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McCotter: Auto loan buys time for 'viable plan'

BY HUGH GALLAGHER
STAFF WRITER

U.S. Rep Thaddeus McCotter, R-Livonia, said Tuesday that President George W. Bush's \$17 billion bridge loan to General Motors and Chrysler gives the auto companies three months to make the restructuring they need to survive.

"I think you'll see they get this thing done, or everyone loses," he said.

Last week, President Bush authorized that General Motors would receive \$9.4 billion and Chrysler would receive \$4 billion in December and January from the \$700 billion allocated by Congress for the Toxic Assets Relief Program for investment banks. General Motors will receive an additional \$4 billion in February.



McCotter

General Motors and Chrysler warned that they did not have enough money to meet demands through the end of the year. Ford Motor Co. has told the government that it has enough money for the near future and did not receive federal funds.

"It's the best we could have hoped for," McCotter said.

The president acted after the Senate failed to pass a rescue bill that had been approved in the House of Representatives.

McCotter said the bridge loan gives the auto companies three months to bring all stakeholders together and create "a viable plan for the future."

He said it also keeps General Motors and Chrysler from having to file for bankruptcy. The auto companies have said that going into bankruptcy would be a problem because buyers would be reluctant to buy from a bankrupt auto company due to concerns over parts availability and warranties.

McCotter said the bridge loan also gives the incoming Barack Obama administration an opportunity to participate in talks and offer its own recommendations. McCotter said the Bush and Obama positions are very similar.

"It will be interesting to see how it plays out and what constitutes 'viable,'" McCotter said.

If the two companies do not have an acceptable plan, they will be required to repay the federal loan in three months.

McCotter has been critical of the treatment of Detroit auto executives by members of Congress compared to the treatment given investment bank executives who have been the beneficiary of \$350 billion with more to come. He and others have demanded that the banks be more accountable for the funds they've already received and will receive in the future.

"House Republicans sent a letter to Speaker (Nancy) Pelosi and (House Finance) Chairman (Barney) Frank to investigate and Frank said he would," McCotter said.

He said now that Congress has vented its frustration on the auto companies, it can turn its attention "to those who caused the problems in the first place," investment bankers.

"Credit has yet to unfreeze," he said. President-elect Obama is pushing

for an economic stimulus package centered around government investment in repairing the country's infrastructure. As a self-described conservative, McCotter has reservations about the extent of government involvement.

"Investment is infrastructure is a necessary and good thing. It's something that will last and not be temporary. I will be interested in the details and what gets put into the package," he said.

Private investment to stimulate the economy, he said, is being stymied by the continuing credit crunch. He said a stimulus package alone can not turn around the economy and that more needs to be done to help those struggling with foreclosure problems.

"More should have been done on the grass-roots level," he said of the TARP funds.

'Oh, little town ...'

School transforms itself to celebrate Christmas season

BY SUE MASON
OBSERVER STAFF WRITER

Skeptical teenagers, shy youngsters ... Santa Claus doesn't care who stops by to chat around this time of the year. In the "Little Town of Burger," he has a smile, a "Ho, ho, ho" and a stuffed bear for those who visit his house.

"I enjoy this, it's the highlight of my year," said Santa who got help entertaining his guests from Christmas Carol. "One of the wonderful things about our kids is that the 17-year-olds come and shake my hand, but they still have their list."

Christmas Carol has been helping Santa at Burger for 10 years and has watched many of his visitors grow up. And even though they are older, it's the looks on their faces that makes the visit special.

"They're so excited," she said.

Nintendo Wii, MP3 players, games, music and videos like *Camp Rock* have been popular requests. One young man wanted "a complete train set like his grandfather had in his basement," said Santa.

Among Santa's visitors was



TOM HAWLEY | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Snuggling up to Santa (R.J. Tessmer) and Christmas Carol (Darlene Jablonowski) at the Burger Center for Students with Autism's annual Christmas carnival are students Erica Hill, 7, of Garden City (left) and Jeni Ottenthengil, 8, of Plymouth-Canton.

9-year-old Bradley Zigulis of Westland.

"I saw Santa and I asked him for a PSP and laptop," said Bradley. He

gave me a teddy bear that I'm calling Ashley Jr. It's a good name."

In actuality, Santa is R.J. Tessmer, and Christmas Carol is

Darlene Jablonowski and the "Little Town of Burger" is the Burger

Please see **BURGER, A6**

Woman who put baby in trash will stand trial

BY DARRELL CLEM
OBSERVER STAFF WRITER

A Wayne County jury will decide whether a Westland woman tried to kill her newborn son or if she was besieged by mental problems when she delivered the baby herself, tucked him in a trash bag and put him in her parents' garage.

The baby survived after relatives heard his cries and found him alive.

Barring a plea agreement, 28-year-old Valeeka Gartrell will face trial March 4 in Wayne County Circuit Court on charges of assault with intent to murder and first-degree child abuse.

If convicted, she could face penalties ranging up to life in prison for an incident that happened April 23, 2007, at her parents' house, where she lived.

Gartrell's trial had been long delayed as experts sought to determine whether she was competent for court proceedings and whether she could be held criminally responsible for her actions.

With those issues now resolved, Wayne County Circuit Judge Jeanne Stempien ruled earlier this month that Gartrell should stand trial for the attempted murder of her baby boy.

Defense attorneys have argued that the defendant didn't understand what she was doing when she put the baby boy in a garbage bag and placed him in a garage near Joy and Hix roads, on Westland's northwest side.

During the summer of 2007, Gartrell had been released on a \$50,000/10 percent bond after one of her cousins offered to watch over her and give her a place to stay while her case was pending.

Police have said her baby and her 3-year-old daughter were placed in the custody of their grandparents.

According to police, Gartrell woke her parents on April 23 and told them that she was bleeding. They had known she was pregnant.

Gartrell was taken to St. Mary Mercy Hospital in Livonia, where doctors found that she already had given birth, police Sgt. Chris Benson has said. Family members then returned home, where they found the baby in the garage, he said.

Young Livonia girl to perform in bowl games

BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN
O&E STAFF WRITER

Madalyn Geletzke is starting to feel the pressure of dancing during half-time at the Orange Bowl in Miami on New Year's Day, but then who wouldn't with 20 million viewers tuning in to Fox TV when Virginia Tech meets the University of Cincinnati?

The 13-year-old Livonia girl is among 275 dancers from all over the country participating in the show, which features 2,000 performers including marching bands and baton twirlers.

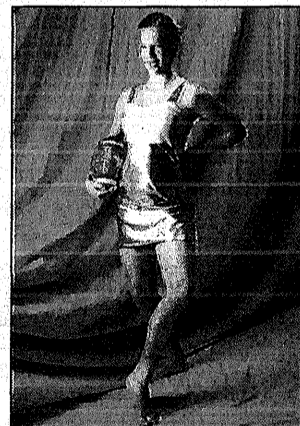
Geletzke is less worried about sharing the stage with the legendary Doobie Brothers and more about learning the routine choreographed by Mandy Moore from *So You Think You Can Dance* fame. She was just about to leave for the Barbara Hatch School of Dance in Farmington for a four-hour practice. Right before the Orange Bowl, she'll take part in three days of rehearsals in Florida. Geletzke began dancing at age 4. She takes classes in ballet, jazz, tap, lyrical, pointe, hip hop and pom five days a week.

"We have 1½ weeks to learn the eight-minute dance from DVD," said

Geletzke, a seventh-grade student at Holmes Middle School. "I'm really looking forward to the experience of getting to meet a professional choreographer and performing on national TV."

Before leaving for Florida, the young dancer will perform at the Motor City Bowl featuring a matchup between Central Michigan and Florida Atlantic universities Friday at Ford Field with the Mid American Studio Senior All Stars from the pom and dance school in Farmington. She is a little more

Please see **BOWLS, A2**



Madalyn Geletzke will perform in the halftime show at the Orange Bowl. The Livonia girl is a member of the Barbara Hatch School of Dance Company.

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Coming Sunday: The year in photos

Man uses note, threatens teller in Redford bank holdup

A man used a holdup note and implied he had a gun while robbing a Charter One Bank branch in Redford Township of about \$400 on Saturday. There were no injuries and no gun was seen.

The holdup at the bank on Telegraph near West Chicago took place just before noon, a Redford Police Department report said.

A teller told police a man approached her window after she asked if she could help him. He handed her a note that announced a robbery, she said, and she opened her cash drawer and began gathering money. He threatened to kill her, she said, and threatened her again when she tried to push an alarm button.

The robber held one hand in a pocket of his jacket, the teller said. She said she did not see a gun but said there was a bulge in the pocket.

The robber took the money, and the note, and left, the teller said. No getaway vehicle was seen.

Oil shop break-in

A man stole the change box, with a small amount of cash in it, after breaking into Instant Oil Change on Telegraph near Joy Road about 8:30 p.m. Saturday.

The glass in the front door had been broken out, a police report said.

A security video showed a lone man inside the shop, taking the change box, police said.

GARDEN CITY

Home invasions

Police were called to the 31000 block of Hennepin Saturday after a woman returned to her home there to find the front door had been forced open.

A witness told police he had spotted a man walking around the house and that he had followed him in a vehicle for a time before losing sight of him.

The officer noted there were footprints into the back yard but that the suspect had returned to the front door, which had been possibly kicked open, damaging the frame.

The homeowner told police that jewelry valued at \$500 had been stolen from her bed-



Police are looking for this man in connection with a robbery at a Charter One Bank branch in Redford.

room, including a gold watch, a gold necklace, a crucifix and costume jewelry.

A couple of hours later, a resident in the 30000 block of Hennepin told police he noticed a light coming from the side door from the house of a neighbor who was not at home. He found the door had been forced open.

Based on no wet snow in the home and light snow covering the footprints, the responding officer said he thought the break-in had taken place the previous day. The homeowner was contacted; it was unclear if anything had been stolen. Earlier on Dec. 20, a resi-

dent in the 31000 block of Pierce told police she had heard a loud noise at her back door. When she checked, the woman said, she saw a man whom she believed was trying to break into her home. He fled when she turned on a light and her dog began barking, she told police.

LIVONIA

Two arrests

Two Southfield men accused of trying to break into a house in Livonia on Sunday are facing some serious charges for their trouble.

According to Livonia police reports, a 12-year-old boy was at home alone playing video games in his house in the 12000 block of Hartel when he heard pounding at the back door.

The boy called police, and responding police officers picked up a 44-year-old man backing out of the driveway of the house. Minutes later, they picked up his alleged accomplice a few doors down the street as the 46-year-old attempted to convince another homeowner to let him in, police said.

The two men were expected to be arraigned Tuesday on charges of home invasion and being habitual offenders.

Christmas stolen

A woman living in the 18000 block of Lyndon went to bed at 11 p.m. Monday night and was awakened shortly after that by noise coming from the kitchen. She went downstairs expecting to see her son and found her kitchen had been ransacked.

Reported missing from the house were Christmas presents and her purse.

A police report said there was a white mid-sized sedan seen near the house at the time of the incident.

BOWLS

FROM PAGE A1

confident of performing in Detroit as this is her second year. Geletzke already has plenty of experience, not only in dance, but pom. In April, she performed with the Mid American High School All Stars at Disney World and later in parades for the Red Wings Stanley Cup and Thanksgiving Day in Detroit. She's also performed during Detroit Pistons games.

"It's very exciting," said her mother, Laura. "I'm looking forward to the game and hear-

ing her experiences working with choreographers and such a large group. We went to New York City for her 13th birthday and she's determined to be a Rockette one day."

Geletzke was especially excited about meeting the Rockettes during a tour of Radio City Music Hall.

"They told us what it's like, showed us all the places they practice and where they get their costumes," Geletzke said. "They were talking about what you need ballet, tap, jazz and to sing to be a Rockette. I want to be a Rockette. I would only practice during the winter, then go to college. By the time I'm done with the Rockettes

— they only last about five years — then I want to go to become a fashion designer after going to College for Creative Studies."

Geletzke's father, Fred, says anything is possible when it comes to his oldest daughter. Madalyn is a role model for her sister Meredith. The 7-year-old danced with Madalyn at Disney World last spring.

"Madalyn's very dedicated. We talked to her about her grades being good to continue to do this. She's kept up her part of the bargain," Fred said. "She's on the honor roll at Holmes. We're very proud of her."

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COMMUNITY ROUNDUP

Youth Hero of Year

A student at Adams Middle School in Westland is in the running for a state VFW award after being selected as the Youth Hero of the Year by the Kozdron-Zeyer VFW Post 4553 in Detroit.

Nicholas Gonzalez was nominated for the honor by post Commander Albert Boreio in recognition of his citizenship, scholarship and attendance.

According to Boreio, the 11-year-old is a sixth-grader who has been a hero to the staff and his fellow students since kindergarten. Fluent in Spanish and English, he has served as an interpreter for Spanish-speaking students. He also helped teach them the English language.

"Without Nicholas's expertise in guiding his fellow students, staff and the parents, there would be language barriers prohibiting the learning process of our future U.S. leaders," Boreio wrote in his nominating letter. "Nicholas easily glides from one language to another without hesitation."

The son of Sabrina and

Rodrigo Gonzalez, Nicholas is an all A student. He is a Student Council representative and has been in charge of collecting items for the troops in Iraq, Toys for Tots and food items for needy families.

"His parents and younger brother are also to be commended in honoring Nicholas' skills and personality," said Boreio.

Skating stars to perform

Come see possible future Olympic ice skating stars at 7 p.m., Saturday, Dec. 27 at the Arctic Edge Ice Arena located on 46615 Michigan Avenue in Canton Township. The Arctic Figure Skating Club will be hosting a dress rehearsal skate for the January 2009 Figure Skating Nationals in Cleveland, Ohio.

All of the Arctic Figure Skating Clubs pair teams will be performing, including Canadian National champions and world silver medalists Scott Moir and Tessa Virtue, and U.S. National silver medalists Meryl Davis and Charlie White.

Admission is free and open to the public. For more information call (734) 487-7777.

BY TONY BRUSCATO
OBSERVER STAFF WRITER

First Step, the Wayne County agency that provides shelter for women and their children to escape violence and sexual abuse, is in the middle of a capital fund-raising campaign to raise \$5.5 million for a new family center in Wayne.

Thus far, First Step has raised just over \$2 million in gifts and in-kind support to replace the dilapidated shelter in Canton Township.

A new facility can't come soon enough as the Canton facility - an old farm house that was converted to a nursing home before being bought by First Step 20 years ago - has become so unlivable women and their children have been moved to a temporary location.

"Time has taken its toll on the building, it has too many leaks in the roof and it's not repairable," said Theresa Bizoe, an associate director for First Step. "It doesn't have

handicap access and the wiring is poor."

Bizoe said the plan is to construct an addition of at least 14 flexible family suites that can house up to 50 people in the new facility.

"In Canton, we had eight bedrooms with several families sharing a bedroom," Bizoe said. "Conflicts might come up, there are different sleeping times and noise levels."

"The new family center will feature self-contained apartments where families can have dignity, privacy and independence and all the services they need to move from violence to safety," she said. "We serve about 800 people a year, so individual family suites will be very empowering."

Bizoe said while the family suites won't be constructed until the capital campaign is completed, the Wayne facility will provide free counseling and advocacy services in early January. They are the same type of services that are currently provided at facilities in Redford Township and Taylor,

which serve nearly 10,000 families a year.

"Any victim of domestic or sexual abuse can come to our office and see an advocate, someone trained in post-traumatic stress, legal aspects and help sort out their options free of charge," Bizoe said. "We offer counseling for children who witness violence and safety planning for kids, such as when a fight breaks out. Workshops for men and boys about healthy relationships."

Bizoe said the administrative offices will remain in Plymouth.

First Step received about \$100,000 in help from the Detroit chapter of Commercial Real Estate Women (CREW). The women's group in 2006, during its 20th anniversary, picked First Step as a community service project.

"We looked at existing real estate holdings and evaluated them, analyzed their facility requirements and space needs, and help select an architectural and construction management firm," said

Marilyn Nix of CREW. "We worked with them to review properties available in the marketplace to find the best alternative to fit their requirements."

"It was a great opportunity for CREW members to give back to the organization, especially to a group that helps women," added Nix, who then became a board member of First Step.

Karen Wilson of Grosse Ile is the largest donor in the current capital campaign, contributing \$900,000.

"I've been very blessed with a home and not having to wonder if I will have a meal or be safe, and there are people out there who don't have that," Wilson said. "I wanted to provide a safe place for women and children to go when they're in danger and have needs."

The First Step 24-hour help line number is (734) 459-5900 or toll free at (888) 453-5900.

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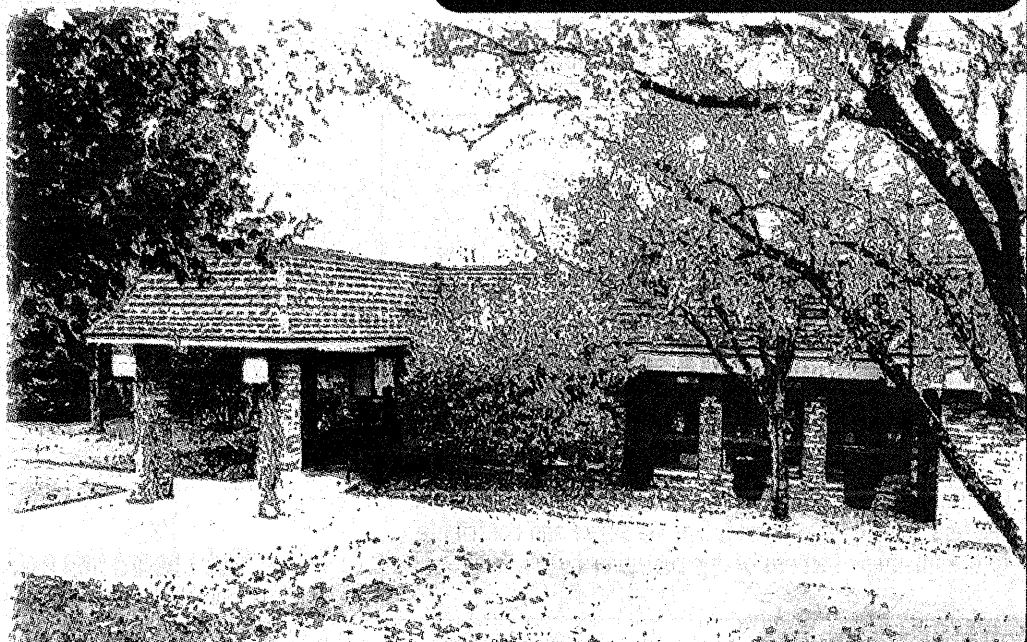
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OUR VIEWS

Ordinance on park funds alters intent of millage

The Wayne County Commission last week failed to override a veto by County Executive Robert Ficano of a proposed ordinance to distribute 25 percent of what each community contributes to the county's parks millage back to those communities.

The proposal was sent back to the commission's Ways and Means Committee for further deliberation, but will probably need to be reintroduced when new commissioners take office in January.

Commissioners who advanced the ordinance have argued that their communities do not receive a fair return on their tax dollar. Under the proposal, they would get 25 percent of their tax money back to use for local recreational needs. We believe the proposal is well intended but is bad public policy and takes too much money from the voter approved parks millage - to maintain the county park system.

Commissioners who advanced the ordinance have argued that their communities do not receive a fair return on their tax dollar. Under the proposal, they would get 25 percent of their tax money back to use for local recreational needs. We believe the proposal is well intended but is bad public policy and takes too much money from the voter approved parks millage - to maintain the county park system.

The parks millage was initially passed by Wayne County voters in 1996 to levy .25 mills, generating approximately \$12.7 million per year. The millage was renewed in 2000 and again in 2005. It expires in 2010.

Under current agreements, communities are able to propose local capital recreation projects for county support from millage dollars. The ordinance would lock in 25 percent to each community, even though the needs of each community are not the same.

Voters understood that the primary purpose of the millage was to support improvements at Hines and Elizabeth Parks, as well as support for Detroit's Chandler Park, Fort Wayne and some smaller parks. Many of our communities do benefit from those parks. Hines Park runs through Westland, Livonia and Plymouth Township. Residents of Redford, Garden City and Canton can take advantage of those parks as well. No one would benefit if a lack of funding allowed those parks to deteriorate.

We believe the current system adequately addresses the concerns of local communities.

A simple celebration is more in keeping with the 1st Christmas

Many people scaled back their spending for this Christmas.

Some were forced to because they were laid off or had their job eliminated; others chose to because of uncertainty about the future economy.

Though the official numbers won't be in until after the holidays, people expected to spend 5 percent less for the 2008 holidays - \$775 on average - than they did for the 2007 holidays, according to a Brand Keys Inc. national survey of 16,000 consumers in the nine U.S. Census regions.

Economists might disagree, but spending less on Christmas isn't such a bad thing.

Consider the first Christmas. Jesus - God's only son - was born to poor parents, peasants, in a stable among animals, the Bible says. There was no Christmas tree, no presents, no special foods.

The wise men, bearing gifts of gold, incense and myrrh, did not visit Jesus while he was in the stable but in a house when he was a toddler, according to Biblical scholars.

The reason we celebrate Christmas is because of Jesus' birth, unpretentious as it was.

Jesus was God's gift to humans, the Bible says. He took the punishment for everyone's sins so that, through faith in Him, people can live eternally in heaven.

That sometimes gets lost in our modern-day celebration of Christmas with its frenzy and excess.

Perhaps a simpler, less commercialized observance will help us remember the reason for the season.

Jesus was God's gift to humans, the Bible says. He took the punishment for everyone's sins so that, through faith in Him, people can live eternally in heaven. That sometimes gets lost in our modern-day celebration of Christmas with its frenzy and excess.



LETTERS

Thanks for column

I just read, "When you're the employee, bankruptcy is very painful" and wanted to thank you for writing what I, and I'm sure others, are thinking and feeling!

My fiancé is a ground worker for Northwest Airlines. He's been with NWA for 19 years, and was with Midway Airlines, prior to that, for 10 years. His is just one story, of thousands, maybe millions, happening in our country.

He'd worked his entire life in an industry and then, when NWA filed for bankruptcy, was forced to take a \$4 per hour pay cut. While that may not seem to be earth-shattering to people on its surface, that \$8,300 per year is money that was directly removed from the economy of this state.

He was very smart in his foresight and put his home for sale, just prior to the bankruptcy happening. The house sold just before the real estate market completely collapsed. While he could have made ends meet, he was concerned about NWA going under and losing his home, if that occurred.

Of course, NWA has emerged from bankruptcy, but the new "unknown" on the horizon is how the Delta/NWA merger will impact employees who are 50-plus, who have many years with the companies, etc. The American workers have for far too long had to carry the weight of executives on their backs, while those executives, many times, seem to fly beneath the radar when it comes to responsibility.

I have been completely astounded to monitor the hearings on the "Big 3 Bailout" and realize just how much of this country truly feels that the auto industry should go down and don't seem to have a remote belief that that will massively impact every industry. When I hear the "leaders" of our country saying that we should let those companies go bankrupt, while we, the taxpayers, have just paid to bail out the very industry (financial) that is most responsible for placing us in this recession, I am aghast!

The auto industry impacts every life in America and, honestly, I can't understand how any American can encourage its demise.

I'm just so frustrated, as I believe (hope???) most Americans are at this point in our history. I really just wanted to thank you for writing exactly what I was thinking.

Maureen A. Latimer
Plymouth

make \$188,100 per year as of Jan. 1, 2008, and then get ALL MEDICAL paid, not to mention how many days off a year they get. And they want to try and mess with possibly the biggest industry in America.

Well, I certainly don't think it is fair. And then this past weekend, a U.S. senator was supposed to come to Gibraltar Trade Center and sign auto-graphs for \$35-\$75 per signature, former Tiger Jim Bunning. Well, after he voted no for Detroit automakers, the owner of Gibraltar called the senator and told him we didn't want him here. That decision cost the Gibraltar Trade Center lots of money, but he stood up for what he believed and hats off to him. We should ALL go out and shop there for Christmas gifts.

Our government officials who WE ELECT should be there for us. I salute all the senators who voted for the Bridge Loan, and to those that did not, that is a shame. You have for some reason tried to kill the automotive industry, for what reason, my question to you is when you go to work - on the days you go - how do you get there? Walk, run, jog? No I would think it would be an AUTOMOBILE, and if it is, was it built in AMERICA.

Interesting question, I am quite sure the senators who voted NO are driving cars NOT built in the U.S., and I think it is time for America to stand up, and voice your complaint. This is America, and everything has changed to protect those who are not from here. For example, when you call a business, and the message says "Press 1 for English," I don't think so. I think the senators who voted no need to go and see if the other countries have Press 1 for English. I don't think it happens.

So to all of our senators who are messing with the livelihood of America, try and remember the Boston Tea Party when they stood up for what they believed and did what they had to. Our government is supposed to be "FOR THE PEOPLE," and that is not what these current senators are there for.

Stand up, America, before it is too late, and with these people in office, speak your mind, because sooner or later, when you make that phone call, there won't even be Press 1 for English. Write your senators and let them know they are messing with the wrong people - Americans. Don't mess with the best.

Bud Somerville
Westland

Grateful to our mayor

Livonia Mayor Jack Kirksey has been a pro-active leader in his efforts to support the necessary loans requested by the domestic car manufacturers. He joined with other mayors in the region to make their voices heard by Congress. We are proud to say that Mayor Kirksey was among those who traveled to Washington to lobby for the domestic auto manufacturers that play a vital role in U.S. and global economies. He encouraged Livonia residents to write letters to the President of the United States requesting support of the loans. We are grateful to Mayor Kirksey for fighting for the sustainability of the domestic manufacturing base and preserving jobs for Livonia that will benefit its citizens.

Jim and Diane Policelli
Livonia

Senators were wrong

I wanted to add my two cents about what is going on with the federal bailout. What a joke! They bail out Wall Street and the CEO for the one company made \$77 million with salary and bonuses, and our government gives them billions of dollars, no questions asked.

But when our automotive industry goes to Washington and has to BEG for money to keep MILLIONS of people working, they shoot us down. They tell the Big Three you want money yet you rode in private jets. Most big corporations have private planes, yet that seemed to make the day of those senators.

Let's look into something: the average U.S. senator makes \$169,300 a year and party leaders and president pro tempore

Good tidings from Social Security

As the holidays approach, Social Security has good tidings to share with Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) beneficiaries: They will receive a 5.8 percent increase in benefit payments beginning with the January payments!

The 5.8 percent cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) will begin with benefits that more than 50 million Social Security beneficiaries receive in January 2009. Increased payments to more than seven million SSI beneficiaries will begin on Dec. 31.

Social Security and Supplemental Security Income benefits increase automatically each year based on the rise in the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W), from the third quarter of the prior year to the corresponding period of the current year.

This 5.8 percent increase is the largest since 1982.

Along with the annual COLA comes other changes, including an increase in the amount of wages subject to Social Security tax. In 2008, the maximum taxable amount was \$102,000. Beginning in 2009, the maximum taxable amount will be \$106,800. This change will affect about 11 million of the 164 million workers who pay Social Security tax. The tax rate remains the same: 6.2 for employers and employees, and 12.4 for the self-employed.

In 2009 it will take \$1,090 in taxable earnings to earn a credit of coverage for Social Security, up from \$1,050 in 2008. All workers can earn up to four credits in a year.

The average retired worker will receive \$1,153 per month in Social Security benefits in 2009, up from \$1,090 in 2008.

People who have Medicare coverage will want to visit Medicare's Web site at www.medicare.gov for changes coming in 2009.

To learn more about Social Security changes coming in 2009, visit our online fact sheet at www.socialsecurity.gov/pres-office/factsheets/colafacts2009.htm.

As always, you can find a wealth of information about Social Security at our Web site at www.socialsecurity.gov.

Frances Heimes-Savickis
Social Security public affairs specialist

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

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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.

QUOTABLE

"But I heard him exclaim, ere he drove out of sight, happy Christmas to all and to all a good night."
- St. Nicholas, as reported by Clement Moore in "Twas the Night Before Christmas

Plight of Iraqi relatives on the mind of local Chaldeans this Christmas

BY KURT KUBAN
OBSERVER STAFF WRITER

For millions of Christians around the world and all over America, today is a day to be celebrated. Many will gather with family and friends for Christmas parties and to rejoice over the birth of Christ.

Metropolitan Detroit's large Chaldean community will also be celebrating the religious holiday, but they will do so with a fair amount of apprehension and fear for family and friends living in Iraq, where they have been persecuted and even killed because of their Christian beliefs.

The plight of Iraq's Chaldeans has hit close to home in southeastern Michigan, which is home to approximately 125,000 Chaldean-Americans — the largest contingent outside of the Middle East. Most live in the communities of Sterling Heights, West Bloomfield, Farmington Hills, Southfield and Troy.

According to local Chaldean leaders, as many as 50 percent of Chaldeans living in Iraq have fled the country since the U.S.-led invasion in 2003. Because they are Christians (largely Catholic) living in a



PHOTOS BY BILL BRESLER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Like many other local Chaldeans, Haytham Yono, who owns the Wayne Liquor store in Wayne, has family members living in Iraq, where Chaldeans have been persecuted because of their Christian beliefs.

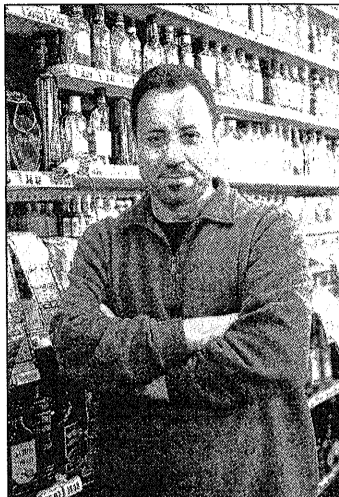
Muslim-led country, they have been driven out of their homes and even killed. In particular, many Chaldean religious leaders have been the targets of terrorist attacks.

Joseph Kassab, the executive director of the Southfield-based Chaldean Federation of America, said Chaldeans and other Christians made up about 5 percent of Iraq's population before the war. Today, he says it's likely less than 2 percent. Those that

remain must try and conceal their Christian roots for fear of being targeted by terrorists.

"Christmas is not easy to celebrate in Iraq. Far too many of our people have fled their homes or have been killed. To survive, they must conceal their religion," Kassab said.

Nick Bakko, a West Bloomfield resident who owns Neil's Party Store in Westland, has many relatives living in Iraq. He was born in the village of Telkaif in northern Iraq, and



Nick Bakko, who owns Neil's Party Store in Westland, was born in the village of Telkaif in northern Iraq. He says Chaldeans in Iraq have been persecuted in Iraq since the war began, including an aunt who fled to a refugee camp in Syria.

came to America in 1983. Most of his relatives live in Telkaif, which is in the Kurdish-controlled north. He says Chaldeans in the northern part of the country are relatively safer than those in central and southern Iraq, areas of the country dominated by Muslim Arabs.

Bakko knows the devastating toll the war has had on

Chaldeans. His aunt, who lived in Baghdad when the war began, received a note to leave her house in one week or she would be killed. Fearing for her life, she fled and is now a refugee in Syria. Another aunt, who was a pharmacist in Baghdad, was shot and killed while at work during the early days of the war.

Bakko and his wife Amy will gather with family today at his mother's home in Commerce. He said they will be thinking of relatives in Iraq, and may even try to call.

"On Christmas we always get together. A lot of times we try and call family when we're all together," he said. "We keep them in our prayers. But we have to live our lives. What can you do? Life is not perfect."

Haytham Yono, a 36-year-old Farmington Hills resident who owns the Wayne Liquor store in Wayne, fondly remembers Christmas celebrations while growing up in Telkaif.

"Our whole family would gather together, pray together, go to church together. It wasn't like here where Christmas has become such a big business," Yono said.

However, Yono says those days are a thing of the past.

He has several aunts and other family members living in Iraq. He is able to talk to them on the phone occasionally, and the picture they paint of life there isn't pretty. Churches have been bombed and religious leaders assassinated.

"Life for them is very difficult," Yono said. "Over here, people are losing jobs and homes, but we live in a paradise compared to what is going on over there."

"Chaldeans were largely protected during the Saddam (Hussein) years because there was law and order. Yes there was no democracy, but there was peace. You could celebrate Christmas without fearing for your life."

Kassab said local Chaldeans will definitely be thinking of their relatives and friends back in Iraq today as they celebrate Christmas.

"The greatest Christmas gift we could have would be to see our people come back to their homes. Before that happens, however, we need conditions to improve in Iraq. We need security for Christian minorities. We also need economic development policies that will allow our people find work and rebuild their lives," Kassab said.

Nativity collection celebrates the reason for the season

BY LEANNE ROGERS
OBSERVER STAFF WRITER

One of the gifts Kim Marquette received from her husband shortly after being married was a Nativity scene.

That was the beginning of a collection that today includes more than 250 Nativity scenes which are on display through Jan. 30 at the Garden City Historical Museum inside the Straight Farmhouse.

"My son got me one and my mom got me some. I'd get some Nativity scenes at garage sales — I became a collector of family Nativity scenes," said Marquette, a Garden City resident. "I have 48 Rubbermaid tubs that they fit into."

The smallest Nativity scene in the collection fits into a match box while the largest is in front of Marquette's home during the Christmas season.

"One year at church we had a live Nativity and one side of the hall was all Nativities which we all brought in,"

said Marquette. "People said I should display them."

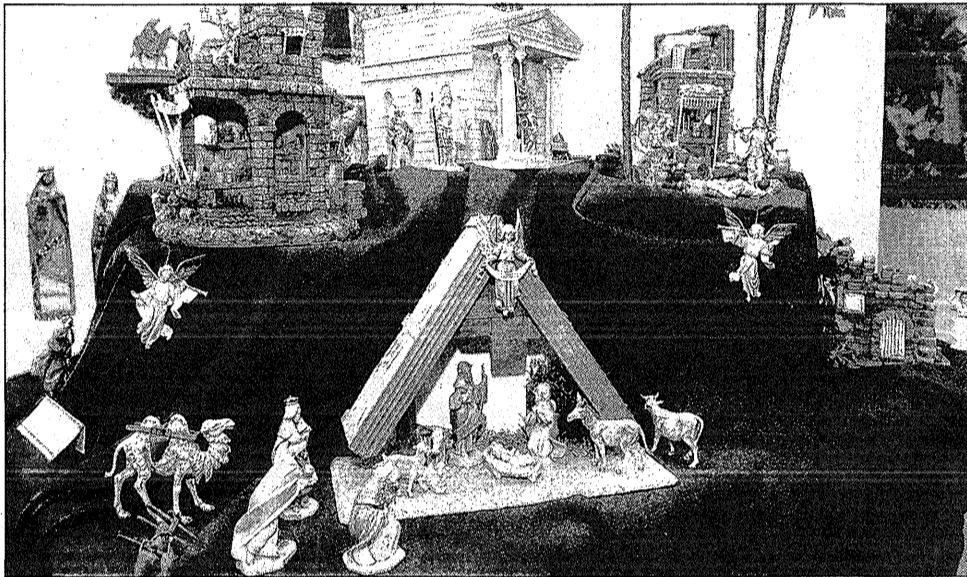
Marquette set up the displays at the museum when it had relocated to the Straight Farmhouse and decided to share her Nativity scene collection.

"I thought it would be nice to see something free for the family. People have been to the museum and are telling other people about it," said Marquette. "There had been a lot of word of mouth."

The largest Nativity on display at the museum is a Fontanini scene which belongs to Marquette's son Alan, 19. It began as a gift from Marquette's late grandfather Duane Porter, who subsequently gave money each year to add to the collection.

"He wanted something for Alan to enjoy and remember him by," said Marquette. "We keep it going and add a piece each year."

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



TOM HAWLEY | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

These Fontanini Heirloom Nativity pieces are part of Kim Marquette's collection which is on display at the Garden City Historical Museum in Straight Farmhouse. The Fontanini Heirloom pieces were first purchased by Marquette's grandfather Duane Porter for her son. A new piece is added each year in Porter's memory.

THE NATIVITY

What: A display of 250 Nativity scenes

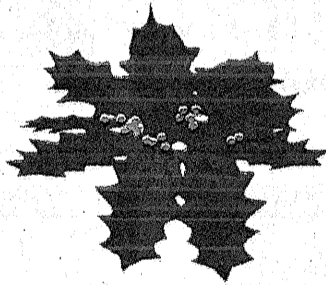
When: Noon to 3 p.m. Wednesdays and Saturdays through Jan. 30

Where: Garden City Historical Museum inside the Straight Farmhouse, 6221 Merriman, north of Ford, Garden City.

Information: Admission is free. Larger groups can schedule a visit by calling the museum at (734) 838-0650 or www.sfonline.org.



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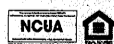
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BURGER

FROM PAGE A1

Center for Students with Autism in Garden City. Each Christmas, the 350 students are treated to a themed winter carnival, a day filled with the sights and sounds of the season and learning experiences. "What we present is a hands-on learning experience in a controlled environment with excellent teachers," said teacher Colleen Polin. "The students are challenged to learn."

The school was transformed into a village with hallways given names like Rousso Road and Berman Boulevard, honoring the Jack Rousso and Larry Berman families that provided financial support for the carnival, and Wigent Way and Cline's Corner, named for Wayne County Superintendent Christopher Wigent and



Former Burger Center staff member Judy Severin of Garden City pins a flower on student Bradley Ziquis, 9, of Westland at the flower shop. At right is classmate Justin Nobel-Shankin, 9, of Garden City.

Garden City Superintendent Michelle Cline respectively. Outside the D&D Railroad, named for Dillon and Dawson, the streets bordering the school, gave students a ride

around the school to get hot chocolate.

Classrooms were transformed into businesses like a fish market, flower shop and a guitar store where students jammed to live music and a deli by the name of No Zoup for You which offered samples of lox and cream cheese on bagels, ham and cheese sandwiches and liverwurst on crackers. The lox and liverwurst were the most popular items.

"Lox and liverwurst are the favorites, which is surprising, at least it's surprising to me," said teaching assistant Candy McHale who was making sure the "counter" was well stocked.

In the sports shop, students lined up to get the autograph of Detroit Tigers pitcher Nate Robertson. Like Santa, he's become a fixture at the



Kyle Howey, 13, of New Boston had a big smile for one of the many crafts students did.

winter carnival. His popularity showed. Several students brought cards, decorated with the old English D and he ran out of baseball cards to sign for the kids.

"They give a good Christmas party," said Robertson who was making his fifth appearance at the carnival. "Events like this ... it doesn't get any better than this."

Members of the Rousso and Berman families as well as friend Ed Battier also attended the carnival and joined students in oohing and aaah-

ing over the decorations and activities.

"I've been coming seven-eight years, it's something I look forward to," Battier said. "This is nice, very nice."

The same is true for Jack Rousso.

"I enjoy seeing the children smile, it gets better and better every year," he said.

Each year the families are given gifts to show appreciation for what they do for the school. This year they received the keys to the village. "We have a lower level at



Working on gingerbread note pads are Jacob Bellanger, 9, of Westland (front to back), Dionte Loving, 11, of Redford and Ashley Mattia, 11, also of Redford.

our home that's filled with the things they've made us, we've got everything hanging up," said Rousso's wife Noella, holding the oversized key. "We've been doing this for 17 years."

Also receiving a key was Wigent "as a thank you for maintaining the program."

"They never cease to amaze me," Wigent said. "I've been here since 9:30 and it's absolutely beautiful."

According to Polin, the staff spends four months preparing for the one-day event, but the planning started as soon as the carnival ended.

"It wouldn't be so successful, if everyone didn't join in the vision for this school," she said. "We all share in it."

PHOTOS BY TOM HAWLEY | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

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The Observer & Eccentric Newspapers

Brad Emons, editor (734) 953-2123 . bemons@hometownlife.com

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S. Claus had game before all the fame

Long before he became a force in the global toy distribution industry, the rosy-cheeked bearded fella who takes the term "all-nighter" to a higher level once a year was best known for delivering pancake blocks, full-nelson headlocks and record-shattering throws at track-and-field meets.

That's right, Santa Claus was a three-sport stud athlete back in the day.

It all started his sophomore year at North Pole Snowy Oaks High School when Claus (5-foot-10, 280 pounds) decided to set aside his wood-working tools for a few months so he could try out for the school's football team.

Undeterred by his thick, fluffy white beard (which was really annoying during those brutally hot two-a-day practices), Claus immediately established himself as one of North Pole County's most dominating offensive linemen.

"He didn't have great wheels, but his work ethic was unreal," remembered a former classmate, who requested anonymity. "He was a great leader, too, which, I guess, when you look back on it, isn't surprising. If you can coax a bunch of overweight reindeer to fly, inspiring a few high school kids to carry out their blocks until the whistle blows is a piece of cake."

With Claus serving as the team's primary pulling guard,

Please see **WRIGHT, B2**



Ed Wright



GREGORY SHAMUS PHOTOGRAPHY

Members of the Detroit Ignition celebrate seconds after Birmingham native Ryan Mack registered a game-winning goal in overtime to defeat the New Jersey Ironmen Saturday night at Compuware Arena. Mack (pictured third from right, facing camera) also scored a game-tying goal with just six seconds left in regulation.

Big 'Mack' Attack

Birmingham native's two clutch goals lead Ignition to XSL OT win

BY ED WRIGHT
OBSERVER STAFF WRITER

Ryan Mack's first Xtreme Soccer League goal wasn't nearly as X-citing as his second one.

And his first one was off-the-charts exciting.

Displaying a crowd-pleasing flair for the dramatic, Mack tallied the game-tying and game-winning goals in the Detroit Ignition's down-to-the-wire 16-14 XSL victory over the New Jersey Ironmen Saturday night at Compuware Arena.

The home-opening triumph evened the winners' record at 1-1 while the Ironmen slipped to 0-2.

"It feels really good," said Mack, moments after he sent the home crowd out into a bitterly cold night with a warm memory. "I was plugging away all game, waiting to get the first one of the season. After I scored the first one, I felt a lot more comfortable out there."

"On the game-winner, I got a nice ball from Kyt (Selaidopoulos) and I put it

through the goal-keeper's legs."

Mack, a native of Birmingham and one of the leading point-earners in the now-defunct Major Indoor Soccer League last season, said he's getting more attention from opponents now that super-scorer Jamar Beasley has departed the scene.

"During the first game (an 11-4 loss at Milwaukee), it seemed like they were targeting me more, following me around," said Mack. "It was kind of nice when Jamar was here and I was the guy behind the scenes."

"I have to go out every night and perform as well as I can and help the team when I can."

Mack was one of three home-grown players who played major roles in the Ignition's victory.

Livonia's Tino Scicluna found the back of the net on two of the three shots he fired at Ironmen net-minder Brett Phillips. And former University of Detroit Mercy star Vahid Assadpour chalked up two goals and an assist for the hosts. "The first month has been

kind of tough for us getting used to one another, plus we've had a lot of injuries," said Mack, referring to how the rebuilt Ignition is meshing. "But a lot of guys stepped up tonight that hadn't played a lot before. I think we showed a lot of heart and I think that's why we pulled through tonight."

"Winning tonight was awesome, especially because it was so frustrating losing our first game. I think it was important to show our fans that we're still a solid team after we went through some adversity."

Detroit goal-keeper Danny Waltman earned his 100th professional indoor soccer win by stopping 33 shots.

Phillips stuffed 29 shots for the Ironmen.

Detroit wiped out a 3-0 first-quarter lead with goals from Josh Rife and Assadpour.

The Ignition doubled its advantage to 6-3 2:29 into the second quarter when Drew Crawford slid a perfect pass to Assadpour, who one-timed it home.

The Ironmen closed their

halftime gap to 6-5 with 25.7 seconds left in the quarter when Rey Martinez capped a 3-on-none break-out with a top-shelf goal.

Detroit led 10-9 after three, but slipped into a 14-10 hole when New Jersey's Shawn Boney converted a Lucio Gonzaga pass with 4:38 to play.

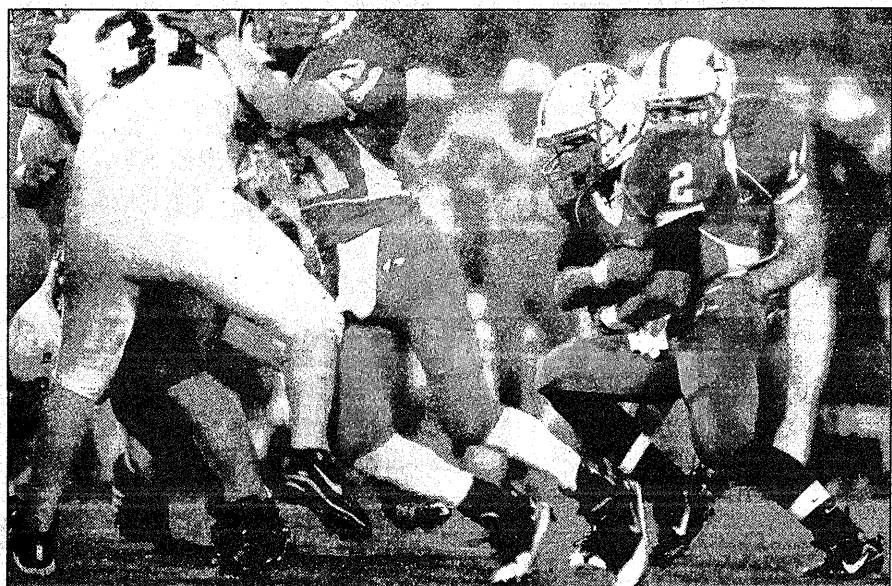
The Ignition's dramatic rally was sparked by Crawford's goal from Assadpour with 2:45 to play.

That set the stage for the heroics of Mack, who tied the game with 5.8 ticks left after securing a Selaidopoulos free-kick pass on the left wing and hammering the ball past Phillips.

The game-winner came 3:06 into the extra session when he scored from a ridiculous angle along the boards, ripping a shot through Phillips' five-hole.

Mack led Detroit with 10 shots. Zach Wilkes notched a team-high four blocks.

The Ignition returns to action on Saturday when it travels to Chicago to take on the Storm at the Sears Centre.



TOM HOFFMEYER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Star burst

Canton's Kiere Daniels (2) looks for running room as he takes a hand-off during Friday night's regional game against Livonia Stevenson. Daniels was selected to the first team All-Observer squad, which is featured on page B3.

Marquee Monday

Stars abound, but Trojans fall

BY TIM SMITH
OBSERVER STAFF WRITER

Two of the state's top senior boys basketball players went head-to-head Monday night at Livonia Clarenceville.

Fans were treated to plenty of highlight-reel slams and nifty plays from both Clarenceville guard Jamie Stewart and Ann Arbor Gabriel Richard powerhouse center Eso Akunne.

But a 29-point, nine-rebound, five-block performance from the 6-3, 217-pound Akunne trumped Stewart's dazzling dunks and 25-point, 14-rebound outing. The Fighting Irish scored 28 third-quarter points en route to an 85-65 non-conference

triumph.

"He's a tough matchup on the high school level," Trojans head coach Corey McKendry said about Akunne. "We put other guys on him early and we were forced to put Jamie on him."

"I thought those two went at it tonight. They both left everything on the floor tonight. They're both outstanding high school players. As a fan it was fun to watch those two play."

According to Gabriel Richard head coach Pete Schoch, whose team improved to 3-0 and is ranked No. 3 in Class B, there is no telling how much Akunne can accomplish.

"He's a phenomenal player. What sets Eso apart is he's very unselfish

Please see **HOOPS, B2**

Sidelines

Figure-skating extravaganza

The Arctic Figure Skating Club will be hosting a dress rehearsal skate for the January 2009 Figure Skating Nationals in Cleveland, Ohio on Saturday, Dec. 27, at 7 p.m. at the Arctic Edge Ice Arena, which is located at 46615 Michigan Ave. in Canton.

All of the Arctic Figure Skating Club pairs teams will be performing, including Canadian National champions and world silver medalists Scott Moir and Tessa Virtue, and U.S. National silver medalists Meryl Davis and Charlie White.

For more information, call (734) 487-7777.

The exhibition is open to the public and admission is free.

Ocelots roll

The Schoolcraft College women's basketball team thumped Scottsdale (Az.) Community College, 84-62, Sunday in a game played in Scottsdale. The victory improved the No. 7-ranked Ocelots' record to 9-1. Scottsdale slipped to 2-7.

Led by Brittany Collins' 17 points, five Ocelots hit for double-figures in scoring. Other key contributors on offense were: April Goins (15 points, 12 rebounds), Salem grad Tayler Langham (12 points), Antania Shepherd (11) and Jasmine Brown (10). Schoolcraft led 46-36 at the half.

NRCLL signups

The North Redford Central Little League is continuing 2009 registration for T-ball, baseball and fast-pitch softball.

The next of several planned dates at the Redford Public Library, located on Six Mile across from Glenhurst Golf Course (west of Telegraph) is noon to 4 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 17.

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No place like home: Patriots rule own mats

Livonia Franklin's wrestling team gave itself an early holiday present Saturday by winning its own Patriot Invitational. Franklin scored 315 points to lead the 10-team field followed by Northville and Ann Arbor Pioneer with 256.5 and 211.5, respectively. The Patriots came away with four individual titles led by Paul

PREP WRESTLING

Hanni (119 pounds), Brandon Billiau (145), Cody Hay (215) and Mike Modes (285). "This wasn't one of the harder tournaments that we will go to this year, but everyone got some good matches in," Franklin coach Dave Chiola said. "A lot

of teams pulled out because it landed on the same day as Oakland County and Macomb County (tournaments) this year, but there were still some very good wrestlers at every weight. This format allowed everyone to get five matches and I was able to wrestle a lot of my JV kids." Runner-up finishers for the

Patriots included Steve Tuyo (112), Elvin Ferreira (160), Don Stratz (171) and Matt Roos (160), the latter whom was competing for the Franklin 'B' team. Rian Klein (103), Erik Czech (125), Alex O'Connor (152) and Nick Simmons (189) each added fourths for Franklin. "With the snowstorm and the

injuries we've had - this was a perfect tournament for us," Chiola said. "January is going to be a big month - we have a lot of tough tournaments and meets. I just want to get everyone healthy and on the mat so we can see what we have. The experience that my JV kids are getting right now will be important for the stretch run."

Lutheran Westland had two individual champions - Laith Francis at 125 and Stephen Kemp at 171. Kemp edged Franklin's Stratz for the title, 2-1. Other top finishers for the Warriors included Craig Kowalski (215), third; Justin Palka (140), fourth; and Breck Crandell (135), fifth.

HOOPS

FROM PAGE B1

and he makes those around him better," Schoch said. "That elevates us as a team. If he was just fixated on numbers ... the only number he's fixated on is the scoreboard."

LESSON LEARNED

Meanwhile, McKendry talked about the next step - where his team and one like Gabriel Richard might again go at it as

premier teams - perhaps in the postseason.

"I talked (with players) early in the year about last year. We won 18 games and lost in the first round of the districts," McKendry said. "We learned our lesson. We're playing people that are very good, and we're just trying to learn and get better so that at the end of the year we can beat a team like that (Gabriel Richard). It's better to take a loss early than late."

McKendry added that Gabriel Richard has "a great team and you can tell they've played a lot

of ball together." Akunne proved difficult to stop, whether slashing through the paint for a layup or launching a long jumper.

But he had substantial offensive help from junior forward Matt Jenkins (22 points) and junior guard Josh Herbeck (21 points, seven rebounds, five assists) as Gabriel Richard built leads of 24-11 after one quarter and 37-31 at the break.

"Jenkins really had a phenomenal game and I'm happy for him," Schoch said. "He's usually not that much of a scorer, but tonight he mentioned going into the game he was going to really be very aggressive."

"When he hit those first couple jump shots, he really felt good about himself and that carried over to the rest of his game."

BACK IN THE GAME

Clarenceville actually considered itself in good shape at halftime, having erased much of an 18-point deficit during the final six minutes of the second quarter.

Gabriel Richard built a 35-17 lead early in the second, when McKendry called a timeout. The Trojans (1-2) allowed only two Akunne free throws the rest of the quarter, with Stewart registering 10 points during the stretch.

Stewart took an inbounds pass under the Fighting Irish basket and threw down a slam with 2:20 remaining, making it a 35-27 contest. He then connected on a beautiful finger roll and, with the horn sounding, sank a fadeaway jumper from the left flank.

During intermission, McKendry and his players discussed getting over the hump and forcing Gabriel Richard out of its zone coverage.

"We talked at halftime after we made our run, I mean we were down 18 and showed a lot of heart to cut it back to two (37-35 early in the third)," McKendry said. "We felt if we could ever get the lead, we could pull them out of their zone and try to make them play man-to-man." The Trojans couldn't quite

make it, falling behind 46-37 with 5:45 left in the third. They did briefly flirt with another comeback, however, reducing that deficit to 48-44 with 4:40 left in the stanza on another Stewart dunk.

On that play, senior guard Darryl Whitaker (nine points, seven assists) sent a bounce pass from the right wing down low to Stewart, who slammed the ball through the cylinder.

COMEBACK STALLS

All that did was rile up the Fighting Irish, igniting a 17-7 spurt to cap off a huge quarter (28 points) and go up 65-51 entering the fourth. Combining for all 17 points during that surge were Akunne, Herbeck and Jenkins.

"They just made plays, that's what good teams do," McKendry said. "We showed we're right there with them, (but) we just didn't make enough plays to get it done tonight."

The deficit never was less than 10 points for the home team the rest of the night.

"Jamie showed, against one of the best teams in the state, that he's as good as anyone out there," McKendry said. "We've got to get our other guys to step up a little bit and figure out how to play off of Jamie."

"And Jamie's got to find his teammates when teams double him. Once we learn to do that a little bit, we'll be very tough to stop. But we gave up 85 points. You can't do that and win."

Also in double figures for the Trojans were senior power forward Jeremy Gainer (15 points, 12 rebounds) and senior guard Nathan Clark (10 points).

Clarenceville's Tuesday night game at Westland John Glenn (a makeup for Friday's snow-related postponement) was postponed a second time. No date was announced for when the contest will take place.

Next for the Trojans is Saturday's matchup against defending Detroit Public School League champion Detroit Northwestern at the Romulus Holiday Tournament.

tsmith@hometownlife.com

CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF CANTON ACCESS TO PUBLIC MEETINGS

The Charter Township of Canton will provide necessary reasonable auxiliary aids and services, such as signers for the hearing impaired and audio tapes of printed materials being considered at the meeting, to individuals with disabilities at the meeting/hearing upon two weeks notice to the Charter Township of Canton. Individuals with disabilities requiring auxiliary aids or services should contact the Charter Township of Canton by writing or calling the following:

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Publish: December 25, 2008

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City of Westland

Invitation to Bid

Sealed proposals will be received by the City of Westland Purchasing Division, 36601 Ford Road, Westland, Michigan, 48185-2298, on **January 8, 2009 at 2:00 p.m.** (no exceptions will be made for late filings) for the following:

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Complete specifications and pertinent information may be obtained from the Purchasing Office or at <http://www.CityofWestland.com>. The City of Westland reserves the right to reject any or all bids.

Jade M. Smith
Controller
City of Westland

Publish: December 25, 2008

069837171-2x2.5

WRIGHT

FROM PAGE B1

Snowy Oaks running backs Joe Donner and Billy Blitzen both eclipsed 1,000 yards rushing one season.

"On the 25 and 36 pitch sweeps," one former teammate recalled, "Santa would get out in front of those running backs and yell, 'On Donner! On Blitzen!' It was pretty cool watching him pave a path for those guys." (Rumor has it there's some

vintage footage of Claus in action on YouTube, but I haven't been able to track it down yet.)

Considering his lofty gridiron success, Claus could have been even better, one former teammate sighed, shaking his head.

"That kid had all the skills, but he didn't have that mean streak that the great ones have," he lamented. "He was too, um - what's the word I'm looking for? - jolly. If he hadn't of been so doggone jolly, I think he could have played at the next level."

Legend has it that one Division II school - Candy Cane Tech - offered Claus a partial scholarship to play football, but he declined when

he found out the school didn't offer a major in package distribution.

The rotund - but surprisingly agile - Claus carried his passion for athletics to the wrestling mats as soon as football season concluded. He discovered modest success serving as his team's 285-pound heavy-weight.

However, as in football, he didn't quite reach his potential. "With his quickness, strength and smarts, he would have been an outstanding - and I mean outstanding! - 215-pounder if he just could have shed a few pounds," one ex-Snowy Oaks grappler insisted.

"But he couldn't stay away from those darned milk and cookies."

In the spring, Claus starred as a thrower on the Snowy Oaks track-and-field team. While he posted solid numbers, it was his theatrics while throwing that drew most of the attention.

"As soon as he launched the disc, he would grunt, then yell out something that sounded all the world like 'Merry Christmas!'" reflected his former track coach. "But it turns out what he was really saying was, 'Carry, Discus!'"

While Claus graduated from high school with nine varsity letters and a sleigh-ful of competition-stoked memories, he's regarded by many North Pole residents as somewhat of an underachiever due to his laid-back disposition.

"Looking back now," one of Claus's high school buddies said recently, "it's a good thing he didn't reach his athletic potential. I mean, what if he would have really excelled in football, played in college and been drafted by the NFL? Who would have delivered all those presents on Christmas Eve - the Easter Bunny?"

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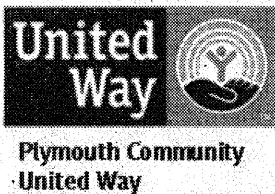
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STATE OF MICHIGAN, PROBATE COURT, COUNTY OF WAYNE, File No. 2008-737362-DE

NOTICE TO CREDITORS

Decedent's Estate
Estate of Roy T. Syer, Deceased, Date of Birth: August 31, 1925.

NOTICE TO CREDITORS:

The decedent, Roy T. Syer, who lived at 18925 Gillman Street, Livonia, Michigan, died August 3, 2008. Creditors of the decedent are notified that all claims against the estate will be forever barred unless presented to Jack T. Syer, named personal representative, or to both the probate court at 1305 CAYM, Two Woodward Avenue, Detroit, Michigan 48226, and the named personal representative within 4 months after the date of publication of this notice.

Personal Representative: Jack T. Syer, 18936 Gillman Street, Livonia, Michigan 48152. Telephone No.: (248) 867-8820

Attorney: Karen L. Kayes, P-41751, 400 Terrace Plaza, PO Box 900, Muskegon, MI 49443-0900. Telephone No.: (231) 727-2600.

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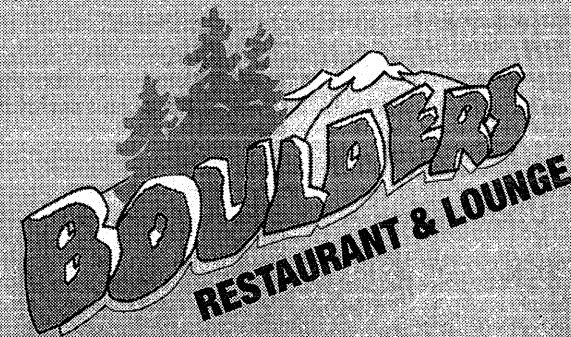
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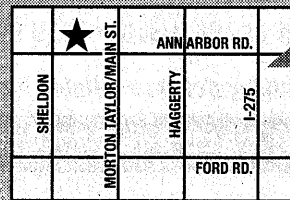
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Former Stevenson High QB facing charges in MSU brawl

BY JOE REXRODE
GANNETT NEWS SERVICE

Two people are facing charges in connection with the Oct. 19 fight involving Michigan State hockey and football players, the Ingham County Prosecutor's office confirmed today.



Mitchell White

assault and battery, at arraignments to be scheduled. The individuals have not been named by the prosecutor's office because they

East Lansing 54-B District Court documents show that freshman running back Glenn Winston will face three counts of misdemeanor aggravated assault, while walk-on freshman defensive back Mitchell White of Livonia will be charged with misdemeanor

have not yet been arraigned on the charges, Ingham County Prosecutor Stuart Dunnings III said. Warrants have been issued for their arrests.

The three counts of aggravated assault could mean a maximum penalty of a year in

jail for Winston. The assault and battery charge for White carries a maximum sentence of 93 days in jail.

Dunnings said the incident took place at a party at a house that was "principally occupied by hockey players." Two men were "having a discussion about a female," Dunnings said, and that led to an altercation between some of their friends.

That fight ended, and one of the people involved left and brought back some friends, Dunnings said. Heavy fighting ensued.

"And there were serious inju-

ries to two people who really weren't fighting," Dunnings said. "I don't know how else to put it. They were just kind of there."

MSU hockey player A.J. Sturges was one of those who received injuries. He was briefly hospitalized with a head injury after the incident.

According to the Associated Press, Michigan State athletic director Mark Hollis said in a statement Monday that "no member of the university community should experience this kind of injury."

"While I am displeas-

with the circumstances and actions that led to these charges, I respect the integrity and approach of our coaching staffs, East Lansing Police Department and prosecutor's office in their response to the situation," Hollis said. "Most importantly, my thoughts continue to be with A.J. Sturges, a respected student-athlete on our ice hockey team."

Winston, from Detroit Denby, and White, a 2008 Stevenson High grad, could not immediately be reached for comment.

During the 2007 high school

football season, White, a quarterback, helped lead Stevenson to a 13-1 record and a runner-up finish in the Division 1 state championship game.

White was also the 2008 Division 1 high jump state champion and competed in MSU's first indoor track and field meet this month, clearing 6 feet, 9 inches. Mitchell's twin brother Myles is a scholarship wide receiver who is being red-shirted on the MSU football team.

The Observer sports staff contributed to this report.

LOCAL PERSONALITIES GO HEAD TO HEAD

125-67	118-74	120-72	119-73	129-63	125-67	130-62	126-66	121-71
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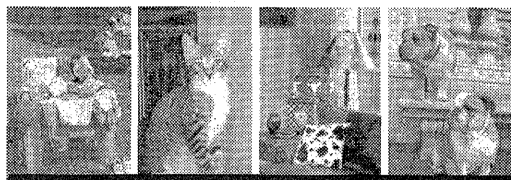
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GMC SUBURBAN LT 1999 Leather, 3rd seat, loaded, sharp! \$6,950

JOHN ROGIN BUICK 734-525-0900

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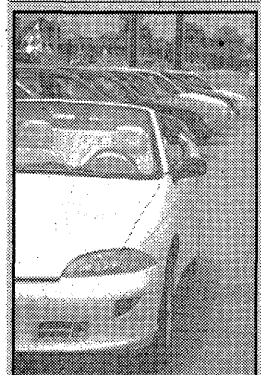
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Finishing Strong: Cpo Sales To Match Last Year's

Advertising Feature

CAReport



By Dale Buss



Search high and low through statistics about U.S. auto sales this year, and you'll find practically nothing to brag about. But one silver lining does emerge: sales of "certified pre-owned" vehicles.

Even through the industry's darkest days of the third quarter, sales of certified pre-owned units for most OEMs selling in the American market were ahead of or at least even with last year - while new and general used-car sales had declined at ferocious double-digit rates.

The fourth quarter finally has managed to bring down the "CPO" segment a bit, but these vehicles have remained the most robust portion of an extremely weak overall market.

As they finish the year relatively strong, in fact, the biggest drag on CPO sales may not be consumers' general reluctance to buy vehicles but, actually, a restricted supply of top-shelf used automobiles that are eligible for OEM certification.

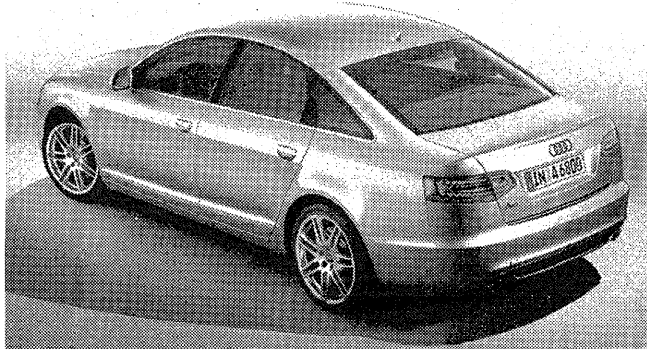
"There is an incredible shortage of one-to-five-year-old used cars because so many have been purchased under long-term contracts that people don't want to get rid of them," said Art Spinella, president of CNW Marketing Research, in Bandon, Ore.

"So people can't find good certifiable used cars. You have to rely on daily rentals and corporate fleets now to find them, and most of them are pretty beat up."

Even through the teeth of the incipient automotive recession, American consumers have been demonstrating strong demand for CPOs.

Ford's CPO sales were up by 29 percent over last year, through November, in its Southwest Region and up by nearly 8 percent in California - the two parts of the country where the company first launched a round of program improvements earlier this year.

And for the year through November, Chrysler's overall CPO sales were up by about 1 percent.



The A6 sedan is among the Audi models that have become hot in the Certified Pre-Owned market.



Hummer's new 2009 H3T is finding demand by CPO buyers.

GM's overall Certified Used Vehicles sales were off only 7 percent for the year to date, through November. Cadillac Certified Used sales had risen by 7 percent for the year. And this arena remained practically the only solace this year for GM's troubled brands: Hummer's Certified Used sales through October rose by 66 percent compared with a year ago, while Saab's Certified Used sales were up nearly 4 percent.

Audi's pre-owned sales remained nearly 23 percent higher through November than a year earlier, and the company was on pace to exceed 32,000 U.S. CPO sales after 27,000 last year. Meanwhile, BMW's CPO sales in the United States rose by 16 percent for the year, through November.

And Lexus CPO sales were up about 5 percent through November; for the year, with the company still projecting the possibility that, for all of 2008, they will surpass the 2007 level that was up about 8 percent over 2006 CPO sales.

Through November, industry-wide sales of factory-certified CPO vehicles actually were almost exactly flat with a year ago, at 1.547 million units sold, according to Edmunds.com, while new-car sales were down nearly 15 percent overall, and used-car sales at franchised dealers through October were down by 7 percent.

So most OEMs are backing their CPO programs more heavily than ever. Among the recent initiatives are a couple by GM.

GM's Certified Used effort has been suffering lately in contrast with those even of other Detroit Three automakers in large part because of the perception that

GM dealers are having difficulty financing all consumer purchases.

But GM also has been going aggressively after more CPO business. Last spring, for example, it began listing its Certified Used inventories on eBay Motors, free for dealers. Vehicles are listed as online classifieds rather than for sale in an eBay online auction.

"It's meeting all of our expectations so far," said Mark Mathews, GM's director of used-car activities. "Leads are coming off of it. But we're still trying to make it as vibrant as possible," he said, including feeding eBay Motors GM's ideas about how to improve navigation and graphics.

Meanwhile, GM also approved Sister Technologies, Dallas, as a vendor to create used-vehicle walk-around videos for its U.S. dealers to use on their sites as well as on auto portals and YouTube. About 25 percent of all U.S. dealers now use online video, said Howard Poliner, director of industry relations for AutoTrader.com, the Atlanta-based online service.

"It's far more engaging for customers to look at video instead of still pictures," Mathews said. About 85 percent to 90 percent more leads come from videos than from photos, "and we get about 70 percent more calls directly to a dealer in terms of inventory searches," he said. "We're encouraging our Certified Used dealers to use this."



Automotive classified ads for Chevrolet (Chevrolet, Chevrolet), Ford (Ford), Hyundai (Hyundai), Mazda (Mazda), Nissan (Nissan), Pontiac (Pontiac), and others. Includes models like AVEO, MARAUDER, ESCAPE, and more.

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Volkswagen RAV4 2005 4WD, moonroof \$16,998 AVIS FORD (248) 355-7515

Volvo S60 2003 All Wheel Drive, leather, 61K miles, extra sharp! \$12,900 Hines Park Lincoln Mercury 1-866-455-5332

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Don't hesitate, make reservations for dinner at the Century Theatre, seats at "The Rat Pack is Back!" at the adjoining Gem Theatre, or a dinner and show package for this New Year's Eve. Champagne will flow after the 9:30 p.m. show. See David DeCosta as Frank Sinatra (from left), Kyle Diamond as Sammy Davis Jr., Mickey Joseph as Joey Bishop and Bobby Mayo Jr. as Dean Martin.

Ring in the new year — on about any budget

BY STEPHANIE ANGELYN CASOLA
STAFF WRITER

FOR THE STROKE OF MIDNIGHT

Because we can never remember all the words to that traditional song, written originally as a poem by Robert Burns in the 1700s, here's a cheat sheet to "Auld Lang Syne."

Should auld acquaintance be forgot
and never brought to mind?
Should auld acquaintance be forgot
and days of auld lang syne?
For auld lang syne, my dear,
for auld lang syne,
we'll take a cup of kindness yet,
for auld lang syne.

Should auld acquaintance be forgot
and never brought to mind?
Should auld acquaintance be forgot
and days of auld lang syne?
And here's a hand, my trusty friend
And gie's a hand o' thine
We'll tak' a cup o' kindness yet
for auld lang syne

It's less than a week away before the clink of champagne glasses toast in 2009. Have you made your plans yet? Whether you're a snuggle-by-the-fire sort or you plan to paint the town red at any expense, FILTER has you covered.

FOR POCKET CHANGE

New Year's Eve can be just as enjoyable spent at home among friends or loved ones as it can with elaborate dinners or dancing. Try one of these non-plans and cozy up for the coming year:

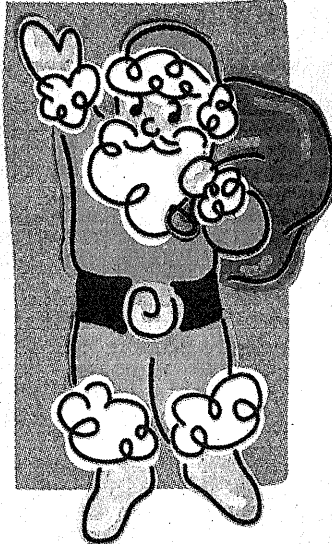
Make it a movie night, no date required — Rent a DVD, grab a stack of pillows and warm blankets and set up a living room picnic with popcorn and peach mimosas — or ginger ale with a cinnamon stick. For the young, and young-at-heart, you can't lose with animated classics like *Rudolph's Shiny New Year* or *Happy New Year, Charlie Brown*. Grown-ups might choose a favorite director — Alfred Hitchcock, Woody Allen or Ingmar Bergman — and squeeze in a double feature before the clock strikes 12. Stick to the holiday theme with a comedy like *When Harry Met Sally*, a romance like *The Apartment* or a mystery like *After The Thin Man*.

Heat up the oven and click on the TV — Plan ahead and make your own indulgent New Year's Eve dinner, complete with a des-



Rent a classic and stay in Dec. 31.

Please see **NEW YEAR, D5**



Holiday Happenings

Events

The Big, Bright Light Show: Downtown Rochester lights the night with its dazzling display of more than 500,000 lights coating all the buildings along Main. The free event, through Jan. 4, 2009 attracts more than 1 million visitors. Expect a traffic jam but it's still a sight to behold.

Wayne County LightFest: Drive through more than four miles of light displays along Hines Drive, beginning at Merriman. Cost is \$5 per car, call (734) 261-1990 for details. The display runs to Jan. 1, 2009.

Holiday Nights: Greenfield Village will transform into a living Christmas card with its candle-lit paths, Model T and carriage rides, ice skating and decorated home tours for this seasonal favorite, 6:30-10 p.m. Saturday-Sunday, Dec. 27-28. Tickets \$12.50-\$17, children under 4 enter free. Add dinner at the Eagle Tavern for \$64.50 to \$68.50. Parking costs \$5. The Henry Ford is at 20900 Oakwood Blvd., in Dearborn. Visit www.thehenryford.com.

The Henry Ford: See *Polar Express*, in all its IMAX glory, now showing at 20900 Oakwood Blvd., Dearborn. Call (313) 271-1570.

On Canvas

Paint Creek Center for the Arts: Get ready for handmade holiday-themed works in glass, ceramic, fiber and more with *Holiday Objects Up and Down*, through Jan. 3, 2009, at 407 Pine Street, Rochester. Call (248) 651-4110.

On Stage

Spend Xmas with Ced n Teri: Mikey Brown and Sarah Switanowski celebrate the holidays by bringing their Webisode characters Cedrick and Teri to life, along with musical guests, in *A Very Ced n Teri Xmas*, 8 p.m. Friday-Saturday, through Dec. 27, Planet Ant, 2357 Caniff, Hamtramck. Tickets, \$10-\$15, call (313) 365-4948.

Fox Theatre: Like a Christmas Card set to music, see Irving Berlin's *White Christmas*, running to Dec. 28, tickets \$20-\$100, 2211 Woodward, Detroit. Visit OlympiaEntertainment.com or call (248) 433-1515.

Compiled by Stephanie Angelyn Casola

Classical Chinese dance show returns to Michigan

Elaborate costumes, music that's both soft and bold, stage designs that add color to gray winter days, master choreography and classically trained dancers — it's all part of the show by The Divine Performing Arts performing classical Chinese dance and music.

The Divine Performing Arts Spectacular will be held at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday-Wednesday Dec. 30 and 31 at the Ford Community & Performing Arts in Dearborn.

It's the second time the group has performed in Michigan this year — that's how popular it is.

It receives critical acclaim worldwide.



Elegant Chinese ethnic and folk dances highlight the Divine Performing Arts show.

Divine Performing Arts brings Chinese dance and music to life with an exhilarating show. Graceful routines include classical processions to ethnic dances.

Tickets are \$49-\$99. Visit www.divineperformingarts.org for more information.

Location is 15801 Michigan Avenue, Dearborn.

Lana Mini

Ferndale band creates great ambient Christmas music

Merry Christmas! We want to spread some cheer, through music to you!

We love the name of this Ferndale-based band: *Computer Perfection*.

We love the name of the Web site: www.romanticair.com (it's the Detroit and New York recording company).

And we love that for Christmas they have created a fun, upbeat, hip holiday album titled *Christmas Party with Computer Perfection & friends*, with guest musicians.



The CD *A Christmas Party* by the band Computer Perfection is available to the public for free download. The CD is worth listening to during Christmas dinner.

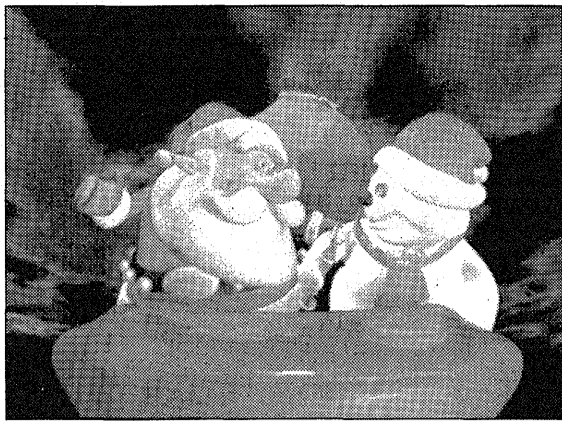
Download it for free.

Songs include classics like Computer Perfection performing *Silent Night*.

We recommend the ambient song *Purple Snowflakes* and the fun version of *Feliz Navidad*.

Please see **BAND, D2**

"Santa Vs. The Snowman"



BY STEPHANIE ANGELYN CASOLA
O&E STAFF WRITER

Filtering your entertainment best bets for the holiday weekend, beginning Dec. 25, 2008:

25 Click on the leg-lamp and take a time-out tonight to laugh along with

PURE PICKS

Ralphie in his never-ending quest for a Red Ryder BB gun, as TBS resumes its 24-hour loop of the holiday classic, *A Christmas Story*, airing until 8 p.m.

26 From his roots in New Orleans to his rise as one of the Hot Boys to being a top Grammy contender

with his latest record, *The Carter III*, rapper Lil Wayne may be at the top of his game. After all, the album sold 1 million copies in its first week, more than any other record opening this year. See him perform

along with Keyshia Cole, T-Pain, Gym Class Heroes and Keri Hilson, tonight at Joe Louis Arena, 600 Civic Center Drive, Detroit. Doors open at 6 p.m. and the show begins at 7 p.m. Tickets \$39.75 to \$79.75, call (248) 645-6666 or visit www.ticketmaster.com.

27 Detroit darlings *The Hard Lessons* always manage to give their all on stage, which makes this trio — Augie, KoKo and The Anvil — a natural choice for a holiday weekend party. Don't miss out on the band's 3rd annual *Post-Christmas Blowout*. Doors open at 7 p.m. tonight and the show high-kicks in at 8 p.m. at St. Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress, Detroit. Tickets \$12, call (248) 645-6666 or visit www.ticketmaster.com.

28 You can almost hear the whistling melody and see the high-flying basketball dunks now, so get the family packed and over to Palace of Auburn Hills in time for the *Harlem Globetrotters'*



KoKo Louise and Augie of *The Hard Lessons* wish you a Happy Holiday season, and give you the 3rd Annual Post-Christmas Blowout.

2009 World Tour, it arrives a little early at 6 p.m. today, to metro Detroit. The Palace is at 1 Championship Drive, Auburn Hills. Tickets \$15-\$39.50, call (248) 645-6666 or visit www.palacenet.com.

29 Get something for nothing today. It's the Detroit Science Center's gift to Seniors. Today marks the final Senior Monday, which offers free general admission to anyone 60 and older. Bring the whole family and enjoy holiday features like *Santa Vs. The Snowman*, showing at 10 a.m., 1 p.m. and 4 p.m. in the IMAX theater, or *Holiday Laser Magic* at noon and 2 p.m. at the Dassault Systems Planetarium. On exhibit is *Leonardo Da Vinci: Man, Inventor, Genius*, all at the science center, 5020 John R. in Detroit. Tickets \$13.95 to \$16.95, call (313) 577-8400 or visit www.detroitsciencecenter.org to plan your visit.

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5 GOLDEN GLOBE NOMINATIONS
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BEST ACTOR BEST DIRECTOR BEST SCREENPLAY
Frank Langella Ron Howard Peter Morgan

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Kenneth Turan, LOS ANGELES TIMES

"ABSOLUTELY ELECTRIC"
James Christopher, THE LONDON TIMES

"ONE OF THE YEAR'S BEST"
Peter Travers, ROLLING STONE

"ENTHRALLING"
Claudia Puig, USA TODAY

"ABSORBING AND EXCITING"
David Denby, THE NEW YORKER

4 CRITICS' CHOICE AWARD NOMINATIONS BEST PICTURE

FRANK LANGELLA MICHAEL SHEEN

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BAND
FROM PAGE D1

The Chicago band The 1900s performs *Winter LAS*, while Buttermilk Daydream does a song called *Sleigh Ride*. And there are saucier tunes such as *Santa Baby* by Panic C and Sharon. All of Computer Perfection's members hail from the now-defunct pop

band Pas/Cal. The band's full-length debut is due out in 2009. We will keep you posted. In the meantime the *Christmas Party* EP is just a little holiday treat. Download the album at www.romanticair.com. For Computer Perfection's regular music visit myspace.com/computerperfection. Happy Holidays!

Lana Mini

USA WEEKEND
DECEMBER 26-28, 2008
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USA WEEKEND MAGAZINE

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Observer & Eccentric and Mirror
NEWSPAPERS

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Ring out the year with special wines

It's safe to say that as a reader of this column you've tried Australian wines. But have you tried Penfolds?



Focus on Wine
Ray & Eleanor Heald

Chief wine maker Peter Gago calls it the "world's largest boutique winery." And rightly so. We're now 164 years old," Gago says of Penfolds. "To some people, the range of wines we make may appear a bit daunting."

THREE DISTINCT STYLES

More than half of all Penfolds wines fall into the style category of multi-regional blends. Koonunga Hill Shiraz Cabernet (2005 vintage at \$12) is a good example as a blend based on Barossa Valley, McLaren Vale and Coonawarra

grapes. In each vintage, Penfolds wine makers under the direction of Gago, seek to maintain Koonunga Hill's various red wines as superior values at \$12.

Penfolds Thomas Hyland wines are also in the multi-regional style. Although the Chardonnay (2007 at \$16) is an evolving style expressing fruit from the Adelaide region. There's loads of value in this range.

Next rung on the ladder is single region wines with major examples, RWT Shiraz (2005 at \$90) from Barossa grapes, Bin 128 (2005 at \$22), a Coonawarra shiraz and Bin 51 Eden Valley Riesling (2007 at \$20). The two shiraz wines are decidedly different. RWT is seductive with aromas from violets to red and black fruits, ending with brown spices and hints of French oak. Bin 128 is distinctively Coonawarra with loads of heft, weight and regional flavor from the unique red soil.

Bin 51 Riesling highlights a new chapter in the long Penfolds history. South Australia, and in particular the Eden Valley, is gaining recognition for producing dry riesling with lime and apple aromas along with a decidedly

mineral edge. We've reached the third rung with single vineyard wine styles that account for less than 10 percent of Penfolds wines. St. Henri Shiraz (2004 at \$51) epitomizes this category with pure unadulterated fruit due to no new oak aging. Gago considers it the "finest since 1990."

THE PEAK
At the Penfolds peak is the

current 2003 release of Grange, \$300, which requires medium to long-term aging to fully develop its immense complexity. It's not a stretch to say that it showcases the Penfolds philosophy of multi-vineyard, multi-district blending philosophy. Aging in American oak marks this wine at the spicier end of the shiraz wines produced by Penfolds.

WINE PICKS

Serve some change-of-pace wines for the New Year's holiday.
■ Picks of the pack: 2007 Pine Ridge Chenin Blanc-Viognier, \$14, and 2007 Dutton Goldfield Dutton Ranch-Shop Block Pinot Blanc, \$25.
■ Fruit and spice: 2007 Pietra Santa Gewurztraminer \$15; 2007 Helfrich Alsace Gewurztraminer \$15 (off-dry); and 2007 Clos LaChance Viognier \$22.
■ Wallet-friendly: 2008 Man Vintners Chenin Blanc (South Africa) \$10.

Eleanor & Ray Heald are Contributing Editors for the internationally-respected Quarterly Review of Wines and Troy residents who write about wine for

the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers. Contact them by e-mail at focusonwine@aol.com.

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5 GOLDEN GLOBE NOMINATIONS BEST PICTURE (Drama)

BEST DIRECTOR BEST ACTOR (Drama)

David Fincher Brad Pitt

BEST SCREENPLAY

Screened by Eric Roth and Robin Swicord
Story by Eric Roth
Screenplay by Eric Roth

BEST ORIGINAL SCORE

Alexandre Desplat

TIME

"A SPRAWLING, ENTHRALLING MOVIE."
-Richard Coles

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"ONE OF THE BEST MOVIES OF THE DECADE."
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Newsweek

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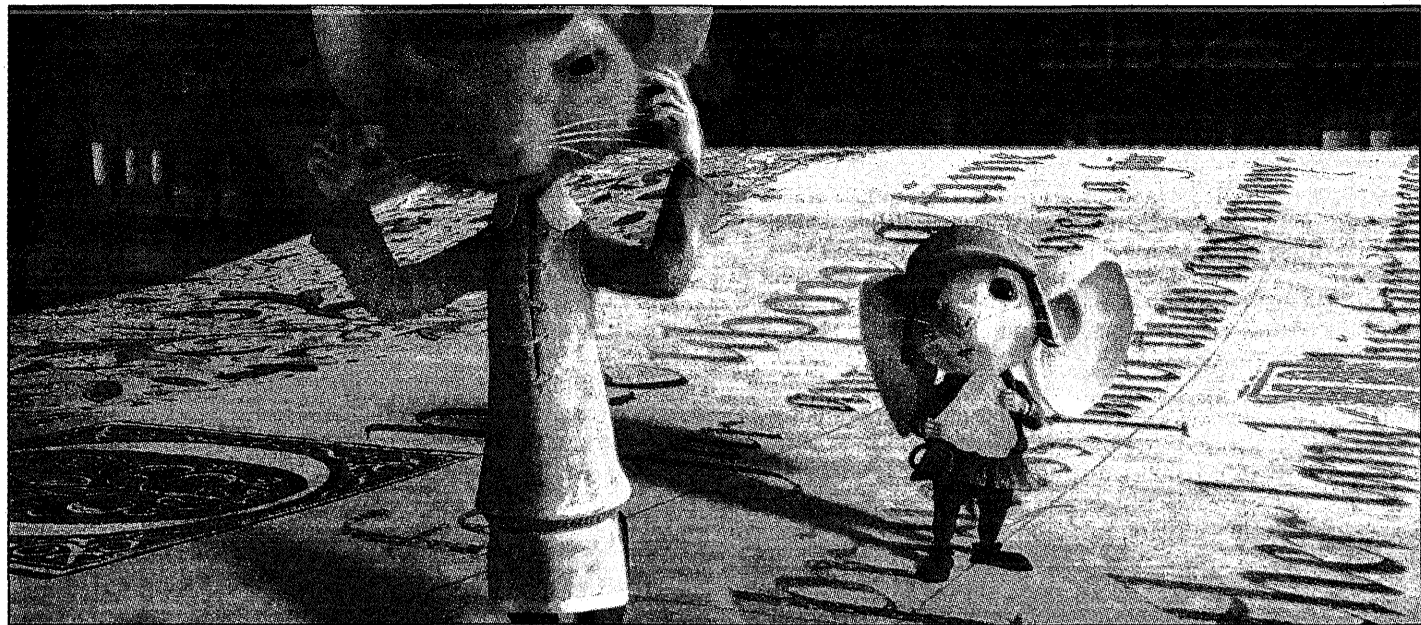
MOVIE Guide

Where available by deadline, features are listed.

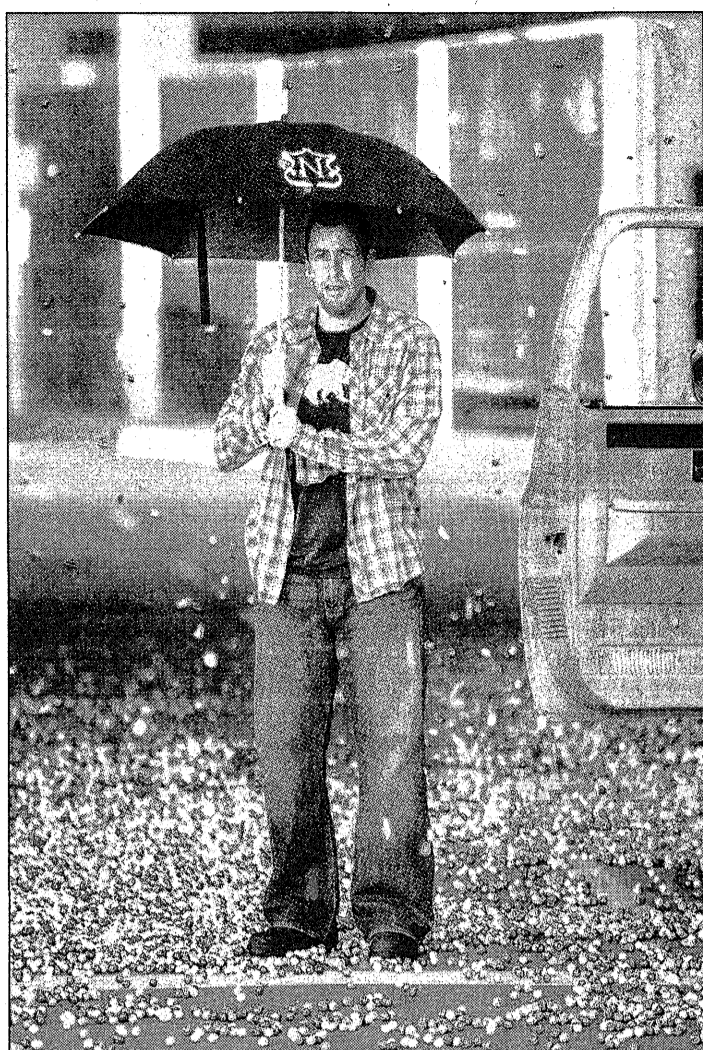
Observer & Eccentric
NEWSPAPERS

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Despereaux, the brave mouse and star of the film, "Tale of Despereaux."



Adam Sandler plays Skeeter Bronson in "Bedtime Stories."

Christmas movie traditions go on

Here's a list of movies opening for the holidays.

For the kids, opened last week:

THE TALE OF DESPEREAUX: Once upon a time, in the faraway kingdom of Dor, there was magic in the air, laughter and gallons of mouth-watering soup. But a terrible accident left the king broken-hearted, the princess sad and the townsfolk despondent. All hope was lost until Despereaux Tilling was born.

A brave and virtuous mouse, Despereaux is simply too big for his small world. Though tiny, wheezy and saddled with comically oversized ears, Despereaux refuses to live a life of weakness and fear, believing he was destined to be celebrated in the tales of chivalry he so adores. (UNIVERSAL) Rated G.

For the family with kids in their teens:

BEDTIME STORIES: An adventure comedy star-

ring Adam Sandler as Skeeter Bronson, a hotel handyman whose life is changed forever when the bedtime stories he tells his niece and nephew start to mysteriously come true. Directed by Adam Shankman and featuring Sandler, Guy Pearce, Keri Russell, Courtney Cox and Russel Brand. (WALT DISNEY PICTURES) PG.

For families and mature teens who like the unusual:

THE CURIOUS CASE

OF BENJAMIN BUTTON: Adapted from the 1920s story by F. Scott Fitzgerald about a man who is born in his 80s and ages backward. We follow his story, set in New Orleans from the end of World War I in 1918, into the 21st century. Directed by David Fincher and starring Brad Pitt and Cate Blanchett with Taraji P. Henson, Tilda Swinton, Jason Flemyng, Elias Koteas and Julia Ormond. (PARAMOUNT PICTURES) PG-13.

Not an upbeat theme:

DOUBT: John Patrick Shanley brings his Pulitzer Prize and Tony Award winning play to the screen. It's 1964, St. Nicholas in the Bronx. Father Flynn (Philip Seymour Hoffman) is trying to upend the schools' strict customs, fiercely guarded by Sister Aloysius Beauvier (Meryl Streep), the iron-gloved principal. The winds of political change are sweeping through the community, but when Sister James (Amy Adams), a hopeful innocent, shares with Sister Aloysius her suspicion that Father Flynn is paying too much personal attention to a male student, Sister Aloysius sets off on a personal crusade to unearth the truth and expunge Flynn from the school. Without any proof, she locks into a battle of wills with Father Flynn. (MIRAMAX)

PG-13.

Teens may like:

HURRICANE SEASON: A year after Hurricane Katrina, Al Collins, a high school basketball coach in Marrero, Louisiana, assembles a team of players who had previously attended five different schools before the disaster and leads them on the path to the state championships. Starring Forest Whitaker, Isaiah Washington, Shad Moss and Lil' Wayne. Directed by Tim Story (Dimension & MGM) PG-13.

If you like animals, bring the tissue:

MARLEY AND ME: The heartwarming and unforgettable story of a family in the making and the wondrously neurotic dog who taught them what really matters in life. Starring Owen Wilson and Jennifer Aniston. Directed by David Frankel. Screenplay by Scott Frank and Donald Roos,

based on the book by John Grogan. (20TH CENTURY FOX) Rated PG.

Cool:

THE SPIRIT: Adapted from Will Eisner's comic book series, The Spirit is a classic action-adventure-romance genre-twister written for the screen and directed by Frank Miller (creator of *300* and *Sin City*). It's the story of a former rookie cop who returns mysteriously from the dead as "The Spirit" (Gabriel Macht) to fight crime from the shadows of Central City. His arch-enemy, (Samuel L. Jackson) has a different mission: to wipe out Spirit's beloved city as he pursues his own version of immortality. Stars Gabriel Macht, Eva Mendes, Sarah Paulson, Dan Lauria, Paz Vega and Jaime King, with Scarlett Johansson and Samuel L. Jackson as "The Octopus." Odd Lot Entertainment and Lionsgate are production partners on the film. (LIONSGATE FILMS) PG-13.

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Go Comedy! offer hilarious dance movie spoof

BY SUSAN STEINMUELLER
STAFF WRITER

Go Comedy! Improv Theater has its first audience favorite.

Timeless: The Dancical, which opens the new Ferndale theatre's 8 p.m. Sunday showcase, has been extended indefinitely says Pj Jacokes, co-owner and producer. The showcase features original written comedies.

"It's one of the shows where

people who see it come back," he said. "So each week we have repeat attendees. It's a big word of mouth show."

The spoof of dancing movies like *Dirty Dancing* was written and directed by Lauren Bickers of Ferndale.

Jacokes said *Timeless* is "hilarious" but "hard to describe." "It's sort of like a musical but they don't sing, they dance, and it's not necessarily people who should

dance," Jacokes said. "I have seen it 12 times by now and there are still times that I'll howl."

Timeless has had success in other venues. It debuted as a short sketch at Hamtramck's Planet Ant Theatre 2007 Box Fest, then returned there as a full production earlier this year. It was picked up by The Second City to run this summer at Donny's Sky Box in Chicago.

Timeless is followed at 9 p.m. by the fully improvised musical, *Rock-*

o-Matic.

Using only audience suggestions, the cast creates an on-the-spot musical comedy accompanied by a live band featuring Phred and Mikey Brown. *Rock-o-Matic* is followed at 10 p.m. by *Elemenopy* featuring improv power-duo Pj Jacokes and Chris DiAngelo.

"I think our whole line-up is something you are not going to see anywhere else," Jacokes said. Go Comedy! Improv Theater, 261

E. Nine Mile, opened last month in the building formerly occupied by the Ferndale Secretary of State office. It offers improv and sketch comedy, a training center, road shows, classes and workshops for private parties, corporations and schools. For tickets (\$10), call (248) 327-0575; or buy them beginning at 7:30 p.m. Sunday at the theatre box office.

The Web site is www.gocomedy.net.

NEW YEAR

FROM PAGE D1

sert you'd never dared before (perhaps a chocolate soufflé), light some candles and dine with your family or loved one decked out in slippers and pajamas. Let *Dick Clark's Rockin' New Year's Eve*, now with co-host Ryan Seacrest, entertain you and count down to a new year ahead. The Times Square holiday broadcast has been going strong since 1972 and will air at 10 p.m. Dec. 31, on ABC, Channel 7. After all, what would New Year's Eve be without the ball drop?

BYO Wine and Dine

— Gather a group of close friends and ask everyone to bring a favorite bottle of wine, and an appetizer or dessert to share. Spend the time sampling flights — from white to blush to full-bodied red — and noshing on home-baked goods while you investigate the lyrics to *Auld Lang Syne*, the Scotch song known to ring in many a New Year. Try hanging sprigs of mistletoe around the house, to catch your unsuspecting pals off guard.

WITHOUT BREAKING THE BANK

If you can't imagine closing the door on 2008 without some serious dance moves, consider these mid-priced options for singles, couples or groups:

Ferndale's Boogie Fever blends the sounds of the '70s and '80s with party favors, a champagne toast and late-night pizza buffet. Doors open at 9 p.m. Dec. 31, at 22901 Woodward Ave., Ferndale. Tickets \$25 in advance at

www.boogiefevercafe.com.

The Royal Oak Music Theater features Eve's New Year with guest Lori Michaels. Doors open at 9 p.m. Dec. 31, at 318 W. Fourth St., Royal Oak. The event is 21 and older and tickets \$15-\$30, call (248) 399-2980.

Craving those '80s hits you know and love? Feel like breaking out your Pat Benatar-inspired shoulder shakes? Head to the Magic Bag in Ferndale for the annual Mega 80s New Year's Eve Bash. Doors open at 8 p.m. for anyone 21 and older. Tickets \$40, visit www.themagicbag.com for details. The bar is located at 22920 Woodward Ave., Ferndale. Call (248) 544-3030.

SET TO SPLURGE

From belly-laughs to longstanding traditions, make it a night to remember at any of these events:

For 21 years, Livonia's Laurel Manor has held the tradition of hosting a New Year's Eve Gala. This year will be no exception. From 7 p.m. to 1:30 a.m. on Dec. 31, patrons will enjoy hors d'oeuvres, an open bar, dinner featuring filet mignon and chicken or a vegetarian entree, dessert table and an afterglow featuring pizza and Danishes after midnight. Tickets \$85 per person, 21 and over only, call (734) 462-0770. Laurel Manor is at 39000 Schoolcraft in Livonia, visit www.laurelmanor.com.

Canton's Village Theatre hosts New Year's Eve with *Two for the Road*, a stage show featuring the music of Dean Martin, Barry White, The Beatles and more. The evening

includes a strolling reception and champagne at midnight. Festivities begin at 9 p.m. Dec. 31, 50400 Cherry Hill Road in Canton. Tickets \$50, call (734) 394-5300 or visit www.canton-mi.org.

If your New Year's Eve requires a full-scale balloon-drop and fireworks, check out A New Year's Eve-olution, 9 p.m. Dec. 31 at Clutch Cargo's, 65 E. Huron in Pontiac. The first 100 tickets sold cost \$40, then the price rises to \$75, but it includes a top-shelf open bar until 1 a.m., elegant hors d'oeuvres, champagne, music by DJs Ryan Richards and Braz D, a fashion show, magicians, comedy by Guy Copeland, door prizes and a late-night buffet. Call (248) 333-2362 or visit www.clutchcargos.com.

Eve '09 at the newly-revamped Hyatt Regency of Dearborn features music by DJs Capt'n20, Fadi and Blake George, model art, dancing in the Grey Goose Ballroom, a Platinum Ice Lounge featuring Jose Cuervo Platino Tequila, visit www.EVE09.com for details and prices as they become available.

If you love Middle Eastern food and music, check out the lavish, stylish New Year's Eve Celebration hosted by legendary modern musicians Emad Batayeh and Osama Baalbaki plus DJ Franky Bones. The huge event includes appetizers, dinner, champagne, breakfast and full premium bar. There's also kids tickets available that includes dinner and babysitters. The party also includes a raffle and prizes. Tickets are \$75, \$100 and \$125. Location is the upscale Bella Banquet Center, 4100 E. 14 Mile Road in Warren (at

Ryan Road. For details call (810) 397-8500.

Ring a Ding Ding with The Rat Pack is Back! a musical tribute to Frank Sinatra, Sammy Davis Jr., Joey Bishop and Dean Martin, offering show-only tickets for \$45 at 6:30 p.m. and \$65 at 9:30 p.m. on New Year's Eve. Dinner and a show offered at the same times for \$110 and \$130, respectively. Or opt for dinner only at the Century Grill, reservations run from \$65 to \$90, later seatings include a midnight champagne celebration with party favors and members of The Rat Pack Orchestra. It's all happening at The Gem Theatre, 333 Madison Ave., Detroit. Call (313) 963-9800.

Comedians Steve Harvey and Katt Williams take the stage for the 2008 Championships of Comedy, 9 p.m. Dec. 31, at Joe Louis Arena, 600 Civic Center Drive, Detroit. Tickets \$65-\$250, call (248) 645-6666.

The Barenaked Ladies will rile up the crowds, making them feel as if they had a million dollars, at The Fox Theatre, 9 p.m. on Dec. 31, 2211 Woodward, Detroit. Tickets \$55-125, call (248) 433-1515.

Make it to the Mansion for an unforgettable New Year's Eve bash this year as Detroit's Whitney restaurant opens its doors — and even heats garden tents — for revelers. The restaurant offers three dinner seatings, at 5 p.m., 7 p.m. and 9 p.m. but the party begins at 10 p.m. and keeps rocking with DJs Matt A and DJ Roc Boy until 4 a.m. Enjoy a premium open bar, champagne toast and hors d'oeuvres for \$100 per person or reserve a booth for up to six guests including unlimited bottle service for \$900. Late-comers arriving after 1 a.m. pay \$50 each. Reserve a spot at (313) 832-5700.

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CALENDAR

FROM PAGE D6

to share.

Higher Rock Cafe
Second and fourth Friday of the month, doors open at 7:30 p.m., live bands begin at 8 p.m. presented by Salvation Army of Wayne/Westland, 2300 S. Venoy, between Michigan Avenue and Palmer.
For information, call (734) 722-3660 or visit www.tsahigherrockcafe.com.

Worship service
10 a.m. Sundays, at The Lutheran Church of Our Saviour, 29425 Annapolis, Westland. Sunday School for children.
For information, call (734) 728-3440.

Sunday worship
10 a.m. at Lutheran Church of Our Saviour, 29425 Annapolis, Westland. For information, call (734) 728-3440.

Sunday services
Pastor Dan Streng leads services at Living Water Church (Pentecostal Church of God), 11663 Arcola, one block west of Inkster Road on Plymouth Road. Sunday School is 10 a.m. followed by worship at 11 a.m. Bible study 7 p.m. Wednesdays. Call (734) 425-6360.

Farmington Women Aglow
Meets the second Monday of each month 7-9:30 p.m. at the Longacre House on Farmington road between 10 Mile and 11 Mile, Farmington Hills. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. Call Vikki for more information at (248) 497-7755. A Christian women's group.

Worship services
Sunday worship services are at 8 a.m. (traditional) and 10:30 a.m. (contemporary), at Grace Lutheran Church, 46001 Warren, between Canton Center and

Beck, Canton. For more information, call (734) 637-8160. Sunday school and Adult Bible Study at 9:15 a.m. Adult Bible Study series: Heaven Can't Wait.

Worship services
Praise and worship 10 a.m. Sunday, at Westwood Community Church, 6500 Wayne Road and Hunter, Westland. Contemporary music and casual dress. Children church and nursery. Call (734) 254-0093. Doughnuts and coffee served.

Celebrate Recovery
Ward Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Northville launches Celebrate Recovery, a Christ-centered recovery program helping men and women find freedom from hurts, habits and hang-ups (addictive and compulsive behaviors), meets every Friday for 6 p.m. dinner (optional), 7 p.m. praise and worship, 8 p.m. small group discussion, 9 p.m. Solid Rock Cafe (optional coffee and desserts). Child care during Celebrate Recovery is free and available by calling (248) 374-7400. For information, visit www.celebraterecovery.com and www.ward-church.org/celebrate.

Sunday service
All are welcome to attend worship service at 10 a.m. Sunday in the sanctuary at St. Paul's Presbyterian Church, 27475 Five Mile, one block west of Inkster, Livonia. For more information, call (734) 422-1470.

Worship service
At 10:30 a.m. Sundays at New Beginnings United Methodist Church, 16175 Delaware at Puritan, Redford. Congregation is hearing lessons from I Peter. Call (313) 255-6330.

Adult literacy classes
Adult and English as a Second Language literacy classes are available for those wishing to improve reading, writing and English conversational skills. Open to age 18 and over. Trained

tutors available for day or evening. For information, call Merriman Road Baptist Church in Garden City at (734) 421-0472.

Leave your name and phone number and someone will contact you.

Personal ministry
Due Season Christian Church is a nondenominational, multicultural, full gospel church that offers Sunday worship services at 10 a.m. and Tuesday night Bible study at 7:15 p.m. Services are currently held at Stevenson High School on Six Mile, west of Farmington Road, Livonia. All are welcome. For information, call (248) 960-8063 or visit www.DueSeason.org.

Scripture studies
From 7-8:30 p.m. Mondays in the lower level of Our Lady of Loretto Church, Six Mile and Beech Daley, Redford. Call (313) 534-9000.

TOPS
Stands for Take Off Pounds Sensibly, meets at 7 p.m. every Thursday evening at St. Thomas a' Becket Church, 555 S. Lilley, Canton. Weigh-in is from 6:15-6:55 p.m. It is a weight support group that encourages members to lose weight and keep it off. Call Margaret at (734) 838-0322.

Learner's Bible study
At 7 p.m. Mondays, in Room A101, at Ward Presbyterian Church, 40000 W. Six Mile, Northville. Call (248) 374-5920.

Church service
Loving God by loving people, meets at 10 a.m. Sunday at Westwood Community Church, 6500 N. Wayne Road at Hunter, Westland. Doughnuts and coffee served. Call (734) 254-0093 for information.

Eucharistic adoration
The monthly program of Parish Prayer and Eucharistic Adoration continues the third Wednesday of each month at St. Michael's Church of Livonia,

Festival of hymns seeking choirs, singers

Registration deadline for choirs/singers interesting in participating in the massed choir for Beloved: A Festival of Hymns is Dec. 31. E-mail Ann Buland at musalann@musician.org.

The festival takes place 6:30 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 11, 2009 at Faith Lutheran Church, 30000 Five Mile, Livonia. Call (734) 421-7249 for more information. The festival is "A Whosoever Event for the Whosoever Synod" sponsored

by the Western Wayne Cluster (No. 5)/ELCA. It is an opportunity to focus on the theme of the Epiphany season; worship together as a synod; build relationships across clusters; sing music of a variety of times, places and cultures; and learn about the vision for Southeast Michigan Synod Whosoever Children's Choir beginning with a summer camp experience in 2009.

Michael Burkhardt, director of worship and the arts at

Holy Cross Lutheran Church in Livonia, serves as director and organist for the hymn festival. A director's workshop will be offered 2-4 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 4, 2009 at Faith Lutheran Church for all participating directors as well as for any choral directors in the synod seeking a growth opportunity. The workshop includes rehearsal technique, tone production and stylistic considerations for hymn festival music.

cutting edge drama productions, energized contemporary music, high-tech video and lighting, programs for kids and teens, for college students, singles, married adults and seniors. Services are at 8 a.m. and 11 a.m. Sunday (6:30 p.m. the first Sunday of the month), Sunday school for all ages at 10 a.m. and Wednesdays at 9 a.m. and 7 p.m. Call (313) 255-2222.

Trinity Episcopal Church
Sunday services at 8 a.m. and 10 a.m. Wednesday service at 6:15 p.m., Bible Studies and Worship Center for all ages, at 11575 Belleville Road, (four miles south of Michigan Avenue), Belleville. Parents with Young Children Bible Study at 6 p.m. Sundays, includes dinner, child care. Call (734) 699-3361.

Shabbat Rocks
A musical celebration precedes traditional Shabbat service once a month at Adat Shalom Synagogue, 29901 Middlebelt in Farmington Hills. For more information, call (248) 851-5100 or visit www.adatshalom.org.

English classes
Conversational English as a Second

Language classes are being offered for adults of all ages and backgrounds at 7 p.m. Monday and Tuesday at Christ Our Savior Lutheran Church, 14175 Farmington Road, Livonia. Tutors will work on a one-to-one ratio to help students better understand and speak the English language. No charge. To register, call (734) 525-0191 or (734) 522-6830.

Sunday school
Congregation Beit Kodesh, at 31840 Seven Mile, between Farmington and Merriman, Livonia, is registering children, age 4 and up, for Sunday school. Financial assistance available. Special discounts for new members. For more information, call (248) 477-8974.

Services
St. John Lutheran Church, 23225 Gill Road, Farmington Hills, invites the community to a new worship service at 5:30 p.m. Saturdays. Also, Sunday traditional worship services are at 8:30 a.m. and 11 a.m.; contemporary service is at 9:50 a.m.; and Sunday school hour for all ages is at 9:45 a.m. Call (248) 474-0584.

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St Genevieve Roman Catholic Church St. Genevieve School - PreK-8 29015 Jamison • Livonia • 734-427-5220 (East of Middlebelt, between 5 Mile & Jeffries) MASS: Tues. 7 p. Wed., Thurs. 9 a., Sat. 4 p. Sun 11a St. Maurice Roman Catholic Church 32765 Lyndon • Livonia • 734-522-1616 (between Merriman & Farmington Roads) MASS: Mon. 8:30 a, Fri. 8:30 a, Sat. 6 p, Sun 9a	SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST	Cherry Hill United Methodist 321 S. Ridge Road Canton, MI 734-495-0035 Rev. Merlin Pratt Worship 10:30 Prayer Hour Thursday 7:30 www.cherryhillume.org	GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH MISSOURI SYNOD 25630 GRAND RIVER at BEECH DALEY 313-532-2266 REDFORD TWP. Worship Service 9:15 & 11:00 A.M. Sunday School 9:15 & 11:00 A.M. Nursery Provided The Rev. Timothy P. Halboth, Senior Pastor The Rev. Dr. Victor F. Halboth, Assistant Pastor
CHURCHES OF THE NAZARENE	Cherry Hill Seventh-day Adventist Church 33144 Cherry Hill, Garden City, MI 48135 (1 block west of Venoy) Phone: 734-524-0880 Pastor: Eddie Petreaca Meetings on Saturdays for: Early Morning Bible & Health Class-8 a.m. Worship Service-English-9:30 a.m. Bible Studies English & Spanish (All Ages) 11:00 a.m. Wednesdays: Prayer Meeting-7 p.m.	NEWBURG UNITED METHODIST CHURCH "Open Hearts, Minds & Doors" 36500 Ann Arbor Trail between Wayne & Newburgh Rds. 734-422-0149 Worship Service December 28 10:00 a.m. Rev. Marsha M. Woolley Visit our website: www.newburgumc.org	EVANGELICAL PRESBYTERIAN
PLYMOUTH CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE 45601 W. Ann Arbor Road • (734) 453-1525 Sunday School - 9:45 A.M. Sunday Worship - 11:00 A.M. Sunday Evening - 6:00 P.M. Family Night - Wed. 7:00 P.M. NEW HORIZONS FOR CHILDREN LEARNING CENTER (734) 455-3196	EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA	First United Methodist Church of Plymouth 45201 North Territorial Road (West of Sheldon Road) (734) 453-5280 www.pfumc.org	WARD Evangelical Presbyterian Church 40000 Six Mile Road Just west of I-275 Northville, MI 248-374-7400 Traditional Worship 8:00, 9:30 & 11:00 A.M. Contemporary Worship 9:30 A.M. Nursery & Sunday School During the 9:30 & 11:00 Hours Evening Service • 7:00 p.m. Service Broadcast 11:00 A.M. Sunday WRDT-AM 560 The WNUZ Word Station For additional information visit www.wardchurch.org
PRESBYTERIAN	Timothy Lutheran Church A Reconciling in Christ Congregation 8820 Wayne Rd. (Between Ann Arbor Trail & Joy Road) Livonia • 427-2290 Jill Heather, Pastor 10:00 a.m. Family Worship (Nursery Available)	NON DENOMINATIONAL	LUTHERAN CHURCH WISCONSIN SYNOD
Fellowship Presbyterian Church Sunday School: 9:30 a.m. • Worship: 10:30 a.m. Pastor: Dr. Jimmy McGuire Services held at: Madonna University's Kresge Hall 36600 Schoolcraft Road • Livonia Parking lot is on N.W. corner of Levan & Schoolcraft • Nursery provided www.fellowship-presbyterian.org	Timothy Lutheran Church (repeated)	BELL CREEK COMMUNITY CHURCH a place to belong Casual, Contemporary, Excellent Children's Program Meets at Franklin H.S. in Livonia on Joy Road (Between Merriman and Middlebelt Roads) at 10:00 a.m. 734-425-1174 Join us for coffee, bagels and donuts after the service!	Risen Christ Lutheran David W. Martin, Pastor 46250 Ann Arbor Road • Plymouth (1 Mile W. of Sheldon) (734) 453-5252 Worship 8:15 & 10:45 am Sunday School 9:30 Adult Bible Study 9:30 Nursery Care Available All are welcome. Come as you are. www.risenchrist.info
St. Paul's Ev. Lutheran Church & School 17810 FARMINGTON ROAD, LIVONIA (734) 261-1360 WORSHIP SERVICES SUNDAY: 8:30 A.M. & 11:00 A.M. THURSDAY: 6:30 P.M. website: www.stpaulsilivonia.org	CHRISTIAN SCIENCE First Church of Christ, Scientist, Plymouth 1100 W. Ann Arbor Trail, Plymouth, MI 734-453-0970 Sunday Service 10:30 a.m. Sunday School 10:30 a.m. Wed. Evening Testimony Meeting 7:30 p.m. Reading Room located at church Saturday 12:00 p.m.-2:00 p.m. 734-453-0970	ROSEDALE GARDENS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (USA) 9601 Hubbard at W. Chicago, Livonia, MI (between Merriman & Farmington Rds.) (734) 422-0494 www.rosedalegardens.org Chapel Worship Service 9:00 am Traditional Service 10:30 am WE WELCOME YOU TO A FULL SERVICE CHURCH	St. James Presbyterian Church, USA 25350 West Six Mile Rd. Redford (313) 534-7730 Sunday Worship Service - 10:00 A.M., Sunday School - 10:15 A.M., Thursday Dinners - 6:00 P.M., Thrift Store every Sat. 10am-2pm Nursery Care Provided • Handicapped Accessible Rev. Paul S. Bousquette

For Information regarding this Directory, please call Donna Hart at 734-582-8342 or e-mail: dhart@dnp.com

pink

Susan Steinmueller . Special Editor . (248) 901-2576 . ssteinmueller@hometownlife.com

See that great celebrity hair? It's fake - you can have it cheaply

BY LANA MINI
O&E STAFF WRITER

One of my co-workers complains constantly about her normal longish hair. "It's too thin," she says. "Why can't it look like Jessica Simpson's or Natalie Portman's?"

"Your hair is normal," I tell her repeatedly. "Jessica and Natalie both wear extensions."

In fact, minus a rare few lucky celebs like Angelina or Jennifer (ironic), most of Hollywood's great locks are faux.

Paris Hilton, Anna Faris, Cameron Diaz, Vanessa Anne Hudgens, Mariah Carey, Kim Kardashian, Carmen Electra, Holly Madison, Beyonce — all of them have donned hair extensions.

Aniston admitted she had them once years ago and it fried her hair. Hers, they say, were glued to her hair.

For instant, pretty, safe faux hair, most celebs use clip-on hair extensions.

Paris Hilton has created her own of hair that comes on a head-band. The hair is synthetic, heat-resistant and can be removed from the headband so you can change the hair styles with long or short pieces. Her headband-hair is called *The Bandit* and should be at **Sally Beauty Supplies** soon.

I'm not the kind of person who enjoys over-primping. No faux nails or Botox (but I love a good pedicure). I've had two or three microderms, but really prefer donating my extra money to the Sashafarm.org animal sanctuary.

However, my vanity weakness is hair. I purchased the clip-in extensions and am always complimented when I use them. I have two sets — one to just add fullness and another to add 13 inches

of length. They take about 15 minutes to clip in and 10 minutes to remove. I wash them in the sink and curl with a curling iron. Find them at beauty supply stores. My extensions are human hair, but they make me feel bad wondering who sacrificed their locks overseas for a low amount of money. I also have synthetic hair that I like just as much.

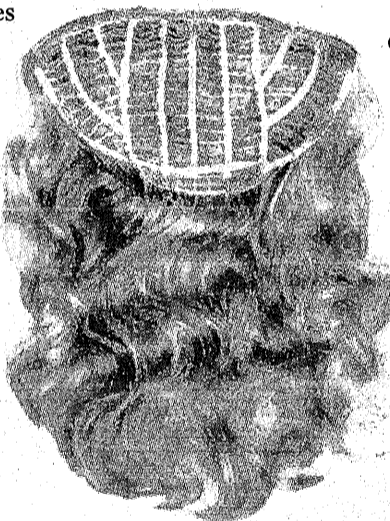
Also I never thought I would wear wigs just for fun, but recently purchased a long \$40 wig at **Cherry Beauty Supply, 13421 W. 10 Mile, Oak Park**; it beats styling and frying hair everyday

My favorite hair salon in **Birmingham - Platinum the Salon, 223 E. Maple, Birmingham, (248) 594-9988**, specializes in hair extensions.

Platinum custom makes the extensions to match your hair color, and will teach you how to use them. I love this place because they're also



Raquel Welch's hair extensions are top-of-the-line.



Jessica Simpson's hair extensions come in smaller individual clip-on pieces or in large sections that are clipped in - as pictured here.

(248) 347-7700.
Have fun with it.
lmini@hometownlife.com

experts at adding outrageous shine to normally dull hair. I've literally been stopped on the streets after walking out of the place.

Extensions cost anywhere from \$10 (question the quality) to hundreds. Jessica Simpson's range from \$90 to \$300 — depending how much hair you want. Paris Hilton's clip-on (not *The Bandit* headband), are \$50. Mine were about \$150.

Raquel Welch's extensions and wigs are human hair and cost more, but online reviews rave about the quality. Visit stores like **Naileo Salon Marketplace, 23200 Haggerty, Farmington**



Jessica Simpson hair extensions are at Sally Beauty Supply.

pink picks

By Jill

For the Toddler Set

Editor's Note: In the spirit of the coming Baby New Year, enjoy these toddler-themed PINK Picks, submitted by reader Jill S. Kathan of Livonia, mom to Kelsey (pictured):

Wear It!

Carter's pajamas

DON'T Wear It!

Clothing that is too big!

Tote It!

Snoopy Midi-Cooler. It's great for storing food to keep cool.

Kick It!

Stride Rite for new walkers

Accessorize It!

Princess Sock Booties, from Target or Babies R Us

Face It!

Gentle Naturals Baby Eczema Cream

Smell It!

Johnson's Bedtime Lotion

Hear It!

The Little Mermaid soundtrack

Drink It!

Guernsey's whole milk

Eat It!

Pirate's Booty

Use It!

Gerber Lil' Trainer Tablewear

See It!

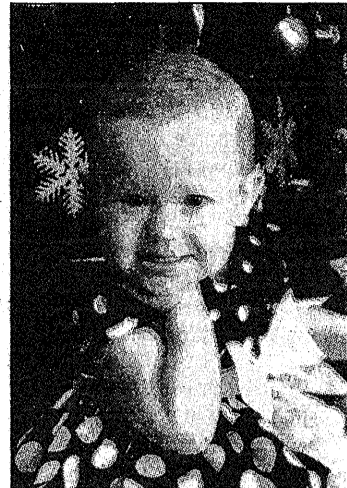
Dora The Explorer

DVD It!

Baby Einstein videos

Read It!

The Very Hungry



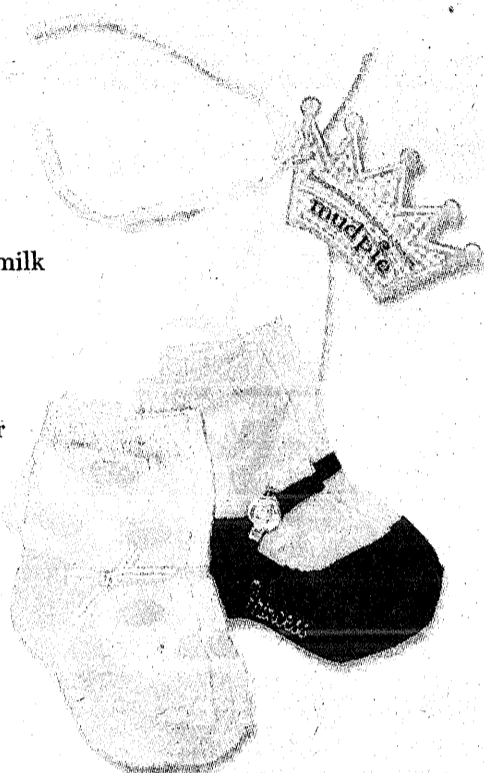
Kelsey Kathan

Caterpillar by Eric Carle



Do It!

Take a walk with Mommy and Daddy everyday

Compiled by Staff Writer
Stephanie A. Casola



Ring in the New Year with
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