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PLYMOUTH OBSERVER

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P-CCS teachers to vote on tentative pact

Joanne Maliszewski
Staff Writer

Plymouth-Canton teachers will vote March 19 and 21 whether to accept or reject a proposed two-year tentative work agreement with the school district.

"It's in their hands to look at," said Bob Williams, president of the teachers union, Plymouth-Canton Education Association. "Nothing is locked in until it is voted on. This is what the bargaining team brought back."

The vote comes some three

months after teachers rejected a tentative agreement in December 2015.

Union members will gather March 14 for a membership meeting and an opportunity to discuss the tentative pact and to ask questions, Williams said.

Following the teacher vote,

the tentative agreement is expected – if approved by teachers – to go March 22 before the P-CCS Board of Education for approval, Interim Superintendent Monica Merritt said.

"I want to thank the union and the board for working to

reach this tentative agreement," Merritt said. "We have a shared sacrifice."

The tentative pact includes a full step – for 2016-17 only – for teachers who are still climbing the pay steps. For

See **TEACHERS**, Page A6



Clive and Suzanne Phillips show off their ballroom moves at their new studio on Forest, Dance New York.

BILL BRESLER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

New downtown studio offers lessons in social dancing

Matt Jachman
Staff Writer

Clive and Suzanne Phillips left the whirl of New York City a few years ago for a more reasonably-paced life in the Plymouth area.

But they kept with them a big part of their New York life, as dance instructors and world-class dancers, and are bringing that experience to downtown

Plymouth with a studio, Dance New York, they opened earlier this month.

Suzanne, who grew up in Westland but left after high school to pursue a dance career in the Big Apple, and Clive, who grew up in England and Australia and has traveled the world as a champion dancer, are offering private and group lessons in ballroom and Latin dancing. Their studio on Forest is the fifth they've run since opening

their first, also called Dance New York, at 54th Street and Broadway in 1994.

"We couldn't ask for a more perfect space," Suzanne Phillips said of the large open space, with a dance floor of about 55 by 97 feet and no support columns – unusual for a ballroom its size – to interfere.

"This is a combination of all the cool

See **DANCING**, Page A2

P-CCS teacher named semifinalist for state honor

Danielle Alexander
Staff Writer

Rebecca Kraft, world history and International Baccalaureate world religions teacher and National Honors Society adviser at Plymouth High School, has been named one of 10 semifinalists for Michigan Teacher of the Year.

"She truly is one of a kind,"

Plymouth High School Principal Cheri Steckel said.

Steckel nominated Kraft and said that although there are many phenomenal teachers at Plymouth-Canton Educational Park and, specifically, at Ply-



Kraft

mouth High School, she is "truly deserving" of the honor.

The first round of applications required Kraft to list educational history and professional development activities, write a professional biography and create a 90-second video answering the question, "What makes you an outstanding teacher?"

"The first round was a very

nice recognition from my building principal that I was doing a great job and I honestly thought it'd be the end of it," Kraft said.

However, two months later, Kraft received a letter in the mail saying she was one of 10 semifinalists in the state.

See **STATE**, Page A6

See **LIQUOR**, Page A2



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Member FDIC

Heise sets public office hours

State Rep. Kurt Heise invites residents to meet with him during office hours or "Coffee with Kurt" next week to address questions or concerns regarding state government.



Heise

"I encourage all who are available to come out on March 14 or March 18, so that I can listen to your concerns and help in any way that I can," said Heise, R-Plymouth Township. "The hard-working taxpayers in our community deserve to know what's going on in Lansing and how it could affect them."

Heise's in-district office hours will take place Monday, March 14, at the following locations:

» 10-11 a.m., Parthenon Coney Island, 39910 Ford Road (east of I-275), Canton

» Noon to 1 p.m., Northville District Library, 212 W. Cady St., Northville
» 3-4 p.m., Plymouth District Library, 223 S. Main St., Plymouth

Residents and business owners are also invited to join Heise for "Coffee with Kurt" 7:30-9 a.m. at the Zack's of Plymouth, 9468 S. Main St., Plymouth.

Heise is also available to meet with constituents by appointment either in the district or at his Lansing office. Residents are invited to call toll free 1-855-REPKURT or email KurtHeise@house.mi.gov to schedule an appointment.

PCAC prepares for Music in the Park concert series this summer

Music In The Park, a 32-year "Summer Wednesday at Noon" tradition, will be hosted again this year by the Plymouth Community Arts Council.

Concerts will begin June 22 and run through Aug. 24. The 10-week concert series is free to the public and made possible through the generosity of community business and organization sponsors. Although the list will grow in the

next few months, the following businesses have already committed to the 2016 program: DJL Builders, Kona Ice, Euro Stars Gymnastics and Plymouth-Canton Montessori.

The Plymouth Fire Department, Northville station and the city of Plymouth provide support services for the weekly event. The concert typically draws 1,500-3,000 audience members to downtown

Plymouth's Kellogg Park. Concerts go on rain or shine, with the adjacent covered "Gathering" providing a covered venue in case of rain.

Businesses interested in becoming a sponsor should contact Lisa Howard, PCAC executive director, at 734-416-4278 or lisa@plymoutharts.com.

The 2016 schedule includes:

» June 22: The Chautauqua Express

» June 29: Mr. Seley & The Troublemakers
» July 6: To Be Announced
» July 13: Beverly Meyer, The Music Lady
» July 20: Saline Fiddlers Philharmonic
» July 27: Fairground
» Aug. 3: Matt Watroba
» Aug. 10: Gemini
» Aug. 17: Barbara Bailey Hutchinson
» Aug. 24: Joel Tacey's Tip Top Entertainment

DANCING

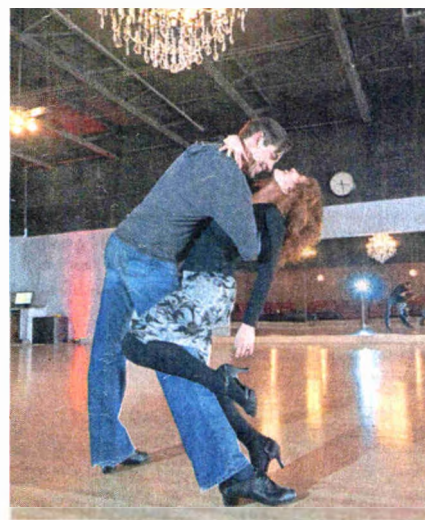
Continued from Page A1

things that happened with other studios we've had," her husband said.

The two met while in a show together in Philadelphia in 1988, then reunited when Suzanne toured Europe a few years later as Baby in the stage version of "Dirty Dancing." But touring, competing and teaching kept them apart; for the first two years of their marriage, for example, Clive lived in Australia to run a touring show there.

"We can't not be together anymore," he said. Still, Clive often flies off to dance competitions or to teach in New York.

The couple has three sons, 18, 15 and 11 — none of them dancers yet — who have grown to love the less hectic Midwestern lifestyle, they said. They've had two stu-



BILL BRESLER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER
Clive and Suzanne Phillips are bringing their love of ballroom dancing to Plymouth. Group classes begin in early April.

es like rumba, cha-cha and salsa. Dance New York will offer group lessons, starting in April, at beginning, intermediate and advanced levels.

Suzanne Phillips was a theatrical dancer — the term for styles like jazz, tap and ballet — and spent six years as a featured dancer at Radio City Music Hall. Clive introduced her to ballroom dancing, which, she says, is addictive.

Ballroom dancing, the two said, is a way for people to interact socially that leaves behind electronic distractions like television and social media.

"There's a buzz. There's nothing like it," Suzanne said.

Dance New York (www.dancenyork.com) is at 575 Forest Avenue. The phone number is 734-404-6270.

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dios in Manhattan, another in a New York City suburb and another in Iowa. The Phillipses weren't planning on having another studio after moving to Michigan, but spotted the space on Forest one day and immediately fell in love with it.

'Nothing like it'

In addition to giving lessons, the Phillipses have a retail area for dance gear, plan to open a cafe and will rent the ballroom or other rooms out for private events.

The studio is dedicated to ballroom dancing, a general term that encompasses a variety of styles of partner dancing, including waltz, swing and foxtrot, plus Latin danc-

LIQUOR

Continued from Page A1

problem and asked the owners be given more time to pay the back taxes.

The building owners, Southerland said, are in litigation with the insurer over expenses that have

not been paid.

Commissioners said they understood the hardship, but that the review process must be applied evenly to all license holders. The MLCC's deadline for renewing licenses is the end of April, officials said, so if back taxes are paid by then, the commissioners could reverse

their decision and recommend license renewal.

On Friday, Southerland said he was optimistic the taxes could be paid by the end of April. "We've got a number of things in the works," he said.

The commission also voted unanimously to recommend to the MLCC that two Class C licenses

now in escrow — one at Plymouth Crossing and another at the downtown restaurant Bamboo, which has been closed for about a year and a half — not be renewed next year if they are still inactive.

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PLYMOUTH OBSERVER
Published Sunday and Thursday by Observer & Eccentric Media

Community Office:
29725 Hudson Drive • Novi, MI 48377 • 866-887-2737
Monday-Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
hometownlife.com

Editor: Joanne Maliszewski
248-396-6620
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734-469-4128
Email: tsmith@hometownlife.com

Subscription Rates:
Newsstand price: \$1.00 Thursday and \$1.50 Sunday
\$8.25 E2 pay per month
\$52.00 six months
\$104.00 per year
\$91.00 six months mail delivery
\$182.00 per year mail delivery

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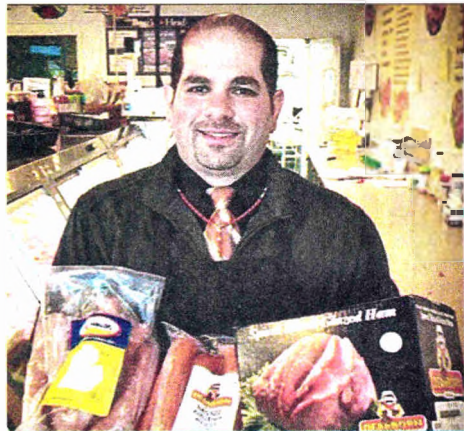
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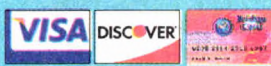
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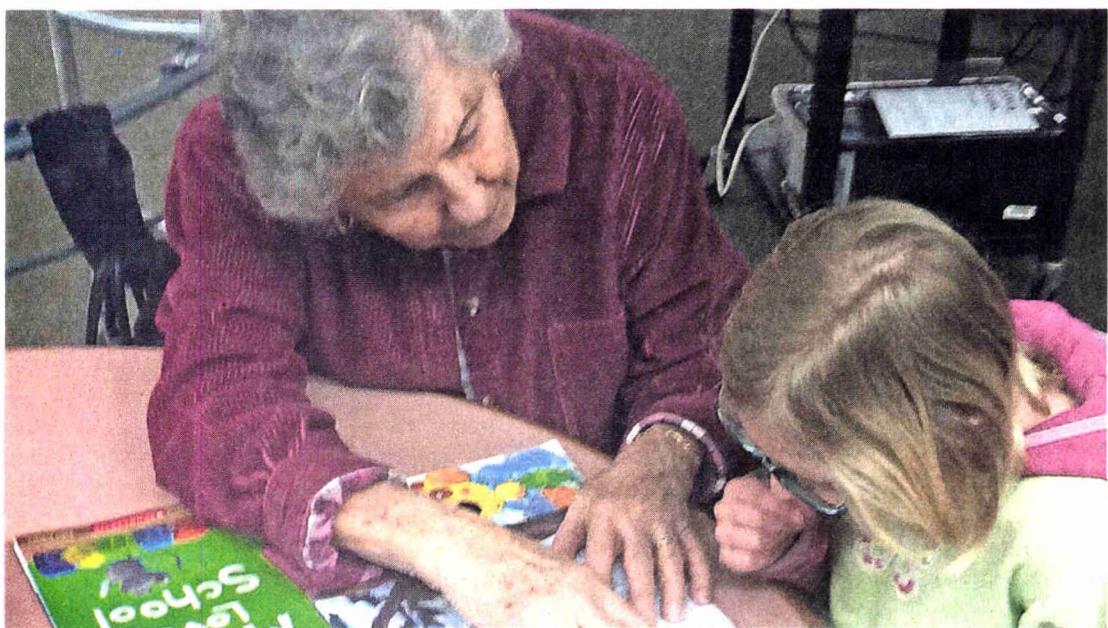
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Senior adults joined students at Bentley Elementary for a good read.

Bentley students share reading day with seniors



Bentley students picked a book and read it to their senior friends.



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What's better for a child than snow coming down and grandmas and grandpas of sorts to read with?

Just ask Bentley Elementary students in Canton. "Wow, that was a hard book, but she helped me get through it. Now I'm better," first-grader Mary Clay said, referring to the senior adult who read with her. Fourth-grader Andy McLaren added: "I just love reading this book. It makes everyone happy! I made someone happy today."

Seniors arrived at Bentley in early March to sit in and listen to kids reading to them. "It was a beautiful experience. It gave our struggling readers a chance to practice in a no-pressure situation, it gave all of our students a chance to see reading has a purpose and it just seemed to make everyone in the room happy," said Shannon Terrace, Bentley media specialist.

And the senior adults no doubt were duly impressed with the students' reading

skills. Senior Joe Mraulak couldn't hold back his enthusiasm. "I couldn't read like that when I was your age! You're good," he said to a student who was reading to him.

"Despite the snowy weather outside that day and other districts off for snow days, the kids at Bentley were showing off their skills and making others happy in the community. It was a great day to be a teacher here," Terrace said.

P-CCS approves school of choice proposal

Danielle Alexander
Staff Writer

The Plymouth-Canton Community Schools Board of Education passed a resolution Tuesday to open up a potential of 250 school of choice seats for kindergarten through fifth grade students for the 2016-17 academic year.

The resolution, which also provides an opportunity for sixth- through 11th-grade siblings of applicants to join the district, as well as 20 seats (10 for ninth grade and 10 for 10th grade) in the P-CEP International Baccalaureate Program, passed with a 6-1 vote. School board Trustee Mike Maloney opposed and said he felt it is a "short-sighted idea."

While discussing the opposition expressed by district parents in the past, Trustee John Barrett said, "Many of these concerns seem to be nonexistent." Trustee Michael Siegrist then added that he, too, has not seen any of these fears "come to fruition."

P-CCS Interim Superintendent Monica Merritt agreed: "Students enrolled through our previous school of choice programs have a proven track record of success in terms of academic performance and they have made positive contributions to the learning environment in our district."

Merritt said academic performance should not be the sole focus, but rather student growth. For example, 59.3 percent of P-CCS students met or exceeded expected growth on the 2014-15 NWEA in math and 56.75 percent in reading; however, 76.4 percent of school of choice students met or exceeded expected growth in math and 56.4 percent in reading.

When the school of choice program was first introduced into the district, P-CCS chose to limit the number of seats and grade levels and offer the opportunity only to students

within Wayne County.

Board Treasurer Patrick Kehoe asked Tuesday whether the board would be interested in opening the program to students in other counties. Merritt said the board has the potential to explore that option.

"It's definitely an idea we're excited about, but there are many questions that we will need to seek answers for first," said Nick Brandon, district community relations director. "It would be a big step in the evolution of our school of choice program."

Since P-CCS accepts the state foundation allowance for all school of choice students who enroll with the district, the program does have the ability to add up to \$2 million of additional revenue, which according to Merritt is very important in a time of financial and budgeting challenges for P-CCS and "should not be overlooked."

As part of the resolution, the district will first open a one-time intra-district transfer application process March 11. Similar to school of choice placements, intra-district transfers will only be available for open seats; however, they will be considered before school of choice placements are made.

The K-5 (with siblings) online application window will be open from April 9 to May 8 and can be found at www.pccsk12.com beginning April 9. The actual number of school of choice students enrolled into P-CCS from outside of the district will depend on availability.

Like previous school of choice programs, this addition will not impact class size, increase staffing costs or displace any current P-CCS students, according to the board.

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Chamber honors Plymouth business leaders

Matt Jachman
Staff Writer

People like to talk about giving back, but David Siegrist can point to a specific motivation for doing so.

Siegrist, who with wife Nancy runs the Plymouth certified public accounting firm Siegrist & Siegrist, says that if it hadn't been for a scholarship, he probably wouldn't have been able to go to college.

The scholarship "opened my eyes that there are people who do things for other folks," Siegrist said. And he's tried to return the favor during his career, in part through a 25-year involvement with the Plymouth Community Chamber of Commerce.

"We've just been big believers in giving back," Siegrist said Friday morning. "You need people to step up and help."

The Siegrists were honored Tuesday for that service when they won the chamber's inaugural

Legacy Award, which is given to members with a sustained commitment of leadership and resources to chamber projects, said Wes Graff, chamber president. The award, along with three Business of the Year awards, came during the chamber's second annual awards dinner at Karl's Cabin.

Siegrist said that, as he looked out over the crowd Tuesday night, he knew many people there were just as deserving.

"It's a great honor," he said. "It's very humbling and there are many people who are deserving and have done an awful lot for this community."

Longtime auction chairs

The Siegrists have each served as a chamber president (the position is now called the board chair) and have co-chaired the chamber's annual auction and golf outing, its two biggest fundraisers. Together,



Representatives of businesses honored by the Plymouth Community Chamber of Commerce pose Tuesday at Karl's Cabin: (from left) Bill Lawton of Community Financial Credit Union, David Siegrist of Siegrist & Siegrist, Mark Evenson, also of CFCU, chamber president Wes Graff, Jeff Horton of Horton Plumbing and Remodeling, Nancy Finley and Paul Harper of Harper, Finley & Associates, and Nancy Siegrist of Siegrist & Siegrist.

they co-chaired the auction for 14 years, Siegrist said.

Siegrist credited his wife for her service to the chamber, particularly for years of work on the auction.

"She rolled her sleeves up and she worked hundreds of hours on that

project," he said.

Siegrist is also a 30-year Kiwanian — he's in the Kiwanis Club of Colonial Plymouth — and current chairman of the Community Foundation of Plymouth. The foundation has awarded more than \$258,000 in grants and scholarships since it

began in 2005.

Siegrist also came up with the Greater Plymouth Service Project, a food-packaging event aimed at hunger relief that is scheduled for Saturday, May 7, at the Plymouth Arts and Recreation Complex.

The Siegrists were

introduced to the Plymouth area — he calls it greater Plymouth — by a friend years ago and quickly fell in love with it, David Siegrist said.

"We're just blessed to be in a wonderful community and there are so many people who do good things," he said.

Also honored Tuesday at Karl's Cabin were Community Financial Credit Union, the large business of the year; Horton Plumbing and Remodeling, the mid-sized business of the year; and Harper, Finley & Associates, also an accounting firm, the small business of the year.

Graff said community service, professional accomplishments and leadership were among the criteria for choosing the businesses of the year.

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Canton carjacking case awaits a psychiatric exam for the defendant

Darrell Clem
Staff Writer

Stalled by a possible months-long delay for a psychiatric exam, a Westland man's court hearing has been pushed back to August on charges he brandished two fake guns inside a Canton Walmart store and then attempted two carjackings outside.

Faheem Tamir-Saul Nance's hearing in 35th District Court — already delayed twice — has now been pushed

back to Aug. 5, a court clerk said Friday.

The delay comes as Nance, jailed with a \$500,000 bond, awaits an exam and opinion by the state Forensic Center for Psychiatry to determine whether he is competent to aid in his own defense in court.

Nance, 25, could face penalties ranging up to

life in prison if he is convicted of two counts of carjacking, six counts of assault with a dangerous weapon and one count each of armed robbery, making a false bomb report and felony firearm.

Witnesses told police that Nance waved two airsoft guns inside the Walmart store on Ford Road near Lotz, frightening customers and employees who feared the weapons were real. Police say Nance also falsely claimed he had a bomb amid allegations

he tried two carjackings in the parking lot.

The incident happened about 10:30 p.m. last Sept. 13.

Witnesses told police Nance managed to get inside one victim's Honda Accord, but struggled to work the manual transmission, giving officers time to reach the scene and make an arrest.

dclm@hometownlife.com
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734-972-0919



Nance

Ms. Wheelchair Michigan to visit Canton library

Sharina Jones was just 5 years old when she was accidentally shot by another child playing with a gun. She lost her ability to walk.

With help and guidance, she overcame her tragedy, pushed past obstacles and limitations and focused on helping others.

Now, she is bringing her story to the Canton Public Library at 7 p.m. Thursday, March 24, for an all-ages program. The public is invited.

Jones established an organization, Think Beyond the Chair, to provide hope, healing and resources to others faced with circumstances like hers. She has a master's degree in business administration from Wayne State University and was crowned Ms. Wheelchair Michigan in 2011.

After high school, she became the first in her family to attend college. She attended Mott Community College, earning an associate's degree, and continued her education with a bachelor's degree from Oakland University before earning her MBA.



Jones

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Vote for P-C Marching Band by March 20

The Plymouth-Canton Marching Band has been selected as one of 10 finalists for Comerica Bank's March the Park national anthem contest and is now turning to the public to decide the winner by voting for their favorite on the Comerica Cares Facebook page.

Support the Plymouth-Canton Marching Band, which is eligible - if it wins - to receive a \$5,000 grant to support its efforts.

Videos of the 10 final-

ists are on Comerica Cares Facebook and public voting will run until March 20.

In addition to the potential for the grant, the winning band will perform the national anthem at the Detroit Tigers game April 9 at Comerica Park. The winning band also will win 130 tickets to the game.

To vote, go to www.facebook.com/ComericaCares.



FILE PHOTO

The Plymouth-Canton Educational Park Marching Band was crowned Flight I state champion at the Michigan Competing Band Association competition last November.

Flint doctor to talk water crisis April 5

The Plymouth Rotary Club AM will host Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha - the woman who spotted the lead in Flint water - to speak at 7:30 a.m. Tuesday, April 5, at PARC, 650 Church Street.

The pediatrician will talk about the Flint water crisis and her efforts to draw attention to the problems. The cost is free, but Rotary members ask attendees to make donations to the Flint Child Health & Development Fund. Donations will be accepted at the door.

"If there was ever a time to invest in our children, it is now. Our Flint children deserve every opportunity to be healthy and successful. The creation of this fund will further ensure that



Hanna-Attisha

our children are afforded the resources and interventions to overcome

this population-wide exposure to lead," said Hanna-Attisha, founding donor of the Flint Child Health & Development Fund.

The fund was established Jan. 11 under the Community Foundation of Greater Flint to ensure the health of Flint families.

Tickets for Hanna-Attisha's presentation may be obtained at <http://rotaryclubofplymouth-am.eventsbot.com/>.

For more information, call 248-650-5717.

TEACHERS

Continued from Page A1

teachers with many years in the district, an increase of \$75 was proposed for longevity pay, which is paid once a year. For example, if a teacher with longevity has typically received \$300, a \$75 increase would be included. "This is a way to take care of our teachers at the top (of the salary schedule)," Williams said.

On the other side, the tentative agreement would have the teachers accept a decrease in their annual classroom allocation - used to buy supplies - from \$100 to \$50, Williams said.

"Our largest focus was to get the step," Williams said, adding that 60 percent of all teachers in the district are still climbing the steps.

Acknowledging the

importance of the salary steps, Merritt added: "We heard from teachers on their priorities."

At a February school board budget forum, Williams told the board that labor peace will move the district forward. He urged the board to "return to the old way of doing business" by honoring the salary steps for teachers in the contract now under negotiation.

In 2010, Gov. Rick Snyder and state legislators passed two significant laws directly affecting schools district. One was that school boards no longer had to honor and pay the traditional salary steps based on years of service for teachers. The second was that school boards must adopt balance budgets.

About five years ago, Plymouth-Canton abandoned the teachers' 11-step salary system for 14

steps, stretching out the potential for salary increases for years of service.

"Just because state law says you don't have to doesn't mean you have to," Williams said, adding teachers are not asking for an actual raise, but to honor the step system. Calling this request the "heart and crux" of it, Williams added that with the step system intact, "labor unrest will go away. It's not a true negotiated wage."

By returning to the step system, new teachers, for example, who may have started in Plymouth-Canton five years ago would be allowed to receive pay based on the next step.

The schedule was changed effective for the years 2012-15 to \$39,954 for the first step with a bachelor's degree and \$43,954 with a master's degree. The next half-

step would pay \$41,111 for a bachelor's degree and \$45,320 for a master's degree.

PCEA teachers last had a 2-percent salary increase in 2006-07. In 2008-09, teachers at the top of the schedule received a 2-percent raise. Since 2009-10, PCEA members have had no increases.

According to the National Education Association, in 2012-13, the average starting salary for Michigan teachers was \$35,901, while the national average was \$36,141. During that same time period for nearby states, in Illinois the average starting salary was \$37,166, for Indiana it was \$34,696 and Ohio it was \$33,096.

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BaseLine welcomes a bit of the Irish March 19

BaseLine Folk Society will host an evening of acoustic folk and traditional music at 7 p.m. Saturday, March 19, at the Plymouth Community Arts Council, 774 N. Sheldon Road.

Featured artists will be Maggie and Alex Zakem, who will combine their talents with Chris and Stephanie Sorenson

to provide an evening of voices, banjos and guitars. The evening also has room for 10 open-mic performers beginning at 7 p.m., with the Zakem/Sorenson performance at 8 p.m.

The society's March host is John Delle-Monache, who will perform two Irish spring-like songs.

STATE

Continued from Page A1

"It took me a full three weeks before I finally spoke up about it," Kraft said, laughing. "It's just not something we, as teachers, talk about."

Kraft was then asked to complete a second

round of applications, which she said was "intense."

For this round, she was asked to describe her community involvement, define the teaching profession, write a philosophy of teaching, discuss public education issues and trends and create another video, this time a little longer, answering the question "If you were chosen as Michigan Teacher of the Year, what would your message be as spokesperson and representative for the teaching profession and what would you communicate to the teaching profession and general public?"

"If there had been more than 10 people nominated, I might not have gone through with," Kraft said. "But when I received the letter, my mentality shifted from, 'Wow, what a great honor!' to 'Hey, I actually really want this!'"

Although Kraft said she is still feeling quite self-conscious, she is excited because it is a powerful and rare oppor-

tunity for educators to have a voice in policy and tone across the state, particularly at a time when educators "do not always feel as empowered as they should."

"My absolute number one priority in education is equity," Kraft said. "All kids deserve a high-quality education."

Steckel said Kraft is

so passionate about social justice and even created an after-school intervention group for the most struggling students in the building.

"She works tirelessly to make things equitable for kids," Steckel said. "That's what I love most about her; she won't settle."



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Livonia woman will serve as grand marshal at St. Patrick's Parade

David Veselenak
Staff Writer

For Kitty Heinzman, being the grand marshal in this weekend's St. Patrick's Parade in Detroit is a true honor — especially since she's been attending for more than 50 years.

Add that to the list of things she's done and learned in her almost 60 years of living in the United States after moving here from Ireland.

"I have learned so much from the Irish-American people here, things I didn't know," she said. "Here, I got to meet different immigrants from different parts of Ireland.

"We'd all be educating each other on all the things we learned here in America."

Heinzman immigrated to the U.S. from County Mayo, Ireland, in 1958. She had some family in Detroit, mainly an uncle who worked as a police officer, who served as her sponsor when she came over. Her first job was working in an accounting firm in Detroit, as she arrived just as tax season was in full swing in the US.

"I got hired right away at this Michigan Business Service," she said. "It was right across from Marygrove. I used to go to Mass every day there."

She lived in Detroit for several years before marrying her husband and moving to Livonia, where she's lived for more than 50 years. She and other family members have been instrumental in teaching Irish dance across Michigan for many years as well, running the Ardan Academy of Irish Dance.

She's the second Livonia representative to act as grand marshal in the past three years: Livonia residents Tom and Bridie Flynn served as grand marshals for the parade back in 2014.

The parade, sponsored by the United Irish Societies, begins at noon Sunday along Michigan Avenue between Sixth and 14th Streets in Detroit's Corktown neighborhood.

"It's an honor to represent the De-



BILL BRESLER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Kitty Heinzman is grand marshal of the Detroit St. Patrick's Parade.

troit Metropolitan Area at the St. Patrick's Day parade, it truly is," she said. "A lot of these people I've known since I've come here."

She said she's most excited to see the younger generations of Irish-Americans taking up roles in the Irish community and helping with many of the events, including the parade and the Motor City Irish Fest, which moves from Redford to Livonia later this year.

"I'm totally impressed with them. The next generation is seriously going ahead," Heinzman said. "You never get over the wonderment of the United States. It amazes me. It's the best place to be involved."

'It's exciting'

Heinzman isn't the only one happy to be involved in the parade. Her daughter, Liz Heinzman, said she and other family members are excited to see her honored in such a regard at an event their family loves so much.

"We honest to God have such a good time at the parade and to have our own grand marshal in the parade to boot," she said. "We'll do a nice little dance in front of the grandstand for her. It's exciting.

"We're looking forward to it."

Kitty Heinzman became a citizen several years after coming to the United States and is happy to have come across the Atlantic Ocean to make this her home.

While she still enjoys going back to Ireland for visits, she said the opportunities in this country can't be topped.

"I say this time and again: Every child here should go to the country of wherever their ancestors are and live there for six months as a native of that land," she said. "They'd kiss the ground they walk on here."

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'James and the Giant Peach Jr.' arrives at the PARC

Forever After Productions will present its "master-peach," a production of Roald Dahl's "James and the Giant Peach Jr.," beginning March 17 at The Playhouse at the PARC at 650 Church Street, Plymouth.

The show is an offbeat adaptation of the classic adventure tale of a boy, his insect friends and their amazing journey across the ocean on a giant piece of fruit.

"Behind its wit and whimsy, "James and the Giant Peach Jr." explores some sophisticated themes. How do we define our family? How we start over after a big loss? We've always planned to make it available for performance by schools and educational theaters groups as soon as possible, because — and we think Roald Dahl would agree — young people are capable of amazing things," said Justin Paul, who co-wrote the music and lyrics for the musical with Benj Pasek.

"James is a child put in a remarkable situation and with the help and support of some new friends he is able to achieve great things. Similarly, these Forever After students are working together in extraordinary ways to present this musical. We know their show is going to be great. Break a leg guys!" Pasek added.

Sent by his mean, conniving aunts to chop down their old fruit tree, James discovers a magic potion which results in a tremendous peach occupied by some not-so-normal characters.

From the center of the gigantic fruit, James and the unlikely crew launch a journey of enormous proportions. Together they discover that while we are all born into a family, we then go on to create a family of our own.

Forever After Productions in Plymouth will present the show at 7 p.m. March 17-18; 2 p.m. and 7 p.m. March 19; and 1 p.m. and 4 p.m. March 20. Tickets are \$10 and may be purchased at www.iheartforeverafter.com or at the door. For more information, go to www.iheartforeverafter.com or call 734-547-5156.

P-C United Way seeks Rake N Go volunteers

Want to make a difference by helping a senior citizen or person with a disability?

Plymouth Community United Way is looking for volunteers Saturday, April 30, to clean yards and do light chores in Plymouth and Canton townships. PCUW's Rake N Go event is in partnership with Plymouth Community Council on Aging and Comcast Cares Day.

Volunteers will meet the day of the event at Plymouth First United Methodist Church for a continental breakfast and instructions.

Check-in time is 8:30 a.m. Volunteers are asked to bring rakes, garden tools and gloves and have their own transportation to travel between homes. PCUW will supply the yard waste bags, which will be distributed at the church. Leaf blowers are a great help with larger yards.

All ages are welcome, but those under 18 need to be accompanied by an adult. To volunteer, call Randi Williams at 734-453-6879, ext. 7, or email randi.williams@pcuw.org by April 15.

Low-income seniors, 65 and older, that feel they may qualify for service should also contact Williams. Income verification will be required. This service is offered in partnership with Plymouth Community Council on Aging and Comcast Cares Day.

For more information and an application, go to www.plymouthunited-way.org.



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Website launched for I-275 construction update

David Veselenak
Staff Writer

Warmer weather means it's almost time for construction season.

The Michigan Department of Transportation is prepping for major work on Interstate 275 through Livonia, Farmington Hills and Novi that will close one side of the heavily-traveled freeway. The department just announced it plans to keep residents and motorists informed of the project via a new website with information, dubbed "Revive I-275." It can be found at revive275.com.

The website lists several aspects of the project, which will consist of replacement and repair of pavement from Five Mile to the I-696/I-96/M-5 interchange. Concrete shoulders are expected to be re-

paired; work on 16 bridges will also take place. There will also be sign replacement and Intelligent Transportation Systems work.

Southbound I-275 will close first, followed by northbound I-275 this summer once southbound work is complete. Other roads and bridges are expected to see work throughout the spring and summer as well. I-696 from east of Lahser in Southfield to I-275 will also be closed for two weekends during the project as well.

No start date announced yet

Work is expected to begin this spring, but no start date has been announced. Diane Cross, a spokeswoman for MDOT, said specific dates won't be determined until a contractor is officially selected.



FILE PHOTO

No start date has yet been announced for the I-275 construction project.

"We hope to know the winning bidder, awarding of contract and start date in the next few weeks," she said.

The project's website states the specifics were advertised

March 4 with bid results having been announced. Wixomb-based Toebe Construction, LLC, is listed as the low bidder at about \$75.1 million and completing the work in 109 days,

which is 9.5 percent less in costs and 45 days less than the original estimate given by MDOT.

The website is the second catchy name for a local construction project in the last three years. "Fix96" was the designation given by MDOT during the I-96 reconstruction project in 2014.

MDOT held a public meeting on the project last fall, including sharing details of detours. Farmington Hills and Livonia both approved noise waivers for the agency to work on the project around-the-clock, though both city councils showed concern over noise for residents who live along the corridor.

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New memoir chronicles growing up in WWII Army life

Diane Gale Andreassi
Staff Writer

Beverly Chiasson is best known as a champion of issues ranging from fighting developers to rallying against half-day classes in Livonia. Now the 86-year-old New Hudson woman is in the public eye with a new book about growing up on an Army base during World War II.

She self-published a 75-page account, "Remembering World War II with Prisoners of War — as a Teenager," and the books rolled off the printing presses and into her apartment at Abbey Park at Mill River, where she lives with her husband Ray.

Chiasson was at an AMVET meeting at Abbey Park when she shared stories about her life at Fort Robinson Army base in Nebraska and she captured the attention of local photographer Jane Purslow, who suggested she write a book.

Words flowed

Using a pen and yellow note pad, Chiasson immediately started pouring out her life as a teen during World War II. The book focuses on anecdotes about German prisoners of war who were captured by the English and sent to an internment camp about three miles from Fort Robinson, where Chiasson lived with her family.

The prisoners "had the life of Riley," Chiasson said. "If they worked, they made 80 cents a day and, if they didn't work, they made 10 cents daily that they could spend on candy, pop and cigarettes. In those days, cigarettes were 15 cents and pop and candy bars were a nickel.

"We weren't really supposed to fraternize with the prisoners, but no one could speak German, so you couldn't talk to them anyway," Chiasson said.

That didn't stop one prisoner from giving her two bottles with intricate small scale ships inside — she kept one and do-



JOHN HEIDER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Abbey Park resident Beverly Chiasson wrote the memoir "Remembering World War II with Prisoners of War — as a Teenager."

nated the other to the Fort Robinson Museum.

The war also brought Chiasson together with Ray, a Dearborn native, who was stationed at Fort Robinson to train dogs. Apparently, the first time Ray saw Beverly, he told a friend he was going to marry her.

Romance begins

He was right. They have been married 68 years, have

five children, 11 grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren. Chiasson, whose smooth skin and perfectly coiffed hair erases a couple of decades, winked and playfully laughed as she explained the book includes some of the love letters she shared with Ray while he was in the service.

Over the years, Chiasson was active politically everywhere they lived: Livonia, Novi and Green Oak Township. Her volunteer work got the attention of city officials who named her Livonia's Citizen of the Year in 1972, which was the same year she earned an Americanism award from a Livonia VFW group.

"I was a former grassroots political warhorse," the longtime Livonia precinct delegate said. "My husband called me the Bull Dog."

After business college, Chiasson worked four years as an executive secretary at Ford Motor Co., raised her children and dove into a multitude of political issues. When she

launched her writing career last year, she decided against using a computer.

"I've always operated with a typewriter, a phone and a fax machine," she said, adding that she can get her answers faster using a phone than email. "If I want to talk to somebody, I call them up or they call me."

Her first 100 books were delivered last week. They sell for \$19.99.


"This is my legacy," she said. "Actually, I could write three books. If I never would have gone to that AMVET meeting, it never would have happened."

While details haven't been decided, some of the proceeds from the book will go to AMVETS, she added.

Books will be available at a signing 1-2 p.m. March 23 at the Salem-South Lyon District Library.

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March 16

April 20

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5:45 p.m. - Check-in
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Mom of former heroin addict admits 'I'm one of the lucky ones'

Jay Grossman
Staff Writer

Pam Feinberg watched helplessly as her son went from smoking marijuana at the age of 14 to shooting heroin at the age of 20.

"I'm one of the lucky ones," the West Bloomfield parent said. "He's been sober for three years and going to school."

There's a crisis in America and it comes in the shape of a pill. According to the National Institute of Health, the number of opioid prescriptions (Vicodin, OxyContin) escalated in the U.S. from around 76 million in 1991 to nearly 207 million in 2013.

Sam Quinones, author of "Dreamland: The True Tale of America's Opiate Epidemic," is coming March 16 to speak to parents, students and the community at Birmingham Groves High School. The event will include a panel discussion about how to identify drug abuse in a loved one.

The doors open at 5:30 p.m. and the event is free to the public. Oakland County Sheriff Michael Bouchard will start the evening with discussion about the heroin epidemic in the community.

It's an epidemic that Feinberg knows about firsthand. In addition to being a registered nurse, she runs a consulting firm in West Bloomfield that began offering treatment programs for drug addicts in 2013. Her firm is one of the presenting sponsors for the panel discussion at Groves.

From disappearing spoons to missing money, she watched a trail of deception unfold in her home that started with her son's marijuana use. She was sending him to see a therapist twice a week, but the drugs continued.

At the age of 18, her son received a medical marijuana card from the



Pam Feinberg runs a consulting firm in West Bloomfield that began offering treatment programs for drug addicts in 2013.

state of Michigan. Feinberg said he lied about the reasons he needed a card.

"My son claimed he had a back injury," she said. "He didn't have a back injury."

Then came prescription drugs like Adderall and Xanax. Next came cocaine and heroin.

"I knew he was smoking pot ... but in no way did I think it would escalate to heroin," she said. "It's here in the suburbs. People are dying in affluent neighborhoods, as well as non-affluent neighborhoods. There really is no societal divide."

Feinberg said the straw broke for her son after he moved to Florida in 2012, where he eventually agreed to seek help after delving even deeper into heroin. Today, he's volunteering in Israel and applying for a master's degree.

Looking back, Feinberg admits she should have intervened sooner when she first learned her son was smoking marijuana. Along those

lines, she warns people to examine their behavior if they find themselves smoking marijuana at least once a day.

"When you're smoking on a daily basis, there's a problem," she said. "Especially if you're talking about a teenager ... as parents, we can't just say it's a stage and they'll grow out of it. We're creating a world of young people who can't function at their best."

Feinberg believes drug addiction is a more prominent problem in the suburbs because people have the resources to cover up their problems. Plus, they have the extra money to buy drugs.

"We don't know who is going to develop an addicted personality," she said. "It could be any one of us."

Groves High School is located at 20500 W. 13 Mile Road. For additional information about the event, call 586-709-1079.

grossman@hometownlife.com
586-826-7030
Twitter: @BhmEccentric

Southfield officials vow to continue oil well fight

Terry Jacoby
Correspondent

Despite protests from Southfield political leaders, city administrators and many residents, the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality granted a permit Tuesday to Jordan Development Co. LLC for rights to drill on a 1.5-acre parcel of the 40-acre piece of land leased from Word of Faith International Christian Center Inc., at Evergreen and Nine Mile roads in Southfield.

But city officials haven't given up the fight and responded with a "strongly" worded press release opposing the MDEQ's decision.

"The city of Southfield strongly opposes Michigan Department of Environmental Quality's decision to grant Jordan Development's permit request to drill an exploratory well on the grounds of Word of Faith International Christian Center," read a statement released Tuesday afternoon by Community Relations Director Michael A. Manion.

Despite several "informational meetings" and a public hearing last month in which a majority of residents voiced opposition to the project, the permit application was approved following a review by the MDEQ to ensure that all legal requirements were met.

Hal Fitch, chief of the DEQ's Office of Oil, Gas and Minerals, said that proper consideration also was given due to the close proximity of surrounding houses. That "consideration" included a public hearing Feb. 17 at Southfield High School, which filled the school's 500-seat auditorium with the majority in attendance strongly against the proposal because of the site's "residential" location.

"We extended our review period and reached out to the community because we

wanted to look closely at this permit request," Fitch said. "We were able to share information and offer additional time for the public to provide comment and for the DEQ to evaluate those comments as they pertained to the statutory permitting requirements. Once we reviewed all the public comments, it was determined the application met all statutory and legal requirements and, as such, the DEQ was obligated to issue the permit with conditions."

Fitch told the crowd that Wednesday evening and repeated again on the phone Tuesday to the Observer & Eccentric that the MDEQ has to make its decision based only on "a system of laws" and that denying a permit that meets all the requirements would open up the MDEQ to possible litigation.

"We received about 2,000 written comments, mostly email, and had about 1,000 people at the public hearing," Fitch said Tuesday. "The application met all the requirements and rules and we didn't hear anything in the public comment that made us think otherwise. In other words, no one showed us where it did not comply. The application met all the criteria and that is what we base our decision on."

The city of Southfield currently has a moratorium in effect through April 28 that expressly prohibits oil drilling or mining in the city. Southfield officials believe MDEQ's decision to grant the request for a permit does not supersede the city's moratorium.

"The city will request a temporary restraining order through Oakland Circuit Court if necessary to halt the commencement of any drilling," according to the statement released by the city. "The city of Southfield requested additional information from the (MDEQ) on Jan. 19 regarding Jordan

Development's permit request that has still not been provided - despite MDEQ's assurances that it would be prior to any decision."

Additional information requested by the city focused on residential water wells, special hazards and natural features, endangered species protection, environmental impact, air pollution and prevention of waste.

In a letter sent Jan. 19 to Word of Faith, city officials stated that even if Jordan's application was approved by the MDEQ, it still did not give Word of Faith or the Jordan Co. the rights to drill on the property without the city's approval. Additionally, the letter reiterated that the church is also not permitted to remove any trees, unless in compliance with the city's woodland regulations.

"Drilling for oil and gas, no matter how safe Jordan Development claims, is totally incompatible with a residential area," Mayor Ken Siver said. "The city's utmost concern is the public's health, safety and welfare and we remain committed to act in the best interest of our residents."

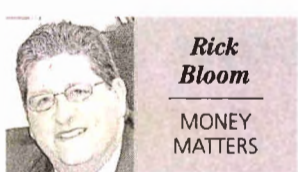
Fitch stands by the MDEQ's record regarding environmental protection when it comes to oil wells.

"We recognize people's concerns," he said. "But we think as far as the environmental impact we have very good controls on that and they apply whether the well is out in the middle of the woods in Kalkaska County or in the city of Southfield. We have very protected measures in place when it comes to air quality, water quality, soil protection and things like that."

More than 61,000 drill permits have been issued in 90 years and there are more than 1,700 active wells in the state. More than 320 wells have been drilled in Oakland County.

Don't be afraid to file an amended income tax return

Q: I have a tax problem that I hope you can help me with. Since my divorce three years ago, I have had a friend do my tax returns. My taxes are relatively straightforward, as all I have is income from my employer and some interest. I have no deductions. The only other thing I have is distributions from my ex-husband. That is where the issue comes in. My friend told me the money I've received from my ex is taxable. My friend moved out of town, so this year I decided to do my taxes on my own. I took advantage of the free file program you talked about a couple of weeks ago. It was very easy and straightforward. The issue came up with the money I received from my ex-husband. When I went through the questions, it turns out that I did not have to pay tax on the money from my ex. I called my divorce attorney and he confirmed that the money I received was not alimony, but was considered a property settlement and, thus, I did not have to pay taxes. I asked my friend who did my tax returns about this and she said she didn't



Rick Bloom
MONEY MATTERS

know there was a difference. I have also talked to my ex, who I have a good relationship with, and he confirmed that I shouldn't have paid taxes on the money. My question to you is should I file an amended return? The money would be significant to me, but I'm afraid to file an amended return because I was told that it can cause all sorts of problems with the IRS. My question to you is what should I do?

A: Without question or reservation, you should file an amended return.

It's one of those urban legends that people think if you file an amended return it's automatically going to cause you problems with the IRS; that is just not the case. In your situation, it would be relatively easy to document that the money you received was not alimony, but a property settlement.

To file an amended return, you need to complete Form 1040X. You are allowed to amend your return within three years of when you filed your return. If you filed your 2012 tax return April 15, 2013, you would have until April 15, 2016, to amend it.

When it comes to taxes, you don't want to play games. When you do your 2015 tax return, if you find that you made a

mistake in the past, it is your obligation as a taxpayer to file an amended return. Not just because you're entitled to money — if you made a mistake on your return and the result is that you owe money to the IRS, it's in your best interest to file an amended return. Yes, you will have to pay interest and there is a potential penalty. However, when you voluntarily amend your return, it is much easier to deal with the IRS than if you wait until it notifies you.

In filing amended returns, you also need to look at how the changes will impact your Michigan return. In many situations, the changes in your federal return will have an impact on your state return. It appears that by filing an amended

Michigan return you'll also receive a refund.

It is certainly nice when a friend helps you do your tax return. However, it is always important to recognize that taxes are not stagnant. The rules last year are not going to be the rules next year; tax laws are constantly changing. That's why it is important to have someone that understands taxes and is dedicated to staying current. Unfortunately, many people who prepare taxes don't stay current and that is where problems develop. You and I sign our tax returns and we are the ones who are ultimately responsible. That is why it is important to make sure if someone does your tax return, they know what

they're doing.

Many of you are eligible to take advantage of the IRS free file system. It is a very good system and it allows you to access software from various companies such as TurboTax, TaxSlayer and other well-known tax software programs for free. It's not gimmicky and it saves you money. As I've always believed, the money you save always looks better in your pocket than it does anywhere else.

Good luck!

Rick Bloom is a fee-only financial adviser. His website is www.bloomassetmanagement.com. If you would like him to respond to questions, email rick@bloomassetmanagement.com.

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Livonia lawyer eyes seat on circuit court bench

Brad Kadrich
Staff Writer

Melissa Cox knew from her pre-teen years she was going to be a lawyer and she's been one for eight years.

Now Cox, a Livonia resident who went to Ladywood High School, wants to take the next step up the legal ladder. A Northville native, Cox has joined some two dozen candidates for four open seats on the Wayne County Circuit Court.

"I knew I was going to be an attorney when I was in middle school," said Cox, for the last eight years a lawyer (plus two years as a law clerk) at Northville-based Fausone-Bohn. "Because that seed was planted so early, it was always in my head that I'd be a judge."

She believes she's built a case (pardon the pun) for it in her eight years at Fausone-Bohn. She's handled municipal accounts, she's been an assistant city attorney

"I knew I was going to be an attorney when I was in middle school."

MELISSA COX
candidate for circuit court judge

for Wayne and Westland and she's had a family law practice handling divorce, adoption and child custody cases.

It's a skill set she believes is more well-rounded — particularly the family law component — than the other candidates getting into the race can offer.

"I've prosecuted cases, so I know the criminal court well," said Cox, who got her bachelor's degree in psychology from the University of Michigan and her juris doctor degree from Ave Maria University when it was still in Ann Arbor. "My own clients are family law and I've defended cities in civil court. Nobody really has the expe-

rience I have. I have eight solid years in each of those areas."

The family law bench is where she wants to eventually end up. As the mother of two, Cox believes that's her strength.

"It's harder to see what's best for a child if you can't put yourself in the shoes of that child," she said. "It's very frustrating for me not to be able to make the decisions that are important, especially when it comes to children."

Cox may have an advantage she can't help: her last name. She's no relation to former Michigan Attorney Mike Cox or his wife, current state Rep. Laura Cox, but Melissa Cox knows name recognition often works in mysterious ways.

"I always knew I wanted to be a judge," Cox said. "The appeal (in this election) is my last name, plus there are four open seats. That's rare."

She's getting quite a bit of support, including the endorsement of the



Melissa Cox has joined the field for four open seats on the Wayne County Circuit Court.

Association of Wayne County Police Chiefs. Also backing her, according to a list on her website (www.melissacoxforjudge.com) are 17 judges, Wayne County Prosecutor Kym Worthy, Livonia Mayor Dennis Wright and Westland City Coun-

cil President James God-

bout. But the most important endorsement came from her home base: husband Kevin Cox. The couple lives in Livonia with their three children, 5-year-old Elle, 4-year-old Harper and 18-month-old

Beckham.

"My husband has always been my biggest fan," Cox said. "He said, 'I know you're going to win and I think you should do this.'"

bkadrich@hometownlife.com
Twitter: @bkadrich

Buy Michigan Now announces contest

The Buy Michigan Now campaign is dedicated to helping businesses succeed in Michigan and creating awareness of products made in the state. For the fifth consecutive year, it is giving one new business owner a chance to win free marketing exposure via its Up and Coming Entrepreneur Contest.

"Each of the past contest winners has credited the opportunity with helping them to establish their new businesses and that's what the Buy Michigan Now campaign is all about," Buy Michigan Now founder Lisa Diggs said.

"This year, we're particularly excited to be able to offer vendor opportunities for the winner at new events in Frankenmuth and Jackson in addition to the Buy Michigan Now Festival in Northville."

Buy Michigan Now will select one grand prize-winning business and two runners-up. The grand prize winner will receive vendor space at Michigan Market & Mayhem (Frankenmuth, July 16-17), Buy Michigan Now Festival (Northville, Aug. 5-7) and Buy Michigan Now Fall Fest (Jackson, Oct. 22-23), as well as many other op-

portunities for exposure.

If interested, send an email with "Up and Coming" in the subject line to Fest@BuyMichiganNow.com by March 31.

Submissions must include: submitter's name, title and phone number, company name and city where product (s) is grown or made, date company began, website (if applicable), description of product, picture(s) of product and explanation in 200 words or less of what makes the company/product unique and why the entrepreneur deserves this opportunity.

PLYMOUTH CANTON COMMUNITY SCHOOLS REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL WIDE AREA NETWORK FIBER MAINTENANCE

The Board of Education of the Plymouth-Canton Community Schools invites all interested and qualified companies to submit a proposal for a Wide Area Network Fiber Maintenance solution. This solution will consist of the following components i) Emergency and scheduled maintenance ii) Locating services iii) guaranteed service response time.

Three (3) copies of the sealed bid along with one (1) original and (1) electronic copy should be submitted to
Elson Liu, Plymouth-Canton Community Schools
E.J. McClendon Educational Center
454 S. Harvey, Plymouth, MI 48170
by **Tuesday April 5, 2016 at 1:00 pm Local Time.**

The bids will be publicly opened at this time. The proposals must contain the wording "Plymouth Canton Community Schools, WAN Maintenance RFP" on the envelope/package. The bid documents and addendums will be posted on the state website buy4michigan.com and the USF site.

Please contact Jim Qualls in writing at Plante & Moran, PLLC, at jim.qualls@plantemoran.com, if you have questions about obtaining the RFP.

The Board of Education reserves the right to accept and/or reject all bids, as they judge to be in the best interest of the school district.

Board of Education
Plymouth-Canton Community Schools
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Weigh options for pension or lump sum payout

Dear Rick: I have a situation I hope you can help me with. I am in my mid-60s and will be retiring at the end of the year. My company has offered me a buyout on my pension. I had my accountant look at the numbers and he thought that the buyout number was fair. My question to you is what things should I consider in deciding to take the lump sum or to take the pension? You should know that I am a conservative investor and, in addition to my pension, I have about \$250,000 in my 401(k)



Rick Bloom
MONEY MATTERS

and another couple of hundred thousand dollars in investments outside of my retirement accounts. The way I figure it is that my pension, plus Social Security, along with about another \$500 a month, should more than cover my living expenses.

A: In reviewing your situation, I like what you initially did. You talked to someone to make sure

that at least the computation on the lump sum was fair. I always think that is one of the first things people should do. On the whole, most companies are fair when it comes to buyouts; many companies are very generous. On the other hand, not surprisingly, there are companies that are not employee-friendly when it comes to buyouts.

The first thing you need to look at is your individual situation. What type of investor are you? Are you the type of investor who is going to take this money and invest it in things such as

CDs and U.S. treasuries or are you an investor who accepts volatility and is willing to invest the money long term? If you're the type of investor who is going to invest the money in things such as CDs and U.S. treasuries, then it leans toward not taking the buyout. If you're the type of investor who accepts volatility and risk and can keep the money invested for the long term, taking the buyout generally makes more sense.

Another issue is when you are going to need income from the money.

If you need the income currently to cover your living expenses, it leans more toward the pension. If you do not need the income for a number of years and you can let the money continue to reinvest and grow, then it leans toward taking the buyout.

In your situation, I would not take the buyout. You would be better off to take the pension as opposed to the lump sum. Because you will currently need the income and you are a conservative investor, it makes more sense to take the pension.

One last note — it is important that you invest some of your other money for long-term growth. I believe your cost of living will go up, not down, and having money invested for long-term growth will protect you. Good luck!

Rick Bloom is a fee-only financial adviser. His website is www.bloomassetmanagement.com. If you would like him to respond to questions, email rick@bloomassetmanagement.com.

Rock City Music Co. is the place for music lovers

Observer: Tell us about your business, including the services and products you offer.

Rock City: Rock City Music Co. has anything a musician or music lover could want. We offer new and used guitars, amps, CDs and vinyl records. As well as being a full-service guitar and amp center, we also offer a wide variety of lessons.

Observer: How did you decide to open your business?

Rock City: I started working at Bluesairmen Guitars in Garden City when I was 16 years old. At age 20, I purchased the store. After many years of hard work and success, we had outgrown our location in Garden City, so I began looking for a larger retail space and a new beginning with a name that meant something to me. After putting the word out, a family member suggested taking a look at our current location (the old Virginia Farrell Beauty School). After the ink was dry on the lease, I decided if we were going



Owner Nick Marocco at the counter of Rock City Music Co. in Livonia.



Rock City Music Co. offers new and used guitars, amps, CDs and vinyl records.

to move here to Livonia, it was time for a new name and we landed at Rock City Music Co.

Observer: Why did you choose the Livonia area?

Rock City: Livonia just seemed like the best option. It's a beautiful community with great,

supportive people, it was close enough to our old location that we wouldn't alienate our old clientele and it was close to home.

Observer: What has been the biggest challenge?

Rock City: So far our biggest challenge has basically just spreading

the word to the new community that we are here and all the different services we offer. Everyone that has come in so far has been pleasantly surprised and we want to keep doing that.

Observer: How has the economy affected your business?

Rock City: When I first took over Bluesairmen in 2011, the economy was

not in a very good place, but we worked through it and survived; that's why we are here. So far, everything in Livonia has been great. It seems like people who live here really get off on supporting a local business rather than big box stores.

Observer: Do you have an amusing anecdote that shows what it's like to be a small business owner?

Rock City: AC/DC once said, "It's a long way to the top, if you wanna rock and roll!"

Observer: What advice would you give to other small business owners?

Rock City: I would just say, if you believe in yourself and your idea,

go for it. There will always be naysayers and people who try and stand in your way, but if you have the drive and determination, you will make it.

Observer: What's in store for the future of your business?

Rock City: We are constantly working on improving the store and doing new things. We have recently brought in T-shirts, ukuleles and posters. But the thing I am most excited about is we are our working with our neighbors at O'Malley's to present a sort of summer concert music series here in our parking lot. We will have different themes/and artists.

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New Law Changes Certain Social Security Filing Strategies for Couples who are age 62 or older in 2015.

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Members from North Congregational Church in Farmington Hills, Meadowbrook Congregational Church in Novi, Pine Hill Congregational Church in West Bloomfield and First Congregational Church of Wayne took part in the trip.

Residents recovering from Katrina

A group representing the Southeast Michigan Association of Congregational Churches recently returned from a week-long trip to New Orleans. The 14 men and women included members from North Congregational Church in Farmington Hills, Meadowbrook Congregational Church in Novi, Pine Hill Congregational Church in West Bloomfield and First Congregational Church of Wayne.

This is the ninth year that congregationalists from Michigan have traveled to New Orleans to help with reconstruction efforts. Even though it has been more than 10 years since Hurricane Katrina, many neighborhoods in the New Orleans area have yet to fully recover, particularly low-income wards that experienced significant flooding. Many displaced families have yet to return.

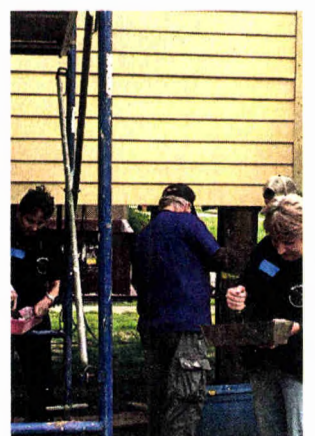
The group stayed at Camp Restore, a facility for volunteers that opened in 2006 on the once-flooded campus of Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in New Orleans East.

The congregationalist volunteers worked with the St. Bernard Project, a long-term disaster recovery organization begun in 2006 in the wake of Katrina. Initially focused on helping to rebuild New Orleans, St. Bernard Project is now national in scope, helping with the East Coast recovery from Hurricane Sandy and other disasters. Members of AmeriCorps supervised the on-site work.

The St. Bernard Project organized the work sites. The Michigan volunteers worked on two houses during the week. Both are "opportunity homes" owned by St. Bernard Project that will become rental units for low-income families.

"We come back every year because the need is still here," said Liane Jensen, a member of North Church who served as one of the trip's organizers. "We take away more in gratification and fellowship than we give."

For more information, go to www.StBernard-Project.org or www.NorthCongregationalChurch.org.



Volunteers mix joint compound for mudding the drywall.

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PREP GYMNASTICS

Chiefs foiled in title bid

Canton drops to fifth in team state finals

Tim Smith
Staff Writer

Hopes were high that Canton would hang with state gymnastics powerhouse Rockford/Sparta at Friday's team finals.

Veteran Chiefs coach John Cunningham was optimistic because his team racked up 146 points while winning the team regional March 5.

"Rockford is a super team this year," Cunningham said that day. "But they've been scoring around 146, which coincidentally is what we had."

But Canton did not match that overall performance six days later at Rockford, tallying 140.975 points to finish fifth overall. Victorious for the second straight year was Rockford/Sparta with a 146.350 total.

Forest Hills claimed the runner-up spot (145.100), followed by Farmington (144.000) and Howell (141.925).

In sixth with 140.225 points was Plymouth; Livonia Blue placed ninth with 138.250.

The Chiefs were in a hole from the start, finishing seventh on vault with a 35.300 score — although it was a tightly contested event. Winning with 36.800

See GYMNASTICS, Page B3



MICHAEL VASILNEK

Canton's Katherine Najduk displays her agile technique on balance beam at the regional.

BOYS BASKETBALL DISTRICT



JOHN KEMSKI | EXPRESS PHOTO

Canton head coach Jimmy Reddy and his team watch, almost in stunned disbelief, as they suffer a one-and-done loss to Northville in a Class A district semifinal at Salem.

KNOCKOUT PUNCH

Chiefs' magical season comes to sudden close at hands of pesky Mustangs

Tim Smith
Staff Writer

Northville cranked up its relentless defense to a fever pitch Wednesday night against Canton.

And when the Class A boys basketball district semifinal ended at Salem High School, it was the Chiefs feeling sick, losing 51-39 to the swarming Mustangs.

The Mustangs (21-1 to set a new school record) chipped away after falling behind early and then took control in the fourth quarter — stopping the KLAAs champions cold in their tracks, not giving up a point for the first seven minutes as Northville went on a 12-0 run.

That turned a 33-33 game into a double-digit lead with time running out for Canton.

"Guys were flying all over, recovering, guarding multiple defenders and



JOHN KEMSKI | EXPRESS PHOTO

Two Northville defenders shadowed Canton senior forward Logan Ryan all night, including on this shot.

then we were rebounding as they missed, which was the best part," said Northville head coach Todd Sander, whose team enjoyed a 26-19 rebounding edge.

Leading that charge with 14 points was senior Nick Wilds, with junior Jake Justice scoring 12 off the bench while shadowing Canton big man Logan Ryan. Chipping in 12 points and a game-high 13 rebounds was senior Justin Gibbons.

"Key was energy; we come ready to play every day," Wilds said. "We were a little flat. It was a close game and then we got a good run going and energy's the key for us, I think."

According to Gibbons, the focus on defense has been crucial to Northville's season-long success and that continued against Canton.

"That's how we play the whole year. Defense first, (then) we let the offense

See CHIEFS, Page B2

D1 BOYS HOCKEY SEMIFINAL

Shamrocks on cusp of three-peat

Catholic Central holds off late rally by U-D Jesuit to reach Division 1 final

Tim Smith
Staff Writer

Whatever momentum University of Detroit-Jesuit had when Austin Evans tied the game 1-1 on a tap-in with 1:29 left in the opening period went "poof" went Novi Detroit Catholic Central scored two goals 24 seconds apart in that period's final minute.

First it was senior Kyle Mulka ripping a high shot past Cubs goalie Jacob Robinson, taking a feed from senior line-

mate Joseph Mancinelli. That put CC back in front.

Just 14 seconds later, junior defenseman Zachary Sprys-Tellner and senior forward Nick Macari teamed for a scoring play right on the doorstep in front of Robinson.

The Shamrocks (23-7) went on to win 4-3 in the Division 1 boys hockey state semifinal at USA Hockey Arena, managing to stem the U-D Jesuit tide late in the third with some smart, unselfish play. CC played for the championship against Brighton.

"Certainly it makes it a lot easier when you get a two-goal cushion," CC first-year head coach Brandon Kaleniecki said. "And to be honest, I didn't real-

ly feel like it was a 3-1 hockey game at that point. It was a very tight game, they were coming at us pretty good for long stretches in that first.

"The swing back to our favor to not only get one, but two right at the end of the period, those goals are a killer. We pretty much held that until the very end."

Can't do that

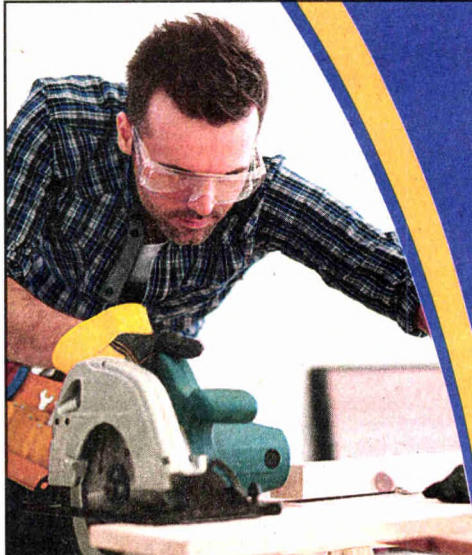
Cubs head coach Rick Bennetts, whose team (16-8-5) has lost the semifinal game four years in a row, shook his head about the way the Shamrocks answered right after the Evans goal.

See SHAMROCKS, Page B2




SCOTT CONFER

Novi Detroit Catholic Central's Michael Considine (right) fires a shot that would make it 4-1 in the second period Friday against University of Detroit-Jesuit.



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PREP ATHLETICS

Latest KLAA realignment proposal voted down

Principals to meet again to mull over alternate plan

Brad Emons
Staff Writer

It's back to the drawing board for any possible realignment plans for the 24-member Kensington Lakes Activities Association.

KLAA principals, by a 17-6 margin (with one school absent), voted down a competitive balance proposal plan March 7 to realign schools into six different divisions instead of the current four while maintaining 12 teams in both the Kensington and Lakes conferences.

Proposal B essentially provided a swap, with KLAA West Division members Pinckney and Milford moving to the Kensington Conference from the Lakes and KLAA Central Division schools Novi and Northville moving from the Lakes from the Kensington.

A 75-percent majority, or 18 schools, was needed to approve the change, which tried to address the discrepancy between



the largest schools in the KLAA, such as Grand Blanc (enrollment 2,727), and the smallest in South Lyon East (923).

Proposal B was initiated by an executive committee of KLAA athletic directors, who mulled over four different proposals for possible realignment.

The KLAA, which came into existence during the 2007-08 school year when schools from the Western Lakes and Kensington Valley Conference joined forces, is now in the process coming up with another proposal that can be taken to its 24 members at the next principals meeting for a possible vote April 18.

Any new realignment plan adopted will not go into effect until the 2017-18 school year.

Meanwhile, KLAA athletic directors are looking into a possible four-year performance based formula plan that has been used by the Oakland Activities Association, which consists of 23 member schools.

"What was brought forth was a strength of schedule-type proposal that will hopefully address some of the variables that the KLAA has already had," Milford Principal Kevin McKenna said. "It's similar to it, but it's not the same exact plan. It's taking some of the ideas of the positives of what they have, maybe some positives of other things and trying to look at that a little bit."

In the OAA, divisions are broken down by a past performance based formula for each of the fall, winter and spring seasons. For example, two rival schools that may be in the same football division would not necessarily be aligned in the same division in another sport.

Travel concerns, particular-

ly for Tuesday night conference events, along with maintaining rivalries and aligning schools with similar enrollments are some of the concerns that will still play into the next KLAA proposal.

"It's one of the variables (geographic) that we're trying to keep intact," McKenna said. "Does it do it 100 percent? No. But we're trying to keep one of those variables together."

"Our next time line is March 21 to see some of those proposals. And if we don't see those proposals, we'll have to see what's next for the KLAA."

According to McKenna, the KLAA schools that voted for Proposal B were Milford (enrollment 1,484), South Lyon (1,224), South Lyon East (923), Pinckney (1,326), Waterford Mott (1,651) and Waterford Kettering (1,512).

Ironically, Milford's sister school from the Huron Valley district, White Lake Lakeland, voted no on Proposal B.

"I don't want to answer from a Milford standpoint just because I'm kind of representing the KLAA as a secretary," McKenna said. "I'd rather

not put the Milford variable scenario in place. I have to be respectful to the KLAA."

Speculation has run rampant within the past week that as many as 10 schools from the KLAA, primarily from the Lakes Conference, have already been in preliminary discussions to form their own conference or league.

If a new OAA-type proposal does gain traction before next month's KLAA principals meeting, McKenna said the possibility still exists that some schools may have to sacrifice moving to another division or perhaps conference.

"I think so, absolutely, but we'll see what that proposal brings forward. There's are a few options with it, so we're willing to look at that," he said. "It could keep the league intact, absolutely, but it's going to take a majority of the KLAA buildings to keep it together and we'll see where it takes us."

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CLASS D BOYS BASKETBALL

Loss in district final aside, Eagles enjoyed stellar year

PCA's efficiency lifts team to victory over Trillium in semifinals

Tim Smith
Staff Writer

Smart and efficient play has spearheaded Plymouth Christian Academy's varsity boys basketball team to a pair of wins in this week's Class D district hosted by Allen Park Inter-City Baptist.

Unfortunately for the Eagles and first-year head coach Matt Windle, the hopes of capturing a district championship fell by the wayside during the second half of the final Thursday as the host Chargers broke open a close game late to win, 55-31.

"We competed and really played tough," Windle said. "We came out with a new defense and did a great job holding them. We were only down 20-18 at halftime."

"It was a physical game and not a lot of fouls were called. Inter-City plays such tight physical defense and we couldn't get open looks in the second half."

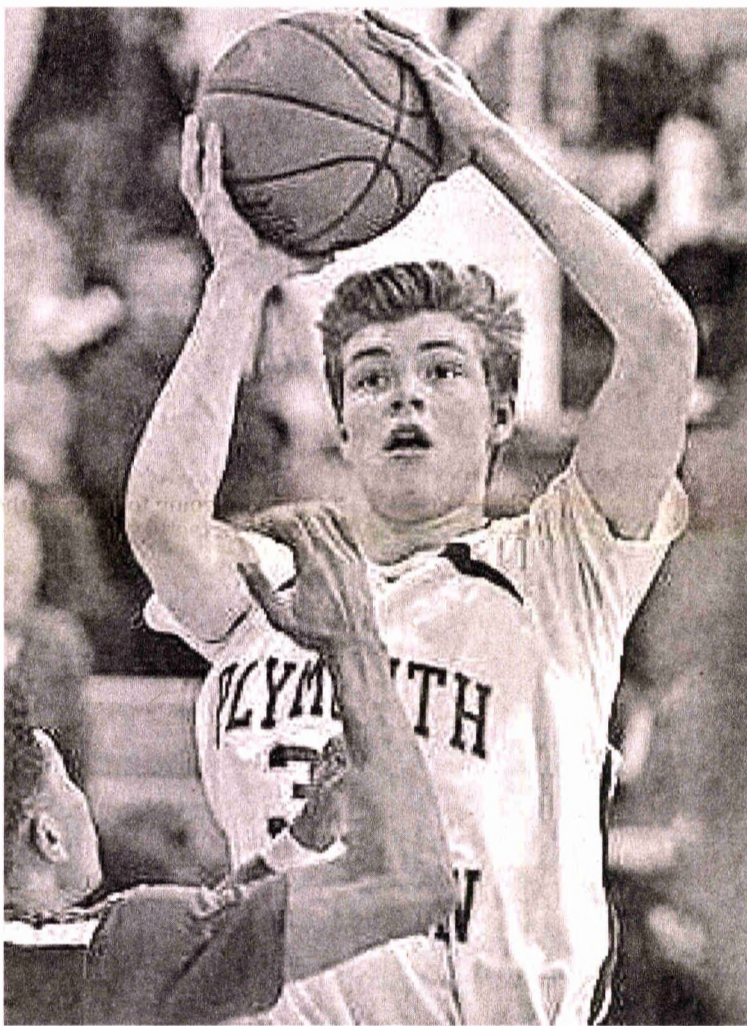
But the Chargers did, knocking down some crucial shots early in the third quarter — setting the tone for a 16-6 scoring edge in that quarter to make it a 36-24 contest going into the fourth.

The Yakuber brothers were outstanding for the Eagles in a losing effort. Sophomore guard Levi Yakuber led the squad with nine points, while senior guard Luke Yakuber chipped in eight. Both grabbed five rebounds.

Scoring eight points was sophomore forward/guard Matt Malcolm, while sophomore center Jayme Fadden and sophomore forward/guard Max Okolo helped the PCA cause with five rebounds each.

Raising the bar

"We played really tough and I was very proud of the way our guys fought," Windle said. "They exceeded a lot of people's expectations for



BILL BRESLER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

PCA's Matt Malcolm launches a shot during a game earlier this season. His strong play helped the Eagles reach the Class D district final at Allen Park Inter-City Baptist, where PCA lost, 55-31.

tonight's game and, really, this whole season.

"It's a great motivator for all those young guys as we continue to build for the years to come."

After knocking off Inkster Peterson-Warren Academy, 66-33, on Monday, the Eagles defeated Trillium Academy, 57-52, in Wednesday's semifinal. Scoring 22 points and grabbing six rebounds for PCA was Malcolm.

"Tonight will be a big test," Windle said earlier Thursday. "We know we can beat them, because we did it earlier this year. And we know we can lose big if we don't show up to play."

"Our mindset has been 'breaking down walls one at a time' for these playoffs. All

today takes is being the better team for one game. One quarter at a time. One possession at a time."

That strategy worked earlier in the tourney. Against Trillium, Malcolm went 8-of-11 from the field, including 4-of-5 from behind the 3-point line. "Matt Malcolm was very efficient," Windle said.

Chipping in 17 points was Levi Yakuber.

"The big thing from last night is the guys just did a great job being patient on offense," Windle said. "They made Trillium have to make difficult shots. And we just had great hustle plays all night."

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CLASS C DISTRICT HOOPS

Lutheran Westland runs record to 22-0

Warriors go for school's first basketball district title

Ed Wright
Staff Writer

Lutheran Westland used a 23-8 fourth-quarter spurge to outlast Canton Prep, 73-55, in a Class C district semifinal game Wednesday night at Whitmore Lake High School.

The triumphant Warriors improved to 22-0 while earning a spot in the district championship game against Ypsilanti Arbor Prep (14-7).

Lutheran Westland relied on huge production in its book-end quarters, scoring 25 points in the first quarter and 23 during the final eight minutes.

Zach Burk was a beast in the paint again for the winners, tallying 20 points and 10 rebounds.

Senior guard Brent Croft added 15 points and five assists, while Luke Smith chipped in 11 points, 12 boards and two steals.

Robert Marshall turned in a pivotal performance in a reserve role, adding 10 points (on 5-of-5 shooting) and eight rebounds.

Ben Brown and Kory Ba-

rikmo both scored six points for the Warriors. Barikmo also dished out eight assists and secured nine rebounds, while Brown snatched six caroms.

LW made 17-of-25 free throws and 4-of-16 3-point shots.

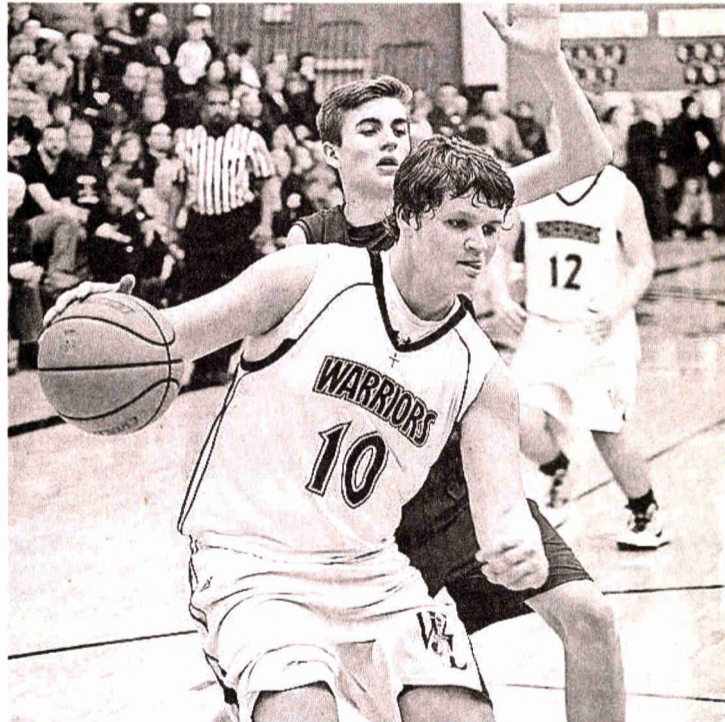
Donald Broussard and Kameron Watkins led Canton Prep with 12 points apiece. Will Lyles chipped in eight points.

"We played a solid first half offensively and defensively," LW head coach Jim Hoelt said. "In the second half, Canton Prep couldn't miss; everything they put up went in. I think we had a few lapses defensively, but we just had to weather the storm in terms of the momentum."

"We did what we needed to do to get this win. Now it's on to the district final where we'll meet up with Ypsilanti Arbor Prep. They are aggressive, but we must match their intensity ... it will be a battle."

The Warriors will be in search of the school's first district title.

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TOM BEAUDOIN

Luke Smith scored 11 points and grabbed 12 rebounds during Lutheran Westland's victory over Canton Prep.

GYMNASTICS

Continued from Page B1

was Farmington.

Canton placed eighth on uneven parallel bars (34.375) and sixth on balance beam (36.075) before rebounding on floor exercise with a fourth-place showing of 36.400.

Among area teams, the only one with an event victory was Farmington, first overall on vault.

Both Plymouth and Livonia Blue chalked up third-place finishes, on beam (34.725) and

bars (34.975), respectively.

Rounding out the standings were Grand Ledge (seventh, 140.000), Grosse Pointe United (eighth, 139.825), Brighton (10th, 137.500), Lowell (11th, 134.950) and Port Huron Unified (12th, 134.150).

Rockford/Sparta started slowly but picked up steam, winning on beam (37.625) and floor exercise (37.525).

Canton, Plymouth and Salem gymnasts were scheduled to compete Saturday in the individual finals.

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Michigan Bucks to host College Challenge March 19

Brad Emons
Staff Writer

College soccer at its finest will be on display Saturday, March 19, at the Michigan Bucks eighth annual College Challenge at Pontiac Soccer Arenas in Pontiac.

Men's soccer teams from Butler University, Michigan State, Notre Dame and Oakland University will play, with the day's first match at 12:30 p.m. featuring MSU against the

Fighting Irish. Each of the four games will be only 70 minutes in length at the request of the teams.

The No. 10 nationally ranked Irish will play back-to-back matches, with their next game at 2:10 p.m. against Horizon League Tournament champion OU. The Spartans' next competition will be at 3:50 p.m. against Big East Conference third seed Butler.

The final match is scheduled for 5:30 p.m., with Oakland

facing Butler in a coaching match-up that features two former Bucks players, Eric Pogue (OU) and Paul Snape (Butler), both of whom were leaders on the field as players and now as head coaches facing each other for the second consecutive year.

Tickets are \$12 at the door (all ages). Discount tickets can be purchased in advance for \$8 at www.BucksSoccer.com (click on the flier to continue to the link).

2016 QUEBEC PEE-WEE INTERNATIONAL TOURNAMENT

Local players enjoy life on, off ice at Quebec tourney

Honeybaked 2003 AAA team strong at Pee-Wee World Championships

Several local youth hockey players had the time of their lives recently, competing at the 2016 Quebec Pee-Wee International Tournament.

Finishing in the top four was the Honeybaked 2003 AAA team, which includes Canton's Hadley Hudak and Lucas Hayes, Plymouth's Kyle DeMarco and Livonia's Luca Di Pasquo.

All 17 members of the team stayed with host French billet families while in Quebec City.

Honeybaked lost its final game of the tourney, 4-0, to the Czech Republic. Subsequently, the Detroit Belle Tire team (including Collin Weinrich of Canton) defeated the Czech team, 3-2, to win the championship.

Other boys on the Honeybaked team include: Trevor Mitchell, Brighton; Brett Harris, Chesterfield Township; Sutter Muzzatti, Okemos; Owen Carlile, Hartland; Alec Hamady, Beverly Hills; Max Smolinski, West Bloomfield Hills; Niklas Miller, Howell; Shayne Beaufait, Commerce Township; Greg Enright, Bloomfield Hills; Andrew Morgan, Troy; Carson Galin, Walled Lake; Ryan Goodfellow, Novi; Seth Ferguson, Hartland.

All coaches of the Honeybaked squad are former National Hockey League play-

ers: Jeff Mitchell, head coach; Brian Smolinski, assistant coach; and Jason Muzzatti, goalie coach.

Matthew Rochna of Canton played on the Compuware team, which also attended and played at the tournament.

The tournament, referred to as the "Pee-Wee World Championships" is annually attended by more than 2,250 competitors from more than 15 countries and is the oldest and most prestigious youth hockey tournament in the world.

It was founded in 1960 and many of today's greatest NHL players participated in the event as youth themselves — Wayne Gretzky, Paul Coffey, Guy Lafleyr, Brendan Shanahan, Bobby Orr, Mario Lemieux, Marcel Dionne, Eric Lindros and Dylan Larkin, among others.

Invitations are extended to youth hockey organizations that have established their strong commitment to the youth of their community and to the highest level of sportsmanship and hockey performance.

More than 120 teams took part at AAA, Elite AA, AA and lower-tiered group levels.

Memories abound

Meanwhile, all of the Honeybaked players offered their recollections of the trip, hockey and the cultural experience of staying with French billet families:

Shayne Beaufait, Commerce Township: "I remember going out onto the ice on the game against the Remparts and looking and seeing so many fans watching us. The billet families were so



The Honeybaked 2003 AAA hockey team, including several players from Canton, Plymouth and Livonia, finished in the top four at the recent 2016 Quebec Pee-Wee International Tournament.

nice and I remember playing with the kids and skating on the rink or going in the hot tub with them."

Owen Carlile, Hartland: "I will remember the first game at the Centre Videotron because I think that's the biggest crowd I will ever have!! I'll remember how encouraging the billet house was about hockey with their collection of hockey jerseys."

Kyle DeMarco, Plymouth: "I enjoyed the opening game. It was so cool to play in front of all of those fans. I will always remember that. I will remember playing pool with the billet family and playing tournaments to see who the best pool player was. It was a sweet time."

Luca Di Pasquo, Livonia: "I will remember playing in front of 15,000 people at the Centre Videotron. I will remember playing non-stop mini-sticks at the billet family house."

Greg Enright, Bloomfield Hills: "I will definitely remember the first tournament game against the Quebec Remparts, when we played in front of over 10,000 people. I will remember our inside joke with Luca, Lise and I at the billet house."

Seth Ferguson, Hartland: "I will remember playing at the Videotron with the huge crowd. I will remember how nice the billet family was and the huge snowball fight on the last day."

Carson Galin, Walled Lake: "The huge crowd when we played against the Remparts and all of our fans cheering us on. On the last day me, Ryan Goodfellow and Seth Ferguson all went into the hot

tub and had a huge snow fight with our billets. They made our trip so much fun."

Ryan Goodfellow, Novi: "Having fun with my teammates and billets and all the games. I will remember going to the outdoor rink and eating whipper with the billet family."

Alec Hamady, Beverly Hills: "I remember all the sight-seeing in the city. I will remember how much fun the billet family was and how amazing their meals were."

Brett Harris, Chesterfield: "I will always remember the first tournament game against the hometown team in front of thousands of people. One thing I will remember about the billet family is how nice they were and how delicious the crepes were."

Lucas Hayes, Canton: "One of the things that I will remember about my billet family is the traditional French cooking. It was very good and they made everything from scratch. I will remember playing in front of 12,000 people on our opening game. I was really nervous going out on the ice in the beginning, but as soon as we started playing, my nerves went down. One of the things that I will remember about the billet family is playing Just Dance with them and the food was wonderful."

Hadley Hudak, Canton: "I remember stepping on the ice in front of 14,000 people and being nervous. I remember how great the city was and I also enjoyed outdoor pond hockey. The billet family was very kind and the food was great."

Niklas Miller, Howell: "The greatest memory from Quebec was playing in front of so many fans, in such a prestigious tournament. I will always remember when the billet family would take us to play pond hockey and going into the hot tub. Teaching them things about the United States and about us and our family and school. When they would take us to the rink every morning and when they would wake us up."

Trevor Mitchell, Brighton: "What I remember is being with the best team I could have and doing fun activities with them like tubing and being with my billet. Also playing in front of 12,000-15,000 people for our first game and only have our families and billet families support us. The billet family had two crazy, fun kids that would love to play mini sticks. Also the crepes in the morning for every breakfast."

Andrew Morgan, Troy: "I will always remember playing in front of the crowd at the Videotron arena. Linda was the best cook and we played pool every night at the billet house."

Sutter Muzzatti, Okemos: "I will remember when I first stepped out on the ice at the Videotron and seeing how many people were there. One thing I will remember is playing at the rink with our billet being a goalie."

Max Smolinski, West Bloomfield: "One thing I will remember about playing in Quebec would be stepping onto the ice in front of 18,000 people. One thing I will remember about my billet family would be her French toast every morning."



The Plymouth Sharks celebrate after winning districts recently. The team then went on to finish third at the MAHA state tournament. Members of the team include Joel Wilkinson, Zachary Gibson, Grant Waitz, Jack Fawcett, Jacob Grieb, Ryan Whelan, Conner Kaminski, Luke Mesner, Jayden Nicol, Dante Rieli, Zachary Porada, Nathan Fishel, Dimitri Guberinich, Nikolai Grabowski and Brady Walsh and coaches Gene Grabowski, Mark Fawcett, Brent Rieli and Darin Walsh.

YOUTH HOCKEY

Plymouth Sharks take bite out of competition in MAHA tourney

It was quite a season for the Plymouth Sharks youth hockey team, composed of youngsters ages 11-13 from Plymouth and Canton.

A few weeks ago, the team concluded an incredible run in the MAHA state districts, going 8-0, including overtime

victories in the semifinals (against Birmingham) and finals (against Livonia).

With that championship, the squad moved on to the MAHA state championship tournament March 4-6 in Alpena, including the top eight Pee-Wee 'B' teams.

The Sharks were tied 3-3 late in the third period against Escanaba, only to fall 5-3 to the team that would go on to win the state title.

Members of the team, coached by Gene Grabowski, Mark Fawcett, Brent Rieli and Dari Walsh include the follow-

ing (listed alphabetically): Jack Fawcett, Nathan Fishel, Zachary Gibson, Nikolai Grabowski, Jacob Grieb, Dimitri Guberinich, Conner Kaminski, Luke Mesner, Jayden Nicol, Zachary Porada, Dante Rieli, Grant Waitz, Brady Walsh, Ryan Whelan and Joel Wilkinson.

DIVISION 2 HOCKEY SEMIFINAL

Spartans hammer Hartland, reach D2 final

Ed Wright
Staff Writer

As most everyone knows — and as Hartland's hockey team certainly found out Thursday afternoon — paybacks are a ... well, anything but a day at the beach.

Just three weeks after dropping a 4-0 decision to the Eagles in the KLASA championship game, Livonia Stevenson throttled its conference rivals, 5-1, in a Division 2 state semifinal at the USA Hockey Arena in Plymouth Township.

The Spartans, who advanced to the D2 state championship game against Romeo (see results at hometownlife.com), put the hammer down early on their maize-and-blue foes, scor-

ing bang-bang first-period goals before the Zamboni's engine had a chance to cool down from its pregame resurfacing gig.

Stevenson's defense was suffocating, rarely allowing the Eagles to string together back-to-back passes, let alone think about recovering from the 3-0 deficit they faced once Jake Beane's power-play goal settled into the back of the net 1:41 into the middle period.

Even when Hartland did manage to construct scoring chances, Stevenson senior goalie Cullen Barber and his puck-devouring band of defensive brothers slammed the door hard and loud on the Eagles, with the exception of a second-period goal by Luke Cowan.

"We were a little more opportunistic tonight than we were the first time we played Hartland," Stevenson head coach David Mitchell said. "I think getting those two early goals like we did calmed us down and showed us that we could score on them."

"Those two goals gave us energy and put them back on their heels. The last time we played, they scored an early one and we were chasing the game from then on. Scoring early forced them to chase the game."

Stevenson senior captain Ben Kowalske, who played in his third state championship game, said playing against high-level teams like Hartland brings out the best in him and



Stevenson's Ben Kowalske and Shane Leonard celebrate Kowalske's first-period goal.

his fellow Spartans.

"This team's culture is all about trying to match or exceed great programs in the state and Hartland is definitely a great program," said Kowalske, who scored the Spar-

tans' second goal. "No matter how it looked or what the outcome was today, it was not an easy task. We had to work hard for everything we got tonight."

ewright@hometownlife.com



The Marcus Garvey Academy African Drum and Dance Ensemble entertain at the Multicultural Fair at Schoolcraft College.

SUBMITTED

Travel around the world at Schoolcraft's Multicultural Fair

Sharon Dargay
Staff Writer

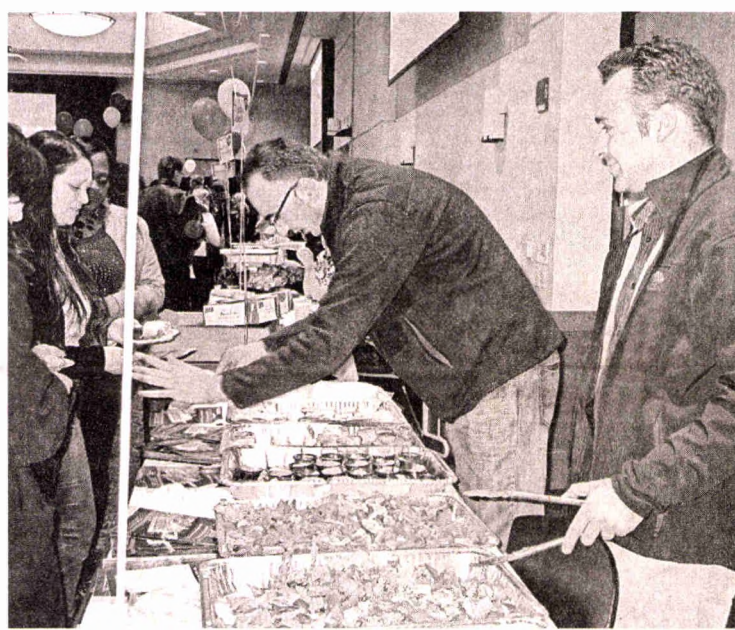
Laura LeVoi Leshok promises a "rocking good time" Thursday, March 24 in the VisTaTech Center at Schoolcraft College.

"Salsa performers will come in and teach people how to do salsa. The Brazilian athletic dancers involve the audience, too," said Leshok, a part-time faculty member who is helping to coordinate the 15th Annual Multicultural Fair at the Livonia campus. "The African drums band will include people from the audience. We always have the African drummers. The whole room changes at 12:05 p.m. when they start. People are dancing and it's so energy-driven at that point."

Music, dance, food, an interactive display, artifacts, exhibits and chair massages will keep visitors busy from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. with activities in the Center's DiPonio Room, Presentation Room and Main Street area. Leshok expects approximately 3,500 students, teachers and community members will attend the free event.

"It is quite student-driven. We're at the point that now students know about it and look forward to this event. For international students who are here in the States to study, it's a great time for them to highlight their culture and share it."

"This is a great way to learn about other cultures and people and find commonalities."



Sampling ethnic food is a part of the annual Multicultural Fair at Schoolcraft College.

SUBMITTED

From Albania to Venezuela

Leshok's son, a high school junior, set up a display table about Spain at the fair when he was in eighth grade. He and a friend have returned every year as exhibitors. Most of the displays are prepared by college students. Some team up with faculty members or ethnic community groups.

The countries represented by food, costumes, artifacts and photos change from year to year, depending in part on the nationalities of Schoolcraft's international students.

"We have a big Albanian population this year for some reason, so definitely they will be represented. A couple of years back we didn't have

any."

European, Asian, Middle Eastern, African, South American and North American cultures will be represented, including Native American and African American. International students also will explain dating and marriage customs from their countries, at the "Marriage Around the World" display.

Changing race

New this year is an exhibit, Little Syria, New York, 1880-1940 that looks at one of the first large communities of immigrants from the Middle East. The traveling exhibit is on loan from the Arab American National Museum in Dearborn.

The Human Race Machine, a Race Experience also is new,

and will show visitors how they'd appear as a different race. The Race Experience Kiosk will be stationed in the campus bookstore March 17-23.

"This year we also have henna (hand painting) and our Schoolcraft massage therapy department will come in and give free chair massages and share information about destressing."

Yemeni dancers and a reggae band are new performers this year.

"Ours is probably one of the best (fairs) in the Midwest," Leshok said. "The involvement we get from students is almost unprecedented, especially for people being on a commuter campus and it's so transitional being a two-year school."

"Ours is comprehensive and partnered with the community," she said. "I think it's great fun for students to talk to other students and share their world."

The performance schedule for the fair is Mariachi Jalisco Band, 10 a.m., Manoogian School Armenian Dancers, 10:40 a.m., Capoeira: Brazilian Athletic Dance, 11:10 a.m., Yemeni Dancers, 11:40 a.m., Marcus Garvey Academy African Drum and Dance Ensemble, 12:05 p.m., Leticia and the Energetic Soul Salsa Dancers, 1 p.m., Reggae by Jonathon Motley, 1:40 p.m., Ballet Folklorico Mexico Lindo, 2 p.m., and O'Hare Irish Step Dancers, 2:30 p.m.

Schoolcraft College is located on Haggerty between Six Mile and Seven Mile. For more information visit schoolcraft.edu.

sdargay@hometownlife.com

Make sure your appliances haven't been recalled

This past week I received the first draft of a new law dealing with appliance recalls. It looks like State Representative Gary Glenn is proving true to his word that he will make a difference on behalf of Michigan homeowners. I expect to be working hard with Mr. Glenn to institute a law that can save the life of many a consumer.

More than \$1 trillion is being spent every year in this country to repair homes with damage caused by recalled appliances. There currently are 195 million recalled appliances in homes where the homeowner doesn't have a clue as to whether one of them is installed in their house.



Joe
Gagnon

APPLIANCE
DOCTOR

Here is a recent bit of information about dishwashers that you may not have heard a thing about. Sold between January 2009 and May 2014 (just shy of five years) there were 149,000 dishwashers sold in U.S. and another 45,000 sold in Canada that may have a defective power cord. The cord can overheat and there have been reports filed that fires have caused property damage. Imagine waking in the night and the dishwasher is not even operating yet it is on fire and so is the rest of the kitchen.

Check your appliances

Every one reading this column needs to be aware of the seriousness of this subject. You need to make some effort to find out if you have a recalled appliance in your home and to spread the word to friends and loved ones. If you have a fire break out in your house one time from a recalled product, I can assure you that your attention antenna will stand straight up. You simply can go to www.appliancerecall.com or www.saferproducts.com and make a note of each model number and check it out. By the way, the brands associated with this recent recall are Bosch, Gaggenau, Thermador, and Kenmore Elite.

Let me go back in time to 1970 when I took on the responsibilities of service and customer relations manager with the Amana Corporation. During that era companies knew how to make sure customers were pleased to own a major home appliance. When there were faults with a product all the manufacturers were quick to take action to rectify the problem. If a new refrigerator was delivered and the compressor locked up, you had another new one in your home the next day.

We had a total of some 26 different names to shop for back then. If the Chinese are allowed to purchase General Electric as expected in the months ahead, you will see a serious quality issue come blazing into this country.

Ethics needed

Customer satisfaction needs to make a big come back in the market place and it can't happen without the cooperation of each manufacture. Each one of them has to realize that producing a product with built-in hazards can only bite them in the rear. If we let these recalls go on as they have and don't take action of some sort, many more will die and suffer the tragedy of a house fire.

Being an engineer in this country has always been a very prestigious career and they need to stand up and be counted. I knew many in 1970 who wouldn't approve of the way things are made today. The question is, where are those ethics now? Fortunately, we have a lawmaker in Lansing who is taking a stand on this issue. His name is Gary Glenn and I know he would like to hear from you. Stay tuned.

Joe Gagnon can be heard at 8 a.m., Saturdays on WAAM 1600. You can e-mail your problems and questions on appliances to appldr@twmi.rr.com

Annual St. Patty's day event, DIA party focus on dance

Sharon Dargay
Staff Writer

Bring your dancing shoes to the 32nd Annual St. Patrick's Day Irish Fest Thursday, March 17, in Westland.

Then dance the night away Saturday, March 19, at the opening party of the Dance! American Art 1830-1960 exhibit at the Detroit Institute of Arts (DIA) in Detroit.

"We're going to have an exciting day," said Mick Gavin, the Redford musician who is organizing the Irish Fest. "We're going to have a lot of dancing this year. More than usual." Gavin, a fiddler, and his Crossroads Ceili band will perform at both events, along with the Detroit Square Dance Society Band.

The Irish Fest starts at 3 p.m. on St. Patrick's Day, at the Hellenic Cultural Center, 36375 Joy, east of Newburgh. Admission is \$10 for adults. Kids, 12 and

under, accompanied by a parent, enter free. Gavin said no one is turned away for inability to pay. Corned beef and cabbage dinners, hot dogs, hamburgers and beverages will be available for purchase.

Performers are Mick Gavin with Eddie McGlinchey and Ray Maguire, 3 p.m., The Ardan School of Irish Dance, 4 p.m., Mick Gavin's Crossroads Ceili, 5:30 p.m., The Detroit Square Dance Society Band, 6:30 p.m., Highland Pipes, 7 p.m., Motor City Irish Dancers, 7:30 p.m., and members of Conor O'Neill's Session Band, 8:30 p.m. A roots music jam starts at 9:30 p.m. Lindsay McCaw will call the square dancing patterns.

"With the square dancing the audience can get up and dance. The Ardan School also brings people out to do a ceili dance"

Gavin said both Crossroads Ceili and the Detroit Square Dance Society Band will perform at the DIA's dance party, which runs 7-10 p.m. March 19 at the DIA,



Mick Gavin (middle) plays fiddle with members of the Detroit Square Dance Society Band, Aaron Jonah Lewis on fiddle, Ben Luttermoser on guitar, and Rachel Pearson on upright bass. Gavin also plays with his own band, Crossroads Ceili.

SUBMITTED

5200 Woodward Ave., Detroit. Tickets are \$20, available at dia.org or by calling 313-833-4005.

"Set and square dancers will perform separately and bring people out from the audience. It should be exciting. I believe it's going to sell out."

GAAR helps sick, abandoned animals

Sharon Dargay
Staff Writer

115

As an animal rescuer for 14 years, Sandra Mezza, president of Guardian Angel Animal Rescue (GAAR) has seen it all — abuse, abandonment, hunger, scrapes, bruises and broken bones.

“We take in many sick and injured animals,” Mezza said. “We work mostly out of Detroit because of the number of strays, but do take in animals from other cities, especially in emergencies.”

She and other volunteers at the Livonia-based, nonprofit, no-kill organization, manage to turn seemingly hopeless cases into success stories. About 25 volunteers foster animals, mostly dogs and cats, that come into GAAR’s care when they are relinquished by owners, taken from high-kill shelters or found on the streets as homeless strays. GAAR finds homes mostly for cats and dogs, although it has also offered birds, rabbits, chickens and a pot-bellied pig for adoption.

The Observer & Eccentric caught up with Mezza recently to find out more about GAAR. This is the first Q&A in a series of stories about local animal rescues and shelters. Meet GAAR:

Q: What’s your mission?

A: Our mission is to help animals in need and get them the vet care they need and place them in forever loving homes.

Q: Tell a rescue story or two that reflects your mission.

A: Sebastian was one of our severe abuse cases. We were told that he had been a stray for over a year in the neighborhood, he was a kitten that was born under a porch. You can tell by his frostbitten ears and his scarred body he had lived a very rough life



Members of Guardian Angel Animal Rescue staff a booth during the International Women's Show in Novi. Their Pawject Runway event, includes fashion models and rescue dogs on the runway.



Sadie.

and was just over a year old. He was slit from eye to across his throat. He had to spend a lot of time under vet care, with fluids and pain meds. After months his throat finally healed but there were many problems with his eyelid. He has undergone two surgeries and is on third one which will be done in a couple of weeks. He is the most lovable sweet boy. Sebastian is up for adoption, we are looking for a quiet loving home for him.

Q: Tell us a successful adoption story.

A: Sadie ran the streets of Detroit for over five years, escaping even live traps that were set for her. We were the lucky group that she

chose to let rescue her. She was heartworm positive, she was shot up with pellets that were lodged in her body and had many other issues. “Pam” adopted her and she is doing great. She was a lot of work, being on the streets for so long, but Pam worked with her and now she is a perfect house pup and loves Pam so much.

We have so many amazing stories. Every year we tell them at our Pawject Runway at the International Women’s Show. This year it is April 30 and May 1 at the Suburban Collection Showplace in Novi.

Q: What is your adoption process?

A: There is an application, interview, home visit and once everything is approved, there is a contract to be signed. We expect our rescued animals to go to loving homes that will treat them as part of the family and keep them safe, loved and pampered for the rest of their lives.

Q: Have you ever rejected an applicant? Have you taken a pet back after adoption?

A: Yes.

Q: What’s your greatest challenge as a rescue? What would ease your efforts?

A: Money is always a issue. Because of the number of injured animals we take in vet bills are always high. We have one kitty for example that was tortured and has undergone four surgeries.

Fosters are hard to find and keep. Volunteering for rescue is very sad, so you have to be a strong person and focus on the lives you save and not the ones you lose. To volunteer takes a lot of compassion, sacrifice, patience, time, strength, most of all love.

Q: Any upcoming events?

A: April 30-May 1 is Pawject Runway at the Suburban Showplace in Novi. Sept. 24, Mariner will be performing at the Token Lounge (in Westland). All ticket sales will go to Guardian Angel Animal Rescue.

Q: What’s your contact information?

A: Visit the Guardian Angel Animal Rescue Facebook page to see all



Volunteers flank Sandy Mezza, president of Guardian Angel Animal Rescue, at a pet food drive.

of our amazing rescue stories and events and all of our work we do around the metro area. Our website is gaarmichigan.org.

Email: guardian_angel_rescue@hotmail.com. Phone: 734-516-2171. Address: P.O. Box 511309, Livonia, MI 48185

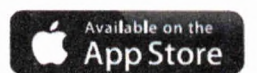


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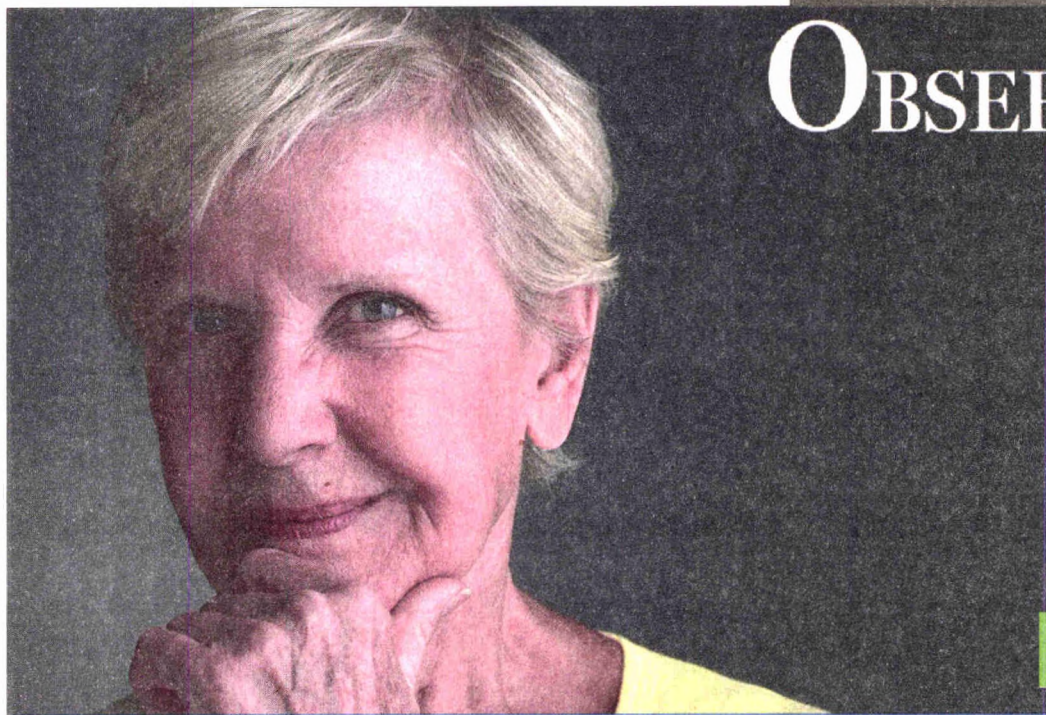
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Study the decision to go back to school

BY DEANNA HARTLEY
CAREERBUILDER

When is it worthwhile for individuals looking for a job or seeking career advancement to go back for more schooling, and when does it not make sense to pursue higher education?

Going back to school is a big decision, so take some time to evaluate your options first.

"Certain situations, careers and jobs warrant additional education, but extensive research, self-reflection, financial evaluation and planning should come first," says Kaitlyn Riley, assistant director of the Starr Career Development Center at Baruch College of the City University of New York.

Ask yourself these questions if you're considering pursuing further education.

Are you making a career transition? "The top reason these days is to help facilitate a career transition for which an educational degree is required," says Steve Bohler, founder of the Oxford Program, a career guidance program. "Going back to school can improve your situation by redirecting the skills and experience you already have with new knowledge and a degree."

Joni Holderman, a professional résumé writer who



THINKSTOCK

founded Thrive! Resumes, echoes that advice. "The best time to go back to school is when it is directly related to a career goal, especially a major transition — (for example) an accountant who wants to become an RN will need additional education to achieve that."

What are others in your industry doing? "It makes

sense to go back to school if your industry is especially technologically fast-moving, because it's easy for a candidate to be ignored due to not knowing the correct software packages," says Joe Flanagan, a career adviser at VelvetJobs.

In some cases, however, returning to school may not be the most viable option. "It doesn't make sense to go back

to school if the job progression is transparent, linear and you see many of your other colleagues who are above you in the company hierarchy getting promoted without going to school," Flanagan says.

Is a degree essential to advance your career or earning potential?

"Your ability to advance in your career may depend on your educational level," says Cheryl E. Palmer, owner of Call to Career and a certified career coach. "You may be in IT, for example, but to move into senior-level management, an MBA may be the best route. That way, you can demonstrate to employers that you have the technical skills as well as leadership skills."

Sometimes, there's the additional financial incentive as well. "Generally speaking, more education usually equals more money," Palmer explains. "There are exceptions to this, of course, but this generally is the case. An additional degree or certification will usually give you more income because of the additional credentials."

Is your degree related to your long-term career goals?

"The worst time to go back to school is when you quit your job to pursue a degree that's not related to your career goals," Holderman says.

"There is significant prejudice in the recruiting world against candidates who are unemployed, and many employers see full-time school attendance by adults over 25 as unemployment, no matter how many degrees they earn."

The notion that you are earning a degree in an unrelated field often perpetuates the stigma that you are unfocused and unreliable, she says.

Do you have compelling internal motivation?

Carolyn Edwards, a career and life coach and graduate professor, explains that individuals should have a strong reason for going back to school before they make that level of financial and time investment.

"There are no guarantees that once you complete your training, degree or certification that you will make more money, get a promotion or successfully change jobs immediately or ever," she says. "Find a clear motivation that will provide joy, fulfillment or a sense of accomplishment that will meet an internal or personal goal."

Deanna Hartley is a writer for the Advice & Resources section on CareerBuilder.com. She researches and writes about job-search strategy, career management, hiring trends and workplace issues.

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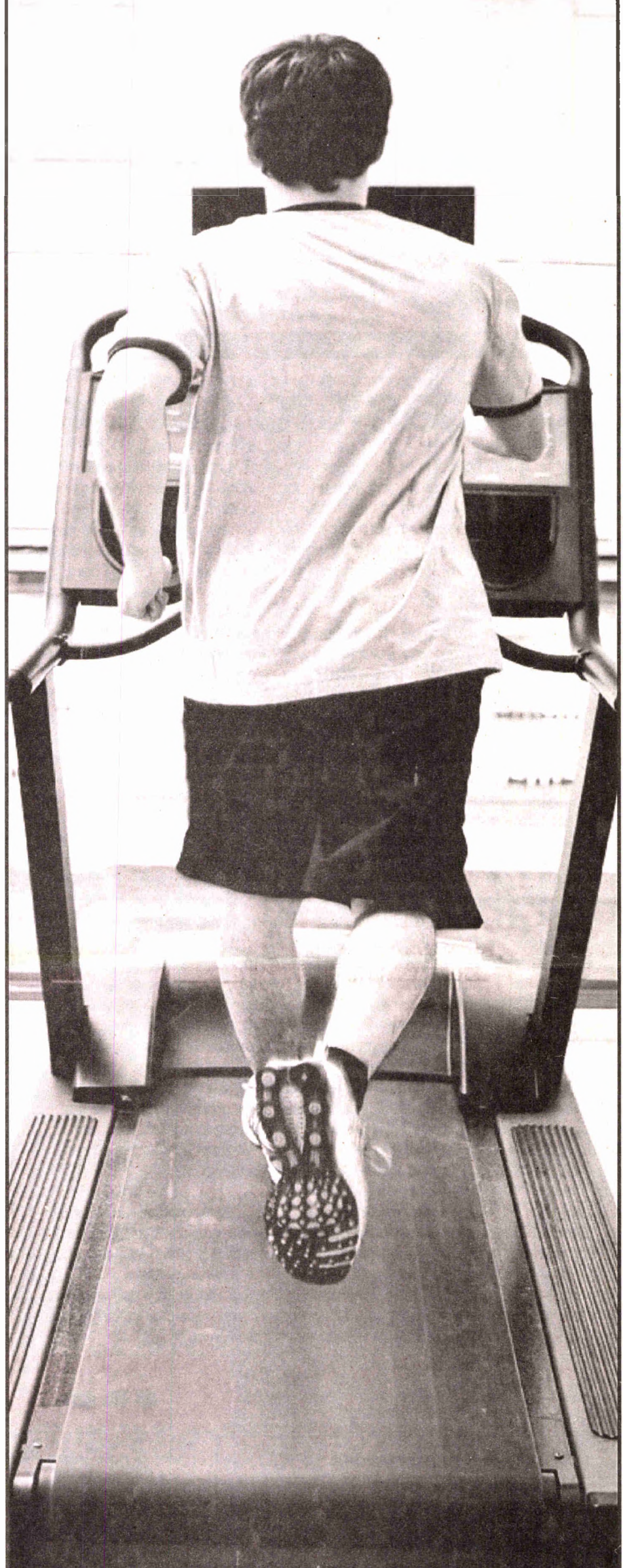
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- ACROSS 1 Reinforcing shoe tip 7 Brand of prescription painkiller 13 Toss out 20 Southern African land 21 Give in 22 Big markets 23 Many an earthen plant holder 25 Vegetable mixed inside 110-Across 26 Dog biscuit, to a dog 27 Bit in a stew 28 Canon — Rebel 29 Bakery item — Paese (cheese) 31 Mall with wholesale goods 34 Speakers of Celtic 36 Put — (ruses) 37 — a woman? Sojourner Truth 38 Knife cut 39 Writer Oz 43 Diplomacy 45 Food store worker 49 Vegetable mixed inside 72-Across 52 Ranks 54 Gorbachev's wife 55 Not sleeping 56 Fills untidily 57 Vegetable mixed inside 23-Across and 84-Across 58 Vegetable mixed inside 97-Across 60 It's charged 61 Like slightly spoiled meat 62 "Ta-ta" sound 63 Pack-toting beast 64 Dell products 65 Vast span 66 DOJ arm 69 Swinging ditty 71 Toby brew 72 Rapid weight-loss option 75 Vegetable mixed inside 23-Across 78 University in Silicon Valley 80 Moray lurer 81 Eye-ticking paintings 82 Lobbies for 83 Vegetable mixed inside 45-Across 84 Impact depression near Flagstaff 86 Jedi sage 87 Begged 88 Corn units 89 1950s Ford 92 Vacation site 95 In a strange way 97 Affect one's emotions 101 Spinks foe 104 Dijon "yes" 105 Sauna 106 Part of GPS: Abbr. 107 Made known 108 Vegetable mixed inside 31-Across 110 Surfs while watching TV 113 Intertangles 114 Langston Hughes memoir, with "The" 115 Probes into 116 TV satirist Stephen 117 Party split 118 Double boxing punch DOWN 1 Bit of skin art 2 Minimal lead in baseball 3 Some herons 4 — reef 5 Get — start (be tardy) 6 D.C. donor 7 Kind of sail 8 Circle eighth 9 Brand of cable modem 10 Plains sheller 11 "When is — not ..." 12 Reno stakes 13 Loses hope 14 Irreverence 15 Pitcher's talk 16 Dupe 17 Qatari, e.g. 18 Paddy plant 19 Writer Roald 24 In the work already mentioned: Abbr. 32 Dash device 33 Snug 34 Dells 35 Periodic pay 38 Contempt 40 Israel's Goida 41 "In that area" 42 Three-hand card game 43 "Kon- —" 44 "Just —!" 46 Tendency to keep silent 47 Nondairy spreads 48 Overpack 49 Broccoli — 50 Cockeyed 51 Calendar info 52 Lodge group 53 Feed lines to 56 Amount paid 57 See 67-Down 59 Ring of virtue 61 Urge on 64 Braid 65 Isn't right 66 Folder filler 67 With 57-Down, some tavern trash 68 Response to "Nice job!" 69 Texas city 70 "I gotta hand — ya ..." 71 Chart book 72 Bivouac bed 73 Take note of 74 Oscar — Renta 75 Pageantry 76 German car 77 British art gallery 78 Apology word 79 One axing 82 Most flaky 83 RC, say 85 One losing weight 86 "You've gotta be kidding!" 90 Puts down, to a rapper 91 Overhead stadium recorder 92 Most irritated 93 Future D.A.'s major 94 Builds on 96 "Irma la —" 97 — law (old Germanic legal code) 98 Femur locale 99 "Emperor of the Air" author Ethan 100 Doorway joint 101 British actor Guinness 102 Jay of TV 103 — never fly! 105 Fliers' mil. posts 109 Key near Q 111 23rd Greek letter 112 Bustle

Crossword puzzle grid with numbered starting points for clues.

For assistance or suggestions on the Puzzle Corner, contact Steve McClellan at (517) 702/4247 or smccllelan@michigan.com. Want more puzzles? Check out the "Just Right Crossword Puzzles" books at QuillDriverBooks.com

SUDOKU

9x9 Sudoku grid with some numbers filled in.

Here's How It Works: Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!

Completed 9x9 Sudoku grid.

COFFEE BUZZ WORD SEARCH

Word search grid with coffee-related words hidden.

WORDS

- ACIDITY ARABICA AROMA BAG BARISTA BATCH BEANS BEVERAGE BITTER BLEND BREW BUZZ CAFFEINE CAPPUCCINO COFFEE CREAMER DEMITASSE DRIP ESPRESSO EXOTIC FLAVOR FRENCH PRESS FROTH ICED MELLOW MILK MCHA MUG PERCOLATE POT REFILL ROASTER STIR SUGAR VARIETAL WARMTH

Find the words hidden vertically, horizontally & diagonally throughout the puzzle.

Crossword Answers and Word Search solutions.

Car Report

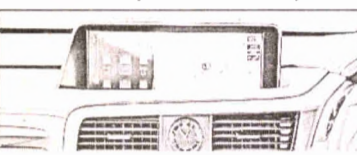
Lexus Promotes Safety System+ Technologies in Space-Oriented Marketing Campaign for New RX



By Dale Buss

Albeit two inches taller and needing a shower. American astronaut Scott Kelly returned home safely earlier this month after a record-breaking 340 days in space and accompanied by a live-stream broadcast of the landing, on Time.com.

Lexus has been getting in on the space-age action on behalf of its crucial new version of the RX mid-size crossover, through its sponsorship of Time's documentary series on Kelly.



A huge touchscreen joins advanced safety technologies.

"A Year in Space," as well as the luxury-car brand's own new digital-only 60-second spot that ran as an introduction to the live-stream. It touts Lexus RX as "the official luxury crossover of getting home safe."

The ad features footage from historical space homecomings, which are part of the B-roll of life in many boomers' heads but

which are relatively new events to millennials. The soundtrack is a remake of Diddy and Skylar Grey's "Coming Home."

"While others keep our astronauts safe, we'll help take care of our future astronauts," the spot concludes, with a scene of a little girl in an astronaut suit, playing with a space-shuttle model--and ensconced safely in the rear seat of a new Lexus RX that features the brand's Safety System+ technologies.

The Safety System package includes:

Lexus Pre-Collision System with Pedestrian Detection: It uses millimeter-wave radar and a camera to detect other vehicles; in the Safety System+ version it also can detect people in the vehicle's forward path under certain conditions.

Lane Departure Alert: It uses a camera to monitor visible lane markings, and is designed to warn you with a steering wheel vibration if you're drifting so that you can steer back into the lane.

All-Speed Dynamic Radar Cruise Control: It long has been available as a stand-alone Lexus safety system that enhances the capability of traditional cruise control. In the higher-speed highway environment, Dynamic Radar Cruise Control uses

millimeter-wave radar, assisted by a forward-facing camera, to detect a vehicle ahead and then determine its speed. The system then adjusts your vehicle speed to help maintain a preset following distance. With Lexus Safety System+, a further enhancement is now available in some models: "all-speed" Dynamic Radar Cruise Control. In this version, the system is active at a wider range of speeds, even in stop-and-go environments.

Intelligent high-beam headlamps: In most vehicles, the driver is responsible for flipping the high beams on and off as nighttime traffic approaches or comes into view ahead of the vehicle. The intelligent high-beam headlamp system helps take this job off your hands so you can focus on the road. The system uses a camera to detect the headlights of oncoming vehicles and the taillights of vehicles ahead, and then automatically switches between high beams and low beams to help avoid distracting other drivers.

Lexus also has set up a custom content hub that explains various aspects of the most comprehensive safety system ever offered on a Lexus RX.

"The opportunity for Lexus was twofold," Brian Bolain,



The 2016 Lexus RX.

general manager of Lexus product and consumer marketing, told me. "The association with space provides an unspoken association with technology and with being forward-thinking, and gave us an opportunity to talk about safety that emanates from the technology."

And the brand plans to build the association between Lexus and the new space age. "The nice thing about this affiliation is that it goes on for a while," Bolain said. "We have a several-month deal with Time and a print opportunity coming up later in this partnership. We can keep talking about it. It serves us real well in the social space, and we've got millions of followers and we'd like to give them some interesting things to hang onto."

Otherwise, in terms of the RX launch, Lexus dedicated January and February to the nameplate. "For instance, we did a really interesting thing with Facebook based on changes that users made to profiles," Bolain said. "If you said, for example, that you just got married, we'd serve you up an ad that was contextual about recently getting married, and fitting RX into your life. We've also got a Hulu integration with The Mindy Project. We want to move our demographics younger."

Did he think the astronaut, Brian Kelly, was aware that Lexus was sponsoring his re-entry?

"He didn't talk to me about it, so I'm going with, 'No,'" Bolain quipped. "We made our deal directly with Time."

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