Department of Human Services

Articles in Today's Clips

Thursday, April 20, 2006

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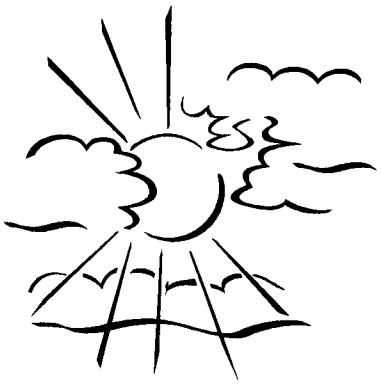
Prepared by the DHS Office of Communications (517) 373-7394



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Published April 20, 2006

Attorney filing to oversee Ricky's burial

Guardian could collect money for funeral expenses

By Kevin Grasha
Lansing State Journal

The Ingham County public administrator who wants to give slain 7-year-old Ricky Holland a proper burial said he expects to file a petition today to be named the boy's personal representative.

Attorney Tom Walsh said he intends to set up a bank account to take in donations for Ricky's burial and funeral services. A public administrator is a state-appointed official who represents a deceased person when no one else comes forward.

"I suspect there are people out there who want to help," he said about setting up a way for people to donate.

But before he can take control of the boy's affairs, he has to be appointed by a probate court judge, explained Court Administrator George Strander.

"If the estate receives funds, it's conceivable they could be used to pay for funeral arrangements," Strander said.

Ricky Holland was reported missing July 2. In January, his body was found in rural Ingham County.

Ricky's parents, Tim and Lisa Holland, have accused each other of killing him. The cases against them were bound over to Ingham County Circuit Court earlier this month.

A trial date has not been set.

Contact Kevin Grasha at 267-1347 or kgrasha @lsj.com.

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Detroit News

Thursday, April 20, 2006

Wayne Briefs

Taylor

Woman to stand trial in daughter's killing

A woman accused of killing her daughter because she feared the family would become homeless was ordered to stand trial on a murder charge Wednesday in 23rd District Court. Taylor police said Sharon Kay Radtke, 56, shot Lisa Kay Radtke, 22, April 7 inside their home on the 8000 block of Williams. Lisa Radtke was a senior at Eastern Michigan University who was expected to graduate at the end of the month.

Woman In Custody After Abandoning Baby

Newborn Listed In Good Condition

POSTED: 11:53 am EDT April 19, 2006

The 21-year-old woman who abandoned her newborn baby girl in the basement of her family's home is in police custody.
The woman was arrested and charged Tuesday with child endangerment, according to police.
On Tuesday, the woman went to her aunt's home in Detroit. She went down to the basement, delivered her daughter and then left the home alone.
Paramedics arrived and found the baby with the umbilical cord still attached.
The baby is at Sinai Grace Hospital listed in good condition.
The woman's other four children are in the state's care.

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Alert system aids missing child
Canton toddler returned to parent quickly thanks to Silent Alert

Thursday, April 20, 2006

BY SUSAN L. OPPAT
Ann Arbor News Staff Reporter

An e-mail and cell phone alert system that's free for Canton Township residents helped get a wandering 2-year-old returned to his parents last week.

Canton Township Public Safety Sgt. Scott Hilden said a subdivision resident found the toddler walking alone with a pacifier in his mouth, and called police. No one in the area recognized the child, so police posted a photo of the child on the Silent Alert system that Canton joined in February.

Within minutes, Hilden said, a friend of the child's mother called the mother at work. At the same time, the child's father discovered the boy was missing and called police.

The child was reunited with his father minutes later, Hilden said. The family was embarrassed by the incident, he said, and declined to comment, but told Hilden on Wednesday that "they were thankful the system worked."

"In this instance the child's father also discovered the boy missing, but if he had been the victim of a medical emergency, or foul play, the child would have remained 'lost' until the mother returned from work," Hilden said. Instead, because of the system, the mother was notified within an hour.

Silent Partner is a free, online broadcast system that delivers critical public safety information to Canton Township subscribers via e-mail, text pager, cell phone or personal digital assistant (PDA). Notifications can include crime alerts in a specific neighborhood, traffic delay information, or information about wanted or missing individuals.

Since the township joined the service, Hilden said, police have issued neighborhood crime bulletins, posted pictures of lost and wanted individuals, and have notified businesses of robberies in the area.

To subscribe, log onto www.canton-mi.org/publicsafety, click on the Silent Partner Alert logo, and follow the simple instructions.

Susan Oppat can be reached at soppat@annarbornews.com or at 734-482-1166.

Baby Dies After Fall from Southfield Apartment Window

By Bill Proctor
Web produced by Seth Myers

April 20, 2006

A toddler died Thursday morning after falling from a 7th story window at the North Park Apartments in Southfield. The child was a 16-month-old boy.

EMS crews arrived at apartment building 16300 just after 10 a.m. By the time they were on the scene, little could be done for the baby boy who fell from a window on the back side of the building.

According to Southfield fire captain William John, Southfield police are now investigating the death. John confirmed that the boy was dead when emergency crews arrived at the scene.

The boy who died was among 6 children in the apartment at the time of the fall. Three adults were also in the apartment: the child's parents and an aunt. Some of the other children may have witnessed the tragedy.

Susan Rouse has lived at the North Park Apartments for 7 years. During the day, she cares for children at an apartment in the complex. Rouse told 7 Action News that she never opens the windows in her apartment while children are around.

"You just lightly push into those screens and they're out," said Rouse.

7 Action News reporter Bill Proctor recalled Thursday that a colleague's child fell from a window at the North Park Apartments in about 1983. Proctor said he thought the apartment was on the third or fourth floor. That child survived, he said.

Detroit News

April 20, 2006

Novi

Man faces 7 counts in sex predator sting

A 41-year-old Taylor man has been charged with one count of child sexually abusive activity and six counts of using a computer to commit a crime, involving dissemination of obscene material to a minor. Bond was set at $100,000 for Steven J. Sabell, who used the screen name "stevewho" and "stevewho40." A pre-exam hearing in Novi District Court is set for April 26.

Detroit Free Press

Oakland Briefs

April 20, 2006

A million pennies sought to prevent child abuse

The Child Abuse and Neglect Council of Oakland County plans an event next week to recognize April being National Child Abuse Prevention and Awareness Month.

The event is scheduled for 6:30 p.m. Tuesday at the council's CARE House, 44765 Woodward in Pontiac.

The council will use the event to collect for its Penny Power drive, trying for 1 million pennies to represent the number of children abused annually in the United States.

Money raised through the campaign will go to prevention programs at CARE House. The event is free and open to the public.

For more information, call 248-332-7173 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays.

By Gina Damron

Published April 16, 2006

[From the Charlotte Shopping Guide]

Bearup still children's advocate with CTF

By RACHEL S. GRECO

Editor

CHARLOTTE — In his Lansing office, where Richard Bearup serves as executive director of the Children's Trust Fund, the Charlotte native keeps visible reminders of what it means to be a children's advocate.

As the first person to serve as Michigan Children's Ombudsman from 1995-98, Bearup investigated reported cases of neglect and abuse within the child welfare system. During that time 42 children his office investigated died.

Today, Bearup keeps their pictures in his desk and looks through them often. "Just about every day I look at the pictures because it helps remind me what I'm doing."

Bearup was appointed to the top position at CTF in January. The nonprofit group helps advocate for and fund child abuse prevention programs throughout the state. But this is just the next step in helping children for the father of three, who grew up in Charlotte with a passion for politics.

"I had always been involved in politics, even when I was a senior at Charlotte High School," he said. "I was volunteering with political campaigns."

Bearup said he sees politics as another form of "advocacy," a way to make a difference for others. In college, he served as a legislative assistant at the State Capitol.

Bearup said it was former Lt. Governor Connie Binsfield who introduced him to child welfare efforts, when she approached Bearup about working for her as the director of Michigan International Year of the Child. "She was a wonderful mentor to me," he said, of Binsfield. "To this day I can still say she was the

best boss I ever had."

From 1998 to 2005 Bearup was executive vice president and chief operating officer for the Detroit-based Lutheran Child and Family Services of Michigan.

Through it all Bearup said he's always believed that to serve as a children's advocate is to "never ever give up on a child's life."

Bearup said working in the field made him incredibly grateful for his own childhood in Eaton County and his supportive family upbringing. "I wish other children could have the same kind of experience that I had."

"It's just about a constant state of vigilance," he added. And with the CTF Bearup said he can help to affect real change throughout the state. The organization works with nearly 80 councils in Michigan's 83 counties that receive CTF funds to help prevent child abuse and neglect.

"That's the beauty of the Children's Trust Fund," he explained. "It's all about child advocacy. We don't use any state funds. We raise the money and give it away and we don't try to do this all at a state level from a high perch."

Now that Bearup is heading up the CTF he said he is especially proud of the reinstatement of the Children's Trust Fund check off, which appears on all state tax forms this year. The program, which was in operation from 1982 to 2000, allows taxpayers to donate money to the organization when filing their taxes.

Bearup lives in Charlotte with his wife Judy. The couple is expecting their first grandchildren this year.

Midland woman held hostage at knifepoint by her boyfriend for two hours

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Kelly Nankervis, Midland Daily News 04/18/2006

A tense hostage situation ended peacefully Monday on Bay City Road.

About 5:45 p.m., 911 dispatchers received a phone call from a Midland man, 34, who said he was holding his girlfriend at knifepoint and demanded to speak with a police negotiator. Deputy Chief Bob Lane said he did not know what caused the man to hold the woman hostage.

Midland Police and the SWAT -- Special Weapons and Tactics -- team responded to the scene, the Shattuck Apartments near Waldo Road.

Lane said police did not evacuate residents from the apartments, but residents were told to stay away from doors and windows for their safety.

While police carefully watched the apartment, crowds of onlookers on a sidewalk across Bay City Road slowly drifted nearer and nearer to scene, and were waved away several times by police officers. Some laughed and giggled while talking on cell phones, hiding behind bushes, while others commented that things like this "just don't happen in Midland."

Officers blocked all traffic on Bay City Road, and the Midland County Emergency Services Mobile Command Unit was brought to the scene and parked near Willow Street.

Not much was visible to those who waited until two officers, followed by a handful of SWAT team members dressed in camouflage and carrying long guns, ran into the complex.

After negotiations between the suspect and police, he released his hostage, identified at the scene as Jackie Redmond by her stepfather, Joe Harper. Redmond was not harmed.

When Redmond came out of the apartment, she tried to get back inside, Harper said, adding she wanted to talk her boyfriend out of the home. Police held her back, pulling her around the corner of a building.

A few minutes later, police came out with the man in custody.

Among the onlookers was Judy Scherzer, who lives nearby. She and her husband had just returned home from getting groceries to find the scary situation.

"We got here just before they really blocked the road off," she said.

Scherzer was in the know at the scene after talking with Harper. She was told that the hostage and the suspect were dating, and that he was armed with a knife.

Harper tried to talk to his stepdaughter, but didn't get much of a chance.

"Yeah, she's pretty shaken up," he said, adding Redmond and her boyfriend had some sort of argument before he pulled out a knife.

"Well, I like to see something end peaceably," Scherzer said, standing near Harper.

Near the end of the standoff, the hollow blow of a gunshot echoed out from the complex, causing those across the road to flinch.

Harper said he was told the gunshot was a misfire, though police at the scene would not comment.

"During the course of events, a SWAT team member was repositioning a rifle when the firearm accidentally discharged, causing no harm," Lane read from a statement. That event is under review.

Midland County Prosecutor Mike Carpenter said his office had not seen reports on the incident because police still were investigating.

04/20/2006

Man accused of choking ex-girlfriend

FROM Traverse City Record-Eagle STAFF REPORTS

TRAVERSE CITY— A woman told police she begged for her life after her ex-boyfriend allegedly attacked her at a party, threw her to the ground and choked her until she lost consciousness.

Darrell Duane Scribner, 20, of Buckley, was arraigned Wednesday in 86th District Court on a charge of intent to great bodily harm less than murder, a 10-year felony, after an alleged incident Saturday night on Karlin Road.

Scribner allegedly made derogatory remarks to the woman at the party. When she attempted to walk away, Scribner allegedly tackled her to the ground, pinned her arms and began to choke her, according to the criminal complaint.

Grand Traverse County sheriff's officials said as Scribner choked the woman he allegedly told her "nobody else is going to love you because I'm going to kill you," according to reports.

The woman was able to break free for a moment and was "begging" Scribner to leave her alone, but police allege he attacked her again and covered her mouth with a free hand when she tried to scream for help.

The woman said she lost consciousness and didn't know how she got free of Scribner. She told police she was later able to hide in a bathroom while others at the party made Scribner leave.

Police reported the woman had bruises on her neck, arms, hands and head.

Scribner, who is being held in the county jail on a $75,000 bond, is scheduled for a court hearing in May.

Woman plans to make big jump to provide lift for advocacy center

Thursday, April 20, 2006

By JERRY NUNN
BAY CITY TIMES WRITER

Offer Staci Hurley a chance to support a good cause and she just might jump for it.

Literally.

That is what she and 20 other Bay County locals did last year during Operation Freefall, when they leapt from a plane at 13,000 feet to raise awareness for the victims of sexual assault and domestic violence.

The jump, being held again this year on April 29, is part of a national skydiving event that also raises money to support organizations such as the Bay Area Women's Center. Nationally, nearly 2,000 jumpers, including Hurley, are expected to take the plunge this year at 24 different sites.

Hurley said skydiving doesn't frighten her because she's doing it for a cause she believes in.

"I always wanted to skydive," said Hurley, a domestic violence case worker at the Women's Center. "When the chance came up to do it for a good cause, I just had to take it."

The daredevil do-gooders shell out $600 apiece to take part in the event. Many solicit sponsors to raise the funds.

Last year, local participants raised more than $2,000 for the Women's Center and much more than that for other awareness groups involved.

Hurley has her sponsors in line for this year's jump, including nearly everyone she knows, except her mother.

"My mother won't pay for me to jump from a plane, Hurley noted.

Shelley Ramos, executive assistant at the Women's Center, said the idea behind the annual skydiving began with a single victim of sexual assault.

"It started out with a victim who was raped," said Ramos, pointing out that when the anniversary of the assault came around each year, the tragedy was experienced anew.

"This was a way for her to take that day back for herself, to make it her own. Now they celebrate it every year and it has continued to grow," Ramos said.

Hurley said she gets motivation to throw herself out of a plane because of the victims she encounters every day.

"Nationally, one in three women will be the victim of domestic violence or sexual assault," she said.

And, the Bay Area Women's Center saw a 52 percent increase in those seeking help last year, according to Ramos.

"We hope that is not people becoming more violent. We hope it is more people becoming aware and stepping forward," Ramos said.

Accurate numbers of sexual assault and domestic violence victims would be hard to compile, Ramos added, because so many people never come forward.

Inspiring victims to have the courage to speak out is one of the goals of Operation Freefall and other events planned each April, which is Sexual Assault Awareness Month.

Other upcoming local events include an art display, Denim Day and an Assault Survivor's Vigil.

In one out-of-the-way hallway at the center, Ramos confronts a rainbow of T-shirts hung from a clothesline; shirts that carry the personal messages of local survivors and supporters of sexual assault or domestic violence victims.

The red shirts stand for rape, yellow for domestic assault and the blue ones represent childhood victims of sexual assaults.

White T-shirts are reserved for those who died as victims.

"Unfortunately, this hallway has quite a few white ones," she said. "There were a lot of loved ones taken away."

Published April 20, 2006

Drug costs: Medicare plan places drug firms ahead of patients, taxpayers

A Lansing State Journal editorial

Readers may have noticed a letter this week from East Lansing's Donna Rose. She warned users of the new Medicare prescription drug benefit of its "doughnut hole" - a huge gap in coverage between $2,000 and $5,000 in annual spending.

Rose advised one option is to buy more expensive premium plans that fill up the doughnut.

Another option - a better one - is to require Congress to rewrite this gift to the drug industry into an actual health reform.

A New York Newsday report cited a study that 38 percent of recipients in the first year would hit the doughnut hole. If they haven't made provisions, they will be out $2,850 to cover the hole - and that's on top of their other premium and deductible costs.

And even with such burdens placed on seniors, the new drug benefit is expected to cost about $700 billion over the next decade; $700 billion this nation doesn't have, by the way.

Of course, it didn't have to be that way. When Congress and President Bush passed the drug plan in late 2003, they didn't have to extend benefits to all seniors, affluent or needy.

And they didn't have to enshrine in law a prohibition against the government negotiating lower prices with drug manufacturers.

Ordinarily, a big buyer has leverage with a seller. That's what Wal-Mart does to keep its prices down. Heck, even the federal government does it on drugs - if you happen to be part of the Veterans Administration system.

But the drug industry spent millions in lobbying and campaign donations in Washington to keep Medicare out of this common-sense practice. That sure helped their bottom line - Pfizer, which has a large presence in Michigan, reported $4.1 billion in earnings for just the first three months this year.

The price for such "success," though, is burdened patients and taxpayers.

Congress and President Bush could do better. They simply choose not to.

Wayne Co. may yield mental health control

April 20, 2006

BY ZACHARY GORCHOW
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

Wayne County is likely to cede direct control of mental health care for its residents to an independent authority -- a move it has long resisted, but one supporters say would result in better use of tax dollars and improved services for 40,000 people.

Officials from the county, the City of Detroit and the board that oversees the Detroit-Wayne County Community Mental Health Agency are in negotiations over what the authority would look like.

Leaders say they expect to finalize a plan in the next month.

"Yay! Praise the Lord," said Marie Chapman, a leading activist for the Dearborn affiliate of the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill, when she heard that an authority is likely.

"I think we need to take the politics out of it. The mentally ill do not need to have competing factions for the money," she said.

If the plan goes through, the more than $500 million in Medicaid grants from the state and federal governments for mental health would go directly to the authority instead of going first to the county, which critics say has diverted millions of dollars to other purposes.

Supporters say an authority also would speed changes designed to help patients and allow more money to be spent on services, instead of bureaucracy.

In the past, County Executive Robert Ficano has said an authority would dilute accountability and has questioned giving the mental health board more power -- although that was in the context of a state-imposed authority, not one established by the county.

The move comes as the state Legislature is gearing up to put an authority in charge if the county doesn't set one up first. And the state also could cut the county's mental health funds if an authority isn't in place soon.

"Every time I've worked with the executive, he's never said, absolutely, emphatically 'Never' to an authority," said Cindy Dingell, Ficano's top appointee to the mental health board.

"He's focused on trying to clean up the agency, and then we'll get to the next step. We're at the point where the administration is looking at the next step," Dingell said.

Republicans passed a bill in 2004 to install a county mental health authority, but Democratic Gov. Jennifer Granholm vetoed the plan, saying the county deserved more time to get changes in place.

Control of mental health care in the county is somewhat complex.

The mental health agency is county-run and staffed by county employees, but it is overseen by a board made up equally of appointees by the county executive and the Detroit mayor.

Although the board hires the agency director, the county once stepped in to put a director on administrative leave, leaving the question of who's in charge legally murky. There's also a lack of clarity about who fills top positions in the agency -- the director or the county.

Bernard Kilpatrick, who besides being Detroit Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick's father is also the mayor's top appointee to the mental health board, said county leaders could see the "handwriting is on the wall." Dingell agreed with that view.

Either the officials of the city, county and mental health board could negotiate what an authority would look like or have the state do it for them, Bernard Kilpatrick said.

"They didn't want to discuss it before," Bernard Kilpatrick said of the county's prior position on an authority. "Now, they're at least at the table."

County officials have been sensitive to the idea of such an authority because of how the state removed control of Detroit Metro Airport from county governance and put an independent authority in charge, Dingell said.

In that move, the county lost employees that were at the airport and lost assets, Dingell said. Those are issues that will be a priority for the county in talks on an authority for mental health.

*Contact **ZACHARY GORCHOW** at 313-223-4536 or zgorchow@freepress.com.*

AG stepping in on 'male Roe vs. Wade'

Kathie Marchlewski, Midland Daily News 04/20/2006

Email to a friend Post a Comment Printer-friendly

The child-support/men's rights lawsuit filed in U.S. District Court in Bay City has the attention of state Attorney General Mike Cox.

In the suit deemed the male version of Roe vs. Wade, Matt Dubay, 25, a computer programmer from Saginaw Township, claims his Constitutional rights were violated by orders to pay child support for a child he didn't want. Cox disagrees.

Dubay says his ex-girlfriend, Lauren Wells, told him that she was on birth control and, additionally, that she was unable to get pregnant because of a medical condition. When she did become pregnant and requested financial assistance, Dubay responded with the suit against her and against Saginaw County Prosecutor Mike Thomas, claiming that state paternity law is unconstitutional.

Cox said Dubay's decision to sue the county prosecutor, not the State of Michigan, is an attempt to avoid intervention by the state attorney general's office -- one that will not work.

"We have to take a stand," Cox said. "We have to send a message that parents take responsibility for their children."

Cox announced Wednesday his office will be taking part in the suit, and filed a motion to intervene.

Thomas said he was surprised that he, and not a state entity, was the target for the suit. "I didn't quite understand when it was filed against me in the first place," he said.

The suit filed in March has garnered national attention. It's not the first of its kind, however, and Cox said others like it in Kentucky and Hawaii have been promptly tossed out by judges.

Thomas and Cox are expecting the same to happen in the Dubay case, and a motion to dismiss has been filed with the U.S. District Court in Bay City.

"Potentially, it could be chaos for the children of Michigan," Cox said. It also could lead to taxpayers bearing the burden of responsibility for children whose

fathers don't wish to contribute financially.

Cox said that too often, Michigan's taxpayers end up footing the bill for parents who choose not to be responsible for their children. He expects a hearing on the case to be scheduled within the next month. "We're confident the right thing will happen," he said.

L. William Smith, who provides contracted counsel for Midland County, is representing Wells. He said her concern is the welfare of her child.

"Miss Wells is desirous of raising a well-rounded, normal young child," he said.

Published April 20, 2006
[From the Lansing State Journal]

Schneider: Calls to state assistance help line go to India

Health problems here. A layoff there.

And pretty soon Gail and Howard Church found themselves unemployed and eligible for food stamps.

"We absolutely never expected to end up in these circumstance," Gail said. "It was just one thing after another."

Gail, 51, has a health-related disability that prevents her from working.

Howard, 42, who has 25 years of experience in maintenance work, lost his job in December after undergoing knee surgery.

The knee is healed now, but Howard remains unemployed and, in Gail's words, "willing to take any job he can get."

But, as anybody who has the misfortune of being unemployed in Michigan at the moment knows, there just isn't much to be had.

Against this jobless background, Gail dialed the state Department of Human Resources "customer service help line" to inquire about getting a "Bridge Card" - the modern incarnation of the old paper food stamps.

A Bridge Card resembles a debit card and works much the same way, allowing clients to draw on their benefit accounts.

Long-distance call

After waiting out the voice-mail options, Gail got a human being on the phone, but sensed something strange about the conversation.

In a former job, she dealt with foreign phone banks, and was pretty sure she had landed in one.

The woman representing the state Human Resources customer service help line sounded to Gail like somebody in another country trying to master an American accent.

Gail asked; the woman refused to say. But a Human Resources employee in Lansing told Gail that her call went to India.

Retracing Gail's steps, I, too, picked up the forced accent and background sounds of a foreign phone bank. I asked the customer service rep where she was; she said "security concerns" prevented her from naming even the country she was in.

On the job

Gail's point: Her husband would love a job answering phone calls for the state - even for minimum wage. And maybe such a job would mean the Howards, who live in Lansing, could support themselves - and pay taxes - instead of being a drain on taxpayers.

Surely other Michigan people in need of work feel the same way. So, why are those jobs going to people in other countries?

Human Resources spokeswoman Maureen Sorbet confirmed that those calls do, indeed, go overseas - but not for long.

On May 20, a contract that will transfer the call-center jobs to an Oscoda-based company - Crusecom Technology Consultants - will take effect.

The original contract was signed in 1999, when John Engler was governor.

But in 2004 Gov. Jennifer Granholm issued two executive orders that give preference to Michigan-based job providers bidding on state contracts.

The orders also require the Department of Management and Budget to consider whether a bidder is exporting jobs or using offshore tax shelters.

So, beginning May 20, when somebody dials the Human Resources customer service help line, the call will go no farther than the state line.

What do you think? Call John Schneider at 377-1175, send a fax to 377-1298 or e-mail jschneid@lsj.com.

Include your name, phone number, city or township.

Food giveaways planned

HOMETOWN HEADLINES

FLINT

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION
Thursday, April 20, 2006

By George Jaksa
gjaksa@flintjournal.com • 810.766.6332

Crossover Downtown Outreach of Flint will give away food at Faith United General Baptist Church, 1116 W. Hill Road, Mundy Township, Saturday and Tuesday at Swartz Creek United Methodist Church, 7400 Miller Road, Swartz Creek.

Both events are 10 a.m.-1 p.m. and co-sponsored by the host churches.

United Way tops 2005 target
Washtenaw campaign raises more than $8 million, 3% beyond goal

Thursday, April 20, 2006

BY CATHERINE O'DONNELL
Ann Arbor News Staff Reporter

Washtenaw United Way surpassed its 2005 target, raising $8,037,190 in pledges.

It's the first campaign since 2003 to top $8 million, raising 3 percent more than the $7.8 million targeted.

Mike Anderson, co-chairman of the campaign, made the announcement at the organization's annual meeting Wednesday at Washtenaw Country Club. Marking 35 years of United Way in Washtenaw County, the event drew about 200 people.

Larry Schweinhart, director of the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation in Ypsilanti, delivered a keynote message on the value of early childhood education. The High/Scope Perry Preschool Study, under Schweinhart's direction, estimated that high-quality early childhood education can save society $17 for every dollar invested.

The $8 million raised by the United Way in 2005 means funding to local programs and agencies will be maintained a second year, according to a written statement from the United Way. In 2001 and 2002 the United Way fell short of targeted goals, but reached them each of the past three years.

Sandra Rupp, president of the United Way, said 2005 campaign leaders targeted $7.8 million as a conservative, realistic goal given the uncertainty in the local economy, particularly the automobile sector. Rupp said she and her staff visited about 100 community leaders beginning last spring, trying to raise awareness of community needs. This year, she said, disasters such as Hurricane Katrina also made people more aware of the need.

Diane Hockett, assistant executive director of the Girl Scouts of the Huron Valley Council, said that if the United Way hadn't reached its target, funding to agencies such as hers might have been cut. She wasn't surprised the $7.8 million target had been met, however, as the United Way announced in January that the campaign was meeting projections.

At a business meeting before the annual meeting, the United Way board of directors approved $6.5 million in distributions for the 2006-07 program year, which begins on July 1.

Board approvals included:

- $3.1 million for funded agencies and initiatives, including the United Way Call Center and Success by 6, a Great Start initiative to make early childhood education a local priority.
- $212,000 to community affiliates in Dexter, Milan and Saline.
- $3.2 million in contributor-designated gifts to United Way-funded agencies and other charities.

Larry Whitworth, president of Washtenaw Community College, has been named chairman of the 2006 general campaign. Vice chairman is Mark Ouimet, head of the Ouimet Group and a member of the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners.

After the annual meeting, Robert Chapman, president of United Bank & Trust-Washtenaw, was elected the 2006 board chairman. Other 2006 officers elected are Frank Cambria, John Boyless and Brian Miller.

Catherine O'Donnell can be reached at codonnell@annarbornews.com or 734-994-6831.

DayBreak Adult Day Center allows supervised social time

By Mardi Suhs, Cadillac News

CADILLAC - Five days a week Diane Cooper is a day care provider in a cozy home where she bakes fresh cookies every morning, serves hot lunch and supervises fun activities and games to giggles and laughter.

Cooper, an LPN and mother of five, loves her job. But instead of providing day care for toddlers while parents work, Cooper oversees eight to 10 "at risk" senior citizens - the frail, chronically ill or cognitively impaired - as the director of the DayBreak Adult Day Center.

Cooper loves her job, admitting that she's always loved the elderly.

"I've worked here for eight years," she said "I just love them. They are grandmas and grandpas. We reminisce. We have coffee and spend the morning around the table."

Later, after a hot lunch from Meals on Wheels, there is fun and laughter during exercise time and games, often featuring balloon volleyball and UNO.

The goal of Daybreak, a program operated by the Wexford County Council on Aging with grant money from the United Way, is to provide a safe, home-like setting for the supervision of daily living activities for the frail elderly.

"This provides a place for caregivers to take their loved ones and get a break or go to work," explained Bonnie Forbes, COA director. "We have a donated van with a handicapped lift so we can actually go and pick up people at their homes and bring them, even in a wheelchair. This day center is one of the most recognized in the state."

The small, well-kept home that houses the center is near the hospital, which donated the use of the building. COA handles upkeep and repairs and volunteers keep the grounds groomed and tend the gardens.

Frank Rosted, 95, is a familiar face at the DayBreak coffee table. Since he often jokes about "making it to 120." Cooper helps him plan his 100th birthday celebration.

Forrest Harris arrived for the day with a large box of candy bars for Bingo treats.

"I like the fellowship here," he said. "We play Bingo and UNO."

"We have a couple of daughters that their mothers come here," Cooper said. "They confided to me if it weren't for DayBreak they couldn't keep their mothers at home. They need this respite. And their moms enjoy it so much. If they didn't come here they would

have to go in foster care."

For information on applicant and qualification procedures, call 775-0133.

Your Local Connection

The Wexford County Council on Aging operates the DayBreak Adult Day Center. Their goal is to increase peer social interactions among at risk seniors, the frail and chronically ill of Wexford County. The home-like setting offers assistance and supervision in the activities of daily living. To be eligible, participants must be 60 years old, require regular supervision and must have one of the following: memory loss, physical impairment, cognitive impairment or frailty.

For information, call 775-1033.

State jobless rate up to 6.8%

But tri-counties see gain in number of residents with jobs

Published April 20, 2006

[From the Lansing State Journal]

Associated Press

Michigan's unemployment rate rose slightly to 6.8 percent in March, the state said Wednesday.
The state's seasonally adjusted jobless rate was 6.6 percent in February. The rate has increased for two consecutive months since January, when a 6.2 percent mark qualified as the lowest rate in the state in nearly four years.
The national unemployment rate in March was 4.7 percent.
Rick Waclawek, director of the state's Bureau of Labor Market Information and Strategic Initiatives, said Michigan's jobless rate has remained fairly stable over the past six months.
The state report precedes numbers for local labor markets. The regional report, which breaks out results for the Lansing area and other parts of Michigan, is scheduled to be released April 27.