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Vol. 130-No. 50 December 10, 2002

'Focus on the Future' seeks economic development here

by Sandra Ponsetto
Staff Writer

A group of more than a dozen Nashville business people, politicians and community leaders met last Wednesday at the Mulberry

Fore clubhouse for the second meeting of Focus on the Future, a group dedicated to the economic development of Nashville.

The group which held its first meeting last month is

the brainchild of Tad Davis and Orvin Moore, owners of the Mulberry Fore Golf Course and Mulberry Gardens Banquet facility in Nashville and Melissa Daniels, one of the owners of

Daniels Funeral Home being built west of the village on M-79.

"When you drive through town you can take a look and see a lot of new buildings going up. I think it's

time we get some good press going about what's happening in our town," said Davis after last month's meeting. "We have a lot invested in this town and we want to bring attention to the growth that is happening in our community."

Davis said that he would like to change the public's perception of Nashville.

"I've heard our town called 'Nastyville' more times than I can count," he said. "It's not 'Nastyville;' it's a very nice village and our Village Council is becoming very proactive about growth."

"A lot of people seem to forget that we are a part of Barry County or they think of us as an ugly step-child. But what we have here is actually very beautiful," added Davis. "We want to bring at-

ention to what is good about our town."

Fred Jacobs, chairman for the Barry County Economic Alliance and a board member of the Barry County Chamber of Commerce and vice president of J-Ad Graphics, said after last month's meeting that he agrees with the plan.

"For years the Nashville area has been one of the slowest areas in the county for new growth, but now that growth is starting to happen," said Jacobs. "The schools are showing signs of growth as are the businesses. When people see growth and development happen, it spurs more growth and development. This area has real potential for growth in

See Focus on Future, pg. 2

Santa's Secret Shop returns to schools

Students at Fuller Street and Maplewood elementary schools will have a chance to purchase gifts for family and friends at the Secret Santa Shop, which will be at Fuller Dec. 9-11 from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. and from 8:30 to noon Dec. 12, and Maplewood Dec. 12 from 8:15 a.m. to 2:15 p.m. and Dec. 13 from 8:15 a.m. to

2:45 p.m.

The program offered at the schools for several years gives children the chance to purchase quality gifts at reasonable prices with help from PTO members and other parent volunteers.

Joan Leos, administrative assistant at Fuller Street, said that Santa's Secret Shop is about more than

shopping.

"It's important that children learn the thrill of giving as well as receiving," she said. "And, the children learn about planning and saving."

Several weeks ago the students at each school received a catalog with a price list and a bank. The children were encouraged to use their

catalog to help them decide what gifts they wanted to buy for whom and then start saving money from their allowance or from doing chores and such.

Leos said the children really enjoy being able to buy gifts for their family.

"It's set up just like regular shopping," she said. "See Secret Shop, pg. 2

Maplewood students learn lesson in value

A recent experiment conducted by Laura Smith's and Dave Hustwick's fourth grade students at Maplewood Elementary yielded some interesting results about paying more money for a name brand product.

What began as a science project to demonstrate the scientific method became a real life example of consumer research. Though not trained researchers, the students' efforts would indicate

that what costs most is not always the best.

Students were given five brands of paper towels with which to conduct their experiments. In order to replicate conditions as closely as possible, groups of four students each were given an eye dropper, water, heavy steel washers and the five sheets of paper towels. Ten drops of water were placed in the middle of a sheet of towel, its corners were lifted

off a solid surface and the steel washers were placed one at a time directly upon the damp spot. Strength and durability of the towel was assumed to correlate directly with the number of washers that it held before breaking.

Combining the results from both rooms, the results are as follows (note that "ties" in strength where a group found that two towels



Laura Smith helps Dakota Gross, Casey Gardener and R. J. Browne stack metal washers in the center of a wet paper towel to see how strong it is compared to other brands

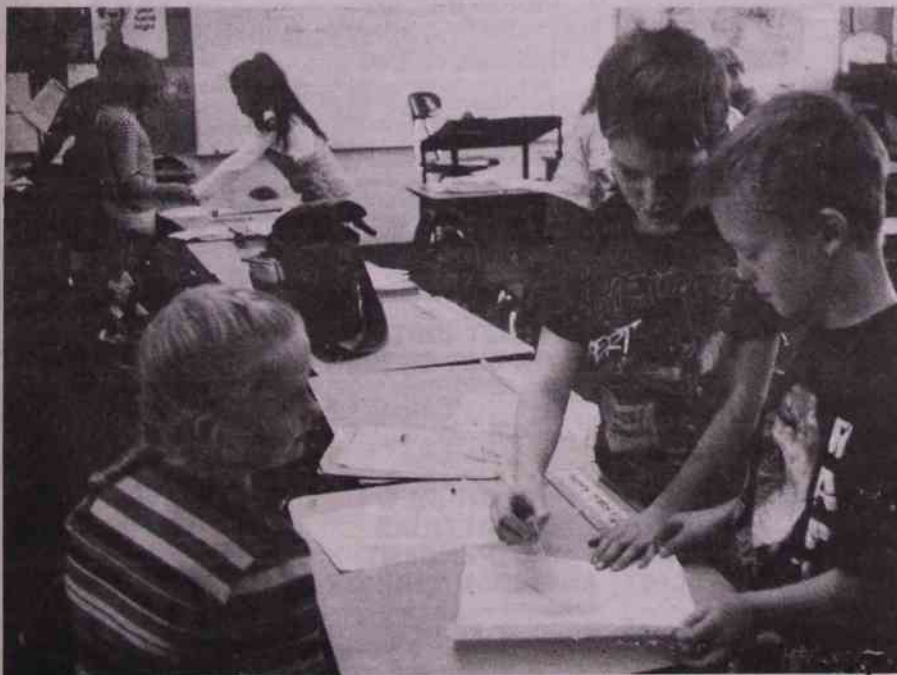
broke through at the same weight were counted as being a "strongest" vote for each towel): So Dri, 23; Green Forest, 17; Sparkle, 12; Mardi Gras, 4; Home Harvest, 0.

From these scientific results students learned that the most expensive is not always the best in performance. A relatively inexpensive "generic" towel and an environmentally-friendly "recycled" towel both proved more durable than several name brand towels. The least expensive towel, however, did prove to be the least durable too.

"This type of experiment, conducted regularly at Ma-

plewood School, helps make 'sense from science,' said Smith. "Stop by some time and check us out... or add to these findings right in your

home. Let us know what you find out! Perhaps we can use your data when we really get into graphing and charting."



Anthony Phillips, Tommy Robinson and Mykaela Woodman carefully apply precisely the right amount of water to paper towel before testing it against other brands, to see which is actually the strongest.

In This Issue...

- Visitor brings taste of Mexico to Fuller Street students
- Fire disaster averted at church in Nashville
- New Vermontville postmaster sworn in last week
- Winter Sports Preview in this issue

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the next couple of years." At last week's meeting, Jacobs said the Barry County Chamber of Commerce has taken a stand to support the building of a casino near on M-179 near U.S.-131. He added that Nashville was in a prime location to benefit from the casino.

"Where you guys sit here in Nashville, it's going to have an impact on you," said Jacobs. "How can you benefit if the casino goes? That's what it's all about."

"Here Nashville sits on M-66 and M-79. What can you do as a community?" he asked. "When you look at Nashville you have some things going for you."

Jacobs cited the local farm equipment dealer, Ma-

ple Valley Implement, and Good Times Pizza as good examples of how a business' reputation draws customers from all over the county.

"But how can you get people who drive through here, who have no connection to Nashville and don't know anybody here and maybe have come from St. Johns or north of Lansing over by DeWitt and have decided to go to one of these casinos, how can you get them to slow down, get out of their car and walk the streets of Nashville?" he asked.

"Can Nashville do it now?" asked Jacobs. "I don't think so. You haven't got anything different than 50 towns just like yours; they're all over the place.

You've got to have something that's different." Jacobs cited how the town of Marshall capitalized on its historic flavor as a way to develop their economy.

"They created a tourist attraction of sorts," he said. "They're really trying to a better job. They just started staying open on Sundays, they're trying to jury some of their businesses. In fact, they passed an ordinance a number of years ago that says anybody that is on Main Street now that is not retail can not expand in the downtown area. You can stay, but you can not expand. When they need to expand they can move off of Main Street and open those areas for more retail because that's what they need."

"They're building something and that's what you have to do here," said Jacobs.

Jacobs suggested local merchants dress in period clothing during the weekend of Charlton Park's Civil War muster or dressing in 1950s style clothing during the Route 66 car show.

"You need to find something that is different and distinctive about Nashville," he added, suggesting the town invest in period lighting and fix up the store front to reflect a certain era of the town's history.

"When you're buildings need fixing up, fix them up distinctively. Right now your buildings are just like buildings you'd see anywhere. Try to add something; that's what it's all about," said Jacobs.

Jacobs told the story of two businessmen, one in Boston and the other in Iowa, whose businesses were failing to the point that

they were considering closing up shop and going to work for other people when they had an idea. Each man took a chance and decided to offer their customers something different, something unique. Each man is now a millionaire.

"You have to come up with something that is unique about Nashville," said Jacobs. "You have to make it different, distinctive. What are you going to do to slow them down and get them out of a car?"

"You want to come up with something that will last, something that is attractive, so when people do stop and get out of their cars, they can't wait to tell their friends about it," he added. "It's got to be something you can develop, something in your income level, something you can do as a team."

Jacobs said that Nashville has the potential for dramatic change.

"You have something precious here, you have people who live here and like it here; it's their home town," he said. "But, you want to be successful along with it. You want other people to see the success and be a participant. I think you can do it; it just takes team work."

Jacobs closed his presentation with two quotes that he said guide him in his life and business. The first quote was from Art Martell, "The best way to predict the future is to create it."

"That's what you have to do in Nashville. If you want things to be better in Nash-

ville, you want your businesses to grow... you have to think, how can I make I take this business to the next level?" Jacobs added.

His second quote was from Robert F. Kennedy, "Some men see things as they are and ask, 'why?' I dream of things that never were and ask, 'why not?'"


"I say, when it comes to communities see things as they are, and don't see anything wrong. We need to dream of possibilities and ask, 'why not?' I think that's is where Nashville is," added Jacobs.

Dixie Standel-Manshum, the executive director of the Barry County Economic Alliance, told the group that there are a lot of organizations out there that could serve as resources for Nashville. She said that David Chase from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and Cheryl Barth from the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) were willing to come to future meetings and lend their expertise in areas of rural and housing development.

Nashville Village President Frank Dunham said that one of the problems facing the community is the high number of rental units within the village limits. He said that an increase in single family-owned homes would create a more stable base of residents.

Dunham said that Barth had met with him and Stan-


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Secret Shop, continued from page 1

lar store and there will be volunteers there to help them," she said, "it's just a really neat experience."

The volunteers also enjoy the annual event, according to Leos.

"A lot of volunteers who help out at the school say this is their favorite thing all year long," she said. "Dawn Fletcher does a lot of volunteer things for our school and she has taken this on and become the organizer and has done a wonderful job."

Teachers at Fuller also pitch in to help make Santa's Secret Shop happen.

"Our music and art teachers, Jill Schantz and Lori Thomas, have given up their room so we could set up Santa's Secret Shop," said Leos. "Everyone works together to make this happen."

Continued next page

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From previous page

del-Manshum earlier in the day. He reported that she told them that there are funds available to provide homeowners with low-interest loans or grants to help them fix up their homes to make the neighborhoods within the village more appealing to home buyers.

Dunham also reported that there are funds available for the MSHDA to purchase homes within two blocks of the downtown area, fix them up and sell them to low-income families as a single family residence.

"The advantage of having them involved (the USDA and MSHDA) involved is that funding comes every year. There is different funding for different things," said Standel-Manshum. "Once you get your feet in the door you'll be right there in line to make use of that money. We've got to get the people here that are able to help us."

"That's part of my job, researching this kind of stuff," she added. "If I'm here and listening and I know what you need I can go back and I check with MSHDA, I check with USDA for the various funding organizations and I'll bring in these people and I will get these connections going."

Standel-Manshum also reported that Dunham and Village Council Trustee Mary

Coll will be attending a program put on by the Michigan State Cooperative Extension Service Called, "Small Town Success Strategies."

"They'll be discussing different strategies for small towns to improve themselves and become successful," added Dunham. "They could involve different things like DDAs (Downtown Development Authorities), grants that may be available for streetscapes and such and anything to do with small towns and what they need to succeed."

"There is a lot of good in-

formation we could get out of it as a council," he continued. "I think being able to come back and maybe apply it with some of the businesses and supporting the effort, or the attempt, we could get cooperative here and have some success and make a real showing."

"The ideas have been there. Individuals have brought the ideas up," concluded Dunham. "But, individually you can't do it alone. You need quite a few others to jump on board and push."

Standel-Manshum encouraged members of the

Village Council and Focus on the Future to attend meetings of the Barry County Economic Alliance and Chamber of Commerce meetings.

"As a council, I think we need to get more involved in education program that the Michigan Municipal League provides," Dunham said. "We need to get involved and get connected with some of these other communities. There are a vast amount of resources out there, and I have just become aware of a few of them. The opportunities are astounding and we're not

taking advantage of them. It requires time and effort and one person can do so much. If someone will share the burden it will make it a lot easier."

Kathy LaVictor, executive director of the Barry County Chamber of Commerce, asked the group to consider promoting local businesses and events in the Barry County Tourism Guide, which is published each year.

LaVictor said the brochure is distributed through all Michigan Visitor Centers, the Barry County Chamber of Commerce, local businesses and sent out as part of relocation package.

"We want to get the word out about Nashville as best we can," she said.

"This whole thing is about the future," said

Moore. "There are a lot of things that have happened in the past and we need to put that behind us and focus on the future."

"That's the name of our group, Focus on the Future," said Davis. "Like Orvin said, 'the past is the past.' We're here with positive ideas, not negative complaints. We're here to grow and develop in a positive, upbeat and enthusiastic way."

Davis encouraged everyone at the meeting to bring at least one more local business person to the next meeting along with brainstorming ideas for promoting the economic development of the Village of Nashville.

The next meeting of Focus on the Future will be held at Mulberry Fore Thursday, Jan. 16, 2003.

MAPLE VALLEY SCHOOL LUNCH MENUS

Elementary Schools (Maplewood & Fuller)

Lunch Menu

Wednesday, Dec. 11

Cheeseburger, baked beans, pineapple, cookie, 1/2 pt. milk.

Thursday, Dec. 12

M.W. Hungry Howies. Pizza, tossed salad, peaches, pretzel rod, 1/2 pt. milk.

Friday, Dec. 13

Cheesie bread sticks, spaghetti, pear halves, ani-

mal crackers, 1/2 pt. milk.

Monday, Dec. 16

Macaroni and cheese, broccoli, applesauce, fruit snacks, 1/2 pt. milk.

Tuesday, Dec. 17

Burrito, whole kernel corn, bread sticks, sherbet cup, 1/2 pt. milk.

Note: Maplewood Elementary will be serving breakfast this year starting the first of the school year.

Maple Valley Jr./Sr. High School Lunch Menu

Wednesday, Dec. 11

Choose One - Chicken fries, pizza, chicken sandwich, pasta bar. Choose Two - Garden salad, mashed potatoes, pineapple, juice, Milk.

Thursday, Dec. 12

Choose One - Cheesie bread sticks, pizza, cheeseburger, taco bar. Choose Two - Garden salad, spaghetti, peach cup, juice, Milk.

Friday, Dec. 13

Choose One - Macaroni and cheese, pizza, chicken sandwich, salad bar. Choose Two - Garden salad, whole kernel corn, pear halves, juice, Milk.

Monday, Dec. 16

Choose One - Hot pocket, pizza, chicken sandwich, salad bar. Choose Two - Garden salad, french fries, applesauce, juice, Milk.

Tuesday, Dec. 17

Choose One - Burrito, cheeseburger, pizza, taco bar. Choose Two - Garden salad, whole kernel corn, sherbet cup, juice, Milk.



Ashcrafts to celebrate 40th wedding anniversary

Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Ashcraft will be celebrating their 40th wedding anniversary on December 15, 2002. They have three children, Ray (Vicki) Ashcraft, Brad (Amy) Ashcraft and Donna (Tom) Davis; and seven grandchildren.

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Early childhood 'Story Stop' program expands

Early Childhood Connections of Eaton County has expanded its "Story Stop" literacy program for children 3-5 years old and their parents.

Besides the program, which is held at the Community Room at Thornapple Lake Estates, located at 6335 Thornapple Lake Road, on the first Wednes-

day of each month from 11 a.m. to noon, there is now a second session that will meet on the second Wednesday of the month, from 11 a.m. to noon in the gym at Kellogg School, located at 324 Queen St. in Nashville.

Joan Leos, the Maple Valley Schools coordinator for Early Childhood Connections, said she wants expectant parents and the parents of children between the birth and 5 years of age to be aware of the services that are available to them through Early Childhood Connections.

Leos said that when families register with Early Childhood Connections, they will receive mailings, a special gift for their child and on-going information about special times and things parents can share with their children during the preschool years.

"Children between birth and 5 years old are able to learn more than at any other time of life," said Leos. "Give your child the gift of a high I.Q. (intelligence quotient) through positive interaction; you can influence your child's I.Q. by some 40 points.

"Yes, you can shape a little genius right in your home — just by doing what you do," she added. "And, guess what? It is fun stuff, done purposefully, like singing songs, reading books, talking and saying rhymes, working with Play-Doh, coloring, playing music — fun stuff!"

Leos encourages parents to get started by bringing their child to one of the Story Stop programs or by calling her at (517) 852-9468 or Kaye Sechfield at (517) 726-0149.

Project Fresh helps growers, WIC clients

"It was our goal at MSU Extension to promote the federal Woman, Infant and Children (WIC) Farmers Market Nutrition Program," said Joni Hlinka, Project Fresh coordinator.

The program provides low-income families with special coupons that can be redeemed for fresh fruits and vegetables grown locally. The project encourages limited resource families to use more fresh fruit and vegetables in their family meals and increase the sales at local farm markets.

MSU Extension, in partnership with the Barry-Eaton District Health Department-WIC Program, provided Project Fresh coupon recipients with nutrition education on choosing, storing, and preparing fresh produce, enabling them to be eligible for a coupon packet worth \$20.

This year, MSU Extension recruited four new produce growers in Eaton County to participate with Project Fresh. Accepting coupons in Charlotte were The Country Mill, Appleschram Orchards and Cook's Blueberry Farm. In Eaton Rapids, sweet corn growers Harold and Bev Whiting also participated. This was an increase of four new growers as compared to only one farm participant in Eaton County in 2001.

Approximately 250 coupon packets were distributed to families in Eaton County. Of those, Eaton County growers accepted 385 coupons worth \$770.00. This was an 18 percent increase in redemption rates from 2001.

MSU continues to seek new local fresh farm producers to participate in Project Fresh. Call Hlinka at (517) 543-2310 for more information.



Adam Brumm, president of the Barry County chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation, talks to students about wild turkey calls.

First-graders learn about wild turkeys

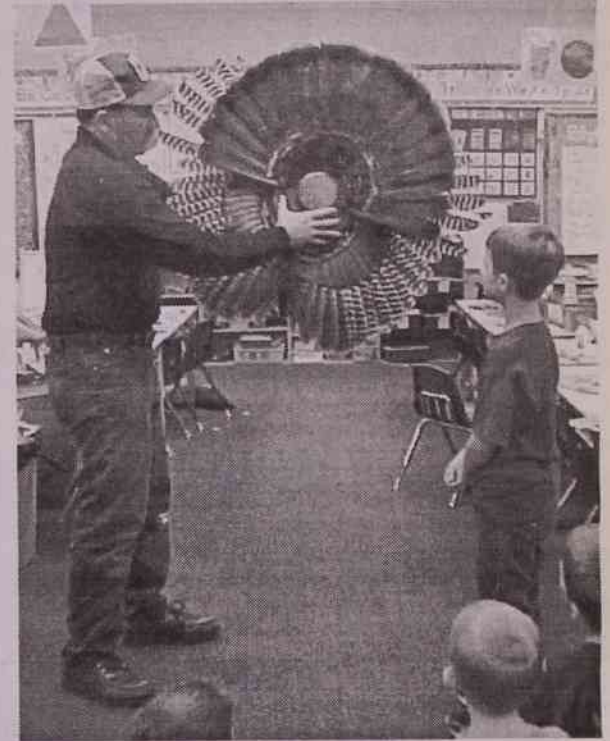
First-graders in Tammi King's class at Fuller Street Elementary learned about wild turkeys from Adam Brumm, the father of one of their classmates and the president of the Barry County chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation.

During the presentation, which was also sponsored by the Pierce Cedar Creek Institute, the children were shown how to make and use wild turkey calls.

The children also wrote stories about what they learned about wild turkeys and their preservation.

"They learned a lot of information about turkeys. Like, a baby male turkey is called a jake and a female baby turkey is called a jenny," said King. "It was good way to help us wrap up our unit on turkeys."

In addition to facts about turkeys, the classroom re-



Adam Brumm shows the students in Tammi King's first grade class a tail from a wild turkey.

ceived a kit containing a lesson plans and a CD-ROM and video about turkeys.

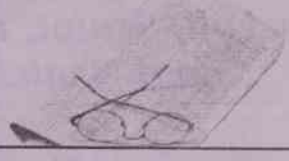
Each child also received a book marker, ruler and pencil from the federation.

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In My Own

Write

by Sandra Ponsetto

Bringing back Christmas

"It just doesn't seem like Christmas without snow," sighed my oldest daughter, as she looked out the window of the van at a dull gray landscape of barren trees and withered grass.

"I'm tired and I want to go home," complained my youngest.

It had been one of those days. My husband and I had spent the entire afternoon Christmas shopping in Kalamazoo with our daughters, who were then 6 and 4 years old. We had just finished dinner at a restaurant where the service was as cold and bland as the food. The girls were tired and cranky and so were we.

"When will we get home?" whined the 4-year old, "Are we almost there yet?"

"Soon," I replied. "Soon."

"It can't be soon enough," muttered my husband.

I looked out the window of our mini-van at the cold, desolate streets of downtown Kalamazoo, devoid of even a dusting of Christmas

snow and sighed a silent prayer, "God, we sure could use some Christmas spirit, but right now I think it would take a miracle."

Just then I spotted thousands of glowing multi-colored lights up ahead in Bronson Park.

"Let's stop and take a walk in the park," I suggested hopefully.

"Yeah," said my husband a smile starting to creep across his face. "They really do a good job decorating the park every year. Let's do it!"

"Wow! Can we go there?" said my oldest, her eyes as big as saucers as she spotted the giant candy canes forming an arch over the sidewalks.

"Pretty!" said the youngest with more enthusiasm than I heard from her all day.

We pulled into a parking space and after we made sure everyone was bundled up with hats, gloves and scarves, we started wandering through the gaily-lit park

surrounded on three sides by glorious old churches.

"It's so beautiful," said the 6-year-old, twirling beneath the candy cane arch.

"But," she added wistfully as she took my hand. "It would look so much prettier with snow. It just doesn't seem like Christmas without snow."

"I know. But, there's still a few days left before Christmas; we might get some yet," I said as we walked over to the nativity set up at the north end of the park.

We joined a group of about 10 people who were looking at the display.

My daughters were enthralled with the life-size figures of Mary, Joseph and the shepherds and wise men.

"Mommy, where's the baby Jesus?" asked my youngest tugging on my sleeve and pointing at the empty manger.

"I don't know; sometimes people don't put the baby Jesus in the manger until Christmas Eve..." I started to

explain.

"He's, not here because the kids keep stealing him," said a man standing next to me.

"Oh," I said dumbly.

"Why would someone want to steal Jesus?" asked my oldest. "Don't they know stealing is wrong?"

I didn't know what to say.

I had suggested stopping at the park as a way to capture a little Christmas spirit. This obviously wasn't what I had hoped for.

"It's a real shame," said someone else. "Kids just don't have any respect these days..."

Just then a young man skidded his BMX bike to a halt near the nativity sending up a rooster tail of mud.

"What the..."

"Hey, what do you think ..."

See Christmas, page 6

Be their Hero from age Zero

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December is National Stress Free Family Holiday Month---Remember to Laugh, Laugh, Laugh.....



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Advertisement

Finally...High-Quality/Low Cost Internet Service comes to Barry County!

By PAUL STOWERS

You may have seen their billboards as you drive North of Hastings (see picture) - A company called Netpenny.Net based in Grand Rapids has recently come to Barry County and is

making quite a splash amongst Internet users, especially with their quality and pricing. Netpenny is the brainchild of David Stowers, a West Michigan native. He and his partner have teamed up on what will revolutionize the pricing for dial-up Internet and it's about time. AOL of course leads the way, charging \$23.90 per month for

their frustrating dial-up service. MSN, not being much better charges \$21.95 per month and in most cases will hit you up for a 'contract'. Then you have a multitude of local Internet companies

per minute for Internet access. Netpenny.net has no 'contracts', no 'set up fee's' and they don't even require a credit card. They're fast and reliable too and if you have a hard time believing what your reading then sign up for their 'risk free trial' and see for yourself.

Netpenny.net only has one billing rate and not only is it simple, its fair because you only pay for

what you use. They have a \$4.95 minimum charge each month, however this includes 495 minutes (8.25 hours) of Internet Service, they simply charge 1¢ penny per minute after that with a maximum monthly charge of \$14.95, which if you ask me is still a fantastic price for unlimited service. Netpenny claims that their service is so good that they don't need to 'lock' people in contracts and as the President is quoted as saying "We don't think its fair to charge people a 'set up' fee when people sign-up because 'happy customers' tell their friends and family about us and that more than makes up the difference". Making claim to another one of his companies features, Maring is also quoted as saying "We understand that a lot of people either don't have credit cards or don't want to give their credit card information out and that is fine with us because we simply allow people to pay by check.

When ask how they are able to offer \$4.95 a month Internet Service and still give great customer service, Maring said, "Cost are kept low by utilizing a data center located 85 feet underground in the old gypsum mines in Grand Rapids. There's no heating and air-conditioning cost. This

also allows us not only to keep cost low but gives us the ability to monitor our usage and add lines when needed so our customers don't run into busy signals and disconnects like they are so use to having with other ISP's". He'll also be the first to tell you that their 'automated online sign-up process' saves Netpenny a lot of money too. The Vice President of Marketing says he's never had an easier job because so many people are telling their friends and family members about Netpenny. He states, "And why wouldn't they, they get better service and in some cases customers are saving as much as \$227 per year, that's a car payment or a weekend getaway, just for switching Internet providers!"

As a user of Netpenny.net's service for over 8 months now I can personally vouch that Netpenny.net continues to surpass my expectations and make things even

better. They recently added Spam/Virus filtering, FREE for every customer and in their first month offering this FREE service they stopped over 22,000 'porn/junk' emails and 379 nasty virus's from getting to Netpenny.net customers.

Netpenny truly is a company you can proudly tout to your friends and family and by the way its in your best interest to do so because Netpenny.net will credit your account \$5.00 for everyone you refer.

For more info about Netpenny.net see their ad the newest addition of the Ameritech Yellow Pages or just go to their website: www.netpenny.net or call their toll-free number 1-888-248-7239. It would be in your best interest to do so.

Remember, switching could save you enough money to help you make a car payment, or you could use it to take a weekend getaway year after year, after year.



charging you \$19.95.

Netpenny offers dial-up Internet service with local Hastings and Battle Creek phone numbers as well as local numbers in most other West Michigan cities all the way North to Cadillac as well as most of the Lakeshore. Netpenny's unbelievable success takes root in their slogan "It just makes cents" - charging only 1¢ penny

making quite a splash amongst Internet users, especially with their quality and pricing. Netpenny is the brainchild of David Stowers, a West Michigan native. He and his partner have teamed up on what will revolutionize the pricing for dial-up Internet and it's about time. AOL of course leads the way, charging \$23.90 per month for

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Each child also received a book marker, ruler and pencil from the Librarian.

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Visitor brings a taste of Mexico to Fuller students

The students in Mindy Otto's second grade class at Fuller Street Elementary got a taste of Mexico when Manuel Leos, the husband of Fuller Street Administrative Assistant Joan Leos, visited recently.

"In my master's class we're learning about how to create a learning community

within the classroom," said Otto.

Since Otto has incorporated Spanish into her daily classroom activities, she decided to make her classroom a multicultural learning community.

"It was great because we knew someone (Leos) in the community who was of

Latin American descent who could come into the classroom and talk to the children about his cultural heritage.

"I just asked him to come in and talk to the children, but they (Manuel and Joan Leos) went above and beyond what I expected," she added.

The couple went to a

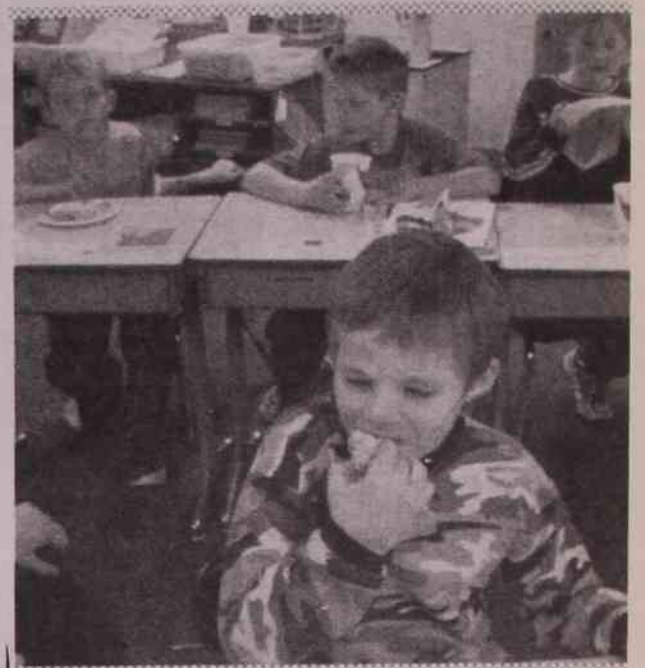
Mexican bakery in Lansing and brought in six different "pan de dulces," or sweet breads for the children to sample.

"He told the students about the pastries and how he remembered some of them from his childhood," said Otto. "The pastries were very different from the doughnuts you get at Fel-pausch, so the kids were kind of surprised — they liked some of them."

Leos also made authentic cinnamon cocoa for the children, which they enjoyed.

Otto said her students were thrilled to hear someone speak Spanish to them.

"He rolls his 'R's and the kids really enjoyed hearing someone speak the authentic



The students in Mindy Otto's second grade class sample Mexican pastries.

language," said Otto. "And, they (the students) got to show him what they could do and he was impressed.

"I think it was a great way to expose the students to something different; it was wonderful," she concluded.



Manuel Leos shows the students in Mindy Otto's class how to mix cinnamon cocoa.

NEWEST CITIZEN

GIRL, Jennifer and Aaron Gonsler of Vermontville announce the birth of their daughter, Emilee Jo, on Oct. 24 at Hayes Green Beach Hospital in Charlotte. She weighed nine pounds, four ounces.

Grandparents are Pat and Bonnie Ripley of Vermontville, and Larry and Judy Gonsler of Nashville. Great-grandparents are Maxine Hines of Sunfield, Elaine Ripley of Vermontville, and Myron and Celora Shilling of Charlotte. Emilee joins a sister, Alyssa.

Christmas, continued from page 5

There was a general murmur of disapproval as the shaggy-haired young man, wearing baggy khaki's, an army surplus jacket and battered sneakers got off his bike and stepped over the yellow cord that surrounded the nativity.

The murmur of disapproval turned to a gasp of surprise as the young man walked up to the manger, reached into the tattered messenger bag he wore slung over his shoulder and pulled out a life-size figure of the baby Jesus.

Everyone watched in stunned silence as he gently placed the Jesus in the manger then paused and bowed his head for a brief moment.

"Hey, thanks," said one of the onlookers as the kid stepped back over the yellow cord and headed toward his bike.

"Where'd you find him?" asked another.

"In the bushes near the Baptist church," responded the kid as he mounted his bike.

"Some kids in the neighborhood think it's funny to steal him," he said as he sped off into the night. "My friends and I keep bringing him back."

"He found the baby Jesus," said my youngest look-

ing up at me with sparkling eyes.

"He brought back Christmas," added the oldest.

"Yeah, I guess he did," I said as tears pricked at the corners of my eyes. "He brought back Christmas."

As we walked through the park back to our van, the girls laughed and danced and my heart filled with joy as snow began to fall like a silent benediction.

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NICE COUNTRY HOME.
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Obituaries

Chaplain Cathy Ann Vessecchia

Pottersville - Cathy went to be with our Lord Saturday, Nov. 30, 2002 at the age of 49.

She was the beloved daughter of Charles and Janice Bumgardner of Vermontville (formerly of Sunfield), also surviving family are her brother, Bob (Kathy) Bumgardner of Sunfield, sisters, Nancy (Larry) Trask, Ginny (David) Chase both of Vermontville, and Sharon Beech of Pottersville, nephew, Marc Trask of Bellevue, nieces, Cheryl Knoll of Grand Haven, Anne Trask of Bellevue, Denise Chase and (Ted Kurziel Jr.) of Spring Lake, great nephew, Christ-opher Knoll of Grand Haven, and Cameron Pifer of Bellevue, and many aunts and uncles in Virginia and Tennessee.

From a young age, Cathy felt the call of Christ upon her heart to become a counselor to the emotionally wounded. She did not judge what she saw and heard.

It was her mission to be a promoter of peace.

Cathy graduated from Liberty Baptist College (Lynchburg, VA) in 1985 with a masters in ministry.

Then she became a counselor and conducted a ladies ministry at a local church for many years.

She was a founding member of Barry Community Hospice in Hastings, she was a chaplain at Pennock Hospital for 15 years. In 1990 she was a chaplain at Fort Jackson Army Hospital in South Carolina.



She had a non-profit christian counseling office for the last 12 years.

In 2001-2002 she was a part time chaplain at Sparrow Hospital E.R. in Lansing.

She was also spokesperson for the National Kidney Foundation, and Womens Abuse Foundation.

She was an accomplished musician from the age of 15 as lead singer of Cathy and the Sounds of the South. She was also a member of the Country Music Association with a D.J. license.

Cathy had two darling poodles, Sissy, and Shelby, whom she considered her children.

She was a loyal daughter, sister, aunt, and friend. She ran the race, fought the good fight, stood on her faith, and gave Christ all of her life.

Funeral services were held Wednesday, Dec. 4, 2002 at the Sunfield United Brethren Church. A interment service followed at the Sunfield Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made to the Rennuchi Hospitality House, c/o RFH, P.O. Box 36, Sunfield, MI 48890.

For more information, www.legacy.com.

Elwood Raymond "Duke" Hawkins

GRAND LEDGE - Elwood Raymond "Duke" Hawkins, of Grand Ledge, passed Monday, Dec. 2, 2002 at his residence at the age of 88.

He was born Sept. 19, 1914 in Vermontville, MI. the first child of Ray and Hattie (Bale) Hawkins.

He was a World War II veteran, serving in the Army Air Forces in the Pacific. He was a lifetime member of the VFW Post. 8260 in Nashville, MI.

He retired in 1974 after working for more than 30 years at Motor Wheel Corp. in Lansing, and was a farmer in Grand Ledge for many years as well.

After retiring, Mr. Hawkins enjoyed 19 years of fishing every day possible.

Elwood was a loving and devoted husband and father.

He was preceded in death by his wife of 59 years, Idabelle (Graham), his brother, Lawrence and recently his sister, Anna Mae (Hawkins-Schaub) Antico.

Surviving are his two sis-

ters, Lucille Carroll of Portland, and Eleanor Rawson of Grand Rapids, his daughter, Gloria McCoy (Gerald Fay), and his grandson, Pat (Tina) McCoy of Lansing, and many nieces and nephews and wonderful friends and neighbors.

He will be greatly missed by them. He was a man of great character and determination.

Funeral services were held Monday, Dec. 9, 2002

at the Rosier Funeral Home, Mapes-Fisher Chapel, Sunfield. A military graveside service followed at the Sunfield Cemetery.

For those wishing, contributions may be made to the cancer, or alzheimer's fund, c/o RFH, P.O. Box 36, Sunfield, MI 48890. For more information www.legacy.

Arrangements were made by Rosier Funeral Home, Mapes-Fisher Chapel, Sunfield.

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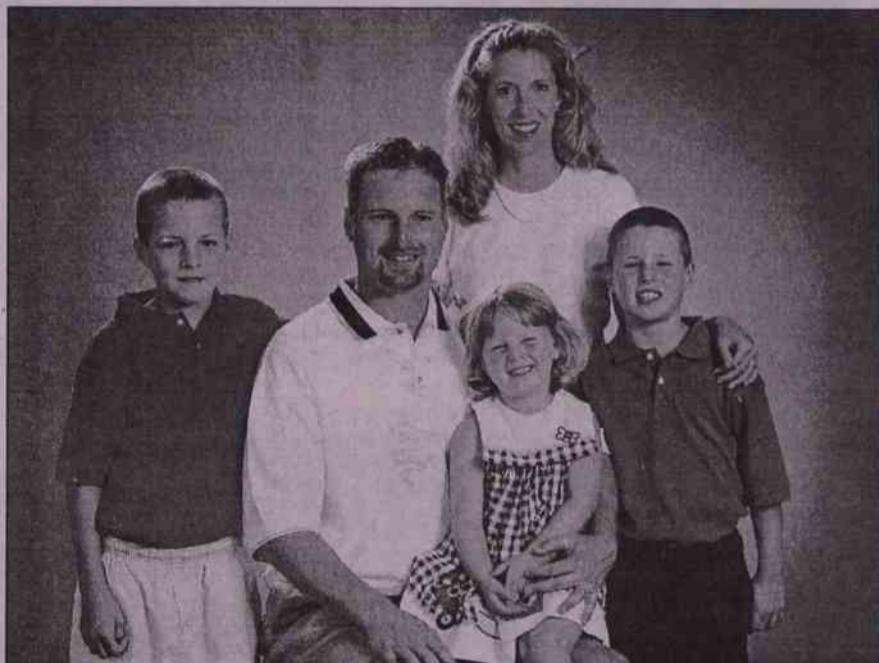
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Laura DeBolt

DEWITT - Laura DeBolt, age 68, of DeWitt, formerly of Vermontville, died Thursday, Dec. 5, 2002.

Miss DeBolt was born Dec. 31, 1933 in Kalamo Township, the daughter of Clarence and Esther (Kellogg) DeBolt.

She worked at Transitions North for the past eight years.

She is survived by brother Louis (Judy) DeBolt of Vermontville, sister Eleanor (Gary) Kinnie of Dover, Tenn., several nieces, nephews, cousins and caregivers at the DeWitt Home.

She was preceded in death by brother Wesley in 2001.

Funeral services were held on Saturday, Dec. 7, 2002 at Pray Funeral Home in Charlotte. Pastor Wes Emerson officiated. Interment was at Maple Hill Cemetery in Charlotte.

There will be no visitation.

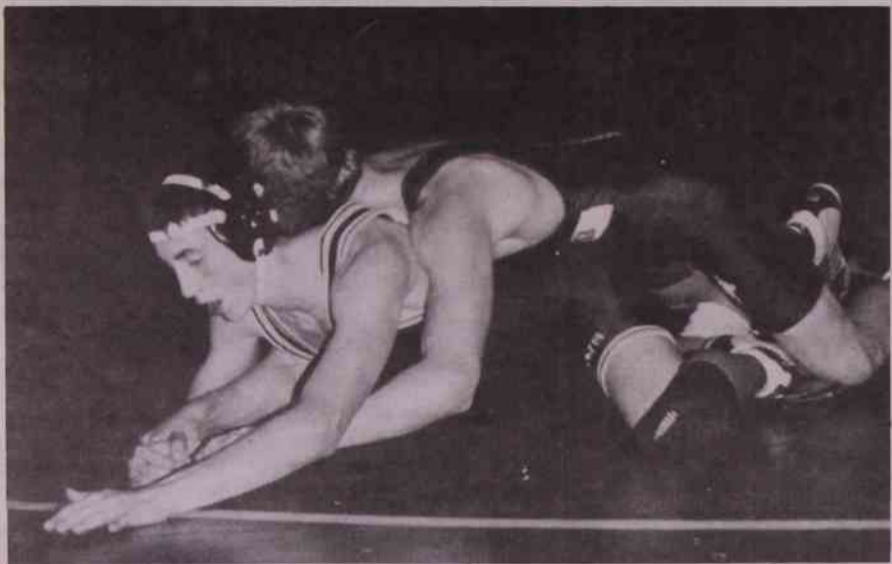
If desired, memorial contributions may be made to the family.

Arrangements were made by Pray Funeral Home in Charlotte.

The students...
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Winter Sports Preview

Lions must overcome low numbers and foes



Maple Valley's Joe Desrochers (bottom) at 125 tries to find the best way to escape from the Vikings Ryan King. (Photo by Brett Bremer)



The 2002-2003 Lion varsity wrestling team. (front from left) Tyler Greenfield, Kevin Fassett, Brandon Krouse, Coach Chris Ricketts, Matt Brumm, Joey Desrochers, Laura Trumble, (back) Eric Totten, Ben Swan, Matt Conklin, Josh Grasman, Lance Harvey, and Ben Boss. (Missing from photo are Coach Tony Wawiernia, Jake McMillon, and Andrew Gaber.)

Head Coach Chris Ricketts who is entering his 29th year with Maple Valley's varsity wrestling team says he hopes that good senior leadership and a strong sophomore class will be enough to take the Lions on to league and district titles this winter.

Senior Brandon Brooke at 135 and sophomore Ben Boss at 140 return to the team after being state qualifiers at the end of last season.

Also back is senior Josh Grasman looking to do some damage at 215.

New to the varsity team is senior Ben Swan at 275, and sophomores Joe Desrochers (130) and Eric Totten (145).

Those grapplers make up the core of the team that is still very young and will have to battle hard to make up for its low numbers.

If Maple Valley hopes to make a run for a SMAA crown it'll have to go through Dansville, Leslie, and Olivet at the top.

Districts could be made tougher, because the team has been bumped up to Division III.

The Lions opened their season last Thursday with a tri-match at Lakewood against Shelby and the host Vikings. Kind of like being between a rock and a hard place.

Valley dropped both matches beginning with a 54-12 decision against Shelby.

At 215, Grasman started a quick night for 215 pounder from Shelby. Grasman got the pin just 21 seconds in, but the Lions already trailed at that point 27-6.

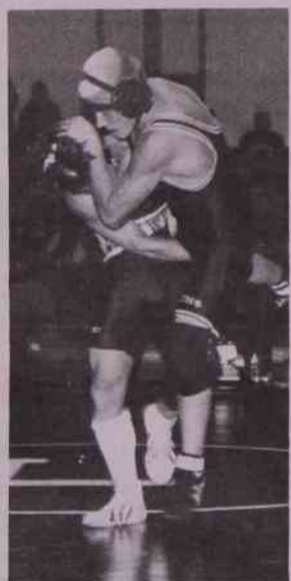
After losing a lead in the third period at 119, Kevin Fassett scored a takedown in the final seconds to earn an 10-8 victory.

Boss began his run at a return to state by riding out a 7-6 lead through the entire final period to get Valley's final points of the match.

In the night cap the Lions were downed by the team ranked third in the state, the Lakewood Vikings.

After downing Shelby, the Vikings got the best of Maple Valley, 62-9.

Grasman and Lakewood's Geoff O'Donnell both pinned their opponent at 215



Maple Valley's Jeff Totten (right) tries to fight free of the grasp of Lakewood's Brandon Carpenter. (Photo by Brett Bremer)

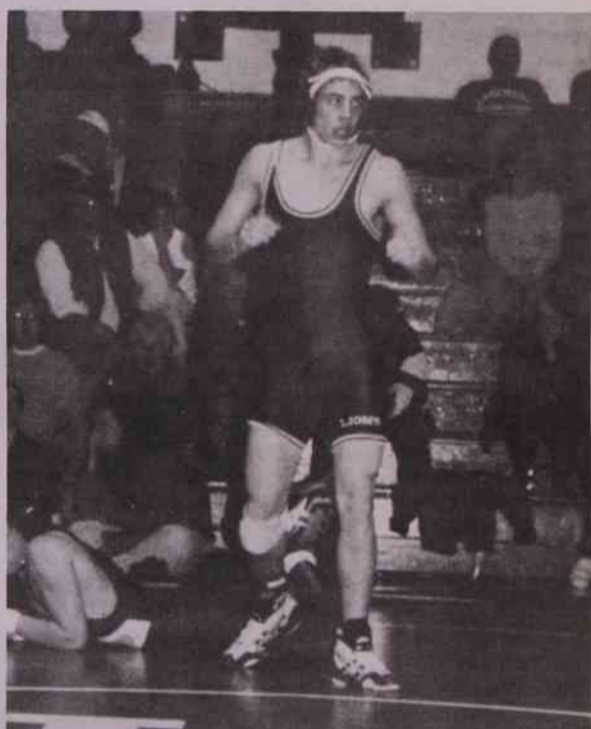
from Shelby in 21 seconds, and when the two butted heads Grasman came away with a 5-0 victory.

Valley's other returning state qualifier, Boss, pinned

his opponent at 135 to get the Lions second and final points of the evening.

Maple Valley's coaches knew that wrestling at Lakewood would be a tough night for their kids, but they hope it will serve as a wake up call to show them how much they have left to learn.

The Lions wrestled at the Concord Invitational on Saturday Dec. 7. This week they wrestle against Leslie and Saranac on Thursday Dec. 12 and Saturday they travel to another tough tournament, the Thornapple Kellogg Invitational.



Josh Grasman rises from his win at 215 against Lakewood's Geoff O'Donnell. (Photo by Brett Bremer)

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Almost all of volleyball squad returns for Lions

Not only does the Maple Valley varsity volleyball team return nine players from last year's squad, many of them are in their third year playing together. Lions Head Coach Kelly Becklin is very excited

about it. The team is looking to use that experience to improve upon last year's 8-22 record. Seniors returning to the team include Krystal Root, Jessie Grant, Jessica Mansfield, Jennifer Grant, Ashley

Gordeneer, and Michelle Silsbee. That group is also joined by classmate Veronika Pitukova. Chayla Robles and Megan Putnam are back on the varsity for their junior campaign, and Kyndra Root re-



The 2002-2003 Lion varsity volleyball team. (front from left) Jessica Mansfield, Ashley Gordeneer, Jessie Grant, Jennifer Grant, Krystal Root, Michelle Silsbee, Veronika Pitukova, (back) Brenda McElroy, Allison Oleson, Coach Kelly Becklin, Meagan Putnam, Kyndra Root, and Chayla Robles.



Cheering on the Lions

The 2002-2003 Lion varsity sideline cheerleaders. (front from left) Heather Clark, Summer Hill, Amber Terberg, Melissa Nisse, (middle) Coach Kristi Priddy, Andrea Eaton, Jerrica Ashcraft, Ashley Trumble, Maria Yusupova, Coach Donna Nisse, (back) Matt Root, Nick Burpee, Cashel Harp, Mike Mead, and Kendrick Coplin.

turns for her sophomore season. Junior Elisha Gibson is the other top newcomer, along with Pitukova. With all that experience the Lions have had a lot of time to work on all the things they can work on. Becklin sees defense and passing as being big strengths for the Lions. The one thing they can't work on is height.

The lack of size will be the biggest thing the Lions have to overcome this winter.

Becklin said she expects Leslie to be tough at the top of the league, and lists their matches at Dansville and Leslie later in the season as being a couple of keys to how things shake out in the league.

Maple Valley's season kicks off at the Bath Invitational Saturday Dec. 14. After that it's on to Eaton Rapids Saturday Dec. 21.

The Lions' first home match is also their first match following the holidays when they play host to Saranac on Jan. 6. SMAA conference play begins two days later against Webber-

Quickness will be what carries the Lion cagers

Maple Valley's boys return to the hardwood to tip off another season of varsity basketball when they travel to face the Middleville Trojans on Tuesday Dec. 10.

The Lions went 16-7 last season on their way to a district final appearance and look to do as well this winter with a combination of speed and hard work.

Hopefully with hard work they can gain the experience they lack and have another strong season.

As with every other basketball coach, Jeff Webb would like to have a little

more height on the roster, but that's out of his hands.

"We think we will work hard and be competitive every night," says the third year varsity coach.

Seniors Eric Smith and Jeff Taylor at forward, and Jim Hirneiss at guard are the top returnees from a year ago.

That trio will be joined on the varsity by classmate Ryan Grider, and sophomores Dustin Meade, Jason Beardslee, and Jesse Page.

After the trip to Middleville the Lions leap right into the SMAA schedule on

the road at Webberville Friday Dec. 13.

They follow that up with the first home match of the season, a non-conference game against Hopkins on Wednesday Dec. 18.

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All real estate advertising in this newspaper is subject to the Fair Housing Act and the Michigan Civil Rights Act which collectively make it illegal to advertise "any preference, limitation or discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, handicap, familial status, national origin, age or marital status, or an intention, to make any such preference, limitation or discrimination." Familial status includes children under the age of 18 living with parents or legal custodians, pregnant women and people securing custody of children under 18. This newspaper will not knowingly accept any advertising for real estate which is in violation of the law. Our readers are hereby informed that all dwellings advertised in this newspaper are available on an equal opportunity basis. To report discrimination call the Fair Housing Center at 616-451-2980. The HUD toll-free telephone number for the hearing impaired is 1-800-927-9275.

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Competitive cheer team

The 2002-2003 Lion varsity competitive cheer team. (front from left) Melissa Nisse, Cashel Harp, (middle) Heather Clark, Sarah Trumble, Tara Gordenski, Jerrica Ashcraft, Jenna Denton, (back) Matt Root, Nick Burpee, Mike Mead, Kendrick Coplin, and Coach Donna Nisse.

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Floor Hockey championship decided in overtime thriller



The second and third grade K-Wings pose with the Junior Floor Hockey League Cup after winning the playoff finale in overtime 3-2.

The Junior Floor Hockey League for second and third graders playoff ended with the team that couldn't win during the regular season beating the two teams that hadn't lost a game in regular

season play. Monday Nov. 25 the K-Wings defeated the Hornets by a score of 2-1 in overtime when Clint Franklin slapped the puck past Hornet goalie Casey Eldridge with only

1:32 left in the period. Franklin had brought the K-Wings to the finals by banking a shot off the Comets goalie, Nick Matheson, in overtime the Thursday before to upset the regular season league leaders 3-2. K-Wings goalie Mitch Hamilton had two very good games in the playoffs, making a great point blank save on the Hornets Garret Mater only seconds before the end came in overtime.

The Junior Floor Hockey League began play this season and gave 54 second and third graders a chance to play in six games. The Maple Valley Community Education's Kellogg Floor Hockey League for fourth through sixth graders will begin its 15th season in January.

Early childhood 'Story Stop' program expands

Early Childhood Connections of Eaton County has expanded its "Story Stop" literacy program for children 3-5 years old and their parents.

Besides the program, which is held at the Community Room at Thornapple Lake Estates, located at 6335 Thornapple Lake Road, on the first Wednesday of each month from 11 a.m. to noon, there is now a second session that will meet on the second Wednesday of the month, from 11 a.m. to noon in the gym at Kellogg School, located at 324 Queen St. in Nashville.

Joan Leos, the Maple Valley Schools coordinator for Early Childhood Connections, said she wants expectant parents and the parents of children between the birth and 5 years of age to be aware of the services that are available to them through Early Childhood Connections.

Leos said that when families register with Early Childhood Connections, they will receive mailings, a special gift for their child and on-going information about special times and things parents can share with their children during the preschool years.

"Children between birth and 5 years old are able to learn more than at any other time of life," said Leos. "Give your child the gift of a high I.Q. (intelligence quotient) through positive interaction; you can influence your child's I.Q. by some 40 points.

"Yes, you can shape a little genius right in your home — just by doing what you do," she added. "And, guess what? It is fun stuff, done

purposefully, like singing songs, reading books, talking and saying rhymes, working with Play-Doh, coloring, playing music — fun stuff!"

Leos encourages parents to get started by bringing their child to one of the Story Stop programs or by calling her at (517) 852-9468 or Kaye Setchfield at (517) 726-0149.

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PUBLIC HEARING

The Village of Nashville will hold a public hearing on December 12, 2002 at 7:00 p.m. in the council chambers.

SUBJECT: To hear public discussion on amendment to the zoning ordinance, section 14, off street parking and loading. If you would like to comment in writing please drop off or send them to the Village Office 206 N. Main, PO Box 587, Nashville, MI 49073 by 5:00 p.m. on 12/12/02.

NOTICE

SUNFIELD TOWNSHIP PROPERTY TAX COLLECTION

I will be collecting W2002 Property Taxes for Sunfield Township at the Sunfield Branch of Ionia County National Bank, during regular working hours, starting at 9 a.m.:

Every Friday & Saturday in December
 during regular banking hours.

Any taxes received after Dec. 31, 2002, will be dated as received in 2003.

Postmarks will not be accepted as payment date.

Dog Licenses: Neutered/spayed dog is \$7.00 and non-neutered/spayed dog is \$12.00. Proof of up-to-date rabies vaccination is required. After Feb. 28, 2003, licenses will be \$25.00 at the Eaton County Animal Control Office.

Taxes and Dog Licenses may also be paid by U.S. Mail or at my home by appointment.

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Fire disaster averted at church in Nashville

by Sandra Ponsetto
Staff Writer

The Nashville Fire Department responded to a call last Wednesday at Grace Community Church in Nashville to put out a smoldering fire in the ceiling of the new building under construction on M-79 west of the village.

According to Steve Swift, the church representative in charge of the project, around noon workers noticed a dark spot on the ceiling of the auditorium. He said that when Dick Carrow, project manager, took a closer look at the spot, he thought it felt warm and when they opened the attic to investigate further, they found it filled with smoke and called the fire department.

"Rather than finding water leaking, we found a smoldering hot spot," said Swift. "There weren't any flames and no one was

hurt."

Swift said the fire department had to be called back to the church again later that evening.

"Before we went home, we noticed there was still some smoke. The second time the fire department came out we had to take out another 20 feet of ceiling to get rid of the burning insulation," said Swift.

The church had hoped to be in their new facility by Sunday, Dec. 15, but the fire may have set that date back,

according to Swift.

"It may take us another month to finish the project because of the insurance investigation and we need to have the truss company to come out and take a look," he said.

Despite the setback, Swift looks at the positive side of the situation.

"It could have been worse. It could have weakened the roof and it could have fallen down on us," he said. "Nobody was hurt; this stuff can be fixed."



Work continues inside the auditorium at the new Grace Community Church despite damage caused to the ceiling and rafters by a smoldering fire.

New Vermontville postmaster sworn in

by Sandra Ponsetto
Staff Writer

Karen Wickham of Delton was sworn in last week as the new postmaster for the United States Post Of-

fice in Vermontville.

Though she was sworn in Dec. 5, Wickham came to Vermontville in September 2001 as the officer in charge and was appointed postmas-

ter in August.

"The postal service is really good about giving you opportunities to advance," said Wickham, who started her career as a part-time city letter carrier in Bellevue in 1985.

After Bellevue, Wickham said worked as letter carrier in Battle Creek for a year before accepting a position as a clerk in the Delton office, which she held for 13 years. Before coming to Vermontville, Wickham served as the postmaster in Dowling.

Wickham said that being a postmaster means doing what ever needs to be done to see that the mail gets delivered.

"It's my responsibility to sort the mail for delivery, that's the important thing," she said. "Then I do whatever else need to be done. I do maintenance and sell stamps and packages. I was responsible for getting a new roof put on, having a new counter top put in and



Karen Wickham is the new postmaster at the United States Post Office in Vermontville.

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<p>Gallon Bareman's 1/2% or Fat Free Milk \$1⁹⁹</p>	<p>1/2 Gallon Bareman's Orange Juice \$1¹⁹</p>	<p>2 lbs. Pioneer Powdered or Brown Sugar 99¢</p>	<p>Blue Bonnet Margarine Quarters 2/\$1</p>
<p>5 qt. Pails Country Maid Ice Cream \$4⁹⁹</p>	<p>5 lbs. Gold Medal Flour 89¢</p>	<p>12 oz. Kraft American Cheese Slices 2/\$3</p>	<p>10-15 oz. Raisin Bran, Frosted Flakes, Rice Krispies Kellogg's Cereals 2/\$4</p>
<p>12 ct. Northern Bath Tissue \$2⁹⁹</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Vermontville Grocery Phone 726-1570</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-size: small;">Store Hours: Mon.-Sat. 9 am-9 pm; Sun. 10 am-6 pm • Prices good thru Saturday INSTANT LOTTERY • BEER • WINE • VIDEOS • WIC, CREDIT CARDS, DEBIT CARDS, EBT</p>		

getting repairs and upgrades done.

"And," Wickham added. "It hasn't happened yet; but, if someone called in sick, I'd deliver the mail. It's a little office. I have to know how to do everything and make sure everything gets done every day."

Wickham said she doesn't mind the driving to Vermontville from her home in Delton every morning.

"When the weather isn't

bad, it's not a bad drive," she said. "Vermontville is a nice little town with a lot of nice people. You can't beat the small town atmosphere; plus, the employees here are great."

Wickham said that the post office window hours would stay the same Monday through Friday. However, in January the post office window will close at 11 a.m. instead of noon on Saturday.

Turkey shoot, bake sale set at Masonic Lodge

The Nashville Masonic Lodge and Maple Valley Lightning Bolts 4-H Club will have a turkey shoot and bake sale Saturday, Dec. 14, beginning at 1 p.m. at the Nashville Masonic Lodge.

The turkey shoot will be an indoor BB gun shoot, using the tournament BB guns donated by the lodge to the Maple Valley Lightning Bolts 4-H Club for their

shooting sports program.

Children and adults are invited to participate. Prizes will be awarded based on scored targets. The shoot will be run by certified 4-H shooting sports leaders and Masonic Lodge members.

Holiday baked goods will be on sale at this event. Organizers say this event promises to be fun for the entire family.