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Volume 111 Number 4

Novi, Michigan

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**INSIDE**

**More growth**

Once decided to be a business development, the Gateway project which will include residential and some business zoning is set to begin this spring — Page 4A

**COMMUNITY FOCUS**



**Sharing the holidays**

Sixth Graders at Novi Meadows brought some added joy to senior shut-ins who receive meals from Novi's Meals on Wheels program when the students decorated lunch bags and filled them with treats for the seniors — Page 3A

**LIVING**



**Unique Holidays**

With the official holidays over, the Novi News thought it would be fun to take a look at other real but wacky holidays — Page 1AA

**SPORTS**

**Basketball**

The Wildcats were defeated in a tough match against South Lyon before Christmas break when the Lyons turned up victorious, 51-43 — Page 5AA

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## Tower Auto to seek infrastructure help

By RANDAL YAKEY  
Staff Writer

Just bringing up the issue tax abatement in Novi is enough to reignite a controversy that packs the civic center during council meetings.

But from Lansing to city hall, state and local officials want it to be clear. This is not a tax abatement.

Tower Automotive, a leading designer and manufacturer of

structural components and assemblies used by auto makers all over the world including, Ford, General Motors, Saturn, Honda, Nissan, Bavarian Motors (BMW), Volkswagen and Mercedes-Benz, has asked the city for approximately \$60,000 for telecommunications infrastructure, according to city officials.

Tower, which is waiting on Novi for an answer, has already

asked the city of Farmington Hills for a tax abatement if the deal with Novi falls through.

"It's simply not a tax abatement," Novi Economic Development Coordinator Greg Capote said. "They are looking for support for a MEGA credit from MEGA board authority. But it is important to understand that this is not a tax abatement. What they are looking for is community support."

MEGA, which stands for the Michigan Economic Growth Authority, approved a \$5.3 million Single Business Tax Credit for Tower Automotive that would be spread out over a ten year period.

Rep. Nancy Cassis (R-Novi) has thrown her support behind the Tower bid. According to Cassis, Tower needs the 'community participation' in order to qualify for the business tax.

Cassis also said that with Tower's background in business, they would be an "excellent" addition to the Novi business community.

"Tower is a good company with high paying jobs that we would like to keep in Novi," Cassis said. "We are in competition with other states to keep these companies."

Continued on 5



Mike Yu, co-owner of Novi Main Street's New Peking restaurant, cooks up a main dish.

Photo by JOHN HEIDER

## New Peking offers home-cooked food

By RANDAL YAKEY  
Staff Writer

They traveled halfway around the world, hop scotching across the Pacific to the United States in search of their American Dream.

From Korea to Taiwan and eventually Michigan, the Wu family is hard at work making the dream become a reality with their new restaurant, The New Peking, in Main Street.

Co-owners Mike and Shen Wu have 18 years experience in the restaurant business and they are betting the public will love their food.

"My father's cooking was old style," Mike Wu said. "That's what we do here. I cook everything here fresh."

He said he and his brother Shen Wu are looking to provide what every customer is looking for - quality.

"The New Peking restaurant dishes never change," Mike Wu said. "We keep the same quality and taste. Same style."

Wu said that quality and con-

sistency of "good home style cooking" go together. When a customer comes in to try a dish, he wants to be sure that it is prepared consistently.

The New Peking will be entertaining daily specials and lunch specials that will start with a reasonable \$4.99 to \$5.99, according to Wu. He also said he keeps an eye on his customers to make sure they enjoy all the delicacies in their eatery.

"The first restaurant was started in 1983 in Garden City at Ford and Middlebelt," Wu said. "It was the first New Peking."

Wu said he decided to move into the Novi area after he witness a movement into Oakland County in the mid-1980s.

"I came here in 1981," Wu said. "I went to East Michigan. Then I saw my boss, only three years older than me. He had nice car. I thought 'If I was going to be poor, I'd stay in Korea.'"

The New Peking Restaurant specializes in Mandarin and

Continued on 5

## Texas group negotiating to buy Key Plastics

By RANDAL YAKEY  
Staff Writer

Key Plastics, a major supplier of automotive parts in the United States and Europe, is reportedly on the verge of being sold to Carlyle Management Group (CMG) of Dallas, Texas.

According to CMG Vice

President Dev Kapadia, the transaction has yet to be finalized.

"We are in negotiations with them (Key) right now," Kapadia said. "I don't want to issue any comments as of yet but the negotiations are on going."

CMG could take over most of Key's holdings in North America

and Europe, if the sale is completed.

Key was facing financial difficulty and defaulted on a \$6.8 million loan due to a liquidity problem last spring. The company, which produces automotive components, was scheduled to make the \$6.8 million payment last

March 15. Because the company was unable to meet the deadline, they filed Chapter 11 bankruptcy in March.

At that time, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) David Benoit said that he was working with creditors to try to come up with a long term solution to the company's

liquidation problems. Benoit avoided calls from the Novi News on rumors of the company's sale at that time.

In a press release issued by Key Plastics late Tuesday night, company officials estimated the transaction to be worth over \$188

Continued on 5

## Residents will have final say

Survey will help school determine if second high school is wanted

By STEPHANIE FORDYCE  
Staff Writer

To build or not to build a second high school - that is the question.

Now it's up to Novi residents to help come up with the answer.

Beginning January 8, over 350 residents will become a part of a city-wide telephone survey to aid in the on-going research by the

school district's Blue Ribbon Task Force.

Formed in August, the task force is made up of 60 students, parents, teachers, and administrators who will help implement the future space, population and technology needs of Novi schools.

"This is one of the most important citizen committees ever formed in this district," said Superintendent Dr. Emmett Lippe. "The message is simple. If we as a community do not identify and meet the needs of the district necessary to maintain and build upon the excellence of education in Novi schools for the next decade, who will."

In the past ten years, from the fall of 1989 to the fall of 1999, student growth in the Novi rose 54 percent from an enrollment of 3,789 to 5,804 - an equivalent of 200 new students per year.

With student population on the rise and school infrastructure aging, Lippe said there is a need for more facility space.

"If we are going to maintain the current quality of education we are accustomed to in Novi, we really have to provide our school the space and programs it needs to meet the standards this community expects," he said.

In order to provide the Blue

Continued on 4

## Expo Center's train and toy show draws kids of all ages

By STEPHANIE FORDYCE  
Staff Writer

Even after Christmas, Barbie dolls and toy trains continued to sell in Novi at the Sixth Annual Toy & Hobby Show.

Held at the Novi Expo Center, December 29-31, the show featured more than 300 toy and hobby dealers from all over the country.

"This is when the adults have

their chance to buy all the toys they were afraid to ask for during the Christmas season," said the show's promoter Bob Reckinger from R.R. Promotions, Inc. "Deep down, we're all just kids at heart."

From Lionel to American Flyer, the event had a wide variety of new, used, and collectible model trains, as well as a large assortment of toy cars and racing kits.

Apart from viewing the big selection, spectators could also be found enjoying the show's 60-foot modular train display full of site, color and sound.

Aside from the train sets, the event also included an abundance of collectible and antique popular merchandise.

Retro items like a Planet of The Apes Dr. Zaius doll and a Pac Man bedspread were just a few items of nostalgia customers could find.

Star Wars action figures and Transformers were also hot sellers.

Continued on 4



Skip MacDonald, of the Michigan Model Train Center in Pinckney, sets up during the Train and Toy Show at the Novi Expo Center.

Photo by JOHN HEIDER

## Braving the cold



Dan Groves checks one of his ice-fishing lines set up on Walled Lake last week. See page 7A for the full story.

Photo by JOHN HEIDER



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## Education saving program proving to be popular

By MIKE MALOTT  
HomeTown News Service  
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Little over a week into the program, Michigan's new college tuition savings program is proving to be very popular with residents.

Some 4,250 have requested enrollment kits, according to Patrick Connor of TIAA-CREF Tuition Financing Inc., the New York firm contracted to oversee the program. He estimated that several hundred Michigan residents have already signed on.

That's a good start, showing a high level of interest, considering the Michigan Education Saving Program only became available to residents as of Nov. 21, Connor said.

That would not come as a surprise to the sponsor of the plan, State Sen. Mike Rogers, R-Brighton. Legislative aide Sylvia Warner said the tuition savings program had generated high

levels of interest among parents while it was being approved in the Legislature. She had been compiling a list of residents who wanted information about the program even before it was finally approved.

In the college savings plan, anyone will be able to open a savings account for a student beneficiary that will be eligible for tax deferrals up to \$5,000 a year. The maximum is \$25,000. The maximum amount that can be deposited is \$125,000.

But the key to the program's popularity is that an account can be started with as little as \$25, Warner explained. Previous tuition saving programs required hefty a down payment.

When the student is in college, there is more flexibility in how this fund can be used, according to Connor and Warner. The money can be used for attendance at any college, not just those in Michigan,

including vocational, technical and graduate schools. The money can also be used for more than just tuition. It can go to cover all college-related expenses — such as books, fees, and room and board.

"By some projections, the average cost of four years at college could reach six figures by 2020," Lt. Gov. Dick Posthumus said, explaining the reasons for launching the program. "Whatever the actual number, the MESP will absolutely increase student access by reducing the risk that students will incur excessive debt."

He noted that many families, 56 percent according to surveys, have made no plans for funding college costs. So student loans make up a rising part of financial aid to students, which mean graduates often leave college having accumulated substantial debt already.

MESP accounts can be launched with \$25, or \$15 min-

imum payroll deductions. The state will match, one dollar for every three contributed, when a first-time account holder invests up to \$200, if family income is under \$80,000, and if the beneficiary is still under the age of 6 when the account is started.

Account holders will have several options about how their money will be invested. The basic option, for newcomers to the investment world, is the "Managed Allocation" option, but other strategies can be used in the program.

The state has hired TIAA-CREF to operate the program. It is the largest tuition savings management firm in the country, handling such programs in 11 states. The largest and oldest is New York, Connor said, which has some 103,000 accounts set up at present.

According to Warner, 23 states now offer similar programs and at least 40 have

some kind of savings program for higher education.

The tax deferrals available in MESP currently apply only to state taxes. But Rogers plans to do something about federal taxes as well, Warner said.

Having just been promoted by voters to Congress — if his slim 160 vote margin holds when the ballots have been recounted in his race against Dianne Byrum — he plans to sponsor legislation in Washington too that would make such state tuition savings programs eligible for federal tax deferrals.

In fact, Warner said, based on the early vote totals, Rogers has already submitted the paperwork needed to get the drafting of such a bill underway.

For more information on the program, call 1-877-861-MESP (1-877-861-6377). Information is also available on the MESP website at <http://www.mtsaves.com>.

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## Developer wishes to take over fire station site for residential use

By ANDREW DIETDERICH  
Staff Writer

A home developer wants to turn a chunk of land set aside for use as a fire station site in Northville Township into a small residential area.

However, it may be a tough sell to some township planners who think the community may be better served with nothing on the property at all — for now anyway.

The Northville Township board of trustees tabled a proposal at its Dec. 21 meeting from Troy-based Biltmore Properties Corp. to buy 4.42 acres of land on the township's west side for \$312,000 to develop six lots. A decision is pending an appraisal of the property located on the east side of Sheldon Road north of Five Mile Road. It was acquired from Wayne County for use as a fire station site.

"Property value is probably never going to go down in Northville Township," said Sue Hillebrand, Northville Township board of trustees clerk. "I don't think we'll be hurt financially if we don't take this offer."

Access problems make the property an unattractive area to build a new fire station, officials said. Other parcels in the area the township also owns and have better access routes could be used instead.

The proposed sale agreement from Biltmore had several problems, said township attorney James Tamm in a report to the board. For example, it was unclear whether the proposed purchase price is a fair market value. Additionally, Tamm said the proposed "six-month investigation

period...is a generous amount of time." Also, he said a provision in the agreement that includes a preliminary plat approval as a condition of the sale "should be deleted."

Further, he called the provision the township "join in the execution of any site plan or plat requests... unreasonable and inappropriate."

Hillebrand said there may be other reasons to think about not selling the property.

"I don't think we need anymore homes in the township at this point," she said.

For example, the land could be used for recreational purposes, she said. Or the township could hold on to it and wait for its value to continually increase.

However, Marv Gans, Northville Township board of trustee, said he supports selling the property.

"I don't want to sell it if we have a use for it, however it's a very small parcel of land and I think by selling it we could get some seed money for other programs," Gans said. "We could use the money to get started on the completion of some of these other projects we've started."

Gans said he didn't think developers will be clamoring to pick up the land.

"I don't think the average developer would be interested in building there," he said.

The appraisal of the property is expected to be completed within the next two weeks and should be ready for the January meeting of the township board of trustees.

Andrew Dietderich is a staff writer for the Northville Record. He may be reached by calling (248) 349-1700 extension 104.

## SOC CRA keeps cities under wraps

By Mike Malott  
HOMETOWN NEWS SERVICE  
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Legislation allowing municipalities to leave the Southeastern Oakland County Resource Recovery Authority, known as SOCCRA — a waste hauling authority made up of 12 to 14 southeast Oakland cities — will have to wait until next year.

But that should not count as a delay for cities that want to step out. Because of contracts currently in place, any departures from the authority would have to wait until those agreements expire in 2002.

In the meantime, attorneys have come up with a way to amend the law so that some communities can depart while others are allowed to stay, according to SOCCRA general manager Tom Waffan.

He does not expect those attorneys will have their work done by the turn of the year, so legislation introduced earlier this year by Sen. Shirley Johnson, R-Royal Oak, will die and have to be reintroduced early next year. Rep. David Woodward, D-Madison Heights, introduced similar legislation in the House.

The problem is that when current state law was drafted to allow municipalities to band together to form such authorities, it did not anticipate that some communities might want leave the pact. Included were provisions only that allowed for total dissolution.

Several communities, including Royal Oak, Madison Heights and Hazel Park are interested in contracting for services on their own. The purpose is a cost savings, according to legislative aide Brian

O'Connell. Communities that now pay \$38 per ton for the removal waste expect they could get rates between \$12 and \$18 per ton.

Royal Oak estimates its savings at \$4.4 to \$7.7 million over five years. Johnson's office calculates the total savings for all communities could range between \$22.7 million and \$46.5 million over the same time frame.

Waffan is not so sure the municipalities will be able to get those prices. Shake ups in the waste hauling business, producing mergers and spin offs in recent years, had until recently left several firms in the area working hard to gain new business. Now that those landfills have received permission to accept Canadian wastes, Waffan said he doesn't think they are quite as willing to cut their rates in order to win new contracts.

SOC CRA has assets and questions regarding whether departing communities should be paid for the assets they leave behind with the system have not been resolved.

Finally, Waffan said, the communities have contributed to landfills, which by state law must be cared for 30 years after use.

O'Connell said the bill is expected to be amended to incorporate Waffan's proposed changes when it is reintroduced in the coming year.

Included in the authority are Birmingham, Clawson, Ferndale, Hazel Park, Huntington Woods, Pleasant Ridge, Royal Oak, Troy, Berkeley, Beverly Hills, Lathrup Village and Oak Park to take advantage of more competitive waste removal rates. Madison Heights' status in the authority is a matter of dispute.

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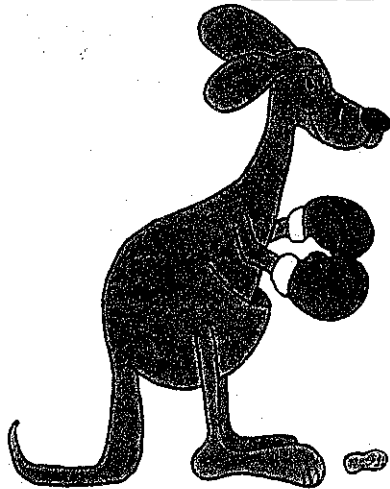
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SAFETY RATING\*



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HERE THEY ARE

# Nutty Holidays

By Chris Davis



And there you are. It's about 6 p.m. on Dec. 24, and suddenly the realization hits you: You haven't done a lick of Christmas shopping. Maybe it's time to get a list together.

After you realize there's no hope for getting the things people will actually want, you fall back on the almighty calendar. Hey, who doesn't need a way to chart the passage of the coming year, right?

We took a look at the 12 months for 2001. In addition to anniversaries, birthdays, parties, and the day-to-clean-out-the-gutters day, there are a number of holidays and festivals you should tell your loved ones about for the upcoming year.

**BANK HOLIDAY**  
**January 2 • Great Britain**

This holiday was established in England in 1871 to close banks to allow them to get caught up on business. The failure of Detroit-area banks were the catalyst for President Franklin Roosevelt to close U.S. banks for 10 days starting on March 6, 1933.

Apparently, those Brits party just a wee bit too much on New Year's, and they give letters an extra day to rewrap. Either that, or while you're waiting in line to get a few pounds from your account for some aspirin, the bank execs can be seen whooping it up inside the window. God save the queen!

**ADULTS DAY**  
**January 15 • Japan**

A day to celebrate coming of age. A national holiday in Japan honoring those who reached their 20th birthday (voting age) the previous year.

In keeping with the Japanese theme of respecting one's elders, this holiday is apparently set aside to honor the older generation. Interestingly enough, Kid Rock, Limp Bizkit and Korn are slated to make guest appearances in Tokyo the same day.

**AUSTRALIA DAY**  
**January 26**

The anniversary of the first British settlement in Australia on Jan 26, 1788. We don't know where this one is held, but it sure sounds cool. G'day.

**WAITANGI DAY**  
**February 11 • New Zealand**

Commemorates the signing of the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi, in which the Maori natives agreed to co-exist peacefully with the European settlers.

The "Wazzup!" guys will be doing guest appearances on all the best Tasmanian TV stations.

**JOUSTING THE BEAR**

**March 10 • Italy**

In the city of Pistoia, 12 horsemen from the city's four districts join in a procession to Cathedral Square with costumed attendants accompanying. The horsemen gallop at effigies of bears with outstretched paws holding a target. The winner of the joust is named Knight of the Golden Spur of Pistoia.

"Hi I'm Teddy Ruxpin. Can you and I be friends? I really like to YEEEOOW!"

**ANZAC DAY**  
**April 25**

**Australia & New Zealand**

Commemorates the landing of the Anzac troops in the Gallipoli Peninsula in European Turkey on April 25, 1915, during World War I.

Not unlike Zantac Day or Prozac Day, it's the recovery day set aside after Australia Day and Waitangi Day...at least we think so.

**QUEEN'S BIRTHDAY**  
**April 30 • Netherlands**

Held in honor of Juliana Louise Emma Marie Wilhelmina, queen of The Netherlands from 1948 through 1980. She was a popular monarch, despite her hiring of a faith healer for the royal family.

We were wrong. This has nothing to do with Freddie Mercury or Brian May. Sorry.

**EARLY BANK HOLIDAY**  
**May 6 • Great Britain**

Exactly how the early bank holiday comes after the regular bank holiday we don't understand, but then we never understood those fuzzy hats the guards wear at Buckingham Palace, either.

**WHIT-MONDAY**  
**May 20**  
 Half of the

**European continent**

Until recently, this was one of the major holidays of the year in the Pennsylvania Dutch country. From 1835 through the Civil War, it was known as the "Dutch Fourth of July."

How can Whit-MONDAY fall on a Sunday? Talk about confusing!

**SPRING BANK HOLIDAY**  
**May 27 • Great Britain**

With all these days off, it's a miracle any business gets done over there.

**CANADA DAY**  
**July 1**

Before 1982 Canada Day had been known as Dominion Day, First of July, Confederation Day, and July the First. Canada Day celebrates the events that occurred on July 1, 1867, when the British North America Act created the Canadian federal government.

If you love hockey, maple leaves, the word "loser" and the CN Tower, speak some French and fly the red and white, eh?

**BANK HOLIDAY**  
**June 3 • Great Britain**

Gee...what's another day off when you've already had THREE?

**SUMMER BANK HOLIDAY**  
**August 5 • Great Britain**

Isn't this getting a little ridiculous?

**LATE-SUMMER BANK HOLIDAY**  
**Aug. 26 • Great Britain**

Now, before you start getting all uptight, remember that it's been a whole three weeks since the last vacation day over there.

**PHYSICAL CULTURE DAY**  
**October 10**

**• Japan**

If we didn't know any better, we would

have thought this was some kind of a tribute to Madonna. Apparently it isn't.

**NATIONAL BOSS DAY**  
**October 16 • U.S. & Canada**

An annual day designated to honor American and Canadian supervisors. What does it say when these are the only two countries around the world who salute employers?

**BANK HOLIDAY**  
**October 28 • Great Britain**

Aww, fer cryin' out loud...

**ELEPHANT ROUNDUP**  
**November 17 • Thailand**

At this event, 100 trained elephants allowed to demonstrate intelligence, strength, obedience and agility. The elephants are also placed in a game of soccer. "Mabel moves it midfield to Jumbo, centers to Biggie...back across to Stumpy...he shoots...he SCORES!"

**NATIONAL DAY**  
**Dec. 21 • Romania**

Celebrated since 1990 after the fall of former dictator Nicolae Ceausescu, it marks the 1918 unification of Romania and Transylvania.

Not National Left-Handed Awareness Day, not National Cucumber Grower's Day, and not even National Carousel Rider's Day. Just plain of National Day. Enjoy it.

**BOXING DAY**  
**Dec. 26**

**Half the Westernized world**

The public observance of Boxing Day takes place on the following Monday if December 26 falls on a Saturday or Sunday. The traditional celebration of Boxing Day included giving money and other gifts to charitable institutions, needy individuals and people in service jobs.

Despite the name, this holiday has nothing to do with either Sugar Ray Leonard or Thomas "Hitman" Hearns.

Chris C. Davis is the editor of the Northville Record.

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Illustration By  
 DIANA WELLS

Blimey ...  
 They're closed  
 again!!!









# MOVIES

Karl Kling, Editor 248-685-1507

Thursday, January 4, 2001

## Film leaves women, and men, wanting

What Women Want  
MPAA Rating: PG-13  
Now Playing  
Not Recommended

By Jennifer Norris  
STAFF WRITER

Mel Gibson and Helen Hunt recently hit the silver screen in a comedic tale of what happens when one person has the power to read the thoughts of another person.

Set in modern-day Chicago, Gibson's character plays the role of a successful businessman employed at a prestigious advertising company. Hunt plays the role of a newly hired employee to the advertising agency, who has limited experience but a wealth of ideas to formulate successful business deals.

Initially unimpressed with the addition of Hunt to the company, Gibson's chauvinistic views and cynical nature are reflected in his demeanor and dialogues with fellow co-workers.

Armed with limitless ideas, a cheery smile, and an outgoing personality, Hunt challenges other advertising executives to create ways to appeal to the female consumer, or target product campaigns that capture what a woman wants. She provides all her co-workers with a box full of items designed for women, with the instructions to formulate an effective ad that captures women's interest in the product and shows them how that merchandise meets their personal wants.

Reluctantly, Gibson takes the box home and begins to brainstorm ideas to market these products. Although this film is



Mel Gibson attempts Yoda, because that's what women want.

dominantly a comedy, a flavor of science-fiction is introduced when a freak home accident leaves Gibson with the ability to read the minds of women.

Predictably, Gibson initially thinks he's losing his mind as he hears the thoughts of women around him as he travels to work

and roams the workplace.

With what appears to be an extreme nuisance-hearing the intimate and private thoughts of complete strangers-Gibson visits a psychologist and decides this ability to read the minds of women may be advantageous to him. It seems unbelievable that

the female psychologist becomes aware of his rare talent after only a few minutes, while his co-workers remain oblivious to his mind-reading.

Suddenly, Gibson is in a position of total awareness. He knows of women's secret prospective business ventures, personal phone calls from work, ideas in creating successful ad campaigns and even learns how women wish to be treated.

It is interesting that his accident leaves him with the ability to only hear the thoughts of women. Several interesting dialogues occur between Gibson and Hunt as she engineers brilliant business ideas and unknowingly has her thoughts tapped by Gibson.

Although the film entails a comedic storyline of being able to read other's thoughts, the reactions of co-workers in What Women Want seem too rehearsed and the instances where Gibson repeats their thoughts occurs in such frequency that it seems impossible the women don't become somewhat wary of him.

In Gibson's eyes, being able to hear a woman's personal thoughts will surely help in the corporate world and will also help his efforts both socially and in dating.

However, even when he thinks

### What Women Want



he knows what a woman wants, his plans interestingly backfire on several occasions. To his surprise, his best intentions go awry when he puts his mind-reading abilities to the test in his professional and personal affairs.

What Women Wants combines a lot of comedy and clever antics which saves the film to some degree. Although it offers some laughs, the relationships between the characters could be developed further, and the women's reactions to his mind-reading capabilities could be better explored.

A freak accident leaves Gibson with the amazing ability to hear

thoughts, which he believes is a trait every woman would find acceptable. But, a trail of circumstances and encounters leave Gibson pondering and examining what it is that women really want.

Jennifer Norris is a reporter for the Milford Times. She can be reached for comment at 248-685-1507 or by e-mail at jnorris@ht.homecomm.net



Helen Hunt and Mel Gibson star in What Women Want.

Mel Gibson Helen Hunt

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