THE SUN AND NEWS
Your Hometown Newspaper Serving the Middleville, Caledonia and Gaines Township Areas
NO. 63 SATURDAY, JULY 5, 2025 www.sunandnews.com



OVERDRIVE FINISH OFF BOERSMA CORNER KICK FOR NATIONAL TITLE
PAGE 10

Trojans thankful and excited for new FFA barn

BRETT BREMER
Sports Editor

With alfalfa all around, corn more than waist-high across the street and horses and cows on the horizon, the young Thornapple Kellogg FFA Chapter broke ground on a new barn off of Bender Road in Middleville Friday morning, June 27.

The chapter has raised more than $150,000 in donations and grants for the barn project, with the FFA advisory board fundraising committee bringing in around $40,000 from community donations.

"I think the really cool thing about having a barn is that when people see it, they're gonna be like, 'oh my gosh, like we have live animals right outside of the school,'" TKHS senior Emma Reil, the TK FFA vice

See **FFA BARN** on Page 3



Members of the Thornapple Kellogg FFA chapter toss the first shovels full of dirt out of the ground at the site of their future barn set to be built on Bender Road in Middleville just south of the high school near the TK Schools bus garage Friday. The group includes (front with shovels from left) TK FFA advisor Alyssa Hamlin, TK FFA president Erika Wolowicz, vice president Emma Reil and treasurer Alexa Hoeksma, as well as TK FFA members (back from left) Hunter Seaben, Carter Hondorp, Maguire Simmons, Kadyn Palmateer, Allison Wolowicz, Alexa Hoeksma, Paige Sheely and Vivian Hansson. **Photos by Brett Bremer**

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Caledonia's Independence Day celebration draws a big crowd

KAREN TURKO-EBRIGHT
Staff Writer



Caledonia's annual Independence Day parade always draws in a big crowd, according to Caledonia Charter Township Supervisor Bryan Harrison. **Courtesy photos.**

Over 200 runners and walkers laced up their shoes and lined up at 8 a.m. for the start of the 18th annual Kilt Klassic 5K run, walk and fun run last weekend. The event kicked off a day of festivities at Caledonia's annual Independence Day celebration on Saturday, June 28.

"This is the main fundraiser for the Caledonia men's and women's cross country and track teams. This is our 18th year running the race," explained Jill Thompson, who helps organize the event. "Technically, my husband, Ben Thompson, started the race almost 20 years ago but we had a couple years off with COVID and another year."

In addition to the 5K, athletes in wheelchairs joined the race for "My Team Triumph." Thompson said five athletes in wheelchairs signed up and five other athletes known as "angels" pushed the wheelchairs through the race. (See more on the Kilt Klassic on page 8).

Following the race at 10 a.m., a lineup for the parade gathered at Duncan Lake Middle School on Kraft Ave. Floats, and visitors in red, white and blue, bagpipers, fire and police departments, churches, local businesses, school bands, various youth groups and more started moving at 11 a.m.

Among the long lineup of parade participants was Kay Brown, who works for Glen Valley Dentistry. She was the lead planner in constructing the company's float and theme that marched along Main Street in the Caledonia parade on Saturday. Brown spent about a month creating a 4-foot tooth out of paper mâché with some help from her sisters, who built the



Employees of Glen Valley Dentistry pose in front of the company's float that marched along Main Street in Caledonia last Saturday, June 28.

See **CELEBRATION** on Page 2



A colorful display of fireworks ended the day at the annual Caledonia Independence Day celebration on Saturday, June 28.

CELEBRATION

Continued from Page 1

inside of the tooth.

"They worked on the armature of the tooth," explained Brown. "It's a real family affair every year."

Besides waving to the crowd on the float carrying the giant tooth, employees handed out sugar-free suckers and carried out their theme which included wearing sunglasses and t-shirts with the slogan: "With smiles so bright we gotta wear shades."

The tooth traveled on a float along Main Street with about 20 on board.

"It was a great turnout this year. There's always a ton of people. We always underestimate how many are at that parade. We bought double sugar-free suckers and we were in good shape this year," said Brown. "The crowd never ceases to amaze us that comes out to the parade every year. It was gorgeous weather. The bagpipes were behind us."

Later in the evening, the sky lit up as a crowd gathered to watch fireworks. Caledonia Township Supervisor Bryan Harrison said there have been some changes in the Independence Day celebration throughout his tenure of 25 years serving his community.

"We don't take a headcount, but surely the crowds have grown right along with our community," Harrison said. "We used to have a full day of festivities at Lakeside Park following the parade but participation dropped off, so we added truck and tractor pulls for a while. Some great traditions for sure."

Harrison said two events at the Independence Day celebration always draw a big crowd.

"Of course, that parade and fireworks are mainstays and we have a committed core of volunteers that help to plan and organize it each year," Harrison said. "The school, village and Holy Family Church partner with us as well, so it is a true community effort."

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FFA BARN

Continued from Page 1

president, said Friday. "It's definitely gonna be a way to get more people interested and it's a good way to set up the future, the future children who are coming in from our younger schools. It's a good way to set them up for getting interested and involved in the project, because young kids see the animals and they're going to think it's really, really cool."

Reil said her great-grandparents had a farm, raising cattle and sheep, and she had an aunt and uncle with a farm that sparked her interest. Eventually, she was able to get involved with 4-H and the new TK FFA which she joined her sophomore year. It has only helped boost her passion for farming and the agriculture industry.

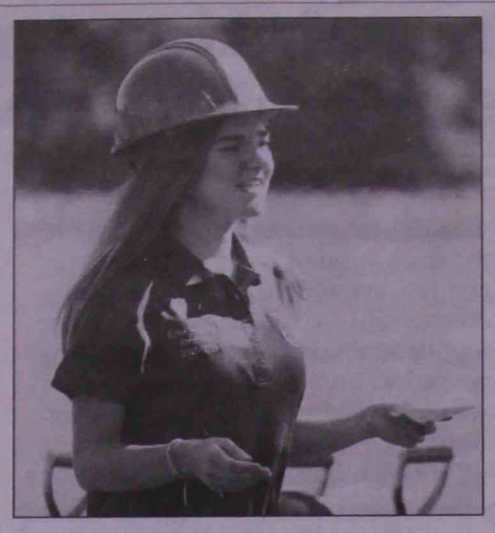
"It is definitely a very inclusive group," Reil said of the TK FFA. "Because of (TK FFA Advisor Alyssa) Hamlin and everything that she does for FFA and everything she has helped me with in FFA, I am actually going on to receive my bachelor's in informal agriculture education. It has definitely helped me bring what started off as just really liking animals into my entire future."

The TK FFA chapter was dormant for most of six decades until recently. The program faded in the mid-1960s and was reborn during the 2022-23 school year. It has been a pretty productive three-plus years already for the program. There are certainly chapters that have been going strong for more than four years that don't have their own barn.

"In the fall, we do our broiler chicken competition, which is where we raise about 50 chickens in a shed right next to the school, and we take them and the goal is to get the best-looking chickens. You go and show them to judges and get ranked on that," Reil said. "We won first in the state our second year doing it, which was our first year with Mrs. Hamlin — which is really awesome.

"And then there are two main competitions that we do in the spring, and that's our leadership competition and our skills competition."

The new barn will be used for FFA activities, events and there will be classroom space. Plans are for the main structure to be ready this fall



TK FFA president Erika Wolowicz speaks about the opportunities the new TK FFA barn will provide during the groundbreaking ceremony for the barn June 27 in Middleville.

and for TKHS principles of technology classes to spend time helping finish off the interior of the barn throughout the fall.

"I was kind of eager coming in," Hamlin said, who is an agriculture, food and natural resources educator for TK Schools as well as the FFA advisor. "I started this essentially during my first year here. I saw an opportunity. I saw a very supportive community and I had a very good feeling that they would be able to help me get this dream to become a reality. To begin, we had to get it approved by the school board."

That took some time, and once the project was approved it was full speed ahead with fundraising. The head of the fundraising committee was Lani Forbes. Major grants came from the DeCamp Foundation, Consumer's Energy and Eaton RESA. Hamlin was also very appreciative to TK Schools for making the project a reality.

"They are going to be able to really apply what we're learning in the classroom into practice in our, essentially our, farm," Hamlin said. "There's a lot of concepts that I teach, like animal reproduction, genetics, nutrition, welfare management, all of those play a key factor," Hamlin said. "It goes a long way when students are able to learn it and then put it into play. So I think it'll be important for them to be able to practice that."

Hamlin grew up in Jackson, and she was shaped by her own experi-



Thornapple Kellogg FFA advisor Alyssa Hamlin speaks to the crowd gathered just off Bender Road in Middleville Friday, June 27, during the groundbreaking ceremony for the new TK FFA barn. The main construction is set to be completed by the fall.

ences in the Jackson Area Career Center FFA as a youth.

"My advisor really pushed me, Jason Gehrke," Hamlin said. "He pushed me into becoming an ag teacher. He said he could see it, and I kind of trusted his intuition. I've always had a passion for agriculture. I've grown up raising livestock for 4-H and then FFA really I guess took it to the next level for me.

"It developed my leadership skills, developed my speaking skills, it developed my passion for teaching others about the agriculture industry and really trying to communicate where their food comes from. That's one of my main goals is teaching kids the whole process from start to finish."

Hamlin, TK FFA chapter president Erika Wolowicz and the TK FFA advisory board chair Chad Alverson each took a moment to address the gathered crowd down the drive from the TK Schools bus garage Friday. They thanked sponsors and looked forward to opportunities the space will provide.

"This is a testament to the support that is in the community itself," Hamlin told the spectators. "The students at TK have really jumped full force into everything that encompasses FFA and the agriculture industry, and I am really excited to use this facility to ignite those real learning experiences for the students."

Wolowicz, a TKHS student, said she believes the new barn will create opportunities for students and community members alike.

"Our FFA members will now have the opportunity to raise animals within our barns and show at the fair, offering a spot to the students that may not have the facilities at home to raise livestock," she told the crowd. "They teach us valuable skills such as responsibility, hard work, time management and even good sportsmanship. As an FFA chapter, we'll be able to use the barn to host new activities and events that will help us connect with our community as well, not only ourselves. We believe it is important to teach our community about agriculture and how important of a role it plays in our everyday lives."

Alverson is really excited about the opportunities the TK FFA will provide students beyond agriculture too. He said while many people think the FFA Organization is just farming "it's actually not. It's about leadership is what it is, and that's what these kids are learning."

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Community foundation to celebrate 30th anniversary at upcoming events

Barry Community Foundation officials recently announced a milestone anniversary celebration, "Capture Your Dreams," inviting the community members to join in a series of events designed to commemorate three decades of service.

Since 1995, the BCF has reportedly worked toward improving lives by fostering collaboration and bridging resources through the vision and generosity of donors.

"We are incredibly proud to reach this 30-year milestone, a testament to the dedication of our staff, volunteers and the unwavering support of our community," said Bonnie Gettys, the foundation's president and CEO. "As we reflect on our past achievements, we are even more excited to look forward.

"This summer, we want to hear from you – what aspirations you hold for our shared future in Barry County," Gettys added. "These insights will be invaluable as we chart our course for the next 30 years of impact."

The "Capture Your Dreams" anniversary celebration will feature a series of events throughout August and September, including:

- Founders Festival in Delton on Aug. 9;
- Brew Fest in Nashville on Aug. 16;
- Summerfest in Hastings on Aug. 23; and
- Heritage Days in Middleville (date to be determined).

The public is invited to join in foundation members in celebrating the anniversary and contributing to a collective vision for the future.

For more information, interested persons may go online and visit the foundation's website, BarryCF.org.

— DM

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Community Group ..... 11:00 a.m.
James L. Collison, Pastor
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MIDDLEVILLE TOPS 546

The June 30 meeting opened with roll call and the secretary's report. There is one fish in the fishbowl.

Maryellen's program came from the July/Aug TOPS magazine titled "Stopping Middle Age Spread." Metabolism tends to slow down as we age. We are expected to gain 10 to 25 pounds between the ages of 20 and 40. Most of it is fat tissue. Distribution also shifts to surround your organs. The risk of diabetes, heart disease, and neurodegenerative diseases goes up. Dietary changes are now needed to maintain a healthy weight. Some people do intermittent fasting. The key is to maintain an active lifestyle — daily walks or going to the gym. Exercise a little at a time throughout the day. It will help tremendously.

Sue lost the Ha-Ha Box. She was also the best loser for the month of June.

The meeting ended 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.

The chapter is looking for anyone interested in a group that supports weight-loss journeys without shame.

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

Kent County Board agrees to settlement with Anaergia over Sustainable Business Park

JAMES GEMMELL
Contributing Writer

Kent County has settled a lawsuit with the company originally chosen as the anchor tenant for a future Sustainable Business Park in Allegan and Kent counties.

The county said in a June 26 news release that it has agreed to pay Anaergia Inc. $725,000 to settle the case and to avoid a "potentially lengthy legal process." The county said its insurance would cover the payment. The suit is scheduled to be officially dismissed by July 24.

In 2023, Kent County postponed construction of a bioenergy plant in the park, citing concerns about Anaergia's financial health and its ability to complete the project. The business park will be built adjacent to the South Kent Landfill south of 100th Street and west of US-131 in Byron and Dorr townships.

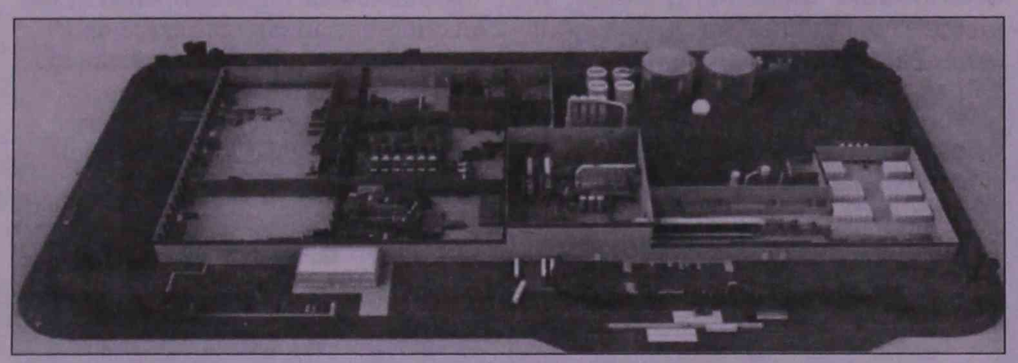
In 2024, the Canada-based renewable energy company filed a $2.3 million federal lawsuit against the county for breach of contract. Anaergia alleged that Kent County failed to pay it for initial landfill diversion work it did on the business park after canceling a contract. The county refuted that and said Anaergia did not fulfill its obligations.

A subsidiary of Anaergia, Kent County Bioenergy Facility LLC., had been awarded a $5 million grant from the Michigan Public Service Commission to develop the bioenergy plant.

In 2022, the Kent County Department of Public Works approved the Project Development Agreement with Anaergia and another company, Continuous Materials Inc., based in Texas. The original goal was to open a bioenergy plant by 2025.

"Neither Continuous Materials nor Anaergia will be part of the project

See **BOARD** on Page 9



A conceptual rendering for the bioenergy plant that originally was supposed to anchor the Sustainable Business Park in Byron and Dorr townships. **Source: gainestownship.org**



The current site plan design for the Sustainable Business Park in southern Kent County. **Source: Kent County Department of Public Works**

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Gaines PC recommends allowing Electronic Changeable Messaging signs as special permits

JAMES GEMMELL
Contributing Writer

The Gaines Township Planning Commission is unanimously recommending the township board deny a sign company's request for a text amendment to the zoning ordinance to allow Electronic Changeable Messaging (ECM) signs within residential districts by right.

However, the planning commission did vote at its June 26 meeting 5-1 to recommend the board approve a zoning text amendment to allow special use permits for the ECM signs, so long as they are in the township's new Suburban Residential zoning districts and for institutional uses.

Under the existing ordinance, the signs must be shut off between the hours of 11 p.m. and 6 a.m.

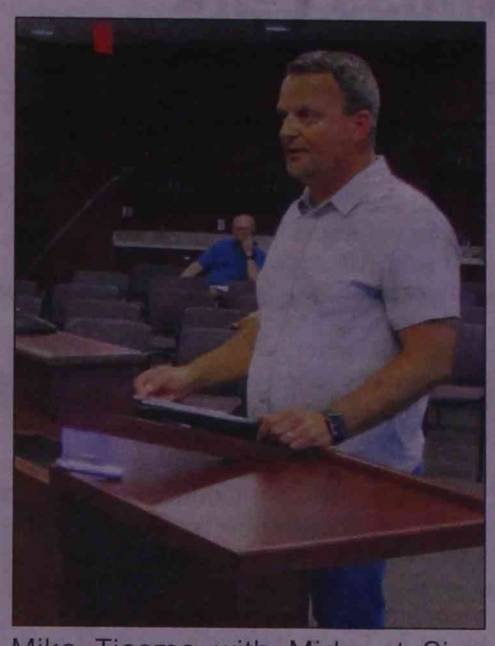
One planning commissioner was absent from the meeting.

ECMs are programmable digital signs with bright lights. They typically have LED lights or red dots. Gaines Township only permits them on freestanding signs, as opposed to wall signs. And no more than 40% of the sign's area can be dedicated to an ECM display.

Denise Simons with the Midwest Sign Company requested the text amendment in writing. And Mike Tiesma, director of Business Development with the Wayland-based company, made the pitch to the planning commission in person at the meeting.

"We get requests occasionally specifically for schools, churches and institutional uses in residential districts to incorporate an LED message center in their sign," Tiesma said.

He noted that installing the ECMs would not be appropriate if schools or churches are located in a condensed residential area. But he feels it would be okay if few homes were around them.



Mike Tiesma with Midwest Sign Company requested a text amendment to Gaines' zoning ordinance to allow Electronic Changeable Messaging signs in residential districts for institutional uses. **Photo by James Gemmell**

"For those specific reasons, we would like to request that you consider changing the text in there," Tiesma said.

Planning Commission Chairwoman Connie Giarmo said a public-input survey was incorporated into last year's Gaines master plan update. And it showed that many township residents do not like intrusive lighting from signs.

"About 28.9% said they're very concerned and 41.9% are somewhat concerned. That is over 70% of the residents in the township who are concerned about lighting," Giarmo said.

Commission Vice Chairwoman Ronnie Rober was adamantly opposed to text changes in the zoning to allow exemptions to the lighting provisions.

"We worked long and hard on this, as I remember, trying to decide was it good, was it not good. And I think we came up with the perfect solution: no," she said.

Rober cast the only no vote on the motion to allow special use permits for the ECM signs.

A public hearing was opened at the meeting but no citizens came up to the podium to address the planning commission on the matter.

"(The lighting) is a big concern with a lot of folks," planning commissioner Ryan Wiersema said.

See **GAINES PC** on Page 12

GAINES CHARTER TOWNSHIP
NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

The Gaines Charter Township Planning Commission will hold a public hearing to consider the following request:

Summary of Request: Consider revocation of a Special Land Use permit for a home occupation in a residential accessory building in the Agricultural/ Rural Residential (A/RR) zoning district

Property Address: 4645 100th Street SE, Caledonia, MI 49316

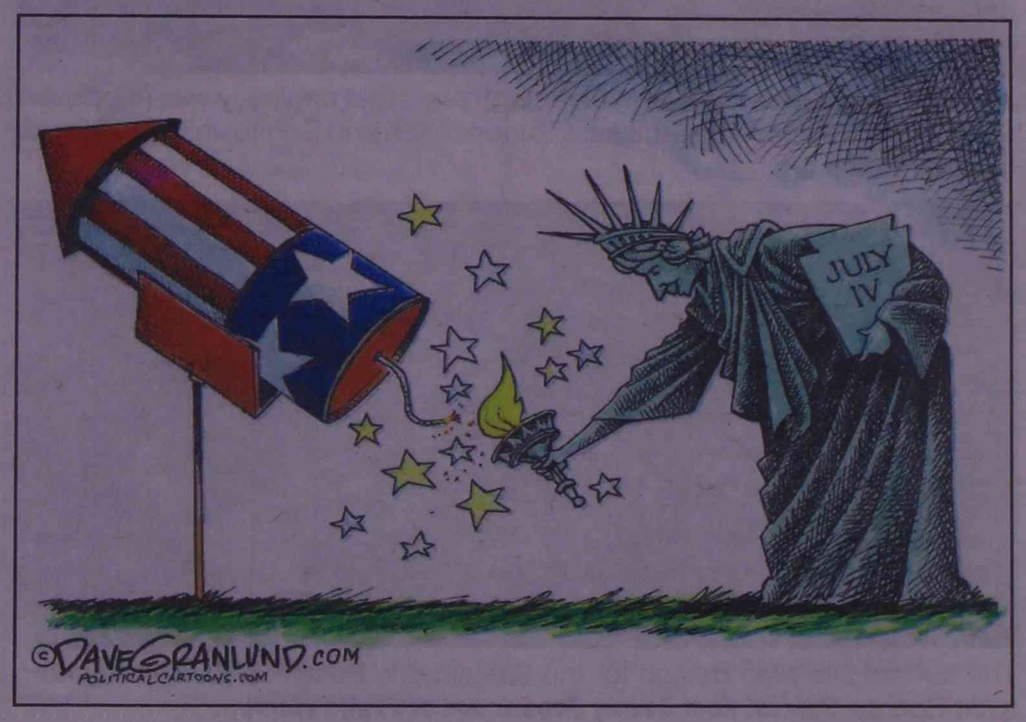
Parcel Number: 41-22-25-400-006

Applicant: Jennifer Ranero

Date and Time of Hearing: July 24th, 2025, at 7:00 PM

Location of Hearing: Gaines Charter Township Offices, Board Room
8555 Kalamazoo Avenue SE, Caledonia, MI 49316

Any interested party may appear and be heard on said proposal. Information related to this request may be inspected, by appt., during regular business hours at the Planning Department window located in the Gaines Charter Township Offices. For information related to this request, contact Dan Wells at (616) 980-6188 or dan.wells@gainestownship.org. To be entered into the public record, signed written comments must be received by 5:00 PM on July 24th, 2025. Persons with disabilities needing special accommodations should contact Kim Triplett at (616) 698-6640 one week prior to the meeting to request mobility, visual or any other assistance.



Page fifth-graders help make new hammock garden a reality

"Magical," "mystical" and "just perfect." That's how a group of girls described the new hammock garden at Page Elementary School in Middleville, as they got to try it out after a recent ribbon-cutting ceremony.

Students scattered around the garden in groups to test the hammocks and enjoy all the hard work they put into making the garden a reality.

With scissors in hand, Page students from Deb Rossi's fifth-grade class snipped a red ribbon officially opening and dedicating the school's new hammock garden.

According to school officials, the hammock garden is the result of fifth graders, who researched, planned and helped raise funding for the project through much of the 2024-25 school year.

The idea for the garden started after Rossi took her class outside to read last fall. They sat on the ground enjoying being outdoors but found ants climbing all over them.

"It was very distracting," said Rossi.

Then, Rossi came up with the idea for a hammock garden, pitched the idea to the school's principal, Amy Forman, and then to her students. She wanted them to be part of making the garden a reality.

They enthusiastically moved full speed ahead, brainstorming how the hammock garden should look, researching different kinds of hammock gardens, and even helping find donations and support for the project.

Students created and presented a presentation for a few members of the board of education and other school leaders, gaining their full support. At the ribbon cutting, students said all the work was worth it.

Kaiden Snyder comfortably laid in a hammock holding the class pet – a giant frog named Sunny. He said Sunny deserved to enjoy the garden, too.

"It's kind of crazy," Snyder added. "We were working on it just about all year and now it's awesome to see it all come together."

He said the hardest part was waiting for the project to be done and ready for use. Although they tried their best to have it finished before the end of the school year, it didn't quite happen and the fifth-graders who spent so much time creating the garden realized they wouldn't even be the ones to use it the most since they'll be moving on to the Thornapple Kellogg Middle School for the upcoming 2025-26 school next year.



Deb Rossi and many of her fifth-grade students at Page Elementary School's hammock garden ribbon cutting. **Courtesy photo**

However, the ribbon-cutting event gave them an opportunity to be the first ones in the hammocks.

"It's really good. I hope the fourth- and fifth-graders next year will really enjoy it," Snyder said.

Eli Foote wrapped himself like a cocoon in one of the hammocks. He gave the garden a 9 out of 10 stars, saying the only thing wrong with the project was that they had to wait so long for it to happen.

Rose Forman, who will be a fifth-grader in the fall, wasted no time getting comfortable with a book and her stuffed animal in one of the hammocks.

"I'm excited," she said. "It's going to be a great spot to read."

Rossi addressed her students gathered for the ribbon cutting.

"I couldn't be more proud of you guys and all your hard work," the teacher said. "This is amazing."

See **HAMMOCK GARDEN** on Page 9

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See our website or Facebook for more information and photos.

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Kilt Klassic keeps bringing Scots back to Caledonia



Caledonia High School alumnus Tatum Verburg cools off near the midway point of the 2025 Kilt Klassic 5K near Kraft Meadows Middle School in Caledonia Saturday. Verburg won her division and was the third fastest female overall at the race. **Photos by Brett Bremer**

BRETT BREMER
Sports Editor

A good portion of the guys and gals stepping onto the medal stand in the parking lot just outside the Caledonia High School tennis courts at the conclusion of the Kilt Klassic 5K Saturday were current, former or future CHS student-athletes.

There were 241 finishers in the 2025 edition of what is an annual fundraiser for the Caledonia High School cross country and track and field programs.

Andy Adams, 21 of Alto, was the men's overall to finisher with a time of 16 minutes 16.6 seconds. Jamie Lyberg, 41 of Alto, was the top female finisher with a time of 18:52.1.

There were four Thompsons in the top 20 overall, including Caledonia varsity boys' cross country coach and track and field coach Ben Thompson.

"This race is always cool. We've had all these alumni come back, and parents of kids are running. It's really cool," Thompson said.

"Hopefully [they're coming back] because of the relationships they made in cross country and wanting to come back and see their friends," he added. "I'm sure they want to give back to the program and to keep running a little bit. Some of them are running a lot because they're college athletes and some of them are just out here. We have got people who've been graduated for a long time that probably graduated 10 years or 20 years ago."

Thompson was happy to report after the race that only one of his three sons finished in front of him. He said he went out a little fast, not used to racing distances as short as 5K lately. The one of the three Thompson boys who did finish in front of him, Jamin, has bested him before in a 5K so dad was okay with that.

Jamin, a senior on the Cornerstone University Mens' Cross Country and Track and Field teams, was tenth at the Wolverine-Hoosier Athletic Conference Conference Cross Country Championship last fall and placed third in the 10,000-meter race and seventh in the 7,000-meter race at the WHAC Outdoor Track and Field Championships as a junior in May. He was fourth Saturday with a time of 16:35.1.

Clay Batio, 20 of Caledonia, was the runner-up to Adams with a time of 16:23.7. Noah Johnston, a senior at Caledonia High School who was a state qualifier in cross country in the fall of 2024, placed third in 16:31.1.

Adams, another CHS grad, runs with Jamin at Cornerstone University. He was 19th at the WHAC Cross Country Championships in 2024.

Hannah Dupuis, a 2025 CHS graduate, was the second fastest female of the day with a time of 19:49.9. She'll begin competing for Michigan Tech University in the fall. Her one-time high school teammate Tatum Verburg was third among the ladies in 19:53.8.

There isn't anything special funds raised are being set aside for at the moment coach Thompson said.

"Last year, we used some of the money to get some special championship uniforms for the boys and girls, for like for conference, regionals and state meets. That was kind of a cool thing," he said. "We've bought a lot of pole vault poles in the

See **KILT KLASSIC** on Page 12



Runners including Noah Johnston (98) and Noah Peterson (129), who were both top ten finishers in the end, take off at the start of the 2025 Kilt Klassic 5K Run/Walk in the parking lot in front of Caledonia High School Saturday.



HAMMOCK GARDEN

Continued from Page 7

Page librarian Jessica Shuck said she knows students will get a lot of good reading time in the hammocks next year.

"You should all be very proud of yourselves and what you've been able to do," Shuck told the students. "I'm very excited to use the garden next year and I hope it will be another way to help entice students to read more."

And, Page's principal was ecstatic with the garden.



Deb Rossi and her students cut the ribbon to officially dedicate the hammock garden. **Courtesy photo**

"I love it and I love that it's for future generations of Page students to use," Forman said. "It was such a selfless act by our fifth-graders.

"They knew they wouldn't get it done to use themselves but they still worked very hard on it," she added. "And now it's here and it's going to be a great place for students to enjoy reading."

Support for the project included a $1,000 "One School at a Time" Award from Family Fare, a $2,278 grant from the Barry County Youth Advisory, material donations from NTA Landscaping and assistance from Barry County Lumber, as well as help from members of the school district's Building and Grounds Department.

— Thornapple Kellogg Schools

BOARD

Continued from Page 5

as we move forward," DPW Director Darwin Bass told *The Sun and News*.

The county's stated goal has been to divert 90% of trash that goes to landfills and convert it into marketable materials.

Anaergia had proposed building the $400 million waste-to-energy facility to process 400,000 tons of trash annually that businesses put in their dumpsters and residents place in their curbside trash carts. Also, about 30,000 tons of recycled commodities and organic waste would have been processed to produce renewable natural gas and fertilizer.

In February 2025, the Kent County Board of Public Works approved the completion of the final infrastructure design and bid documents for the 250-acre Sustainable Business Park. Baas said the bidding process will begin in the Fall of 2026 before the county Board of Public Works makes a final decision on the project.

Plans are for the Sustainable Business Park to include facilities for mixed waste processing, organics recovery, stormwater management, research and development, construction and demolition debris sorting, and end-use operations.

Grand Rapids-based engineering firm Fishbeck, Thompson, Carr & Huber Inc. was contracted to develop the major construction-design documents.

The original design proposed by Anaergia for the Kent County Bioenergy Facility had a transfer station. However, the Kent County Bioenergy Facility will not be constructed as originally planned. Instead, the county is now planning to build the project in phases. The South Kent Transfer Station would be constructed first, and then the facility for processing organics and recyclables would be built.

Baas said design work for the transfer station will begin this fall, with construction tentatively set to start in late 2026 or early 2027.

The construction timelines are subject to approval by the county Board of Public Works and the Kent County Board of Commissioners. The plan is to open bids this fall for constructing the Sustainable Business Park.

"And if bids are favorable, and with BPW approval, commence construction in Spring 2026," Baas said.

The goal would be to restart the process of procuring developers for the mixed-waste processing plant later in 2026. It would entail anaerobic digestion and processing food waste to produce Renewable Natural Gas. That involves capturing methane gas released during the decomposition and converting it into a usable energy source.

Kent County officials said sustainable waste management is an environmentally responsible way to manage food waste by diverting it from the landfill.

"So, we're taking steps on this in preparation for the closure of the South Kent Landfill in 2030," Baas said.

The initial plans called for the City of Wyoming to supply water for the project, with the municipal utilities running from Byron Township into Dorr Township, which would either be a wholesale or retail customer.

The original concept also envisioned the Byron-Gaines Utility Authority (BGUA) taking control over part of that infrastructure. However, the BGUA consulting engineer, Jeff Gritter with Vriesman & Korhorn civil engineering company, said he has not received an update on that yet.

"We have not had any additional communication regarding (Kent County's) schedule or plans for the business park," he said.

Stakeholders in the project include the two counties and their respective road commissions, plus the City of Wyoming, Byron, Dorr and Gaines townships, and Consumers Energy and DTE Energy.

The DPW said more than 7 million tons of trash have been put into the South Kent Landfill since 1986, and as of 2023 the existing waste-to-energy plant had processed about 5 million tons since 1990.

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING
THORNAPPLE TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
MONDAY, JULY 28, 2025, at 7:00 P.M.

Please be advised the Thornapple Township Planning Commission will hold a public hearing on July 28, at 7pm or as soon thereafter as possible. The public hearings will take place in the Township Hall, 200 E. Main St., Middleville.

The public hearing(s) will address the following:

1) *Special Use #177*—Applicant Jennifer Carey is wishing to construct a residence on her property to house an immediate family member requiring around the clock care. Her residence is located at 3450 Eagleview Ct., Middleville, MI 49333 (parcel 08-14-025-001-35) per Thornapple Township Zoning Ordinance 5.3 (t) and 19.68.

Any interested person may attend the public hearings to learn about the extent and location of Special Use requests to offer comments to the Planning Commission. A copy of the application noted above may be examined in the Township offices at the address noted above during regular business hours. Monday – Thursday 9am- 4pm

Written comments regarding these applications may be addressed to: Secretary Sandy Rairigh, Thornapple Township Planning Commission, P.O. Box 459, Middleville, MI 49333, or submitted via email to: zoning-administrator@thornapple-twp.org

Americans with Disabilities Notice
Persons with special access needs should contact the Township Clerk at 269-795-7202 no less than 72 hours before the hearings.

Cindy Ordway, Thornapple Township Clerk

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Overdrive finish off Boersma corner kick for national title

BRETT BREMER
Sports Editor

A clockwise spin from Mary Free Bed Overdrive's Nate Boersma punched a corner kick to teammate Kyle Friar at the top of the goal box five and a half minutes into a second overtime period in the championship match.

With the Motor City Eagles' goalkeeper on the near post and a defender on the center of the line, Friar turned to hit Boersma's pass just inside the far post to give the Overdrive a 1-0 golden goal victory in the MK Battery United States Power Soccer Association (USPSA) Conference Cup Series Founders Cup Championship, June 22 in Fort Wayne, Ind.

"I just passed it. I don't even pick a play half the time," Boersma said of his corner kick that led to the Overdrive's championship clinching goal. He said going quick before everyone is set up works out to his advantage a lot of times.

The Overdrive, one of the top seeds in the Founders Conference heading into the tournament, did not allow a single goal all weekend long. The team shut out opponents 5-0, 3-0 and 1-0 during pool play, took a 7-0 win in the quarterfinals and a 2-0 win in the semifinals.

Boersma, a seventh grader at Thornapple Kellogg Middle School, said he enjoyed "destroying" teams at the tournament. As far as earning six straight shut outs, he said "our defense was just on point and our goalie was playing really good."



Mary Free Bed Overdrive attacker Nate Boersma (12 of Middleville) sets up to put the ball in play during the finals of the MK Battery United States Power Soccer Association Conference Cup Series Founders Cup Championship, June 22 in Fort Wayne, Ind. **USPSA photos by Katie Pierce**

Those victories put the Overdrive, based out of Grand Rapids, into the championship game against one of their local rivals, the Motor City Eagles from Northville. Power Soccer games consist of two 20-minute halves played on a basketball court in specialized $12,000 powered wheel chairs with cages on the front built for knocking the ball around and protecting feet. A six-meter goal is at each end of the court. Games are played 4-on-4 with three "field" players and a goalkeeper on each side.

The Overdrive team compiled a 13-7-1 during the 2024-25 season playing in the Founders Conference, and earned a promotion up to the Presidents Conference with their championship finish in Fort Wayne.

Boersma, primarily an attacker, was second in the Founders Conference with 16 goals this season and led the conference in assists with 14 in 21 games. New seasons begin in November, and teams play in tournaments throughout the winter and spring to earn spots and seeding for the national championship tournament each summer.

Jonah Westcott of Hastings is also a member of the Overdrive squad after earning a spot on the Mary Free Bed traveling team for the first time this season. Westcott came on late in the first ten-minute overtime period and was on the floor with Boersma and Friar as they clinched the national title.

Friar was named the tournament MVP, and the Overdrive's keeper Alec Lundy had to be high in the voting for that award with his six shut outs and a rare save of a penalty kick.

The Overdrive team, one of the youngest at the tournament in any division, was coached by Pete Kaiser this season with Nate's father Jason Boersma and Livvie Berger on the staff as assistant coaches.

"Pete is a pure soccer player and has been his whole life," Jason said. Kaiser played at Aquinas College, and while power soccer is new to him, he has been able to transition some things from the pitch to the court.

The USPSA is the governing body for power soccer, which is dubbed as the first competitive team sport for power wheelchair users. Power soccer empowers athletes with diverse disabilities, such as quadriplegia, Muscular dystrophy, arthrogryposis, and cerebral palsy, to compete independently at all skill levels according to the organization.

Mary Free Bed Wheelchair and Adaptive Sports began its power soccer program in 2019, and after a bit of a set-back during the pandemic in 2020, started playing games and competing in tournaments in 2021.

"The first year you just played games and we had hand-me-down chairs, and they went in and it was like taking an old rust bucket F-150 truck with cattle guards on them playing against Corvettes," Nate's mother Vikki Boersma said.



The Mary Free Bed Overdrive celebrate their Founders Cup National Championship victory following a 1-0 double overtime win over the rival Motor City Eagles during the MK Battery United States Power Soccer Association Conference Cup Series Championships June 22 in Fort Wayne, Ind.

See **OVERDRIVE** on Page 11

OVERDRIVE

Continued from Page 10

"My chair kept falling apart," Nate said.

The Lori's Voice nonprofit helped the Overdrive acquire some better chairs, and that made a ton of difference, and Nate has managed to get a chair even more specific to his own needs since then. It takes some work to modify chairs so they best support the abilities of each individual driver with the placement of switches and such. The chairs also need to be torqued to not be more than their drivers can withstand. Chairs are tested before and after matches to see that they don't exceed 6.2 miles per hour (10 kph) in both the forward and backward direction. Players mostly use foot guards to move the 13-inch ball.

Jason's role as an assistant coach has more to do with his engineering skills than X's and O's he provides.

It has become a whole family sport. Nate's big sister Morgan Boersma, a TK freshman, works on the pit crew. Jason took some of his RC racing experience from his childhood and has her cleaning tires with acetone. All the parents in the stands had "Pit Crew" shirts made up for themselves as well. TK junior Karsyn Boersma isn't quite as into the competition as the rest of the family, but sometimes she enjoys the travel.

There is a lot of travel. Vikki said finding gymnasiums that can also support the electricity needs for a fleet of battery powered wheel chairs is one of the sport's big challenges.

Tom Flynn is one of three sports coordinators in the Mary Free Bed wheelchair and adaptive sports department, the one who tasked with handling power soccer as well as wheelchair tennis and para standing tennis and goalball for the blind and visually impaired. The Mary Free Bed program also offers wheelchair basketball, wheelchair lacrosse, wheelchair rugby, hand cycling clinics and competitions too.

"Over this whole season, coach Pete [Kaiser] always has his white board out at practice. They're always scouting other teams," Flynn said. "I've seen coach Pete watch film while they're driving home from tournaments. All the coaches are so invested in this. They draw up the plays. They scout. They know who those other players are and what kind of defense we want to play, or who we want to have playing on offense."

"The players bought in," Flynn added. "The coaches got the players to buy in that this system will work. The players know they have to play on offense or defense, you can't just play offense or defense. There are even times where our goalie … he will take the ball up the court and then somebody knows to come back and play defense. They just have an offensive and defensive mindset, and they players know they have got to do what they have got to do … it is so much fun to be involved. When I started in 2023, the program was up and running. To see the progress from then to now is incredible."

Players have their regular chairs, and transition into the specially equipped Strike Force power wheel chairs with guards for the contests. There are rules against 2-on-1 play to help limit contact to not only protect the players, but their pricey equipment as well.

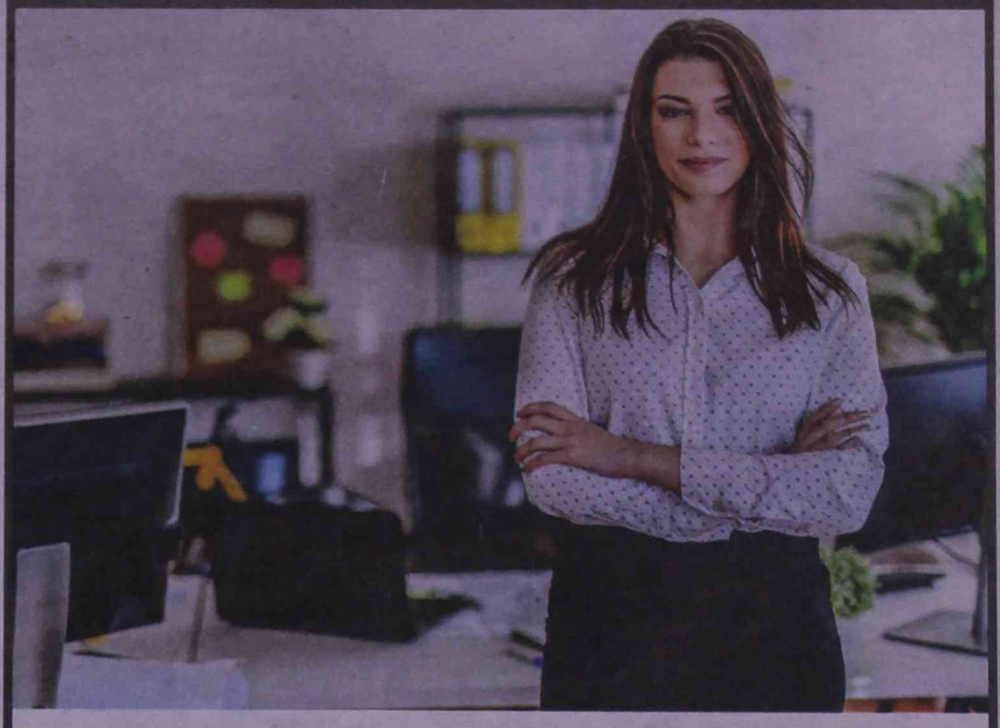
"We are 95% philanthropy. Fortunately, we have people that support us. We pay travel expenses for players or tournament fees, coaches fees, rental fees for gym space … we're very fortunate that we have the support that we have," Flynn said. "This equipment, at $12,000 apiece if you have 12 players on your team there is $144,000 in equipment. It is a fun sport to watch and it is fun for these kids."

The Overdrive program has players in it from nine years old to 32 years old. The Founders Conference is the lowest of four levels in the USPSA with national championship competition. The Premier Conference is the top level with a Champions Conference, the Presidents Conference and the Founders Conference the other three steps in the ladder. There are also non-conference and recreational play opportunities in the USPSA, like the ones the Overdrive started with not so long ago.

"It's pretty exciting," Vikki said. "They're kind of the up and coming team."

More information on the Mary Free Bed programs or how to help support them financially can be found on the wheelchair and adaptive sports page of maryfreebed.com.

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KILT KLASSIC

Continued from Page 8

last three or four years for track."

Racers who competed in kilts earned special prizes at the end of the event. My Team Triumph racers were once again the first to take off from the start line. The 5K run/walk was followed by a Kids Fun Run on the practice fields behind Caledonia High School.

GAINES PC

Continued from Page 6

Gaines Township allows internal and external illumination of ground signs for non-residential uses and external illumination is allowed for residential development entry and wall signs for non-residential uses.

The current ordinance defines several classes of sign illumination. It states that sign lighting shall be of low intensity with effective provisions made to minimize spillover of light beyond the actual sign face. And the light source must be enclosed and directed to prevent light from shining directly onto traffic or neighboring property.