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SUNDAY November 26, 2006

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Westland teen rebounds from head injury

Franklin student talking, moving, could return home soon

BY DAN WEST STAFF WRITER

Nathan Carlin's eyes were closed and he was unable to speak as he rested in an intensive care unit at the University of Michigan Hospital early Thursday morning.

and neck injuries after a confrontation that ended with an assault at the school Wednesday morning. The 16-year-old Westland resident was unconscious when he was airlifted to the Ann Arbor hospital.

Nick Carlin, 20, worried that he would never be able to talk to his younger brother again. Then, at 3 a.m. Thursday, Nathan opened his eyes and uttered some words.

"He was convinced it was all a bad dream, he was going to fall back asleep and he would wake up in his bed," Nick Carlin said Friday. "He didn't remember going to school that day."

Nathan was anxious during those few minutes he was awake, but it was a tremendous moment of hope that teenager would survive. "I was thrilled he remembered who

I was and I was able to calm him down," Nick Carlin said.

On Thanksgiving Day, the Carlin family was thankful Nathan was able to move his arms and legs and even crack a few jokes in between some lengthy naps. By the end of the day, he was moved from the ICU into a patient room.

"He was speaking in complete sentences and he even smacked me in the

face after I made a comment," Nick Carlin said. "That really lifted our spirits. He was starting to be himself again."

Nathan suffered hairline fractures to the base of his skull and spine. Nick Carlin said his brother has a "hellacious headache," but the injuries have not limited his motor skills. He added it is possible Nathan could come home this weekend.

"He's still very groggy and on a lot of medication for the headache, so he

PLEASE SEE INJURY, A4

Letters let kids hear from Santa Claus

BY SUE MASON STAFF WRITER

It's about to get very busy around Kristy Robinett's house. As an official correspondent for the Big Man, she's getting ready to write to good boys and girls and some naughty and nice adults.

Welcome to Sent By Santa, a home-based Santa's workshop specializing in personalized Santa letters.

"People provide me with the information, and I do the letter, I personalize every one," said the Westland resident. "Children are amazed Santa really knows so much about them — good things, as well as areas that need improvement. The letters are a great way to build self-esteem by commending the children of their accomplishments."

Robinett signed on as Santa's correspondent in 1997 and has done it every year except 2005 when she took time off for health reasons and a move from Garden City to Westland.

The letters are written with information provided by the sender. They cost \$8 each, with a portion from each letter donated to Wide Smiles, an organization for families with children who have clefting.

Oral-facial clefts are birth defects in which the tissues of the mouth or lip don't form properly during fetal development. They are the fourth most common birth defect, and the first most common facial birth defect. One child in 700 is born with clefting.

Wide Smiles — www.widesmiles.org —



TOM HAWLEY | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

PLEASE SEE SANTA, A5 Kristy Robinett of Westland gets her elf ears at night when she writes her Santa letters to children of all ages.

Residents plead to keep agency in apartment building

BY DARRELL CLEM STAFF WRITER

For 12 years, a Medicaid-funded agency has quietly rented a ninth-floor apartment in Westland, providing crucial services to a handful of mentally and physically impaired residents.

The problem is, the Neighborhood Service Organization never sought city approval to have an office atop the high-rise Hunters West building, on the northwest corner of Hunter and Yale.

NSO care providers, who also treat patients from outside the building, never had a threatening situation until police officers and firefighters were recently summoned when a non-resident became combative.

Now, Westland city officials face a difficult decision to either force NSO out — a move that its in-house patients say

would devastate them — or let the agency stay and impose restrictions, such as limiting care to Hunters West residents.

Currently, 14 patients occupy five of the building's 426 apartments. They pay their own bills, and they receive such services as psychiatric therapy, help with their medications, and rides to places like their doctor's office, the grocery store and election polls.

"They do things for us we can't do for ourselves," 75-year-old patient Norma Sprecher told the Westland City Council last week, pulling her oxygen tank with her to the podium.

"They are family to me," Sprecher said. "If you take them from me, it will be a very traumatic thing."

Several elderly patients pleaded with city officials not to force NSO to move its office, which is housed in a two-bedroom apartment. One resident, Helen Foy, said care providers took her for radiation treatment for cancer.

"To me, it's my security blanket," she told the council, adding later, "I feel it has saved my life, and I feel they should stay there."

NSO has a therapist, a psychiatrist, a nurse, a case manager and direct care workers who staff the office. The hours are 6 a.m. to 10:30 p.m., but the agency's unit director, Mary Neff, said workers will respond to patients at any hour they need help.

"We bring the services to them," she said.

PLEASE SEE AGENCY, A4

LPS board to talk funds, graduation policy

BY REBECCA JONES STAFF WRITER

Livonia school board members will talk about finances and high school graduation requirements at Monday's committee of the whole meeting.

No decisions will be made at the study session, but board members promise it will be a good dialogue.

"Please listen and tune into that meeting if at all possible," board President Lynda Scheel said. "We'll probably have some good discussion regarding things like enrollment numbers, funding from the state, programs and fund equity."

Sheila Alles, director of academic services, will present a recommendation on how to align the district's curriculum with the state's new high school graduation requirements that take effect for freshmen entering high school next fall.

LPS students will have to take an additional half-credit of English, one and a half credits in math, a half-credit in science and additional

social studies classes. The district will also have to change its requirements to include visual, performing and applied arts, add two credits for world language and incorporate an online learning component.

Budget amendments will be introduced as well.

Supt. Randy Liepa estimated a \$2 million shortfall in this year's budget because enrollment fell by 500 students, twice what the district anticipated. He has suggested balancing the budget from the district's \$10.9 million fund equity.

Some parents and board members have raised concerns about spending down the fund equity.

"We need to keep those funds for those times when the state takes away funds that they have promised us," said Trustee Robert Freeman. "The state promised a \$210 increase in our foundation grant. ... The news out of Lansing is that they didn't have the revenue that they expected."

During a Michigan Association of School Boards conference, Freeman heard that the

state may announce a midyear reduction in state per-pupil revenue that could be anywhere from \$90 to \$120 per student.

"Either one of those numbers hurts a lot. That's half of what the state promised us," Freeman said. A \$90 per student reduction amounts to more than \$1.5 million.

Trustee Steve King said the district can't keep blaming the state for its money woes.

"There is no money tree at the state," he said. "Tough decisions are coming, he said. "It starts with transparency and putting everything out on the table."

At a retreat meeting Nov. 13, board members discussed how to work better together and with the community.

"I hope in the next few months, you'll see progress out of our board," Trustee Tom Bailey said. "If there's a hiccup, a small snafu, a big snafu, we will fix it. We are a good district. We're going to work together as a team."

The committee of the whole meeting starts at 7 p.m. at the board office on Farmington Road, just south of Five Mile.

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INDEX: APARTMENTS E4, AUTOMOTIVE E7, HOMETOWNLIFE C1, CROSSWORD E6, CLASSIFIEDS D2-E10, JOBS D2, NEW HOMES E1, OBITUARIES C4, PERSPECTIVES A7, REAL ESTATE E3, SERVICE GUIDE D3, SPORTS B1. Coming Thursday in Filter. Let it snow. Filter highlights shows bound to usher in the holiday spirit.

# Parents tell board LPS changes not working

BY REBECCA JONES  
STAFF WRITER

Parents upset about Livonia Public Schools' loss of 500 students told school board members last Monday that the Legacy Initiative is not working.

Teresa Thompson sent her fifth-grade son to Johnson Upper Elementary this year.

"Now it feels like he's at junior high," she said. Unlike last year, parents weren't invited to the class Halloween party. "There's been little to no communication between the teachers and the parents," she said.

Karen Wynns has a third-grader and fourth-grader at Grant Elementary. She said

there's no longer a community feeling there.

Wynns will face a decision next year. "Do I send my daughter to the mega 5-6 school or do I send her to a private school?" she said.

Wynns suggested trying a districtwide K-8 school.

Alicia Wenzinger, who moved into the district a year ago, still has a child in high school and middle school in LPS, but enrolled her second-grader in parochial school.

"I wish I could afford all three, but I cannot," she said. "There has to be a better way because I don't believe the Legacy Initiative is it."

Seven schools were closed and elementary schools were reorganized under the Legacy

Initiative this year, in a cost-saving effort. However, the district lost more students than it had anticipated, and some parents blame the plan.

"I will guarantee you, you are seeing now and you will continue to see the fallout of the Legacy Initiative," said Steve Futrell, a father of four. "We're finding that we're really not going to save that kind of money."

Parent Laurie Brenton said she initially supported the Legacy Plan but now feels misled, and she's concerned the district will continue to lose students.

Trustee Robert Freeman said only a small portion of the losses were a result of parents pulling children out of LPS.

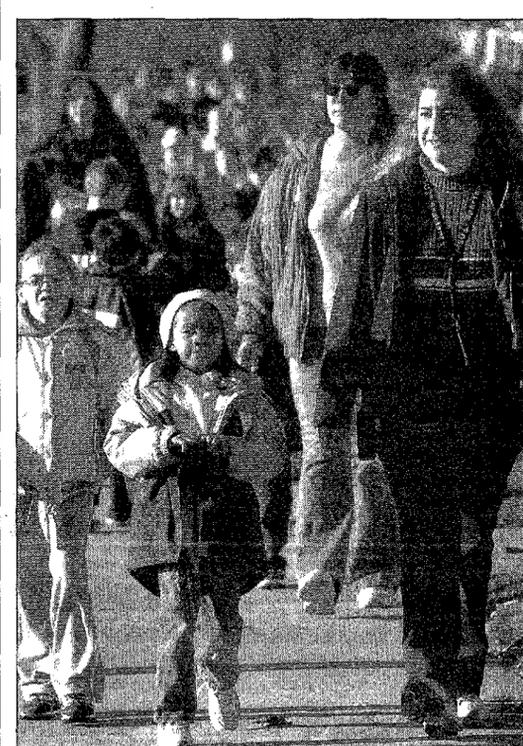
"One of them was my own. My daughter graduated, and my wife and I didn't have a 5-year-old to replace her," he said. "Some of the claims that are being made are being made falsely."

Trustee Cynthia Markarian said she's heard from parents who are feeling out of place in their schools.

"We need to work through that," she said, and encouraged people to stay involved.

When it comes to questions like whether the district should have a K-8 school, Markarian said, "We as a board have to decide how we're going to handle those things going forward."

rrjones@hometownlife.com | (734) 953-2054



PHOTOS BY TOM HOFFMEYER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

# City get ready to light up holiday season

Time to warm up those vocal chords for a holiday sing-along as the Mayor Sandra Cicirelli and a few special guests get ready to flip the switch on the city's annual Christmas display.

The festivities take place at 6:15 p.m. Monday, Dec. 4, in front of Westland City Hall on Ford Road.

The mayor and members of the Westland City Council members will be joined by Santa Claus and the winner of the annual "What Christmas Means to Me" essay contest in lighting up the city's Christmas trees.

There will Christmas caroling and after, the ceremony, refreshments and a visit with

Santa at the central fire station next to city hall.

Children who don't get a chance to whisper in Santa's ear that evening can chat it up with the Jolly Old Elf during the annual Santa Call-in Show at 6 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 7. Call (734) 467-3198 for more information.

Other Christmas activities include the 13th Annual "We Promise You A White Christmas" children's poster contest and decorating the pine trees in front of the Bailey Recreation Center with the mayor.

The Westland Parks and Recreation Department is promising one family in Westland a white Christmas.

Even if there is no snow on the ground Dec. 21, they'll make sure the winner's house has a snow-covered yard.

The contest is open to all elementary school children who live in Westland. All they need to do is draw a picture showing their house covered in snow on Christmas Day.

Posters must be received by no later than 10 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 13. The contest winner will be announced and contacted on Monday, Dec. 18. If there already is snow, another prize will be awarded.

Posters can be dropped off at the Bailey Recreation Center or mailed to the Westland Parks and

Recreation, Attention Poster Contest, 36651 Ford Road, Westland, MI, 48185.

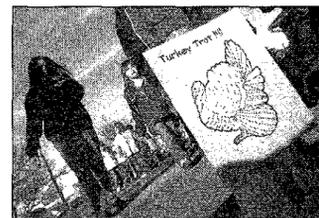
Schools groups and scout troops also can help dress up the city for the holidays by joining the mayor in decorating the pine trees between city hall and the Bailey center at 4:30 p.m., Wednesday, Dec. 6.

Each group will decorate a tree specially chosen for them and then present their trees to the mayor and her special guest, Santa Claus. There also will be time for some Christmas caroling sing-along and refreshments.

For more information, call the mayor's office at (734) 467-3200.

## Pre-turkey time workout

Hayes Elementary School students, from left, third-grader Megan Bauneister and first-grader Anija Hall along with first-grade teacher Kerry Budia and the rest of the school walk throughout the neighborhood during the school's Turkey Trot on Wednesday afternoon.



Signs mark the way for students and staff of Hayes Elementary School to walk through the neighborhood.

### CITY OF WESTLAND PUBLIC NOTICE

The following appeals will be heard at a public hearing to be held in the Council Chambers of Westland City Hall, 36601 Ford Road, Westland, MI on Wednesday, December 13, 2006 at

7:00 p.m. at which time comments may be directed to the Board during audience participation. If you wish to reply by mail, send your comments to the above address. All property owners whose names appear in our tax rolls located within 300' of this property are being notified pursuant to this statute.

**Petition #2578-8702 Fremont**

Request for a 4 foot front yard setback variance from Ordinance 248 as a result of the construction of a covered front porch addition to the existing home.

**Petition #2579-1622 S. Wayne Road**

Request for a 15 foot setback variance from Ordinance 248 in order to install a 75 square foot, 14 foot high free-standing sign at the front lot line of the site.

**Petition #2580 & 2581-110 S. Newburgh Road**

Request for two non-conforming sign variances from Ordinance 248 in order to alter two existing non-conforming signs located at the site.

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## WESTLAND Observer

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# Concert series lines up folk acts, gathers a following

BY REBECCA JONES  
STAFF WRITER

Original folk music has found a home and it's gathering a following in Livonia.

The nonreligious series has featured fiddlers and folk singers in recent months, but next Saturday's performance includes new music inspired by boys serving jail time.

"It's pretty powerful stuff," said singer/songwriter Josh White Jr., who will perform those songs and others at his Dec. 2 concert, part of the Unity Acoustic Coffee House concert series.

The series brings artists before a coffee-fueled, family-friendly audience at Unity Church on Five Mile.

Livonia resident John Alexander lines up the talent, including national acts.

"You hear a lot of songs that you never heard in your life," said Alexander, a performer himself who also works as a handyman.

Initially the idea was met with resistance at the church, but Alexander pushed, and the monthly series now has a following.

"I knew he could bring in the talent. The question was would the people come?" said the Rev. Dennis Skiles of Unity Church. "What we have established is a venue in Livonia that reaches as far as Troy and Ann Arbor. We even get people from Toledo that come tripping by."

White, son of the famed guitarist singer and blues artist Josh White, put on the first concert at Unity two years ago.

White, a Novi resident, also attended the church from time to time.

Saturday's show, which begins at 7 p.m. features some



TOM HOFFMEYER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Concert organizer John Alexander (left) listens to folk singer Josh White Jr. as he talks about performing in the Unity Church coffee house concert series Dec. 2.

songs that he and fellow artist Mike Ball wrote after meeting this summer with incarcerated youth at the WJ Maxey Boys Training School through a program called Project Roots.

One of the songs, "Bar to Bar," features the chorus: "Metal locking doors, three hots and a cot and a cold dark floor."

A collective song with a blues influence is called "Eddie's Choice" about a young man just released from lockup who has to decide whether to go back to a life of crime or to heed the advice of an old man he meets at a bus stop.

White put the jailed inmates' lyrics to music and introduced them to what he calls root music, also known as folk music.

The Unity concerts attract families and seniors who are put off by a bar atmosphere.

A \$15 suggested donation at the door includes coffee and snacks. Artists are compensated, and profits benefit

the church's youth department.

Ann Camp performs Jan. 14. The Rev. Robert Jones is the featured artist Feb. 10.

Last month's concert featuring The Cats and the Fiddler stole Marilyn Wells' heart.

The trio of 11-year-olds from Milford put on a "foot-stomping fun" show, Wells said. They perform folk, gospel and bluegrass on a variety of instruments.

"I bet they're going to be No. 1 on the country charts one day, as soon as they're discovered," said Wells, 67, of Plymouth, a regular concert-goer who sometimes brings her 92-year-old mother to the shows. "It is so full of energy. The music is absolutely outstanding. You couldn't get that kind of entertainment for that money anywhere else."

For information or to reserve tickets call (734) 421-1760. Unity Church is at 28860 Five Mile Road between Middlebelt and Inkster.

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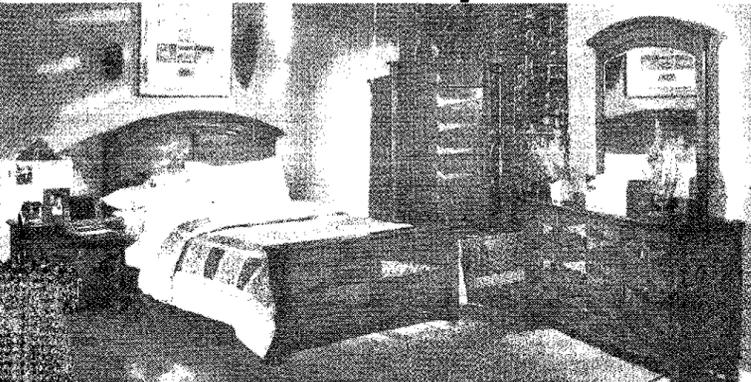
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**INJURY**

FROM PAGE A1

hasn't eaten anything," Nick Carlin said. "If he is able to start eating and some other things work out, he could be home soon."

As Nathan recovers, his accused attacker, a 16-year-old Livonia boy, was being held in a juvenile detention facility this weekend after a hearing Friday in Wayne County Juvenile Court. Details of the hearing were not immediately available.

Initially, he is being prosecuted as a juvenile since he is about a month shy of his 17th birthday - considered an adult age in the criminal court process.

"They have a few days to decide whether to charge him as an adult," said Livonia police Capt. Mark LaBerge said. "I'm sure the prosecutor's office is waiting to see how the victim recovers before deciding how to proceed."

Carlin was injured during a confrontation in Franklin's cafeteria at about 7:15 a.m. Wednesday, about 10 minutes before classes were to begin. Police said he was thrown to the floor on his head. The fight was a culmination of sharp text messages exchanged between the victim, the attacker and the attacker's friends.

One witness was Franklin freshman Joe Ratke, who said he was eating breakfast in the south cafeteria when he saw the victim try to walk away from a boy in a letter jacket.

"The jock said, 'Don't you turn your back on me,'" Ratke said. The victim said he didn't want to fight and tried to walk away. "He flipped him around and slammed him on his head."

The victim went into seizures and his eyes rolled back in his head.

"He was shaking with blood coming out of his ears. There was a garbage can full of bloody towels," the student said.

No weapons were involved. Livonia police Lt. Greg Winn said detectives were still investigating the cause of the argument that led to the fight. Winn said detectives were analyzing many witness accounts and cell phones in the search for clues.

There was uneasiness at the school Wednesday morning in the aftermath. Livonia police sent school resource officers to Franklin to help deal with tensions. Students were allowed to call parents to report their own safety and many left school. At about 10 a.m., parents streamed to the school to pick up students. "It was disturbing. I couldn't concentrate in class," Ratke said after leaving the building. The cafeteria area was taped off for a while after the incident as part of the police investigation, but the area was cleaned and open to students in time for lunch. Staff writers Rebecca Jones and Dave Varga contributed to this report.

**Hospital reunion set for Dec. 5**

The 22nd annual holiday reunion of former Wayne County General Hospital's staff and retirees is scheduled for 5-9 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 5, at the Golden Corral restaurant, on Warren Road between Newburgh and Central City Parkway. The reunion will be held in a private dining room.

Anyone associated with the hospital is invited to attend. For more information, call Patricia Ibbotson at (734) 561-0177.

**DIABETES PROGRAMS**

The CVS Pharmacy at 37530 Cherry Hill, Westland, will offer a program on Managing Your Diabetes 3-6 p.m. Monday, Nov. 27. Participants will learn how to control diabetes and manage medications, as well as get tips on making healthy lifestyle choices.

For more information, call (734) 727-0322.

The program also will be offered at the CVS Pharmacy at 31411 Cherry Hill, Westland, 3-6 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 30. For information, call (734) 326-2990.

**AGENCY**

FROM PAGE A1

NSO provides care that allows the patients to remain independent and live in a mainstream environment, Neff said. Some patients have no family or relatives who will help them.

City administration officials and a split Westland Planning Commission have recommended that the council reject NSO's request to remain at Hunters West. A decision is expected Dec. 18 during a council meeting at City Hall, on Ford Road east of Newburgh.

Planning Commissioner Normie Brazier, who has a special needs son, conceded that NSO provides much-needed services, but she said the agency should have its own office and not be in an apartment building.

Under new management, Hunters West is undergoing a \$4 million renovation, and those running the facility have indicated support for NSO.

Officials indicated that, if they decide to let NSO stay at Hunters West, certain conditions will be imposed, such as prohibiting the treatment of patients from outside the building.

Mayor Sandra Cicirelli raised concerns Monday that allowing NSO to provide care out of an apartment building could open up "a Pandora's box" unless restrictions are placed on the agency.

Most city leaders appeared to agree that patients are being helped.

"It would appear they're getting some necessary help," Councilman Richard LeBlanc said.

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**Map your way through the Westland library**

**INFORMATION CENTRAL**

Vacations cost enough as it is, and the less money spent in the planning process, the better.

If this has been a topic of frustration for you, come check out the library's new map and travel collection! We have frequently updated maps and vacation guides you can bring home to look through and plan your itinerary for the perfect vacation.

There is plenty of vacation information for all 50 states. You might be surprised to learn of attractions you had never known existed. Enjoy great Civil War re-enactments in Virginia, or make plans to visit Alabama in time to experience the Shakespeare Festival.

Of course, all of the hot vacation spots are covered as well. There is an abundance of information about camping sites in Florida, and the Hawaii vacation folder is well-represented with brochures and maps that are sure to enrich your holiday.

The library's resources are not limited to the boundaries of the United States. If that dream vacation to Scotland has been stuck in the planning stages for 20 years, make definite decisions through lodging guides or decide if a hike through the highlands is the right adventure for you.

For regions such as Ireland, Aruba and France, a shopping guide or entertainment ideas coupled with a street map could prevent you from wasting one minute of your precious vacation time.

Whether you want to go backpacking across Europe, plan your honeymoon in Tahiti, or set aside a couple of weeks to go sightseeing in Japan, look into the library's resources before you part with any money. The Map and Travel File is located near the research databases in the middle of the library. See the Reference Desk, if you have any questions.



The library is open 9 a.m. to 10 p.m. Monday-Wednesday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Thursday-Saturday and noon-5 p.m. Sunday, or visit us on the Web at [www.westland.lib.mi.us](http://www.westland.lib.mi.us)

**Highlighted Activities**

**Holiday Stamping with Carl:** 2 p.m. Nov. 27.

Get a head start creating your holiday cards. Learn a variety of techniques to create a variety of cards to share with your loved ones this holiday season. All are welcome. All supplies included. Stop by the Reference Desk or call (734) 326-6123 to reserve a seat.

**Independent Movie Night:** 7 p.m. Nov. 28.

Join us as we screen *Campfire*, a gripping tale of life in the West Bank, immediately after Egypt's withdrawal from the Sinai in 1981, in the first of our monthly showing of independently produced feature films. Bring a friend or come by yourself to enjoy an evening of entertainment. No registration is required.

**Teen Advisory Board (TAB) Meeting:** 7 p.m. Nov. 29.

Join other teens and have your say in helping to select books, programs and prizes for teen activities. All sixth-12th-graders are welcome.

**Science Fiction and Fantasy Book Discussion:** 7 p.m. Nov. 29.

Join in for what will prove to be an exciting discussion about Speculative Fiction. All adults with interests in the genre are welcome. Visit our blog, too, at [swestlandlibmius.blogspot.com](http://swestlandlibmius.blogspot.com).

**Information Central** is compiled by Mary Beth Fikler at the William P. Faust Public Library, 6123 Central City Parkway, Westland. For more information, call (734) 326-6123.

**DEATHS**

**A**  
**James A. Aliber**  
 Aliber, 81, of Birmingham, died Nov. 21.

**B**  
**Clifford R. Baker**  
 Baker, 91, died Nov. 20.

**C**  
**George A. Clifford**  
 Clifford, 77, of Redford, died Nov. 20.

**D**  
**Harold Vernon Collins**  
 Collins, 65, of Westland, died Nov. 20.

**E**  
**Pierre Louis DePorre**  
 DePorre, 74, of Bloomfield Hills, died Nov. 20.

**J**  
**Ruthann Johnson**  
 Johnson died Nov. 20.

**M**  
**Jack Vito Migliore**  
 Migliore, 84, of Sterling Heights, died Nov. 20.

**Gary Alan Mitz**  
 Mitz, 58, died Nov. 18.

**Tom Moshimer**  
 Moshimer, 71, of Plymouth, died Nov. 21.

**R**  
**James A. Richardson**  
 Richardson, 76, formerly of Plymouth, died Nov. 22.

**Jean Ann (McMichael) Ruhl**  
 Ruhl, 67, of Farmington Hills, died Nov. 20.

**Lamar M. Russom**  
 Russom, 90, died Nov. 19.

**S**  
**Kathleen Ann Sheneman**  
 Sheneman, 52, died Nov. 22.

**Douglas Stevens**  
 Stevens, 73, of Frankfort, died Nov. 14.

**W**  
**Katherine O'Brien "Kay" Walters**  
 Walters died Nov. 22.

**Z**  
**Peter Charles Zemnicks**  
 Zemnicks, 88, of Beverly Hills, died Nov. 19.

Complete paid obituaries can be found inside today's newspaper in Passages on page C4.

AROUND WESTLAND

Gingerbread class

Looking for a unique Christmas experience to share with your child? Mary Denning's Cake Shoppe is offering Art of Gingerbread Houses 6-8 p.m. Monday, Nov. 27, at her shop at 8036 N. Wayne Road, Westland.

It's a one-day class for a child and an adult team to create a special gingerbread house. The shop will supply all of the gingerbread, frosting, candy and equipment that will be needed, so each team will take home a completed house at the end of class.

The cost is \$30 for one child and one adult team to make one house. If a second house is needed for an additional child, add \$15. All adults must be accompanied by a child.

For more information, call Mary Denning's Cake Shoppe at (734) 261-3680.

Holiday music

The sounds of the season will echo through Westland Shopping Center with musical performances by local groups.

The five-piece Phil Gram All Stars will perform classic holiday music 6-8 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 28, Dec. 5, 12 and 19, in the East Court, while 3 D's & W, a barbershop quartet, will perform throughout the mall 6-8 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 13 and 20, and Friday, Dec. 15 and 22.

Also performing will be Plymouth Baptist Church Choir 8-8:30 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 7, in the J.C. Penney Court, and Our Lay of Good Counsel Choir Group 11 a.m. to noon Friday, Dec. 15, also in the J.C. Penney Court.

Youngsters can stop by and see Santa 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. now through Saturday, Dec. 2, Dec. 4-9 and Dec. 11-14. Additional hours will be 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Dec. 10 and 17, 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. Dec. 15, 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. Dec. 16, 17 and 23 and 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Christmas Eve, Dec. 24.

With the holiday shopping season in full swing, the mall will be open a variety of hours during the month. It will be open 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. now through Thursday, Dec. 7. Other hours include 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Dec. 8 and 17, 9 a.m. to 10 p.m. Dec. 11-15, 8 a.m. to 11 p.m. Dec. 16, 18-23, and 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. Dec. 24.

The mall will be closed Christmas Day, but will re-open 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. Dec. 26. It will return to normal hours Dec. 27-30, then open 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Dec. 31 and Jan. 1.

Got a mocktail?

Share a favorite non-alcoholic drink for a chance to win a gift certificate for stores at Westland Shopping Center.

The Southeast Michigan Community Alliance and Mothers Against Drunk Driving are looking for the tastiest holiday drinks to be featured at the Holiday Mocktail Mixer 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Friday, Dec. 8, at the mall's east court.

There will be first-, second- and third-place gift certificates awarded.

Drop off recipes at the mall Information Desk, e-mail them to Wendy Harless at wendyh@semca.org or mail them to 25363 Eureka, Taylor MI 48180. All entries must be received by Friday, Dec. 1.

For more information, visit www.semcaprevention.org.

Talk about SciFi

What if The War of the Worlds started in Westland?

H.G. Wells' classic story isn't based in Westland, but a new science fiction forum is.

The Westland public library will host a science fiction and fantasy discussion group at 7 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 29. It's free, and the public is invited.

A flier for the group seeks participants to "engage in spirited discussion" during "kind of an intellectual party about aliens" and other things science fiction.

SANTA

FROM PAGE A1

offers support, inspiration, information and networking for families dealing with the challenges associated with clefting, Robinett said.

The first year Robinett did Santa correspondence, she sent out 20-25 letters. The number inched up with referrals, and she now does 700 to 1,000 letters each holiday season.

"They all come in at once," she said. "I have 35 now, but they'll all pile in the first week of December."

She puts in a lot of late nights,

writing letters. Although she can do generic letters, she prefers to personalize each one, trying to make them more of a feel-good letter created especially for the recipient.

She makes sure she uses different paper for youngsters who've gotten letters from her in past years and estimates that she does "about 30 a night, if I'm on a roll."

Admittedly, there's a concern about the letters getting to their recipients in time, especially when some of the destinations are Ireland, England and South Africa.

"I've only lost one or two in the last 10 years, but it's always scary they won't make it in time," she said.

The international letters also are difficult because Robinett must research the traditions in those countries, so that the child can believe the letter is truly from Santa Claus.

Robinett gets help from her two children, ages 9 and 12, who help make magic reindeer and magic and snowflakes that are included in the letters.

Her 9-year-old son last year told her there's no Santa, but "still believes I'm on Santa's payroll."

"I'm not sure if he's pulling my leg or if he's serious," she said. "I tell him I'm an elf and that I only get elf ears at night when I'm writing."

Robinett has done letters for

all ages. She's done the letters to children from parents and grandparents, has had grandmothers send letters to their husbands, "if they've been naughty," and even ones containing marriage proposals.

"There's endless possibilities and some of the requests have been doozies — some where they know the recipient's been cheating on them," she said. "I send those back because they're not appropriate."

As for those naughty or nice boys and girls, visit Kristy Robinett's Web site at www.sent-bysanta.net for more information or to order a letter from Santa. But don't delay, her deadline for orders in Tuesday, Dec. 5.

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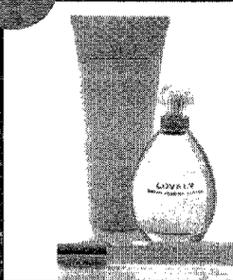
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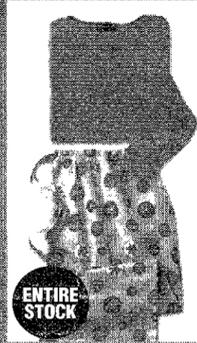
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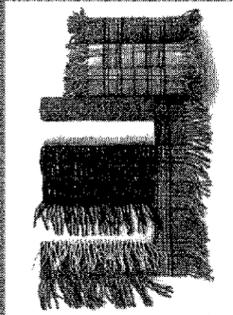
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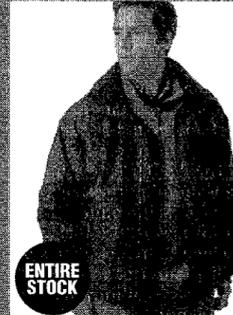
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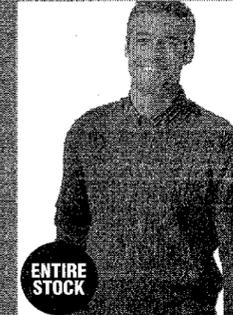
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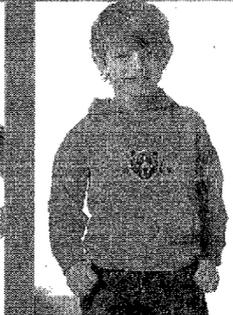
30% off ENTIRE STOCK of men's sportswear and outerwear from Columbia. Orig. 30.00-95.00, sale 21.00-27.50. IN MEN'S SPORTSWEAR. NOT VALID ON PLEASANT RIDGE TOWN CENTER.



40% off ENTIRE STOCK of men's sportswear by Preswick & Moore. Choose from woven shirts, knits and sweaters. Orig. 40.00-60.00, sale 18.00-36.00. IN MEN'S SPORTSWEAR.



40% off ENTIRE STOCK of ladies' separates by Bull Hawn including jackets, pants and more. Orig. 24.00-79.00, sale 17.40-47.40. IN LADIES' SPORTSWEAR. EXCLUDES TANKS BY STORE.



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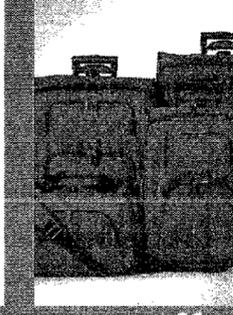
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**FALL/WINTER HOURS: 10-8 M-F, 10-6 SAT, 12-4 SUN.**

## Book tells dramatic story of softball, prison

BY HUGH GALLAGHER  
STAFF WRITER

In 1978, a group of teenage softball players wandered into Clarence "Bud" Hucul's sports store in Madison Heights to order some team T-shirts.

That chance encounter would change the life of Hucul and the young women. He found out they didn't have a lot of money and he helped with T-shirts and supplies.

He also found out they were inept on the field, a source of amusement for the folks in the bleachers. He told them so and when they asked him to become their coach, the success of the team and its players took over Bud Hucul's life.

In blunt, direct, matter-of-fact language Hucul tells a story in which personal disaster and team success are wound tightly together on the road to a national softball championship. In *22 Yellow Roses*, Hucul doesn't spare himself, but it's the success story that Hucul wants to emphasize.

"It's a true story. Seventeen of 22 girls from eight different high schools received full-ride scholarships. In that period,

that was more than all the high schools in Michigan put together," said Hucul, now a resident of Plymouth.

The girls were students at Shrine, Birmingham Groves, Marian, Southfield-Lathrup, Novi and East Detroit. Some came from broken homes, some had only marginal softball talent.

Hucul had played some pro ball and was a scout for the St. Louis Cardinals. When he and his wife at the time moved to Michigan to work at Beaumont Hospital in the mid-1970s, he coached a team of hospital employees.

But this team was different and his single-minded interest in their success would damage his marriage, his business and contribute to decisions that landed him in prison.

"A lot happened in those years. I think I wasn't too proud of some choices I made, but then I am of some," he said. "When I decided to keep bankrolling this thing and fudging my balance sheets, I had to make a choice and I bonded with them."

### ROAD TRIPS

Hucul's sports store was



TOM HOFFMEYER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Clarence 'Bud' Hucul with his book, '22 Yellow Roses.'

already doing weak business. But he began to spend money on team uniforms, shoes and equipment. And he began taking his young charges on trips

to demonstrate their skills to college coaches.

"They didn't have money to visit schools, they couldn't go to Western Florida or Tampa. They didn't have any cars," he said.

He knew what coaches wanted to see. He told his young team they had to take pride in what they were doing.

"I knew the game, baseball and softball have a lot in common. The fundamentals are the same," he said. "When they saw by changing the habits they had to doing the right thing, they were succeeding in batting and everything else. I was very disciplined and strict with them. We practiced hard, very hard and some girls cried."

In the process of financing the team and the out-of-state trips, Hucul began falsifying financial reports to keep his business afloat. His business activities drew the attention of the Internal Revenue Service and the FBI. While his team was winning ballgames, Hucul was indicted for mail fraud. He pleaded guilty and was sentenced to a year in prison and five years probation.

As his team was ready to play in the national championship round of games, Hucul sent 22 yellow roses, one to each player, and then left with his daughter to drive to Duluth, Minn., to begin serving his time.

### LONG DISTANCE COACHING

The final part of the book tells of how Hucul coached his team by phone long distance from prison. To do this, he was able to get 60 other prisoners to relinquish their weekly phone time to him on the permission of the warden.

"They (the prisoners) were so happy to be part of something in the outside world. A level 1 (minimum security) prison, they think it's a play school where you have fun, with tennis courts, but a paradise it's not," he said. "You're secluded, you're told when to do this, when to do that. When they get up, when they shower, when to eat, when to go to the mailroom. It's a federal prison. You work."

The team won the 1978 championship and many of the young players did go on to college.

Hucul served just over nine months in Duluth. He returned to coach the team to a third place in 1979 and another championship in 1980 and devoted 21 years to coaching softball.

His efforts on behalf of his players included a successful suit against the Michigan High School Athletic Association rule forbidding high school softball team members from playing with recreational teams.

He is currently working on a booklet advising college-bound student-athletes on what to do and not to do.

Hucul's book is available through the publisher online at [www.immortalinvestments.com](http://www.immortalinvestments.com) or at the Book Cellar and Cafe on Ann Arbor Trail in downtown Plymouth.



[bcbsm.com](http://bcbsm.com)  
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*Daniel J. Loopp*

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President & CEO  
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*Jeanne Carlson*

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# There can be no winners from war and occupation

Suffering from chronic nosebleeds as a child sometimes required medical help. Under the Israeli occupation, my minor medical problem resulted in my parents enduring repeated humiliation to beg the occupying army for permission to seek medical help.

One particular evening, I watched as my mother and father took turns pleading with army officers for permission to leave our house. After what seemed an eternity, my parents were finally granted permission to take me to the nearest clinic for help.

It took several hours after being treated for us to get permission to return home. Under the Israeli occupation, little daily routines were dangerous and exhausting. My father risked his life and the life of his family by venturing out of the house to seek help for his child. One never knew when a jittery soldier would pull the trigger.

Most of my family survived and escaped the occupation and now are observers not of one, but two occupations, Palestine and Iraq. Both occupations are vicious, hazardous and inhumane. Young distrustful men and women are trying to maintain peace in foreign places through the barrel of their guns. They patrol the streets in fear and that, coupled with their high adrenaline, makes an already volatile situation dangerous and deadly. The occupation interrupts and robs everyone of a basic and normal life, and robs soldiers from their innocence.

But to hear the occupiers talk, one would think they are benevolent and kind to the people they occupy. President Bush consistently talks about freeing the Iraqis from Saddam Hussein and his tyranny. He talks about democracy and the rights of Iraqis to be free. Consecutive Israeli leaders talk about their kindness toward the Palestinians.

Yet in reality, the occupation of a whole society is the worst form of human violation a country can impose on its subjects. What the occupation provides is a life where an individual has now lost the ability to perform life's most basic tasks, such as walking to a neighbor's house or driving to the next town without checkpoints and permission from a stranger in uniform.

According to John Hopkins University, more than 650,000 people have been killed in Iraq since its invasion by U.S. forces. If this number is true, it is the equivalent to the number of people living in Livonia, Westland, Troy, Farmington Hills and Redford. Regardless of whether they were killed by coalition military action or insurgents, those individuals killed are more than just

statistics. They are someone's mother, father, son or daughter. Families in Iraq are forever scarred, not only by the death in their families, but the destruction of their country and the uncertainty of their future.

We have disrupted their lives under the pretense of bringing democracy and freedom to them. Their daily lives are now full of violence, fear and frustration. Peace, tranquility and normal living are now something in the past. Like the Palestinians, the Iraqis are now on a path of struggle that will not end until they become free to rule their destiny — a destiny that must be free of occupation.

If the Iraqi tragedy does not stir our hearts, maybe we need to think of our soldiers and work to save them from the frontline of this calamity. The human cost to our young soldiers is immeasurable, having lost over 3,141 lives and over 20,000 lives altered by the injuries they sustained. This month alone, we have lost more than 45 soldiers, including two from Michigan. These numbers do not include the lasting psychological affect on people serving the occupation.

By enlisting, our service men and women have given up their voices because they are bound by the Code of Military rules. They are willing to die to keep us free, but fighting to continue an illegal occupation of a country should never be part of our military services. With the new election, we must commit ourselves to finding a true solution to the Middle East problem. Our next step is to find a constructive way to rid ourselves of the shackles of occupation and its corruption.

To honor our soldiers, we need to remind the president to exert the same will and stubbornness to end this war precisely like it was started. Just as he reminds us that we cannot cut and run until we win the war, we need to remind him that in war and occupation, there are no winners.

We are disillusioned if we think that we can ever restrain people who are fighting to be free. The longer this war and occupation are prolonged, the more death, destruction and hate will become the norm. The only winner in this war are individuals and former public officials, like Former CIA Director James Woolsey, Neil Livingstone, Randy Scheunemann and others who pushed for the war and are now making millions in profit from this war.

As the holiday season approaches and our soldiers and the Iraqi people are put in harm's way, we must test our courage by using our voice for peace and justice for the victory we seek. Nothing is won by force.

Terry Ahwal is on the executive committee of the American Federation of Ramallah Palestine and an advocate for non-violence. She lives in Canton.



Terry Ahwal

# U-M can encourage diversity through outreach programs

Regular visitors to these pages might recall my letters among others supporting Proposal 2, the Michigan Civil Rights Initiative, during the campaign. Thus I welcome Hugh Gallagher's Nov. 23 assessment that "Support of Proposal 2 opens door for dialog on race."

But not without quibble. Mr. Gallagher's continued insistence that Proposal 2 bans affirmative action, rather than a narrow subset of affirmative action programs involving race and gender preferences, is disproved by the proposal's ballot language. And Proposal 2's opponents didn't steer away from the race issue as much as they conjured imaginary threats to women's programs in an orgy of scaremongering.

I prefer to think that all that is behind us now, save for another sad, sorry lawsuit filed on the day after the vote by the radical group By Any Means Necessary and its fellow travelers disdainful of the unmistakably expressed popular will. Instead, I join Mr. Gallagher in endorsing forward-looking efforts to launch a dialogue on issues of race (as well as gender — why not?) leading to progressive change, as exemplified by the workshop he cites that is being planned by Toward a Fair Michigan (<http://towardfairmichigan.org/>).

Further, an online "Advisory" dated Oct. 19 from the U-M News Service concerning the university's 2006 enrollment listed several outreach measures already under way to encourage minority applications: "application workshops for prospective students and counselors, personal invitations by current students and U-M alumni, on-campus events to introduce students to the opportunities at U-M, and visits by President Coleman to African American churches and community events." Mr. Gallagher opines, and I agree, that such programs are not banned by the constitutional amendment that Proposal 2 has put in place.

I find the Advisory extract very instructive, for it casts doubt upon U-M President Coleman's contention that the new amendment marks the end of diversity; it underscores the importance of distinguishing what Proposal 2 bans from what it does not; and it puts Proposal 2 advocates, including me, to our proof over our assurances that affirmative action will survive. Having worked toward the proposal's

passage, we own it in the sense that we cannot and should not walk away from it.

So where do we go from here? Mr. Gallagher accurately recalls "the long, tortured history of race relations in this country and in this state," but almost as if that history should form an obstacle to fresh thinking about race relations. I'm not a social scientist, just a citizen, and if I had my druthers, diversity would not be orchestrated but would simply happen as my fellow citizens of all races, creeds, etc. participate in producing America's good things and preserving America's goodness. This is what I observed in the Army, where the mission is paramount. Rather than wallow in grievances, it might be more rewarding to take the situation as we find it and apply the fixes where they're needed.

Certainly, public education needs fixing, and, as it bears on state university admissions, has been the flash point for Proposal 2's own tortured history. I'm not an educator, either, but I have an idea to utilize the state universities' commitment to diversity even more directly than appears in the U-M Advisory.

It might be called Adopt-a-District, whereby a state university would set up a resource and liaison center in a public school district found by measurable criteria to be underperforming.

Because the program would be predicated on performance, not race or gender, it should raise no concern under Proposal 2. Through its direct presence as long as needed, the university could provide cutting-edge expertise to district administrators, mobilize university staff and alumni to address specific concerns or tasks, invite dialogue with aspiring students and showcase an empowering option for life after high school. If successful over time, such a program could assist the district in producing university applicants fully competitive on the basis of merit. All very pie in the sky as proposed, but perhaps worth a look or even a pilot program.

A friend of mine who attended the MCRI Committee's victory party in Lansing on election night told me that Ward Connerly of the American Civil Rights Institute stated that "Now is the time for the heavy lifting." I hope that participants on both sides of this long and bruising campaign will lift together toward healing.

Paul M. Seibold is a translator, Army retiree and member of the Michigan State Bar who lives in Birmingham with his wife, Patricia, and daughter, So-Jin. The views here expressed are his own.



Paul Seibold

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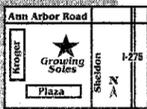
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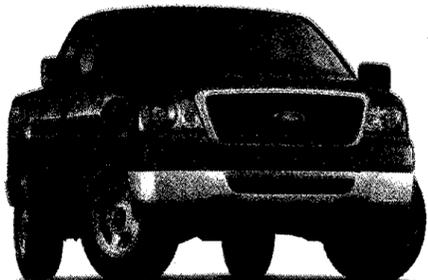
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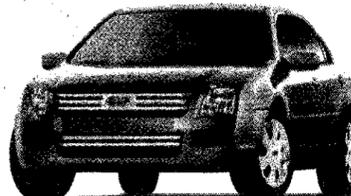
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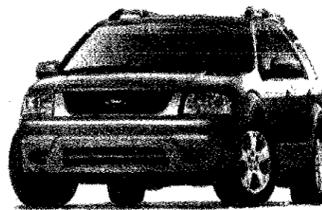
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