



**Newsletter binds friends 60 years after World War II ends**

OBSERVER LIFE, SECTION C

**War veterans have difficulty adjusting to civilian life - HEALTH, C6**



**Minx mixes it up with DJ style**

PINK PAGE C8

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SUNDAY  
May 29, 2005

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**Deadline to run for city offices nears**

BY DARRELL CLEM  
STAFF WRITER

This year, Westland voters will elect a mayor and four city council members during an election that is drawing some high-profile candidates.

Candidates planning to seek an elected position face a filing deadline of 4 p.m. Tuesday, June 14, at City Clerk Eileen DeHart's office at Westland City Hall.

As of Thursday, Mayor Sandra Cicirelli had filed her nominating petitions to seek a second, four-year term. She made history in 2001 when she became the first woman elected to the city's top post.

Another woman, city government watcher

Elenor Swistak, has said she is circulating petitions and will challenge Cicirelli.

As of Thursday, only three candidates had officially entered the council race - incumbent Robert Stottlemeyer, former Mayor Robert Thomas and community volunteer Normie Brazier.

Other council members whose seats are at stake include Cheryl Graunstadt, Michael Kehrer and President Charles Pickering.

Several council candidates, including some incumbents, are expected to enter the race before the filing deadline.

There will be a primary election on Aug. 2 due to the Wayne County parks millage ques-

tion. Whether there will be local races will depend on how many candidates file.

A mayoral primary will be held if three or more candidates enter the race. A council primary will be scheduled if there are nine or more hopefuls. The winners in the primary would face off on the Nov. 1 general election ballot.

Candidates who hope to enter either race will have to collect valid signatures of at least 210 registered Westland voters to get their names on the ballot.

"They have to be valid," DeHart said. "If they give me 210 signatures and two of them aren't valid, they can't be a candidate. I always say,

get a little cushion."

DeHart also offered another tip. Whoever circulates petitions for candidates should make sure that they don't sign the papers until they have collected the last of their signatures.

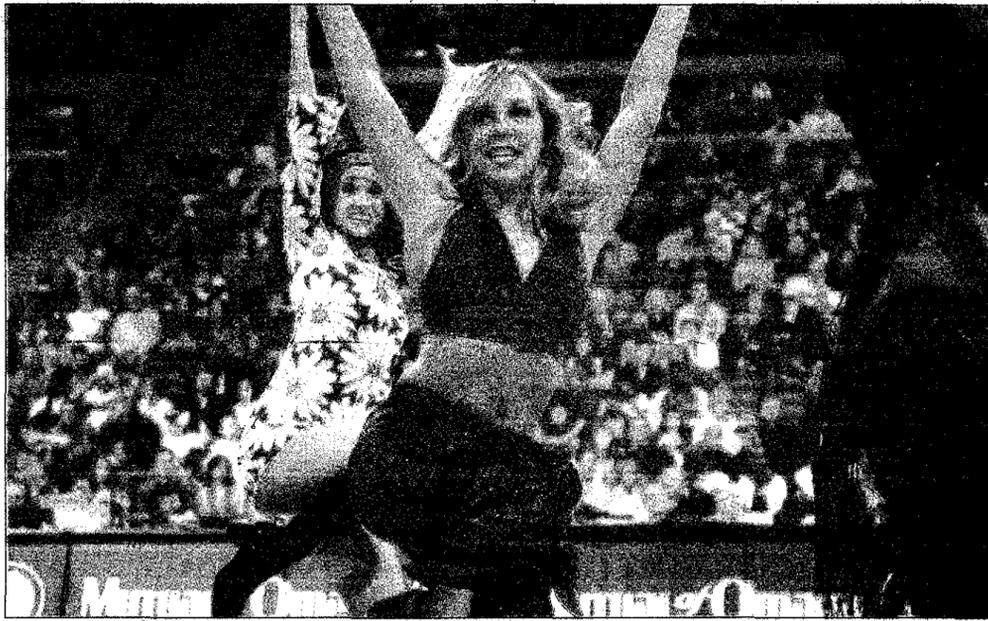
Also, once a circulator puts a date on a petition, any signatures collected after that date will be invalid, DeHart said.

The winner of the mayoral race will earn a four-year term.

The top three vote-getters in the council race also will get four-year terms. The fourth-place finisher will receive a two-year term.

Nominating petitions are available at the clerk's office.

**Dream come true**



Livonia Franklin High School graduate Shannon Davis is all smiles as she performs a routine during a recent Detroit Pistons-Miami Heat Game.

**Westland woman helps fire up Pistons fans**

BY SUE MASON  
STAFF WRITER

When the Detroit Pistons square off against the Miami Heat at the Palace of Auburn Hills at 8 p.m. tonight, Shannon Davis will be there.

And the 19-year-old Westland resident will have one of the best seats in the house, on the hardwood at the edge of the court.

"It's a dream come true," said Davis, a rookie member of Automotion, the Pistons' dance team. "I want to dance, either perform on stage or anything I can get. I never dreamed I'd be on Automotion."

As a member of the team, Davis performs at all of the Detroit Pistons' home games. The dance team also does pre- and postgame activities, make public appearances and does charitable events.

The latter fits in with coach Rebecca Girard's vision for the 16-member team. Her motto is "make a difference" and her mission for Automotion this year "is to change the way people feel by being the best role models possible and by helping in the community, like never before."

Girard was a member of the inaugural Automotion team. She has been dancing for 26 years and coaching for 19. She

PLEASE SEE PISTONS, A4

**Letter writers hear back from troops**

BY DIANE GALE ANDREASSI  
CORRESPONDENT

Two young girls' letters touched the hearts of servicemen in Iraq so much they took time to write back and express their appreciation.

Now the people sponsoring the letter writing campaign would like to find the girls to let them know they received responses.

The girls' letters were among 1,000 others collected at Westland Shopping Center during October 2004 and sent overseas to troops in Iraq the following month. A letter writing station, including paper if the writer chose, was set up in the

mall's east court near Marshall Field's.

"We asked that all letters be in an unsealed envelope," said Denise Mills, Westland Shopping Center marketing manager. "They were read to make sure they were appropriate and for security purposes."

The Westland Shopping Center return address was stamped on the outside of the envelopes. And that's

where the servicemen sent their responses.

The mall received the letters last week, both from men in the same battalion, and now they're hoping to find the girls who prompted the soldiers overseas to write back.

One soldier included the letter he received, which was signed in cursive from Emily Chadwick of Garden City.

The other serviceman's letter, however, didn't contain the first note that was written locally. The serviceman's letter was simply addressed to Angela.

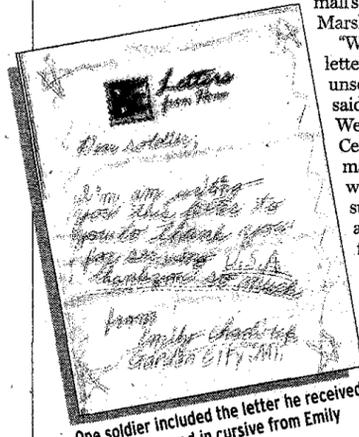
"I am hoping that we can publish the letters to let people know that not only did the letters get through, the soldiers really appreciated them," Mills said.

Emily's letter looks as if it was written by someone who is just learning to write in cursive. It says:

"Dear Soldier,  
I'm writing you this letter to you to thank you for serving U.S.A. Thank you so much,

from Emily Chadwick  
Garden City, Mi."

PLEASE SEE LETTERS, A4



One soldier included the letter he received, which was signed in cursive from Emily Chadwick of Garden City.

**At age 100, he's ready to celebrate more**

BY SUE MASON  
STAFF WRITER

A smile plays at the corners of John Lyall's mouth as he tells anyone within hearing distance that his family is all invited to the next birthday in 100 years."

On June 5, he reaches a milestone, he'll turn 100. And of course, there'll be a celebration.

"Yes, there's going to be a party, or so they

tell me," he said.

His family - he has two sons, John and David, and two daughters, Frieda and Doreen, 16 grandchildren, 29 great-grandchildren and three great-great-grandchildren - will gather at the Stark Road Gospel Hall in Livonia to celebrate.

Lyall was born on June 5, 1905, in Fife, Scotland. Even today, almost 75 years since his coming to the United States, there's still a hint of an accent when he speaks.

An electrician in the coal mines in Scotland, he depended on overtime to make ends meet. When the overtime was cut, Lyall accepted the government's offer to assist his emigration to Canada. He left behind his wife Florence and baby daughter Frieda who followed him a few months later.

Once in Canada, he found there were no jobs to be had, but he ended up assisting a

PLEASE SEE 100, A4

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Volume 41  
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**Coming Thursday in Filter**

Michiganders love their summer festivals and no matter where you live, there's one near you

# Bicyclists stage ride to raise awareness

BY DIANE GALE ANDREASSI  
CORRESPONDENT

Shahidah Muta of Westland joined about 200 other bicycle riders who rode 12 miles on Hines Drive recently in remembrance of those killed or injured in bike riding accidents and to draw attention to road safety rules.

The ride is part of a nationwide program, Ride of Silence, to raise awareness that cyclists have a legal right to share the road.

Muta understands the need. Last year, she saw two people hit by motorists while cycling on Hines Drive.

Motorists sometimes holler out their windows that the cyclists should use the sidewalk, she said, adding that they probably think bicycle riders are homeless and can't afford a car.

"Or, they're jealous" that the cyclists are getting in shape and sticking to their goals, she said.

Muta said she believes the biggest problem is that motorists and cyclists can get so focused on where they're going and thinking about something else that they don't pay attention to the other's needs.

"You don't do it intentionally," said Muta, who cycles some 1,300 miles a year.

"There needs to be a lot more bicycle awareness," said Tina Kangas of Walled Lake who took part in the ride. She is a friend of the boy who was riding with Todd Schoenheide, the 17-year-old Northville High School student who was struck and killed by a drunken driver while riding his bike on April 10.

Before the ride began, event organizer, Jeff Osowski, asked the bicyclists to take a moment to look at the people around them.

"Statistically, next year one of us won't be here," the Livonia resident told the crowd.

In 2003 there were 622 bicyclists killed in the United States and 46,000 reported being injured.

"We want to share the road," Osowski, 42, said. "That's why we're here. I read about it in the back of bicycling magazine and sent an e-mail and found out there was no one involved in Michigan organizing rides. I decided you only get out what you put into the community and decided to organize the ride."

Before the pack of riders left the pavilion in the Nankin Mills area of the park, Osowski read a poem, "The Ride of Silence." It began with,



PHOTOS BY ADRIENNE VROOMAN

Participants in the Ride of Silence stay on the shoulder of Hines Drive as cars passed by during the 12-mile ride.

"Tonight we number many, but ride as one, in honor of those not with us ..."

Sherry Zimmerman of Plymouth showed up in support of a co-worker whose cousin was killed in a bicycle-related accident two years ago.

Jim Sharples of Center Line noted that most drivers are courteous and give cyclists the right of way. He said it's the exception when motorists hog the road or put cyclists in danger.

Osowski rides more than 3,000 miles annually and at least 2,000 of those miles are on Hines Drive. Recent deaths of children on bicycles draws even more attention to the need of safety awareness, Osowski said pointing to Schoenheide and two other incidents a couple of weeks ago.

Devon Walton of Detroit was struck by a motorist on Mother's Day while riding his bike on East Canfield in Detroit. The same day, a 9-year-old Inkster boy, Jayvon Lowe, was riding his bicycle on Beech Daly when he was struck and killed by a motorist.

Osowski said he hopes the local Ride of Silence will become a yearly event to let "automobile drivers know we're out there and we're trying to follow the rules."

"Hopefully, drivers will follow the rules and look out for us just like we are looking out for them," he said.

Osowski cycles for the physical fitness benefits and prefers riding a bike to running, because there is less impact on his knees.

"It's noncompetitive," he said. "And you get to see a lot of nature. I've had plenty of close calls. People will look



Organizer Jeff Osowski asks the bicyclists to take a moment to look at the people around them as part of the preparations for the Ride of Silence in Hines Park.

right at you when you're crossing the street and drive right in front of you. Bicyclists are supposed to follow all the same rules of the road as cars, because they are vehicles on the road. They have to go with the traffic and you can get ticked."

The Rev. Joe Bonno of St. Michael Lutheran Church in Canton said the important thing for everyone to remember is to "always be aware whether you're riding or driving."

He said he recently had a poignant lesson of the importance of wearing helmets. Women in the church approached him and explained that since the children

admired him he had a responsibility to wear head gear and be a good example.

He agreed and the first time he wore it, the helmet saved him from an accident with a tree branch.

Some riders were moved to tears as they remembered friends and family members who died in cycling accidents.

Theresa Flaga of Warren held up poster boards by the side of the road as the cyclists passed by. It read: "We Are Riding for Those Fallen." It listed names of bike riders who have been killed.

"It's very sad we have to do something like this to show the public we deserve rights on the road, too," Flaga said.

# Gillies remembered as good friend of Westland

BY DARRELL CLEM  
STAFF WRITER

George R. Gillies will be remembered as a dedicated Westland city employee whose humor and compassion endeared him to those who knew him.

"I loved the guy," former Mayor Robert Thomas said. "He was just a great guy."

Mr. Gillies - retired deputy mayor and former parks and recreation director - died Tuesday after battling cancer. He was 70.

Serving nearly a decade as Thomas' deputy mayor, Mr. Gillies became the longest-serving appointee to that city position.

"He was a good deputy mayor," Thomas said. "He always tried to put a positive spin on the city. He wanted people to think of Westland as a good city and a positive city."

Mr. Gillies led the charge with Thomas to create the city's Salute to Excellence awards for Westland's best mother, father, teacher and high school senior. Thomas - and now Mayor Sandra Cicirelli - honored the winners during State of the City addresses.

"George really got things rolling with that," Thomas said.

Mr. Gillies often served as master of ceremonies for events such as the State of the City and the city's Christmas tree-lighting ceremony.

"He was really good at it, and he loved doing it," Thomas said. "He liked to see people happy."

A Canton Township resident, Mr. Gillies started his city tenure in 1970 as a part-time athletic instructor in the parks and recreation department. He later became a softball supervisor and was appointed parks and recreation director in 1986 by then-Mayor Charles "Trav" Griffin.

"As a city employee, he had tremendous people skills, which I knew was necessary in

the parks and recreation department," Griffin said. "Secondly, he was an extremely conscientious person who wanted to make sure the job was done right."

Mr. Gillies always tried to coax Thomas into golfing, although the former mayor always preferred fishing during his leisure time.

"The first time I ever golfed was with George, after his first bout with cancer," Thomas said. "He was always trying to get me to golf while I was in office. The only two times I've ever golfed have been with George."

Griffin recalled how Mr. Gillies treated the people he encountered.

"He was caring and compassionate, and he always tried to treat people with dignity and respect," Griffin said. "He also had a great sense of humor. He could speak to small groups and large groups of people, and he had the ability to inspire them."

Griffin credited Mr. Gillies with improving the look of the Bailey Recreation Center during his tenure as parks and recreation director.

City Personnel Director Keith Madden found in Gillies' personnel file a stack of more than 50 letters and cards that Gillies received as a show of appreciation for how he helped others.

"He was a good friend to have," Thomas said. "We kept in touch after we retired from office."

Mr. Gillies is survived by his wife, Janet; children Kathy Cripe, David (Ann) and Richard; sister Marilyn Gillies; and grandchildren Derek, Kyle, Abby and Annie.

Services were Friday at St. Mary Catholic Church in Wayne. Burial was at Knollwood Cemetery.

Memorial contributions may be made to the American Cancer Society.

dclem@oe.hometowncomm.net | (734) 953-2110

## DEATHS

**B**  
James E. Blake, 68, of Pontiac, died May 19.

**C**  
Barbara "Joan" Smith Caro, 83, died May 22.

**D**  
Nicholas Dunchock, 90, of Bloomfield Hills, died May 23.

**E**  
Eleanor Engerer, of Livonia, died May 16.

**G**  
Josephine F. Grzebiak, of Livonia, died May 21.

**H**  
Willard H. Hahn, 82, of Madeira, Ohio, died May 21.

Steven A. Heath, 30, of Pontiac, died May 14.

Stephen T. Herr, 41, of Waterford Township, died May 11.

**K**  
Raymond J. Knickerbocker, 65, of Ludington, formerly of Canton, died May 17.

**M**  
Ronald Peter Miles Sr., 59, of Tallahassee, Fla., died May 14.

Dick J. Miller, 76.

**N**  
Mary Neary, of Livonia, died May 22.

**P**  
Stefanie Ann Nowak, of Westland, died May 25.

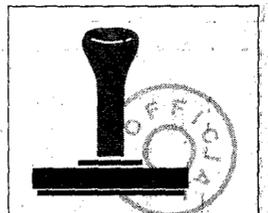
**R**  
Margaret G. Plagens, 75, of Farmington, died May 19.

Karen M. Prullt, 62, of Rochester Hills, died May 18.

**S**  
Frances Skolarus, of Westland, died May 22.

Dennis Norman Styers, 60, of Westland, died May 16.

**W**  
Lillian L. Werner, of Plymouth, died May 21.



For the Record appears in every edition of the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers. Complete paid obituaries can be found inside today's Community Life in Passages on page C5.

## WESTLAND Observer

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To all residents and interested parties, The Council minutes will be available for review on the internet at [www.gardencitymi.org](http://www.gardencitymi.org)

You can access this information at the Garden City Library or City Hall during regular Business hours or in the Police Station Lobby 24 hours a day.

ALLYSON M. BETTIS, Treasurer/City Clerk

Publish: May 1, 15, 22, 29, June 12, 19, July 3, 17, 24, 31, August 7, and 21, 2005

### PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

#### WAYNE-WESTLAND COMMUNITY SCHOOLS PROPOSED 2005-2006 BUDGET

#### MONDAY, JUNE 13, 2005

Please take notice that, on June 13, 2005 at 7 o'clock p.m. at 36745 Marquette, Westland, Michigan, the Board of Education of the Wayne-Westland Community Schools will hold a public hearing to consider the District's proposed 2005-06 budget.

The Board may not adopt its proposed 2005-06 budget until after the public hearing. A copy of the proposed 2005-06 budget, including the proposed property tax millage rate, is available for public inspection during normal business hours at 36745 Marquette, Westland, Michigan.

The property tax millage rate proposed to be levied to support the proposed budget will be a subject of this hearing.

MARTHA K. PITSENBARGER, Secretary

Publish: May 29 and June 2, 2005

Cheer for the hometeam

read today's

## SPORTS section

# City's best honored at awards dinner

BY SUE MASON  
STAFF WRITER

A check for \$500 will come in handy for John LaFaive. A senior at Lutheran High School Westland, he has set his sights on attending the Brooks Institute of Photography in Santa Barbara, Calif., after he receives an associate's degree from Schoolcraft College.

LaFaive is the 2005 recipient of the Joseph F. Benyo Scholarship, an honor, he admits, he didn't expect.

"I'm kind of surprised I got it," said LaFaive, who received an oversized scholarship "check" during the Westland Chamber of Commerce's Spring Awards Dinner Tuesday evening. "It further encourages me to pursue a career in photojournalism."

More than 100 people filled Joey's Comedy Club in Livonia Tuesday to also see awards presented to 2005 First Citizen Gary Bulson and Business Person of the Year Jeffrey Kavanaugh.

The Benyo Scholarship is in honor of the late Joseph F. Benyo and recognizes an individual who is pursuing an art, imaging or photographic career.

For LaFaive, it was the glamour of fashion photography that caught his eye and, when he heard about the classes offered at the William D. Ford Career Technical Center, he decided to give them a try.

"I heard about the great work being done there," said LaFaive, crediting teachers Jeff Bloomer and Gloria Joseph in encouraging him to pursue a career in photography.

"He has done an exceptional job," said Cindy Candela, placement coordinator at the center, in announcing his selection.

A second-year media production student at the center, he has directed several projects at the center including a



First Citizen Gary Bulson came away with hands full of awards and proclamations after being honored as Westland's 2005 First Citizen.

**More than 100 people filled Joey's Comedy Club in Livonia Tuesday to also see awards presented to 2005 First Citizen Gary Bulson and Business Person of the Year Jeffrey Kavanaugh.**

times I carry the flag, but there's 30 people behind me carrying the bigger picture."

Bulson was a founding member of the Westland Business Owners Association and the SPARK Foundation (Sports, Parks And Recreation for Kids), raising money for local park programs. He's currently the vice president of SPARK. He also has served on the Westland Festival Committee as well as the Salvation Army Advisory Council.

He also is active in the Westland Jaycees and as the chapter president of the organization led the group to national honors in 2003.

The recipient of the 2002 Business Person of the Year award from the Westland Chamber of Commerce and the Westland Citizens' Citizen of the Year in 2003, Bulson dedicated his award to his wife of 14 years, Brenda, and two children.

video of former students talking about the center and their careers, Candela said.

"I know this will serve you well in your future career," she said.

"I can't do what I do without the people behind me," said Bulson in accepting the award. "This award is as much for me as it is for the people behind me. There's



Chamber chair Jade Smith congratulates Jeffrey Kavanaugh, the chamber's 2005 Business Person of the Year.



Lutheran High School Westland senior John LaFaive holds a mock \$500 check he received from Susan Benyo as the recipient of a scholarship named in honor of her late husband, Joseph.

Response Team.

"I couldn't put it on without the help from the people in this room," said Kavanaugh in accepting the award. "It's an honor just to be nominated and I'm a grateful recipient."

Both Bulson and Kavanaugh also were recognized with proclamations

from U.S. Rep. Thaddeus McCotter, R-Livonia; State Sen. Laura Toy, R-Livonia; State Rep. Glenn Anderson, D-Westland; Mayor Sandra Cicirelli, the Westland City Council and City Clerk Eileen DeHart.

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PHOTOS BY BILL BRESLER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

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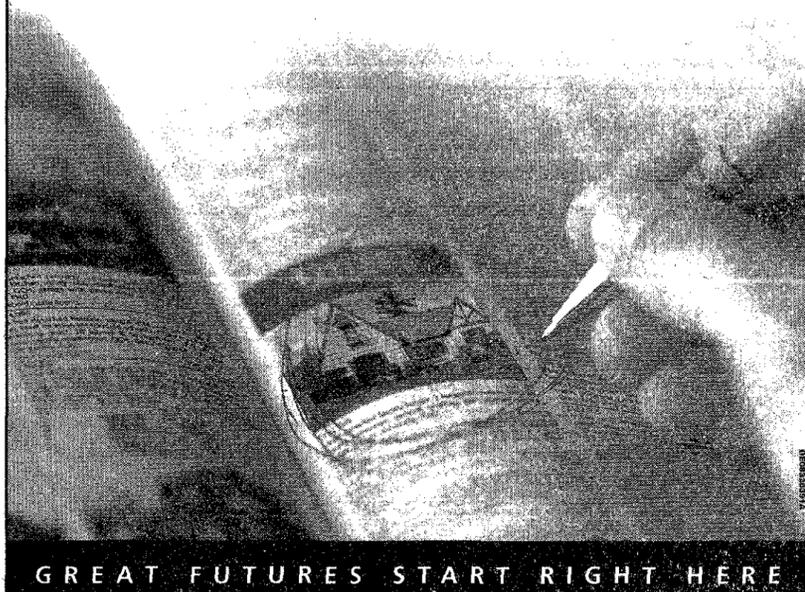
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**100**  
FROM PAGE A1  
truck driver after dropping in at the Walkerville Hydro Plant. He made \$12 a week.

The Lyalls stayed in Canada for a year before coming to Detroit where he eventually got a job as a skilled tradesman at Chrysler's Highland Park plant. He worked there for 31 years.

"He's been retired longer than he worked there," said his daughter-in-law Candy Lyall.

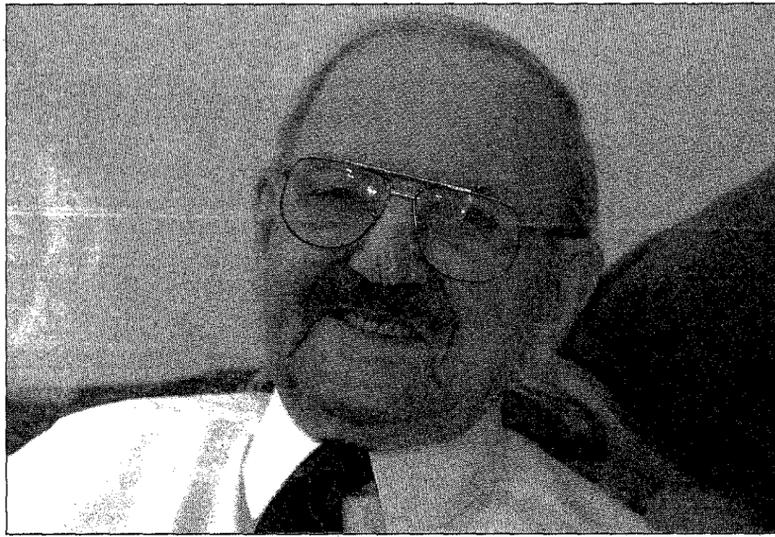
Lyall still recalls their first home in Detroit - 8450 Auburn. He bought it "cheap," for \$5,550, he said. The family also found a storefront church and became active in it, helping to build the West Chicago Gospel Hall.

In 1963, they left Detroit and moved to a home on Nancy Street in Livonia where they helped build the Stark Road Gospel Hall on Stark Road south of Plymouth Road.

He and Florence eventually moved to a townhouse in Westland. She passed away shortly after they celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary in 1996, and Lyall has stayed on there. He prefers it that way.

He still drives, although limiting his time behind the wheel to daylight hours, and does some cooking, according to Candy. Lyall is quick to respond that "I know how to fry bacon and eggs."

While in Scotland, Lyall worked and went to school twice a week to study a trade. He ended up going to the University of Edinburgh one day a week until he decided to



John Lyall breaks into a smile, talking about the many things he has done during his life. The Westland resident turns 100 on June 5.

leave for Canada. When he left, his father and sister Jean came to see him off, his mother wouldn't come. Since it wasn't his time to board the ship, they left to get some tea.

"But they weren't quick enough," Lyall said. "The tender came to get me to take me to the ship, it must have been early."

The Lyalls did return to Scotland two-three times and saw more of the country than when they lived there. They stayed with relatives, but now, everyone they knew has passed away.

"I was the baby of the family and they're all gone," he said.

"There were six kids, three boys and three girls. One left to go to Africa and we lost contact with him. We were the only two to leave the country."

He also recalls that Florence's father had the only car in the village, but at the time the big thing was motorcycles.

"They didn't have electric starts, you had to run and jump on them," Lyall said. "You'd drop the handle, release the pressure and away you'd go."

And his dad had the only telephone in the village during World War I.

"He had to make sure no

light came from the windows because the zeppelins were overhead looking for the capital, Edinburgh, to bomb," Lyall recalled. "I heard their drone but I never saw them."

On the top of a hutch in the dining room is a small rocker that reminds Lyall of his wife. When he gets to missing his wife, he gives it a rock or two.

As for his longevity, Lyall has credits just one person - the Lord.

"He's been good to me," the Westland resident said. "Everything I have is because of him."

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**PISTONS**

FROM PAGE A1

is in her fifth year as its coach.

Davis heard about the auditions on the radio and decided to give it a try. She practiced what her dance instructor at the Point Counterpoint Studio in Garden City had preached.

"She told me to always be in front where they can see you and that's what I did," said the 19-year-old Westland resident said. "I was in the back, and I made sure I got to the front so they saw me."

Davis has loved dancing for as long as she can remember but didn't start classes until age 10. Her mother, Beth, decided to give into her pleading in hopes its would help with her "really, really bad stage fright."

It did and now she won't give it up for anything, she said.

"The first time I performed with Automotion was my first time ever at a basketball game, now I'm the biggest basketball fan ever," Davis said. "It's not just the Pistons, I know about the other teams."

The team practices three hours twice a week and occasionally has extra hours of practice. According to Davis, they learn two-three routines per practice. Davis estimates that she has learned at least 50

routines, since attending a weeklong dance camp last August.

"Sometimes we practice a routine we need to have ready for a game the next day," she said. "It can be hectic. When we have games, I basically devote the entire day."

Admittedly, she's done her share of performances in front of large crowds, but she's learned a thing or two about performing in front of 20,000 plus people, most of whom are above her head.

"I've learned to keep my chin up," she said. "I've learned so many things since joining Automotion. I was almost shied when I was at the dance studio. Working with Rebeca has shown me that I can always have something if I want it enough."

"I look up to her a lot. She's an amazing person. The team wouldn't be what it is without her and the captain, Trishia Crawford."

While Automotion is her dream job, it's only for a year. Davis will have to audition to be a member of next year's team.

"We're one big family, and don't want it to end," she said. "It's amazing, we're so close and love each other so much."

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**Bill supporting firms owned by disabled veterans gets OK**

The Michigan Senate recently unanimously approved bipartisan legislation sponsored by Sen. Laura Toy, R-Livonia, which would make it easier for companies owned by disabled veterans to secure state contracts.

"Michigan's veterans have risked their lives to defend our nation's freedom, and many have the scars and disabilities to show for it," said Toy. "As Michigan's economy continues to lag behind the nation's in the face of a changing global landscape, now more than ever, we must continue to help these individuals who have made such enormous sacrifices."

Senate Bill 303, sponsored by Toy, would require that preference in awarding state con-

tracts be given to qualified disabled veterans. It would also set a goal that not less than 3 percent of total state expenditures for construction, goods, and services are awarded to qualified disabled veterans.

Under a companion bill, the Department of Management and Budget would be required to report to the Legislature each year on its progress towards awarding state contracts to disabled veterans and other persons with disabilities.

Toy said similar laws on the books didn't require meeting goals or reporting requirements. "That is the wrong message to send to our state's veterans and disabled citizens. This needed legislation will now fill that void," she said.

**LETTERS**

FROM PAGE A1

The letter she received back was from U.S. Army Sgt. David Nimmo. His letter says: "The support we receive helps get us through long days away from our families. Thank you and the many others back home in the USA."

Sincerely,  
Sgt. David Nimmo,  
U.S. Army in Iraq  
The other mystery letter was

written to a girl named, "Angela." It says:

"Dear Angela, Thank you for your thoughtful letter. And for the prayers. Sorry it took so long to write you back. I trust you had a very good school year. Enjoy the summer and take care. Tell all your classmates we say Hello. Take care"

Sgt. Dennis Weaver  
The letters collected at the Westland Shopping Center were among a total of 9,500 letters sent from a dozen Jones

Lang LaSalle-managed malls in 10 states. Feed the Children in Oklahoma City inserted the letters in care packages that were prepared for troops overseas.

"With the recent anniversary of Sept. 11 and the death of more than 1,000 U.S. service personnel in Iraq, we need to let our troops know that we support them 100 percent and pray for their safe return," Mills said when the letter writing campaign was launched.

She is considering hosting a similar event in October at the Westland Shopping Center in hopes letters will reach service people during the holiday season this year, as well.

"We had a lot of success with it," Mills said. "It struck a cord with everybody and everybody could relate. It was interesting to hear and read letters from people who either knew or had a loved one in the service overseas. There's more people than we realize who have been affected by this."

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PLACES AND FACES

Democrat meeting

The Westland Democratic Club will meet at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, May 31, at the Dorsey Community Center, on Dorsey east of Venoy and south of Palmer. Officers will meet at 7 p.m.

Carnival time

The Wayne Ford Civic League at 1645 N. Wayne Road in Westland will host a carnival now through Sunday (June 3). Adult and children rides, games and food will be featured. Call (734) 728-5010 for information.

The civic league also is offering a dinner for seniors 11:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Sunday, June 12, at the league. The price is \$8 for members and \$10 for non-members for a buffet dinner with beer, wine, pop and dancing to live entertainment. This event is for people age 55 and older. Call (734) 728-5010 for information.

Skating party

Walking with Faith Inc., a team of more than 100 walkers and volunteers who walk in the annual Multiple Sclerosis Walks, will hold a "Kids FUN - RAISE for Multiple Sclerosis" skating party 6:30-8:30 p.m. Thursday, June 16, at Skate Land West, 37550 Cherry Hill, Westland.

The cost will be \$10 per person with rentals of \$1.50 for roller skates and \$5 for inline skates. There will be 50/50 raffles, and a PSP raffle. Tickets cost \$1 each or 3 for \$5. For more information, call

Alecia Harris at (313) 999-5259.

Summer program

Westland Bowl in association with the Westland Parks and Recreation Department will offer free bowling for kids now through Aug. 20.

Kids up to 18 years of age will be able to bowl one free game per day during summer hours with a participation card, available at the bowling center, 5940 N. Wayne Road. The centers also is offering a free family bonus package on Saturdays.

For more information, call Westland Bowl at (734) 722-7570.

Fund-raiser

Westland residents can buy frozen pizza, home-style fudge, gourmet coffee samplers, cookie dough, mixed nuts and such things as light bulbs and trash bags without making a trip to the grocery or hardware stores. Representatives of AmeriFund are calling homes in John Glenn High School community on behalf of the Instrumental Music Boosters as part of a special fund-raiser. The calls will be made between 4 and 9 p.m. Monday through Friday for about three weeks. The main goal of the campaign is to complete fund-raising for new band uniforms, according to booster and campaign director Barry Hensel.

The proceeds will help cover the costs of rain gear and accessories. All products are guaranteed and will be delivered to homes free of charge.

Groups honor Toy for work

State Sen. Laura Toy, R-Livonia, was recently honored by two statewide organizations for her work on legislation to protect the health of Michigan citizens.

Toy was awarded the 2005 Significant Progress Award from the Donate Life Coalition of Michigan for her legislation to establish the Organ and Tissue Donation Education Fund, which became law Dec. 29, 2004. The fund allows individuals to contribute to organ and tissue donation education programs when they renew their drivers licenses.

Toy was also named Legislator of the Year by the Michigan Dietetic Association for her work promoting licen-

sure for dietitians and nutritionists in Michigan. She sponsored legislation to require such licenses, which is currently before the Senate's Health Policy Committee. Both awards were presented in May.

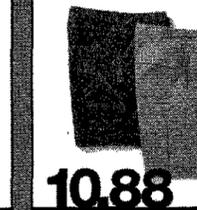
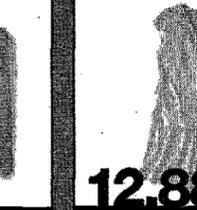
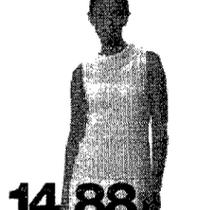
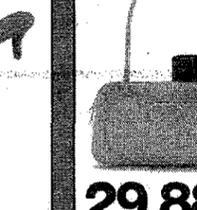
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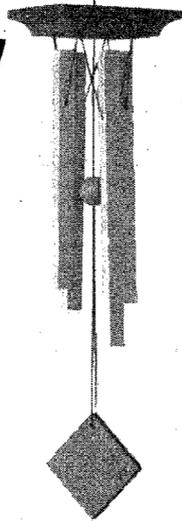
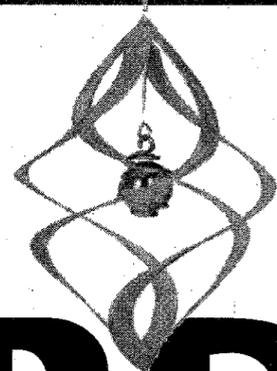
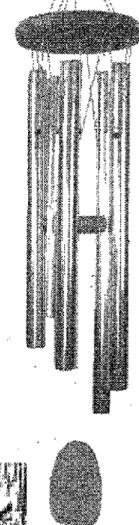
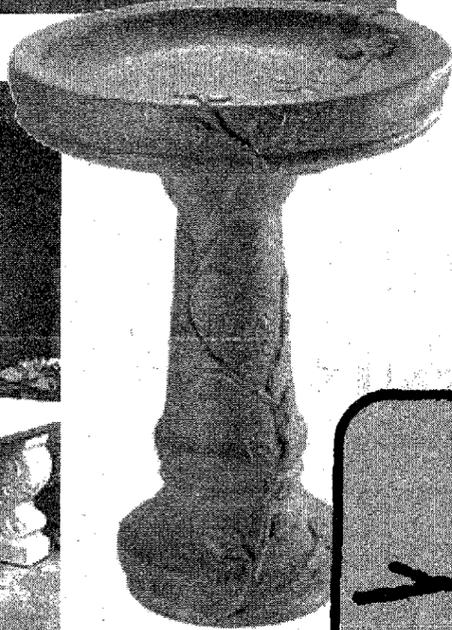
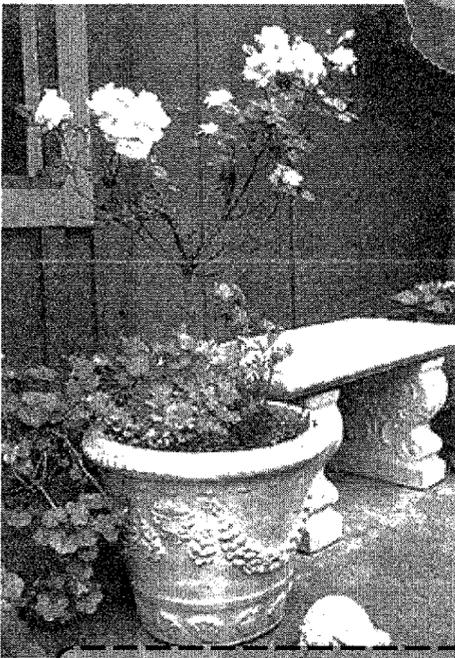
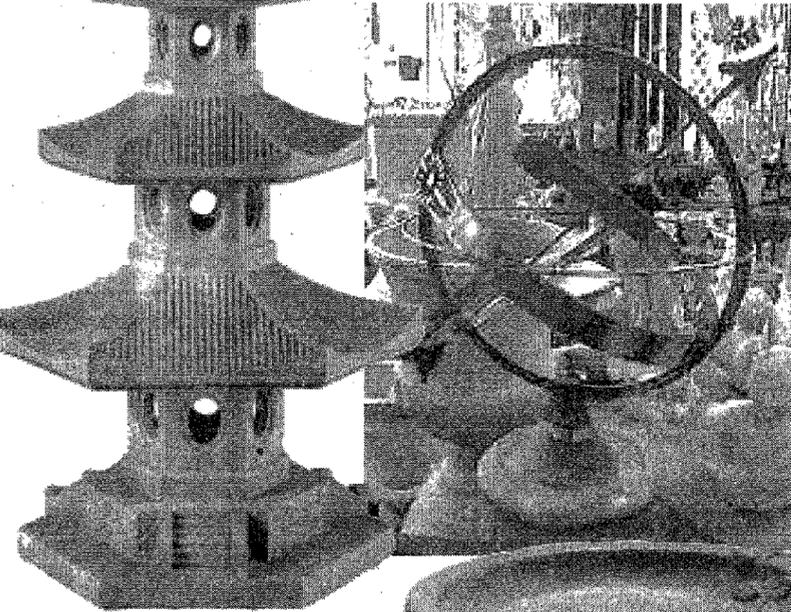
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# Independent panel would take politics out of redistricting

In America, it is a crime to rig a single election, but to this day it remains perfectly acceptable to rig an entire system to advantage a particular political party or incumbent elected officials.

The practice is called gerrymandering and it is pervasive in American politics today, including in Michigan.

Gerrymandering deprives many voters of their voice in Lansing and in Washington, D.C., and discourages citizens from participating in the electoral process.

On Thursday, May 19, along with 41 co-sponsors, I introduced House Joint Resolution K, a proposed amendment to the constitution that would put a stop to gerrymandering by placing the power to draw state legislative and congressional districts in the hands of an Independent Redistricting Commission (IRC), establishing clear standards for the composition of districts, and barring the commission from using election results, voting history data or incumbent addresses at any point during the drafting or adoption of a redistricting plan.

Michigan's redistricting system is badly broken. In the 2004 election for Michigan House of Representatives, only 18 of 110 seats were decided by margins of 10 percent or less and only two incumbents lost their seats.

Since the current redistricting plan was adopted by the Michigan legislature, no congressional incumbents have lost their seats in a general election, no seats have changed political party, and no congressional election has been decided by a margin of less than 16 percent.

It is clear that redistricting in Michigan, and across America, has become a political instrument that best serves to protect and strengthen incumbency and partisan advantage.

As a result, elected officials enjoy tremendous self-bestowed advantages in elections. The bottom line: Voters no longer pick their elected officials, elected officials pick their voters and that's wrong. It's bad for voters and bad for our democracy.

My proposal takes the power to draw congressional and legislative districts out of the hands of self-interested legislators and places it with an independent commission that would be constitutionally barred from using election results, voting history data and incumbent addresses at any point during the drafting and adoption of the redistricting plan.

A commission approach insulates the

**In the wake of every election, editorial pages, pundits and politicians alike bemoan the fact that so few Michiganders engage in the political process. We repeat our mantra that "every vote counts," yet the unspoken truth is that in many congressional and legislative districts that is simply not the case. Gerrymandering makes some votes count more than others and erases the political power of entire communities.**

process from the political temptations that lead state legislatures to draw partisan gerrymanders. This type of IRC is a proven approach for restoring the integrity and public confidence in the apportionment and redistricting process.

Twelve states already use commissions to draw legislative districts. Six states use them to draw congressional districts. A number of other states employ advisory and back-up commissions.

These commissions have been tremendously successful and Michigan would be well advised to consider a similar approach.

Creating an IRC does not advantage one political party or another. It makes the process about the people and not the politically powerful. It empowers voters and makes votes count again.

In the wake of every election, editorial pages, pundits and politicians alike bemoan the fact that so few Michiganders engage in the political process. We repeat our mantra that "every vote counts," yet the unspoken truth is that in many congressional and legislative districts that is simply not the case. Gerrymandering makes some votes count more than others and erases the political power of entire communities.

Reform of the redistricting process in Michigan is long overdue. I hope readers will agree, contact their legislators, and urge them to support my proposal.

Glenn S. Anderson represents the 18th District (Westland) in the state House of Representatives. He can be reached by mail at 697 House Office Building, 124 N. Capitol Ave., Lansing, MI 48933; by telephone at (517) 373-2576; by fax at (517) 373-5962, or by e-mail at glenanderson@house.mi.gov.



Glenn S. Anderson

# Palestinian-Israeli conflict raises question 'What is truth?'

It is often hard to get a handle on the "truth" when it is right in front of us.

You've probably heard the story of the six blind men who are asked to describe an elephant. One runs his hands along the elephant's trunk and declares the animal is like a python. Another feels along the elephant's broad side and determines the elephant is a wall. Another feels his tusk and is sure the elephant is a sharp spear. And so on.

As journalists, we work to "see" the complete elephant and understand it. We seek out different sources, we track down different points of view, but we also try to nail down facts.



Hugh Gallagher

The farther we are from a subject, the less clearly we see and understand it. This is particularly true of controversial happenings half way around the world, even though the consequences of those controversies may have a heavy impact on our lives.

Few struggles are more widely covered and controversial than the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

Hasan Newash, founder and director of the Palestine Office-Michigan, believes that American media are biased in favor of Israel. On Wednesday, he and the Congress of Arab American Organizations of Michigan invited local journalists to a lunch at the Al Berdouni Restaurant in Dearborn to hear from two people who have studied the issue and reached a similar conclusion.

The Detroit area is home to a large Middle Eastern population and a sizable Jewish population. The 57-year struggle over sovereignty, land rights, refugees, reparations and who's done more harm to whom have special resonance because they mean so much to people who live in our area.

As community newspapers, we do not have correspondents covering the conflict and endless negotiations. We cover speeches, gather reactions, talk to people from the area.

Allison Weir, a free-lance journalist, is the founder of an independent research organization "If Americans Knew." Her contention is that the media is seriously biased against Palestinians. She presented an analysis showing that the news media — specifically, the *New York Times* and the three major networks, ABC, CBS and NBC — under report Palestinian deaths and exaggerate Israeli deaths. She also argues that even when reporters file stories that present Israel in a negative way, news organizations won't release them. She offered as an example a video of the shooting of a young Palestinian by an Israeli soldier that she claims AP

"erased."

Statistics and data are interesting for their flexibility. She said the number of children killed by Israelis is greater than the number killed by Palestinians since 2000 (her Web site uses the figure 680 Palestinian children to 118 Israeli children) and then proceeded to show Power Point slides showing several one-on-one confrontations that may or may not have been provoked.

But, I was thinking, a newspaper or a network would be less likely to run that kind of story than a story about a suicide bomber who blows up a school bus or about an air raid by Israeli forces that takes down a school. She does argue that the news media do not do a good enough job of reporting cumulative deaths, and without putting those deaths in context, such figures aren't meaningful. And it's the context that causes all the problems. Also, the source for the the death count is debatable on both sides.

Considerably more persuasive and interesting was Ali Abunimah, a Chicago-based writer whose parents are from Palestine and who is passionate about having the Palestinian view represented. He presented a lucid, vigorous and detailed account of the history of Palestinian-Israeli relations since 1948, and particularly since the collapse of the 2000 Camp David talks. He also made a strong case that in blunt and subtle ways the national media tend to favor the Israeli view. He argues that the long-established Jewish presence in this country and their economic power is the reason for this imbalance. Weir and Abunimah also argue that the United States favors Israel diplomatically.

Jewish groups, as one person in the audience suggested, have similar forums for journalists presenting their point of view and their analysis of statistics.

The sad thing is that deaths on both sides continue. Children continue to suffer, live in fear and die. And both sides are locked in these military, diplomatic and propaganda conflicts with resolution in question.

These newspapers don't report on the casualty numbers. We don't run editorials supporting one side of the conflict or the other.

We're too far from the situation. But we do care deeply about these people trapped by history, by superpower politics, by mistrust, by resentment, by arrogance, by intransigence.

We do support Newash and his organization's call for accurate and full coverage of the issues without favoring one side or the other.

Hugh Gallagher is the managing editor of the *Observer-Newsapers*. He can be reached by e-mail at hgallagher@oe.homecomm.net, by phone at (734) 953-2149 or by fax at (734) 591-7279.



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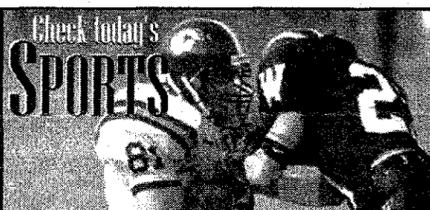
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Sunday, June 5  
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Sponsored by SMMH Medical Staff and Care Choices HMO

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- Health and Safety Activities (sponsored by SMMH Medical Staff)
- "Ask the Doctor"
- Blood Pressure and Bone Density Screening
- Hospital Tours

## Cancer Survivor's Day Celebration

"Celebrate Life and Hope"

12:30 p.m. - Reception

1 p.m. - Program

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Speakers: Domino's Pizza Inc.

Chairman and CEO

Dave Brandon and wife, Jan Brandon

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- Sunset Boulevard Band -

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