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Holiday closings

City of Novi offices will be closed Mondays and Tuesdays, Dec. 24-25 and Dec. 31-Jan. 1. Novi Public Library will be closed those days as well as Sundays, Dec. 23 and 30.

Holidays at Twelve Oaks Mall

Santa photos: Santa will be available for photos at the Ice Palace in Twelve Oaks Mall. Santa hours through Dec. 23 are during all mall hours with breaks from 12:30-1 p.m. and 5:30-6 p.m. Mondays-Saturdays and 1-1:30 p.m. Sundays. On Christmas Eve, Dec. 24, Santa will be available 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. with a break from noon-12:30 p.m. Guests must be in line with a ticket by 3 p.m. to see Santa before he leaves for the North Pole.

Ice Palace and Santa: This holiday season, visitors to Twelve Oaks Mall are in store for some cool family fun when they step inside the spectacular holiday Ice Palace. The display features a 30-foot ice dome with falling snow, a light show and, new this year, the beloved prehistoric herd from the family film "Ice Age: Continental Drift."

Novi News online

Have you checked out our website? It's chock full of local news from the Novi community and is updated often. There are several cool features at hometownlife.com that allow you browse through the latest news and features from your neighboring communities, too. So, bookmark www.hometownlife.com to be sure you're always in-the-know in your hometown.

You can also find us on Facebook by searching "Hometownlife."

Right-to-work: New legislation could deplete union membership

By Cal Stone
 Staff Writer

Contentious right-to-work legislation was approved last week by state lawmakers and signed by Gov. Rick Snyder, but its impact on Novi's large employer of union members — the Novi Community School district — is difficult to tell at this point. Five union groups represent teachers, secretaries, food service, transportation and maintenance workers — approximately

800 school employees in all. For six years, Tom Brenner has been president of the local teachers' union, Novi Education Association, and he said the impact of the legislation is fairly unknown at this time. His main concern is that the NEA will lose the financial support of some of its 406 members. "I found the news of this law's passage particularly disturbing on a personal level," said Brenner, adding that he has done his best to represent

members as fairly and professionally as possible. "The new law to me was a slap in the face," Brenner said. "When Rep. Crawford voted for it and the governor said he would sign it, I took that as a message that he (and his colleagues) did not value my efforts, personally." Snyder signed the legislation on Dec. 11, making Michigan the nation's 24th right-to-work state.



Tom Brenner is president of the Novi Education Association, the teachers' union.

Please see UNION, A16

Sounds of the season



JOHN HEIDER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

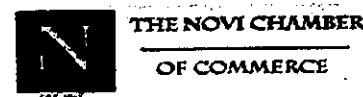
Parkview Elementary School students sing "Must Be Santa Claus" during their Dec. 11 holiday concert. The group was directed by music teacher Matt Ownby.

Toast of the Town gala set for Jan. 25

By Julie Brown
 Staff Writer

Business leadership and civic engagement will be honored at the Friday, Jan. 25, Toast of the Town gala, hosted by the Novi Chamber of Commerce at the Suburban Collection Showplace. The gala begins at 6:30 p.m.,

said Sheryl Romzek, chamber interim executive director, and includes dinner and dancing to music of a live band. Individual tickets are \$60, with a cost of \$400 for a table of eight. The 2013 Business Recognition Awards will be given, along with a live auction and raffle to benefit the American



Red Cross. That evening, an individual will receive the Mayor's Award, chosen by Novi's mayor, Bob Gatt. There are also three additional award categories: Community Builder, Best Place To Work, and Customer Service Excellence. For those three, separate awards are given in each for small businesses of 50

Please see TOAST, A2

Novi aims to improve Older Adult Services

By Lonnie Huhman
 Staff Writer

The City of Novi is hoping to engage a wider audience and increase awareness of the various senior citizen programs. Those are the two goals in the updated Strategic Plan for the City of Novi's Older Adult Services presented to the city council at their Dec. 3 meeting by Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Director Jason Mangum and Older Adult Services Manager Rachel Zagari. Both said this plan is a vital tool in bringing forth quality programs and services for Novi's older adults. "The process to complete this strategic plan was comprehensive and multi-faceted," Mangum told council. He said it included a dedicated steering committee, focus groups, and data collected from our 2012 Community Assessment Survey for Older Adults, a statistically valid reflection of perceptions held by Novi older adults. The plan, for 2013-2015, aims to be a road map

Please see ADULTS, A13

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INDEX

Business.....B6
 Crossword Puzzle.....B8
 Education.....A4
 Homes.....B8
 Jobs.....B8
 Obituaries.....A12
 Opinion.....A14
 Services.....B8
 Sports.....B1
 Wheels.....B10

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Hoping for a little hometown snow

Country musician's new Christmas single inspired by South Lyon

By Kurt Kuban
Staff Writer

About a month ago, right around Thanksgiving, Anita Cochran was on her way to a meeting in Nashville. It was sunny, 70-plus degrees and "just a beautiful day." Having grown up in Michigan, it just didn't seem like the start of the holiday season to her.

That's when the question popped into her head — "I wonder if it's snowing back in South Lyon?"

And just like that, the native South Lyon songstress had the basis of her newest single, a Christmas song called *Snowing in My Hometown*.

That day as she sat through her meeting, Cochran was thinking of

lyrics for the song, and by the time she arrived back at her house she pretty much had it finished. And with her own home recording studio, she didn't waste any time performing and recording it. In addition to singing on the track, she plays nearly all the instruments (with the exception of drums and piano), and even produced it herself.

With the help of some friends, she also went to work on a video for the song, which was shot in her backyard. In a matter of three weeks, both the single and video were completed — just in time for Christmas.

Cochran (formerly Anita Renee Cockerham), who graduated from South Lyon High School in 1985,

says the song was inspired by her hometown (she grew up near Pontiac Trail and Milford Road). In fact, at the end of the video, she even holds up a sign that reads, "Merry Christmas from South Lyon, MI." Her Christmas memories during her childhood guided the song's lyrics.

"Christmas was always a special time for me. I come from a large family, and we always had big gatherings with lots of friends and family," said Cochran. "It was my favorite time of the year."

She tried to instill those feelings into the song, which is about going home for Christmas — where it's snowing, of course.

"When I think about Christmas, I always think

about South Lyon," said Cochran. "Even after I moved to Nashville (in 1994) I would come home for Christmas every year to be with the family. It holds a special place in my heart."

This is Cochran's first single in a while. In recent years, performing in country star Terri Clark's band has kept her busy, touring all over the globe. But she also does plenty of her own work, and is best known for her hit duet with Steve Wariner, *What If I Said*, which climbed to number one on the country charts in 1998.

The new song kind of brings Cochran full circle, because her very first single back in 1994 was a Christmas song called

Please Come Home for Christmas. That song made it to the airwaves after her fans inundated local country radio stations with requests to play it, and it helped launch her career.

"The only reason the stations began playing the song was all the calls my friends and fans were making," Cochran said. She has already sent *Snowing in My Hometown* to all the local country radio stations, and is hoping for a repeat. In fact, she had so much fun working on the song, she's hoping to write and record an entire Christmas album by next Christmas.

Snowing in My Hometown is available on iTunes and can also be purchased through her website, www.anitacochran.com. The video is already available to view on YouTube. The song is dedicated to

her brother, Randy, who recently passed away. In recent years, most of Cochran's immediate family migrated down to Nashville to be closer to her, and it has been a number of years since she came home for the holidays (though she did play a show in New Hudson last summer, which raised money for Operation Injured Soldiers).

That will change this year. With some of her family members, she is coming back to South Lyon, and is set to arrive this weekend. "I'm hoping to see a lot of my old friends. Hopefully there will be a gathering at the South Lyon Hotel," Cochran said. "I hope it's snowing in my hometown when I get there."

kuban@hometownlife.com
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South Lyon native Anita Cochran's new single, "Snowing in My Hometown," was released just in time for Christmas. As the title suggests, the song was inspired by her hometown.



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Discover Downtown Milford

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It seems to happen about this time every year. You've finished most of your Christmas shopping, but have a few more people to buy for and are stumped. Or a few extra folks recently made their way onto your gift list. Or perhaps it has all just sneaked up on you — and you're just now realizing that Dec. 25 is only a few days away. Don't panic. And don't think your only option is to trudge out to the mall and fight the crowds of shoppers that are in the same situation as you.

Downtown Milford has a variety of unique, affordable items sure to make for plenty of smiles at Christmastime. From clothing and accessories for teen girls and women of all ages, from housewares to toys, from home decor to restaurant gift cards and so much more, Main Street merchants are ready — and most with extended hours through the end of December.

"We have lots of things priced very reasonably — and all are one of a kind and made by artists in Michigan," said Bonnie Mottaghi, a member of the Aubergine Gallery co-op, which features more than a dozen artists' works. Find an assortment of candles and needle felt creations, hostess gift baskets, shadow box art, prayer flags, CDs and books for kids and adults, artsy coasters and magnets, along with paintings, photography, and metal art. "It is a popular place for Christmas shopping," Mottaghi said.

For the foodie on your list, check out Acorn Farm for Kitchen Aid mixers — 10 different colors are in stock — top seller Lily Pad lids, Le Creuset cast iron cookware, Wusthof knives and other items. "This is all quality kitchen ware. It's something you can have and then pass on to your kids," said Karen Pianki, Acorn Farm sales clerk. "And we pride ourselves on hometown service, we can package everything for you and we have no-hassle returns."

At Main Street Art, manager Suzanne Gilbert reminds shoppers that the shop has an assortment of Le Sueur pottery, the complete line of Carl Sams books, DVDs, prints and plush toys, gift cards, and Michigan-made jewelry and art work — as well as art supplies and framing services. And what would Christmas be without plenty of surprises under the tree for the little ones? The Village Toy Shoppe is stocked with a huge assortment of Playmobil, stuffed animals, books, dolls, puzzles, magic kits and science kits. You can also pick up "gotta have it" Spooner Boards, Papo dragon figurines, Wild Creations Eco Aquariums, Magformers magnet building sets and more. "We have unique gifts that are educational and fun for all ages," said owner Cindy Hughes.

Many shops have extended hours, and 34 Main Street stores and restaurants have added Sunday hours until year's end. So grab that gift list and head to downtown Milford.

By Aileen Wingblad

After Rain Merry Christmas to all!

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Meet Me in Milford

Restoring a legacy

Wayne County Parks reviving 'specimen' trees in Arboretum

By Kurt Kuban
Staff Writer

Back in October, Elizabeth Iszler walked along a trail in Bennett Arboretum and marveled at autumn's glory amid towering trees and rolling hills.

"This is a beautiful place," said Iszler, who was hired back in April as the landscape architect and design manager for Wayne County Parks.

Under Iszler's leadership, the county is taking a fresh look at Bennett Arboretum, which is located in the northwest portion of Edward Hines Park in Northville Township. In addition to its rolling topography and green vistas, Bennett Arboretum contains more than a hundred trees planted back in the 1930s when the park was a major destination for Wayne County families. It also contains an interpretive trail system, wetlands and plenty of wildlife.

Over the years, nature has taken its course in the arboretum and many non-native plants and trees have sprouted up, and in many cases have now overrun the "specimen" trees planted decades ago.

According to Wayne County Parks Naturalist Carol Clements, those trees were brought in from all over the world. In fact, Clements said more than 400 trees were planted during Bennett Arboretum's heyday. Some were native to Michigan and America, but many were imported from Europe and even China.

"We still have 104 of those original trees, including a beautiful fern-leaf beech and an acanthopanax tree from Asia," Clements said. "We've lost a lot of trees, but we still have some great collections left, including beech, maple and oaks collections." She also mentioned a very rare Manchurian maple, which she was told are almost impossible to get these days.

The problem in many cases is finding them. With brushy invasives like buckthorn and honeysuckle growing in thick stands, some of the trees have become hidden to those using the park.

With her landscape architecture background, Iszler brings a new perspective to Wayne County Parks. She was immediately struck by the uniqueness of the arboretum area, and hopes to shine a new light on its legacy.

"There aren't a lot, if any, county arboreta in the state. It's a big part of the history of Hines Park," said Iszler, a Novi resident. "The fact that it is here offers a great opportunity. I would really love for people to get out and experience it."

Iszler has initiated a restoration plan that will help people do just that. People who frequent the park or who drive Edward Hines Drive will begin to see that plan go into effect as early as January when the ground freezes. That's when a contractor will begin going out to the



PHOTOS BY JOHN HEIDER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER
Elizabeth Iszler walks through Bennett Arboretum in Hines Park back in October. Iszler, with Wayne County Parks, is working to preserve and restore the remaining "specimen" trees dating back to the 1930s. The arboretum is located in Northville Township.



Under Elizabeth Iszler, Wayne County Parks is restoring the specimen trees in Bennett Arboretum, which were planted in the 1930s.

BENNETT ARBORETUM FACTS

- Established in 1930s by J. Merle (J.M.) Bennett, who worked for Wayne County Road Commission as director of Wayne County Parks and Forestry
- Located in the northwest portion of Edward Hines Park, in Northville Township
- Michigan's oldest public arboretum
- 104 of the original 470 or so specimen trees from the 1930s still remain

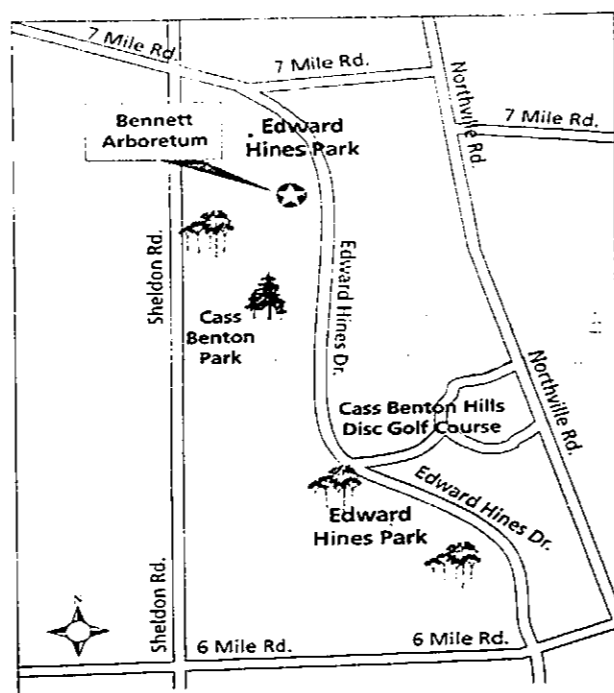
arboretum to remove the invasive plants and trees. The work should continue into the spring, when workers will also prune the specimen trees and bring them back to health. There are also plans to add more signage that will explain both the history and natural features of the arboretum.

"People will really notice the changes by summer," Iszler said. Bennett Arboretum was the brainchild of J. Merle Bennett, a visionary who joined the Wayne County Road Commission in 1922 at a time the county was starting to develop its

roadside plans. Bennett became nationally recognized as a pioneer in roadside development, writing several books on the subject and even getting the state of Michigan to enact the "Roadside Tree Protection Act." He was fascinated by forestry, and was personally responsible for the planting of thousands of trees across the county, and especially along the Middle Rouge Parkway, which we now know as Hines Park. It was Bennett's idea to create an arboretum featuring unique trees from around the world. According to Clements, back in Bennett's day,



Bennett Arboretum's bridle trails were a popular attraction for years after being established in the 1930s.



Bennett Arboretum, located in Northville Township, features acres of fields and unique trees, and is popular with walkers, birders and area high schools' cross country teams.



Workers plant some of the specimen trees in Bennett Arboretum in the 1930s.

north is today," Clements said. While Wayne County Parks has done a couple of recent surveys of the arboretum with the help of University of Michigan students, Iszler and Clements believe they will know even more after the invasive plants are removed.

In addition to restoring the specimen trees, the master plan calls for creating wetland and prairie ecosystems that weren't part of the original plan. New trees will also be planted to supplement the various collections, though the focus will be on adding native trees. Iszler said she is excited

about the future of Bennett Arboretum. Her goal is that more people discover what a jewel the county has, even though it hasn't always been treated as such. "Hopefully this is just the beginning," Iszler said. "My hope is to add to the educational component of the arboretum. I think this would be a great place to bring school kids to learn about nature." "Perhaps the best part of the arboretum is that it's free, and it's open to the public."

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Horse, bunny, piglets all new at Kensington farm

From a two-ton gentle giant to tiny pink piglets, there are new friendly faces to meet at Kensington Metropark's Farm Center.

Yoder, a 10-year old dappled grey percheron gelding, now reigns as the biggest draft horse at the farm. Standing at 18 hands high, and weighing around 2,000 pounds, he is already teamed up with Charlie, the second-largest horse at the farm, to give horse-drawn wagon rides.

Ellie and Larry Bireta of Highland loaned Yoder to the farm for three months, and he's a perfect fit, according to Debbie Cavallaro, supervising farm interpreter. "He came from an Amish farm, and he's old school, he knows his way around a wagon or other farm equipment," said Cavallaro. "He's exactly what we needed." Yoder is friendly and good with kids. He, along with Charlie, are one of three teams of horses that will be giving wagon rides weekdays, noon-4 p.m., and daily from Dec. 26 through New Year's Day.

With white fur and pink eyes, Peppermint is a new addition in the barn. With extra fur around her nape, this lion-head bunny joins Sandy, a Flemish giant rabbit. But the biggest attention-grabber in the barn is Sugar, the sow, and her nine piglets. Born Nov. 17, the piglets can be seen snuggling together to nap when not feeding. Five more sows are due from now until spring.

The Kensington Metropark Farm Center is open 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily. For more information, call (248) 684-8632. A vehicle entry pass is required to enter the metropark. Daily permits are \$5, and annual passes are available.

UNION

Continued from page A1

Earlier that day, the Michigan House of Representatives sent Snyder two controversial right-to-work bills as thousands of protesters demonstrated outside the Capitol. The House first approved House Bill 4003, SS-51, establishing a right-to-work law for public sector unions with state Rep. Hugh Crawford, R-Novi, voting yes. A second bill, Senate Bill 116, which applies to private sector unions, was approved SS-52 with state Sen. Mike Kowall, R-White Lake, voting yes.

Crawford said it was the right thing to do and that it needed to be done. "It gives workers the right to choose and not be forced or intimidated into joining a union," said Crawford. "This doesn't bust unions or effect their right to organize. If anything, it could make some unions stronger because they will have to better address their customers — that's their current members and potential members."

Brenner said he made many efforts to communicate with Crawford and his office. "I believe that he voted for this for political reasons, that there is little data to support this law, and that for the people who this affects most, there was absolutely no opportunities to solicit their feedback. In a larger sense, passage of this law was done in a fashion that gives me no confidence in the democratic process here in Michigan."

The legislation will make the payment of union dues voluntary for private-sector unions and most public-sector unions. Police and firefighters are exempt.

"In the short term, our local unit, we will lose some revenue," said Brenner. "The main problem I see is that while people will be free to join the union or not, they will continue to benefit from the services the union provides. That would primarily be the negotiation of a contract and its enforcement. This is the free rider issue. How can it be in a market economy that a person can demand services and not be expected to pay for them?"

None of the legislation will be effective until after current contracts expire, but Brenner said that in the long term, this may serve as a wake-up call to citizens who demand fair treatment, expect a government that listens, and political parties that work together to solve our problems.

"This is only the beginning," said Brenner. "I just wish that the policy makers would engender an environment where all we had to worry about was teaching our students." Steve Matthews, NCS superintendent, said he thinks the impact on negotiations will be hard to predict.

"We are committed to

working with our groups to ensure that all of us create the very best environment for our students and for learning to occur in our district. This legislation will not impact that goal.

Matthews said they will continue to talk and to focus on working together. He said his goal is to create an environment where everyone understands that "our goal is to have a quality organization that focuses on providing the very best school system for our students."

Fast track?
Since taking office in January 2011, Snyder had described right-to-work as too divisive and not on his agenda. On Dec. 4, Snyder announced publicly that the controversial issue was "on the agenda" in Lansing. By Dec. 6, Snyder bowed to pressure from the conservative members of his party and announced that the process was moving forward. Just five days later, the change was law, without a committee hearing and with little debate in the Legislature.

But Crawford says he doesn't think it was rammed through. "It wasn't," he said. "This has been discussed for months and everyone knows the issue. It's a step in the right direction. It will make Michigan a more inviting place to stay, and for those to come to and set up shop."

Whether that happens in Novi is hard to say. Ara Touzpoian, the City of

Novi's economic development director, said he didn't have anything to say at this point because it was too early. The Novi Chamber of Commerce, of which hundreds of local businesses belong, is not taking a stance on the right-to-work issue, according to Sheryl Romzek, interim executive director. As for the city as an employer, approximately 200 of its 254 full-time employees are represented by five labor groups: full-time fire; police dispatchers/clerks; MAPE field services and support staff (Public Works field service workers, clerks and such in treasury and finance, secretaries/administration support, code enforcement officers, and community development inspectors); police officers, and police command officers. A sixth union covers part-time fire personnel.

"As I understand, the lame duck legislation exempted police and fire from the same requirements as other union groups across the State," said Clay Pearson, Novi city manager. "Although without the benefit of normal public hearings and discussion, and the flurry of action pushed through in those waning days, it is hard to get specific answers so far."

Staff writer Ken Abramczyk contributed to this story.

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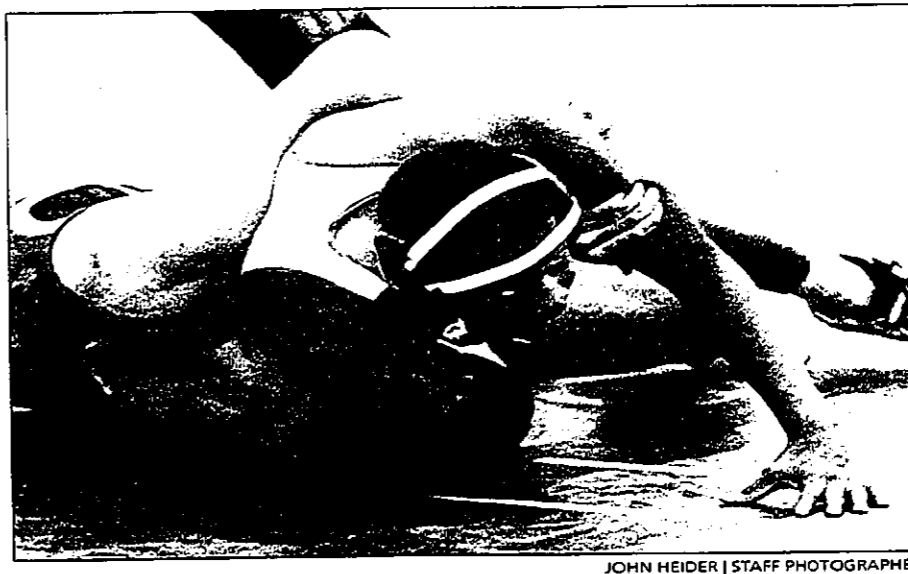
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SPORTS

Wildcat grapplers overpower Raiders, Falcons

Novi wrestling team 4-0 to start season



Wildcat Demare Mathis competes on Dec. 5.

By Chris Jackett
 Correspondent

It may be early in the season, but things are looking good so far for Novi's wrestling squad.

The Wildcat grapplers improved to 4-0 at a Dec. 12 quad meet, knocking off North Farmington 52-21 and then Farmington 36-33, who each also faced off against Northville.

Novi started the night off in a 15-0 hole against North Farmington due to two voided forfeits due to injuries and a 4-3 loss by decision at 145 pounds. However, the 'Cats won the next five matches and nine of the final 10 to outscore the Raiders 52-6 in the back end of the meet.

Junior Carston Cook (152 pounds) got the streak started with a voided forfeit victory before senior Ben Landry (160) won 3-0 victory and junior John Hood (171) pinned his opponent to even the match at 15-15. Sophomore Jared Eng-

ON TAP
 Novi's wrestlers (4-0) were set to return to action last night at Plymouth Salem against powerhouse Canton and resurgent Plymouth before heading into the Oakland County Championships Friday at Southfield and Saturday at Southfield-Lathrup.

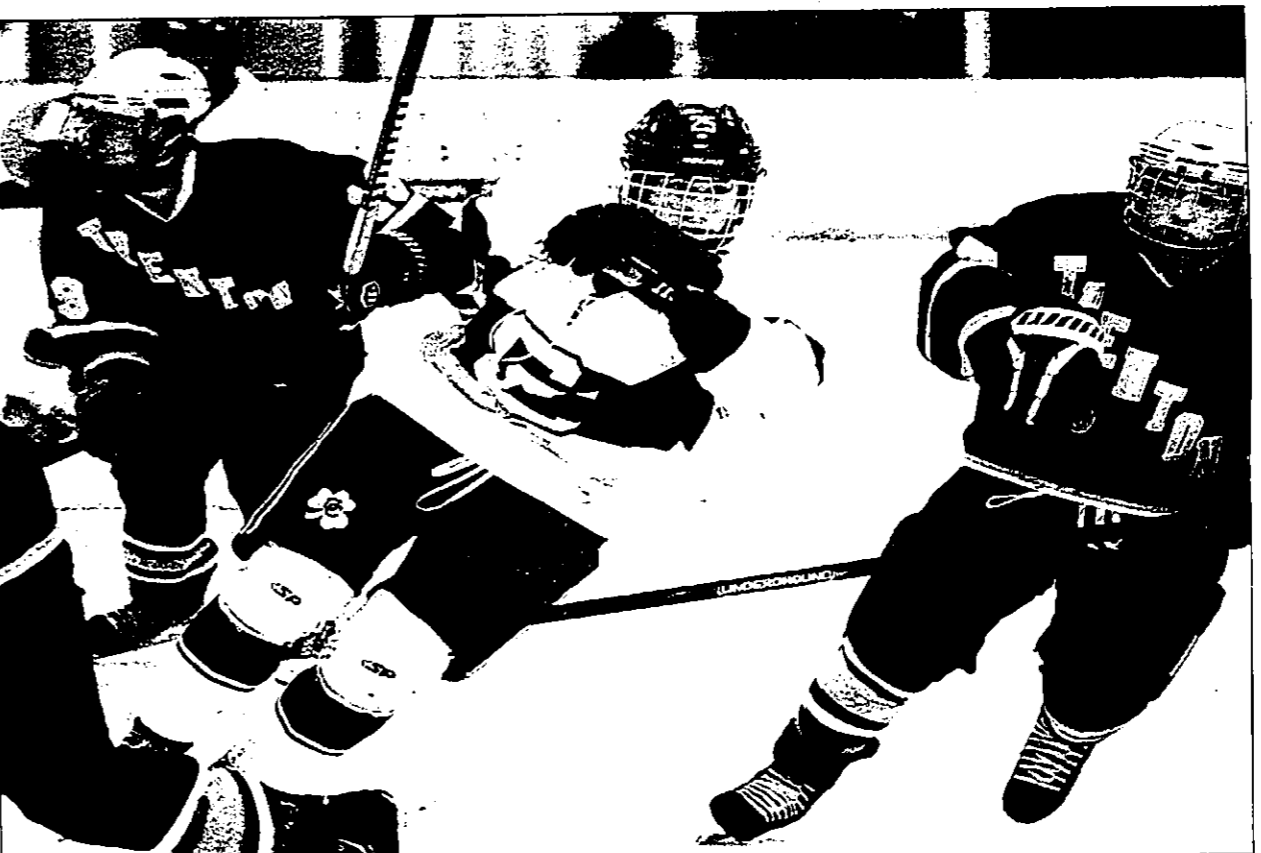
The Falcons kept things closer in the second match, starting with the 140-pound void victory to go up 6-0. Junior Ben Wright (145) tied the match with a pinfall victory, which were mirrored in victories by Cook and Landry for a 15-6 lead.

However, Farmington tied it at 15 with the next two victories before Roush won a 9-3 decision to regain a Novi lead at 18-15.

The Falcons picked up a six-point pin at heavyweight for a 21-18 lead, but a void victory by Denova (103) was followed by Farmington's 103-pounder losing at the 112-pound weight to George Davis added a win for a 36-21 lead to secure the victory.

Matt George (112) and senior Andrew Park (119) also picked up wins before sophomore Evan Davis (125) pinned his opponent to cap the team victory.

Chris Jackett is a freelance writer and former staff writer for the Novi News.



Catholic Central Shamrock Michael Babcock zips between two Trenton players during the teams' Dec. 12 game. Babcock got the assist on CC's first goal that night.

2 more big wins for Shamrocks

Hockey team tops Orchard Lake St. Mary's, Trenton

By Sam Eggleston
 Correspondent

It's definitely a sign of a strong Detroit Catholic Central hockey team when they skate away with a combined 11-1 showing against two teams over two games. It's even more telling, however, when one of those teams is Trenton.

The Shamrocks hockey team, coached by Todd Johnson, earned an incredible 8-0 victory over rival Trenton last week before collecting a 3-1 victory over Orchard Lake St. Mary's.

Against Trenton, the Shamrocks followed the lead of Derek Moore as

the game-winning goal despite the piling on that soon followed.

Brady Jones tacked on a goal of his own to make it a 2-0 game, assisted by Max Wanko and Nick Daigneau, before Bobbie Carey increased the lead, 3-0, on an unassisted, short-handed goal just minutes later.

The scoring continued as Babcock, Andrew Kinney (2), Wanko and Charlie Green each added a tally of their own in the lopsided victory. Earning assists were Daigneau (2), Stephen Jarczyński, Danny Middleton, Wade Orłowski and Babcock.

Railsplitters, Zebras trample past Wildcats

Two close losses came by a combined six points

By Chris Jackett
 Correspondent

A pair of second-quarter deficits proved to be too much for Novi's boys basketball last week, as they lost two games by a combined six points.

The Wildcats (2-2) took to the road Dec. 12 at Lincoln Park and last Friday at Wayne Memorial, failing to complete a late comeback in a 60-59 loss to the Railsplitters before a late surge by the Zebras gave them a victory over the 'Cats 56-51.

Three Wildcats found themselves in triple figures against Lincoln Park, led by seniors Tre Cadwell (16 points, four steals), Charles McKinney (15 points, four steals, four rebounds) and Jonni Ivy (10 points, six rebounds).

"Cadwell had a solid game against Lincoln Park. Tough on defense and made few mistakes offensively," Novi coach Brian Tass said. "Ivy was good on the boards for us and made a difference on defense. McKinney's defense contributed to our scoring."

However, the 'Cats were outscored 24-18 in the second quarter to fall behind 33-28 at halftime. Down 48-44 going into the final quarter, Novi outscored the Railsplitters 15-12, but couldn't get the final two points needed for a victory.

"Our team kept focused on Tuesday and had a better second half," Tass said. "Made a good play and then two mistakes. Hard to get much

ON TAP
 Novi's boys basketball team (2-2) was set to host Westland John Glenn (1-1) two nights ago before starting league play 7 p.m. Jan. 4 at home against South Lyon East (0-3).

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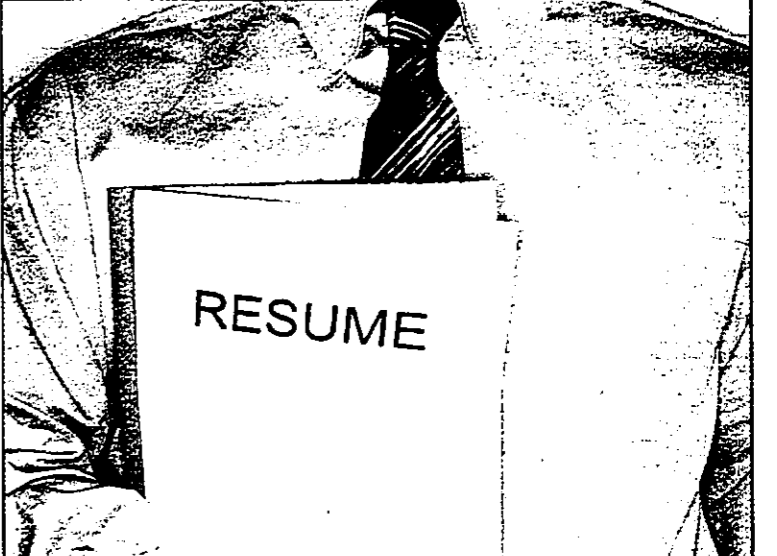
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