

Schoolcraft College board acts to fill vacancy

The Schoolcraft College Trustee Kevin McNamara has resigned his position on the board effective Dec. 31. In January McNamara will become assume his position as on the Wayne County Commission.

The Schoolcraft College Board of Trustees is now taking applications to fill McNamara's position. The deadline for filing is 4 p.m., Monday, Dec. 11. Applications are available from the Office of the President, Room 190, Administration Center, at Schoolcraft College's campus in Livonia between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m.

The Board will interview candidates Dec. 16, and the new board member will be seated at the board's Jan. 24, 2007 meeting. The term for this appointment covers the period of Jan. 1, 2007 through June 30, 2007.

The person chosen and any others who may be interested in being elected for a full six-year term on May 8, 2007, must file nominating petitions by 4 p.m., Feb. 13, 2007, with the Livonia City Clerk's Office. In order to be considered for appointment candidates must be willing to run for the office in the May 8 election.

To be considered a candidate for the position, an applicant must be a registered voter and a resident of the Schoolcraft College district, which includes Plymouth-Canton, Garden City, Livonia, Northville, Clarenceville and part of the Novi school districts. The seven-member board meets once a month, with members serving six-year terms.

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



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At Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan and Blue Care Network, we dedicate ourselves every day to honoring our nonprofit heritage and commitment to Michigan. We also commit ourselves to providing affordable health benefit solutions that meet the needs of our customers, information and assistance to meet the needs of our members and innovations to improve service and reduce cost.

As we welcome Jeanne Carlson as the new President and CEO of Blue Care Network, we look forward with excitement to playing a more prominent role in your community. As we go forward, you have our commitment that we will approach our business with the integrity you demand, the service you expect and the commitment we all share to improving health care for everyone.

Daniel J. Loepp

Daniel J. Loepp
President & CEO
Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan

Jeanne Carlson

Jeanne Carlson
President & CEO
Blue Care Network

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