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Proposed parking lot at Paul Henry trailhead on hold after village is denied DNR grant

Karen Turko-Ebright
Staff Writer

A proposed parking lot to be constructed on the property near the Paul Henry Thornapple Trail trailhead at Kinsey Avenue and Main Street in Caledonia is on hold after the village was not approved for a recent Michigan Department of Natural Resources grant. Some residents opposing the parking lot are breathing a sigh of relief at the news of the project's delay.

Christie Bayus, program manager for the DNR, said the grants are competitive and not everyone who applies is awarded a grant.

"We received 57 applications requesting $7.2 million this year," Bayus said.

Among those 57 applicants was the Village of Caledonia, who applied for a grant to fund a proposed parking lot that would be constructed on the property near the Paul Henry Thornapple Trail trailhead at Kinsey Avenue and Main Street. But the village was among 42 other applicants that did not make the grant recipient list.

"The property at Main and Kinsey is owned by the school district, and it would be their decision if they choose to develop that property in the future," said Caledonia Village Council President Jennifer Lindsey. "At this point, the Village Council will need to reevaluate the downtown parking situation and determine how to best meet the needs of the area."

Lindsey said that while she has served on the Caledonia Village Council for the past eight years, parking has consistently been raised as a concern in the downtown area. But that is only one of "several factors" that led the village to consider the

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Members of the Women's Giving Circle of Barry County gathered at Thornapple Kellogg High School on Friday, Dec. 12, to hand over a check for $6,500 to TK's FFA advisor, Alyssa Hamlin. Pictured are (from left) Nancy Goodin, Lyn Briel, Debby McKeown, Hamlin, Kim Norris, Debbie Tomko, Lisa Finkbeiner and Carla Wilson-Neil.
Photo by Molly Macleod

Women's Giving Circle benefits TK FFA program

Molly Macleod
Editor

Thornapple Kellogg High School's Future Farmers of America chapter received a financial boon last week from a local group of women dedicated to supporting area nonprofits.

The Women's Giving Circle of Barry County is a group of community members who are interested in learning about and contributing to local nonprofit organizations. Members meet quarterly and, together, vote on one organization to support. All members then write a personal check for $50 (or $30, if under age 30) to that nonprofit.

In November, members of the circle gathered at First Presbyterian Church in Hastings and voted to support TK's FFA program this quarter. WGC representatives handed over a check for $6,500 last week. With this quarter's donation, the Women's Giving Circle has contributed $348,500 to Barry County nonprofit organizations since it began in 2013.

TK's FFA program was rechartered in 2022. Today, it is run by TKHS agriculture, food and natural resources teacher Alyssa Hamlin. Hamlin said TK boasted a robust FFA program until 1966, when it shut down for unknown reasons. After a few years of building up the club, it currently maintains 30 to 40 active members.

Individuals must be members to vote at Women's Giving Circle meetings; interested women are welcome and encouraged to join at any time. Contact Nancy Goodin at NanGoodin@aol.com for a membership form and guidelines.

The Women's Giving Circle's next quarterly meeting will take place on Wednesday, Feb. 4, at the Hastings Elks Lodge. Social hour begins at 5:30 p.m., followed by the meeting at 6 p.m.

Organizers ask that current and prospective members RSVP to Goodin, NanGoodin@aol.com. Any questions about the organization can be directed to Goodin as well.

Gaines trustees wrap up loose ends at final board meeting of 2025

James Gemmell
Contributing Writer

Members of the Gaines Township Board of Trustees addressed several housekeeping items in their final township board meeting of the year on Monday, Dec. 8.

Among them was a 6-0 vote to approve a zoning ordinance text amendment for electronic changeable message signs. One trustee was absent.

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.

Earlier this year, trustees raised concerns about the time the signs would operate, how much glare the light might produce at night near neighbors' homes, and a type of display called a flyout. That is where a message appears to slide onto the screen in a motion-based animation that can distract drivers.



Gaines Township trustees approved amendments to the water and sewer ordinance, electronic messaging signs and other year-end housekeeping matters at their Dec. 8 board meeting. **Photo by James Gemmell**

Midwest Sign Company had requested a zoning text amendment in June to allow the ECM signs in residential zoning districts for institutional uses by right. But the township's planning commission recommended at that time that the township board reject the request. Instead, commissioners asked the township board to approve a zoning text amendment to allow special use permits for the ECM signs.

After a pair of public hearings earlier this fall, the township board approved the amendment to the zoning ordinance at the Dec. 8 meeting. It will only be for institutional uses in residential areas. Essentially, that applies to churches and private schools.

The second public hearing was needed because a recommendation was added to alter the hours in which the ECMs can be operated. Instead of the old ordinance requirement that the ECM signs be shut off between 11 p.m. and 6 a.m., the new ordinance language stipulates that they must be shut off in residential zoning districts between 10 p.m. and 7 a.m.

The sign ordinance also restricts light emissions from an LED sign to zero candle power past the property lot line.

On another matter, the township trustees voted 6-0 to approve an amendment to the water and sewer ordinance. In the past, if a homeowner's private well or septic system failed, and public water or sewer lines were available to that person's property, the homeowner would be required to connect to the municipal system. And that typically costs thousands of dollars. That was mandated by state health codes to ensure safe drinking water and proper sewage disposal.

But Township Manager Rod Weersing said that has changed under the ordinance amendment.

"Instead of immediately having to hook up," he said, "they could go to the health department first to give them an option to replace the well or septic. The health department makes that determination."

Property owners will now be able to seek a permit from the Kent County Health Department for a new well or septic system. If the permit is granted, property owners will have a choice of whether to connect to the public utility system or install a private well or septic system.

In their final meeting of the year, the trustees also voted unanimously to give the township officers a raise. The clerk, treasurer and supervisor each

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Longtime Yankee Springs Township official celebrates retirement



Yankee Springs Township Supervisor Rob Heethuis presented Alice Jansma, who is retiring from the township after decades of service, with a plaque at the December board meeting. **Courtesy Photo**

The Yankee Springs Township Board of Trustees recognized the service of longtime township official Alice Jansma upon her retirement at the Thursday, Dec. 11, regular meeting.

Jansma is retiring after decades of service to the township. Yankee Springs Township Supervisor Rob Heethuis read a detailed tribute outlining Jansma's involvement since the 1980s, including service as trustee, treasurer, deputy supervisor and deputy treasurer. Jansma played key roles during the installation of the township's sewer and water systems and was deeply involved in township elections, a commitment shared by multiple generations of her family.

"Alice, with her kind, caring and compassionate personality, will be sorely missed in the office," said Yankee Springs Township Zoning Assistant Sandra Marcukaitis. "Her knowledge of the township is irreplaceable, and she will always hold a special place in the hearts of the residents."

Following the presentation, Jansma was awarded a plaque, photographs were taken, and the board invited attendees to stay for cake and refreshments after the meeting. — *KTE*

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DENIED

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parking lot proposal at the Paul Henry trailhead at Kinsey Avenue and Main Street. She said before she joined the Caledonia Village Council and before the trail was extended through the village, a streetscape project was completed on Main Street to add sidewalks.

"As part of that project, approximately 20 parking spaces were removed," Lindsey said. "That reduction is what originally prompted the concept of adding replacement spaces."

She said at first, the original proposal for a lot near the trailhead considered 23 replacement parking spaces, but then it was re-engineered multiple times, with the final direction focusing on a smaller concept of roughly 12-15 spaces.

"I understand that some residents are unhappy with the idea of adding a parking lot on Main Street," Lindsey said. "However, this project has the potential to relieve some pressure on businesses by reducing the number of trail users parking directly in front of storefronts.

"While we cannot control the growth occurring around our community, we can prepare for it, and additional parking will help accommodate the increasing number of trail users who visit and support our area."

Lindsey received notification on Wednesday, Dec. 10, that the Village of Caledonia was not a recipient of the DNR Passport Grant, which would have helped fund the parking lot.

"All applications received are scored using the same criteria and, unfortunately, the Village of Caledonia's final score was below the fundable range," Bayus said. "Applicants that are unsuccessful can reapply in the 2026 grant cycle."

Applications for the next round of Passport grants are due April 1, 2026.

"The council has not convened to discuss future plans," Lindsey said.

The Village of Caledonia's monthly board meetings are recorded and posted two days after the meeting at vimeo.com/caledoniavillage. Mixed opinions about the proposed parking lot can be heard on the recordings.

To name a few, three residents living adjacent to the trailhead who oppose the proposed parking lot are Jenna Wynsma, Todd Wynsma and Sylvia Murphy. They said they are relieved the village's proposed parking lot on property near the Paul Henry Thornapple Trailhead at Kinsey Avenue and Main Street did not receive approval for a 2025 DNR Recreation Passport Grant.

The Wynsmas live directly next to the Paul Henry Trailhead. "Along with our neighbor, Sylvia Murphy, we are the residents most directly impacted by the village's proposed trailhead parking lot," Jenna Wynsma said.

Wynsma voiced concerns of many who attended the public meetings since she, her husband and Murphy started the "Stop the Lot" campaign and initiated a petition drive 10 months ago.

"This lot would replace green space with asphalt, remove a critical tree-lined noise and safety buffer, reduce nearby property values, expose residents to grain elevator dust and introduce safety and noise concerns from a secluded lot adjacent to homes, a bar and a daily student travel route," Wynsma said. "We initiated the petition in late February of this year and reached out to nearby residents and resident trail users who shared concerns about the proposed parking lot.

"On Oct. 13, we submitted our phase two petition containing 658 signatures. To date, the petition has 678 total signatures, comprised of Michigan residents, trail users and visitors," Wynsma said.

Some residents are rallying behind the proposed parking lot.

Unlike Wynsma, Stephon "Spike" Baird said in July that he started a petition for those in favor of the proposed parking lot at the trailhead. So far, he has collected 300 signatures.

For the past two years, Baird has served on the village planning commission. His wife is Lynn Buer-Baird, owner of the Caledonia Hair Co. on Main Street. He said she has owned the business for over 35 years.

"We have both been very active in the community, helping with all community events and trying to keep the heritage of Caledonia alive," Baird said. "Needless to say, we are very involved and love Caledonia."

Baird said the push for more parking in Caledonia will not soon go away.

"So having and showing support via signatures, to village council, township and the school board is positive feedback that they can use along with disapproval in order to decipher what direction to take," he said.



According to Jenna Wynsma, most of the area pictured here could have been turned into a parking lot near the Paul Henry Thornapple Trail trailhead at Kinsey Avenue and Main Street. The proposed lot is currently on hold after the Village of Caledonia failed to receive a grant from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. **Photo by Jenna Wynsma**

Every time a Michigander buys a $14 passport with their annual license plate renewal, local public parks reap the benefits. On Dec. 9, the DNR announced almost $2 million in recreation grants that will fund 15 Michigan public recreation projects across 11 counties.

More information, including the grant recipients, can be found at michigan.gov/dnr/about/newsroom/releases/2025/12/09/dnr-approves-recreation-grants-for-local-parks.

The Recreation Passport is a $14 annual pass required for access to 103 state parks and recreation areas, more than 140 state forest campgrounds, Michigan historic sites, hundreds of boating access sites and thousands of miles of trails.

One-tenth of the proceeds from the $14 Recreation Passport sales are granted to communities across the state for development and improvement of local public recreation facilities, according to the DNR.

AG releases report of alleged abuse within GR Diocese

Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel on Monday, Dec. 15, announced the release of a report concerning allegations of sexual abuse and other sexual misconduct that took place in the Diocese of Grand Rapids, including alleged incidents by priests serving churches in Lake Odessa and Caledonia.

The report was released to acknowledge the reports of abuse from victims and to report the department's findings.

According to an announcement released Monday by the attorney general's office, the document reportedly is a compilation of excerpts from the information obtained from tip lines, victim interviews, police investigations, open-source media, paper documents seized from the Diocese of Grand Rapids, and the electronic documents found on the diocesan computers, as well as reports of allegations disclosed by the diocese.

The list of priests for which there were allegations of sexual miscon-

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Obituaries

Paul Albert Wieringa

Paul Albert Wieringa, age 82, of Middleville, MI, went home to be with his Lord on December 4, 2025. Born on June 3, 1943, in Grand Rapids to Edward and Katherine (Sheehan) Wieringa, Paul was a lifelong resident of Middleville and a steadfast steward of his family's heritage.

Raised on the family farm, Paul grew up with the values of hard work, humility, and quiet strength. He continued helping on the farm for as long as he was able and lived on a portion of that same beloved land throughout his life. On August 2, 1975, he married the love of his life, Sallie (Johnson), and together they built a home filled with devotion, faith, and unwavering support.

Paul is survived by his wife of 50 years, Sallie; his children Jennifer (Scott) Pollmann and their children Gabriel, Libby, Abigail, and Hannah; and Eric Wieringa and his children Audrey, Luci, and Irelynn. He is also survived by his five brothers, three sisters, and many nieces and nephews.

He was preceded in death by his daughter-in-law Nicole Wieringa and granddaughter Finley Wieringa.

A man deeply connected to the outdoors, Paul found joy in primitive skills—crafting arrowheads, shaping longbows, and spending time on primitive camping trips, especially with his daughter. He wholeheartedly supported



his children in 4-H, often working second- and third-shift jobs and returning home only to load up the truck and get them to their sheep sales. His dedication to his family never wavered; giving was never a burden to him, but a calling and a gift.

Paul was a gentle, honest, godly man, active in Journey Church in Caledonia. He lived out his faith with sincerity, guided by the words of Scripture. Psalm 127:4–5—"Like arrows in the hands of a warrior… blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them"—was dear to him, reflecting his pride in his children and grandchildren. Another cherished verse, "Be still and know that I am God," embodied the calm steadiness he carried into every aspect of his life.

Above all, Paul's family was the heart of everything he did. His life goal was simple and profound: to support, love, and lift up his wife and children. In this, he succeeded beyond measure.

Relatives and friends met with Paul's family on Wednesday, Dec. 10, 2025 at Journey Church in Caledonia where a Celebration of Life service took place M.

Memorial contributions may be made to Journey Church in Caledonia.

Please visit www.beelergoresfuneral.com to share a memory or leave a condolence message for Paul's family.

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Spiritual Care Consultants seeking matching fund donations

Molly Macleod
Editor

Spiritual Care Consultants is poised to continue helping area residents in the next generation, according to the nonprofit's executive director.

A Christian organization co-founded by Hastings physician Dr. Troy Carlson, SCC board chairman, and Pastor Gale Kragt, executive director, SCC assists in balancing an individual's mind, body, and spirit by providing free consulting sessions with specially trained consultants, along with the organization's prayer partners.

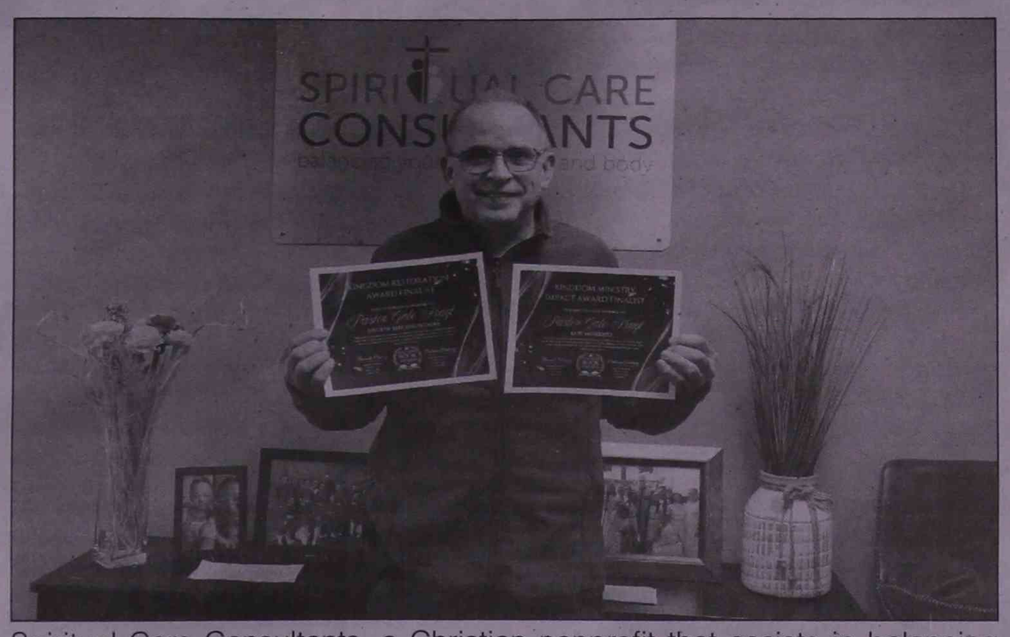
SCC recently announced that it has received a $250,000 matching fund for its endowment at the Barry Community Foundation.

According to the announcement, every dollar donated will be matched up to $250,000 and double the impact of each gift, ensuring SCC's ministry continues to touch lives for generations to come. So far, just over $31,000 has been donated and matched.

"This matching fund is a tremendous blessing," said Kragt, SCC's current executive director and co-founder. "It allows us to secure long-term stability for the ministry and continue serving those who are hurting across Michigan and beyond."

Since 2007, SCC has partnered with local churches, schools, medical professionals and businesses to bring spiritual and emotional care to people from all walks of life.

"We've done over 15,000 sessions — which is a lot of sessions. And do you know what we charge for the sessions? Zero. It's no cost because the donors around us see the value of having a service that doesn't charge," Kragt said. "And we've had an 89% success rate with the hardest of mental health issues."



Spiritual Care Consultants, a Christian nonprofit that assists in balancing individuals' bodies, minds and spirits through free consulting, is looking to its future after receiving a $250,000 matching fund for its endowment. Here, SCC Executive Director Pastor Gale Kragt holds Kingdom Book Awards he received recently. **Photos by Molly Macleod**

Kragt and the staff and volunteers at SCC spend a lot of time and energy tracking the successes of the program. In 2022, the nonprofit held 1,805 sessions with Hastings residents. Of those, 980 sessions served adults; 825 served Hastings children.

From a total of 120 adult clients, 31% reported at least 50% improvement in depression; 29% reported at least 50% improvement in anxiety; 38% reported at least 50% improvement in fear; and 25% reported at least 50% improvement in self-esteem. Children seen at SCC reported similar numbers.

So far this year, SCC has held 477 sessions with children and 1,064 with adults. Most SCC clients hail from Barry County.

"We're really set up well. We have an electronic medical record — that's how we store everything. We're set up well for the future," he said.

Kragt, now 65, is looking forward to the future of SCC. Though he has no plans to retire yet, he is already working with his successor, SCC Children's Ministry Director Vera Yenger.

"I would like to see this organization expand more within Barry County, reach Barry County and the surrounding areas even more. I'm not into planning this in other places," Kragt said.

"We're going to focus on Barry County. We're going to focus on our area — it's what we're going to focus on. Because we don't just affect Barry

See **DONATIONS** on 8

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MEETING

Continued from Page 2

will receive a 4% hike in pay.

The clerk and treasurer's salaries will rise to $96,644 in 2026. For comparison, the treasurer and clerk each earned $78,499 in 2022.

The supervisor's salary will rise to $38,578 on Jan. 1, 2026.

The trustees' meeting per diem will remain the same at $120 per meeting. Their last pay increase was in 2022, when their compensation rose from $110 per meeting to $115.

In other business, the township board set its meeting schedule for 2026 and made committee assignments. The Parks & Trails Committee has been rebranded as the Parks & Trails Open Space Initiatives Committee.

The Gaines trustees also approved a comprehensive update to the township employee handbook. Among the many changes pertained to the use of artificial intelligence.

"As the use of A.I. grows, this will become an essential part of managing its use by township employees," Weersing wrote in a Dec. 2 memo to the township trustees. "A section was also added relating to disciplinary action procedures."

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Yankee Springs trustees appoint deputy treasurer, tackle packed agenda

The Yankee Springs Township Board of Trustees got right to work on a packed agenda Thursday night, Dec. 11, after Supervisor Rob Heethuis called the regular meeting to order at 6 p.m.

Among its action items, the board unanimously approved a four-year contract with the Gun Lake Area Sewer Authority and approved a land division at 790 Courtney Drive that complies with state law and township zoning ordinances. The board also reaffirmed Ryan Craven and Frank Fiala to three-year terms on the Planning Commission and approved the 2026 township meeting schedule.

The board unanimously approved the appointment of Diane Dykgraaf as deputy treasurer, noting that the approval of the appointment was needed for banking records. The November 2025 financial statement and investment report were also reviewed and approved on Thursday.

The Planning Commission reported on its Nov. 20 meeting, which included recognition of longtime volunteer Rich Beukema, a public forum on the township master plan, continued work on the mining ordinance and review of the annual report and capital improvement plan. A special meeting with the township attorney was scheduled for Dec. 12 to continue work on the mining ordinance.

The Zoning Board of Appeals reported denying an appeal related to a short-term rental property, citing township rules that revoke short-term rental permits when a property changes ownership.

Fire Chief Dan Miller said the department responded to nine fire alarms and 24 medical responses in November. He also noted recent training activities and ongoing discussions about cost recovery programs for false alarms and power line calls.

The Clean Water Committee reported on Thursday the completion of a pilot study to improve arsenic removal capacity, with a final report coming soon and the expectation of receiving the second half of a grant in January.

During the acknowledgment of visitors, Barry County Commissioners Catherine Getty and Marsha Bassett provided an update on recent county actions. They reported the purchase of new software for vital records, human resources and finance departments, approval of a memorandum of understanding to establish the Thornapple River Trail from Nashville to the Grand River, and an agreement with United Way to provide certain veterans' services.

And, during public comment on Thursday, a township resident addressed the board, emphasizing the importance of following proper procedures. — *KTE*

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ABUSE

Continued from Page 3

duct against either children or adults since January 1950 for the Diocese of Grand Rapids, which dates back to 1882, was derived from information gleaned from a search warrant that was executed against the Diocese of Grand Rapids in October 2018, as well as from a tipline operated by the attorney general's office since 2018.

There are 51 entries on this list, and of these 51 priests, 38 were ordained or incardinated by the Diocese of Grand Rapids.

"Accountability does not end with criminal prosecution," Nessel said. "Accountability includes transparency, acknowledgement and a commitment to believing in and supporting victims. No matter how much time has passed, survivors deserve to be heard, and by releasing these reports, we hope to honor the courage of victims and ensure their experiences are no longer hidden."

The report contains detailed descriptions of allegations of sexual abuse and other sexual misconduct, including grooming and misuse of authority against minors and adults. The possible criminal prosecution of many of these allegations is barred by the statute of limitations, or because the accused priest is deceased, or for other allegations because the conduct did not violate Michigan law or the person who alleged the sexual abuse did not wish to pursue criminal charges.

In October 2018, more than 40 Michigan State Police troopers, five officers from different law enforcement agencies and 15 special agents from the Department of Attorney General reportedly executed search warrants at Michigan's seven dioceses. As a result, law enforcement officials seized 220 boxes of paper documents and more than 3.5 million digital documents.

"This report is only possible through the victims who came forward and the dedicated work of the Michigan State Police and members of my office as part of the Clergy Abuse Investigation," Nessel added. "I am incredibly grateful for their commitment on these difficult cases."

As a result of the investigation, the state attorney general's office reportedly issued criminal charges in 11 cases throughout the entire state and secured convictions in nine cases, delivering justice for 38 survivors. None of the cases were related to priests ministering in the Diocese of Grand Rapids.

While they did not result in any form of prosecution, the 335-page report includes allegations against at least three priests who served in Lake Odessa and Caledonia.

According to the report, Father Louis Baudone faced "substantiated allegations" from the Diocese of Grand Rapids and bishop accountability site.

The report states that Baudone, who was ordained in 1959, faced two allegations of abuse in 1981 while serving in Muskegon Heights.

The report states that Baudone was also confronted by the parents of an unnamed victim for alleged sexual abuse in 2002 while serving in Lake Odessa. And it details a 2008 complaint against the priest for an alleged incident in 1978 at St. Edward's Church in Lake Odessa.

Baudone was reportedly removed from faculties in 2002 before passing away in May 2024.

The report names two other priests, Father David Eugene LeBlanc and Father Dennis Alan Wagner, who had served at the Holy Family Parish in Caledonia.

LeBlanc, who died in August 2019, was ordained in 1961 by later removed from faculties in January 2007.

According to the report, Wagner was "laicized" in April 2004 after being removed from ministry in May 2002. He was originally ordained in May 1976.

Information related to the investigation into Michigan's various dioceses may be shared via the investigation hotline at 844-324-3374 or by email. Or, for more information on the attorney general's clergy abuse investigation or to submit information, visit the department's website at michigan.gov/ag/initiatives/catholic-church-clergy-abuse.

Victims of sexual abuse and/or assault in need of additional resources are encouraged to contact 855-VOICES4.

Staff writer Dennis Mansfield contributed to this report.

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DONATIONS

Continued from Page 5

— we reach into Grand Rapids, Holland, all around," he said.

Kragt said now is the time to donate to SCC's endowment. Thanks to the matching donation, donors can have their impact doubled.

"It takes care of administrative costs in the budget — in other words, it defrays expenses, things you need. It just ensures that you continue to operate," Kragt said.

While growing the endowment fund helps ensure SCC remains in Barry County, Kragt said the nonprofit is restricted in its uses for those funds.

Kragt said folks are always welcome to donate funds to the nonprofit's general fund, as well. They can go to spiritualcareconsultants.com/ to donate or learn more.

Kragt encouraged individuals to consider SCC as part of their holiday giving.

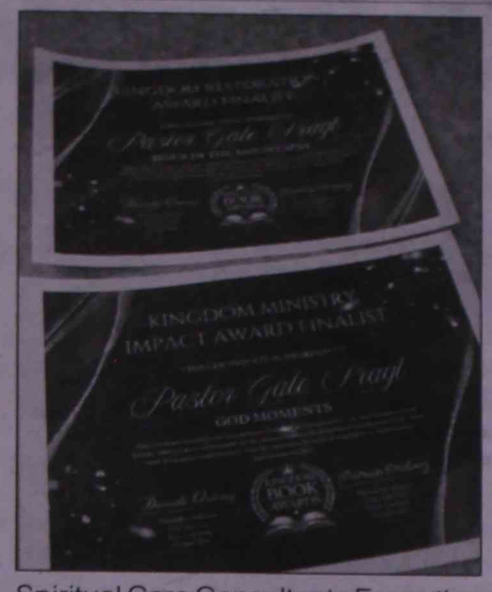
"(It's) because of the impact we're making. It's all about impact — but also, when you give to the endowment, your money stays there. It gives year after year after year after year," Kragt said.



Spiritual Care Consultants Children's Ministry Director Vera Yenger is poised to take the reins from Pastor Gale Kragt when it comes time for him to retire. Her husband, Nathaniel, is a budding children's author. His book, "Hairy and the Hook," along with illustrated flashcards he made are used in the SCC office.

Should SCC eventually dissolve, Kragt said the money in its endowment fund would be transferred to another community nonprofit with a similar mission.

"The reason I would give is the impact that is made in the community," Kragt said. "Because we support almost every area of the community — whether it's churches, businesses, schools — you name it, we support it. We've been part of crises that have not been announced."



Spiritual Care Consultants Executive Director Pastor Gale Kragt was recently honored by the Kingdom Book Awards for two of his books.

Kragt said a contribution to SCC can help shape one's legacy long after they are gone.

In addition to hosting sessions, raising funds and tracking statistics, Kragt and SCC staff can be found on the airwaves. SCC's podcast "Healing Begins Podcast" can be found on all major streaming platforms. Kragt's voice can often be heard on area radio stations, as well.

Kragt is no stranger to the written medium, either. His books can be purchased online at spiritualcareconsultants.com. In addition to Kragt's books, Yenger's husband, Nathaniel Yenger, wrote a children's book titled "Hairy and the Hook."

In the more immediate future, SCC staff and volunteers are preparing for the nonprofit's annual banquet, held at Grace Community Church in Nashville on Tuesday, Jan. 13. Individuals interested in attending the banquet, which will feature personal testimony from SCC clients, can reach out to Kragt at gale@spiritualcareconsultants.com.

To donate and financially assist SCC's mission, persons may mail checks to the Barry Community Foundation, 231 S. Broadway St., Hastings, MI 49058. Checks may be made out to Barry Community Foundation, with Fund #165 – Spiritual Care Consultants in the memo line.

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MIDDLEVILLE TOPS 546

The Dec. 15 meeting opened with roll call and the secretary's report. There are now three fish in the Fishbowl.

Maryellen's program was from Nov/Dec TOPS magazine titled "Feeling SAD? Seasonal Affective Disorder." SAD is a clinical depression that comes with changing seasons. It can be in the winter or summer. It usually goes away when the season changes. A psychologist says it happens due to genetics, brain chemistry or a biological clock out of phase. Also, a family history of depression, bipolar disorder, or pre-existing mental illness can increase the likelihood of being affected by SAD. Women experience it more than men. The further you are away from the equator, the higher the risk of experiencing SAD. Symptoms are like those of depression: persistent sad or empty mood, feelings of hopelessness, irritability and worthlessness, loss of interest, decreased energy, physical pain, sleeping too much or too little, changing appetites, lack of concentration or thoughts of death or suicide. Treatments include talk therapy (Cognitive Behavioral Therapy), light therapy, or anti-depressant medication.

Virginia won the Ha-Ha Box.

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.

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INCREASE:
A ROAD MAP TO FINANCIAL HEALTH

Christmas and credit cards


Zach Santmier

Over the last several weeks, we've been walking through what I call the "Financial Fuel Gauge"—eight practical markers that help you build a strong financial foundation before you chase the big dreams on your heart. Because if your tank is empty, it doesn't matter how nice the destination is—you're not getting there.

We started with Step 1: Spend Less than You Make, where money stops leaking out of your account, and you begin telling your money where to go instead of it just flying the coop. Then we moved to Step Two: Give 10%, which sets the tone for the other 90% and reminds us that money is a tool, not a master. From there we hit Step 3: Your New Zero – a buffer in your checking account so you never see a real zero again.

Last week, we began discussing Step 4: Consumer Debt. We realized debt isn't right or wrong in and of itself, but we need to understand it so that we don't become burdened by unwise debt.

I want you to think back to an image we've used last week—the hole and the dirt. Every time you use a credit card to buy something you didn't plan for, every time you use store credit, finance Christmas gifts, or take out a personal loan with no real asset behind it, you're digging a hole. And the problem isn't just the hole—it's that there's no dirt in sight to fill it back in.

When I walk through neighborhoods across America, I see yards full of holes and no piles of dirt anywhere. That's consumer debt. And here's what makes it exhausting: Every extra dollar you make just goes toward buying more dirt to fill the hole you already dug. No progress. No momentum. Just fatigue.

Consumer debt has robbed our country of financial prosperity and keeps families trapped in a vicious paycheck-to-paycheck cycle. And while I understand that times can be tight, hear me clearly—you are not captive to your paycheck, but you do need to spend less than you make.

Don't like it? No problem! You are working on increasing your income. It may take time, yes—but wealth gained bit by bit lasts. Don't speed up your lifestyle because your neighbor bought a boat before you did. Build slowly. One step at a time. Because when you do, you'll look back one day and realize you're standing in a mansion—and there are no holes in sight.

If you've already dug a hole—credit cards, personal loans, consumer debt—it's time to get to work filling it in. Once you have one month of expenses saved, every extra dollar in your budget goes toward paying off that consumer debt.

This is also the phase where you must ratchet up your income. You dug the hole. Now it's time to fill it. And here's the secret most people miss: The dirt you need may only be one or two raises away. It may be just that one promotion around the corner. The real question is—what value do you need to create to earn that income?

If you want a side job, great. But your first move shouldn't be Uber Eats. Your first move should be to increase the value of the hours you already work. Value first. Hours second.

I've shared before that I do use a credit card—but every expense is planned, budgeted and paid off in full every month. Emergencies come from savings, not plastic.

If you're currently carrying a balance, I recommend being consumer-debt free for one full year before touching another credit card. You need new habits. And if there's even a chance you'll fall back into debt, no travel points in the world are worth digging another hole.

Today, there's three action steps:

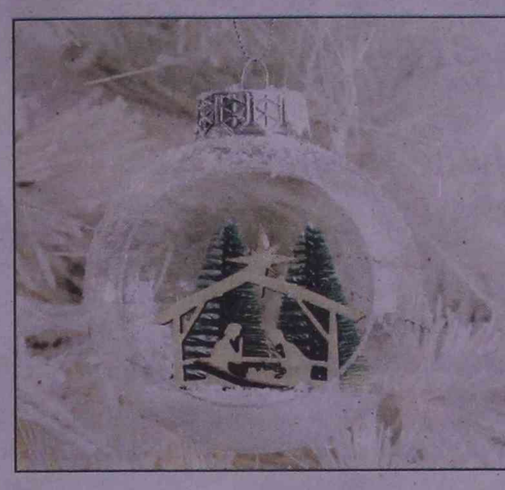
Step 1 – How much consumer debt do you have? Tally it up and write it down. It's time to start filling in that hole with any leftover money

Step 2 – Since it's Christmas time, don't dig a bigger hole! Just because you already have a hole doesn't mean you should keep digging. Put the shovel down and get creative this holiday season.

Step 3 – have a conversation with your employer and ask them how you can add value to the business and how you can get your next raise.

As always, if you need to get caught up or learn more about each step, visit trumbleagency.com/increase, where you'll find a copy of all of these articles along with additional resources.

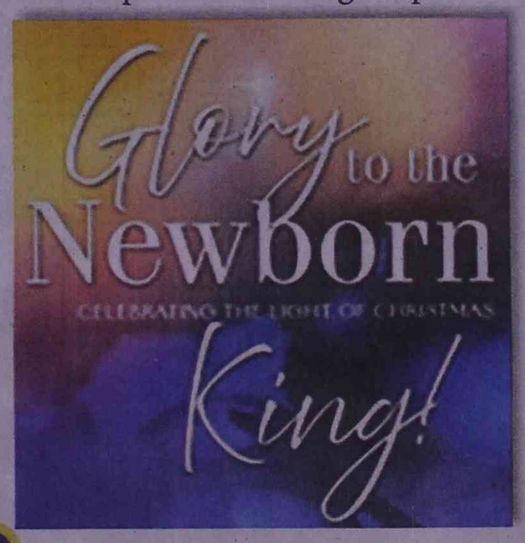
Zach Santmier is the owner of Trumble Agency, Inc. and the author of the personal financial course, Increase. He focuses on helping families escape paycheck-to-paycheck living so they can freely pursue their ideal future.


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Scots head into showcase showdown with Brighton on win streak

Brett Bremer
Sports Editor

The Fighting Scots have won four in a row to improve their record to 8-3 overall this winter.

The Caledonia varsity hockey team knocked off OK Conference Rue Division foe Grand Rapids Christian 6-0 Wednesday at the Eagles Ice Center to stay perfect in the conference at 3-0.

The Fighting Scots are scheduled to head to Munn Ice Arena in East Lansing today, Dec. 20, to take on state powerhouse Brighton in the Howell Showcase. Brighton is currently ranked third in the state in Division 1 while the Caledonia squad is slotted in ninth in Division 2.

The Scots return to conference action at Patterson Ice Center Monday, Dec. 22, taking on Grand Rapids Catholic Central.

That conference win over GR Christian came on the heels of a 5-2 win over Marysville at Patterson Ice Center last Friday, Dec. 12.

The Scots built their lead against Marysville with two goals in the opening period and three more in the second.

Captain Harmon Esch scored two goals, and Ty Lewandowski, Ethan Sova and Landen Moore each scored once for the Scots. Assists came from Sova, Drew Nichols and Evan Moore. Sam Hoag earned the win in net.

Caledonia had a 2-0 lead before the Vikings managed a power play goal with ten seconds left in the first period from Luke Thick.

Lewandowski notched the opening goal ten minutes into the contest off an assist from Nichols. Esch made it 2-0 with a goal off a Sova assist less than three minutes later.

The lead swelled to 5-1 before the Vikings got a goal from Collin Finnie late in the second period.

Sova and Landen Moore scored unassisted goals in the first seven minutes of the second period, with Sova's coming on a power play. Esch's second goal was a short-handed goal assisted by Evan Moore.

TK ladies keep pace with Wolves, but can't overtake them

Brett Bremer
Sports Editor

The Trojans circled this one as a litmus test for where they stack up in the OK Gold Conference.

They didn't get a victory, but TK head coach Brandi James was pretty pleased with her team's efforts in a 50-45 loss to visiting Wyoming in the first conference ballgame of the season Tuesday in Middleville.

TK had a 23-22 lead at the half. The Wolves pulled in front with a 15-10 third quarter run. The Trojans just couldn't quite claw back in front late in the ballgame.

The TK ladies fell to 1-2 with the loss while the Wolves moved their re-

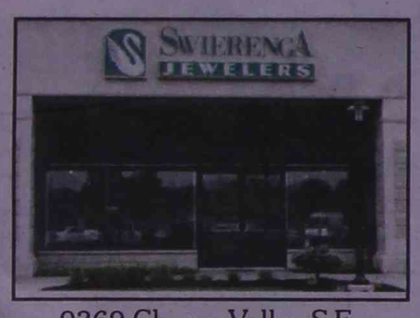
See **LADIES** on 17

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Young group taking over for Lady Scots skiing

Brett Bremer
Sports Editor

The Fighting Scots were really looking forward to their first on snow practices at Crystal Mountain earlier this month.

The Caledonia varsity girls' ski team has some spots open in its scoring group, and figuring out who will best fill those varsity racing spots in the slalom and giant slalom events throughout the winter will be something of a process.

"Eight skiers graduated from our girls' team last year and we are working to fill several places in our runner in order," head coach Duane Petrosky said. "We are excited about the potential from our returning skiers and from our new additions."

The group that is returning for the Fighting Scots includes junior Kylee Zimmer who was an all-conference skier in the Lake Michigan Ski Conference (LMSC) a season ago. The junior trio of Ada Decker, Madison Reynolds and Olivia Vanlaan is back as well.

"We have four freshmen this year, that raced with our middle school team, and believe that a few of them will be contributors right away," Petrosky said. "Ellie Radel and Liv Yonker both had GS times last winter that will put them in a position to help the team and our other freshmen (Emily Hilton and Marin Dentler) have a ton of potential which could allow them to step up to help the team also."

See **SKIING** on 14



Junior Kylee Zimmerer is the one returning all-conference skier back for the Caledonia varsity girls' ski team this winter after the program lost eight seniors to graduation last spring. **Photo provided**

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Great group back as CHS boys try and chase down Glen Lake in LMSC

Brett Bremer
Sports Editor

The Fighting Scots closed the 2024-25 season on the slopes with a victory and are hoping to keep up the pace during the 2025-26 season.

The Caledonia varsity boys' ski team has eight returning skiers who were all-conference honorees in the Lake Michigan Ski Conference (LMSC) a season ago. That CHS team last year placed second in the conference, and just missed qualifying for the state finals as a team with a fourth-place finish at its MHSAA Division 2 Regional meet.

"We finished the season last year winning the Caledonia Invitational beating teams that qualified for the state finals and that we had not beat the rest of the season," Caledonia head coach Duane Petrosky said. "The team is going to try to build on that momentum to improve our finishes at our races this season. We are striving to win the LMSC and place in the top three at regionals, this season. We fell short of both last year and think the goals are achievable this season."

This is the Fighting Scots' third season heading north to compete in the LMSC

The eight returning all-conference skiers for the Fighting Scot team are Peter Calhoun, Gavin Dean, James Diegel, Derick Prichard, Aidan Brown, James Prichard, Justin Harper and Jake Potgeter. Coach Petrosky said he is also excited for the addition of Jackson Otto, a junior with a lot of racing experience already. Derick Prichard, Diegel, Calhoun and Dean are the seniors among that group.

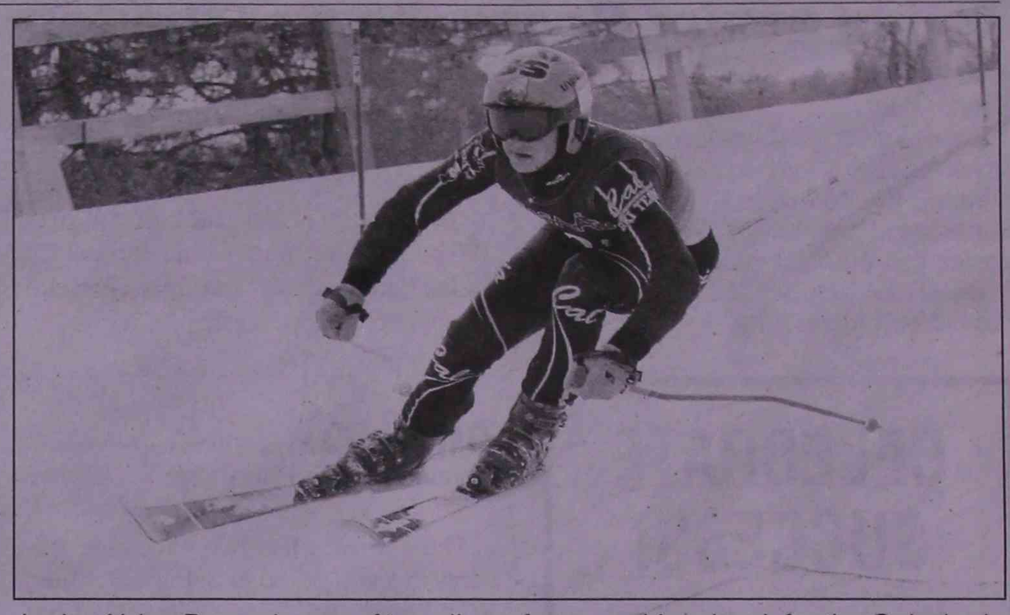
Brown, a junior, had the top conference finish of any of the returnees from a year ago placing fifth in the final conference tally. James Prichard, also a junior, and sophomore Jake Potgeter also both finished top ten in the conference's individual standings.

"Our strength is our depth," Petrosky said. "We believe that we have about ten skiers that could earn all-conference honors this season and these guys are extremely dedicated. Several attended summer camps at Mount Hood and we had eight skiers attend Thanksgiving camps this year, which is the most our team has ever had."

It's more than just those guys making a mark and pushing the program to be its best.

"We also believe that our senior leadership is a huge asset for this year's team," Petrosky said. "We have seven outstanding seniors that all lead in their own way. Four of our seniors have been all-conference, but all seven provide great examples and help lead the team. Although Brennan Donnelly, Max Doll and Rydik Wrubel haven't received as

See **CHASE** on 16



Junior Aidan Brown is one of ten all-conference skiers back for the Caledonia varsity boys' ski team this winter. He finished fifth in the Lake Michigan Ski Conference's individual standings as a sophomore. **File photo by Brett Bremer**

Caledonia boys share the load to boost record back over .500

Brett Bremer
Sports Editor

The Caledonia varsity boys' basketball team got off the schneid with back-to-back wins over Lowell and Carrollton to move its record to 3-2 overall this season.

The Fighting Scots knocked off visiting Carrollton 68-32 Tuesday night, and they were set to host Thornapple Kellogg Thursday, Dec. 18, for the final ballgame before the start of the holiday break.

Junior guard Aaron Collins had a team-high 12 points to go with five rebounds and two assists in the win over Carrollton.

A group of 11 different Fighting Scots scored in the ballgame. Jaeger Tidey had eight points, Bryce Backus nine, Luke Witvoet seven and Connor Bloemers and Braydon Nemmers had six points apiece.

Lincoln Senti had a team-high nine rebounds to go with four points, three assists and a steal. Backus chipped in six rebounds and Ben Geerdes had five points and seven rebounds. Luke Witvoet matched Senti's team-high three assists.

In an 82-60 win at Lowell last Friday, Dec. 12, freshman Luca Galardi led the Scots with 19 points, six rebounds, four assists and a steal. He was one of three Scots in double-figures. Collins had 13 points and Nemmers had 11. Witvoet had eight points and Senti eight.

Bloemers and Witvoet matched Galardi's four assists. Nemmers, Backus, Senti and Bloemers had five rebounds each, and Senti had four of the Scots' 12 steals.

Caledonia will be back in action Saturday, Dec. 27, when it heads to Van Andel Arena in Grand Rapids to face Grandville. The CHS boys are slated to tip-off at 3 p.m. following a 1 p.m. game between the Caledonia and Grandville girls.

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Trojan senior Bossenberger the top 165-pounder at Kent County Classic

Brett Bremer
Sports Editor

Thornapple Kellogg senior Blake Bossenberger is 11-1 on the season after winning the 165-pound championship Saturday at the Kent County Classic hosted by East Kentwood High School.

Bossenberger needed less than a minute to pin his first three foes and get into the championship match where he pinned Rockford's Ares Porter in 1 minute 42 seconds.

The TK team also had Griffin Grummet at 157 pounds and Jackson Smith at 190 both placed third. Cam Peter at 175, Dylan Pauline at 150 and Gabe Gosselin at 144 each placed sixth.

The TK team was sixth overall on the day with 114.5 points at the 23-team tournament. Rockford took the day's championship with 211.5 points. Byron Center was second with 198.

TK followed up that performance by getting its first OK Gold Conference win of the season Wednesday in a set of OK Gold/Black duals at Spring Lake. The TK team outscored Wyoming 77-0 with wins from Ethan Strait, Gabe Gosselin, Max Knowles, Griffin Grummet, Bossenberger, Peter, Smith, Brody Hammer, Abram Dutcher, Bryson Meyering, Garrett Grummet, Daniel Shepherd, Diego Rodas and Carson Gibson.

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SKIING

Continued from Page 12

The ski team has two exchange students this winter too in Salome Rouhier, from France, and Leonie Floetotto, from Germany. Rouhier comes in with some ski racing experience.

Petroskey said he and his coaches are looking forward to seeing those two ski so they can figure out where they will fit into our running order for the season.

Overall, he said determination is the backbone of this girls' squad.

"This group really is focused on improvement on both an individual performance and as a team," Petrosky said. "There are no seniors this year, except exchange students, so my junior class has really jumped in to make sure that everything runs smoothly. All four of my juniors are focused on making this year their best season.

"Last year as sophomores, all of our girls really improved. They really dropped their times and began to really grow as racers. The improvement in the course and their dedication in the weight room, and at camps is setting this team up for some exciting racing this season."

The first race of the season is an LMSC contest at Crystal Mountain Jan. 7. The Scots have been second in the three-team conference past two seasons. Coach Petroskey said he thinks the youngsters in the program are really building a foundation that will get the varsity chasing championships in the coming years.

Glen Lake has all its key skiers back from its conference championship team from a year ago, and overtaking that Glen Lake program will never be easy.

There are conference races on Wednesdays throughout January, and the conference finale is set for Feb. 17.

Caledonia's first invitational competition of the season will be at the Grand Haven Invitational Jan. 9 at Crystal Mountain. Regionals will be at Caberfae Peaks this season Feb. 9.

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CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF CALEDONIA
KENT COUNTY, MICHIGAN

PUBLIC NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Planning Commission of the Charter Township of Caledonia will hold a public hearing on January 5, 2026 at 7:00 p.m., at the Caledonia Township Hall, 8196 Broadmoor SE, Caledonia, MI 49316. The public hearing is to receive comments regarding the application of Michael Brann for a Special Land Use for a drive through window in a strip commercial building at 6675 Broadmoor, Parcel: 41-23-06-451-038.

All interested persons may attend the public hearing and comment on the proposed request.

Written comments concerning the request may be submitted to the Township office, at the above-stated address, up to the time of the public hearing.

Dated: December 15, 2025

PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE
CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF CALEDONIA

8196 Broadmoor Ave. SE
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CALEDONIA TOWNSHIP

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CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF CALEDONIA
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
2026 MEETING SCHEDULE

Regularly scheduled meeting dates of the Charter Township of Caledonia Board of Trustees for 2026 are indicated below. All meetings will be held beginning at 7:00 p.m. at the Caledonia Township Hall, 8196 Broadmoor Ave SE, Caledonia, Michigan.

NOTE: Individuals with disabilities may request auxiliary aids and services for the meeting by contacting the Township Clerk at 616.891.0070.

Meeting Dates
January 7, 2026, January 21, 2026, February 4, 2026, February 18, 2026
March 4, 2026, March 18, 2026, April 1, 2026, April 15, 2026,
May 6, 2026, May 20, 2026, June 3, 2026, June 17, 2026, July 15, 2026,
August 19, 2026, September 2, 2026, September 16, 2026,
October 7, 2026, October 21, 2026, November 18, 2026,
December 2, 2026, December 16, 2026

Joni Henry, Clerk

Wyoming bests Trojan boys in OK Gold Conference opener

Brett Bremer
Sports Editor

It has been a rough stretch to close out 2025 for the Thornapple Kellogg varsity boys' basketball team.

The Trojans were downed 85-43 in their OK Gold Conference opener against visiting Wyoming in Middleville Tuesday, Dec. 16, after back-to-back losses against Forest Hills Central and Whitehall to close out last week Thursday and Friday.

The three defeats dropped TK's overall record to 2-4 for the season.

TK had a 7-5 lead in the first quarter against the visiting Wolves Tuesday afternoon, but the Trojans left the Wolves a little too much space early on and an 11-0 run put Wyoming in front 16-7 all of a sudden.

Trojan guard Andrew Johnson pulled down a defensive rebound and beat the Wolves to the basket in the other direction to finally break the skid, but much of the night it was the Wolves getting down the floor first. They led 29-13 late in the first quarter before TK senior guard Zay Boafo drilled a double-clutch three while jumping across the half-court stripe at the buzzer to cut into that lead a little.

TK was within 11 points early in the second quarter, but that was as close as the Trojans would get the rest of the way.

Wyoming got a buzzer-beating long three of its own at the end of the second quarter to go into the half up 53-22.

That string of three-consecutive defeats for TK started at home with a 72-51 loss to visiting Forest Hills Central (4-1) last Thursday, Dec. 11.

A little surge at the end of the first half boosted the Ranger lead to ten points for the first time, and another run early in the third quarter put the Rangers comfortably in control. TK had a tough time with the Rangers' combination of the ability to penetrate and to knock down outside shots.

Ranger freshman guard Kellen Paul feasted on that burying six 3-pointers and finishing with a game-high 23 points. He hit two back-to-back to bump a nine-point Ranger lead to 15 points in the first two minutes of the second half. Junior Will Schepel hit three 3-pointers and finished with 15 points for the Rangers, and senior forward Matt Sexton closed the night with 16 points.

Ben Lloyd led TK's attack with 20 points. Junior Braylon Rae had ten points and junior Andrew Johnson finished with nine.

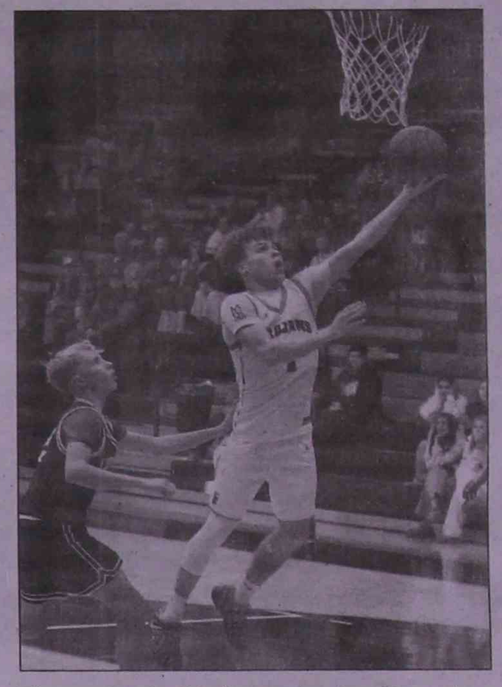
TK was back at it Friday, Dec. 12, making the trip to Whitehall (2-3) where the Vikings scored a 64-52 win.

The Trojans were set to close out the 2025 portion of the schedule Thursday, Dec. 18, at Caledonia. They return to action Jan. 3 taking on Holt at the Cornerstone University Holiday Showcase in Grand Rapids. Game time is set for 7 p.m.

OK Gold Conference play resumes Jan. 6 when TK plays host to Northview.



Thornapple Kellogg senior guard Tyler Lloyd flies towards the rim to get a shot up between Forest Hills Central defenders Blake Teliczan (4) and Matt Sexton (back) during the second half of their nonconference contest in Middleville Thursday, Dec. 11. **Photos by Brett Bremer**



Thornapple Kellogg junior Brayden Lahaie races to the rim ahead of Forest Hills Central freshman guard Kellen Paul during their nonconference ballgame in Middleville Thursday, Dec. 11.

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CALEDONIA TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
2026 SUBMITTAL DEADLINES

*****Submittal deadline is by 10am on the day listed. All materials shall be complete and submitted by the deadline, including fee, escrow and plans. Plans shall be folded, collated, and stapled*****

Proposed Meeting Date	Submittal Deadline (by 10am)
January 5	December 15
January 19 (No Meeting/Holiday)	---
February 2	January 5
February 16	January 19
March 2	February 2
March 16	February 16
April 6 (No Meeting/Holiday)	---
April 20	March 16
May 4	March 30
May 18	April 20
June 1	May 4
June 15	May 18
July 6 (No Meeting/Holiday)	---
July 20	June 15
August 3 (No Meeting/Election)	---
August 17	July 20
September 7 (No Meeting/Holiday)	---
September 21	August 17
October 5	September 3
October 19	September 21
November 2 (No Meeting/Election)	---
November 16	October 19
December 7	November 2
December 21 (No Meeting/Holiday)	---

(Note: The posted schedule is for informational purposes only and does not bind the Planning Commission. Some submittals may require additional review and public notice.)

TK knocks off last season's top teams to win Kent County title

Brett Bremer
Sports Editor

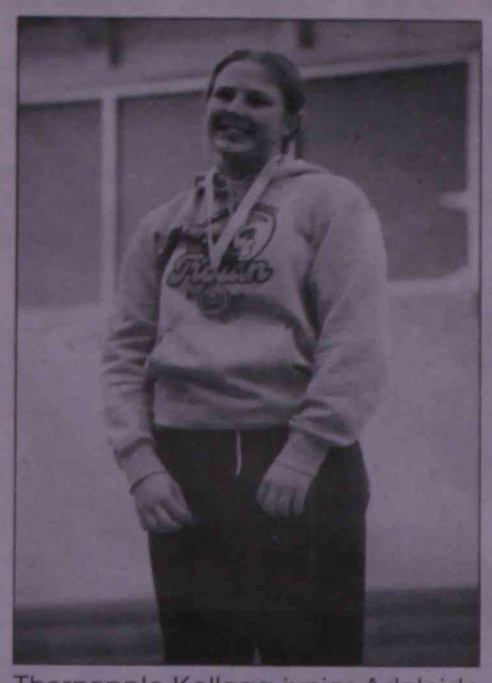
The Thornapple Kellogg varsity girls' wrestling team took the championship Saturday at East Kentwood High School in the annual Kent County Championship beating out the teams that went 1-2 at the state finals last March.

TK outscored Lowell 161-145.5 at the top of the day's standings. Lowell had three individual champions and TK had two. Nobody matched TK's eight top-six finishes. Grand Haven was third with 143 points.

Grand Haven won the MHSAA's first girls' team championship last March, beating out Lowell by ten points at the top of the standings at Ford Field. The TK team was 11th at those state finals.

The Trojan team got individual championships from Adelaide Holderman at 170 pounds and Rylee Alberts at 135 pounds at East Kentwood Saturday.

Holderman, who placed fourth at 170 pounds at the MHSAA Individual State Finals a year ago, is the lone returning state qualifier from last year for the Trojans. Alberts, now a junior, was a state qualifier as a freshman two years ago.



Thornapple Kellogg junior Adelaide Holderman is on the medal stand after winning the 170-pound championship at the Kent County Championships hosted by East Kentwood High School Saturday. **Photos provided**



The Thornapple Kellogg varsity girls' wrestling team accepts its trophy after winning the Kent County Championships at East Kentwood High School Saturday. Last year's state runner-up team from Lowell was second and last year's state champs from Grand Haven were third behind the Trojans.

TK's Briella Dykstra at 115 pounds, Madison Chipman at 100 both placed third, and Amelia Barringer at 115 pounds and Kayla Price at 130 were both fourth. Their team also had Taylor Pena fifth at 170 pounds and Maggie McKeown sixth at 105 pounds.

Holderman opened her day with a technical fall and a pin before beating West Ottawa's Le'Anna Zavala 10-2 in the 170-pound championship match.

Alberts pinned all four of her foes. She needed less than a minute for the win in each of the first three rounds. She stuck North Muskegon's Kelsie Vandervelde 1:31 into the 135-pound final.

In all TK had 14 girls competing at the 32-team tournament. Karsyn Boersma, Morgan Boersma, Addison Barringer and Jaycee Teunessen also had victories throughout the course of the day for the Trojans.

West Ottawa was fourth on the day with 86.5 points ahead of Fruitport 85, Rockford 81, Forest Hills Eastern 75, Northview 74, Kelloggsville 72 and Forest Hills Central 65 in the top ten.

Lowell's Lana Sheehan won the 115-pound weight class and the Red Arrows had Veronica Tapia win at 105 pounds and Tatianna Castillo at 110.

Grand Haven got championships from Daniella Ramirez at 190 pounds and Megan Brower at 130.



CHASE

Continued from Page 13

much recognition in the press, they are outstanding young men and great examples for Caledonia's younger skiers."

While he likes his team's experience level, it's not quite where some of the other top teams the Scots face throughout the season is at. Glen Lake won the LMSC a year ago and has all of its starters back which will force the Scots to be at their best every time they're on the hill if they want to jump up into the top spot.

"We ski against some of the best teams in the state each winter and our biggest challenge is our experience level compared to some of the other teams," Petrosky said. "Most of our guys started racing as seventh graders, while most of our competition began racing at six to seven years old. We are proud of how hard our skiers work to overcome the gap in experience, by the time our kids are juniors it is often hard to tell they started later than the skiers they race against."

The season of racing starts with a LMSC contest Jan. 7 at Crystal Mountain.. Conference races continue on Wednesdays through January with a conference final set for Feb. 17. The first invitational on the slate for the Scots is the Grand Haven Invitational at Crystal Mountain Jan. 9.

The Scots will be at Caberfae Peaks for their MHSAA Division 2 Regional this season Feb. 9.

TK ladies outcheer Plainwell on new season's first night

Brett Bremer
Sports Editor

Was it perfect? Not quite.

Could it have been a better first night of competition for the Thornapple Kellogg varsity competitive cheer team? Not really.

The host Trojans opened the 2025-26 season by winning the Competitive Cheer Coaches Association of Michigan Invitational in Middleville Friday.

The stands were packed with orange and black with TK middle school and JV teams competing too. The TK ladies took the lead with a reworked round one routine. They stayed right with Plainwell in round two by performing as tough a routine as is possible. In round three, the Trojans returned to a full complement of four stunt groups on the mat, after performing with three a season ago, and blew everyone away to win the day's championship.

TK outscored runner-up Plainwell 734.7 to 721.2 overall at the meet with nine varsity teams. The win was especially sweet for the TK Trojans being that the Plainwell Trojans placed fifth at the MHSAA Division 2 Competitive Cheer Finals as year ago, scoring as the top team from the west side of the state. Plainwell won district and regional titles on its way to the 2025 Finals, finishing ahead of the TK ladies at both those meets last February.

"In my opinion in year's past and with a lot of teams, and I'm sure we'll do it this year, you go out there and you're so worried about perfection that you lose sight of why you're there and why you're doing it," TK head coach Madelynn Lula said. "They just had that at the forefront of their mind. I am here because I love what I am doing. I love the people I am doing it with. And I love the people I am doing it for. If we shoot for the stars and land on the moon, great. And that is exactly what they did."

The Trojans are shooting to get back to the state finals after coming up short of that goal last season, and with an experienced team and a solid group of newcomers Lula thought it was time to do something a little different. Rather than getting help from outside the program for round one choreography this season, Lula took on the task herself.

"I just felt like we were at a place where we were getting bored of the style that TK had been doing for a really long time and I wanted something new and exciting to engage the athletes," Lula said.



The Thornapple Kellogg varsity competitive cheer team celebrates a victory in the CCCAM Invitational at Thornapple Kellogg High School in Middleville Friday, Dec. 12. **Photo provided**

"And so when they came off the mat in round one, there was so much 'did you see everybody's faces?' Everybody was shocked. Everybody loved it, and we got a lot of compliments on that, which hopefully will help us stand apart for the rest of the year."

She said that a lot of teams either take a "dance" style or a "textbook" style in round one. TK has leaned into the textbook approach most of the time, and scored well, but wanted to put a more memorable impression out there this season.

"It was so it was so cool … when we walked out of the building we actually got the compliment from somebody saying you're gonna be the choreography people are talking about all year just because it's different. It's something different," Lula said. "We kind of mesh the really unique and creative, innovative with the textbook motions to make our own unique TK style this year."

There was also the added benefit of Lula knowing her cheerleaders so well that she could really hone the choreography to their talents rather than trying to squeeze their talents into the choreography.

TK had the top score of round one with 225.3 points. Plainwell was second at 222.8 and Forest Hills Northern wasn't far behind with a score of 219.7.

Tk and Plainwell pulled away from the pack in round two. Plainwell had a round two score of 216.9 and TK put up a score of 213.9 – so Plainwell led by half a point entering round three.

TK threw back handsprings, back walkovers and back tucks as their big gymnastics skills in round two, and Lula said it was the first time in a couple seasons that her team has performed a round two with a maximum degree of difficulty.

"Everybody hit, so they knew that even though there were imperfections they did their job and stayed on their feet," Lula said.

The orange and black Trojans secured the win with a round three score of 295.5 (which included an eight-point deduction.) Plainwell had a score of 281.5 (which also included an eight-point deduction in the round.)

"Yes it is early in the season. Yes there were mistakes," Lula said. "We know exactly where we can improve, but to go out there and hit a perfect round three, or our version of perfect in December anyways, this early in the game was huge for their confidence."

Forest Hills Northern was third overall on the day with a score of 678.74. The Huskies had a score of 196.64 in round two and 262.4 in round three. Portage Central was fourth overall with a total of 667 points ahead of Coopersville 639.9, Newaygo 533.94, Dowagiac 477.4, South Haven 450.7 and Portage Northern 328.

LADIES

Continued from Page 11

cord to 4-0. The Trojans were set to host Caledonia for a nonconference ballgame Thursday, Dec. 18.

The Trojans were also bested by five last Friday, Dec. 12, at Forest Hills Central. The Rangers scored a 40-35 win.

TK will be a part of the Cornerstone University Holiday Classic after Christmas. The Trojans face Lowell at 11:30 a.m. Dec. 26 and will take on Kenowa Hills at 1:30 p.m. Dec. 29.

OK Gold Conference play resumes for TK after the holiday break at Northview, Jan. 6.

Village of Middleville
COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

The minutes of the November 25, 2025 Regular Council Meeting, that were approved on December 16, 2025, are posted at the Village Hall at 100 E Main Street and on the website at www.villageofmiddleville.org.

Thrilling late wins for Scots as they take three titles at Kent Co. tourney

Brett Bremer
Sports Editor

Tied 0-0 with 2025 state medalist Ayden Ringer, a senior from Grand Rapids Catholic Central, Caledonia sophomore Max Schnurstein took what he could get to get a 3-0 sudden victory in overtime Saturday.

Ringer, who was fifth in Division 3's 106-pound weight class, shot in on Schnurstein in their 120-pound semifinal match at the Kent County Classic hosted by East Kentwood High School. Schnurstein sprawled, got a cross face in and worked his way around to hook an ankle for a take down that gave him a 3-0 victory.

Schnurstein went on to earn a 4-3 win over Comstock Park's Peyton Farrell in the championship match to finish as one of three Caledonia champions on the day. He was joined at the top of the medal stand by 285-pounder Ky Spencer and 175-pounder Cayden Nostrant.

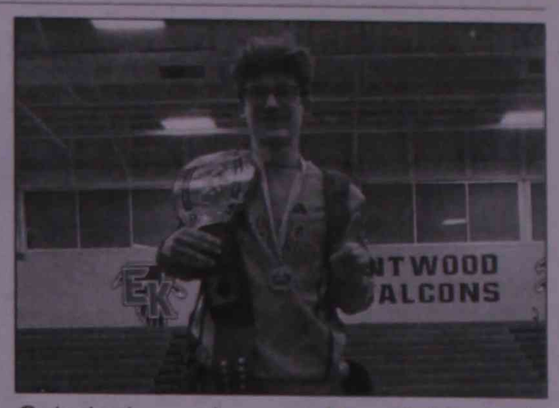
The Caledonia team was fourth overall in a field of 24 teams from around Kent County.

"I could not be more proud of Max how he is mentally," Caledonia head coach Shawn Veitch said. "Mentally he has gotten so much stronger in the past year. A big piece I have been talking to him about is where your mind goes your body will follow. You have to mentally do it."

"The team went nuts for him too," Veitch said of the semifinal win.

The CHS coach was pretty pleased with the enthusiasm of his team throughout the day.

"Sometimes at big individual tournaments you can see that drift," Veitch said. "You're not with the team as much , it's all individual, the day is going long. I was so pleased with our team continuity. They stayed together all day. The officials probably hated us because they had to keep telling us only two in the corner. That to me is a blessing. We're gelling as a team and wrestling more for our team than ourselves."



Caledonia sophomore Max Schnurstein celebrates his championship in the 120-pound weight class at the Kent County Classic hosted by East Kentwood Saturday, Dec. 13. He was one of three Caledonia champs on the day. **Photo provided**

There was a lot to cheer about.

Nostrant opened with a pin, scored a technical fall against Thornapple Kellogg's Camden Peter in the quarterfinals, outscored Comstock Park's Deegan Pike 10-3 in the semi's and then beat out Kent City's Jackson Carr 12-5 in the championship match at 175. Veitch best described Nostrant's day as "dominant."

"He is just on a different level right now," Veitch said.

Spencer won at 285 pounds by outscoring Rockford's Alex Stewart 4-3 in the championship match after notching three pins to open the day. That final was about as exciting as Schnurstein's semifinal win. Veitch gave Spencer some freedom to choose his position at the start of the second period tied 0-0 with Stewart. Spencer chose the top position, where the coach would certainly lean to his wrestler opening that period in the bottom position to get the first point of the match with an escape. Stewart got that escape after about a minute on the bottom.

Stalling calls flew both ways through the rest of the second period and the start of the third period. Stewart chose the bottom position to start that third period. Eventually a stalling call on Stewart tied the match at 1-1 and then another the other way put Stewart back up 2-1.

The two went out of bounds with nine seconds to go and Stewart still up one. Spencer shot in on the restart and then completed a double-leg take down for the win as time ran out.

The Scots' Escher Reeder was the runner-up at 1267 pounds. The Caledonia team also had Xavier Stewart at 215 pounds and Robert Restau at 144 place third. Ben Moss at 150 pounds and Koleson Reeder at 157 both finished fifth at their weight class.

Veitch said he took very different approaches with Moss and Reeder as they tried to work their way through the consolation bracket after early losses. He said he knew Moss was right on the edge of making great things happen. "He just had to find

See next page

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Gars race to championship at Williamston Invitational

Brett Bremer
Sports Editor

The Grand Rapids Gars varsity boys' swim team took the championship Saturday at the four-team Williamston Invitational.

The Gars, made up of student-athletes from Thornapple Kellogg, West Michigan Aviation Academy, West Catholic , Unity Christian, and Hopkins, won eight events and finished the day with 487 points.

Owosso was second with 428 points ahead of Williamston 292 and Lansing Waverly/Catholic 227 at the meet with some unique events to high school swimming.

Gars took the top two spots in the 100-yard individual medley with Gabriel Van winning in 59.08 seconds and Anakin Goeckle second in 1 minute 4.11 seconds. There was a 1-2-3 finish for the Gars in the 50-yard backstroke with Caden Bliek winning in 32.77, Oliver Nydam second and Landon Noorman third.

Anakin Goeckle teamed with Hayden Goeckle, Carter Send and Sreyas Murmu to win the 200-yard medley relay in 1:59.04.

Haiden Vruggink took the 50-yard breaststroke for the Gars in 34.85 seconds with Send third in that one.

John De Waal Malefyt won the 100-yard freestyle in 51.66 seconds while teammates Ty Denney and Bliek placed third and fourth in the race.

De Waal Malefyt won the 100-yard backstroke too in 54.97 with Murmu second in 1:05.42.

Van added a winning time of 25.20 in the 50-yard butterfly.

Denney and Vruggink were third and fourth respectively in the 50-yard freestyle. Send was the runner-up in the 100-yard breaststroke with teammate Nick Schepers fourth in that race.

Ethan Magnuson had a third-place score of 126.70 points for the Gars in the diving competition.

The Gars closed the meet with the team of Denney, Bliek, De Waal Malefyt and Van taking the 200-yard freestyle relay in 1:38.56.

Caledonia ladies sweep two games during T.C. trip

Brett Bremer
Sports Editor

The Caledonia varsity girls' basketball team had a successful trip to Traverse City last weekend.

The Fighting Scots defeated Traverse CityWest 62-51 Friday evening and then took a 57-43 win at Traverse City Central Saturday afternoon.

The two wins moved the Fighting Scots' record to 3-0 so far this season. They were set to visit Thornapple Kellogg Thursday, Dec. 18. The Scots take on Lansing Waverly Saturday afternoon, Dec. 20, at Aquinas College with a tip-off slated for 3 p.m. and will be back in action Monday at East Grand Rapids.

In the contest with Traverse City Central, the two teams were knotted at 24-24 before Brooklyn McLeod hit a three to snap the tie. The Fighting Scots grew their lead to double figures in the fourth.

Continued from previous page

his rhythm," said the Caledonia coach.

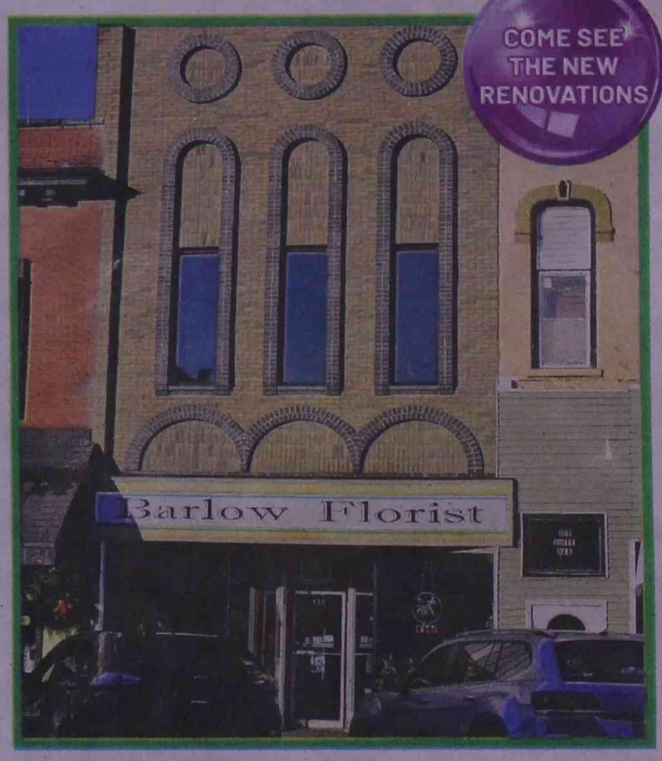
With Reeder, it was a little more aggressive approach.

"I told him, you are a junior. You're no longer just going out there to wrestle. We need you to go out there and to win. He responded extremely well," Veitch said. "He just took it to every kid."

Really, the CHS head coach was pleased with all those medalists.

Rockford won the day's team championship with 211.5 points. Byron Center was second with 198 ahead of Kent City 185.5, Caledonia 182.5, Cedar Springs 156.5, Thornapple Kellogg 114.5, Forest Hills Northern 108, Kenowa Hills 97, Northview 84 and Sparta 83.5 in the top ten.

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Cheers to a season filled with *Good News!*

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