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Longtime representative, Middleville native Bob Bender dies at 88

Molly Macleod
Editor



Robert "Bob" Bender

The county is mourning the loss of a longtime leader, volunteer and community member.

Robert "Bob" Bender, a lifelong Middleville resident, died at the age of 88 this week. A Navy veteran, Bender served area residents for years as both a Barry County Commissioner and a longtime representative in the Michigan House of Representatives.

After graduating from Thornapple Kellogg High School in 1954, Bender earned his degree in agricultural education from Michigan State University in 1959. From there, he began his career as a U.S. Navy pilot before transitioning to the Navy Reserves in 1981 and serving until 1990. He retired at the rank of captain in 1991.

While on the ground, Bender ran his 1,100-acre, 500-head dairy farm in Middleville.

Bender spent much of his life devoted to public service. He served as chairman of the Barry County Board of Commissioners from 1978 to 1982 before being elected to serve in the Michigan Legislature — a job he held for six terms from 1983 to 1994.

Barry County Commissioner Catherine Getty asked her fellow commissioners to take a moment of silence honoring Bender at Tuesday's Board of Commissioners meeting.

"I'd like us to take a moment to remember a fellow commissioner that passed away this

See **BENDER** on 3

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Middleville farmer honored on national stage for corn yield



Middleville farmer Brian McKeown (center) proudly displays the plaque for his second-place award in the Nutrien Ag Solutions "High Yielders 2024" corn contest presented at an award banquet in Denver, Colorado the day before the beginning of Commodity Classic 2025 on March 1. McKeown was honored at the banquet by Nutrien Ag Solutions representatives: Spencer Harris, Rob Dunlop, LoRaine Salmon, and Eric Kunzeman, U.S. Manager of Seed Marketing for Nutrien Ag Solutions. McKeown used the DynaGro variety D50VC09RIB to generate his second-place yield of 303.61 bushels per acre in the No-till Irrigated class. **Photo courtesy of George Hubka/MG News Service**

Gaines Township Board approves second phase of Dutton Center development

James Gemmell
Contributing Writer

The Gaines Township Board voted unanimously, 7-0, at its meeting Monday night, March 10, to approve the final preliminary plat for the second phase of the Dutton Center planned unit development, or PUD.

The development covers a 10-acre section of a 29.3-acre parcel, with 51 residential lots proposed for the site on the 3300 block of 68th Street. That would include a density of slightly more than five units per acre.

The township board had already given final approval for the first phase of the mixed-use commercial and residential development. Project applicant Michiana LLC, a subsidiary of Allen Edwin Homes, received approval last October to rezone a 29-acre parcel of former agricultural land to a PUD. That was for the remaining northern section of the former J & A Post Family Farm, north of Shadyside Park.

Because that first phase was a single parcel, not a plat, it essentially was approved by right as a site condominium project.

Mike Allen, with Allen Edwin Homes, said recently the home-building company went "above and beyond" the lot-width standards that had been previously approved by the township by adding some self-imposed conditions as part of the PUD.

The conditions included front-yard setbacks varying from 25 to 30 feet to give the streetscape some texture and variety. In addition, there are self-imposed architectural restric-

See **DUTTON** on 3

Caledonia residents respond to proposed trailhead parking project

Noah Peterson
Staff Writer

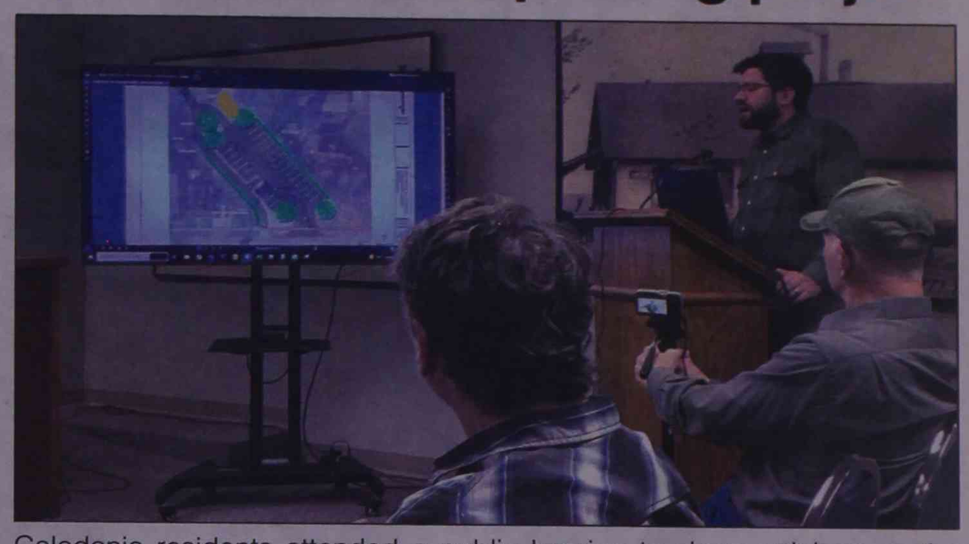
The Caledonia Village Council overviewed a project proposal that would create additional parking for the village's downtown area at its meeting Monday, March 10, with several residents sharing their thoughts in a public hearing to help determine whether the project should be set in stone or not.

The focus of the project would be to build a small parking lot on the intersection of Kinsey Street and Main Street, just north of where the Paul Henry Trail trailhead currently sits. The site is to provide 22 parking spaces for residents wanting to use the trail or to provide extra parking on Main Street. Village officials say with construction and engineering, the project is to cost an estimated $530,000.

More information will be provided if the council approves the DNR Grant on April 1, which could provide $150,000 towards the overall cost of the project.

"The biggest thing I want to stress is that this is still very much preliminary," said Peter Tierney, project engineer with Fleis & VandenBrink. "What the DNR is going to look for when we submit our application is that they're gonna look for elements such as parking, rain garden and lights. They can move around, they can change but they're

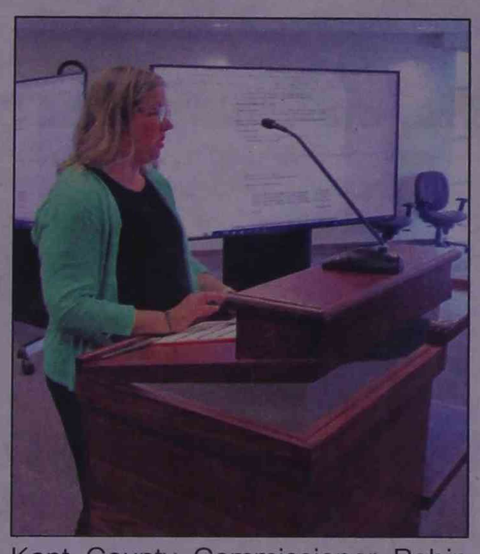
See **TRAILHEAD** on 5



Caledonia residents attended a public hearing to share opinions on the proposed trailhead parking project at the Caledonia Village Council meeting on Monday, March 10. **Photo by Noah Peterson**

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Gaines trustees receive update on county data storage



Kent County Commissioner Robin Halstead addresses the Gaines Township Board of Trustees at its March 10 meeting in the township hall board room. **Photo by James Gemmell**

James Gemmell
Contributing Writer

As more and more municipalities shift from using onsite servers to store government data to using cloud storage, Gaines Charter Township officials are exploring the best way to securely maintain township records.

Township officials recently asked District 10 Kent County Commissioner Robin Halsted about how the county is storing its data. The 10th District represents all of Gaines Township, plus Precinct 6 in Kentwood.

Halsted, who was elected in November, answered that question at the township board's March 10 meeting. She said Kent County uses the government cloud to store data for about 50 different services. But she said the county still has not transitioned its Equalization Department's records from the internet to the cloud.

"And so, we're working on about a two- to four-year timeframe with that," Halstead said. "Because it's a major change, and it's going to require multiple departments to be on board."

Like many municipalities, Kent County uses BS&A Software to store records. BS&A Online is a collection of municipal services that provides instant access to various types of information held by the local government. Residents who set up personalized user accounts can access those records.

Currently, Gaines Township provides its residents with a website link to BS&A Online on the gainestownship.org website. They can look up tax payments that are due or tax history, as well as their water and sewer accounts, building permits, special assessments and real property records.

Local governments store information

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Members of the Gaines Township Board of Trustees consider the second phase of the Dutton Center mixed-use project in tandem with the Thornapple Farms development just south of it during the council's regular meeting Monday, March 10. **Photo by James Gemmell**

DUTTON

Continued from Page 1

tions, such as garages would not be built to protrude more than 10 feet beyond the front of a home. There also are minimum porch requirements.

There would also be sidewalks on both sides of the public streets. Sanitary sewer and municipal water connections would be put in place, and detention ponds would control storm waters.

Allen Edwin recently completed construction of Phases I and II of the Thornapple Farms subdivision immediately south of the Dutton Center PUD.

"The Dutton Center development will be connecting in from the north, for starting this phase. As they move it along, they're going to have to connect in from the south, as well, to get building permits, once they get to 30," Township Manager Rod Weersing said. "A pretty straightforward request."

Allen Edwin officials plan to begin the third phase of the Thornapple Farms development this year. It would build the first two phases of the Dutton PUD concurrently with the third phase of the Thornapple Farms project. A water and sewer development contract for that was approved by the township board in February.

After a public hearing Monday night, township trustees voted unanimously to approve establishment of a special assessment Streetlight District for Thornapple Farms phases I and II.

Phase 2 of the Dutton Center project will feature 51 detached homes with minimum lot sizes of 5,800 square feet. Phase 3 calls for 120 multiple-family apartment units, which would consist of 10 buildings with 12 units each. Phase 4 envisions two, 2-story 15,400-square-foot buildings along Hanna Lake Avenue that would include commercial, residential and office buildings. Phase 5 would have two, one-story commercial buildings of 6,350 square feet along 68th Street.



The proposed location of Phase II of the Dutton planned unit development is outlined east of Hanna Lake Avenue. **Source: gainestownship.org**

BENDER

Continued from Page 1

past weekend. Bob Bender served as not only a county commissioner chair but also then continued to serve our state as house rep," said Getty during Tuesday's invocation.

Bender represented Michigan's 88th District from 1983 to 1992, which at the time included Ionia County and townships of Assyria, Baltimore, Barry, Carlton, Castleton, Hastings, Hope, Irving, Johnstown, Maple Grove, Orangeville, Prairieville, Rutland and Woodland and City of Hastings in Barry County. After redistricting, Bender represented the new 87th District from 1993 to 1994, which included Barry County and the townships of Berlin, Boston, Campbell, Easton, Keene, Odessa and Otisco and the cities of Belding and Ionia in Ionia County.

During his time in the state legislature, Bender served on the House Agriculture Committee, the Appropriations Committee, the Agriculture and Forestry Committee, the Corrections Committee, the Education Committee, the Military and Veterans' Affairs Committee and the Social Services & Youth Committee.

After his time in the legislature, Bender and his wife of 65 years, Carol, joined the Peace Corps for a 2-year volunteer stint in Russia from 1995 to 1997. The couple spent many more years volunteering for "Houses to Houses" in Guatemala.

Visitation for Bender is scheduled for Friday, March 21, from 5 to 8 p.m. at Beeler-Gores Funeral in Middleville. A memorial for Bender will be held at the Middleville United Methodist Church on Saturday, March 22, at 11 a.m. A private burial will follow at Mount Hope Cemetery in Middleville.

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CHS hosts college and trade fair

Noah Peterson
Staff Writer

Caledonia High School recently hosted its annual College and Trade/Business Fair on March 6-7, providing over 1,400 students from Caledonia and neighboring districts, including Byron Center, South Christian, Lee, and West Ottawa, an exciting opportunity to explore future career and education pathways.

This event showcased a diverse range of post-secondary options, from college and universities to skilled trades and business career opportunities, helping students connect to professionals and plan for their futures.

On March 6, 55 colleges and universities, including Grand Valley State University, Michigan State University and Grand Rapids Community College arrived at CHS to help students learn about academic programs, financial aid and career opportunities. The event also had military representatives from the United States Army and Air Force, along with the National Guard and Michigan State Police, to encourage students to join the armed forces after graduation. They provided information about military service opportunities, career paths, benefits and eligibility requirements.

The following day, 52 business and trade professionals in careers ranging from health to finance attended, offering hands-on experiences and valuable conversations about careers in skilled trades, apprenticeships, and business industries.

"This event is a fantastic opportunity for our students to engage with colleges, businesses, and trade professionals to explore career pathways," said CHS principal Bill Martin. "By bringing together representatives from higher education and the workforce, we're giving students access to resources that will help them make informed decisions about their futures."

The two-day fair took place in the gymnasium at CHS, featuring booths and displays, allowing students to learn firsthand about various industries, career paths and post-secondary education options. Beyond networking with professionals, students were able to ask questions, gain career insights, and discover opportunities that align with their interests and aspirations.



The College and Trade/Business Fair took place in the gymnasium at Caledonia High School March 6-7, where students got the opportunity to explore future career interests and post-secondary education pathways. **Courtesy photos**

District staff say that Caledonia High School is proud to host an event that not only benefits its students but also fosters strong connections with local businesses, trade organizations and higher education institutions. They say they are thankful for all the colleges, businesses, educators and volunteers who used their time and expertise to make this event a success.



Representatives from the United States Army offer information at the recent CHS College and Trade/Business Fair.

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Organizers are preparing for the annual Thornapple Kellogg Alumni Association "All-School Dinner" on Saturday, May 3. Here is a photo from last year's event. **Photo provided**

'All-School Dinner' is May 3

Get your tickets. That's the message of the Thornapple Kellogg Alumni Association as it prepares to host its annual "All-School Dinner" on Saturday, May 3.

According to organizers, the dinner is for all graduating classes from Thornapple Kellogg High School, as well as former principals, teachers and staff. The deadline to register is April 9.

The annual dinner will be held at the Thornapple Kellogg Middle School cafeteria, with the school located at 10375 Green Lake Road in Middleville. The event, which will include the honoring of a distinguished alumnus, will kick off with a social hour at 5 p.m., with appetizers and dinner at 6:15 p.m.

The menu is slated to include smothered chicken or roast beef dinner with salad, rolls, potatoes, vegetables, dessert, coffee, iced tea and water.

The cost to attend is $20 per person and checks can be made out to "TKAA." Mail your dinner reservations with your name, guest name, year graduated and choice of chicken or beef to Wanita Huizenga, 5285 Stimson Road, Middleville MI 49333.

Seating is limited and those planning to attend are encouraged to mail in reservations as soon as possible. Those wishing to reserve a table – a minimum of eight people – are asked to provide the names of those guests at the time of registration. — *DM*

TRAILHEAD

Continued from Page 2

really looking for elements. This is more of a direction, not a document."

A public hearing was held after Tierney's presentation, providing residents with an opportunity to give their personal opinions on the project. Most residents claimed that the project needs improvements and should not receive the DNR Grant.

The most popular issue with the project is the concerns of safety in the community. Residents claimed that a parking lot in a less visible area next to their homes will increase chances of break-ins.

"Anytime you add an additional park, there's potential for something to happen," said Kent County Sheriff Lt. Ryan Thome. "Having cars in a remote or crowded area could create concerns for the safety of its citizens. But with further updates, we could provide extra patrol and suggest extra lighting and no overgrown landscapes to ensure no suspicious activity will occur in this area."

Speakers also claimed that the parking lot will increase traffic on Main Street, especially with bikers and walkers on the trail consistently having to watch out for speeding.

"The traffic is horrible on Main Street, as far as speed goes," said resident Steve Firestein. "I see many people on the trail on a bike, scooter or walking, and I think it's just an accident waiting to happen."

Though the majority of the public disagreed with the project, there were some who saw it as a start and that it could possibly work.

Missy Break, owner of the Ice Cream Express, said that Main Street does have a parking issue, especially between 4 and 9 p.m. when students are leaving school. She suggested that lines outlining parking spaces could be redone to provide additional spots. Break added that improvements should be made with the goal of ensuring public safety.

"I agree that we need parking in this community," she said. "I'm saying that we need to put our voices together and come up with something. I have kids who walk down the Paul Henry Trail from school and would hate for somebody to get hurt on their way to get ice cream."

After the public hearing, Pierre advised that the project was not "set in stone" and will undergo further improvements.

The Caledonia Village Council will follow up on the proposal at its next meeting on March 24.

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Conservation officials urge landowners to be leery of spongy moth's return

As spring approaches, folks who have had trouble with the spongy moth may be wary of its return.

The troublesome pest is usually noticed in its caterpillar stage, where it is a voracious eater of many different tree species' leaves. Its preferred host is oak trees, but they can also commonly be found on spruce, basswood and apple trees.

It is important to understand the life cycle of these insects because it helps determine the best steps to control them. The spongy moth, like other moths and butterflies, has a four-stage life cycle – egg, larvae, pupa and adult.

The cycle begins with the egg stage, where each egg mass can contain 600-1,000 eggs. The eggs hatch into larvae, the fancy science-name for caterpillars, and it is this stage where spongy moths will feed continuously and can cause severe to complete defoliation of trees if the population (number of caterpillars in an area) is large enough.

While the opening stage may seem like an eternity, the caterpillars are a short-lived portion of the moth's life cycle emerging in late-April or early-May and feeding for seven to eight weeks.

Following this, the larvae (caterpillars) enter the pupal stage for one to two weeks in late-June or early-July, where the caterpillar has created a cocoon and will undergo metamorphosis. After pupating and emerging as an adult moth they no longer feed.

After adult moths mate, the cycle starts over again and the flightless female moths will lay their egg masses in dark and protected areas, such as the underside of branches, crooks of trees, awnings, and gutters.



A spongy moth caterpillar seen on an oak leaf. **File photo**

As Michigan Department of Natural Resources officials predicted, 2024 spongy moth populations in southwest Michigan were high enough to cause noticeable tree defoliation in some areas, including Barry County.

Luckily, outbreaks of spongy moths are cyclical and also dependent on their natural predators. For instance, moth populations may increase when their predators, like mice and squirrels, decrease.

In addition, this species also has two pathogens that become prevalent when spongy moth populations get very large. The nucleopolyhedrovirus, or NPV, is a viral disease that naturally occurs in spongy moths, and E. maimaiga is a fungal pathogen introduced to the United States in the 1990s to help control spongy moths.

The two diseases combine to wreak havoc on large, dense populations, leading to a significant population decline when the five-to-seven-year cycle will start all over again.

In the fall of 2024, the Barry Conservation District conducted surveys for spongy moth egg masses across the five most heavily forested townships in Barry County – Hope, Irving, Yankee Springs, Orangeville and Rutland. Technicians compared the number of non-viable egg masses to viable egg masses following a simple sampling protocol developed by Penn State University Extension.

On average, the survey indicated that 84 percent of egg masses were not viable, which indicates the population of spongy moths in the sample area is largely expected to decline. There were a few sampled sites with higher percentages of viable new egg masses, but subsequent follow-up this winter has shown continued decline of viable egg masses even in these sites.

Natural patchiness in populations can make outbreaks hard to predict across a larger landscape, but thankfully spongy moth populations do appear to be declining and there are actions the landowners can take to stem the flow of caterpillars this spring if you find your property has a lot of viable egg masses and you are worried about your trees and shrubs.

The first step is to take stock of your situation.

Take a walk around your yard, or through your woods and start looking for signs of these critters. The most obvious sign will be their egg masses, which are inch-long fuzzy-looking mounds of rusty orange hairs stuck on the bark of trees, underside of decking, and other dark places near forests or large trees. New egg masses will be darker in color and firm to the touch, whereas non-viable egg masses will be lighter, crumbling and spongy/squishy.

While you are out counting, you can destroy the egg masses so they do not hatch in the spring by scraping them into a bucket of soapy water.

Even if you don't notice spongy moths until the caterpillars are out and about, there are still things you can do. A common trap for the caterpillars is to wrap a dark cloth around the trunk of the tree at a height that is easy for you to reach. When the spongy moth caterpillars travel to hide during the day, they will hide under the cloth, then you can go out during the day and smash, burn, or dump them into soapy water to kill them.

For the most severe cases, pesticide is an option. The most effective spray for spongy moths is the organic pesticide Bacillus thuringiensis v. Kurstaki, or BtK, a soil bacteria that kills many types of leaf eating insects. There are a few things to consider before deciding to spray.

First, the timing of a spray is important. If the

See **MOTH** on 14

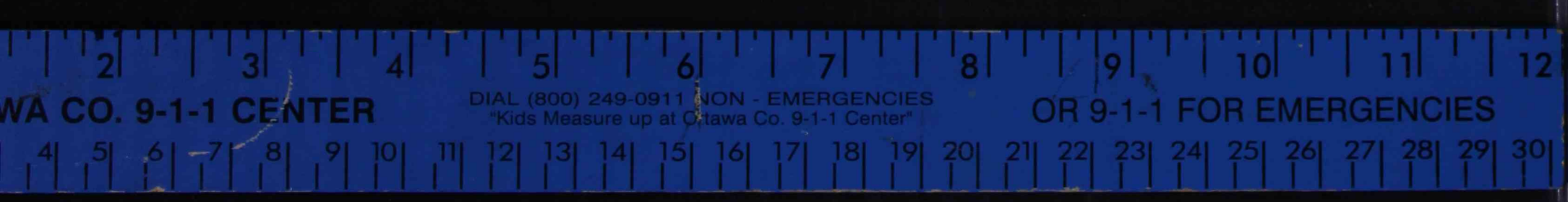

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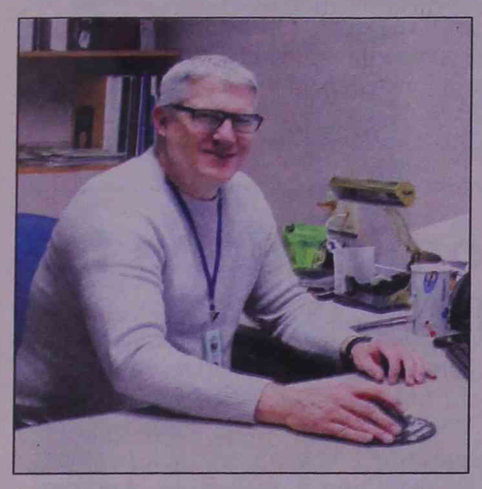
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New Barry County Planner comes with experience and a vision



Jeff Keesler started his job on Dec. 2 as Barry County's new planning director and zoning administrator. **Photo by Karen Turko-Ebright**

Karen Turko-Ebright
Contributing Writer

He's Barry County's new planning director and zoning administrator.

Jeff Keesler started his new position three months ago, after Jim McManus, the county's planner for 33 years, retired from the same position.

McManus told The Sun and News that he now works as a Principal Planner consulting for McKenna Associates in Kalamazoo.

Keesler worked at McKenna as an associate planner from 2022 to 2024 before taking over McManus's former office inside the Historical Courthouse in Hastings.

He gained experience at McKenna and stepped in to help other communities.

"I did master plan projects, zoning ordinance updates, and community planner work when communities didn't have a staff planner," Keesler said,

According to the 2022-2023 Michigan Association of Planning annual report, Barry County's most recent master plan, dubbed the Barry County 2040 "Live Better" Master Plan, received an award for Outstanding Planning Project: Best Practice.

McKenna Associates of Kalamazoo served as a consultant to Barry County in development of that plan.

Keesler grew up in Durand and graduated from Durand High School. For the last 20 years, he's lived in Lansing with his family. He holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from Bridgewater State University in Massachusetts. Additionally, he earned a Master of Arts degree in Urban and Regional Planning.

Not only did Keesler work for McKenna before accepting his new planning director and zoning administrator position with Barry County, he also worked as a program specialist for the AARP Michigan State office in Lansing for six years. His job focused on carrying out age-friendly community work in Michigan communities.

He worked with a team providing technical assistance to communities to help older adults feel at home as they aged.

"We did statewide advocacy for older adults and age-friendly community projects in East Lansing, Highland Park, Auburn Hills, Grand Rapids, Jackson, and several others," Keesler explained.

While fulfilling many responsibilities at the state AARP office, Keesler had a priority job that was his focus.

"My role was working with helping age-friendly communities be welcoming places and help our older adults flourish and stay active," Keesler said.

On Thursday, Feb. 27, Keesler joined an audience of about 40 people at the Revitalize Delton meeting.

Revitalize Delton (RD) started in the summer of 2023 with a handful of community members ready to clear a path for future generations. Since then, the organization has grown with more volunteers. RD aims to bring additional housing, residents, and businesses to Delton and make it a place where families thrive, raise their children, and send them to Delton Kellogg Schools.

Keesler told the audience his department does not plan to change the natural charm of Barry County, including Delton, but instead, to keep it intact.

"Our goal is to keep our county lakes, fields, and woods all natural and healthy. We are not trying to urbanize Barry County. We want to keep things natural and beautiful," Keesler said. "The way that we can do that is to follow the master plan. This is the only ordinance that we have, a new 2023 master plan that really sets out the goals for the county in the next 10 to 20 years."

Read the Barry County Master Plan in its entirety at barrycounty.org.

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- The Reminder

Annual spring weight restrictions in effect statewide

The Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) and local agencies have enacted spring weight restrictions, an annual move to protect roads.

As of Monday, March 10, weight restrictions are now being imposed and enforced on all state trunkline highways in the entire state of Michigan. State routes typically carry M, I, or US designations.

In the restricted areas, the following will apply:

On routes designated as "all-season" (designated in green and gold on the MDOT Truck Operators Map), there will be no reduction in legal axle weights.

All extended permits will be valid for oversize loads in the weight-restricted area on the restricted routes. Single-trip permits will not be issued for any overweight loads or loads exceeding 14 feet in width, 11 axles, and 150 feet in overall length on the restricted routes.

On routes designated as "seasonal" (designated in solid or dashed red on the MDOT Truck Operators Map), there will be a posted weight reduction of 25 percent for rigid (concrete) pavements and 35 percent for flexible (asphalt) pavements, and maximum speed of 35 mph for some vehicles.

Drivers must follow the speed limits for weight restricted roads, per state law. Speed restrictions for trucks and the rules for propane fuel delivery and public utility vehicles can be found online.

When roads that have been frozen all winter and begin to thaw from the surface downward, melting snow and ice saturate the softened ground. During the spring thaw, the roadbed softened by trapped moisture beneath the pavement makes it more susceptible to damage. This contributes to pothole problems already occurring due to this winter's numerous freeze-thaw cycles.

MDOT determines when weight restrictions begin each spring by measuring frost depths along state highways, observing road conditions, and monitoring weather forecasts. Weight restrictions remain in effect until the frost line is deep enough to allow moisture to escape and the roadbeds regain stability.

County road commissions and city public works departments put in place their own seasonal weight restrictions, which usually, but not always, coincide with state highway weight restrictions. Signs are generally posted to indicate which routes have weight restrictions in effect.

For weight restriction information and updates, call 800-787-8960, or you can access this information on MDOT's website at Michigan.gov/Truckers, under "Restrictions." All-season routes are designated in green and gold on the MDOT Truck Operators Map, which is available online at bit.ly/4hr4fiI. You also may sign up to receive e-mail alerts at public.govdelivery.com/accounts/MIDOT/subscriber/new. — *MM*

TAEF seeking nominations for 2025 Hometown Hero

Noah Peterson
Staff Writer

The Thornapple Area Enrichment Foundation (TAEF) is seeking nominations for the annual Hometown Hero Award. The group is seeking nominations for outstanding individuals in the Thornapple Kellogg community who exemplify excellence, integrity and commitment.

The Hometown Hero Award is an honor given to an individual who has made significant positive contributions to their local community, often through acts of service, bravery or exceptional dedication, essentially being recognized as a hero within their town or city. This includes first responders, teachers, volunteers, community leaders, or anyone who has gone above and beyond to improve the lives of others in the area.

Nominations can be made by going to TAEF's Facebook page or by searching formsbcf.org. Another option is to send your nomination to TAEF, % Annie Halle, P.O. Box 164, Middleville, Michigan, 49333.

Nominations must include the nominee's name, address, phone number, and a brief explanation of why the nominee should be considered the community's Hometown Hero.

Nominations are due May 1, 2025.

Last year, Catherine Getty was recognized as the Hometown Hero for serving the Middleville-area community for 25 years. TAEF held a dinner to honor her for outstanding community service.

STORAGE

Continued from Page 2

about their annual budgets and resident information for those government services. But to ensure the safety and security of that information, government agencies establish agency-wide procedures to ensure the data stays accessible. Municipalities must use systems that protect vital data from cyber-attacks, lost power, fires and so forth. An efficient storage methodology can improve government communications and collaborations.

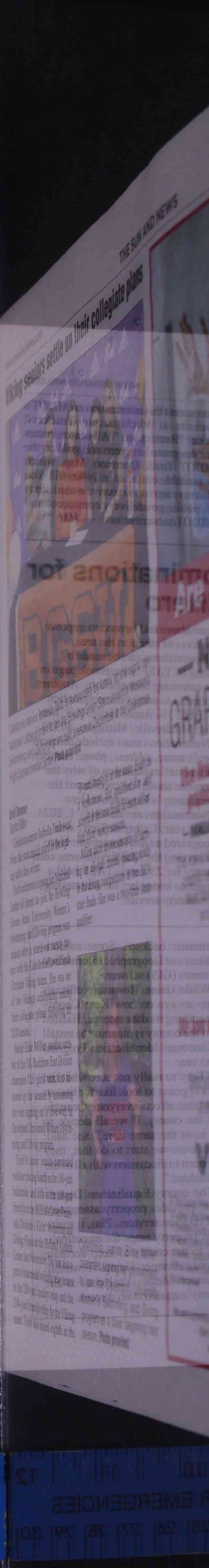
Some municipalities still rely on storing government data on physical servers located within their buildings. But they can be vulnerable to cyber-attacks and require dedicated I.T. staff for maintenance. So, many local governments are now using cloud services like Government Cloud and GovPilot, instead. They offer advanced security features and automatic backups. Some municipalities use Geographic Information Systems (GIS) software.

While Gaines Township officials keep an eye on how Kent County is handling its data storage, Halsted said the county is planning to install a Customer Identification Program next year.

"They're really not sure what the cost is going to look like for that or how that affects everyone throughout the county, if we all decide to go in at the same time," she said. "But once we start to do that, they are open to discussion with all of the townships."

The county Equalization Department provides property assessment and taxation services. Plus, it maintains property maps for municipalities in the county to keep accurate records. Former Gaines Township Assessor Megan VanHoose is the county's equalization director.





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Viking seniors settle on their collegiate plans



Caledonia senior Isabella Treib is surrounded by family as she signs her National Letter of Intent to join the Bowling Green State University Women's Swimming and Diving program next season in December in the Caledonia High School media center. **Photo provided**

Brett Bremer
Sports Editor

Caledonia senior Isabella Treib went from the state medal stand to the signing table this winter.

Treib celebrated signing her National Letter of Intent to join the Bowling Green State University Women's Swimming and Diving program next season after a stand-out varsity tenure with the Caledonia/Lowell/South Christian Viking team. She was one of two Vikings celebrating making their collegiate plans following the 2024 season.

Senior Elise Miller, another member of the OK Rainbow East Division champion CLS girls' team, also followed up the season by announcing she was signing on to dive with the Davenport University Women's Swimming and Diving program.

Treib's senior season concluded with her placing fourth in the 100-yard backstroke and fifth in the 100-yard freestyle at the MHSAA Lower Peninsula Division 1 Girls' Swimming and Diving Finals at the Holland Aquatic Center last November. She was also a part of state medal winning relay teams in the 200-yard medley relay and the 200-yard freestyle relay for the Viking team. Treib also placed eighth in the 50-yard freestyle at the state finals as a sophomore. She qualified for and scored at the state finals in each of her final three varsity seasons.

Miller came up one spot shy of earning an all-state medal, placing ninth in the diving competition at the 2024 state finals. She was a two-time state qualifier.



Caledonia senior Elise Miller celebrates signing her commitment to join the Davenport University Women's Swimming and Diving program as a diver beginning next season. **Photo provided**



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Stellar Scot season ends in Division 1 District Finals

Brett Bremer
Sports Editor

Caledonia freshman guard Emily Stauffer attacked the rim along the lane, scooped up a shot as she was raked across the arm by an East Kentwood defender, and then looked up, hoping for an and-one opportunity as the whistle blew. The ball bounded off the rim and out. Stauffer grimaced, shouted and clenched both fists in front of her.

She got an encouraging two-handed low five from senior teammate Lakely Bottum, but that first feeling the was one the Fighting Scots had a few too many times in the MHSAA Division 1 District Final against East Kentwood at Byron Center High School Friday.

They felt it when a couple lay-up opportunities in transition just didn't fall. They felt it when a couple open threes glanced off the rim.

They felt it when a slide over to try and take a charge was half a second too late. They felt it when Bottum picked up her second foul and went to the bench late in the first quarter.

They felt it when he Kentwood sophomore forward Jazanaye Silva dodged a box out to rebound her own missed free throw twice, seconds apart late in the first half.

And they felt it when East Kentwood senior Jazlynn Ward swished a couple of running one-handed floaters in the closing minutes to help the Falcons seal a 41-37 victory in the district final to bring an end to the most successful Fighting Scot season in recent memory.

"If you're struggling to finish and you're struggling to rebound, that is kind of a recipe for a game to get away from you, and the girls just battled, and battled, and battled and continued to hit shot after shot [late] to keep the game close," Caledonia head coach Todd Bloemers said. "I just wish we could have built a little more momentum off that really good start. A couple missed shots and a couple offensive rebounds given up and then I think we lost our rhythm a little bit on both offense and defense.

"And credit to Kentwood, they're a scrappy team, they're physical, they've got some length and we've seen it on a bunch of film. We knew what we were getting into playing them. You want to win a district championship you have to execute that part of the game plan and finish and get a little luck along the way."

The Caledonia varsity girls' basketball team (18-6) shot out to a 9-0 lead in the district final, but the Falcons (13-13) fought back to tie the game at 11-11 three minutes into the second quarter, took a 17-16 lead with just over a minute to go in the half and then led for the rest of the evening.

Stauffer and Ward tied for game-high scoring honors with 14 points apiece. The Falcons also got nine points apiece from Silva and sophomore forward Sophie Cobb.

Caledonia had its typical balanced scoring behind Stauffer. Fellow freshman guard Olivia Foster had 11 points. A third freshman, Myla Gortmaker, had five points and junior guard Baylee Devries and Bottum had four points apiece.



The Fighting Scots show their emotion after a 44-40 loss to East Kentwood in the MHSAA Division 1 District Final at Byron Center High School Friday, March 7.

Keeping even on the boards with the athletic Falcons would have been a herculean task, but the Scots would have liked to have been better at ending defensive possessions. Once that was combined with a rough shooting night it was too much to overcome - but just barely.

Bottum picked up her second foul of the first half with 46.4 to go in the first quarter and went to the bench until the start of the second half. That made things a little easier for the Falcons on the glass. Kentwood had a 20-17 lead at the half.

"I think three points at halftime, we're not going to try and put her out there in a game like that where the emotions are high and Kentwood is hyperaggressive attacking the basket," coach Bloemers said. "Just felt like we didn't want her to pick up her third. We were hanging in. We hit as big drought offensively where I think we

See **FINALS** on 11



Caledonia junior guard Baylee Devries maneuvers her way around the East Kentwood defense in the paint during the MHSAA Division 1 District Final at Byron Center High School Friday, March 7.



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FINALS

Continued from Page 10

just struggled to finish. Really, that was a key all night. In the second half I am not sure we could have produced better shots and we typically will put a few more through than we did."

The Falcon lead grew to as large as eight points with 2:45 to go in the third quarter before a triple from Gortmaker gave the Scots a spark. The Scots were within 31-26 at the end of the third quarter and would get as close as two points with 2:30 to go in the fourth.

The Scots had that clenched teeth and fists feeling again with 2:45 to go in the ballgame trailing 36-31. The eyes on the Caledonia bench saw defensive pressure force the Falcons to lose the ball out of bounds. But no signal came from officials, and eventually the striped shirts huddled and decided they couldn't decide and called a jump ball. Fortunately at least for the Scots, the possession arrow was in their favor. A heated coach Bloemers called a time out, and the Fighting Scots returned to the floor to run a play for a quick three from Foster, off a feed from Bottum in the high post, that made it a 36-34 ballgame.

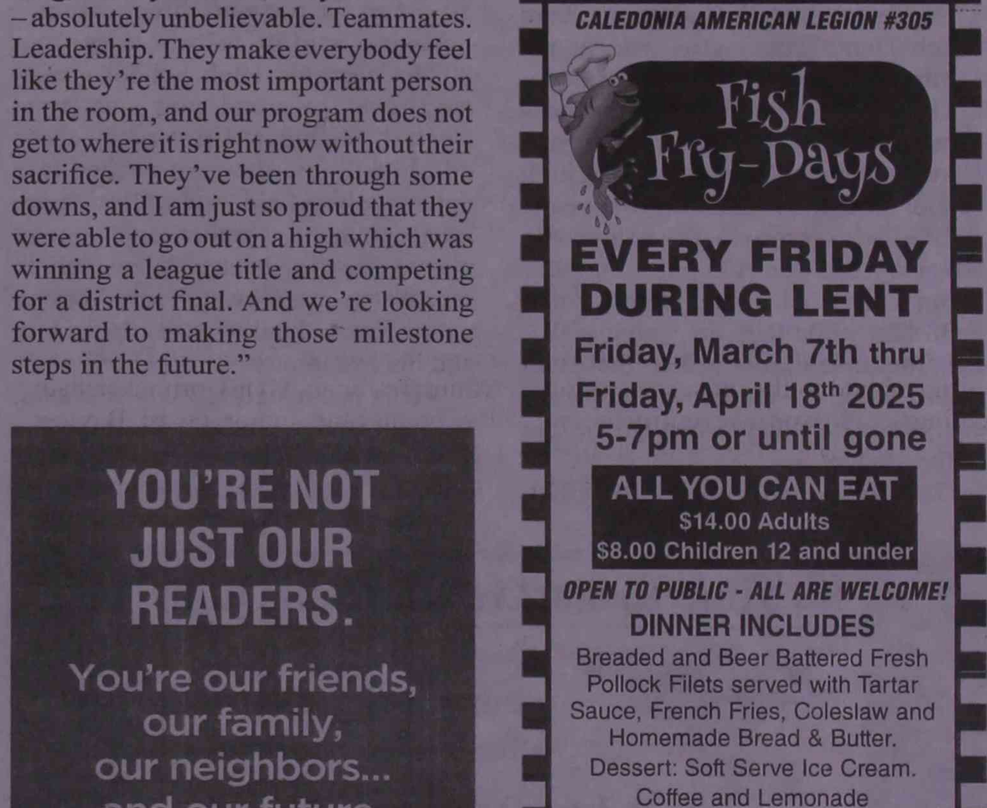
East Kentwood pulled down just enough offensive rebounds and hit just enough free throws over the course of the final 90 seconds to fend off the Scots despite a couple more threes, from Stauffer and Foster.

Bloemers said the two big keys coming into the game were defensive transition and defensive rebounding. He was really pleased with the way his girls limited East Kentwood from getting quick baskets in transition throughout the night.

The East Kentwood girls were bested 64-37 by Forest Hills Northern in their MHSAA Division 1 Regional Semi-final ballgame Monday at Grandville High School.

"I am really proud of how we battled. I think struggling with the physicality early, sometimes maybe teams would yield at that point, and I was really pleased to see how our girls responded. It is a game we're going to be thinking about for a little bit in the offseason, and hopefully it drives us in our training and our weight room work that so many of these young kids have to grow," Bloemers said. "We have some good things going.

"But I'd also like to say that [seniors] Brecken Bloemers Kathryn Langenburg, Lakely Bottum, Lilly Gortmaker – absolutely unbelievable. Teammates. Leadership. They make everybody feel like they're the most important person in the room, and our program does not get to where it is right now without their sacrifice. They've been through some downs, and I am just so proud that they were able to go out on a high which was winning a league title and competing for a district final. And we're looking forward to making those milestone steps in the future."



Caledonia senior Brecken Bloemers pressures the Falcons Sophie Cobb near mid-court during the first half of their MHSAA Division 1 District Final at Byron Center High School Friday, March 7.



Caledonia freshman guard Emily Stauffer puts a shot up around East Kentwood's Sophie Cobb at the hoop during their MHSAA Division 1 District Final at Byron Center High School Friday, March 7. **Photos by Brett Bremer**

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Getting bigger, faster, stronger earns Scots college spots

Brett Bremer
Sports Editor

A couple more Fighting Scots will be patrolling college defensive backfields in the coming years.

Caledonia seniors Reed Vogeler and Colin Kowatch signed on to join NCAA football programs next season last month. Vogeler inked his plans to become a part of the new Calvin University Football program and Kowatch signed his National Letter of Intent to join his big brother, Aidan, on the Hillsdale College Football team.

Vogeler joined the Fighting Scot varsity part way through freshman season in the fall of 2021, was a starting safety on the team that earned the MHSAA Division 1 State Runner-up trophy in 2022, and earned first team all-conference honors in the OK Red Conference in each of the past two seasons while playing defensively at safety and linebacker for the Scots.

Kowatch was a two-year varsity player at Caledonia, and took over as a starting safety in his senior season.

Recently retired Caledonia head coach Derek Pennington said at the signing ceremony Feb. 5 in the Caledonia High School media center that he is proud of the two guys that are both great students and great members of the high school football program for four years.

"We had a season where we saw some adversity and you find out a lot more about kids when things aren't going well than when they are going well," Pennington said, adding that "these two dudes" stood out for the way they gave everything they had through to the end of the season.

The Scots were 4-5 in the fall of 2024, missing the state postseason for the first time since 2019, on the heels of winning 30 games the previous three seasons.



Caledonia High School seniors Reed Vogeler (left) and Colin Kowatch sign on to continue their football playing days on the collegiate level Feb. 5 in the Caledonia High School media center. Vogeler made plans to join the Calvin University program and Kowatch signed his National Letter of Intent to join the Hillsdale College program. **Photo by Brett Bremer**

Vogeler said he learned a lot from 2024 Caledonia High School graduate Brock Townsend, now a safety at Central Michigan University, about effort, skill and the trust needed in a defensive backfield. And while they are set to graduate together, and Vogeler played more linebacker defensively in recent seasons, Kowatch said Vogeler was the same kind of example for him and his teammates.

"He is just a leader," Kowatch said. "He is a leader out there, calls out the defense and just helps you make your mistakes correct. He has been our defensive leader for three years. He has been out there starting since he was a sophomore. His leadership and knowledge of the defense inside and out been helpful for me at least."

Vogeler is looking forward to being a part of the Calvin program which played its first season of NCAA Division III competition in the Michigan Intercollegiate Athletic Association (MIAA) last fall.

"I just really want to be a part of a program and build something," Vogeler said. "I really like the coaches there there and the experience they have, just how they knew me on a personal level and how much they wanted me, which was a big reason. I think that should be a big reason for anyone – how much they want you. I liked them talking to me about what they would see me doing through four years."

Reed's big brother Luke Vogeler, who was also a part of that 2022 state runner-up team at Caledonia, has been a stand-out kicker for the Colgate University football team the past two seasons. He was named first team all-league in the Patriot League last fall while setting record team records for accuracy and distance.

Kowatch is excited to get to play with his big brother Aidan, for at least one season, at Hillsdale. Aidan was a safety at Caledonia and has transitioned to linebacker at Hillsdale where he has seen most of his time on special teams so far. Having him as an insider in the program has been priceless for Colin.

"Obviously, the academics are there," Colin said of choosing Hillsdale. "It is a great academic school and my brother is there too. He has loved every minute of it over there. That was a big pull for me, being able to play with my brother as well as the fact that it is a historical program. The way they run things over there aligns with my beliefs and everything."

See **SCOTS** on 13

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CHS selects new leaders for football and fútbol programs

The Caledonia Athletic Department announced this week that it will be welcoming Whitney Bell as the new varsity head football coach and Taylor Kastens as the new varsity girls' soccer head coach.

Both have spent the past few seasons as assistant coaches in the programs, and the athletic department stated that both bring an incredible passion for student-athlete development, on and off the field.

Bell is a Ferris State University Hall of Famer and was a dominant All-GLIAC defensive tackle, earning All-America honors before playing five years of professional football in the Arena Football League and CFL, where he won a Grey Cup Championship with the BC Lions. After his playing career, he returned to Ferris State as a defensive line and strength and conditioning coach before joining the Caledonia football program eight years ago. He has served for the last six seasons as the defensive coordinator, including during the Scots' 2022 run to the MHSAA Division 1 Football Finals.

Kastens has been an essential part of the Caledonia varsity girls' soccer team's recent success, helping lead the team to a 2024 MHSAA Division 1 District Championship and 2023 District runner-up finish.

A former collegiate soccer player at Oakland University and Grand Valley State University, she was a two-time NIRSA national qualifier at Grand Valley and brings high-level playing and coaching experience.

Beyond the field, Kastens is a Physical Education, Unified Physical Education & Health teacher at Duncan Lake Middle School, a District Wellness Committee member, and a leader in fostering student well-being and athletic excellence.

"We are incredibly fortunate to have both Coach Bell and Coach Kastens shaping our athletic programs," Caledonia High School athletic director Fred Townsend said. "Their commitment to developing student-athletes physically, mentally, and personally is what makes Caledonia athletics so special."

— BB



Whitney Bell has been announced as the new head coach of the Caledonia varsity football team. **Photo provided**



Taylor Kastens has been announced as the new head coach of the Caledonia varsity girls' soccer soccer team. **Photo provided**

SCOTS

Continued from Page 12

"It's nice just being able to know the personalities of the coach more than what they tell you on paper," Colin said. "Being able to hear it from your brother there is no real filter. He tells you everything. You get to know the players, the coaches and the culture over there."

According to Hillsdale's announcement following signing day, "family ties were a big part of this class, as seven of the 25 recruits have relatives associated with Hillsdale. Five – Vince Carrico, Seth Davis, Colin Kowatch, Connor VanBeek and Bailey Wade – are joining older brothers already on the team that they'll be playing with this fall, while Dom Spinazze has two older sisters who played women's tennis collegiately for Hillsdale College, and Leo Marquell is the son of a former Hillsdale defensive coordinator whose mom graduated from the college."

Both Caledonia guys know they have three things they really have to improve as they get set to play collegiately.

"Gotta get stronger obviously," Colin said.

"Bigger."

"Faster."

"Kind of those three big things. But also just from an intellectual standpoint trying to understand the defense better, because it is a different defense than what we run here at Caledonia, just trying to buy into that and learn their defense."

Reed and Colin are already a lot bigger, faster and stronger than they were when they arrived for workouts the summer before their freshman season.

"Their strength program is insane," Reed said of the CHS program. "I really liked it here. I started my freshman year at 150 and I am leaving at 205, so that means something obviously."

Colin credited the CHS program and work he did at Max Effort with helping to turn him into the player he became his season season capable of earning a spot in a college program.

"It was awesome playing with [Colin]," Reed said. "I didn't get to play DB with him, but he was a great player and he was one of those true Cal players. He didn't get to play as young as me, but he worked really hard and got to play his senior year. He made it obviously. He's playing college football. That's the goal."

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BOARD MEETING SYNOPSIS
March 10, 2025

The Gaines Charter Township Board held a regular meeting on Monday, March 10, 2025, and took the following actions.

1. Reviewed the Consent Agenda.
2. Approved the Meeting Agenda
3. A Public Hearing was held for Thornapple Farms Phases I and II Streetlight Special Assessment District
4. Approved the Consent Agenda
5. Approved the Dutton Center Planned Unit Development Phase II Final Preliminary Plat
6. Scheduled a Public Hearing for April 14, 2025 for the proposed update to the Zoning Ordinance
7. Tabled the Liquor License Renewal for Logan's Restaurant #531 to the April 14, 2025 Regular Board Meeting
8. Approved Liquor License Renewals for:
   a. JD Holdings, LLC – Peppino's
   b. TSF Apple Venture, LLC – Applebee's
   c. Stonewater Country Club – Fire Rock Grille
   d. Grinning Mitten, DBA Railtown
      1. Microbrewer Manufacturer's License
      2. Small Wine Make Manufacturer's License
   e. Celebration Banquets, LLC
   f. Briarwood Golf Course
9. Approved and accepted the assessment roll for Thornapple Farms Phases I and II Streetlight Special Assessment District
10. Approved an application for Farmland Preservation Program (PA 116)
11. Appointed Jeff Brinks as the At-Large member of the Byron Gaines Utility Authority Commission
12. Approved the conference request for the clerk and deputy clerk to attend the International Institute of Municipal Clerk's conference in St Louis, Missouri
13. Adjourned the Regular Board Meeting at 7:12 pm

A complete copy of the minutes of these meetings and any resolutions or ordinances adopted at the meeting are on file and available for review at the Gaines Charter Township office, 8555 Kalamazoo Avenue SE, Caledonia, Michigan 49316. Ordinances, meeting schedules, meeting minutes, and other Township information are also available at www.gainestownship.org.

Michael Brew
Gaines Charter Township Clerk

Village of Middleville
COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

The minutes of the February 25, 2025 Regular Council Meeting, that were approved on March 11, 2025, are posted at the Village Hall at 100 E Main Street and on the website at www.villageofmiddleville.org.

CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF CALEDONIA BOARD OF TRUSTEES
Meeting Minutes

The minutes for the Febraury 19, 2025 Township Board of Trustees Meeting that were approved on March 5, 2025, are posted at the Township Offices at 8196 Broadmoor Ave., and on the website at www.caledoniatownship.org.

MOTH

Continued from Page 6

timing is off, or spray drifts onto non-target vegetation, it has the potential to harm beneficial insects like other moths and butterflies, including the Monarch butterfly.

Second, the cost of spraying has to be considered. To be effective, the spray must cover all the leaves of the tree. On large forests, this can be done by airplane or helicopter, whereas individual trees can be sprayed with either hand or truck sprayers. Local contractors can help decide if either of these options will help accomplish any goals for control.

The State of Michigan considers the spongy moth to be an endemic pest, so treatment is considered the responsibility of the landowner. Knowledge is our best tool to combat this pest and recognize when treatment may be most effective.

Barry Conservation District has put together more information, links and a list of contractors that can help at barrycd.org/learn/spongymoth. Or feel free to contact the district office via email at barryconservation@gmail.com or by calling 269-908-4139.

Editor's note: The Barry Conservation District contributed this report.

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Middleville Location -
1664 M-37
9:30 am and 11:00 am

PEACE CHURCH
PEACECHURCH.CC
Sundays at 9:00, and 10:30 AM
Lead Pastor: Pastor Ryan Kimmel
616.891.8119
6950 Cherry Valley Rd., Middleville, MI 49333
peacechurch.cc

Sunday Worship: 8:30 a.m. & 11 a.m.
Fellowship 9:45 to 10:00 a.m.
Sunday School 10 to 10:45 a.m.
@ St. Paul Lutheran Church & Preschool
8436 Kraft Ave., Caledonia, MI 49316
Office 616-891-8688 • Preschool (616) 891-8688
www.stpaulcaledonia.org

THORNAPPLE VALLEY CHURCH MIDDLEVILLE
SERVICE TIMES:
Sunday at 9:30am & 11:00am
20 State Street, Middleville, MI / www.tvcweb.com

Whitneyville Bible Church
8655 Whitneyville Avenue, Alto
616.891.8661
www.whitneyvillebible.org
Pastor Jonathan DeCou
Sunday School .....9:30 AM
Sunday Worship .....10:30 AM
IFCA INTERNATIONAL
Watch our services from our website (see above)

Yankee Springs Bible Church
8900 Duffy Road
Middleville, MI 49333
"Shining Forth God's Light"
Sunday Morning Worship.....10:00 a.m.
Community Group.....11:00 a.m.
James L. Collison, Pastor
www.yankeespringsbiblechurch.org

MIDDLEVILLE TOPS 546

The March 10 meeting opened with roll call and the secretary's report. Two fish jumped out of the fishbowl.

Virginia continued her program from the TOPS "The Choice is Mine Handbook" titled "Motivation and Reality of Healthy Weight Management: Effective Self-Management for Results." These tips help manage cravings. Cravings are often a physical response to a specific situation. They are normal and natural. Change your response to whatever situation is triggering your temptation. The benefits are short-term. How will you feel afterward? Think about the amount of effort expended to burn off those calories. Think about how good you will feel by resisting the temptation. Avoid places that trigger your temptations. Your craving is fleeting. Don't give in! Ways to prevent cravings are to drink a glass or water, leave the situation, take 10 deep breaths, or brush your teeth.

Binge eating comes from an imbalance of brain chemicals. It involves eating more than you want to eat and feeling guilty, disgusted, or out of control afterward. A binge eating diagnosis is defined as having two binges a week on average in a six-month period. It is usually consuming a large number of calories in a short time. Foods high in fat and sugar are most common.

Diets are often proposed to be an all-or-nothing effort. Once you fail, you feel you won't ever succeed. The secret to your success is perseverance., not perfection. There is no perfect of magical solution. There will be good and bad days. Perseverance is most important. A successful weight manager will get back on track after falling off the program. You are not a bad person. Some days when you deviate is inevitable, just become more flexible in your thinking.

No one won the Ha-Ha box.

The meeting closed with marching in place as the group recited the TOPS pledge.

TOPS, a weight-loss support group, meets every Monday at Lincoln Meadows in Middleville. Weigh-in is from 3:30 p.m. to 3:45 p.m., followed immediately by the meeting. Press the white buzzer for entry.

Anyone with questions may call Virginia, 269-908-8036, or Maryellen, 616-318-3545. The first meeting is free.

OTTAWA CO. 9-1-1 CENTER DIAL (800) 249-0911 NON - EMERGENCIES "Kids Measure up at Ottawa Co. 9-1-1 Center" OR 9-1-1 FOR EMERGENCIES

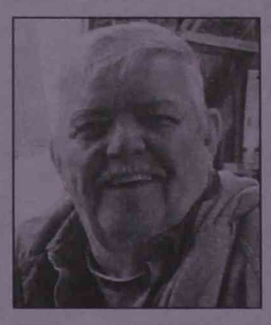
Obituaries

Robert Gordon Bender



Robert Gordon Bender, of Middleville, Michigan, flew peacefully into his next great adventure, leaving behind a lifetime of stories, service, and love. He reunites with his beloved wife of 65 years, Carol Cox Bender, as well as his parents, Russell and Alice Bender, and his sister Beverly Bourgeau. Bob's legacy continues through his children—Cheryl Hemond (Michael), Julie Cleary (Kevin), and Greg Bender. He was a cherished grandfather to Cal Cleary (Lynsi), Hannah Chesser (Dan), Sydney Johnson (Peter), and Gabby Hemond, and an adoring great-grandfather to Margo and Remi Chesser, and Peter Johnson. His sisters, Joan Tabor (Vinal) and Mary Wood (Steve), will also miss him dearly, along with a lifetime of friends and admirers. A proud alumnus of Thornapple Kellogg High School (Class of 1954) and Michigan State University, Bob earned a degree in Agricultural Education before taking to the skies. In 1959, his love for flight became his career as a U.S. Navy pilot. After years of active duty, he transitioned to the Navy Reserves, serving until 1990 and retiring as a captain in 2001—though his heart would forever remain in the cockpit. Back on the ground, Bob returned to Middleville in 1964 to run his 1,100-acre dairy farm, managing 500 head of cattle and the chaos that comes with it. But his passion didn't stop at farming—Bob also found himself drawn into the world of politics. He served as chairman of the Barry County Board of Commissioners (1978-1982) and spent 12 impactful years in the Michigan State Legislature as a state representative. Bob and Carol's story didn't end with public service. The adventurous couple joined the Peace Corps, spending two years in Russia (1995-1997), followed by many more years volunteering with the nonprofit "From Houses to Homes" in Guatemala. Together, they hiked and camped across nearly every National Park in America, explored Europe, and spent idyllic summers on Mackinac Island—a place they held close to their hearts. Though Bob's flight plan on earth has ended, the spirit of his adventure and kindness lives on in the lives he touched. In lieu of flowers, the family kindly requests donations in Bob's honor to From Houses to Homes in Guatemala (www.Fromhousestohomes.org). Bob's family will receive friends on Friday, March 21, 2025 from 5:00-8:00 PM at the Beeler-Gores Funeral Home, Middleville. A memorial service will be conducted at 11:00 AM on Saturday, March 22, 2025 at Middleville United Methodist Church. Private burial will take place at Mt. Hope Cemetery. Please visit www.beelergoresfuneral.com to share a memory or leave a condolence message for Bob's family. Fly high, Captain Bob. May you find endless skies, open trails, and Carol by your side once more.

Bill Briggs Lewis



Bill Briggs Lewis, age 78, of Middleville, Michigan, passed away on Saturday, March 8, 2025 with his family by his side. He was born on April 1, 1946 in Barry County.

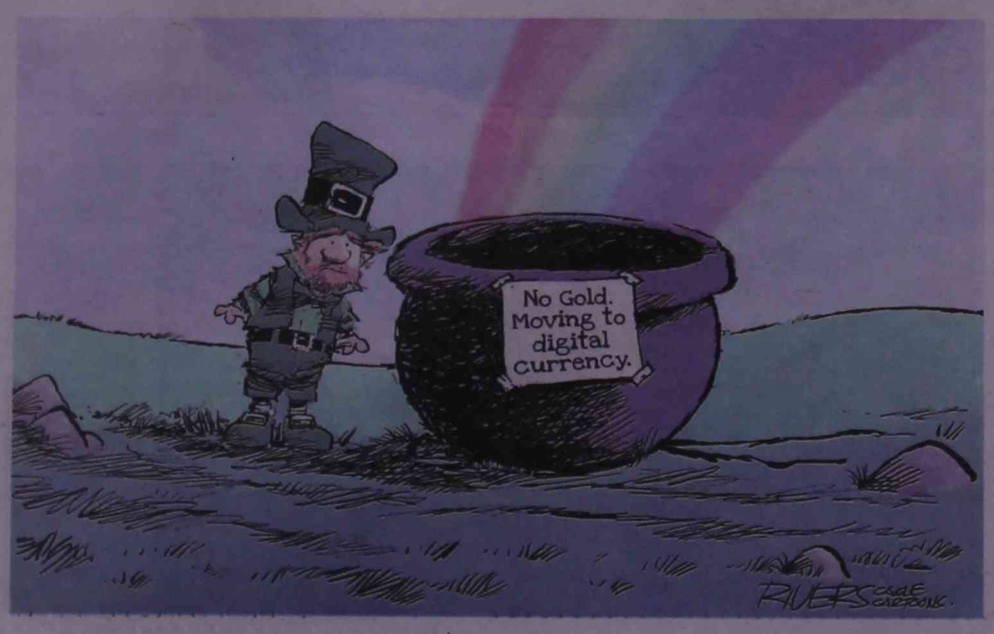
Bill retired from Bradford White Corp. as a skilled tradesman after 43 years after serving in the United States Navy.

He was preceded in death by his parents Russell and Edna Lewis, brothers Johnny and Gladeon, and sister, Melanie. Surviving are his wife Sherrie, brother Alpha (Margilene) Lewis, children April Lewis, Orin (Carrie) Lewis, Stephanie (Tom) Wilde-Ecker, Robert Wilde, grandchildren Skyler Favreau, Chase Favreau, and Dillon Ecker.

A Celebration of Life gathering will be held from 3-7 p.m. on Saturday, April 5, 2025 at Ss. Cyril & Methodius Catholic Church at 159-131st Ave, Wayland Michigan.

Memorial contributions may be made in honor of Bill Lewis to (Barry County Animal Shelter) via checks or cash at 540 Industrial Park Dr., Hastings, MI 49058.

To send a message of sympathy to the family, sign (Bill B. Lewis's) online guest book, or to share a favorite memory, please visit: www.NeptuneSociety.com



RODNEY & RENA SCHAD
A LEGACY OF GENEROUSITY



A former US Marine and his wife of 50 years, created a scholarship fund for TK graduates who pursuing a career in Industrial Arts, CAD/CAM, engineering, industrial design), providing a legacy for over 30 years. Even today, their endowed fund grows from the ongoing generosity of family and friends, honoring life and legacy of the Schad family.

If you want to learn more on leaving a legacy, please call Bonnie Gettys or Annie Halle at 269-945-0526, to help ensure that your gifts can support your hopes and dreams.

THORNAPPLE AREA ENRICHMENT FOUNDATION SCHOLARSHIP

30 YEARS OF IMPROVING LIVES
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231 S. BROADWAY ST, HASTINGS MI
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Gars' Magnuson 25th at MHSAA D1 diving regional

Brett Bremer
Sports Editor

Grand Rapids Gars junior Ethan Magnuson closed out the 2024-25 varsity boys' swimming and diving season at the MHSAA Lower Peninsula Division 1 Diving Regional hosted by Hudsonville Thursday.

Magnuson was about ten points shy of getting through the first round of cuts. He put together a score of 94.95 points through five dives which had him 25th overall.

The top 13 in the end earned spots in the MHSAA Division 1 L.P. Boys' Swimming and Diving Finals that will be held at the Holland Aquatic Center March 14-15.

East Kentwood's Fidele Byiringiro won the regional championship with an 11-dive score of 417.60 points, and Grandville's Brody Agema was the runner-up with a score of 402.35.

The field of 28 divers was cut to 21 after the first five dives at the regional, and then after three more dives the field was cut to 17. East Kentwood's Bradlee Viau was the last of the 13 state qualifiers with an 11-dive score of 280.55. Grand Ledge's Aaron Almay was the last guy cut with a final score of 275.40 in 14th-place.

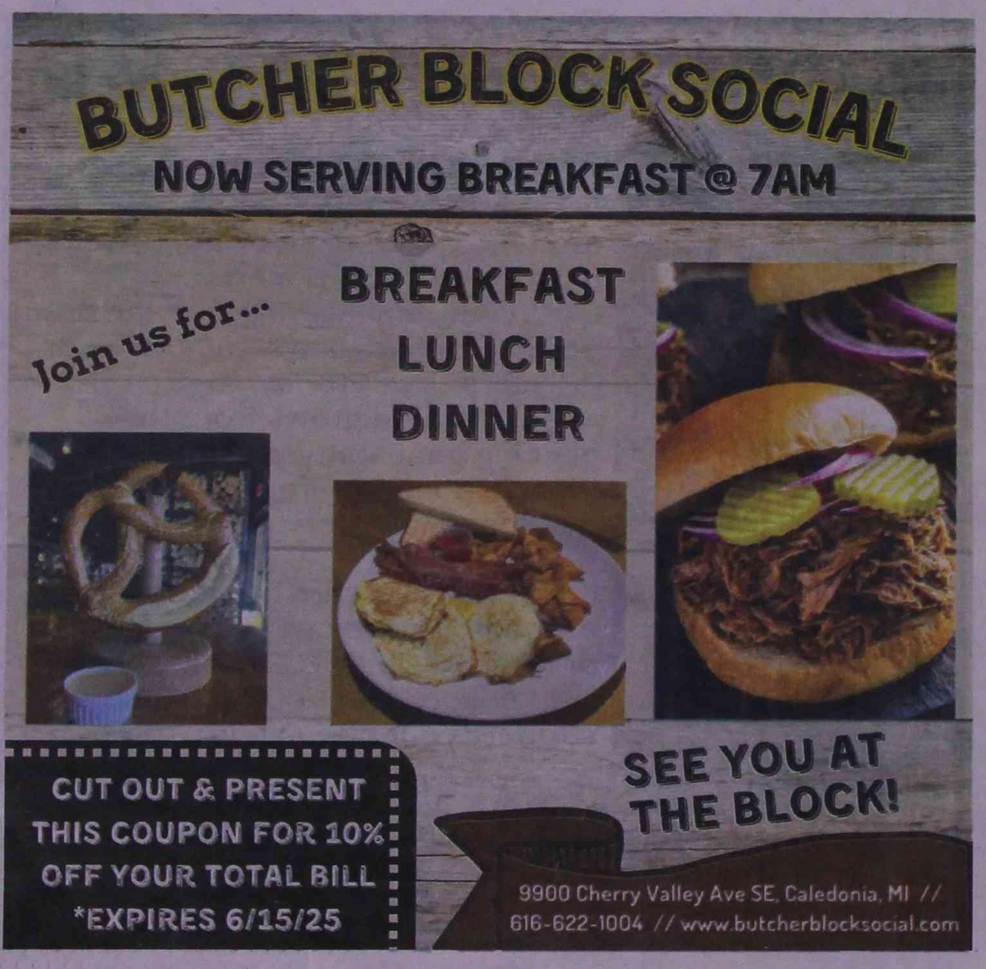


Grand Rapids Gars diver Ethan Magnuson leans back into a dive during the OK Rainbow East Division Conference Championship. His finish at the conference meet earned him a spot in the MHSAA Division 1 Regional last week in Hudsonville where he placed 25th. **Photo by Brett Bremer**

The rest of the field of state qualifiers from the regional included Loy Norrix's Isaac Patrick; West Ottawa's Isaac Kamara-Hagameyer and Zach Jonekryg; Forest Hills Eastern's Dante Grossa, Nik Luehmann and Andrew Garcia; Grand Haven's Carson Tithof and Simon Frisinger; and Grandville's Finn Sanders and Caleb Chambers.

The Gars' lone state qualifier this winter is freshman Gabriel Van in the 100-yard butterfly.

He's not the area's only state qualifier though. The Caledonia/Lowell/South Christian team will have our guys competing in Holland this weekend. The team of Ethan Snapper, Austin Tufts, Sam Jones and Anders Foerch qualified for the state finals in the 200-yard freestyle relay and Snapper is also a state qualifier in the 50-yard freestyle.







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