

SALE MAKE A PLAN: Check out store inserts inside to plan your holiday shopping. **NOVI HOLIDAY HAPPENINGS:** Roundup of local events. A11

NOVI NEWS

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 28, 2013 • hometownlife.com

HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE

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Holiday events at Town Center

Novi Town Center (corner of Novi Road and Grand River Avenue) will be welcoming shoppers with a variety of festive occasions throughout the holiday shopping season. The Christmas tree lighting will be 5:30-6:30 p.m. Saturday beside the clock tower. Holiday carols will be sung by Ye Merry Carolers and Santa Claus will be welcoming visitors. The first 50 people who bring a gift for Toys for Tots will receive a \$10 gift card. Hot coffee and cocoa will also be served by a local Boy Scout troop. Santa Claus will also be appearing at the Performance Mike store from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday and Sunday, Dec. 7-8, 14-15 and 21-22. Those visiting Santa are encouraged to bring their cameras for photos and each guest will receive a free candy cane.

POLICE: BE A SAFE SHOPPER AT HOLIDAYS, ALL YEAR LONG

By Julie Brown
Staff Writer

Chief Chuck Nebus of the Farmington Hills Police Department will do his holiday shopping this year and offers advice: "I would shop early. I would try to go when it's light."

He urges women never to leave a purse visible in a car while inside shopping and that all shoppers carry only what they need. "You don't want to get out of your car and let someone see you put it in the trunk," he said of a purse being targeted by a criminal.

This is a joyous time of year, but unfortunately police departments and security officers must deal with crimes. Shoppers can help by following basic advice.

Kristin Bixman, Hills P.D. crime prevention technician, said it's best to enter a mall with other people. "There will be people there that can see what's going on," she said, adding packages should always go in a trunk—or even be taken home before you come back to finish shopping.

"We always recommend not carrying a lot of packages," Nebus said, adding you are advised to move your car to another parking space after stowing packages.

He noted "Apple picking" of pricey iPhones is common and said it's best to conceal such phones. "Someone runs up and snatches it and it's gone," Bixman said, noting smart phones often contain sensitive information.

"If you look aware and alert and confident, you'll less likely be a victim," Nebus said of studies showing some criminals do profile victims. Carrying just one or two credit cards you need will be helpful if they are stolen. Stolen credit cards should be reported immediately. "Their

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IPC International Security guard Philip Calleja patrols the upper level of Novi's Twelve Oaks Mall. The 200-store mall, at Novi Road and I-96, has more than one million square feet of retail space and sees thousands of visitors a day around the holidays. JOHN HEIDER/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Shopping centers work with security, area police agencies on safety

By Julie Brown
Staff Writer

Shopping safety is paramount to Dan Jones, general manager of Twelve Oaks in Novi.

"The safety and security of our employees and customers is a top priority," he said. He

explained that some specifics must remain confidential for security reasons, but that the mall works closely and well with area police departments to keep the property safe.

"The freeway really works to our advantage," Jones said, noting there haven't been security issues with I-96 being close

by. When businesses choose locations, accessibility is key, he noted. "Certainly ours is very good right off I-96," he said. "I can't necessarily speak for the other shopping centers" on safety. "I definitely feel Twelve

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Don't let calendar dictate your family celebration

By Jill Halpin
Correspondent

It seems to many people that days are becoming busier with each passing Thanksgiving.

Complicating matters are the scheduling conflicts—whether due to travel, Black Friday shopping plans or work arrangements that become more common as some businesses elect to stay open during the holiday. In addition, for some blended families, finding a time to get together can also be difficult.

While tradition may dictate an "official" date to celebrate Thanksgiving, some local families are finding out that when it comes to the food-filled festival of family and friends, formal dates are really little more than

a box on the calendar. Rather than allowing both-ersome scheduling constraints get in the way of a time-honored tradition, these folks are holding wholehearted Thanksgiving celebrations—complete with all the trimmings—on an alternate date.

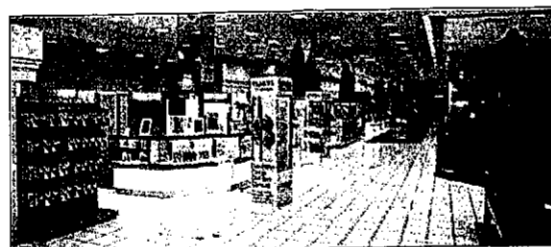
"Rest assured there is nothing wrong with electing to celebrate the holiday on an alternate date," said Dr. Kimberly Waldron, executive director of Gateway Counseling Center in Royal Oak.

Getting together matters

Celebrating Thanksgiving, she said, more about the act of getting together itself.

"We do not have to be held prisoner to a calendar," Waldron said. "We redesign things to work in our lives every day. Holidays don't have to be any different."

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In 2012, Macy's was ready for shoppers heading to the mall on Black Friday.

Expert: Frenzy starts early because consumers want it

By Jill Halpin
Correspondent

Love it or hate it, Black Friday—that hallowed day of shopping slowly threatening to usurp Thanksgiving gatherings everywhere—is here to stay.

Retailers seeking to boost their end of the year sales combined with shoppers eager to kick off the holiday season with good bargains and deeply discounted finds make for an in-

credible event. One that seems to be growing in enormity every year with retailers opening their doors earlier and earlier.

And despite the displeasure voiced by some consumers over the stores' early-bird attitude, the enticements of slashed prices and one-time-only buys are hard to resist for many. Mike Bernacchi, professor of marketing at University of

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SAFETY

Continued from Page A1

first objective is to use them immediately," usually at a gas station, Nebus said of credit card thieves.

Farmington Hills and other communities beef up patrols in shopping areas come November and December.

Sgt. Jeffery Kavanaugh of the Westland Police Department noted his department will have an additional officer at Westland Shopping Center from Dec. 24 "in conjunction with mall security to add that extra element of safety."

Kavanaugh handles Business Watch as coordinator as well as Community Watch and agreed only carrying needed items when shopping is key. "The less items that you have, the better," he said, explaining that it'll be easier to cancel only one credit card and reduces the chances of ID theft.

"You always want to have your keys ready to get in your car," Kavanaugh said. You should

be aware of your surroundings and make sure you're not being followed; request a mall security escort if you feel uncomfortable.

"Most of the time, people are going to be in there for a while," the Westland sergeant said of mall shoppers. "If you cut down the opportunity for them to do something, the less crime there's going to be."

Those in law enforcement also protect workers at retail sites. "The big thing is being observant," Kavanaugh said of potential crime. "If something doesn't feel right, it probably isn't."

Store staffers or others should never hesitate to contact police if feeling threatened, Kavanaugh emphasized.

Area police were aware of the recent slaying of a store clerk in Taylor. "It was a very brutal crime," said Nebus of the Hills department. "Stay as calm as you can and cooperate. Give up the money, give up the property."

Many area businesses have security cameras inside and out and Nebus said inside video is often helpful to police, who can



An entrance to Novi's Twelve Oaks Mall. JOHN HIEBER/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

SECURITY

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Oaks is a safe shopping area."

Claudia Frederick, marketing director for Laurel Park Place in Livonia, also said security specifics must remain confidential for public safety reasons.

"We have our own security," she said. "Our goal is just to provide a comfortable shopping experience for our customers."

Employee safety is also key, she agreed. Frederick said nearby I-275 isn't a safety issue.

"No, not at all for us," she said. "It actually creates a lot more convenience for customers."

Frederick said of safety for all at Laurel Park Place, "That's our goal." Some details aren't publicly shared, "just like anywhere else would be the same."

Westland Shopping Center, at Wayne and Warren roads, beefs up security for the holidays. "We definitely increase our security presence with the assistance of the Westland Police Department. Our commitment and our protocols are the same whether it be Christmas or the summer," said Patrick Derrig, marketing manager.

Derrig and colleagues appreciate the local police. "Westland police during the holidays and beyond are always an amazing help," he said. "They're the best. We definitely are a community mall. We're definitely very proactive rather than reactive," with protocols for safety in place.

Novi's Twelve Oaks Mall as well as Fairlane Town Center, both owned by Taubman Centers, Inc., in Dearborn will also open early this year. "We're responding to

seek media help in publicizing suspects' images.

Bixman of the Hills department added young children should be educated to go to a store clerk or security if they become separated from parents. "Just have a practice plan in place for your kids when you go shopping," she said.

The law enforcement representatives are good about their own safety when shopping for loved ones. "It's a good dose of crime prevention for us, so we do practice what we preach," Nebus said, noting officers write and read many crime reports.

Officer Tony Angelosanto of the city of Plymouth Police Department said, "You should be alert to your surroundings. You should always shop with a friend. There's safety in numbers."

Angelosanto, his department's crime prevention officer, noted some stores can hold purchased merchandise until you're ready to go home. "You want to avoid carrying large amounts of cash," he said, adding paying by check or credit

card is often better.

Angelosanto recommends women carry a smaller purse under the arm, or if carrying one with a longer strap to hold onto the straps. Men are advised to keep their wallet in their front pocket.

"It's safer than most," Angelosanto said of shopping in Plymouth. "It's well-lit. It's more of an affluent community. We don't have a gang element or a drug element. You want to keep the opportunities (for crime) down."

He added key fobs now often have a horn component to summon help and that your biggest key held between your fingers can be an emergency weapon.

"ID theft is the fastest growing crime in the world," Angelosanto said. "That's because of the Internet." You should only shop on secure websites, "things that have a reputation of being safe. You want to be leery of purchasing things overseas."

"Most of it's just common sense," he added. "Just be aware of your

surroundings. Criminals are opportunistic."

Canton police offer these additional shopping safety tips:

» Extra cash, credit cards, checks, jewelry and other items should be left at home. If it is necessary to carry a purse, keep it in front and close to your body.

Men should keep wallets out of back pockets, where they are easily stolen. Carry wallets in front coat pockets or use a money clip as an alternative.

» Be prepared. Have your keys in hand when walking to your vehicle. The keys can be used as a defensive weapon and you will not waste time trying to find them when standing outside your vehicle. Carry a whistle or personal alarm. These devices will alert those around you something is wrong.

» Plan ahead. Choose areas to park where lighting is good and activity is high. Be sure to lock the car at all times. Most burglaries occur on cars that are unlocked.

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FRENYZ

Continued from Page A1

Detroit Mercy, explains it "takes two to Tango. You can blame it in the retailers, but no one is pushing me out the door," to stop Black Friday.

"It's not just the merchandisers clamoring for early shopping," Bernacchi said, "there is a reason the stores are opening early - they know people will be in line to buy. Americans like the feel of getting a good deal."

Although Black Friday has served as an official start to the holiday season for many years, it was not until the advent of the 2010 Cyber Monday - a creation of the National Retail Federation - that retailers began pushing back opening hours.

As consumers discovered they could shop online "anytime, anywhere," retailers felt forced to move their early openings back, Bernacchi said, even into Thanksgiving, as some retailers have done this year.

Responding to demand?

Some local malls have responded to the demand from consumers as well. Livonia's Laurel Park Place is opening four hours earlier on Thanksgiving this year, at 8 p.m. instead of midnight as in years past. It is not mandatory for all stores to be open, so only stores electing to do so will be open.

"I think we're just following the retail industry," said Claudia J. Frederick, the mall's group marketing director, explaining the decision to open four hours earlier. "We're just trying to meet the convenience of the shopper."

Novi's Twelve Oaks Mall as well as Fairlane Town Center, both owned by Taubman Centers, Inc., in Dearborn will also open early this year. "We're responding to

requests from both our customers and our retailers to open earlier, especially since the holiday season is six days shorter this year," said Karen MacDonald, Taubman director of communications.

Although some large retailers including Costco, Nordstrom, REI, Home Depot, T.J. Maxx, Marshalls and Burlington Coat Factory are bucking the trend, by not opening on Thanksgiving, Black Friday is a retail phenomenon that is not likely to change anytime soon.

A recent study by Accenture indicates that the lure of Black Friday as a major shopping event is at its highest level in five years; with 55 percent of shoppers saying they are likely to take part in shopping at some point on Black Friday.

Big day for auto dealers

The reality is that Black Friday shoppers really are likely to find some good deals, and not just in the malls, said Greg Brown, general manager of Serra Chevrolet in Southfield.

"This year is going to be bigger than ever and buyers have a huge advantage: Black Friday coincides with the end of the month," Brown said, "we'll stretch and do what we can to work with every customer to help them find a deal."

Sales for automobiles are traditionally strong on Black Friday, Brown said.

"People are out shopping and in a buying mood - it is a big day," he said.

"Although we usually close around 6 p.m. on most Fridays, last year we were here until 10 p.m. People were looking for - and finding - good deals," he said, adding that he expects it will be the same again this year.

At least one locally owned appliance store is getting in on the Black Friday action as well.

Livonia's Bill and Rod's Appliances will take part in Black Friday for the first time ever, opening at 7 a.m. Not only are they offering deals that include price matching, they will also cook you breakfast, said store manager Joe Legato.

"We are cooking custom omelets, waffles and pancakes for shoppers who bring in a new wrapped toy for the Livonia Goodfellows," Legato said.

The newly opened storefront offers an expanded showroom - a perfect opportunity for the independent retailer to showcase their goods and show "we can go toe-to-toe with the big dogs," Legato said.

ABC Warehouse (www.ABCWarehouse.com) announced that for the first time in its 50-year history, it will have Thanksgiving Day hours, opening all 43 of its stores in Michigan, Indiana and Ohio from 8-11 p.m.

On Black Friday, Nov. 29, ABC Warehouse's traditional "Doorbuster Deals" return with stores open from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Shopping is social time

For some, Black Friday is not just about the deals.

"The Black Friday shopping bonanza has become a social activity, with generations coordinating and collaborating and shopping together," Bernacchi said.

For the past five years, Kellie Bugajski and her daughter Megan, 21, have joined the throngs of holiday shoppers hitting the stores early on Black Friday in hopes of finding the perfect gift at an even more perfect price.

Bargains they have found, admits Bugajski.

However, for Bugajski and her daughter, the Black Friday event is about much more than just shopping: it is about spending time together.

THANKSGIVING, BLACK FRIDAY SHOPPING HOURS EXPAND

The race to win your holiday shopping dollars is heating up this year and that means expanded Black Friday shopping hours. This year, many retailers have elected to follow the lead of Meijer - since the 1980s, the retailer has been open 364 days a year (including Thanksgiving), closing only on Christmas Day.

Area malls as well as local stores are taking part in Black Friday with expanded shopping hours listed below.

MAJORS
Briarwood Mall open 8 p.m. Thanksgiving and close at 9 p.m. Friday, Nov. 29.
Fairlane Shopping Center open 8 p.m. Thanksgiving, Nov. 28, and close at 9 p.m. Friday.
Laurel Park Place open 8 p.m. Thanksgiving, Nov. 28, and close at 10 p.m. Friday.
Somerset Collection in Troy will be closed Thanksgiving and open 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. on Friday.

All Macy's (including Somerset) stores in malls open at 8 p.m. Thanksgiving and close at 10 p.m. Friday.
Twelve Oaks Mall open 8 p.m. Thanksgiving and close at 9 p.m. on Friday.
Westland Shopping Center open 8 p.m. Thanksgiving and close at 9 p.m. Friday.

MAJOR RETAILERS
ABC Warehouse - 8-11 p.m. Thanksgiving. Open Friday 6 a.m. to 9 p.m.
Sears - 8 p.m. Thanksgiving to 10 p.m. Friday.
Kmart - 6 a.m. Thanksgiving to 11 p.m. Friday.
Kohl's - 8 p.m. Thanksgiving to midnight on Friday.
Macy's - 8 p.m. Thanksgiving to 10 p.m. Friday.
Target - 8 p.m. Thanksgiving to 11 p.m. Friday.
Toys R Us - 5 p.m. Thanksgiving to 10 p.m. Friday.
JCPenney - 8 p.m. Thanksgiving to 11 p.m. Friday.
Best Buy - 6 p.m. Thanksgiving to 10 p.m. Friday.
Nordstrom - closed Thanksgiving. Open Friday from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.
Lord & Taylor - closed Thanksgiving. Open 5 a.m. to 11 p.m. on Friday.
Walmart - 6 p.m. Thanksgiving to midnight on Friday.

DOWNTOWN MERCHANTS USE SERVICE, ACTIVITIES TO ATTRACT SHOPPERS

Main Street shops and other local retailers in downtowns across the area are also gearing up to attract shoppers. While it may not be with expanded early-bird shopping hours that push into your Thanksgiving feast, it is something to take note of nonetheless, say some local retailers.

"It's personalized customer service that makes for a one-of-a-kind experience," said Theresa Schlerion, owner of Danding Eye Gallery in Northville.

"The holidays are unique here," Schlerion said. "I think people come here for the atmosphere, the experience. You can get away from the everyday, see things you do not see anywhere else."

While downtowns have everything else a mall offers, it also has something special: community, she said.

IT'S THE EXPERIENCE
"It's old school shopping you come to see your friends, neighbors, relatives, maybe even someone you went to school with years ago. You get to talk to the owners of the stores - not the same homogenized experience you get at the mall," she said.

Ann Barnette, executive director of the Millford Downtown Development Authority, agrees shopping in a local downtown brings a special added element to holiday shopping. "It's not just about shopping; it is about making connections with a hometown merchant - you can't get that anywhere else," she said.

In addition, the added benefit of supporting your local community makes shopping locally even more attractive to some. "You are showing your support for local entrepreneurs and making lasting relationships," Barnette said. "The decorated windows and storefronts also offer a draw for consumers looking for a unique shopping experience. "The ambiance - the overall feeling of warmth and friendliness - is really welcoming," she said.

SMALL BUSINESS SATURDAY
Nov. 30 is "Small Business Saturday", a national event designed to lure shoppers away from the mall during the Black Friday bonanza. Dedicated to supporting small businesses, Small Business Saturday was started in 2010 by Amex and encourages holiday shoppers to shop small and local businesses.

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SIMON

Dine in or carry out – Thanksgiving is all about family time

By Jill Halpin
Correspondent

Cooking an elaborate Thanksgiving feast for 20-plus guests every year is a labor of love for Plymouth Township resident Laura McHugh.

"I've been doing it for at least 10 years," McHugh said, and "every year it seems to get easier even as the guest list seems to grow."

The main dinner – complete with roast turkey, an array of side dishes ranging from stuffing and the requisite mashed potatoes to pecan praline sweet potatoes and chorizo sausage macaroni and cheese – is prepared almost entirely by McHugh, with relatives providing the dessert offerings.

She admits it is a lot of work, especially between trips to the airport and train station to pick up her daughter Alex, a senior at American University in Washington, D.C., and son Tim, a sophomore at Columbia College in Chicago.

Her son Lee, 13, an eighth-grader at West Middle School and husband Dan assist as best they can, she said, setting tables and setting out hors d'oeuvres.

'Blessing to serve'
"I'm grateful for the opportunity to have a chance to spend time and feed my friends and family. It is a blessing to be able to serve so many be surrounded by family," McHugh said.

That's not to say that



Laura and Dan McHugh of Plymouth Township look forward to cooking Thanksgiving dinner for their extended family.

all of the blessings have come easy, McHugh said, recalling a time not-so-long ago when she discovered that she had put the turkey in the oven upside down – with the breast on the bottom.

"I panicked," she said. "I think I was expecting 25 and wondered what was going to happen if it didn't cook properly."

Fortunately, the turkey tasted fine. Her turkey faux pas brought a smile to her face recently, she said, when she saw chefs on television touting the benefits of roasting your turkey

breast-side down.

"I guess I was really in vogue without even realizing it," she said, laughing.

Not everyone enjoys cooking as much as McHugh or has the time and that is where caterers and local markets come into the picture.

"Our lives are changing," said Justin Zdyrski, sous chef with Joe's Produce and Gourmet Catering in Livonia. "A lot of people want to host their families and friends for the Thanksgiving holiday, but they just don't have the time."

Ordering out has benefits

Although some people may have been reluctant to "order out" for their Thanksgiving meal, Zdyrski said that he has seen a shift as more and more people realize the benefits.

"It is losing the stigma it once had and definitely becoming more acceptable. We are literally making the same exact things that you would in your own home and it tastes just as good."

Zdyrski said, recalling a customer who came in inquiring if the gravy included in the catering package was from a can.

"I told her, no that our gravy is made from scratch, the same way most people do at home, using turkey stock," he said.

An added bonus of ordering out, Zdyrski said, is the opportunity to spend more time with guests, relaxing and enjoying their company.

"That really is the biggest advantage," he said. "Many people are realizing that they do not want to spend their time off cooking – they'd rather be socializing."

Joe's has already taken many orders for the meal, he said, and sizes

on orders range from a 10-pound turkey to a large 30-pounder.

"It's across the board. That is the other nice thing, we can personalize it to your party and guests, just like you would do if you were cooking it yourself," Zdyrski said.

Dining out popular

Dining out for Thanksgiving is another option that seems to be growing in popularity, according to some area restaurateurs.

"A cozy Thanksgiving meal does not necessarily mean that you have to host it in your home," said Mark Zarkin, proprietor of Lelli's on the Green in Farmington Hills.

Lelli's, which serves both dine-in and carry-out Thanksgiving meals, offers a three-course meal with two sides and dessert starting at noon Thanksgiving Day.

Zarkin said that he believes people are starting to find out they really don't want the hassle of cooking and cleaning for a large crowd.

"We do it all for them," he said. "People love the atmosphere – and it's a nice chance to really sit back and enjoy the holiday."

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FAMILY

Continued from Page A1

That is exactly what Cathy McKinstry of Plymouth did this year.

With her son Mitchell, 20, a junior at the University of Michigan, studying engineering in Spain this semester, McKinstry knew this Thanksgiving would be a little different from years past.

"Mitch left for Madrid in August and won't return until Dec. 20," McKinstry said.

The long Thanksgiving holiday break was the only opportunity that McKinstry, husband Kurt and their two grown daughters – Molly, 24, a long-term substitute at Discovery Middle School in Canton and Melissa, 24, working on her master's at Western Michigan University – had to

visit him, she said.

Certain that a Thanksgiving turkey was not on their overseas travel agenda and eager to celebrate her favorite holiday with family, McKinstry held her own Thanksgiving dinner in late October.

"Thanksgiving has always been my favorite holiday," she said. "It's so casual and fun and I love the family time. When I asked my family if we could do it early this year, they knew that we wanted to be able to visit Mitch and they were perfectly fine with it. It worked out great."

"It really doesn't matter when you do it," she added. "It is just so wonderful to be together."

Early holiday
As an added bonus, McKinstry said, with the holiday "out of the way," she is already feeling

less stressed about Christmas.

"I'm already over Thanksgiving," McKinstry said.

For the Rev. Bryant Anderson, pastor of Milford Presbyterian Church, it is not so much about the date of Thanksgiving as it is about the "spirit of taking a break from the things that keep us busy in our lives and slow down."

"Sitting the time aside to be thankful – and to be together – is what matters the most," Anderson said.

Anderson knows what he is talking about. The father of two young children, ages 2 and 3, he and wife Kristen have family spread across the country. From Oregon to Texas to Florida and back to Michigan, "we're pretty spread out," he said.

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Knitting group funds kitchen pantry for cancer patients

Knit 'N' Yarn, a volunteer knitting group that meets weekly at Providence Park Hospital's Assarian Cancer Center in Novi, recently funded the creation of a small, well-stocked pantry for patients' family members on the inpatient oncology unit at the hospital. A small yarn-cutting ceremony was held Nov. 13 to celebrate its opening.

Over the past 10 years, Knit 'N' Yarn has helped support dozens of efforts for the Cancer Center and the hospital's oncology patients.

It recognized that cancer patients often have long and frequent lengths of stay in the hospital, which can also result in family spending time on the unit. It collected the funds and gave them to the hospital for



Peter Karadoff, president of Providence Park Hospital, unties the yarn "ribbon" with the help of Barb Williamson, member of Knit 'N' Yarn. Other members pictured are Marilyn Hickman, Carie McCarter, Helene Kaczmar, Diane Gross, Margie Glowski, Jo Flora, Judy McDonald, Donna Osborne, Gloria Collins and Linda Potts. Also part of the group are Joan Collins, Diana Noe, Sally Henry and Bev McCarter.

the pantry.

"Families appreciate the small things when

they are visiting. We thought having a stocked beverage pantry avail-

able for those family members would help relieve some of those

stresses they are experiencing with having someone they love in the hospital," said Corey Faulkner, oncology social worker at Providence Park Hospital.

The pantry has snacks, a microwave, a refrigerator stocked with beverages, a coffee pot with all the necessary fixings for a nice cup of coffee and hot chocolate.

"Their generosity is very much appreciated and we are especially grateful for their dedication to our patients, their families and the healing process," said Peter Karadoff, president of Providence Park Hospital.

Knit 'N' Yarn is composed of dozens of volunteers with a variety of knitting skill levels and is a vibrant part of the Healing Arts department

at the Cancer Center. They create myriad interesting, beautiful, cute and cozy knit items that they sell at the Cancer Center and hospital.

All proceeds raised by the knitting group go to benefit programs and services for Providence Park's cancer patients. Members have plans to help outfit a family lounge on the same unit with the intent to provide families of oncology patients a quiet, private place to take a break and to have private conversations.

To find out more about Knit 'N' Yarn or any of the other Healing Arts programs available at Providence Park Hospital, visit stjohnprovidence.org/Providence-HealingArts or call 866-501-DOCS.

EDUCATION



Animal handler Melissa Fugit talks to Orchard Hills Elementary students about the blue macaw she brought with her as part of the hands-on learning assembly Nov. 15. LORNE HUHMAN

Rain forest comes to Orchard Hills

By Lorne Hulman
Staff Writer

A group of rain forest animals made a stop at Orchard Hills Elementary School to give students an up-close look at life in places they've only heard about.

As part of an academic outreach program, a variety of animals was brought Nov. 15 into the Novi school for a hands-on lesson.

"This is about information vs. fantasy and giving the students an opportunity to really see and learn about

life in the rain forest," kindergarten teacher Laura Mardigian said. "They've been learning about this in other ways, but this an encounter that can go a long way."

There were two assemblies in which student in kindergarten through fourth grade got to see a tarantula, hissing cockroach, blue-tongued skink, rainbow boa, iguana and macaw, whose loud calls had the children laughing in curiosity as it was brought out last.

"This is a great way for them to learn about the inhabitants of the rain

forest," animal handler Melissa Fugit said. "It might be far away, but by letting them see the animals up close, it might give them an idea that they are real and we do have an impact on them."

This realization that life is a big world full of different species was not missed by the students, not even the youngest.

"This was fun. I really liked the lizard (iguana)," kindergarten Tommy Gach said. "I've never seen them before, but I've been learning about them."

He said the recent lesson was about the Madagascar hissing cockroach. It gets its name from the hissing sound it produces when it forces air through its respiratory openings. He also liked seeing the iguana's "puffy beard" up close.

"They wouldn't have had this experience if it wasn't for this assembly," Mardigian said.

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Marines' Toys for Tots a giving yuletide tradition

By Julie Brown
Staff Writer

The U.S. Marine Corps Toys for Tots program, started in 1947 in Los Angeles, plays a key role in making the holidays brighter for metro Detroit children. Rebecca Perelli Yarbrough of Novi is regional area coordinator for West Oakland and Northwest Wayne counties.

Yarbrough will again work with the Farmington Area Goodfellows at the facility at 3735 Interchange Drive, off of Halsted, north of Grand River Avenue in Farmington Hills.

Checks payable to the Toys for Tots Foundation are welcomed by coordinators like Yarbrough, who pass them onto Gump for the foundation. Checks may also be mailed to 1430 North Schilling St., Selfridge ANG Base, Mount Clemens, MI 48045. Yarbrough provided



Area Marine Corps Toys for Tots organizers are pleased with metro Detroit's generosity each year.

these Toys for Tots drop-off sites:

» Toys R Us everywhere

» Baby R Us everywhere

» Art Van Stores everywhere

» Island Lake of Novi

» Toll Brothers, 50595 Chesapeake, Novi

» Novi Ice Arena

» Holiday Tree Lighting at Gov. Warner Mansion in Farmington on Saturday, Dec. 7

» The Tire Shop, 37025 Grand River, Farmington Hills

» California Pizza Kitchen, 31005 Orchard Lake Road, Farmington Hills

» Victory Lane Quick Oil Change, 1235 E Commerce, Milford

» Brookwood Farms, 200 Brookwood Drive, South Lyon

» Martin True Value Hardware, 22970 Pontiac Trail, South Lyon

» Victory Lane Quick Oil Change, 703 S. Lafayette St., South Lyon

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Students also learned about and got an up-close look at an iguana. LORNE HUHMAN

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DAV is a veterans' advocacy and assistance group. DSO Moses will answer questions about a wide range of benefits, services and resources available to veterans. Learn more at www.dav.org

Veterans Services Coordinator Pam Paxton-Keehner, Schoolcraft College
Ms. Paxton-Keehner will answer questions about how veterans can use their educational benefits to pursue a college education. Learn more at www.schoolcraft.edu/veterans or 734-462-4400, x5346.

This event is free and open to all veterans and those who care for and support them.

Read to your children if you want them to succeed in school

I am asked, on occasion, what parents can do to help their children succeed in school. It is an interesting question.

First, we have to define what we mean by success. My assumption is that when parents ask this question, they are asking what they can do to help their children be successful on state assessments like the MEAP. That is clearly one way to measure success. However, it is certainly not the only way.

In our district, we are defining student success in a variety of ways. Success on state and national assessments is important. But equally important are district assessments. These internally created assessments help us measure student performance on what we are teaching in our classrooms.

We also want to measure if students are developing the skills they need to be successful. That is why we also pay attention to work habits and behaviors. Being organized, following through and working cooperatively are also important skills needed for success.

So what can parents do to help their children find success on these various measures? If it may seem too



Steve Matthews
SUPER TALK

(p. 108)

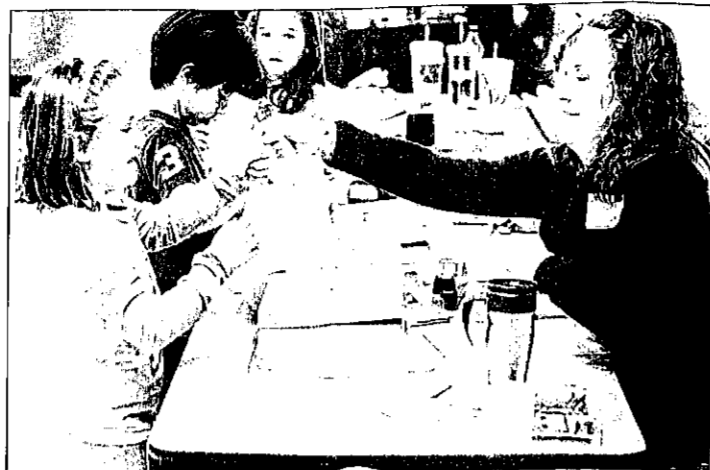
I then went to the PISA test site and looked at its report, Let's Read Them a Story, and that report in chapter one, states: "Reading books to children when they are just beginning primary school and talking with adolescents about topical political or social issues are shown to have a positive impact on children's learning. Even just reading at home benefits children, because it shows them that reading is something that their parents value."

Ripley sums it up nicely. "Parents who read to their children weekly or daily when they were young raised children who scored 25 points higher on PISA by the time they were 15 years old. That was almost a full year of learning."

What's the take-away? If we want to help our children be successful, one of the most important things parents can do is read to our children when they are young and talk to our children as they grow.

My advice would be to start today! Steve Matthews is superintendent of Novi Community Schools. He can be reached at 248-449-1204 or smathews@novi.k12.mi.us.

Holiday shop



Volunteer Mary Zielinski (right) wraps up a transaction with Novi Woods student Alyssa Downes during the school's Nov. 20 holiday shop. Staffed and supplied by the school's PTO, the shop gave students an inexpensive way to buy holiday gifts for their friends and family. JOHN HEIDER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER



Kelly Stoy shops with her daughter Malloy, a kindergartner, during the holiday shop at Novi Woods. At one point, Malloy spotted something she wanted to buy for her mom and asked her to hide her eyes until the selection was complete. JOHN HEIDER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

W.L. board approves sale of property

The Walled Lake Schools Board of Education at its regular November meeting approved the sale of the property, formerly the site of Maple Elementary School, for \$725,000 to M. Shapiro Development Co. on behalf of Pinnacle Homes of Michigan.

"Upon closing two elementary schools, we shared with the community that we would work diligently to sell the former property of both Maple and Twin Beach Elementary Schools to residential developers who plan to build single-family homes that would ultimately bring children into the district," said Kenneth Gutman, W.L.CSD superintendent. "The sale of the Maple site to Pinnacle Homes meets this goal."

Gutman noted the sale of the property was planned for and anticipated in the current budget year. The funds will be deposited into the district fund equity that has been dwindling as a result of declining revenues from the state.

W.L. Central Band 24th in Nationals

The Walled Lake Central High School Marching Band traveled to Indianapolis, Ind., to participate in the Bands of America Grand National Championships. The Marching Vikings performed Nov. 15 in the preliminary rounds and again Nov. 16 after making it to the semifinals' stage.

With state champions from all across the country in attendance, the deepest competition field in recent memory, the Walled Lake Central High School Marching Band finished fifth in class AAA and 26th out of all 91 bands at the competition.

"The kids performed their hearts out and we had our best two perfor-

SCHOOL BRIEFS

mances of the year," said Dave Rogers, WLC band director. "Our performance at the semifinals was definitely our best of the year."

FlexTech students partner with Last Day Dog Rescue

Students at Oakland FlexTech Academy are partnering with Last Day Dog Rescue to host a pet adoption event at the school from noon to 4 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 7. The students were inspired by the mission of Last Day, and want to find homes for animals rescued from high-kill shelters across Michigan.

This student-led event features on-site adoption applications, a dog treat bakery, a live dog and cat show, and a donation station. The students are collecting monetary and pet supply donations like food, beds, and leashes for the rescued animals.

Cassidy Cirka, a 12th-grader, is leading the project to bring awareness to the mistreatment of animals in high-kill shelters. She wants to educate her peers and her community about the way these animals are often euthanized by gas or sold to research labs to be used for painful testing and experiments.

If you would like to volunteer or learn more about this event, please contact Cirka at ccirka@oaklandflextech.org or call Oakland FlexTech Academy at 248-471-6799.

W.L. district receives Budget Award

The Association of School Business Officials International has awarded the Walled Lake Consolidated School District its Meritorious Budget Award for excellence in budget presentation. The award is conferred only to school entities that have met or exceeded the Meritorious Budget Award criteria on the 2013-14 annual budget. The award represents

a significant achievement by the district. It reflects the commitment by Teri Les, the business office staff and the school district to achieve the highest standards of school budgeting.

For more information on the award, visit www.aasbointl.org/MBA.

Great Start Readiness Program

The Novi Community Education Preschool will be offering the Great Start Readiness Program for 4-year-olds starting September 2014.

To qualify for this state-funded program, children must be age 4 by Oct. 1, 2014, and meet two of seven criteria set by the state. The CSR program is a free preschool and includes lunch and snack. Parents provide transportation.

The All-Day Class will be held Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. and follow the Novi Community School District calendar.

Novi Community Education Preschool uses the Creative Curriculum. This curriculum supports the children learning through hands-on activities, and follows the State of Michigan Early Childhood Standards. Lesson plans reflect social, emotional, physical, cognitive, and language development.

Registration is ongoing beginning Jan. 6. Space is limited and enrollment is not guaranteed. Parents or guardians should contact the Community Education Preschool office to schedule a registration appointment at 248-449-1713. The following documents are necessary for pre-registration: 12-month proof of income (2013 tax forms, FIA statement), child's birth certificate, health insurance, copy of child's immunization records, and three proofs of Novi residency (one proof must be a mortgage or lease).

'You Can't Take it With You'



Walled Lake Central High School Performing Arts Department presents "You Can't Take it With You" at 7:30 p.m. Dec. 5-7 at Central High School (1600 Oakley Park Road). More than 80 students are involved in this production on and offstage. The students have dedicated weeks to making sure that the acting, sets, props and costumes are perfect so they can present a lovely work of art to the community. Students in leading roles include: Hannah Shuman as Alice Sycamore; Nikita Krylov as Tony Kirby; Mitch Dobson-Green as Grandpa/Martin Vanderhorf; and Max Elkins as Mr. Kirby. Tickets are \$9 for adult and \$8 for seniors/ students and can be purchased at the door, online at wlcstickets.com or by calling 248-956-4980.

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Atomic Toads

The Atomic Toads, an FTC Robotics Team, had an outreach event Nov. 15 at Deerfield Elementary. With more than 100 third-graders, the 10-member team of Novi Middle School students shared about Robotics FTC competition and how S.T.E.M. (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) was integrated in its design and creation of a robot.

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Leaders



Parkview Elementary School second-grade students perform a piece Nov. 19 from their fall musical, "Leaders of Stage and Screen." Directed by music teacher Matt Ownby, the 10-piece presentation included themes to coincide with the school's Leader in Me program. JOHN HEIDER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

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Many people are wrongly rejected when they apply for Social Security Disability benefits. Money was taken out of their paychecks for Social Security taxes to ensure that they would receive disability benefits if they could no longer work full-time. Sadly, the government denies approximately 60% of those who apply for disability benefits.

Attorneys J.B. Bleske and Jennifer Alfonsi have 42 years combined experience representing only Social Security disability clients. And they personally meet with all clients and appear personally at all court hearings. Many large firms assign inexperienced attorneys to your case. And some of these firms are located thousands of miles away and only fly the attorney in the day of the court hearing. Attorneys Bleske and Alfonsi have real experience before local Michigan judges.

subject and has been interviewed on various television programs. Both attorney Bleske and Alfonsi have also been interviewed on radio programs and have given speeches to many groups.

Attorneys Bleske and Alfonsi offer free phone or office consultation. If they represent you, there will be no fee charged until after the case is won. The fee is a percentage of retroactive benefits.

Bleske and Alfonsi represent clients from all over the state of Michigan. Their Livonia office is on Six Mile Road just west of I-275. Their Novi office is located on Haggerty Road just north of 12 Mile Road. Call them at 1-800-331-3530 for a free consultation if you have been denied, or if you are thinking of possibly applying for Social Security benefits.

In addition to practicing only Social Security disability law attorney Bleske has written a book for attorneys about the

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NOVI COMMUNITY CALENDAR

LOCAL EVENTS

BLOOD DRIVES

Time/Date: 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 12
Location: St. Mary Mercy Hospital

Contact: To schedule an appointment, call 1-800-GIVE-LIFE or visit redcrossblood.org. Appointment sign-ups are also available in the hospital cafeteria. Walk-ins are accepted, but appointments are preferred.

CARELINK LECTURES

Transitions - Life After Treatment group

Time/Date: 6:30 p.m. on second and fourth Mondays
Location: Providence Park Hospital's Assarian Cancer Center, Second floor Conference Room, 47601 Grand River Avenue, Novi

Details: If you have recently finished cancer treatment or have been out of treatment for a while and would like to connect with other survivors, please join this informative discussion and peer support.

FRIENDS OF ISLAND LAKE

Time/Date: 7 p.m. fourth Tuesdays (except December)

Location: Island Lake State Recreation Area headquarters at Kensington and Grand River Avenue

Details: Meetings are open to any interested individual. The group's purpose is to support, enhance, protect and promote the natural, historic, & recreational features of the park and the Huron River by increasing

awareness of the parks assets through the education and outreach activities, encouraging and facilitating communication and cooperation between diverse users of the park and its staff, organizing volunteers and stewardship activities and fundraising through contributions and grants to support those initiatives.

BEREAVEMENT MEETING

Time/Date: 7:30-9 p.m. third Tuesdays

Location: Novi Civic Center (10 Mile between Tati and Novi roads)

Details: Meetings are open to any interested individual. The group's purpose is to support, enhance, protect and promote the natural, historic, & recreational features of the park and the Huron River by increasing

WOMANHEART OF NOVI

Time/Date: 7 p.m. fourth Wednesdays

Location: Providence Park Hospital, Novi

Details: For women with concerns about cardiac health to share information and sisterhood at monthly meetings

SUBURBAN COLLECTION SHOWPLACE

Location: 46100 Grand River Ave., Novi

Phone: 248-348-5600

Web: www.suburbanshowplace.com

CHRISTMAS WONDERFEST

Dates: Dec. 5-8

Details: Christmas Wonderfest is modeled upon traditional European Christmas Markets, offering seasonal shopping for gifts and holiday treats, and also featuring special activities and thrills for youngsters, including a special North Pole area for Santa visits, holiday crafts, indoor carnival rides, and more seasonal fun for treasured family memories.

BUSINESS NOVI CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Location: 21111 Haggerty Road

Contact: Sharon Mallon, 248-348-5185

TAX SYMPOSIUM

Time/Date: 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Location: Sheraton Detroit-Notel, 21111 Haggerty Road

Details: Southfield-based law

NAMI METRO

Time/Date: 7-9 p.m. second Tuesdays

Location: Providence Park Hospital, Novi

Details: Family support group meetings

Contact: For more information, or questions, contact NAMI Metro at 248-348-7197 or visit <http://www.namimetro.org/>

AMERICAN BUSINESS NETWORK MEETING

Time/Date: 8:45-10:15 a.m. first and third Wednesdays

Contact: To RSVP, call 248-349-6225 or 248-685-9226.

AMERICAN BUSINESS WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION

Time/Date: 6:15-8:30 p.m. second Wednesdays

Location: Double Tree Hotel, 42100 Crescent Blvd., Novi

Details: Novi Oaks is a chapter of the American Business Women's Association. The group meets monthly for networking and a program featuring speakers on an array of market-relevant topics. Organizers strive to bring together businesswomen of diverse occupations and to provide opportunities for them to help themselves and others grow personally and professionally through leadership, education, networking support and national recognition. Guests are always welcome; advance registration is required. Visit www.abwnovi.org.

LIBRARY LINES WALLED LAKE LIBRARY

Location: 1499 East West Maple Road, Walled Lake

Contact: 248-524-3772

HUD Counseling

Time/Date: 5-8 p.m. first Mondays

Details: HUD-certified counselors are available to assist homeowners at risk of foreclosure. There is no charge for this service. Please call if you wish to attend. One-on-one sessions will be scheduled.

Book Discussion Group

Time/Date: 6:30 p.m. first Thursdays

Details: Please drop in or call the library if you are interested in joining this recently formed group.

CLUBS

NOVI ROTARY CLUB

Time/Date: Noon every Thursday

Location: Novi Methodist Church 41671 W. 10 Mile

Details: Lunch is \$10 at meeting. Visitors welcome. Check website for speaker information: www.rotary.org

NOVI PUBLIC LIBRARY

Location: 45255 W. 10 Mile

Hours: 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday-Thursday; 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Friday-Saturday; 1-5 p.m. Sunday

Details: Unless noted below, all programs take place at the library. Register for programs at the library or on the website.

Contact: 248-349-0720

Web: www.novilibrary.org

Story Times: Please see the library website or story time brochure for details.

Help for Families, Oakland Livingston Human Services Agency (OLHSA)

Time/Date: 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. every Tuesday

Details: Meet with an OLHSA (Oakland Livingston Human Services Agency) staff member for support with Medicaid, food or cash assistance, foreclosure assistance and many other human services. Call the OLHSA office at 248-209-2633 to make an appointment.

Knit Together Knitting Circle

Time/Date: 10-11:30 a.m. every Thursday

Details: If you have a leaning toward knitting or any of the related handcrafts (crocheting, needlepoint, embroidery, etc.) Knit Together Knitting Circle might be your cup of tea. Skill levels range from complete "newbie" to "expert." No instructor; no registration. Bring your gear, your enthusiasm, your questions, and your stories. And, of course, attendance is free.

NOVI TOASTMASTERS CLUB

Time/Date: 7-9 p.m., every first and third Tuesday

Location: Novi Civic Center, Activities Room, 45175 W. 10 Mile, Novi

Details: Novi Toastmasters is a community-based club, part of Toastmasters International. The group helps all develop and refine their public speaking and leadership skills. Members also have fun while building confidence in day-to-day communications and mentoring toward professional and personal excellence. Guests are welcome. Visit www.novi.freetoasthost.us.

Contact: Linda Kreuter at PR@novi.freetoasthost.us

NOVI LIONS CLUB

Time/Date: 6 p.m. social; 6:30 p.m. meeting starts; second and fourth Wednesdays

Location: Leo's Sports Bar & Grill Restaurant, lower level, 40380 Grand River, west of Haggerty. Visitors are welcome; dinner is from the menu. Novi Lions is part of Lions International, the largest service organization in the world. The purpose is to serve the blind and the community. Principal activities are fundraising for Leader Dogs, Penickton Center for Blind Children and other blind charities along with fundraisers for high school scholarships.

Contact: Lion President Ron Martin, 248-473-1156, or Secretary Ed Kramer, 248-348-2747

firm Maddin, Houses, Warfield, Roth & Heller P.C. will host its 22nd Annual Tax Symposium.

The program, attended by tax professionals, including certified public accountants, will include a series of presentations made by firm attorneys.

CONTACT: Fonda Milana, 586-232-3009 or fmilana@sunrise-nancialgroup.com.

METRO NOVI BNI

Time/Date: 7-8 a.m. every Wednesday

Location: On the Border Restaurant, 21031 Haggerty (north of Eight Mile), Novi

Details: BNI is a structured networking environment for professionals. The Metro Novi BNI team members are committed to providing bona fide referrals. Members learn how to create and refine an "elevator speech," develop a network of other business professionals in the community and receive training/education on networking more efficiently. Guests are invited free of charge. Continental breakfast provided.

Contact: Contact Julie Patonette at 248-737-1665 or juliepatonette67@gmail.com or www.metrobninovi.com.

LIBRARY LINES WALLED LAKE LIBRARY

Location: 1499 East West Maple Road, Walled Lake

Contact: 248-524-3772

HUD Counseling

Time/Date: 5-8 p.m. first Mondays

Details: HUD-certified counselors are available to assist homeowners at risk of foreclosure. There is no charge for this service. Please call if you wish to attend. One-on-one sessions will be scheduled.

Book Discussion Group

Time/Date: 6:30 p.m. first Thursdays

Details: Please drop in or call the library if you are interested in joining this recently formed group.

CLUBS

NOVI ROTARY CLUB

Time/Date: Noon every Thursday

Location: Novi Methodist Church 41671 W. 10 Mile

Details: Lunch is \$10 at meeting. Visitors welcome. Check website for speaker information: www.rotary.org

NOVI PUBLIC LIBRARY

Location: 45255 W. 10 Mile

Hours: 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday-Thursday; 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Friday-Saturday; 1-5 p.m. Sunday

Details: Unless noted below, all programs take place at the library. Register for programs at the library or on the website.

Contact: 248-349-0720

Web: www.novilibrary.org

Story Times: Please see the library website or story time brochure for details.

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Contact: Lion President Ron Martin, 248-473-1156, or Secretary Ed Kramer, 248-348-2747

NOVI HOLIDAY HAPPENINGS

CHRISTMAS WONDERFEST

Dates: Dec. 5-8

Location: Suburban Collection Showplace, 46100 Grand River Ave., Novi

Details: Christmas Wonderfest is modeled upon traditional European Christmas Markets, offering seasonal shopping for gifts and holiday treats, and also featuring special activities for youngsters, including a special North Pole area for Santa visits, holiday crafts, indoor carnival rides, and more seasonal fun for treasured family memories.

NOVI CHORALAIRES HOLIDAY CONCERTS

Details: An American Christmas featuring "Appalachian Carols" by Gwyneth Walker.

Time/Date: 6-9 p.m. Friday, Dec. 6

Location: Novi Civic Center

Time/Date: 7:30 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 7

Location: Meadowbrook Activity Center, 25075 Meadowbrook Road

Time/Date: 4 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 8

Location: Holy Family Church, 24505 Meadowbrook Road

Date: Friday, Dec. 13

Location: Farmington Methodist Church, 33112 Grand River, Farmington (price is \$12 for adults; \$10 for seniors and children under 12; \$10 for groups of 10 or more).

LIGHT UP THE NIGHT IN NOVI

Time/Date: 6-9 p.m. Friday, Dec. 6

Location: Civic Center Campus

Details: Free community event.

Tree lighting at 6:15 p.m. Santa visits, train rides; magic shows at Novi Public Library, marshmallow roasting; live reindeer; ice sculptures; free refreshments; and craft show.

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Location: Farmington Methodist Church, 33112 Grand River, Farmington (price is \$12 for adults; \$10 for seniors and children under 12; \$10 for groups of 10 or more).

KIDDIE CRAFTS

Time/Date: 10:30-11 a.m. Saturday, Dec. 14

Location: Novi Public Library's Youth Activity Room 138A

Details: Toddlers and preschoolers will have the opportunity to create a work of art using their imaginations and the supplies that we will provide. It may get messy so please dress accordingly. Each child must be accompanied by an adult helper. Registration is required; attendees must be between 18 months and 4 years old.

HOLIDAY FAMILY ROAD RALLY

Time/Date: 6-10 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 14

Location: Novi Civic Center, 45175 10 Mile

Details: Bring a team of four to six members, take off in your vehicle and search for "wild & crazy" predetermined items to photograph. Team members can consist of adults and kids, but one adult over the age of 21 must accompany the group. Each picture taken will help your team earn points in hopes of winning one of the evening's prizes. Extra points are given to teams with holiday attire. Immediately following the photo portion, participants will report for appetizers at a local restaurant (which is included) and awards. Your team must bring one digital camera. Price is \$100 per resident team; \$120 per nonresident team. Registration ends Dec. 16 or when sold out.

RING IN THE HOLIDAY SEASON

Time/Date: noon to 2 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 12

Location: Meadowbrook Activity Center

Details: Join in festive colors, a delicious luncheon and sing along to holiday favorites with the Harmonytown Barbershop Chorus. Price is \$7 for residents; \$8.50 for nonresidents. Registration ends Dec. 16 or when sold out.

NOVI CONCERT BAND CONCERT

Time/Date: 2 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 8

Location: Novi Civic Center

LISTEN @ THE LIBRARY

Time/Date: 3-4 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 8

Location: Novi Public Library's Whole Meeting 105

Details: An informal, interactive chamber music performance by baritone David Small, a partnership of The Chamber Music Society of Detroit, Friends of the Novi Public Library, Nordstrom, Evola Music, Tom Holzer Ford and Comerica Bank.

REINDEER GAMES

Time/Date: 2-3 p.m. Friday, Dec. 27

Location: Novi Public Library's Whole Meeting Room 105

Details: Come and enjoy a recently released movie and some munchies. Bring your own pillow and blanket for extra comfort. For ages kindergarten and up.

REINDEER GAMES

Time/Date: 2-3 p.m. Friday, Dec. 27

Location: Novi Public Library's Whole Meeting Room 105

Details: Can you compete with Rudolph and Dash? Try out a variety of skills in reindeer games at this free event for ages kindergarten and up.

HOCKEY BLAST 3-ON-3

Time/Date: 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday, Dec. 31

Location: Novi Ice Arena, 42400 Nick Lidstrom Drive

Details: Tournament offers divisions in Girls, House and Open, with age groups ranging from Mini-Mite to Adult. Teams play three games. Information will be available on arena's website. Price is \$200 per team.

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Dr. David Salah, DDS, Dr. Joseph Pipesh, DDS and our Entire Staff



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UPDATES FROM CITY OF NOVI

Light Up the Night

The city of Novi is eager to Light Up the Night and celebrate the beginning of the holiday season. The annual Light Up the Night event will take place 6-9 p.m. Friday, Dec. 6, on the Novi Civic Center Campus. Mayor Bob Gatt and a special visitor from the North Pole will light the holiday tree at 6:35 p.m.

New additions for 2013 include a petting farm from Michigan State University Extension, fire dancing and juggling from Detroit Circus, Five Star Entertainment food truck and live performances including Chinese, Polynesian dance and more. Perennial favorites include free food samples from local restaurants, marshmallow roasting, outdoor music throughout the night and the holiday craft show. A festive hay wagon will shuttle people to and from the Novi Public Library to enjoy two magic shows featuring John the Magician at 7 p.m. and 8 p.m. and Dan Dan the Choo Choo Man will offer miniature train rides 6:30-9 p.m.

"With something for everyone, Light Up the Night is the perfect event to bring people together. The event showcases the spirit of the holidays and the character of the Novi community," said Jason Mangun, director, Novi Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services.

Light Up the Night is presented in partnership with Bright House Networks. For more information about Light Up the Night and other family-friendly events, visit cityofnovi.org or call the city of Novi Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department at 248-347-0400.

Holiday Road Rally
The city of Novi Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department has an exciting course mapped out for holiday fun. Teams of four to six friends and/or family members are encouraged to get in gear Saturday, Dec. 14, for the annual Holiday Road Rally.

Teams will gather at the starting line, Novi Civic Center (45175 10 Mile) at 6 p.m. to receive instructions before taking off in their vehicles in search of wild and crazy predetermined items to photograph. Immediately following the photo scavenger hunt, participants will report to a hot Mongolian Grill for heavy appetizers (included). Teams must bring one digital camera. Extra points are given to teams in festive attire. Awards will be given and the winning team receives bragging rights for the entire year. Each team must include

Bookmobile



Jean Hoerle unloads a few books from her Novi library bag during a Nov. 19 visit by the library's Bookmobile to Meadowbrook Commons. The traveling van from the library visits the Novi Senior Center at 10:30 a.m. the third Tuesday of each month. Besides bringing a good variety of reads, seniors can request specific titles for their perusal. JOHN HEIDER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

at least one adult 21 years or older. Preregistration is required and the price is \$95 per team. The deadline to register is Wednesday, Dec. 11. Registration is going on now at cityofnovi.org or in-person at the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department, located inside the Novi Civic Center.

Breakfast with Santa
Together, the city of Novi Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department and Novi Rotary will host the inaugural Breakfast with Santa from 9:30 a.m. to noon Saturday, Dec. 14, at the Novi Civic Center, 45175 10 Mile.

Palette & Brush Club to display artwork
The city of Novi is partnering with Palette & Brush Club to showcase numerous artworks including oils, watercolors, glass and mixed media and more in the Novi Civic Center Atrium Gallery, 45175 10 Mile, through Dec. 27.

To learn more about the Palette & Brush club, visit paletteandbrush.org. The artwork in-

See UPDATES, Page A14

Author tells story of life changed by paralyzing accident

By Sue Mason
Staff Writer

There was a time when she was 19 that her parents thought Marilyn Overly's life was over. She had a different view. Paralyzed from the chest down, she felt that God had a reason for sparing her life and she wanted to find out.

Overly was driving a friend's car on Ann Arbor Trail in Plymouth when she lost control and it crashed in a ravine beside the roadway. She survived the 1967 crash, but when emergency personnel grabbed her by her arms and legs and slung her onto a stretcher, her body went numb all over. Level 65 and 66 of her spine was broken. She was immobilized at the hospital, but the damage had already been done. She was left paralyzed from the chest down, with limited use of her arms and even less use of her hands.

"It was about 1 a.m. on April Fool's Day and I was being a fool, driving too fast on the road that night," she said. "It was souped up for the drag strip and he was going to take it racing the next day."

More than 45 years later, Overly's life is anything but over. Married for 47 years, she is the mother of five adopted children and a grandmother.

She has taught school, authored two books about her life and, even though she has limited use of her arms and even less of her hands, is doing painting.

The Garden City resident spent seven years writing her book, which recounts her life from being born and growing up in Livonia to just a few years ago. Originally planned to be one book, her editors at Exlibris recommend she make it two. The first



Marilyn Overly has limited use of her arms and less use of her hands, but has been painting, a talent that was encouraged by a teacher while she was in high school. BILL BRESLER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

book, *Snatched from Hell by God's Grace*, covers her earlier years up until she was committed to Christ. The second book, *Fulfilling the Life of Grace through Him*, is her life since she committed to a Christian life.

Growing up
Overly grew up on Mayfield at Six Mile in Livonia and graduated from Bentley High School. She had only been out of school for two years when the accident happened in 1967. She remembers clearly what the doctor told her when she asked how long it would be until she was back to normal. He told her she would never

walk again.

"At the hospital, I was pronounced dead and the doctor went out and told my parents I was gone," she said. "During that time, a miracle happened and God brought me back to life."

Overly ended up at the Harper Hospital Rehabilitation Unit, where she met her husband Darrel, who worked there. Within three months of meeting, they married. Once she married, she "got saved."

In January, they celebrated their 47th wedding anniversary. Her faith in God rekindled, Overly returned to church and became a Sunday school teacher.

Then she and her husband moved to California, where they attended Bible college. They both became Christian school teachers and when the offer of a job in Michigan surfaced, they decided to come home.

It was a friend of her husband who invited them to attend his church, United Baptist Church in Garden City. They went and "after hearing the pastor preach and meeting the people who were so friendly," Overly knew she had found her place with God.

"I loved it and it was so full of love," she said. "The people were so friendly and so down-to-

earth. The pastor preached straight from the Bible and spoke to my heart."

Overly ended up teaching at the United Christian School, mostly the third grad, for 24 years. She was forced to retire in 2005 because of her health. She is no longer able to sit up all day in a chair.

Seven-year effort
She started writing her book when she developed a wound that kept her bedridden for four months. She developed the outline and then started writing. It took seven years to write. "I didn't stay on it all the time," she said.

"There were months when I didn't work on it with my teaching and working at church. I wrote the whole thing and the publisher felt that because of the length, it would be better if I did it two volumes. I had to go and find a break and then go back and rewrite the ending of the first book and write a beginning for the second book."

The title for the first book is based on her belief that she would "have spent an eternity in hell," if she had died that night because she didn't know Christ at the time.

Ten years ago, Overly and her daughter revisited the scene of the accident. Her daughter went down into the ravine and found a couple of trees with marks and trees that had been uprooted. She also found pieces of the car. It was creepy, she admitted.

The books are available on amazon.com and through Overly. Orders can be placed by calling her at 734-628-2331 or by email at darrelmarilyn@sbglobal.net.

In addition to her writing, she also has resumed painting, a talent that unfolded while in high school. She has been selling her work as gleece prints on the Yessy Art Gallery at yessy.com and etsy.com. That work also has a connecting with God.

"My paintings are a partnership with God. He inspires me and we work together to make it happen," she said.

And even though she is confined to a wheelchair, she says her plate "is a little full" with her painting and her grandchildren. But there is always a place for God. "I've always had a tenderness toward God," she said.

smason@hometownlife.com
313-222-6751
Twitter: @SusanMarieMason

November is National Alzheimer's Awareness Month.

But at Waltonwood at Twelve Oaks we're aware of it everyday.



"My husband has dementia. I was his only caregiver for many years until suddenly I realized I couldn't do that anymore. Fortunately, Waltonwood had the answers: an apartment in the memory care community for him and one in independent living for me. I am very pleased with the care he is getting and I enjoy the programs that are available to me. I visit my husband every day and it is a special time for both of us." — Waltonwood resident

Our special Memory Care community provides activities and assistance in a home like environment. And because we offer multiple levels of care, residents or couples with changing — or different — needs can be accommodated.

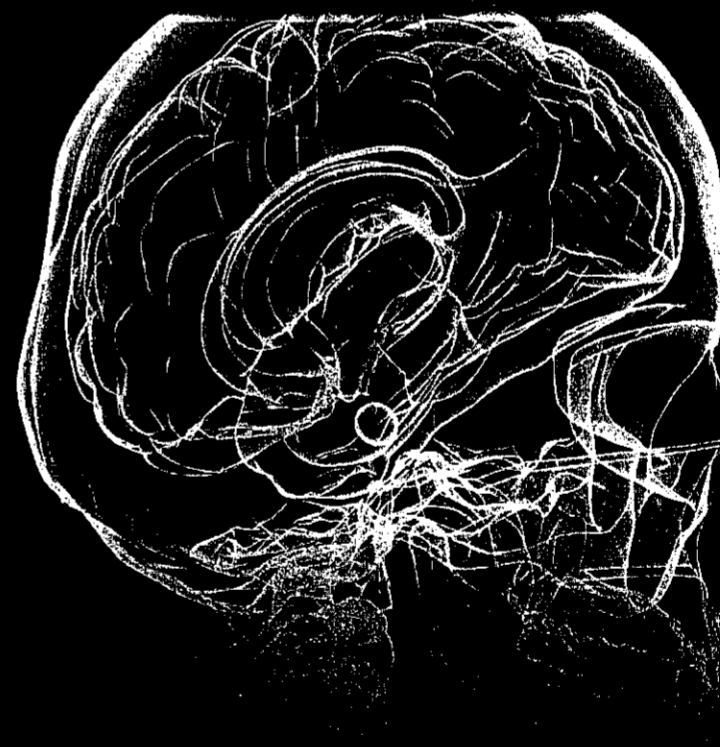
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Believe in better

OUR VIEWS

Giving thanks should be more than one-day thing

In an age when social media is a preferred means of communication, an activity flooding Facebook pages is actually bringing to the forefront, in its own slightly cheesy way, the whole idea behind Thanksgiving.

The activity is done in two fashions. In one, the person takes a letter of the alphabet and each day, starting Nov. 1, points out something starting with that letter for which he or she was thankful. The other one is simpler: The person just picks one thing each day to be thankful for.

While simple in its execution, the idea is replete with meaning, if done sincerely. It shows Thanksgiving isn't just a one-day event, that its purpose should be a 365-day, 24/7 way of life.

How much is thankfulness taken for granted? How perfunctory does saying "thank you" become?

How long will you bite your tongue, after a Thanksgiving dinner guest tries to compliment you by saying that the mashed potatoes had fewer lumps than the gravy this year, before you say, "Gee, thanks?" When you stumble into a coffee shop before dawn Black Friday for some liquid gold before a shopping foray, what do you say as you finger the change the barista hands you? It may be almost subconscious, but likely as not, you'll mumble a "thanks."

We say it all the time (or we should), not just Thanksgiving. Whether it's because the notion of politeness was drilled into us by our parents or because we bought into the "please and thank you" lessons of *Sesame Street* and *Captain Kangaroo*, saying thanks or thank you is arguably one of the most used phrases in the English language.

Maybe we use it too much. Consider that, when our children return to school in the fall, our thanks are better directed to their teachers than spoken as our sense of relief.

And face it, there is no way you mean anything close to "thanks" when you get a back-handed compliment on your Thanksgiving dinner cooking skills, nor is there really any meaning in that exchange at the coffee shop.

This holiday is a clue as to what the problem is: For 364 days a year, we say thank you. Only one day each year, the fourth Thursday in November, we give thanks. Talk, it seems, really is cheap.

We all have to make our own list of what to be



Judy Smith, after donning some Pilgrim garb, helps to serve lunch at the Nov. 14 Novi Senior Center Thanksgiving gathering. Seniors and guests enjoyed the traditional turkey dinner, dessert and coffee and were eligible for a series of raffle prizes. JOHN HEIDER/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

thankful for, but giving thanks means more than lip service, even if it is on Facebook. It means pausing to look straight in someone's eye and smile, letting that person know you value them and the service they have performed. Isn't that what we do Thanksgiving, by pausing to gather with family, letting them know we count them among our blessings?

There are as many ways to give thanks as there are reasons to do so and they don't have to stop when the table is cleared after dinner and dessert.

Are you just saying "Thank you" to be polite, or are you truly "thankful"?

It is something to ponder and maybe not just each Thanksgiving.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Promises, promises, promises

Promise No. 1 - "If you like your plan, you can keep your plan. PERIOD."

Promise No. 2 - "If you like your doctor, you can keep your doctor. PERIOD."

Promise No. 3 - "The average premium savings per family per year will be \$2,500. PERIOD."

Never mind that the sign-up system is broken almost beyond repair in spite of four years of prep and \$650 million of the taxpayers' dollars. (It should be noted here that only six people in the whole U.S. signed up the first day.)

However, the bigger problem is the creditability of the president of the United States. All politicians stretch the truth. It's a given, but in this case it's very different and, in the end, even death. Why, one might ask? Consider the following facts:

1) These lies were repeated over and over again, when the truth was known to the president well before his second term re-election.

2) Of course, the House minority leader, Nancy Pelosi, never read it, so she can be excused.

3) Over five million policy holders have had their policies canceled and it goes up by the hundreds of thousands weekly.

4) Millions of others have seen their premiums go up an average of 300 percent.

5) Millions have seen their deductibles go up on an average of 200 percent.

6) Next year, when the employee mandate kicks in, many employers will either drop coverage to their employees and/or cut back on their hours, making

them part-time employees and thereby avoiding penalties.

7) And the most important one: Some people with dependency on life-saving drugs and/or procedures that they did have on their previous coverage (and were happy with) will not be able to afford these previous coverages and will, unfortunately, die.

In these cases, Obama will have their blood on his hands.

Phil Thal
Novi

Remember at the store to check the label - and if it's not made in the U.S.A., you might want to try online and spend the holiday at home with your family. Help support the country you live in. Happy shopping and happy holidays.

Chuck Tindall
Novi

ACA will work

Conservative tea party people refer to the Affordable Care Act as "a train wreck waiting to happen."

Actually, the current health care system is the train wreck. Thousands of people in the U.S. die prematurely every day for want of adequate medical care. The World Health Organization, a United Nations agency, rated the United States as 17th among the industrialized nations in the quality of care it provides its citizens.

France was No. 1. Canada and Great Britain were high on the list. Ironically, it was the conservative Heritage Foundation that proposed the idea of insurance exchanges. The Democrats had proposed a single payer system like Canada. Conservatives responded with insurance exchanges.

And these same conservatives shut the government down for 16 days trying to defund the exchanges. Social Security and Medicare are government programs that have worked well for older Americans. The Affordable Care Act will work well for the majority of Americans.

Thomas M. Hartnett
Canton

Buy U.S. products this shopping season

Ready or not, another holiday shopping season is upon us. The stores must be ready as more are opening Thanksgiving Day. Also, this year there are more made-in-America products available since more shoppers are looking for them and stores wish to capitalize on patriotic shoppers. Shopping for made-in-America is the right thing to do as it puts more Americans to work and keeps more dollars in America.

While buying made-in-America products is not always possible (or easy, for that matter), it is certainly better for our economy and our country. And while buying made-in-U.S.A. can be more expensive, the higher quality is worth the extra cost. Patriotic consumers may want to try some of these websites: howtobuyamerican.com (they maintain a list of made-in-America businesses and links to made-in-U.S.A. websites) allusaclothing.com (for those who wish to shop local, they are right here in Oakland County); madeinusaforever.com and allamericaclothing.com are just a few.

Phil Thal
Novi

GUEST COLUMN

A time to reflect, remember 50 years ago

Thanksgiving week is a time to remember, to reflect, to give thanks. Last Friday marked the 50th anniversary of President John F. Kennedy's assassination. When it happened, I was a student at Oxford University in England. For me and for many, many others, the events of that day are frozen in my memory: cold, still, horrible.

The local time at Oxford was seven hours ahead of Dallas, meaning those fatal shots were fired at 7:30 that Friday evening.

I - with around 25 others - was seated at a formal black tie dinner in a beautiful candle-lit, oak-paneled room at University College. The main course had just been served when the college's master, Sir John Redcliffe-Maud, stood up at the end of the table.

His face was white and his hands trembled as he said: "I am very deeply sorry to announce that President Kennedy has been shot while on a visit to Dallas, Texas. He is not expected to survive."

I was the only American in the room and I wasn't ashamed to hold my head in my hands while the tears came. The master came over and kindly said, "I am terribly sorry for you to hear this awful news in this

way. Of course, if you wish to leave the dinner, you are excused."

I stayed for a while and tried to maintain a certain level of conversation, trying to remember Ernest Hemingway's definition of courage - which was also JFK's - "grace under pressure."

Supportive friends

But as dessert was served, I couldn't bear it anymore and went back to my room. As I opened the door, I was astonished to find all the lights on, the room filled with my English friends, gathered there to be with their American chum in a desolate hour.

Someone turned on the radio and picked up the bulletin from the BBC: the president was dead. I don't remember the rest of the evening very well, other than that it turned into a kind of wake, with much whiskey being drunk and hugs exchanged with the normally reserved English.

I had met John F. Kennedy once, in an elevator, before he had announced his candidacy for president. He had bright blue-gray eyes and a magnetic air that filled that tiny space.

I saw him again at a distance at 2 a.m. Oct. 14, 1960, standing on the steps of the Michigan Union in Ann Arbor, urging young Americans to volunteer to serve abroad.

Like the thousands who had waited for hours to hear him, I was thrilled and motivated at his speech - in part because I had a very indirect role in it.

While an undergraduate at the university, I had been a member of a student group, Americans Committed to World Responsibility, Organized by two sociology graduate students, Al and Judy Gaskin, the group met from time to time to discuss the world situation. We stayed up too late and drank far too much coffee and beer.

Eventually, we wrote a manifesto (of course) calling on American youth to take up our responsibility to

help the world.

That manifesto was reported in the student newspaper. Eventually, it wound up in the hands of Theodore Sorenson, Kennedy's speech writer.

Although Kennedy did not use the phrase "Peace Corps" until several weeks later, his speech in Ann Arbor is widely recognized as the first expression of the idea.

All those memories came flickering through my mind last Friday as I journeyed back through that dark night half a century ago, an American far away from home grieving for my assassinated president. And I always will give thanks for the English students who, unbidden, came to my room to comfort their American friend.

It's truly said that you are very, very lucky if you have 10 real friends over a lifetime. In that room that night were young Englishmen who became my true friends.

And I will always give thanks for the gifts of grace and intelligence of John F. Kennedy. Over the years since his death, history has revised its opinion of his short presidency. It was not a particularly successful one and it was only the shock of his death and the legislative mastery of the new president, Lyndon Johnson, that led to the Civil Rights Act, among other achievements.

But to people of my age, Kennedy's presidency was a bright flame that has stayed alight in our hearts for the last 50 years.

Like the Bible's Job, I am learning in my old age that it is only out of profound sadness that it is possible truly to give thanks.

Phil Power is a longtime observer of Michigan politics and economics. He is founder and chairman of the Center for Michigan, a nonprofit, bipartisan centrist think tank. He welcomes comments at ppower@thecenterformichigan.net.

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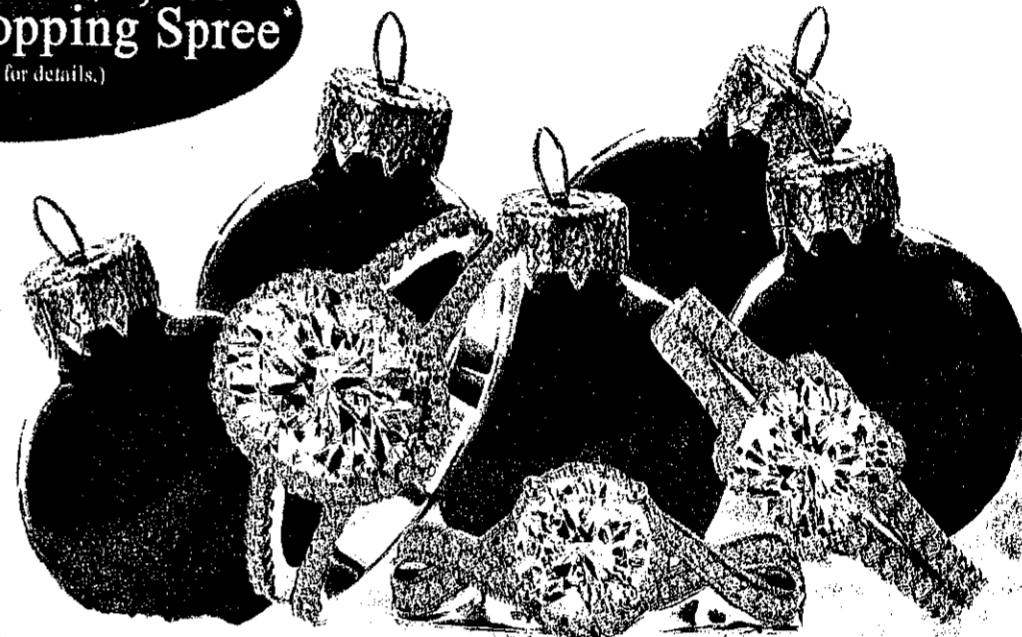
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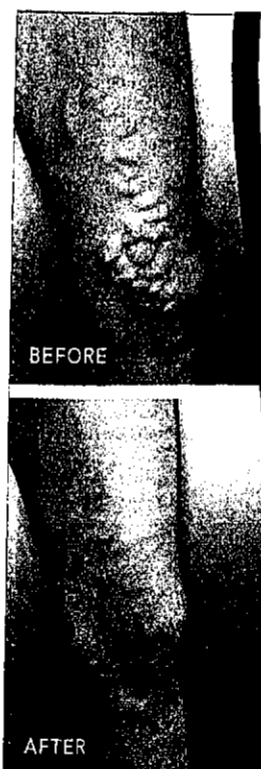


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Local man's 'Hobby' becomes computer gaming giant

By Matt Jachman
Staff Writer

Brad Wardell's "hobby that got out of control" has grown into a multi-million-dollar Plymouth Township company that's a major player in the computer game and computer software markets.

Wardell, of Canton Township, founded Stardock Inc. while a student at Western Michigan University and the company marked its 20th anniversary on Oct. 15 with the release of *Galactic Civilizations III*, a multi-player online strategy game. It's a sequel to the original *Galactic Civilizations*, which Wardell came up with in 1993.

In addition, Stardock is undergoing a major expansion at its headquarters on Beck Road near Five Mile, finishing an entire floor to add a game studio and a chic, cafe-style work area designed to promote collaboration in a casual environment. With about 50 employees now, Wardell plans to add about 25 more, software engineers and game designers, within two years.



Brad Wardell celebrates 20 years in business. BILL BRESLER/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

College startup

Wardell started out

tinkering in his dormitory room at Western, where he majored in electrical engineering, building and selling personal computers he'd made from components. At the time, he said, they were cheaper than the PCs sold by a limited number of manufacturers. He then got into software and game development.

"I started the company as a way to pay for school," Wardell said, recalling how the original *Galactic Civilizations* was made for a long-ago IBM operating system. "The idea was I'd graduate from school and get a real job."

He had that real job for a couple of months, as a consultant for the lending arm of a major automaker. But revenue from software he'd previously developed kept coming in and when Wardell saw the opportunity to grow

and Wardell said the company is planning studios in other parts of the country.

The company specializes in strategy games and also makes desktop enhancements, software designed to modify and customize computer desktops to improve users' experiences.

"That's what we're interested in," rather than role-playing or first-person shooter games, Wardell said. "I don't want to make a game that someone else can do better."

Wardell credits talented employees, many of whom have been brought in from other parts of the country, for Stardock's success.

"We've just built up this network of highly talented people who can just do so much," Wardell said.

Brand manager Adam Biessener is one of Stardock's latest recruits. He's a former writer and

editor in the gaming media who knew Wardell from stories he'd done and reviews of Stardock's games. Formerly of Minneapolis, he's been in the area less than a month.

"It's still culturally very Midwestern," and similar to Minneapolis in that way, Biessener said.

Wardell said he likes to provide a pleasant working environment, perks and the flexibility to let employees meet their family needs, in order to keep turnover low.

The personal trainer, for example, is a perk that helps employees stretch and stay relaxed while at work, an antidote to hours spent at computer terminals.

"By having low turnover, our people are really productive," Wardell said.

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Although most of Stardock's products are downloaded, eliminating the box, founder Brad Wardell still keeps copies in his office. BILL BRESLER/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

his company, he took it.

Stardock's first real office was in Canton and his first employees were the best man at his wedding and his wife's sister — both still with the company. There was a stop in Livonia, too, before Stardock bought the building it's now headquartered in not quite a decade ago.

"This was my big splurge," Wardell said as he led a Monday tour of the three-story building. The pet-friendly office has a laid-back atmosphere — employees benefit from regular visits from a nutritionist and a personal trainer — but the focus can be intense. One wall consists of a whiteboard tagged with relevant advice and aphorisms from gaming and business gurus.

Global reach

Stardock also has contract workers in several corners of the globe

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