

District pulls 2 ESL classes from school

After a heated discussion outside of Washington Elementary School Monday, Livonia Public School administrators have pulled a daytime English as a Second Language program out of the building.

"We've canceled the program at Washington during the day," said Jay Young, director of community relations. "As a result, we're looking for a space to hold the classes."

The ESL classes which were recently moved to Washington and Johnson elementary schools caused concern at Washington, but began Monday as planned at Johnson.

The morning classes originally set for Washington Elementary have been canceled until the district finds an alternate location for them. One class meets Mondays and Wednesdays. The other meets Tuesdays and Thursdays. The cancellation impacts about 60 students.

This came as good news to parents like Kathy Bartoszyk. She is the mother of a second and a fifth grader at the school.

"As a parent, I am very glad that LPS listened to our concerns about the safety of our children," she said Tuesday. "Dr. Liepa was very gracious to accept an invitation to an impromptu meeting with the parents on the first day of school. I only wish that we would have had some involvement in the initial planning."

The district has been working with Livonia resident Jerry Sindacik, owner of The Liquidation Super Center.

Sindacik joined forces with administrators Monday during a meeting with parents outside of the Livonia school. He suggested the possibility that the district might use the lower portion of the Wayne County Sheriff's Union, Local 502, AFL CIO headquarters at 34500 Plymouth Road in Livonia.

"The downstairs is one big open room," said Young. "They don't use it during the day."

If the union board approves the idea, it is possible the district would share the cost of utilities. But nothing is set in stone, according to Young.

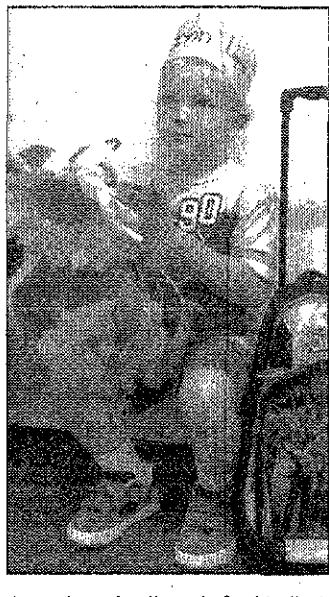
He said Sindacik has agreed to furnish classroom space with dry erase boards, desks, or whatever is needed, by donating the items from his own business.

Bartoszyk said she was grateful that Sindacik took the initiative to help find a new alternate location for the classes.

Young said he hopes to get the matter resolved as soon as possible. These two ESL classes are already a week late in starting, and state funding for the program is at risk.

For more information, or to offer alternate locations for the programs, call the community relations office of Livonia Public Schools at (734) 744-2522.

By Stephanie A. Casola



Jason Lang is all ready for his first day of kindergarten.

First day of school dubbed 'exciting'

The first day of classes in Livonia Public Schools may be just as exciting for the staff as it is for students.

Joann Khoi, secretary, said she's been preparing for the start of the school day at Washington Elementary for about two weeks.

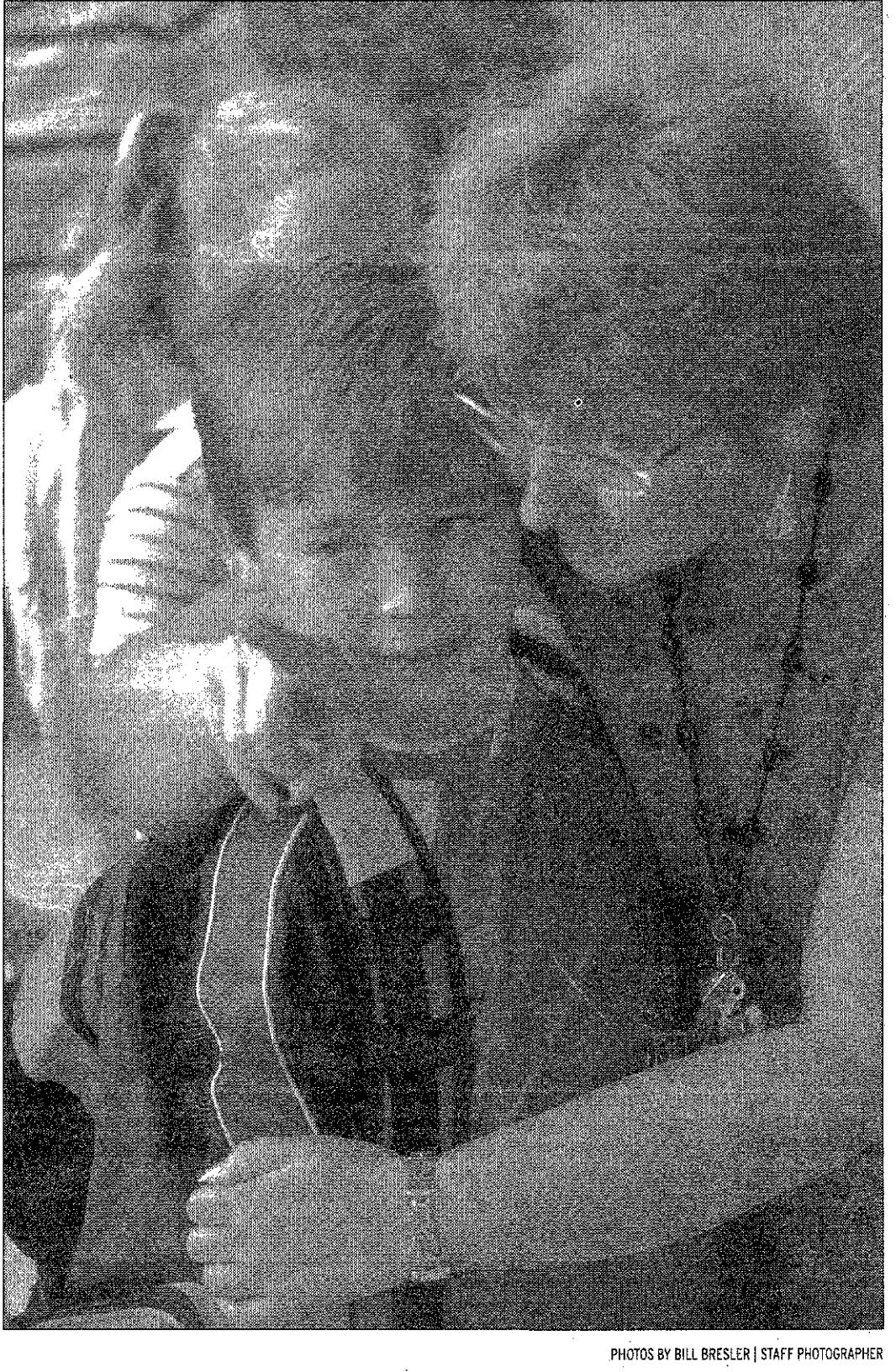
"You look forward to the kids coming back to school," she said, just prior to ringing the first bell at the onset of a new school year.

For Janet VanCamp, a mother of two boys attending Washington, the school has become a long-standing family tradition. She and her husband both attended Washington as children.

She had little trouble encouraging her youngsters to get ready for a new school year.

"Last night they got their backpacks together," VanCamp said. Her first- and second-graders even woke early for breakfast because they were so excited, she said.

Mercedes Williams,



PHOTOS BY BILL BRESLER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

First-grade teacher Jan Halfacre shares a little advice with student Vince Van Camp, who is headed for second grade.

Washington PTA president, was on hand at the start of school to welcome students and their parents.

As for her own children, Williams said, the day before school they gather their school supplies and spend the afternoon watching a movie, marking the moments before summer vacation was history.

And after the first day, the Williams family celebrates the start of a new year with

ice cream. In addition to new students coming in to Washington, the school welcomed a new principal Monday.

Warner Frazer will head up the administration at the school. He takes over for Charlotte Worthen who was hired as director of instruction in the district.

Frazer is new to the school but not the school district. Former principal of

Buchanan, he has worked at all levels of K-12 education. Frazer retired from Livonia Public Schools six years ago and has since remained working for about eight months each year.

He said he was looking forward to being back at an elementary school where he's able to "work closely with parents."

By Stephanie A. Casola

CLASSES

FROM PAGE A1

leave the building while elementary children are inside their own classrooms.

Still, members in the crowd called for background checks to be made on all the adults, and some inquired about immunizations.

At Johnson Elementary in Westland, Principal Richard Steele said he received only one call from a parent regarding the change. The school is bigger, compared to Washington, he said, and ESL classes began there Monday, as scheduled.

The two afternoon classes at Washington would consist of about 27 students each. One class runs Mondays and Wednesdays, while the other runs Tuesdays and Thursdays.

As a group, the parents who attended the meeting found an evening-only program agreeable. But the ESL classes are also offered in the morning — and at Johnson the morning and afternoon — to accommodate those who are parents and cannot attend evening classes.

"We all have the same goal in mind; the safety of kids and a good education for everyone," said Virginia Kennedy, a teacher who works with the ESL program.

Kennedy said many of the people enrolled in the program are themselves parents of Livonia Public School children. "They want to learn the language to help their kids," she said.

SEEKING A NEW SITE

Jerry Sindacik, a Livonia resident, spoke up advocating a solution, rather than more discussion of what parents deem a problem. He has begun searching for an alternative location for the ESL program, space that may be donated to the school district for that purpose.

"I am a taxpayer said Sindacik, who handles community outreach for Wayne County. "I don't have children. This is a public facility that pay for and you pay for. Let's put our efforts into making the kids secure. These kids have tomorrow."

Liepa told the crowd "I'm hearing you loud and clear" and promised to postpone the start of the ESL classes at Washington until the matter was investigated further.

Robert Colby, a parent, reiterated his support of the ESL program and said it is "awesome" those students are learning English. "That's not the reason we're here," he said.

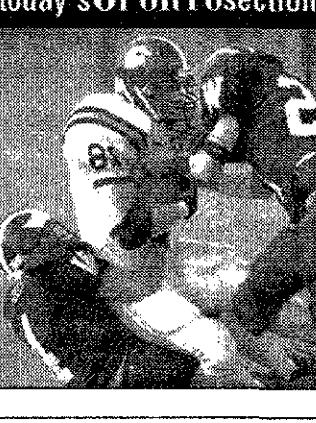
Most parents said the school was too small to accommodate the additional adult program. And Joy Orlich, who transferred her daughter to another school because of this matter, said it's a district-wide situation, one that could face other schools in the coming years. "We don't want adult classes in our children's schools, period."

But some parents, like Lois Meade, left the school feeling better about the overall situation. She said the postponement was a "victory for students and parents" and a "compromise."

Kennedy said many of the people enrolled in the program are themselves parents of Livonia Public School children. "They want to learn the language to help their kids," she said.

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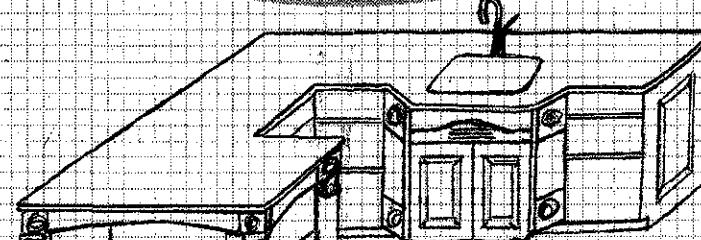
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Driver suffers seizure in rollover accident

BY DARRELL CLEM
STAFF WRITER

A 75-year-old man whose car rolled over on Avondale, near Hamilton Elementary School, apparently suffered a seizure and blacked out, Westland police confirmed this week.

The accident happened about 5:40 p.m. Monday, Aug. 22, on eastbound Avondale between Schuman and Easley, police Officer Jack McIntosh said.

No one was struck by the newer-model Chevy Malibu, and the driver wasn't seriously injured.

"The driver had some type of seizure and blacked out, and he hit a parked car on Avondale and veered off of the street, over the curb and onto the sidewalk," McIntosh said. "He hit a fence post and two parked vehicles in a driveway at Easley and Avondale."

The car also struck a privacy fence and a swimming pool and came to rest on the driver's side, the officer said.

The driver remained unconscious when paramedics arrived on the scene, but later

he was awake after being taken to Oakwood Annapolis Hospital in Wayne, McIntosh said.

The driver, a Westland resident, won't face any charges for the accident.

However, he will be recommended to the Secretary of State Office for an evaluation of whether he should continue driving, McIntosh said.

The accident came after an 88-year-old Livonia man hit and killed an 82-year-old woman on June 2 outside of the Westland Meijer store at Newburgh and Warren.

That driver, whose license was to be revoked, still faces a court hearing that will determine whether he should stand trial for negligent homicide.

The fatality prompted the victim's family to suggest that the state should more closely monitor older drivers.

However, police officials have said that not all elderly drivers are unsafe — and that not all younger motorists are good drivers.

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Who you gonna call?

Bark Busters solves canine behavior problems

BY CAROL MARSHALL
STAFF WRITER

Orlando Campiorni grins and looks down at the table when he talks about his girlfriend, Jennie DiPirro, whom he has known for 45 years. But Campiorni's dog, Socks, doesn't share his love for his lady friend. In fact, Socks has made it very clear that she wants nothing to do with DiPirro.

"I finally decided it's time to take care of this once and for all," Campiorni, 74, of Livonia, said. So DiPirro, 75, of Romeo, called Bark Busters, a local home dog training business. Soon dog therapist Bruce Headley visited Socks and Campiorni to help them begin a new life — one in which Socks and DiPirro can get along happily.

Headley, a Bloomfield resident, has recently begun providing his service in the Canton, Plymouth and Livonia areas. For Campiorni, the help couldn't come soon enough.

A few months ago, DiPirro tried to make friends with Socks by offering her a hot dog. But Socks got a little more than was offered, and bit a piece of skin off DiPirro's finger.

"She started to cry, and went into the bathroom and



TOM HOFFMEYER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Orlando Campiorni (left) of Livonia along with Bruce Headley and Sue Westcott of Bark Busters take a look at Socks to talk about his progress in the training program.

was just crushed that Socks didn't like her," said

Campiorni, who has been dating DiPirro since 2003, after each of them had become widowed. "She just loves dogs and never met a dog that didn't like her, so she was really hurt."

DiPirro was skeptical that Socks would ever change her attitude.

"She told me, 'Oh, no, that dog's just mean. You can't teach an old dog new tricks,' but I told her of course you can. Look at us. We learned to love each other after all these years," Campiorni said.

Socks' problem, according to Headley, is that she thought she was the leader of the pack in her house, so

Campiorni has to teach

her that he is the leader of their pack.

It's a confusing transition, Headley said and Socks may go through some anxiety while she learns, but most dogs learn quickly and need only two sessions with Bark Busters, he said.

The coupleants to plan a trip to Florida this fall, but Campiorni doesn't want to leave Socks behind. The good news is that just hours after they completed their first round of training with Headley, Campiorni and Socks got into the car and drove to DiPirro's house.

DiPirro reported the next day that Socks just sniffed around and then was a well-behaved and calm dog. She said it's as if they'd been friends for a long time.

Headley, who calls himself a canine therapist, said his system is one of correction and reward. His main thrust is to communicate with his canine patients, using both body language and "canine language." If the dog begins to do something wrong, Headley will actually bark and growl at it — something it understands.

Headley said Socks has been very receptive to the training.

"They got along very well," Headley said of Socks and DiPirro. "So it looks like this story will have a happy ending."

For more information about Bark Busters, call Bruce Headley at (248) 752-7782, or visit online at www.barkbusters.com.

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FOR THE RECORD

Margaret M. Austi
Austin, 53, of Farmington Hills, died Aug. 27.

Everett L. Ferrier
Ferrier, 94, died Aug. 25.

Linnea Marie Maier
Maier, 87, of Rochester Hills, formerly of Bloomfield Hills, died Aug. 29.

Linda G. Sloan
Sloan, of Clarkston, died Aug. 26.

Judith Ann Zirblis
Zirblis, 65, of Plymouth, died Aug. 29.



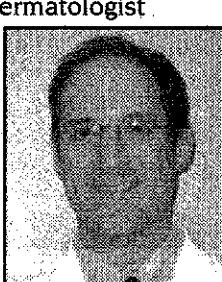
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Plan's gas station, hours draw criticism

Commissioners seek changes in Wonderland Village review

BY DAN WEST
STAFF WRITER

Planning commissioners criticized plans for a 24-hour operation and gas station as part of the Wal-Mart Supercenter proposed in the Wonderland Village redevelopment project.

The commission met Tuesday to study developer Bob Schostak's plans in a preliminary session that introduced the commissioners to the proposed Wal-Mart Supercenter, new Target store and village shops and eateries along Plymouth.

Tuesday meeting was a prelude to the commission's public hearing set for 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, Sept. 20, which is expected to be well-attended.

At that meeting, planning commissioners may vote on a recommendation for the waiver-use petition for the Wal-Mart and Target stores and the site plan for the village shops. The

Livonia City Council has the final vote on the project.

"We want to be responsive to the planning commissioners with their suggestions," Schostak said. "Also, we need to balance the needs of neighborhoods with the needs of the big-box stores and the village shops."

WAL-MART PLAN

The proposed Wal-Mart Supercenter would be positioned in the center and along the south end of the 74-acre parcel. The back of the store will be 120 feet from the nearby neighborhood.

The 203,000-square-foot store will have a drive-through pharmacy, grocery area, seven-bay auto area for oil changes, tire and battery replacement and garden area. Wal-Mart also

wants a snack bar and plans to leave some property open along Plymouth Road for a gas station it may propose later.

Schostak said the gas station would add to the full-service nature of the development, but commissioners Robert Alanskas and Bill LaPine said they were disappointed with the possible gas station because it would contradict the walking-friendly environment sought in the Plymouth Road Development Authority's streetscape project.

"I feel this would break up the beautiful designs of the village shops," Alanskas said.

LaPine was more forceful. "I will never approve a gas station on Plymouth Road," he said. "Maybe I could go for it elsewhere, but not on Plymouth Road."

Commissioner Lee Morrow was skeptical about Wal-Mart being open 24 hours that close to a neighborhood. He wants to see if the other half-dozen Wal-Mart Supercenters in Michigan, all of which are 24-hour operations, are as close to homes as the proposed Livonia store.

"I would like to see Wal-Mart think long and hard about the 24-hour operation," Morrow said.

TARGET PROPOSAL

The proposed new Target store would be closest to Middlebelt. The

back of the 126,800-square-foot store would be 107 feet from a wall that separates the commercial property and nearby neighborhood.

Target is also looking for permission to include a restaurant inside its store to include a Starbucks coffee shop and Pizza Hut.

The plans call for a 72-foot-wide landscape area between the neighborhood the three big box stores. This will include a 10-foot-high berm topped with two rows of mature trees. Schostak plans to close off the current walkways in the brick wall between the neighborhood and stores.

Some planning commissioners lobbied Schostak to push Target and Wal-Mart at least 100 feet further from the neighborhood, but Schostak said that would add public parking, more lights and noise to the store's rear, which would be more disruptive to the neighborhood.

Schostak said he still does not have a deal for third big-box store which would built west of Wal-Mart. He said Sam's Club, Lowe's and Kohl's remain prospects to take over the third store.

STRATEGY FOR SHOPS

The village shops will be contained

in six structures of similar architecture and total some 98,000 square feet of retail and restaurant space. No tenant deals are done, but Schostak said he aims to bring in stores that feature home furnishings, office supplies, mail services, cell phones, sporting goods and shoes.

Schostak would need a variance for parking because he wants 9-by-18-foot spots, but the city requires 10-by-20-foot spots. Schostak said he needs more parking to help him market the property to restaurants. He said the smaller parking spots are permitted at several commercial properties throughout the city.

LaPine said he strongly supports the larger parking spaces and suggested Schostak would have more space to meet the city's parking requirements if he would drop the gas station plan in lieu of more parking.

Planning commissioners said they were concerned about security and maintenance around a storm water detention pond and open area that will be installed at the southwest corner of the property. They want fencing to deter youngsters from reaching the water and prevent trash from being left there.

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New law requires state to give preference to disabled veterans in awarding contracts

Senate Bill 303, which requires preference be given to disabled veterans when awarding state contracts and was sponsored by state Sen. Laura Toy, R-Livonia, was recently signed into law by the governor.

"Today we send the right message to Michigan's disabled veterans," Toy said. "We remember and are profoundly grateful for your service and sacrifice, and we respect and support the contributions you continue to make to our great state and nation today."

SB 303 would set a goal that not less than 3 percent of total state expenditures for construction, goods and services are awarded to businesses owned by veterans with a

service-connected disability. Under a companion bill in the bipartisan package, 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.

"This legislation is a tangible way to give back to those who have given so much of themselves for our benefit," said Toy.

Toy serves as chair of the Michigan Senate's Veteran Affairs Committee. "We have to be serious about helping those who have helped to defend our nation."

Toy noted that a purchasing

preference law for disabled-owned businesses has been on the books in Michigan for more than 15 years, yet the goals of that law have never been met and the reporting requirements in statute have never been honored.

"My legislation requires preference be given to veterans and sets a goal for the state to aim for," she said.

"We need to enforce these laws and make sure that our veterans benefit. I am dedicated to helping the men and women who have served our country."

The legislation, Public Act 91 of 2005, passed both the Michigan Senate and House of Representatives by unanimous votes.

Actor portrays the faces of Henry Ford in 'Forgotten'

BY SUE BUCK
STAFF WRITER

Larry Schrock worked for Ford Motor Company in Dearborn for 30 years, but he never expected he would portray Henry Ford in a lead role on stage.

Schrock, of Farmington Hills, stars in *Forgotten: The Murder at the Ford Rouge Plant*, at 8 p.m. Friday, Sept. 9 and Saturday, Sept. 10 and at 3 p.m. Sunday, Sept. 11 at the Millennium Centre, 15600 J. L. Hudson Drive in Southfield.

Proceeds support the Michigan Labor Legacy Project in Detroit's Hart Plaza, which honors the history of the labor movement and those who lost their lives along the way.

Schrock calls himself a frustrated actor.

"I didn't come to the part because it was Henry Ford, but because it was an opportunity," he said. "This play had to do with the dark side of Henry Ford and it looked particularly interesting."

The jazz opera is set in the late 1930s. There's little dialogue.

"It is a total musical," he said.

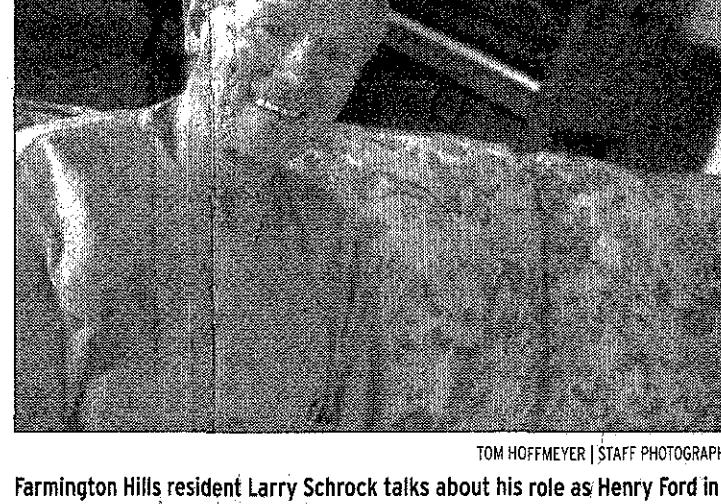
Forgotten is the tragic story of the Rev. Lewis Bradford, a Methodist preacher who went to work at the Ford Rouge plant determined to interest Ford in his vision of industrial harmony.

He took the job to help pay his daughter's medical bills.

Bradford, considered a forgotten activist, died in 1937, during the latter part of the Depression years. His body was found in an isolated area of the plant. The company called it an accident and said there were no witnesses.

Bradford's death came at a time when Ford employees were organizing a union.

Bradford's message of love and charity brought hope to the unemployed and destitute.



TOM HOFFMEYER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Farmington Hills resident Larry Schrock talks about his role as Henry Ford in a production of "Forgotten: The Murder at the Ford Rouge Plant," set for Sept. 9-11 at the Millennium Centre in Southfield.

through his weekly WXYZ radio show, *The Forgotten Man's Hour*. He interviewed men and women on the soup line at the Howard Street Mission in Detroit.

His message was not well received by Ford or his suspected mob-connected security chief Harry Bennett.

Years later the persistence of Steven Jones, the lyrical composer, discovered the true cause of Bradford's death. Jones' grandfather was a cousin to Bradford's wife, Schrock said.

Dr. Carl Schmidt, a Wayne County deputy chief medical examiner, wrote Steven Jones on July 28, 2001 about the "accident" which was never investigated.

Schmidt found Bradford's multiple skull fractures consistent with a beating and inconsistent with a fall.

"This death should probably be classified as a homicide," Schmidt said.

Ford, who died in 1947, was silent on Bradford's death, Schrock said.

"Henry Ford is such a complicated character and had incredi-

ble contrasts," Schrock said. "He is a man who said learning and history are bunk and then he built Greenfield Village and the Henry Ford Museum to preserve history."

He called Ford a genius who "put the world on wheels."

The director of *Forgotten* had everyone write a biography about their character. Schrock's tale of Ford was long.

"He was in that evolutionary period where large corporate industry didn't understand what they needed to do for their people," Schrock said.

Schrock holds an undergraduate degree from Purdue University and a graduate degree from Stanford University in Palo Alto, Calif. He sings sacred music with the Detroit Lutheran Singers and has performed with the Farmington Community Chorus. Schrock does auto shows for Ford Motor Company and has been a narrator at shows in New York, Chicago and Detroit.

To purchase the \$50 general admission tickets, call (248) 796-5198.

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Caution needed for drivers, students when going back to school

School's starting, and families need to be careful when children are going to and from school. It's important to stop for buses with red flashing lights, according to Sgt. Larry Crider of the Wayne County Sheriff's Department.

"Sometimes the kids will go in a direction you may not have expected," Crider said. "Watch before and after the bus stops."

Motorists should stop at least 20 feet forward or back, he said, to afford a full view of the bus and surrounding area.

The American Academy of Pediatrics offers advice for parents and children during this back to school season. Parents are encouraged to review the basic rules with youngsters.

SCHOOL BUS

■ Wait for the bus to stop before approaching it from the curb.

■ Do not move around on the bus.

■ Check to see that no other traffic is coming before crossing.

■ Make sure to always remain in clear view of the bus driver.

CAR

■ All passengers should wear a seat belt and/or an age-and size-appropriate car safety seat or booster seat.

■ Your child should ride in a car safety seat with a harness as long as possible and then ride in a belt-positioning booster seat. Your child is ready for a booster seat when she has reached the top weight or height allowed for her seat, her shoulders are above the top harness slots, or her ears have reached the top of the seat.

■ Your child should ride in a belt-positioning booster seat until the vehicle's seat belt fits properly (usually when the child reaches about 4-foot-9 in height and is between 8 to 12 years of age). This means the shoulder belt lies across the middle of the chest and shoulder, not the neck or throat; the lap belt is low and snug across the thighs, not the stomach; and the child is tall enough to sit against the vehicle seat back with her legs bent at the knees and feet hanging down.

■ All children under 13 years of age should ride in the rear seat of vehicles.

■ Remember that many

crashes occur while novice teen drivers are going to and from school. You may want to limit the number of teen passengers to prevent driver distraction. Do not allow your teen to drive while eating, drinking, or talking on a cell phone.

BIKE

■ Always wear a bicycle helmet, no matter how short or long the ride.

- Ride on the right, in the same direction as auto traffic.
- Use appropriate hand signals.
- Respect traffic lights and stop signs.
- Wear bright color clothing to increase visibility.
- Know the "rules of the road." Visit <http://www.aap.org/family/bicycle.htm> on the Web.

WALKING TO SCHOOL

- Make sure your child's walk to a school is a safe route with well-trained adult crossing guards at every intersection.
- Be realistic about your child's pedestrian skills. Because small children are impulsive and less cautious around traffic, carefully consider whether your child is ready to walk to school without adult supervision.

- Bright colored clothing will make your child more visible to drivers.

"Stranger danger is something they should pay attention to," said Crider, adding children shouldn't travel alone. Crossing guards and police are good sources for help if children are approached.

Often, there are designated safe homes in a neighborhood where kids can get help, and they need to know where those

are, Crider said. Children should stay away from the edge of the road while waiting for the bus. "Don't engage in play activities that are going to cause them to be running into the street."

He recommends parents drive the child's route to school or the bus stop periodically, checking for such changes as a vacant home or overgrown lot, and reporting those to authorities.

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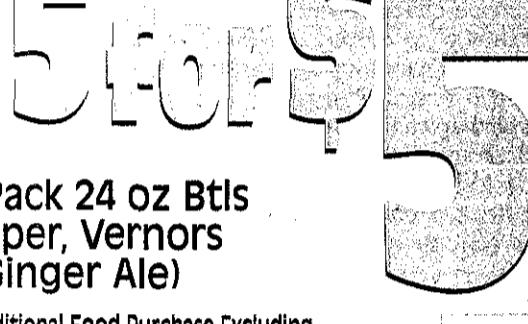


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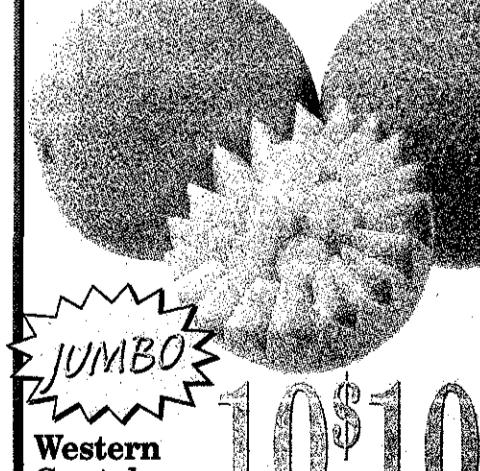
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Observer OPINION

A8 (W)

Observer & Eccentric | Thursday, September 1, 2005

www.hometownlife.com

OUR VIEWS

First-day flop: LPS failed to share info

The first day of school should be fun, exciting and full of promise - not tense, upsetting and full of apologies.

As district leaders, the Livonia Public Schools administration failed to quickly communicate the impending shift of English as a Second Language students into Washington Elementary School. People don't like to be surprised with this kind of last-minute change, especially involving their children.

Was there some overreaction by parents? Yes. While parents naturally are going to be protective, they need to know that these adult students really aren't terrorists learning to fly planes. They're immigrants just like most of our own ancestors. This newspaper's staffers have talked to them before. Some are new residents to our country, but most are the parents, and mainly mothers, of students who might be new to the district. These are people who first spoke another language but want to better write or converse in English. They want to get a job, communicate with their child's teacher or just be able to go to the doctor without a translator.

But it was the district's glaring lack of sharing information in a timely way with parents that precipitated parents' concern. District officials have their explanation for not letting parents know of the change a couple weeks ago. Renting out the Dickinson Center this summer made many programs homeless and, looking for space demanded plenty of attention. Plugging those programs into buildings wasn't easy, but it was only the first step. Somebody needed to be charged with making sure the programs fit where they were moved, and they needed to fit in ways that go beyond space and dimensions.

If this shift had been handled properly — with more advance notice and perhaps a meeting involving ESL staff and even some students or graduates of the ESL program — it's likely there would have been few, if any, complaints. Certainly it would have been nothing that couldn't be worked out between parents and the district, with a few extra precautions.

As unions decline, their legacy lives on

In July, the Teamsters, Service Employees International Union and the United Food and Commercial Workers unions left the AFL-CIO, complaining that the umbrella union hadn't done enough to staunch the rapid nationwide decline in union membership.

Union membership has been in steady decline for 20 years. Nationally, only 12.5 percent of workers were represented by a union in 2004. In the 1950s, 35 percent of American workers were organized. Michigan is one of only four states (with New York, Hawaii and Alaska) with union membership above 20 percent. In Michigan, 21.6 percent of workers are union members.

Unions have been a vital part of Michigan history. First as a productive mining and timber state and later as the nation's most dynamic manufacturing state, Michigan was a beacon to workers and organized labor.

Michigan unions negotiated good wages, health care, vacations, retirement and other benefits for their members, setting a standard for others to follow across the country.

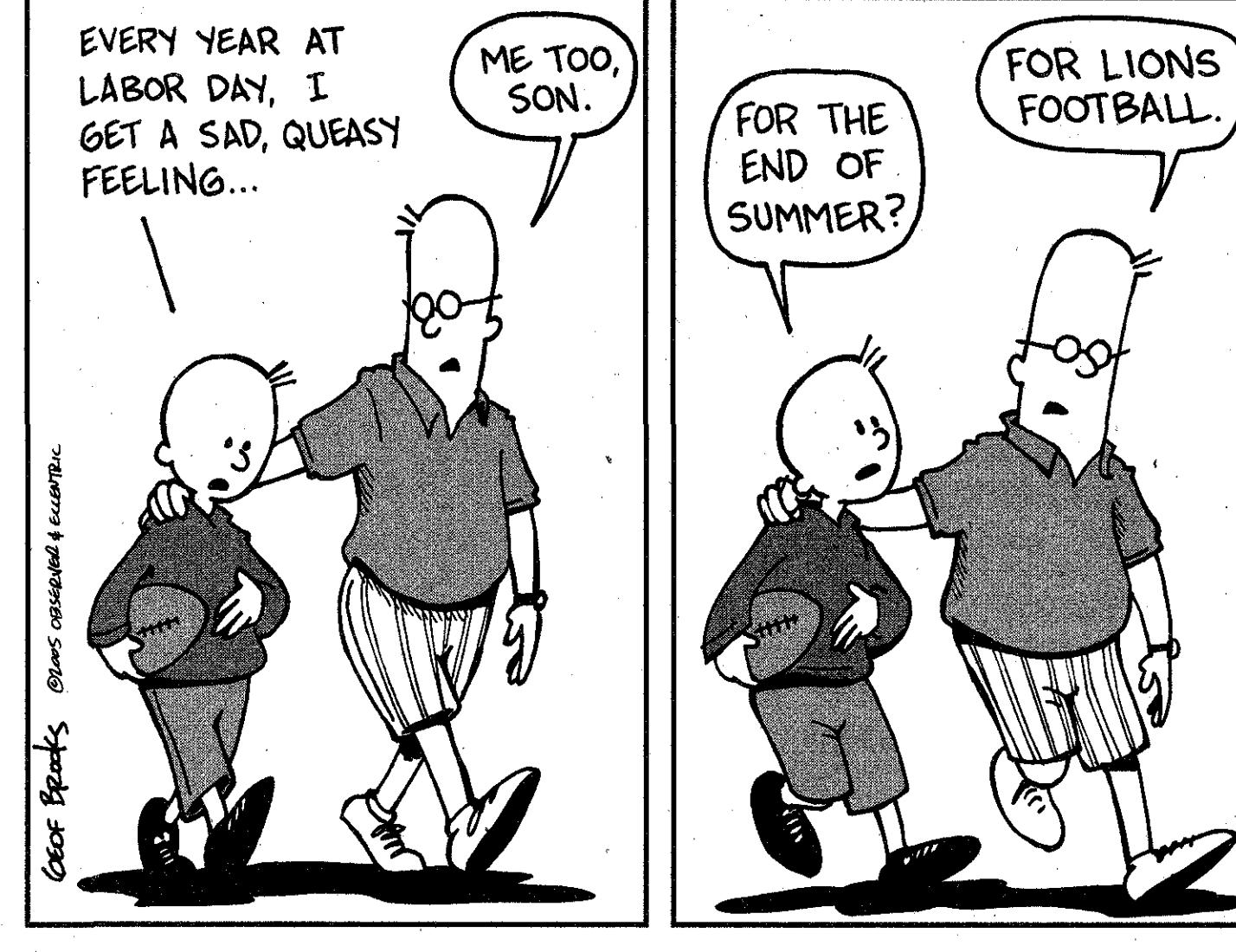
But times have changed. Young workers are unaware of the history of labor-management struggles. Fewer young people are going into the factories and mines where unions made the most impact in lifting the standards of living and improving worker safety.

Many union jobs have been automated out of existence. Many companies have moved jobs to right-to-work states or out of the country entirely. Companies have offered better entry level packages to skilled workers both to compete with other companies and to keep out unions.

And while organized labor has made some strong inroads in white-collar fields (the National Education Association is the country's largest union), most white-collar workers are not organized.

As we mark another Labor Day Monday, it is important to understand that unions provide a balance to our economy beyond their service to their members. Economist John Kenneth Galbraith argued that unions were a "countervailing force" against the power of big business. In his view, big labor and big business provided an economic checks and balances that assured average Americans a fair share in the nation's wealth.

While we celebrate the lingering days of a sweet, warm summer, we should also reflect on what has been gained from solidarity and the new reality of the global marketplace.



Stand by statement

We were happy to have elicited a response to our letter suggesting that the new DDA appointee should step aside. We strongly stand by our letter.

Correction: We did not say "this very competent person" nor did we say that her contributions "were enormous."

Nobody was sitting in judgment. We simply stated facts. The public trust was violated. That is factual, not a judgment call. And that carries a high price. Anyone in public office should be aware of that. By violating the public trust, one loses the "privilege" of serving in the public realm.

Righteous? Again, we simply stated facts.

Forgiveness? Of course, because there are no limits to forgiveness. However, though one is forgiven, there is always a price to pay. The appointee should have known this before she chose to violate the public's trust.

Political? But of course. The appointment was political. The second council member did anything but offend us. You see, he is not running this time. We stated, "of the four incumbents running for City Council, in our opinion, only Cheryl Graunstadt is independent. Richard LeBlanc, who is not up for re-election at this time, in our opinion is the second independent council member."

It is our opinion, those independent votes on significant issues are the votes that truly protect the interest of the taxpayers rather than enhance the special interest groups. We strongly support independent thinkers who represent the residents of the city.

And we stand by our statement that the new DDA appointee should reconsider and not accept this appointment, thus best serving the interests of our city.

James and Mary Murphy
Westland

More freedoms lost

We attended the first appeal in the city of Wayne for its new dangerous building ordinance. This is similar to the one just passed in the city of Westland, which is its new bright ordinance.

Is the whole county going backward? Have the citizens of Wayne forgotten when urban renewal went through in the late '50s and early '60s? This was when the government came in and condemned a lot of homes on anything from real dangerous problems, to one case that I personally know about where they tried to condemn a home (which is still standing) because it had a bathtub with legs and still does, last I heard. Do you know how much one of these cast iron tubs on legs would cost today?

The point is, we are losing our right to have due process. At this first meeting, the city attorney and the board members spent most of the two-hour meeting getting the ground work done. Rules and regulations, the cans and the cannons. Then they heard their first appeal.

In my opinion, this person didn't have a prayer. All you heard was the problem had been there for years. They had plenty of time to correct it. The owner of the property is a senior. Fixed income. Even

LETTERS

when someone looks healthy, they are not always. I really don't know if they are or are not, but the point is they are not 21.

So here are two facts that cause a possible snag. They have put on a new roof, cleaned up the yard and put on siding. Yet this board upheld the ruling, but gave the owner 60 days to get a certificate of occupancy. This is almost an impossible job without help. They need permits and contractors, etc., etc. They were told if after 60 days if they had no certificate, the home would be demolished.

Is this right? The intent has been shown. A new roof and siding aren't cheap. Why suddenly the rush? I heard that the state only allows 60 days, but I heard that the case could have been adjourned and brought up again at a later time, giving the owner a reprieve for a while to get organized and complete the repairs.

Right now, the home does not appear as an eyesore to the neighborhood and the building inspector even said it was secured at this time. So why the hurry? What I didn't hear was how this person is to get help with this, and they did appear sincere about wanting to improve this home and to begin living there.

It amazes me how in a county such as ours, we are fighting a war to bring democracy to another country yet losing right after right in this country. Ironic. Am I wrong or naive to believe the founding fathers of this country fought the Revolutionary War to give people the right to religious freedom, right to own property, right to vote, freedom of speech?

Yet the Supreme Court ruled your property can be taken away for the good of the community, home rule gives the right for the government to come in and raid your home without a warrant, just a belief, now they can take your home, demolish it and then charge you? No court-appointed lawyer to defend you if you can't afford one. You can appeal to the court in downtown Detroit, but if you could afford that wouldn't you have had your home up to date and elegantly furnished and dressed to the hilt?

There's an old saying, "Walk a mile in my shoes." Maybe some of these law deciders should try this. At the very least, inform people where they can get help. I know there are block grants in the communities and other help groups, but most people don't know where or how to get this help. Not everyone is as priviledged as the next guy.

I know there are churches and other foundations that help, but the average person doesn't know where or how to get help and then there's that old thing most of us have even when we're down on our luck and that's pride.

Many citizens in Michigan are now facing something that hasn't happened here since the late '50s and that's a massive amount of job losses. People today need help, encouragement, support and a smile, not the loss of their home and dignity.

Judy McKinney
Westland

Gaza pullout a farce

The evacuation of Jewish colonizers in Gaza was played out like a made-for-TV drama, complete with "extras" brought in from outside the Gaza settler community for added effect. The settlers even went to the trouble of erecting "sets" to help make this drama a success, ensuring them sympathetic media coverage, which ensured them a sympathetic world audience as the "drama" played out in Gaza.

According to an article in *Ha'aretz*, Israel's leading paper, the synagogue at the Jewish-only settlement of Kfar Darom, where the settlers decided to make "their last stand" and prominently featured in the U.S. media outlets, was erected only four months ago in preparation for the disengagement charade.

The media was played like a cheap fiddle by the Jewish settlers, whose very presence on stolen Palestinian soil, contravenes internationally recognized laws and conventions, as they trucked in Jewish extremists from outside Gaza for show.

It is a shame that the 4,000-strong crush of media would highlight such bad acting, but continue to ignore the real life pain and misery of the captive Palestinian population of Gaza and the West Bank under Israel's nefarious occupation.

Mike Odetalla
Canton

Once a coward

Cindy Sheehan, mother of Casey Sheehan, a slain American soldier who died in Iraq, has exhibited enormous courage and vulnerability these past several weeks. In seeking answers and being open, she has brought Americans across the country together to simply ask for the truth from our president about why we are fighting this war.

Bush certainly has exhibited no courage in facing the reality of this loss of life and has shown little compassion and decency in simply granting a meeting with Cindy and the other mothers who have lost their children. But then again this is the president who never really served in the military, was AWOL during Vietnam. Once a coward, always a coward.

So much for his touting a "culture of life."

Susan Horowitz
Farmington

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We welcome your letters to the editor. Please include your name, address and phone number for verification. We ask that your letters be 400 words or less. We may edit for clarity, space and content.

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"People put out their garbage. They just want it to go away, and that's what we do."

— Waste Management spokeswoman Carey Weihmiller, in making a pitch for the trash hauling contract in the city of Westland

WESTLAND Observer

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Our fundamental purposes are to enhance the lives of our readers, nurture the hometowns we serve and contribute to the business success of our customers.

Upheaval of organized labor puts state in the bull's-eye

Here's a good quote to begin the Labor Day weekend:

"To protect the workers in their inalienable rights to a higher and better life...the right to be full sharers in the abundance which is the result of their brains and brawn, and the civilization of which they are the founders and the mainstay...The attainment of these is the glorious mission of the trade unions."

That's from an 1898 speech by Samuel Gompers, the first president of the American Federation of Labor. Today, this fine 19th century rhetoric sounds ... well ... like a fine 19th century relic.

Last week, at a celebration of the 70th anniversary of the founding of the United Auto Workers union, former UAW President Douglas Fraser said: "It's a real struggle. And it's more severe than it's ever been before. Everybody thinks that the toughest things were ... the toughest times were their times. But I don't accept that. The toughest times are now."

Strong words from a labor leader who joined the union the year after it was founded.

As this is written, Northwest Airlines is flying reasonably successfully, despite an ongoing strike by its mechanics union. The heavily unionized American automobile industry is in terrible disarray. Both General Motors and Ford have seen their corporate bonds downgraded to junk status.

Meanwhile, the companies and the UAW are trying to figure out how to cut health care costs before the companies go bust and an angry union membership tosses out its leaders.

Could it be that southeastern Michigan, a major cradle of the American industrial labor movement, is now on the cutting edge of a wholesale transformation of labor-management relations? You bet.

And we better be. As long as companies control their markets — as the American auto makers did throughout most of the 20th century — they can pass along to their captive customers the cost increases they bargain with their unions. The price of the car could go up or the quality go down. Didn't matter much. As a great philosopher once said, if there's no alternative, there's no alternative.

But the Japanese car manufacturers shrewdly calculated that the American market was enormous and the domestic car companies were fat and vulnerable. They started shipping cars made in Japan to the West Coast in the 1970s, and they began gaining market share. Then they looked at the cost of shipping and figured it would be cheaper to make the cars in America.

They built most of their assembly plants in the south, historically hostile to unions. And despite the best efforts of the UAW, the foreign-owned "transplant" assembly plants remain non-union.

Year after year, foreign brands made in the U.S. have increased market share. But our domestic manufacturers find themselves hobbled by labor contracts negotiated over the years with the UAW.

They can't close excess plants; they can't cut labor costs; they can't cut health care costs. They no longer control their markets. And they are in big trouble.

Now, in the early 21st century, trade is largely free, markets are increasingly competitive and the world is becoming flat. And that means that market forces are working against labor union contracts that require closed markets and a monopoly on the supply of labor.

And because Detroit has historically been the citadel of labor union power in America, that process is the most profound and the most wrenching right here in our own back yard.

Writing in *The Detroit News* last week, Daniel Howes called Detroit, "the nation's repository for collective denial and the epicenter of industrial America under siege." A great line.

Speaking of denial — I wonder if there's anybody here who really believes the troubles of the domestic auto industry are going to be solved by a couple of good sales years.

Speaking of being under siege, I wonder if Northwest Airlines hasn't already broken the pattern of union dominance that has crippled the old mainstream air carriers with high legacy costs.

This isn't union bashing. In the good old days, labor unions contributed mightily to our society. Once, they fought against oppressive management which were then behind the times.

Unions helped raise wage levels that created a middle class that could afford to buy the cars they produced. By and large, they fought for equal status for women and minorities. By bargaining for health care coverage and retirement pensions for their members, they contributed to the prosperity and security of our state.

I remember going to speeches by the legendary UAW leader, Walter Reuther, who used to say quite accurately that the union was the great force for the country's benefit in the 20th century.

But his century is gone. And given what's going on these days, I wouldn't be surprised if somewhere, sometime in the near future, somebody important is going to seriously propose that Michigan become a right-to-work state, meaning one where nobody can be required to join a union as a condition of taking or keeping any job.

Think about that.

Phil Power is a longtime observer of politics, economics and education issues in Michigan. He would be pleased to hear from readers at ppower@hcnet.com.

Veteran's case shows chat rooms aren't always what they seem

Anyone who thinks of Internet chat rooms as soul-less places frequented by online groupies hanging out to hook up probably ought to talk to Colleen Wagner or Wade George.

George, a Grand Blanc resident, is a Gulf War veteran recently diagnosed with three inoperable brain tumors and given 90 days to live by doctors back in July. Wagner is a Westland resident, and former roommate of George, who helped organize a benefit for him at the VFW Post 6695 on Mill in Plymouth a few weeks ago.

That benefit raised a surprising \$2,200 to help George ward off mounting medical and legal bills. And while

George struggles to get any support from the Veterans Administration or the Department of Defense, much of the success of that benefit can be attributed directly to the folks in that chat room.

"A lot of the people at his benefit were from that chat room," said Wagner, who said she met George online at a time when both were "down on our luck." "People (in the room) just kind of pull together when someone's in trouble."

And if anyone's in trouble, it's Wade George. A Gulf War veteran, George came home with a disease doctors had been unable to diagnose. He now grimly faces the prospect of death after doctors found the inoperable brain tumors.

Several weeks ago, George underwent the final radiation therapy in his current course of treatment, and doctors were waiting for some swelling to subside before determining the status of the tumors.

Meanwhile, his medical costs continue to mount as he also struggles to get help from the VA. He was in the VA's "system" back in 2003, when he was last seen for the undiagnosed illness. This time, his friends say, it was like the VA had never heard of him.

"When he called this time, they put him on a nine-month waiting list," Wagner said. "He had a prognosis of 90 days!"

Critics of the government aren't surprised by that. George's story drew the attention of groups like the Gulf War Service Organization, an unchartered support group working on veterans' issues. Kirt Love, the group's director in Virginia, said treatment of that sort isn't uncommon.

That's why Love, who said he himself suffers from congestive heart failure, was happy to see people banding together to help George.

"What got my attention (in George's case)

was the brain cancer, because the Institute of Medicine made an announcement Gulf War veterans were twice as likely to develop brain cancer," Love said. "Veterans are generally spurned by the public, so to see this benefit, I knew there wouldn't be very many people who could make it."

"Most of the Gulf War groups are incapacitated," Love added. "There's not many of us left, and not many who help each other, and by the time we do, it's usually too late. It's almost impossible to find fellow vets, and most of them are destitute. I jumped in my car and flew up there."

Doctors found the tumors July 8, and George went ahead with plans to marry his wife, Deanna, the next day. Between them, the Georges have five children, the youngest of whom, 30-month-old Allie, is Deanna's from a previous marriage.

Here's the rub: George wants to adopt her, but he can't afford the legal help needed. And he's fighting what could be a 90-day death sentence. In other words, there isn't much time. According to Wagner, he's doing what he can — getting treatments, prescriptions from the VA, even putting himself out there for potential experimental treatment — all in an effort to take care of his family.

"There's more than just living now,"

Wagner said. "There's a goal, a cause to fight for. We're hoping there's an attorney out there who will step up and help, pro bono. This is a priority for Wade before he dies."

Which is where his friends come in. Wagner and Mary Brown of Wyandotte organized the recent fund-raiser. Now his mother, Patricia O'Leary of Lapeer, is organizing another one Sept. 24 at the Moose Lodge on Lapeer Road in Lapeer. Dinner is 3-6 p.m., with an auction at 6:30 p.m. and a DJ until people's dancing shoes wear out. For information on the benefit, call (810) 667-8906.

Wade George had trouble getting aid from the VA and the Department of Defense agencies that are supposed to help veterans.

Instead, he's getting love, support and, perhaps most importantly, friendship from the unlikeliest of places — an Internet chat room.

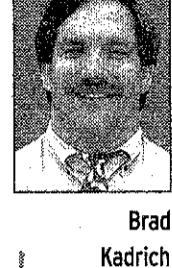
"A lot of this disease is emotional," Wagner said. "Just knowing there are people out there is vital for his emotional well-being. He's not ready to give up, and we're not ready to give up on him. There will come a time ... but not yet."

Maybe that shows the Internet isn't simply a place for hooking up. Maybe it's a great place for hanging on.

Brad Kadrich is community editor of the *Plymouth Observer* who served 15 years in the U.S. Air Force. He can be reached via e-mail at bkadrich@oe.homecomm.net or by phone at (734) 459-2700.



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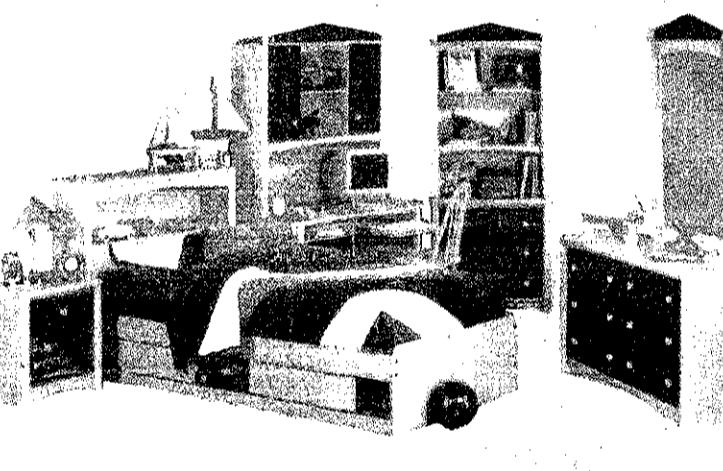
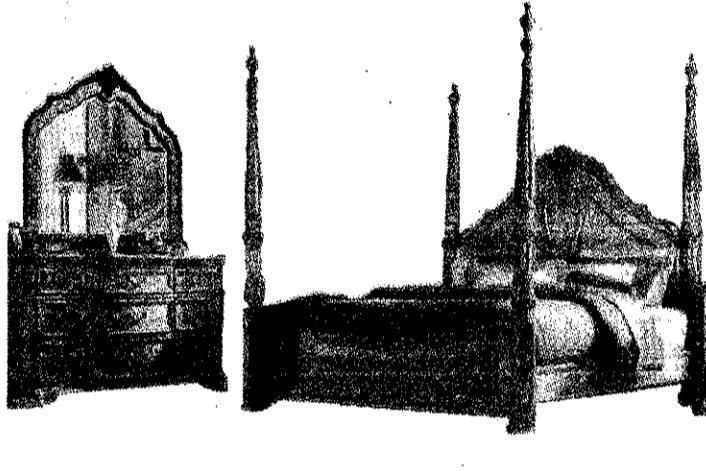
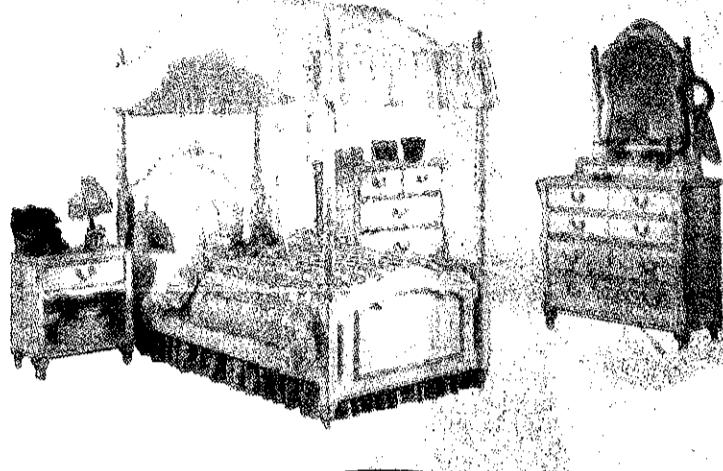
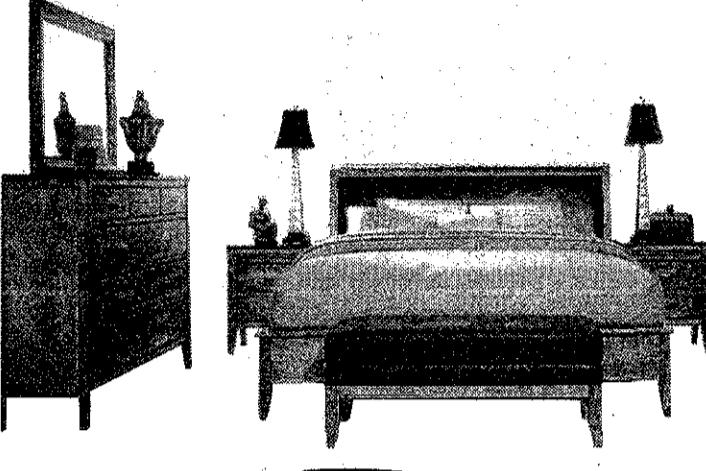
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