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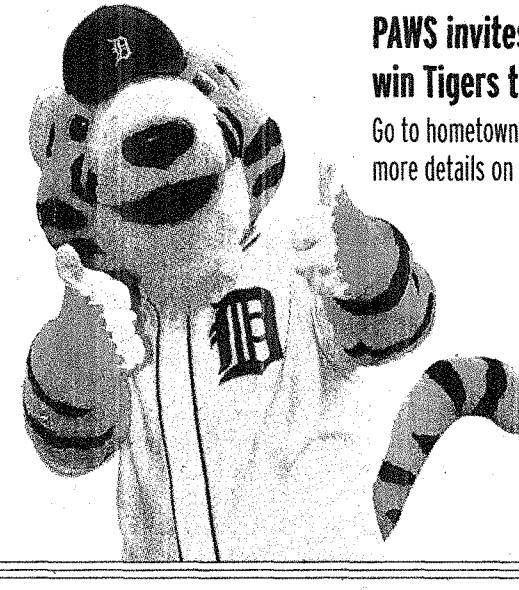
Community garden to bloom, A5

WESTLAND OBSERVER

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AROUND TOWN

Movie nights

Each Friday night through April, the Westland library is hosting a screening of Academy Award nominated movies.

At 7 p.m. Friday, the featured film will be *The Blind Side* which earned Sandra Bullock a Best Actress Oscar. It's the story of Michael Oher, a homeless and traumatized boy who became an All-American football player and first round NFL draft pick with the help of a caring woman and her family. The film is rated PG-13.

No registration is required and the screening is free. Movie Night is an after hours program. The library doors will open at 6:30 p.m. for the movie.

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

Signup time

Youth softball registration for the Dads Athletic Club of Westland's 2010 Summer Season is under way. Sign up:

• 5-8 p.m. today (Thursday) at the Bailey Recreation Center, 36651 Ford, in the civic center complex.

• 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturdays, March 27 and April 3, 10 and 17, at the Dorsey Community Center, 32715 Dorsey, east of Venoy.

• 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, April 7, at Sts. Simon and Jude Catholic Church, 32500 Palmer, east of Venoy.

For more information, call Sandy Lay at (734) 722-8442 or Bud Prough at (734) 595-2951.

Pasta dinner

The monthly spaghetti dinner at the Dyer Senior Center in Westland will be 4-7 p.m. Friday, March 26. Enjoy spaghetti, salad and dessert, as well as entertainment, for just \$6.

The center also has pinochle and euchre games at 1 p.m. Wednesdays and pinochle is played at 1 p.m. Fridays.

The Dyer Center is at 36745 Marquette, east of Newburgh, in Westland. For more information, call (734) 419-2020.

Relay for Life

Westland's 10th annual Relay for Life American Cancer Society 24-hour fund-raiser will be held starting at 10 a.m. Saturday, May 22, at Jaycee Park.

Teams interested in publicizing their fund-raising events can send the information to lrogers@hometownlife.com. Make sure to include the name of a contact person and telephone number.

BY LEANNE ROGERS
OBSERVER STAFF WRITER

As local government and schools try to find ways to share services and have cooperative programs, Westland and Wayne-Westland Community Schools have hit a trifecta.

The council recently approved an agreement with the schools to have students in the Construction Technology Program at the William D. Ford Vocational/Technical Center construct a new home. The \$75,000

construction costs will be paid through the federal Neighborhood Stabilization Program.

"This is the first time for this kind of joint effort," said Ginny Kowalski, Ford Center principal.

"I'm very excited about it. They'll start working on it in the fall and it will be completed in June," said Westland Community Development Director Joanne Inglis.

Westland obtained a vacant foreclosed home at 31669 Birchwood for \$1 through a federal Department of Housing and Urban Development

program.

"We thought they could rehabilitate the home, but it turned out there was too much damage," said Inglis. "The home on the property was demolished."

It took the right property for the partnership between the schools and the city. Most of the blighted, vacant or foreclosed homes Westland has obtained have been in Norwayne and are being demolished with no immediate plans for redevelopment.

"We are holding those properties for later new construction and one of

our goals is to reduce the population density in Norwayne," said Inglis.

Other properties Westland has obtained were in the southeast section of the city but in areas that are part of the Inkster School District, Inglis said. This now vacant parcel on Birchwood is located just west of Merriman and south of Cherry Hill.

"This neighborhood doesn't have the density issue. We've only acquired one house in this neighborhood," said Inglis. "And the

Please see **BUILD, A2**

Seniors pack it up for Kindergarten Roundup

BY SUE MASON
OBSERVER STAFF WRITER

Ruth Torok started her morning unzipping backpacks, but within a half hour she was reversing the process.

"It's organized very well around here, people sign up real good for things like this," said the Westland resident, watching a line of senior citizens work their way along tables, stuffing school supplies into the backpacks.

Torok was among 64 seniors who gathered at the Dyer Senior Center Tuesday morning to fill the backpacks destined for Kindergarten Roundup at 11 Wayne-Westland schools next month.

"We have 1,200 bags to fill," said Sally Perkins, executive director of elementary education.

Working from projections, the filled backpacks were placed in lots of 20 into bags and labeled for the different elementaries. According to Perkins, the amount of backpacks is tied to a projected number of kindergartners for 2010-II.

"We want more students, but this is what we're looking at," she said.

Seniors at the Dyer Center have been helping assemble the bags for about eight years. This year's backpacks contain glue sticks, crayons, books like *Kissing Hand* and *Mother Goose* to read, ABC and number charts and a welcome message from the district.

Please see **PACK, A2**



Elaine Pollock, Marcy Borso, Shirley Baumann and Dolores Sotell work on the 'assembly line,' filling backpacks that will be given to youngsters at next month's Kindergarten Roundup.

Teen hears tough talk from Community Team members

BY LEANNE ROGERS
OBSERVER STAFF WRITER

Expelled from Adams Middle School for his part in an attack on another youth, Mark, 14, had to meet with a group of community members to talk about what happened, how he can change his life and make amends to the community.

Appearing before the Community Team, Mark, whose last name isn't being used, gave his version of the incident: He was at a friend's home and joined the friend with a group of others heading out for a fight with a Garden City youth. The group, including Mark's older brother, were videotaped on school property, kicking the youth after he was knocked to the ground.

It was just a group of friends, said Mark, insisting he didn't have an

affiliation with a gang and never saw a gun although it was evident in the video. He didn't know the youth who was assaulted, but went along to support his friend, Mark said.

"This was a gang fight. One guy was beaten by six or seven guys, and there was a gun," said Westland police Officer Dan Serrano, who is assigned to Westland John Glenn High School and is a Community Team member. "It's not a clique, it's a gang."

"You're lying. You keep saying you're not affiliated with gangs but you say your friends are. Looking in, we'd all consider you a gang member," said Community Team member Brookellen Swope, Westland Chamber of Commerce president. "You went with them when the phone rang."

Mark had gone through the

Westland Youth Assistance Program before his behavior escalated to his current expulsion and status on probation.

"I tried to predict what would happen after our program, if you didn't clean up your act," said Westland Youth Assistance Director Paul Motz. "You'd end up on probation and be removed from your home. I predicted you'd end up here and here we are. If you're not up front, you keep withholding information and trying to live this life, you'll be removed from your home."

In five years, Mark said he sees himself at home, not on probation, not going to fights and having cut off contact with what he characterized as his worse friends.

"I was smoking weed (marijuana) and quit so I wouldn't drop dirty (urine samples). I'm not going to go

off and smoke again. All my (drug) screens will be clean," said Mark.

He spends his days reading and answering questions as part of his home schooling, but said he would like to return to school, adding he didn't get into trouble there. Since he was expelled from the Wayne-Westland Community Schools after challenging the discipline, Mark can't apply to be admitted to a different school for an entire school year. Had his parents withdrawn him from school voluntarily, Mark would have been allowed to apply for admission in another school district, if it would accept him.

"You didn't just wake up and get expelled. You worked up to it and to being on probation," said Motz, after it was pointed out that Mark had

Please see **TOUGH, A2**

City takes over streets in 3 projects

BY LEANNE ROGERS
OBSERVER STAFF WRITER

The credit crunch has taken a toll in a lot of areas, including projects that were stopped without being completed when the funding dried up.

Westland has accepted rights of way for streets in three residential developments which the city has been maintaining since the developers left the projects uncompleted.

The council recently voted to officially take responsibility for the streets in the Covington West Subdivision, the North Creek Estates and Golfside Village condominiums.

"Pretty much we were already maintaining the roads. This won't change anything for residents — we had started maintaining, plowing, clearing the catch basins and street sweeping," said Department of Public Services Director Kevin Buford. "Now the streets will go for Act 51 funding."

These are the first of 11 unfinished developments in the city which Westland is in the process of officially taking over the streets. In response to the situation, Mayor William Wild had appointed a committee to work on getting the streets dedicated to the city.

"These developments were started in the last five years

for the most part. Each of these developments is a direct reflection of the tough financial times in the market," said Buford. "The developers were not able to get funding."

The developer of North Creek Estates contacted the city to report the project couldn't be completed, Buford said, but that is an exception.

"Some developers have gone under or aren't around. That's why the streets were never dedicated to the city," he said. "We have to respond to what happened in some areas. The residents shouldn't be held hostage because of the developer."

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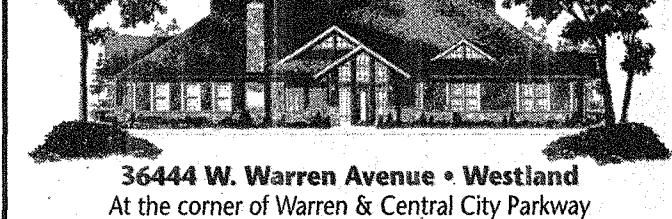
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PACK

FROM PAGE A1

"The parents love them because it contains information for them to work with their children over the summer," said Perkins.

For seniors, the assembly line job offers them a chance to socialize and enjoy a light breakfast and lunch. For Eleanor Walsh, it was a chance to give back to the community.

"It's going a little slow, the zippers are harder than you think," she said.

Walsh and daughter Eleanor Addison were new to the backpack stuffing party. Sitting next to veterans like Ed Turner, they wiggle and tugged and zipped the bags closed, but not before checking to see that each on the 11 items were in the bag.

"We came because we belong here and we want to get involved," said Walsh, a Westland resident.

Torok came with her neighbor Marion Mosier who sees involvement in the center as a way to reconnect with her children's friends' parents from school.

"I enjoy coming, it's such a

great group," she said.

"I've known Ruth for years, we reconnected after I quit working," said Torok.

Chuck Heard said it was his wife, Katherine, who made him come to the center.

"She volunteered me," the Garden City residents said as he worked his way down the table filling two backpacks with goodies.

"Yes, I did. I twisted his arm," said Katherine Heard.

It was Chuck Heard's second year working filling the backpacks, while his wife has been doing it for three-four years.

"I love it," said Katherine. "I love the people. I love doing something for other people."

Mary Loughlin of Westland viewed the work as a form of exercise.

"It's fun," she said. "You do a little walking, it's good for the knees."

Even Dyer Center Director Mary Browne pitched in to help.

"Sixty-four people signed up, and wanted to do it, but I thought we'd be tramping all over each other," she said. "But they're not. They're well organized."

"It's fun," she said. "You do a little walking, it's good for the knees."

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AROUND WESTLAND

Red Wing alumni

Tickets are now on sale to see the Red Wing Alumni take on the Westland Wild Wings 7 p.m. Saturday, April 10, at Mike Modano Arena. All proceeds from the event will go towards restoration of Central City Park.

Mayor William Wild will lace up his skates and join a team of city officials and residents to compete against members of the Detroit Red Wing Alumni Association.

Tickets for the game are \$10 for adults, \$5 for children and children 3 and under are free. The goal for this event is to raise \$20,000 to benefit the remediation of Central City Park.

For ticket information, call (734) 722-7620.

Belly dance class

Learn the intriguing art of belly dance at the Bailey Recreation Center 7:30-8:30 p.m. Wednesdays in an eight-week course that begins Wednesday, March 31.

Students will get a muscle-toning workout perfect for any fitness level. No experience necessary. Wear comfortable, form fitting clothes and bring a bottle of water. Optional coin scarves will be available in class.

The cost is \$50 for residents, \$55 for non-residents. Call (734) 722-7620 or stop by the Bailey Recreation Center 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. daily to register.

Open House

Gaudior Academy will hold an open house for students in pre-K-eighth-grade 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. today (March 25) and noon to 4 p.m. Saturday, March 27. There also will be a kindergarten open house noon-1 p.m. Saturday.

The school is located at 27100 Avondale Inkster. For more information, call (313) 792-9444.

Toy-Collectible Show

Head to the Hellenic Cultural Center, 36375 Joy, between Wayne Road and Newburgh, Westland, 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Sunday, April 11, for a Toy and collectible show.

There will be pop culture, TV/movie items, games, comics, action figures, non-sport cards, new and antiques, hallmark, NASCAR, posters, Hot Wheels, video/music to buy, sell or trade. Win spendable money. Refreshments will be available.

Limited table space is available at \$35 per table or \$30, if paid by March 31. Three tables cost \$80.

Admission is \$2, kids under age 12 free. Early in at 9 a.m. is \$5. For more information, call Gary at (734) 525-3712.

Flower sale

The Wayne Ford Civic League will be selling Easter plants Friday-Sunday, April 2-4. Look for the plant sale at the 7-Eleven at 1826 S. Merriman, 31385 Joy and 8791 N. Wayne

Road, Mobil gas, 1810 S. Wayne Road and Sunoco, 37400 Ford.

The group also will sell Mothers Day hanging basket plants Saturday-Sunday, May 8-9.

Baby Shower

The Wayne-Westland Corps of the Salvation Army is holding a Community Baby Shower and Workshop for expectant or new moms 9:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. Friday, April 30, at the Salvation Army Center, 2300 Venoy, south of Palmer, Westland.

There will be food, prizes and gifts for all as well as a learning experience for moms and moms-to-be. To reserve a seat, call (734) 722-3660.

Gymnastics

Kids can learn to tumble, somersault and cartwheel at the next session of gymnastic classes at the Bailey Recreation Center beginning next week.

Kids will learn progressive skills that will encourage self-confidence and coordination. These classes provide fun in a friendly environment where children can learn to do gymnastic stunts safely.

The weekly classes range from toddlers with no experience who need a parent to accompany them to intermediate level youngsters. The cut-off age for the classes is 12.

For the cost and full schedule of the classes, call (734)

722-7620.

Road Rally

Kick out the jams at PsychSystems ACTS Annual Road Rally Friday, April 23. This year's theme is Detroit Rock City!

"There is always great excitement as teams of 4-6 people solve clues in a race around western Wayne County and eastern Washtenaw County," said event organizer, Dana Toth.

At the end of the evening the teams meet at the final destination where prizes are handed out to the winning teams. This is PsychSystems ACTS main event to raise much needed financial aid for local organizations that support people with developmental disabilities, including AUTISM SPEAKS, Friends of CLS, The Wayne Center Christmas Fund and the Wayne County Autism Society. One hundred percent of all entry fees will go to the PsychSystems ACTS Charitable Fund.

The road rally begins at 4:30 p.m. at Goudy Park at the corner of Sims and Wayne Road, in Wayne.

The entry fee is only \$10 per person before April 1, or \$15 per person after April 1. People can register as a team or as an individual at www.psychsystems.com.

Mail entry forms to 35640 Michigan Ave., West, Wayne, MI 48184.



Former Westland council member Cheryl Graunstadt (left), DeArtriss Coleman-Richardson (second from left) of Inkster and Anastasia (Storm) Pavlicek of Livonia (right) were honored by Wayne County Commissioner Joan Gebhardt, D-Westland (second from right), during a Women's History Month celebration.

Graunstadt among Women's Month honorees from area

A former Westland council member has been honored for community service and environmental activism by the Wayne County Commission.

Cheryl Graunstadt, a sophomore at Livonia Churchill High School and a Cadet Master Sergeant in the Air Force junior ROTC Program, was recognized for volunteering with veterans and the American Red Cross.

Commissioner Joan Gebhardt, D-Westland, selected the three honorees from her district and presented each with a commemorative plaque at the VFW Hall in Lincoln Park.

"These are all three amazing women in their own right," Gebhardt said. "It's an honor for me to be standing here with them."

The ceremonial program was part of the commission's full board meeting agenda. Each commissioner honored at least one woman in his or her district in recognition of Women's History Month. March is designated at Women's History Month.

GARDEN CLIPPINGS

Gargae Sale

All are welcome to come and shop 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Thursday, April 8, at the garage sale at St. Dunstan Parish, 1515 Belton, south of Ford, Garden City.

Clothing, dishes, books, toys and more will fill the sale tables. There will be a \$2 bag sale in the final hour. The sale is a parish event, sponsored by the Rosary Altar Sodality. For more information, call (734) 425-6720.

Gardening day

Stop by Maxwell's Arts and Treasures at 12:30 p.m. Saturday, March 27, for the kids gardening program. Youngsters will learn about the importance of getting started early for the best growth, so don't come clean. There will be hands-on time with dirt.

For more information, call Sharon after 6 p.m. (734) 722-4857 or Maxwell's at (734) 427-5300, Ext. 7. Maxwell's is at 32416 Industrial, north of Ford.

A 'Beauty'

p.m. Saturday, March 27.

The multi-talented Davis first gained attention in 1987 when she became backup singer for the Detroit soul band, Lamont Zodiac and the Love Signs. Shortly after, the lead singer left the band and the name changed to The Chisel Brothers featuring Thorne Davis. Reynolds has been compared to John Lennon and Bob Dylan with Tom Petty underpinnings.

The concert is free of charge. Garden City Presbyterian Church is on Middlebelt, south of Ford. It stars Nick Collins as The Beast and Taylor Down as Belle, the Beauty.

Tickets

Tickets are \$10 for reserved seating and are available at the school. For more information, call (734) 762-8350.

Night Light

Wondering what to do during

spring break? Take your kids on a safari. The Maplewood

Community Center and Garden

City Library are sponsoring a

Safari Day 1-3 p.m. Thursday,

April 8, at the Maplewood

Community Center.

The safari fun begins when

children arrive. They'll receive a

passport to Africa which will be

stamped as they enter each into

adventure room - the animal

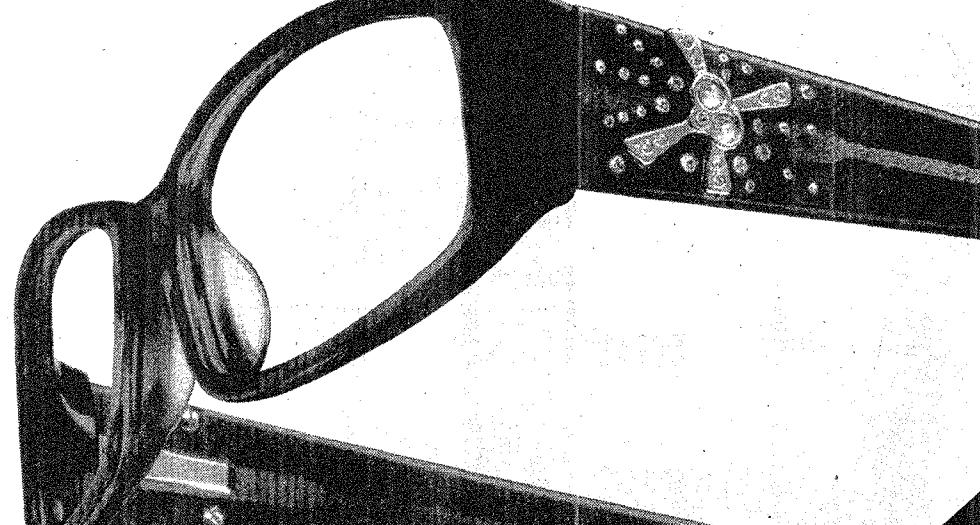
craft room, an obstacle course over crocodiles, dig in the sand to find insects. Try Toe fishing, play games and win prizes.

Little binoculars will be provided to each child to search for animals in the Jungle Room.

Pizza, salad and jungle cake will be served in the Zebra Cantina.

The cost is \$7.50 per child, ages 4-9. Sign up at the center on Maplewood west of Merriman. For more information, call (734) 793-1850.

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Police arrest homeless man for break-in on South Merriman

Home invasion

A man who described himself as homeless was arrested March 21 for breaking into a home in the 400 block of South Merriman. He is also facing charges of receiving stolen property and possessing narcotics paraphernalia.

Just after 6:30 p.m. police were called about a man who had broken into the rear of the home. An officer found a rear window broken and saw a man inside. The man was taken into custody after the officer entered through an unlocked front door.

Checking the home, the officer noted jewelry boxes in two separate bedrooms were open and jewelry scattered on the beds and floor. A crack pipe also was reported

WESTLAND

to have been recovered from the floor. The officer also reported finding a syringe in the suspect's pocket, along with jewelry and a flash drive.

A neighbor told police that he spotted the suspect as he jumped over the fence into the rear yard, then look into the garage windows before heading for the house. When he lost sight of the suspect, the neighbor left his yard to see what was happening. He said came across two other witnesses who reported the suspect had broken the window and entered the home.

The other two witnesses, both teenagers, told police

they were cutting through the nearby church parking lot after seeing the suspect. The pair said they walked back toward the rear yard after hearing glass breaking.

The suspect told police that he broke the window with a rock and entered the house because he was homeless and needed food. He also told the officers that he is a heroin user who had broken into other homes and stolen items a few times in the past.

Break-in

An estimated 100 feet of copper pipe, valued at \$1,000, was reported stolen from a vacant foreclosed home in the 1800 block of North Newburgh on March

19. A man who listed the home as his address told police someone had forced entry into the home, damaging the side door and lock. Once inside, the copper pipe was cut starting at the water heater and throughout the basement.

Retail fraud

A Brighton woman was arrested March 18 for shoplifting jewelry and clothing valued at \$380 from J.C. Penney, 35000 Warren Road. The woman was also facing an assault charge after fighting with store security as they attempted to detain her as she left the store.

An employee told the officer that the woman had

taken jewelry and several blouses into the dressing room but only two blouses were recovered after she left. The items were later located in her purse. The woman told police she was stealing to support a heroin habit.

Break-in

Police were called to a home in the 28000 block of Hanover March 16 after the owner reported finding someone had broken a lock on a window. Assorted tools and a stereo, valued at \$1,000, were reported missing. The man said that he has been working on the home so that he can move in. The break-in had occurred during the prior week, according to the man.

Vandalism

Police mailed a ticket to a Detroit for breaking three windows on a vehicle parked in the 27000 block of Ann Arbor March 19. A resident told police that the man, a former boyfriend, had stopped by and the two had argued. After she told him to leave, the woman said he walked to the end of the driveway and broke windows on the vehicle with an unknown object.

Both driver side windows and the rear window on the 1994 Ford station wagon were reported broken. The vehicle was owned by the woman's sister, who also lives at the address.

By LeAnne Rogers

Police: Drunken driving arrest 'difficult' due to suspect, others

Drunk driving

A Garden City police officer described a March 20 drunk driving incident as "unnecessarily difficult."

The police had to deal with a subject so drunk that he exposed himself and urinated all over the back seat of a police car, as well as party-goers who came out and interrupted the arrest process by asking questions, including why the police continued to activate their overhead lights.

The man who the police stopped in the 30200 block of Beechwood, east of Henry Ruff, said that he had several beers at Albert's on the Alley on Middlebelt prior to being stopped. The man was traveling at a high rate of speed on Beechwood and slammed on the brakes when he saw the police officer's lights.

He then went in reverse and collided with a Pontiac Sunfire that was

GARDEN CITY

parked in front of the Beechwood address.

He ran for the front door of the house, leaving his three passengers in his 2000 Chrysler Concorde.

Tackling the man to the ground, the police handcuffed him and allowed the three passengers to exit.

Conducting sobriety tests was complicated when the people at the house came out and interrupted the police officers who were able to get them back into the house.

The man registered a .19 blood alcohol level and was also arrested for having a suspended license.

Once inside the police station, the police gave him prisoner pants and marked both the man's clothes and the police car with a biohazard sign.

Stolen money

A 45-year-old Garden City woman said that someone stole almost \$1,600 from her purse when she went to visit an 88-year-old patient and friend from Redford Township who was in the cardiac care unit of Garden City Hospital, 6345 N. Inkster Road.

The woman said that she left her purse next to the patient's food plate about 6 p.m. March 20, when she went to visit another patient in the hospital. When she returned, she found that someone had removed the money from the purse.

Drunken driving

The police arrested a 58-year-old Westland woman for drunken driving in the parking lot of the Seven-11 at 29331 Warren Road March 20. They noticed that she was parked in two parking spaces

with her vehicle running and the brake lights on.

She swore at the officer who tried to question her and tell her to shut her car off. He reached inside her Chevy Cavalier window and turned it off himself.

She swore at the officer again and told him to take her to the police station where she would "buy her way out."

She registered a 2.0 blood alcohol level.

The woman said that she drank two pints of liquor.

Larceny

A thief left behind the wrench and screwdriver he used to break into a 1992 GMC pickup and steal the radio face plate about 8 a.m. March 20. The car was parked in the 30200 block of Bock Road.

• Someone broke into a 2007

Chevy Cavalier which was parked at Luna Apartments, 7040 Venoy, before 1 p.m. March 19. The dash board was ripped out and the DVD player and Blue Tooth were missing. The car was locked.

Vandalism

Someone defaced four panels of a white picket fence in the 31500 block of Block. The person wrote on four slats that he hates Garden City.

Retail fraud

The police were able to recover all the cosmetics and clothing that a 19-year-old Dearborn woman stole from the Kmart store at 29600 Ford about 7 p.m. March 20. She entered the store with her own bag which she filled with the items.

By Sue Buck

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Community Garden takes shape under loving hands, sunny spring skies

BY JULIE BROWN
OBSERVER STAFF WRITER

Ayodeji Akinpelu, 21, of Westland was doing some planting Saturday morning.

"I am planting Brussels sprouts," the Wayne State University environmental science senior said. "I planted cabbage. I will soon plant cauliflower."

He and others were planting seedlings for the Westland Community Garden at the Bailey Recreation Center. The day included a noontime walk to the nearby William P. Faust Public Library of Westland, and an afternoon art project.

Akinpelu is part of the city of Westland's Mission: Green effort.

"I just have a passion for the environment," he said. "I want to become an environmental scientist."

He's done such work since eighth-grade, and agreed it's good to provide food for local needy families, the plan for the community garden.

"Westland is a great city," he said. "Through Mission: Green, we're actually becoming a more sustainable city."

Working with him on planting was Kelly Lawrence of Westland, also this year's Westland Relay for Life chair, a fund-raiser for the American Cancer Society. Nearby at the Bailey Center was adult reference librarian Andy Schuck, an organizer.

"We are planting seedlings that will go into the new Westland Community Garden," Schuck said. The Action for Earth effort involves the city of Westland, DTE, Barson's Greenhouse, which is helping with plants, and Gleaners, which will receive the food grown in the garden.



CRAIG WELKENBACH

Sisters Liana Petroni, 5, (left) and Julia Petroni, 8, plant some seedlings during Saturday's Action for Earth event at Westland's Bailey Center. The fun continued with a walk to the nearby Westland library and an afternoon of artwork.

"Get fresh produce, something that's not been processed for too long," he said of the goal. "Get them started right out of the earth."

The program started with a partnership with the Ann Arbor Hands-On Museum and Project S.N.A.P., for Share, Nurture, Act and Preserve. It began in late January with a museum workshop at the Westland library.

The garden property, owned by DTE, is at Newburgh and Cherry Hill in Westland.

"They've done this in several other communities," Schuck said of DTE.

On Saturday afternoon, kids did environmental-themed art at the library.

"The Wayne-Westland

schools have been partners," Schuck said. "We expect close to 5,000 pieces of art that will be included into a 4-by-6-foot mural."

On Thursday, April 22, from 5:30-8 p.m. there will be an Earth Day groundbreaking with the opening of the Westland Community Garden. A concert featuring the Biakuye Percussion Ensemble will be held 7-8 p.m. that evening at the library, on Central City Parkway between Warren Road and Ford.

Saturday's event drew sisters Julia Petroni, 8, a third-grader at Webster Elementary, and Liana Petroni, 5, a Cass Elementary kindergartner. Parents Hyeyoung and Lawrence Petroni of Livonia were glad

to involve their daughters.

"I think it was very good to help the families and help the environment," said Julia, who planted cabbage, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts and broccoli.

"I like playing in the dirt and I like helping," said sister Liana. Dad said they'd like to start a garden at home, noting they had one before when the girls were too young to help.

"I think it'll be good for the girls," he said.

Schuck has been pleased with community response, noting 20 families, the goal for workshops, was surpassed. "It's great to have more than less," he said.

For information about the community garden, call Schuck at (734) 326-6123.

Madonna Gallery hosts contemporary art show

The works of national and local artists are being featured in an exhibit that delivers a social message now through April 6 at the Madonna University Gallery in Livonia.

Paintings, sculptures and mixed media works are featured in IDOLS and ICONS: Transforming Tradition.

The exhibit, which includes work by Madonna alumna Anna Lussier, shows how today's artists continue to use forms and symbols found in traditional religious imagery, even if the spiritual connotation of those symbols may have changed.

"I am interested in the decisions that individuals make in their lives – the intertwining of so-called coincidences and the selective road we all have to travel," said John Bergmeier, an artist from Pontiac. "This 'road' is depicted by the symbolic icons left behind: images from old children's books,



The show includes works of art by national artists, including 'Untitled 2' by Shea Naer of California.

photographic images of family, various farm tools, etc. Found objects and Bible passages often serve as a catalyst, stimulating my imagination, memory and emotions."

The exhibit is free and open to the public. Gallery hours are 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. daily. Madonna University is at Levan Road, off I-96. For more information, call Jeanne Moore, curator and gallery director, at (248) 875-7332.

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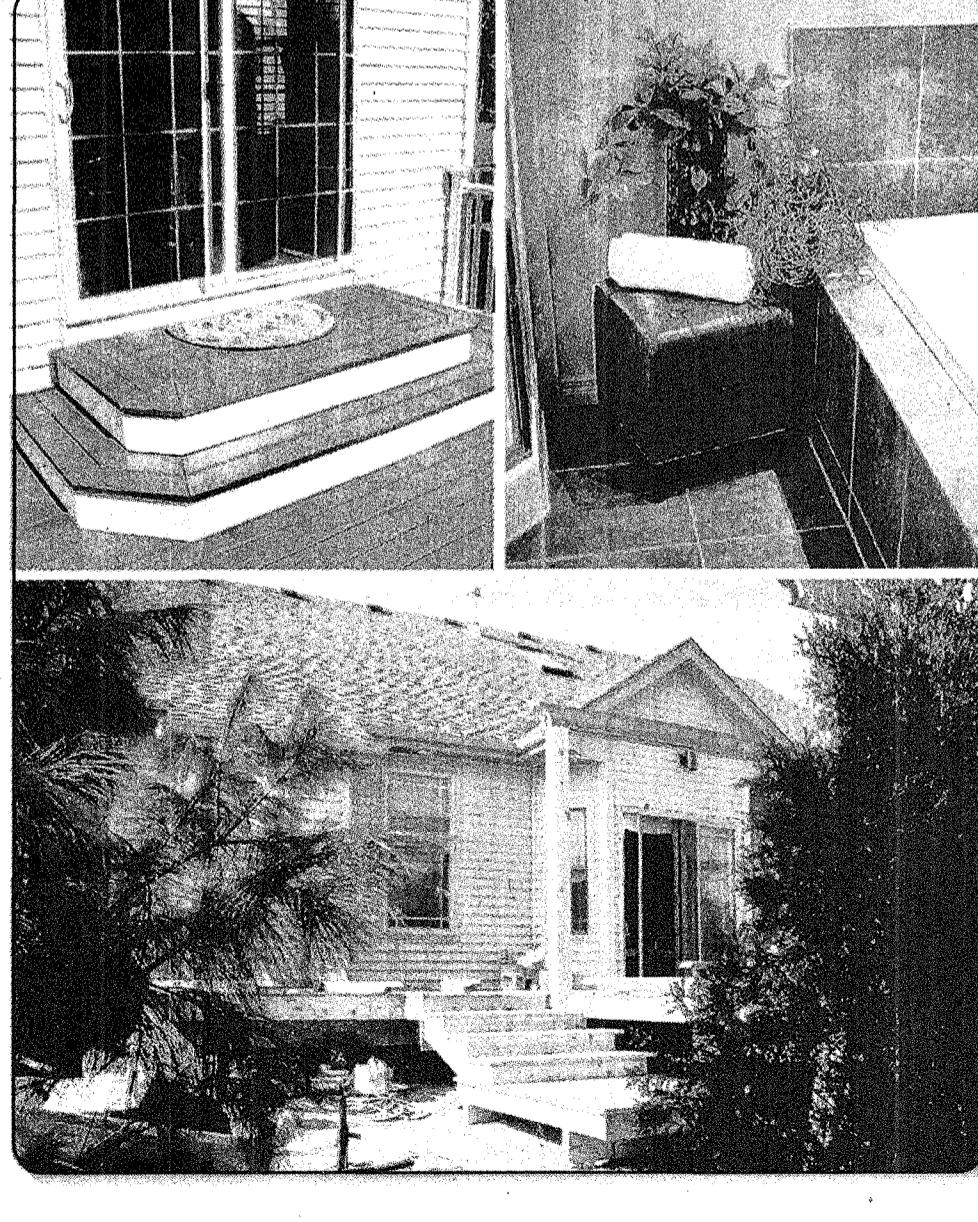
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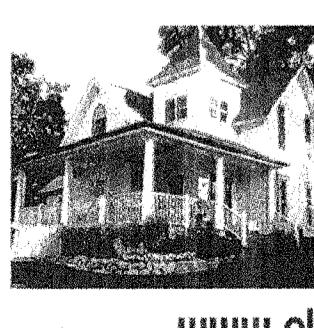
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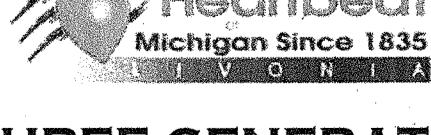
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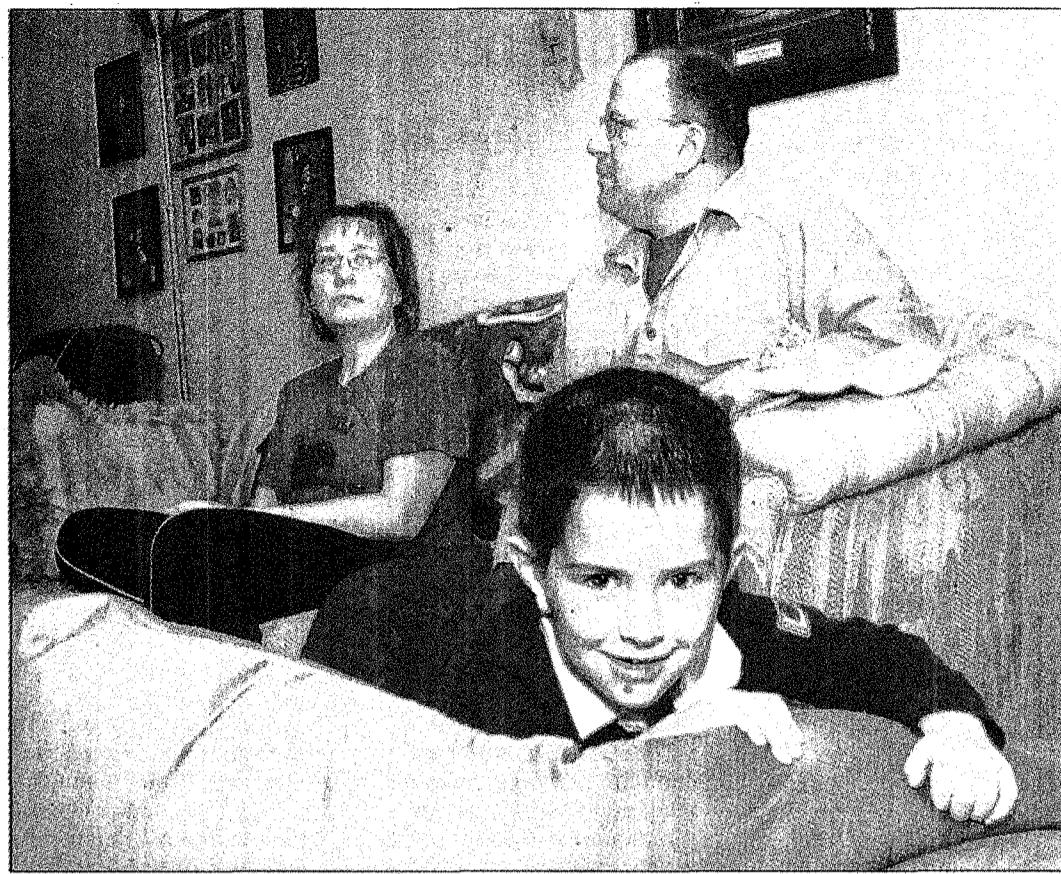
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PHOTOS BY BILL BRESLER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Derek Affholter, with his mom and dad, Tricia and Matt Affholter, will be the special honoree for the 2010 Ann Arbor Arthritis Walk next month. Derek was diagnosed with juvenile rheumatoid arthritis as a toddler.

The good fight: Youngster fights back against arthritis

BY BRAD KADRICH
OBSERVER STAFF WRITER

It started as Derek Affholter was learning to walk.

His parents, Matt and Tricia, noticed he was limping. He would wake up in pain, unable to fully extend his legs. After watching him struggle for a few days, they got him to a doctor, who initially didn't think much of it.

It went on for a couple of weeks until the Affholters got Derek to another doctor, who saw pretty quickly what was wrong. At 23 months old, Derek was diagnosed with juvenile rheumatoid arthritis, a long-term disease resulting in joint pain and swelling.

"As soon as they saw him, they said, 'Yep, he's got it,'" Matt Affholter said. "It's a shock. You're concerned about what's going to happen as he gets older. Is he going to be able to play sports? Things like that worry you."

According to statistics provided by the Arthritis Foundation-Michigan Chapter, some 2.5 million adults and more than 10,000 children in Michigan live with arthritis. Derek deals with his condition by taking three different medications every day and adhering to a strict physical therapy regimen that includes frequent visits to a physical therapist. In addition, Derek visits a rheumatoid specialist and sees an ophthalmologist because his form of arthritis tends to affect the eyes.

As Derek tumbled around his living room wrestling with his 8-year-old brother, Logan, it appeared that, for now at least, the treatment is working.

"When you hear about it, you wonder if you're going to be pushing your son around in a wheelchair," Matt Affholter said. "But he gets to be all boy."



Tricia and Matt Affholter with sons Logan and Derek.

WALKING TO BEAT IT

What: 2010 Ann Arbor Arthritis Walk

When: Saturday, April 24

Where: Huron High School, 2727 Fuller Road in Ann Arbor, and through Gallup Park.

Why: To raise money and awareness to combat arthritis which, according to the Arthritis Foundation-Michigan Chapter, affects some 49 million Americans.

Derek's parents attribute that in large measure to support they've gotten from the Arthritis Foundation. Tricia e-mailed the foundation and got names of other mothers dealing with the condition, a group from which she says she's gotten a ton of support. The foundation, for instance, helped the Affholters find an eye doctor for Derek.

And next month, the family will again try to return the favor, supporting the foundation by walking (for the third year) in the annual Ann Arbor Arthritis Walk, but also by having Derek serve as the walk's honoree.

"I got a pamphlet in the mail and it caught my interest," Tricia Affholter said of the walk. "I wanted to show our support and help raise money to try to find a cure."

The Affholters feel fortunate because Derek's condition was detected early.

"We were very lucky to catch it early ... we caught it in three months," Tricia said. "A lot of doctors don't pursue it because they aren't familiar with it. It's not the first thing they go to. They think it's growing pains."

The family also knows it could be worse. When he's on his medications, Derek is as active as any other youngster - "He's 100-percent boy," Tricia said, laughing - and seems pain-free.

"You realize there are a lot worse things a child can go through," Matt Affholter said. "It changes your lifestyle, but he still gets to be a boy."

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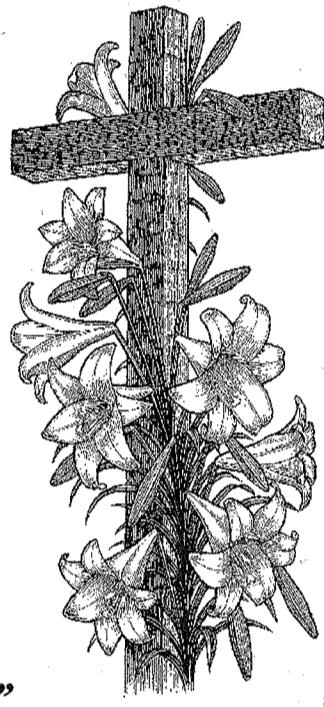
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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Listings for the Community Calendar can be submitted by e-mail at sman@hometownlife.com. They also can be mailed to Sue Mason at 615 W. Lafayette - Second Level, Detroit, MI 48226, or faxed to her attention at fax at (313) 223-3318. For more information, call (313) 222-6751.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Battle of the Bands**Time/Date:** 10 a.m. to 9 p.m.**Saturday, April 17****Location:** Community Baptist Church, 28237 W. Warren Road, Garden City

Details: Local bands will compete in a free concert to help raise money for a local organization that provides those in need of home repairs with volunteers ready to help. The Michigan Missions Third Annual Battle of the Bands will feature more 15 bands playing all genres of music along with face painting and other entertainment. Proceeds from concession and T-shirt sales will help modify a trailer into a mobile shower station for volunteers. The organization also welcomes donations of time, knowledge, and supplies from individuals and companies in all trades. Michigan Missions is a nonprofit organization that brings youth, host churches and homeowners together to serve God by serving unemployed, disabled, elderly and low-income persons with home repairs at no cost to them.

Contact: (734) 679-6350**Toy-Collectible Show****Time/Date:** 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.**Sunday, April 11****Location:** Hellenic Cultural Center, 36375 Joy, between Wayne Road and Newburgh, Westland

Details: There will be pop culture, TV/movie items, games, comics, action figures, non-sport cards, new and antiques, hallmark, NASCAR, posters, Hot Wheels, video/music to buy, sell or trade. Win spendable money, Refreshments will be available. Limited table space is available at \$35 per table or \$30, if paid by March 31. Three tables cost \$80. Admission is \$2, kids under age 12 free. Early in at 9 a.m. is \$5.

Contact: Gary at (734) 525-3712**S.I.P. Kids****Time/Date:** 2-6 p.m. Friday, March

26, and 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, March 27

Location: Jack Demmer Ford, 37300 Michigan Ave., at Newburgh, Wayne

Details: Jack Demmer will host S.I.P. Kids, a program that provides free digital fingerprinting and photos for all children. In addition organizations like Safe Kids-Metro Detroit, Wayne Fire Department, Michigan County Sheriff's Office, Michigan Humane Society and Olympian Tae Kwon Do will be participating. The event is free of charge.

Contact: For more information call Jacki at (319) 268-4111 or e-mail her at Jacki@SIPkids.com**All-bred Cat show****Time/Date:** 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.**Saturday-Sunday, April 10-11****Location:** Allen Park Community Center, 15800 White St., Allen Park

Details: Sponsored by the Just Cat-in-Around Cat Fanciers, the show will feature 225 pedigree cats and kittens, four different Cat Fanciers Association internationally qualified judges each day. Admission is \$6 for adults \$5 for seniors \$4 for children and no charge for those under age 5.

Contact: Cathy Hawley at (248) 393-1986 or visit the Web site at www.cfa.org**Crafting at the Kirk****Time/Date:** 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.**Saturday, April 3****Location:** Kirk of Our Savior Presbyterian Church, 36660 Cherry Hill, west of Wayne Road, Westland

Details: Are you someone who enjoys crafting but find it hard to set aside the time? Feel free to join other crafters at Kirk of Our Savior Presbyterian Church the first Saturday of each month to work on your projects. Just bring along your scrapbooking, quilting, or any other craft projects that you'd like to work on during the time. There is a \$2 table fee.

Toastmasters**Location:** Westland Easytalkers

Toastmasters Club meets every Thursday at 6:45 P.M. in the lower level of the Bailey Recreation Center, located behind the Westland City Hall on Ford between Wayne Road and Newburgh.

Details: Toastmasters provides a supportive environment where members can overcome the fear of speaking in public. The membership is a diverse group from different walks of life.

Contact: For information, call Bill at (734) 306-3980 or Curt at (734) 525-8445.**Fish Dial-A-Ride****Location:** Garden City, Livonia and Westland

Details: Fish Dial-A-Ride of Western Wayne County is seeking volunteer drivers. A nonprofit community service group, it provides door-to-door rides to non-emergency medical and other necessary appointments for senior and disabled residents of Garden City, Livonia and Westland who are unable to drive and have no alternative transportation.

Volunteers can specify days, times, and areas they're willing to drive.

Contact: Call (888) 660-2007 and leave a message.**Earth Angels**

Details: Earth Angels, a children's entertainment/ performance non-profit group composed of kids ages 9 - 16 years old, is currently looking to fill spots. There's opening for girls ages 9 - 11, with at least two years of dance experience, and boys, ages 9 - 12 with no experience needed just an interest in performing. The group delivers a high energy show made up of choreographed dance routines spiced with theatrics and lip-synching to the great Oldies music of the '50s and '60s as well as some current fare.

Contact: www.earthangelsontour.org or by e-mail to eangel1986@comcast.net

TOPS 869 meetings

Time/date: Mondays, weigh-ins at 5:30 p.m., followed by the meeting at 6:15 p.m.

Location: Adams Senior Village, 2001 Kaley Ave., south of Palmer, Westland.

Details: The group is for people age 18 and older.

Contact: The group which meets on Mondays is for people age 18 and older.**American Legion Post 251****Time/date:** 7 p.m. first Tuesday of

the month

Location: 1217 Merriman Road, between Avondale and Palmer, Westland.

Details: All veterans, male and female with a honorable discharge are welcome to join.

Contact: www.post251.org or call (734) 326-2607.**Higher Rock Cafe****Time/date:** 7:30 p.m. second and fourth Fridays of the month.**Location:** Wayne-Westland Salvation Army, 2300 Venoy, south of Palmer, Westland.

Details: Doors open at 7:30 p.m. Live bands perform beginning at 8 p.m. Admission is free, however, a free will offering will be taken to support the bands.

Contact: www.tsia.higherrockcafe4t.com or call (734) 722-3660.**FOR YOUR HEALTH****Safe Place****Time/date:** 7 p.m. Thursdays**Location:** Fellowship Hall at Merriman Road Baptist Church, 2055 Merriman, Garden City.

Details: A SAFE PLACE is based on the Alcoholics for Christ program.

Contact: Russ Weathers at (734) 422-1995.**Adult Day Services****Time/Date:** 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. weekdays**Location:** 570 S Main St., Plymouth MI

Detail: A structured weekday alternative for adults in need of supervision. Program provides activities and discussions to meet social, recreational and personal needs unique to dependent individuals.

Contact: Laurie Krause at [laurie.lifecareads@gmail.com](mailto:lifecareads@gmail.com) and (734) 956-2600.

Metro Fibromyalgia**Time/date:** 1-3 p.m. Second and fourth Thursday of each month**Location:** Merriman Road Baptist Church, 2055 Merriman, just west of Ford in Garden City

Details: The first meeting has a speaker, the second meeting is open to discuss living with our fibromyalgia.

Contact: Lucy at (734) 462-1768, www.MetroFibroGroup.com

EASTER ACTIVITIES

Get your kids in mood for Easter with some very bunny activities being offered in Westland.

Get your kids' in mood for Easter with some very bunny activities being offered in Westland and Garden City.

Kids from all over the area will have the chance to turn in marshmallows for a prize at Wayne County Parks Marshmallow Drop 2010 on Good Friday, April 2, at Nankin Mills in Westland at 11 a.m.

More than 20,000 marshmallows will be dropped from a helicopter to children, who will scramble to collect these goodies during the county's 26th Annual Marshmallow Drop. Children will be divided into groups based on age, to ensure that everyone has an opportunity to participate fully.

Nankin Mills is located on Hines Drive just east of Ann Arbor Trail in Westland.

For more information on this or any other Wayne County Parks event, call (734) 261-1990.

• Westland Civitan Bunny Brunch, sponsored by the Westland Civitan Club and Westland Parks and Recreation, will be held 9 a.m. to noon Saturday, March 27, at the Harris-Kehrer VFW Post Hall at 3323 S. Wayne Road.

The cost is \$3 for children 1-12 years and \$5 for ages 13 and older. All ages are welcome, but all children must have adult supervision.

Included is all-you-can-eat homemade, hot off the griddle pancakes with butter, syrup, breakfast sausage, juice, coffee, tea and milk. Besides the wonderful brunch, there will be a special visit by the Easter Bunny. Children are encouraged to make and wear an Easter bonnet or hat for their picture with the Easter Bunny. Bring your own camera to take photos.

For more information, call Donna Jensen at (734) 729-8075.

• The Westland Jaycees Easter Egg Scramble, co-sponsored by the Jaycees and Westland Parks and Recreation Department, is scheduled for 1-4 p.m. Saturday, March 27, in Jaycee Park, at Wildwood and Hunter. The event is open to youngsters age 14 and younger.

For more information contact the Bailey Center at (734) 722-7620 or the Westland Jaycee Hotline at (734) 226-0400.

• Easter Delight Night at the Bailey Recreation Center 4:30-6 p.m. Monday, March 2, will give kids a chance to make Easter eggs and their very own Easter basket. Youngsters will decorate a basket and then make different types of Easter eggs. All supplies are included. The program is open to children 3-12 years old; children under 6 must be accompanied by an adult. The cost is \$25 per child - \$5 payable to the City of Westland and \$20 payable to the teacher at the class.

The Westland Civitan Club has arranged for the Easter Bunny to visit briefly on his way to decorate his own eggs. Parents are encouraged to bring a camera, if you would like pictures with the Easter Bunny.

Pre-register by March 25 at the Bailey Center is required. Supplies for your projects will not be available, if you do not pre-register.

• Hop by Westland Shopping Center at Wayne and Warren roads, where the Easter Bunny is visiting with youngsters 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Saturday and noon to 5 p.m. Sundays in the mall's East Court. Be sure to sign up for Kid's World at the customer service desk for fun things for kids age 12 and under to do. Photos also are available at the Easter Bunny Loft.

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Making an extra mortgage payment an individual choice

I am frequently asked if it makes sense — in light of what has happened in the real estate market — to make an extra mortgage payment.

Like most things in the financial world, there is no one correct answer. Rather, the issue is what makes sense in your individual situation.


Money Matters
Rick Bloom
In making the decision to make an extra mortgage payment, there are some facts to consider. The first is that making an extra payment will not lower future payments.

In addition, one thing that to recognize by now is that real estate is not a liquid investment. Therefore, if you do make extra mortgage payments, it won't be easy to get that money back if you should need it. Prior to making extra mortgage payments, be sure that you will not need that money for short-term purposes.

Another factor to consider is that mortgage rates are at near record lows. However, that doesn't mean that other types of debt are also at historic lows. Don't consider making an extra mortgage payment if you have outstanding debt on a charge card or a higher interest rate obligation.

It is important to keep in mind that interest on your mortgage is tax deductible. When comparing interest rates, make sure you take into consideration the after-tax cost.

Deciding whether to make an extra mortgage payment is more than just a finan-

cial decision. If it was purely financial, it would be relatively easy. All you would have to do is compare the after-tax rate of return of an investment to the after-tax cost of the mortgage. However, there is another factor. Because most of us do not treat our homes purely as an investment, there is an emotional element. Whether it makes sense financially or

not, many people receive comfort in the fact that they own their home outright. After all, money is supposed to give you comfort and if it is more comforting to have your home paid off, then that is something that should be taken into consideration.

Other issues to examine include:

• By not making an extra

mortgage payment, can you take advantage of an employer match on a 401(k) plan? From a purely financial standpoint, I would prefer having someone invest in a Roth IRA, where money can grow tax free, as opposed to making the extra mortgage payment. On the other hand, if someone didn't need the money and he/she was just going to buy CDs I

would be leaning toward making the extra mortgage payment.

• If you're a long-term investor and you invest the money wisely you will do better than the after-tax cost of the mortgage. On the other hand, if you're just going to let it sit in the bank, then paying down the mortgage is probably a smart thing to do.

Like most financial decisions, the key is what's good for your individual situation and what allows you to sleep at night. Good luck!

Rick Bloom is a fee-only financial adviser. Observer & Eccentric readers can submit questions at moneymatters@hometownlife.com. For more information, visit his Web site at www.bloomassetmanagement.com.



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Deciding whether to make an extra mortgage payment is more than just a finan-

Win tickets to a Tigers game

Are you a young person who goes above and beyond to make your neighborhood, school, community or family better?

If this is you, tell us your story in 500 words or less and you could win four tickets to an upcoming Tigers baseball game.

The *Observer & Eccentric* and Hometown Newspapers will select one winning essay a month during the regular baseball season (April-September). The winner will receive four game tickets, one Hot & Ready Little Caesars pizza and an autographed Detroit Tigers item. In addition, your name will be announced in pre-game festivities at Comerica Park.

E-mail your essay to: cjordan@hometownlife.com with the subject line: PAWS for Applause. Or mail it to:

Attn: Choya Jordan
Observer & Eccentric
Newspapers/Hometown
Weeklies

615 W. Lafayette Blvd.
Detroit, MI 48226

Game tickets to be awarded to essay winners include: Sunday, April 11 (Detroit vs. Cleveland); Sunday, May 2 (Detroit vs. Los Angeles Angels); Sunday, June 13 (Detroit vs. Pittsburgh); Sunday, July 11 (Detroit vs. Minnesota); Sunday, Aug. 22 (Detroit vs. Cleveland) and Sunday, Sept. 12 (Detroit vs. Baltimore).

The winning essays along with a photo of the winner will be published in the *Observer & Eccentric* and Hometown Newspapers.

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Rouge monitoring receives science center support

Friends of the Rouge recently received \$3,000 from the Wayne County Mathematics and Science Center at Wayne RESA for support of the Rouge Education Project, the Friends of the Rouge's school-based water quality monitoring program. These funds will specifically go towards sponsoring Wayne County schools by helping the schools cover the costs of water monitoring equipment.

ment and teacher workshops. "The enthusiastic support from sponsors like the Wayne County Mathematics and Science Center at Wayne RESA is amazing," said Emily Hughes, the Rouge Education Project's Program Manager. "This project is a great opportunity for a business or organization to get involved in a local environmental education initiative."

Last year, 10 sponsors helped to support the 2008-2009 Rouge Education Project through the Adopt-a-School campaign. The campaign has attracted more than \$50,000 in sponsorships, which supports 23 of the 53 participating schools. Contributions assist with school program registrations, water quality testing equipment, workshop participation and program T-

shirts, as well as the program administration.

"Students impacted by our center's sponsorship demonstrate progress toward mathematics and science literacy," said David Bydlowski, science consultant. "Our goal is that students will elect to participate in mathematics and science opportunities in greater numbers."

"Students in Wayne County

need increased opportunities to participate in programs that foster increased interest in mathematics, science and technology. We are proud to be a sponsor in a program that involves students in real live community environmental issues," he said.

Friends of the Rouge hopes to have all of the schools in the project supported by local sponsors. Currently many

schools are supported in part by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Rouge River National Wet Weather Demonstration Project grant.

The mission of the Rouge Education Project is to promote awareness and stewardship of the Rouge River watershed through school-based water quality monitoring, investigation and problem solving. The project's major goals are to provide opportunities for schools to engage students in hands-on, real-world science through water quality monitoring of the Rouge River; to increase participants' awareness of the Rouge River watershed, how they impact it and how it impacts them; and to empower participants to apply knowledge and awareness gained through the Rouge Education Project to identify and address environmental issues in the Rouge River watershed and beyond.

Ex-owners of funeral home will pay victims

BY KEN ABRAMCZYK
OBSERVER STAFF WRITER

Christopher and Nancy Ziomek of Canton, who once owned the Ziomek Funeral Home on Wayne Road in Livonia, entered a no-contest plea last Friday to one count of embezzlement of \$50,000 or more but less than \$100,000, a 15-year offense, before Wayne County Circuit Judge Daniel Hathaway.

A sentence hearing will take place at 9 a.m. May 3 before Hathaway. As part of the plea, the Ziomeks have agreed to pay \$257,119 to 23 victims who were part of the court complaint, according to Wayne County prosecuting attorney Rob Spada. The Ziomeks will be placed on five years probation, but will follow strict repayment guidelines or be subject to jail time, Spada said.

The Ziomeks must pay \$150,000 on the day of their sentencing, then pay the remaining \$107,119.16 within nine months. Three payments of \$35,706.39 will be made every 90 days after the sentencing date.

A missed payment would subject the couple to a two-to 15-year sentence with the Michigan Department of Corrections, Spada said.

Spada expects the victims will be reimbursed through the court once the payments are made.

Spada called it an "egregious" case, but was pleased that the victims would get restitution under the agreement. "It's a great resolution to make the victims in this case whole," Spada said.

Prosecutors accused the Ziomeks of stealing as much as \$250,000 from customers who prepaid for funerals and cremations.

Livonia Detective Dean Langley of the Livonia Police Department first received a complaint on the funeral home in November 2007. A man had purchased two pre-paid funeral contracts, but later found that the funeral home did not have a pre-paid funeral and cemetery sales registration with the state of Michigan. Customers who had purchased the contracts were unable to obtain refunds, Langley said.

Langley investigated the case with state auditors from the Michigan Department of Energy, Labor and Economic Growth Bureau of Commercial Services.

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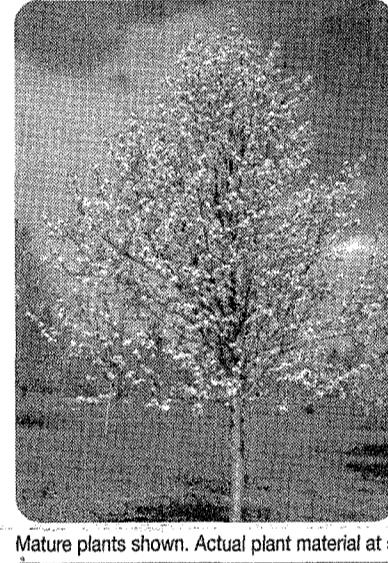
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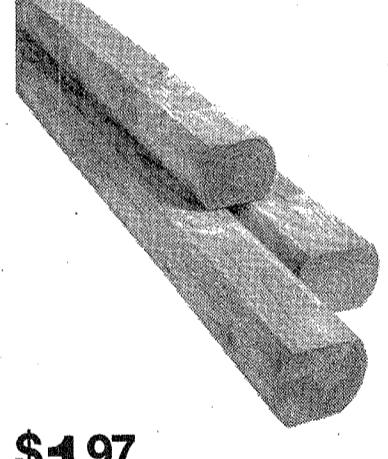


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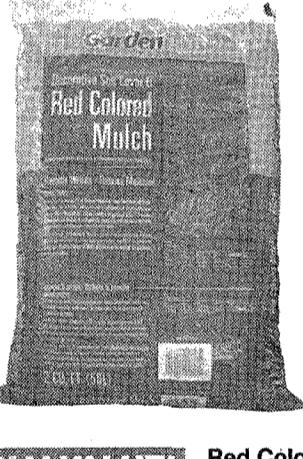
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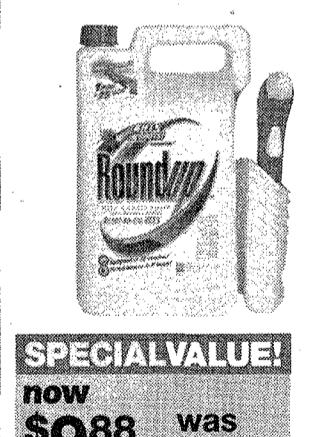
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THURSDAY
March 25,
2010

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Sue Mason, editor
(313) 222-6751
smason@hometownlife.com

LOCAL OPINION

online at hometownlife.com

 GANNETT

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.

OUR VIEWS

Unions help city, their members

Giving back is never an easy thing to ask for or to do. Hard-fought improvements in wages and benefits make life nice for employees, but the price tag can sometimes be hard to swallow for the employer.

Such is the case with municipalities now asking employees to give back to help cut expenses. It's not a new phenomenon. What's new is that instead of an Ecorse or a Highland Park, it's Detroit, Redford and Garden City. Everywhere you look, cities are looking for concessions to make ends meet, even in Westland.

Last week, the letters of understanding with the Westland Firefighters Association Local 1279, the Westland Police Officers Association and the Westland Lieutenant and Sergeants Association were approved by the City Council to help address a projected \$3.5 million deficit and avoid layoffs in the two departments.

We applaud the unions for stepping up to the plate. Their membership ranks will decrease through early retirements, but the union leadership secured positions for younger officers and firefighters by working with the city to make changes. We regret that there will be a loss of manpower, but we are confident that the city will remain safe and well protected.

City officials have had to make some hard decisions. We were saddened by last month's layoff of 10 members of American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees which represents Department of Public Services, parks and recreation and clerical workers.

We understand that all employee groups will be affected one way or another by the cost cutting. We hope the city and the AFSCME will be able to work out an agreement and avoid further layoffs.

Giving back or making changes won't be easy, but if it can save jobs, then it's good for all concerned.

Be part of Earth Hour, support work

Can you imagine sitting in the dark for one hour — no lights, no TV, no computer? In this day and time, that could be considered torture. We have a hard time living without our electronic gizmos.

But at 8:30 p.m. Saturday, March 27, people around the world will take a stand for our planet by turning off their lights for one hour to make a statement about their concern for climate change.

It's called Earth Hour, and since its inception three years ago, its nonpartisan approach has captured the world's imagination and became a global phenomenon. Nearly one billion people turned out for Earth Hour 2009 — involving 4,100 cities in 87 countries on seven continents.

Last year, 80 million Americans and 318 U.S. cities officially voted for action with their light switch, joining iconic landmarks from around the world that went dark for Earth Hour, including the Empire State Building, Broadway theater marques and the Las Vegas Strip.

Every region of the United States is experiencing the impacts of climate change. A 2009 White House report found that climate changes are already affecting water resources, energy supply and demand, transportation, agriculture, ecosystems, and health. These impacts differ from region to region and will grow as climate continues to change. The Southeast and the West, for example, are facing more frequent droughts. Snowpack, a primary source of freshwater in the West and Alaska, is declining.

We urge our readers to do something good for our planet and flip the switch on Saturday evening. One hour of dark isn't a lot to ask to help the place we call home.

WESTLAND OBSERVER

 GANNETT

Sue Mason
Community
Editor

Susan Rosiek
Executive Editor /
Publisher

Grace Perry
Director of
Advertising

Curt Gottlieb
Westland

COMMUNITY VOICE

What do you do to relax?

We asked this question at the Maplewood Community Center in Garden City.



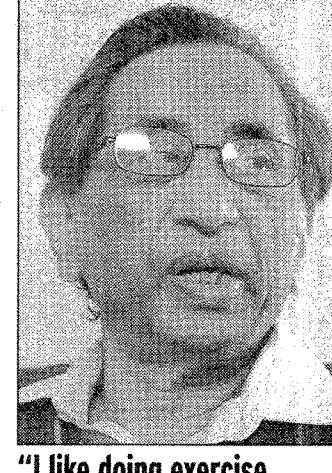
"I like to bowl — bowling, bingo, dancing and reading and casino gambling. I like a little bit of everything."

Lucille Garbarino
Westland



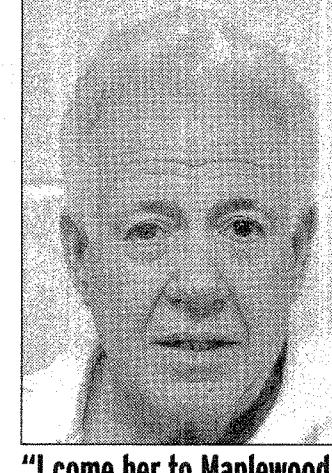
"I like playing with the kids, chasing my wife around the house, reading the Bible and exercising."

Tom Kozak
Westland



"I like doing exercise, mainly every day. I do a half hour breathing exercise and meditate and watch TV."

Pete Bhatt
Canton



"I come here to Maplewood and do a variety of things. I also watch TV sports."

Domenic Gentilia
Garden City

LETTERS

Be aware of disabilities

March is recognized as National Developmental Disability Awareness month. It's a way to promote public awareness and help educate the community about the unique needs and issues that affect people with disabilities and to celebrate their abilities, contributions and accomplishments.

Once isolated and ignored, people with developmental disabilities are now offered greater educational, vocational and social opportunities. Today they're able to attend regular schools, hold jobs, work as volunteers and live productive lives in their communities. People with disabilities should not be feared or stereotyped.

So this month, recognize the hopes and dreams of our friends and neighbors who have a disability and also applaud the staff that makes their dreams come true. Get to know people with developmental disabilities in your congregation, your community service organization and in your neighborhood. People with disabilities are no different from everyone else. They all want, and are entitled to, a life just like you and me.

Ray Schuhzol

Wayne

Don't patronize store

In reference to your article, "Petland pairs pets with families," I am frustrated and saddened that your paper and the City of Westland are so proud of this establishment.

Petland, and other pet stores selling live animals, such as dogs and cats have to have a constant supply. Where do you think they get that supply? Their main source of dogs and cats are from puppy farms. These are notorious for breeding mothers and sons, fathers and daughters, without regard for the health of the animals. Genetic problems common to the breeds are transmitted to the puppies without regard to the health of the animals. They are kept in filthy and inhumane conditions, often outside, until they are sold to places like Petland. I am sure that the management of the local stores are aware of the origins of the supply of their animals. The employees are humane and loving to the animals, but that does not affect the quality and condition of the pets that people buy.

Sure, the local Petland is contributing to the economy of Westland and participating in property taxes. However, the way animals are "harvested" for sale to unsuspecting customers is scandalous. We breed dogs, and frequently have had people who had a dog that they bought from pet stores that was deaf or lame, or had other genetic problems, and had to be euthanized at a young age. If someone is looking for a pet, there are adoption organizations that bring cats and dogs together with families. If someone is seeking a purebred dog or cat, there are many reputable breeders who would sell show animals, pets, or refer people who have litters for sale. Prices are often more reasonable than they charge in the pet stores, and they are guaranteed to be healthy. They are also a fount of reliable information. Please do not patronize pet stores, such as Petland.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

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

Submit letters via the following formats.

Web: www.hometownlife.com

E-mail: smason@hometownlife.com

Blog: You may also let your opinions be heard with your own blog at hometownlife.com.

Deadline: Letters must be received by 9 a.m. Monday to be published in the Thursday edition.

Need to reaffirm rights

There has been much talk by Democrats of the "big bad insurance companies" that deny claims, refuse coverage, raise prices and deny claims. These same people claim that Republicans support insurance companies because they are for big business and in turn, big businesses support Republicans.

Really? Obama has just announced a \$336 billion bailout for health care insurers in the form of government subsidies. Additionally, the health care bill requires ALL Americans to purchase health care insurance. This is a nice feather in the cap for insurance companies knowing that we will be forced to buy from them at least while they are still in business.

Not only that, but while the "Corn Husker Kickback" was being hashed out in the Senate, Carl Levin, the Democratic senator from Michigan, was also holding out for additional subsidies for the BCBS Michigan chapter.

Remember, this is a Democratic bill. They wouldn't allow the Republicans in on the discussions, make suggestions and add amendments.

So, just who is in bed with the insurance companies?

Some have slammed Rep. Thad McCotter for "blocking" this health care bill. Tell me, would you vote for a bill that you were not allowed to see, not allowed to make suggestions and on top of that, knowing that 75 percent of the people in your district were dead set against it? I think not.

Once again, this is a Democratic bill. The Democrats in the House and Senate have the majority and they can pass this bill anytime they want. The problem is that a lot of Democrats are having a hard time selling it to their constituents. These constituents have read these bills and want no part of them.

States are already writing and passing laws to block this unconstitutional move by the federal government. Virginia has passed a law making it illegal for the federal government to mandate that citizens of that state purchase health insurance or face fines and jail time.

Michigan needs to jump on board with plans like these, but some in the state legislature like Rep. Bob Constan from Garden City is sitting on an important piece of legislation that would reaffirm our rights under the 10th Amendment and let the feds know that Michigan will protect its citizens under the laws of the Constitution from the intrusion of the federal government.

Help Bob bring this out for discussion and a vote by calling his office at (517) 373-0849 or e-mail him at bobconstan@house.mi.gov.

Phil Solarz

Westland

Join the PTA/PTSA

The Livonia PTSA Council wishes to thank each of our hardworking and dedicated PTA/PTSA local unit membership chairs. Due to their efforts (as well as the support of officers, parents, principals, staff and students), our council membership has reached more than 8,100 members thus far this school year.

This is an amazing accomplishment that speaks to the important role our PTAs and PTSA play in each of our school buildings. Our total membership from all 24 Livonia units comprises almost 13 percent of Michigan's PTA/PTSA members. Our school community can take pride that our council receives so much respect from units throughout the state because of the programs we offer.

Members of PTA/PTSA belong to the nation's oldest and largest child-advocacy group. By joining a PTA/PTSA, you show your support of children and youth in our local community, as well as throughout Michigan and the nation. Our local PTA/PTSA members support a wide variety of student programs and enhancements including Reflections, Masterworks, Youth Making a Difference, Early Literacy Volunteers (ELVs), the Clothing Depot, Parent Education seminars, and Health & Safety programs, to name just a few.

It's not too late to join your local PTA/PTSA. Every member is valued and appreciated. Please contact your local school today for more information.

Jerilyn German Petersmark

Livonia PTSA Council membership chair

www.livoniaptacouncil.org

Background checks needed

I was appalled when I learned that only 80 percent of organizations are requiring background checks on their employees. There is a Michigan Senate bill (1100) in session that will restrict any sexual predator and any person who has been convicted of child abuse to be involved with a child care organization. I was struck by this bill, as a social worker, because of the fact that there are many organizations that still do not run background checks.

All a sexual predator needs is an opportunity to take advantage of a child and by allowing them in child care organizations they are being handed the chance. So why would we even consider letting this happen? Children deserve to be protected and have fun in a safe environment, especially in places where they go to school.

Children will learn from the environment that is shown to them, and by allowing them to be exposed to a potentially violent person, they may learn similar violence. It angers me to think of the potential danger children could be in. It is sad that we have to deal with this issue, but we do, so why not take the precautions and prevent something terrible from happening?

Emily Herrington

South Lyon

Spring cleaning: Remodeled IKEA ready with new look

BY DARRELL CLEM
OBSERVER STAFF WRITER

Canton-based IKEA has started rolling out its largest showroom remodeling project since the home-furnishing retail giant opened its doors four years ago on the northwest corner of Ford and Haggerty roads, store officials said.

The massive effort comes as store manager Kelly Frieze said many people, despite a housing market slump, still want to spruce up their homes — especially if they plan to stay put rather than try to sell.

"People still want to invest in their homes," he said, as he and other store employees gave a tour of Michigan's only IKEA, a sprawling, 310,000-square-foot store that draws customers from across the state, Ohio and Canada.

The 300-employee store opened in June 2006 amid much fanfare after IKEA officials chose Canton for its Michigan location. Frieze said plans to remodel became more urgent late last year after a fire sprinkler system malfunctioned, causing flooding and forcing a temporary shutdown.

The remodeling project involves two-thirds of a second-floor showroom where customers can see 10 new kitchen room settings equipped with the store's latest display layouts and merchandise designed to inspire home-improvement shoppers.

Store officials unveiled new kitchen room settings that workers had finished by last Friday, and kitchen manager Janet VanderLugt said updated dining room displays are included.

The store's Smaland children's play area was scheduled to reopen.

Changes to the bedroom



Kitchen manager Janet VanderLugt talks about features of the new kitchen displays at the Canton IKEA, which is undergoing its biggest remodeling since it opened in 2006.

department are expected by mid-May, along with an expanded Swedish food market area.

Founded in 1943 in Sweden, IKEA now has more than 300 stores in 37 countries, including 37 in the United States.

Canton store officials focused on remodeling the kitchen display area first as warmer weather approaches.

"Spring is the best time for kitchen remodeling," VanderLugt said. "It's the perfect time to buy a kitchen."

Not everyone wants to buy an entire room, however. Some shoppers, such as Detroiters Kavel Hudson and Jessica Velez, visited the store recently just to browse for merchandise they might want.

"It's my first time here," Hudson said, while Velez was a return customer.

"I like the prices and the quality of the products," she said.

In all, Frieze said, IKEA sells some 9,000 items ranging from a 25-cent dog bowl to entire room furnishings costing thousands of dollars.

Customers can get in-store help redesigning a room, such as in the store's new kitchen planning studio.

Pulling out a kitchen drawer where recyclables can be separated and stored near a sink, Frieze said IKEA also has made strides to become more "green" as an increasing number of customers seek to become more environmentally friendly.

As IKEA touts its remodeling efforts, store officials also announced a grand reopening of sorts for Saturday, March 27. Among the highlights, according to store officials:

- Raffles, gifts and Swedish food sampling will be offered.

- From 8 a.m. to 1 p.m., Joe "The Appliance Doctor"

Gagnon of 1600 WAAM AM radio will host a live morning radio show from the kitchen area.

- Starting at 11 a.m., the Eastern Michigan Improve Troupe of Upside Down Frown Productions will provide entertainment by "living" in the new kitchen room settings.

- In an IKEA meatball chef contest, customers who submitted their own recipes will have them judged by celebrity chefs, with a chance to win a refrigerator and have a recipe prepared as a lunch special in the store restaurant April 3-30. The top 10 entries will present their dishes to the judges on March 27.

- For more information about the Canton IKEA or its promotions, log on to www.IKEA-USA.com/Canton.

dclem@hometownlife.com | (313) 222-2238

Breakfast shows off business opportunities

BY LEANNE ROGERS
OBSERVER STAFF WRITER

If you're interested in commercial and industrial development, the city of Westland wants you to stop in for breakfast 8 a.m. tomorrow (March 26) at Leo's Coney Island.

The Eggs and Opportunities program will offer an insider's look at economic development opportunities in Westland. The breakfast meeting will highlight the vision and innovation undertaken by city leadership to revitalize commercial and industrial properties.

"This will be our first one. The (Wayne-Westland) schools have held programs primarily aimed at residential (buyers). This is geared to economic development," Mayor William Wild said.

The program will include an aerial overview of available properties with the city, initiatives that have streamlined review and permitting procedures and various federal, state and local redevelopment tools, including brownfield, energy efficiency and related tax credits.

"This is an egg-cellent opportunity to showcase what the city of Westland has to offer," Wild said. "During the difficult times of the economy, the city is working very hard to attract new businesses."

The city is trying to attract commercial real estate developers and investors, many of whom are sitting on the sidelines.

"There are a lot of buildings near our mall (Westland Center) that have dropped in value," Wild said. "They would be ahead of the game as the economy rebounds."

City officials were hoping to attract at least 25 real estate developers, brokers and other real estate professionals to the meeting. Make a reservation by calling Economic Development Director Lori Fodale at (734) 467-3264.

The Eggs and Opportunities breakfast meeting will begin at 8 a.m. at Leo's Coney Island, 36595 Warren Road at Central City Parkway.

lrangers@hometownlife.com | (313) 222-5428

Program provides parents with digital fingerprints

With so many children are reported missing each day in the U.S., police officials say that time is critical in the recovery of missing children.

One major problem that costs precious time is gathering current photographs, fingerprints, and statistical information to assist law enforcement agencies.

Helping communities eliminate this problem is S.I.P. (Safety in Prints) Kids which will be at Jack Demmer Ford, Newburgh at Michigan Avenue in Wayne, 2-6 p.m. Friday, March 26, and 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, March 27, to provide free digital fingerprinting and photos for all children. There

also will be face painting and balloons.

S.I.P. Kids will take a child's picture and fingerprints, using a digital inkless fingerprint capture device, and include them as part of the child's file, which will be provided to the parent. The parents can use the copy they receive to turn directly over to authorities anywhere in the world to instantly aid in an investigation.

The event is free of charge and also includes face painting and balloons. For more information, call Jack Demmer Ford at (734) 721-2600.



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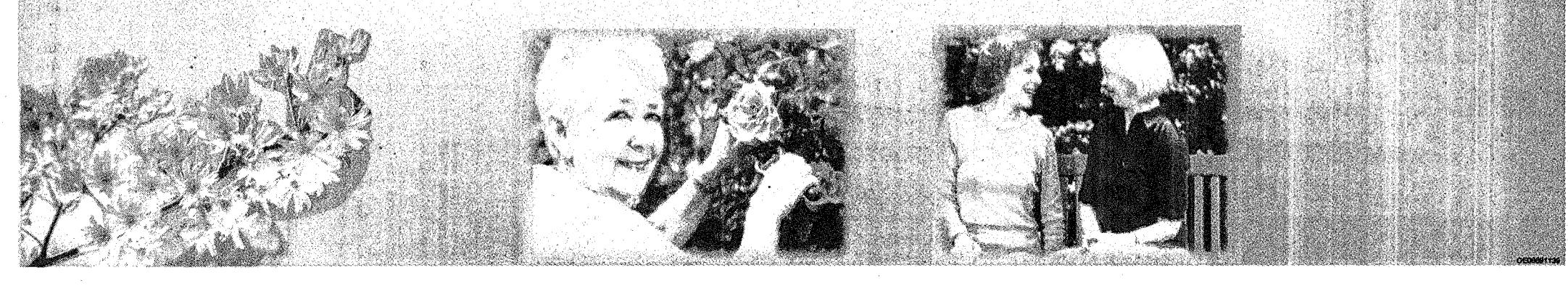


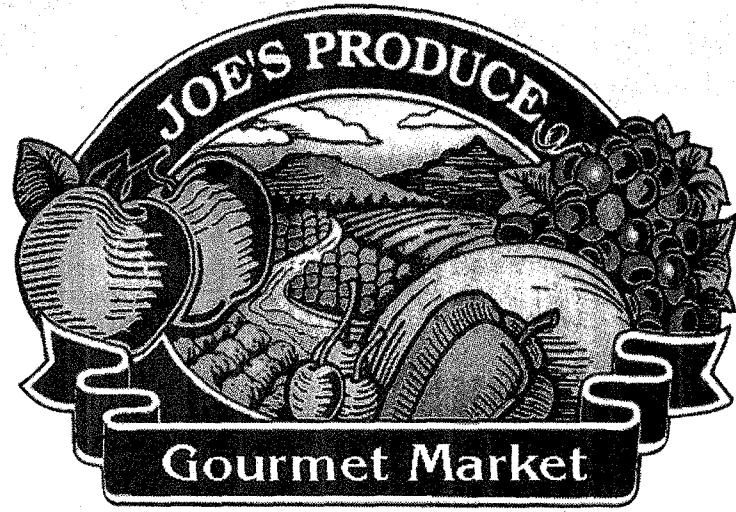
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