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SPORTS, 1B

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OBSERVER

SUNDAY, AUGUST 30, 2020 | HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

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Farmington teacher placed on paid leave

Investigation pending on alleged inappropriate conduct

Susan Vela Hometownlife.com
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

A Farmington teacher was placed on paid administrative leave following a social media post alleging inappropriate conduct when the teacher worked at another school district.

District administrators said Wednesday on Facebook the district immediately began an investigation into the "middle/high" school teacher once they learned of the allegations. The teacher will remain on leave until further notice. "At Farmington Public Schools, we believe in informing our school commu-

nity, even when the information we share may not be entirely clear or complete," the Facebook post states. "While these social media allegations were not made by our FPS students, the District has initiated an internal investigation to thoroughly review the allegations to ensure the safety and security of our students, which remains our top priority." District officials said the teacher's

leave is to make sure students stay safe while ensuring due process. They added that they have contacted law enforcement agencies for assistance.

Clarenceville Public School administrators released a statement last week saying that one of the accusatory social media posts was from one of that

See **TEACHER**, Page 4A



Grace Rembinski, 16, sits with her grandfather's guitar at her Canton home Aug. 20. The Plymouth High student plans to move to Nashville after she graduates in 2021 to pursue a career in the music industry. JOHN HEIDER/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

Canton teen signs contract with Nashville music label

Ed Wright Hometownlife.com
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

There is a 14-year-old home video on Instagram of 2-year-old Grace Rembinski strumming joyfully on a miniature guitar while proudly singing the lyrics to a song that she wrote herself.

Earlier this month, that same ener-

getic girl - now a 16-year-old incoming senior at Plymouth High School - sat at a table in a Nashville publishing company's headquarters, signing a contract that will pay her to do what she loves: write songs, sing songs and make people happy.

Once Rembinski, a lifelong resident of Canton, graduates from Plymouth in

the spring of 2021, she will move to Nashville to continue to produce her special brand of magic - an accomplishment almost unimaginable, Nashville insiders say, for a teenager who doesn't reside in Music City.

"It's crazy and exciting at the same

See **TEEN**, Page 4A

PCCS board announces initial bond project list

Ed Wright Hometownlife.com
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

Who remembers that ray of Plymouth-Canton Community Schools' sunshine known as the \$275 million bond proposal passage that was dimmed within a few days in mid-March by the massive cloud of COVID-19?

Well, the sunshine re-emerged, at least temporarily, Tuesday at the Plymouth-Canton Board of Education meeting with the revelation of which schools in the district will be the first to receive some bond-money love.

In a presentation orchestrated by the district's team of architects and construction managers, officials announced that Eriksson, Field, Hulsing and Dodson elementary schools will be worked on first, primarily due to the need to develop secure entrances at the three older buildings (Field, Eriksson and Hulsing) and because of the need for additional classroom space at all four schools.

Bill McCarthy, of McCarthy & Smith, Inc., explained that similar existing footprints of Field, Eriksson and Hulsing will make it easier for architects to move forward on the projects, as opposed to creating designs for schools with varying layouts.

McCarthy emphasized that the nature of the bond requires that 85% of its initial series (of three) must be spent in 36 months, thus adding a level of urgency to the projects' time lines.

Although the plans are subject to change like everything else during the coronavirus pandemic, a design/construction document phase for the projects is slated to stretch from September through December.

The acceptance and awarding of construction bids will occur in January and February, with actual construction set to run from April to November in 2021.

The Hulsing project carries the highest budget (\$8,394,468) with Dodson (the newest of the four buildings) slotted for an expenditure of \$6,496,929. The projected cost of renovating Eriksson is \$8,296,895, with Field coming in at \$8,288,655.

The Eriksson, Hulsing and Field footprint includes one space being used as a gymnasium and cafeteria. Once the projects are completed, each school will have its own gym and cafeteria, making them equal to the district's remaining elementary schools.

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Proposed Livonia brewery plans 2021 opening

David Veselenak Hometownlife.com
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

A planned brewery in northeast Livonia is expected to open its doors next year after delays related to the coronavirus pandemic that slowed economic activity in the state for months.

The proposed brewery at 27719 Seven Mile requested a one-year extension of its approvals to allow work to continue past the original time frame because of the slowdowns with construction.

"The petitioner in the letter explains that due to the pandemic, operations

were halted in early March 2020 to just recently," said Mark Taormina, the city's planning and economic development director. "This would allow them the time to get qualified contractors and for them to obtain building permits.

"It's strictly an extension of what we previously approved."

The plans call for a complete renovation of the building, which formerly housed a carpet and flooring business. The project includes work on the parking lot and the addition of a small beer

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The proposed brewery will open in the former Motor City Carpet store at 27719 Seven Mile Road in Livonia.

HOMETOWNLIFE.COM FILE



UPS fined for COVID-19 infractions in Livonia

David Veselenak Hometownlife.com
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

The State of Michigan announced Friday it has fined UPS \$7,000 for violations surrounding COVID-19 workplace safety in Livonia.

The Michigan Occupational Safety and Health Administration announced it had fined several companies across the state for violating workplace rules put into place to limit the spread of COVID-19. One of those companies was UPS for violations found at its distribution center at 29855 Schoolcraft in Livonia.

Several other companies were also cited, including United Shore Financial Services in Pontiac; a Speedway gas station in Waterford; Coop's Iron Works, a fitness center in Saginaw; Dan Freed, a residential contractor in Eaton Rapids; and Hills Roofing in Niles.

The UPS fines stemmed from a complaint filed with the state.

"The MIOSHA investigations determined that these six employers were clearly not taking the appropriate steps to protect employees and their communities from the spread of COVID-19," MIOSHA Director Bart Pickelman said in a statement. "These citations are meant to reiterate the employer's duty."

In a statement to Hometown Life, UPS said they believed the violations were not accurate.

"UPS cares deeply about keeping our employees safe ... and while we continue to work with OSHA we strongly disagree with the allegations," the statement reads. "UPS continuously shares the hygiene and social distancing protocols suggested by the CDC with all employees. The company has modified, and will continue to modify, our normal operating procedures to maintain social distance protocols."

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Newsroom Contacts:

Phil Allmen, Content Strategist
Mobile: 248-396-3870

Email: pallmen@hometownlife.com

Follow us on Facebook: @OEHometown

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Anastasia and Katie's helps employees as well as customers

Madeline Kenney

Special to Hometownlife.com
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

"I don't let my disability interfere with what I do in my job," says 26-year-old Marissa Marzec, a two-time acute myeloid leukemia survivor.

Marzec, along with seven other adult employees, works at Anastasia and Katie's Coffee Shop & Cafe at 19215 Merriman Road in Livonia. Unlike most coffee shops, Anastasia and Katie's provides employment for disabled adults. Those disabilities vary, but include Down syndrome, Turner syndrome, and cerebral palsy.

Marzec's cognitive condition resulted from a six-week coma caused by a brain infection. Like the other employees, she is "still able to work in the community and provide good service" despite her disability.

The coffee shop's mission is close to the hearts of Kelly Rockwell and Dan Duffy, co-founders of the shop's non-profit, Mi Works Matter. Rockwell and Duffy each have 14-year-old daughters, Anastasia and Katie, who have Down syndrome.

The duo wants to give their daughters the same opportunities as every other child. Their motivation is to provide more support and opportunities for individuals with disabilities as adults, since their schooling ends after age 26.

"I want as few people sitting around at home as possible," Rockwell said. "If they want to get out there and do something in their community and there's something they're interested in, we want to see them be given those opportunities to pursue that."

Through the coffee shop, Rockwell and Duffy hope to give adults with disabilities job experience so that they can fulfill their future dream careers. For example, one of the shop's employees aspires to work at a movie theater.

At first, "she couldn't work the cash register, so now every time she works, she works the cash register," Duffy said. "If she did, for example, in the future want to go work at that movie theater, she would have the practical experience where she could apply and probably get the job."

Duffy has always felt that "with training and with someone giving them a chance, (adults with disabilities can) do more than what they (are) currently doing."

According to an Employment First in Michigan report, "81% of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities are unemployed in Michigan."

The report also indicates that "The National Core Indicators (NCI) Adult Consumer Survey shows that 53% of individuals with disabilities in Michigan want a community job but only 22% have one."

At Anastasia and Katie's Coffee Shop & Cafe, employees have a job coach with them as they perform their duties to "help each employee become as independent at each of the tasks as possible," Rockwell said.

Like the other employees, Marzec prepares food and beverages, including various types of breakfast and lunch sandwiches, lattes, cappuccinos, and hot chocolate. She also works as a cashier, cleans tables and washes dishes.



Employee Marissa Marzec stands outside Anastasia and Katie's Coffee Shop & Cafe in Livonia. MADELINE KENNEY/SPECIAL TO HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

"I enjoy everything about my job. I love my co-workers and my managers and they're very supportive when I need help. They've become good friends of mine."

Marissa Marzec Employee, Anastasia and Katie's Coffee Shop & Cafe

"I am a friendly person. I enjoy talking to customers. I am a hard worker who always tries my best. I am responsible and passionate about working at Anastasia and Katie's Coffee Shop and the work that I do," she said, attributing her successful job performance to all of these characteristics.

Though the state of Michigan is starting to phase it out, "it is legal to pay people with disabilities less than minimum wage," Rockwell said.

According to Mi Works Matter, "in 2019, more than 5,000 workers with disabilities in Michigan earned about \$3.61 an hour." However, Anastasia and Katie's Coffee Shop & Cafe ensures each employee minimum wage payment.

The employees of the coffee shop never take their jobs for granted.

"I'm very proud that I was chosen to work with such nice and friendly people and being able to work at a job that I love and enjoy," Marzec said.

"These people want to have a job. These people would love to have a job and they give it their all," Duffy said. "They are just so happy to work."

That creates a positive environment, which has been a major part of the coffee shop's success.

"Seeing and talking with the customers is my favorite part of my work day," Marzec said.

Since opening in December, the coffee shop has received tremendous support from its community. Hundreds of people attended the shop's opening ribbon-cutting ceremony in January.

"We figured we would have some support, but it was definitely even better than what we had hoped for," Rockwell said.

Like many nonprofits, however, the

coronavirus pandemic has caused disruption for the coffee shop. Rockwell said the shop was "on track to be close to self-sustaining before the pandemic hit."

Before the coronavirus shutdown, the coffee shop "was definitely a place where people would like to come in, talk, and meet, so not having that component has been difficult for (the shop)," she said.

Nonetheless, the coffee shop has adapted.

"We are doing curbside and online ordering," Duffy said. "We followed all the protocols that the CDC and local health department has given us, so (the workers) are very protected."

Though changes and precautions have been made to their service, the coffee shop's mission has remained the same.

"Creating that sense of belonging, creating that sense of value, and being able to give back," is what Rockwell wants to give her employees, just as other adults are able to do for themselves.

Anastasia and Katie's Coffee Shop & Cafe has undoubtedly impacted the lives of others.

"I enjoy everything about my job," Marzec said. "I love my co-workers and my managers and they're very supportive when I need help. They've become good friends of mine."

"Working for Anastasia and Katie's Coffee Shop is my number one dream job I could ever ask for."

Learn more about the coffee shop at www.anastasiaandkatiecoffee.com.

Madeline Kenney is a Mercy High School senior who participated in a journalism program at Notre Dame this summer.

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More accuse teacher facing CSC charges

Susan Vela Hometownlife.com
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

Oakland County Prosecutor Jessica Cooper says a metro Detroit teacher's tactics with female students he hoped to intimately engage continued after alleged incidents at a school near Clarkston in 2010.

Cooper recently filed an Oakland County Circuit Court brief with more evidence from Jason William Dean's former students at Wayne Memorial and Northville high schools. She said their stories will help prove Dean's character and methodologies, plus rebut claims that his original accuser fabricated incidents with her former teacher.

Most recently teaching math to Northville students, Dean, of Livonia, faces five counts of first-degree criminal sexual conduct. He was arraigned on the counts in January, after one of his former students from Cedar Crest Academy, a private K-8 school in Springfield Township, said he sexually assaulted her in 2010.

At the time she was a 14-year-old eighth-grader and he was her teacher and soccer and basketball coach who had spent a few years taking a special interest in her.

Cooper said the former student began receiving online messages and emails from Dean. There also were extracurricular interactions sometimes involving just the two of them.

Dean was then in his late 20s, and their sexual relationship took place in his student's home in White Lake Township, inside a van parked outside of a Springfield Township dance, in his classroom, at a hotel, on an airplane, and, for months, at the teacher's secret apartment in the Rivers Edge complex in Waterford Township.

According to Cooper's brief, Dean then continued his career at Wayne Memorial, where he flirted with a student in 2011. They exchanged notes and emails in which Cooper alleges the teacher contemplated a sexual relationship with the student and complimented her body.

In 2013, Dean returned his attentions to his former Cedar Crest student who was then 17 and at another school, Cooper said. Emails from his personal account included images of a shirtless Dean wearing a University of Michigan baseball hat and one of him naked while covering his genitals.

Cooper said there's also evidence of Dean inappropriately and sexually touching Northville High School girls ages 14 to 18. They were interviewed in February,



Jason William Dean appeared by video for his arraignment on criminal sexual conduct charges in January. HOMETOWNLIFE.COM FILE

after Dean's arrest and arraignment. She said the Northville students, who occasionally admitted to close relationships with Dean, described inappropriate touching and improper comments, such as promises of a free tardy pass if a "nice outfit" was worn.

"The defendant took advantage of his position as teacher to the victim and the witnesses, utilizing a system of gaining their trust as his students and exploiting their desire for his affection and interest in order to prepare and perpetrate his goal of sexual contact with them," Cooper's brief states. "The jury must be permit-

ted to consider the totality of defendant's behavior and have the ability to put these events in context when judging the victim's credibility."

No decision has been made. Dean's attorney, Nicole Blank Becker, declined to comment.

Dean is also a former Livonia-based Michigan Hawks soccer coach.

His next court hearing is scheduled for September.

Contact reporter Susan Vela at svela@hometownlife.com or 248-303-8432. Follow her on Twitter @susanvela.

Novi homicide, abuse case sent to higher court

Susan Vela Hometownlife.com
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICH.

Chunhui Shi and her son, Mason, a few weeks shy of turning 2, were lying in bed with their necks sliced when Novi Officer Tim Hartland walked in.

Responding to a 9-1-1 call about a suicidal suspect the evening of Jan. 3, Hartland saw Shi, 36, held a knife in her right hand. There were lacerations on her left wrist.

Shi was gasping for air through a wound that exposed her trachea. Hartland testified Aug. 19 that he couldn't find a pulse on her son.

"His wound on his neck was obviously fatal," Hartland said. "(It was) a very deep cut. You could see his trachea was cut all the way through. He had a very gray color to him. There was a pool of blood underneath him."

Mason was declared dead before the Sevilla Circle home emptied of detectives. Shi recovered at the hospital before heading to Oakland County Jail.

Novi's 52-1 District Judge Travis Reeds heard other evidence from a medical examiner, other law enforcers and Mason's father, Wei Zhang, before saying there was enough evidence for Shi to stand trial in Oakland County Circuit Court.

With a translator present, the Novi mother and Chinese immigrant was bound over on two felony counts of homicide and one count of first-degree child abuse.

During her closing statements, Oakland County prosecuting attorney Sara Pope-Starnes directed the judge's attention to three videos she had shared.

In the first 4:06 p.m. clip from Jan. 3, Mason scurries around a kitchen island, moving toward his mother in the bottom right corner of the frame.

The child reverses his path around the kitchen island. His mother stays near where the family keeps the cooking knives. She then walks toward a bedroom.

"There are times where you can see, to her right, the knife in her hand, (and) another time when you can see the knife in her hand when she's looking at the blade of the knife," Pope-Starnes said. "With the knife in her hand, she goes and she picks up the child and she goes into the bedroom."

"There's nothing about these injuries to the neck of the child to indicate that this was an accident."

A second 4:53 p.m. video clip shows a cat moving across the kitchen floor. A 5:15 p.m. video shows Mason's dad calling 9-1-1. An officer arrived to find him crying and visibly upset.

Shi had experienced mental health issues that included suicidal spells. She had received medical attention and care for those issues before her son died.

Her defense attorney, John Holmes Jr., said he was expecting the case to get bound over.

"(But) this did not deal thoroughly with the men-



Chunhui Shi attends a court hearing via Zoom in May. HOMETOWNLIFE.COM FILE

tal health issues," Holmes said. "Those get dealt with in circuit court."

Jenna Berg, an Oakland County Sheriff's deputy, also testified at the preliminary examination.

She had a "hospital watch" over Shi the night of Jan. 6 at Ascension Providence Hospital, a few days after Mason son died.

A nurse handed Shi a clipboard, paper and writing tool because the patient was trying to

speak and mouth words. The nurse handed Shi's note to Berg.

"Probably because there was some significant statements on the paper," Berg tried to explain while studying the

note exhibit. "She states, 'I killed my son. (I'm) bipolar. I'm ill.'"

Shi and her husband have lived in the United States since 2014. She told a doctor on Jan. 2, the day before their son died,

that she wanted to kill herself.

Her husband testified at the hearing that he then signed paperwork to admit her into a hospital because of these suicidal desires. Wei Zhang confirmed they changed their minds, telling medical workers it was a misunderstanding, because there was no one to care for Mason.

They returned to their home and talked over the phone about finding a doctor for Shi the day their son died. Something wasn't right when Zhang returned home from work.

"Usually, she is cooking in the kitchen," Zhang testified. "I called her name. I found her in the bedroom. There was no light on. It is very dark. I saw her lying on (her) back. My son is lying beside her. I saw her throat is cut. I realized something big has happened."

Mason's 2nd birthday would have been Jan. 21, according to online obituaries.

Contact reporter Susan Vela at svela@hometownlife.com or 248-303-8432. Follow her on Twitter @susanvela.

PROPERTY FOR LEASE - CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF PLYMOUTH

The Charter Township of Plymouth is seeking bidders interested in leasing approximately 5,200 of commercial office and storage space located within the Township's Department of Public Works Building, 46555 Port Street, Plymouth MI, 48170.

Interested bidders must send three sealed (3) hard-copy letters of interest to Mr. Jerry Vorva, Township Clerk, by Friday, October 2, at 4 p.m., including a tentative, proposed offer of lease and the proposed use(s) for the site. The envelope should be marked "Proposal to Lease DPW Property." Electronic copies must also be sent to Clerk Vorva at jvorva@plymouthtwp.org.

Bids will be reviewed by the Township Supervisor and/or his designee(s). The top three (3) bids based on price and proposals will be recommended to and reviewed by the Plymouth Township Board of Trustees. Recommended bidder(s) may be contacted by the Supervisor for further negotiations on price and terms. The Township's receipt of a bid does not constitute the acceptance of any offer to purchase or otherwise create any obligation for the Township to lease the property.

The Township reserves the right to reject any or all proposals; waive any irregularity in the proposals received; and to accept any proposal which it shall deem to be most favorable to the interest of the Township. The Township is not obligated to accept the highest bid or bids.

The Township is not obligated to reimburse responding vendors for any expenses incurred in preparing or submitting proposals in response to this request, nor is the Township responsible for such expenses. All such expenses are solely the responsibility of the bidder.

For additional information, and to inspect the property, please contact Supervisor Kurt Heise at (734) 354-3201 or by email at supervisor@plymouthtwp.org.

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for further details.

Teen

Continued from Page 1A

time," Rembinski said. "Ever since I can remember, all I ever wanted to do was sing for people. I never shut my mouth. I'd make my family sit down and listen to me."

Before securing the commitment of Nashville-based Mucho Love Music's executives, Rembinski entertained church congregations, sang the national anthem at Detroit Tigers and Toledo Mudhens baseball games (among others), and won a music competition called "Canton Idol" before she was a teenager.

"As it turned out, an acquaintance of mine took a video of Grace singing at 'Canton Idol' and she sent it to her stepbrother, Ray Horton, who had been in the music industry in Nashville for several years," said Jill Rembinski, Grace's mom. "She told him, 'You have to see this young lady! She's amazing!'"

"Ray said, 'Well, she's young, but we'll keep watching her, so keep sending me stuff.' About a year later, Grace was invited down to Nashville to record in their studio, learn to write, everything. We've been going down there two or three times a year since then."

Horton, a writer/administrator/general manager for Mucho Love Music, is a 1997 graduate of Canton High School.

In a lot of ways, Horton's story is as compelling as Rembinski's.

After completing four years of active duty for the U.S. Navy, Horton was a drummer for Miss USO, a band that entertained troops and performed fundraisers for troop-support groups, according to the Mucho Love Music label website.

Following a successful stint as a



Grace Rembinski, seated, signs a contract with Nashville's Mucho Love Music label. Standing, from left, are label executives Mark McGuinn, Brooke Burrows and Ray Horton, who is a native of Canton. COURTESY OF THE REMBINSKI FAMILY

drummer with the John Wilde Group, he followed his passion for the business side of music and moved to Nashville to study copyright law at Belmont University.

"Once I moved to Nashville and saw how amazing the session drummers there were, I figured I'd better look into the business side of it," Horton joked. "Ending up at Mucho Love has been a blessing. It's like a family, which is one thing, I feel, that made Grace's family comfortable with us."

Horton, who will serve as Rembinski's manager, emphasized that Mucho Love's love for Rembinski may have started with her talent, but quickly expanded to include her personality and upbringing.

"Grace is mature beyond her years and she's not afraid of hard work, that's for sure," Horton said. "Music-wise and when it comes to songwriting, she's only gotten better since she first came down to Nashville. Along with having an amazing voice, she gets music."

Horton said Rembinski's humility is a rare commodity in a performer of her talent. When asked what percentage of her high school peers even know she's an accomplished musician, she said, "probably most of them," a reflection of her non-boastful persona.

"Honestly, I don't know if she realizes how good she is," Horton said. "People her age with her talent level can be kind of, for lack of a better term, the oddball at school, because while everybody else is out having fun, she's working at her craft. But I'll tell you what: Once she moves to Nashville, she won't be the oddball, she'll be the normal, because this city is filled with incredibly creative people like her."

"It's hard to say exactly what kind of odds she's already beaten, but I do know that there are tons of musicians who think they can make it here, but very, very few do. And the fact that she's only 16 makes her story even more amazing."

Rembinski's life may have followed an entirely different path if not for the encouragement of her grandfather, Skip Kouba, whose guitar she still uses.

"He was my first musical inspiration," she said. "I still remember sitting on his lap while he played his guitar ... that's what got me started."

"Like all of us, my dad is so proud of Grace. He makes sure we keep him updated on everything that's going on with her career," said Jill Rembinski.

Among Grace Rembinski's singing inspirations are Ella Fitzgerald and Rachael Price, whose paths to super-stardom are separated by several decades.

"Performers like Grace don't really pick a genre, because instead of listening to specific radio stations like before, people make their own music lists," Horton said. "If a performer can earn listeners' respect, they can sing anything and it will work."

Teacher

Continued from Page 1A

district's former students.

"Understandably, some members of our school community have inquired about the post, eager to understand how the district responded when the concerns were initially raised some years

ago," the statement reads. "The district wants to make it clear that it followed its established policies, worked with the appropriate authorities and sought to respond both compassionately and in a fashion that reflected due process for everyone concerned when the concerns were originally raised and fully investigated."

The Clarenceville community was invited to contact law enforcement or the

district to share concerns about the unnamed teacher so they can be addressed.

"We have always, and will continue to, engage this process because it is central to our core mission and principles as a school district," the statement reads.

This week, Hometown Life filed Freedom of Information Act requests with local and state law enforcement agencies for incident reports involving the

teacher named in the social media campaign.

Soon after, staff from the Farmington Public Safety Department and Oakland County Sheriff's Office replied that their agencies had no such reports involving the teacher.

Contact reporter Susan Vela at svela@hometownlife.com or 248-303-8432. Follow her on Twitter @susanvela.

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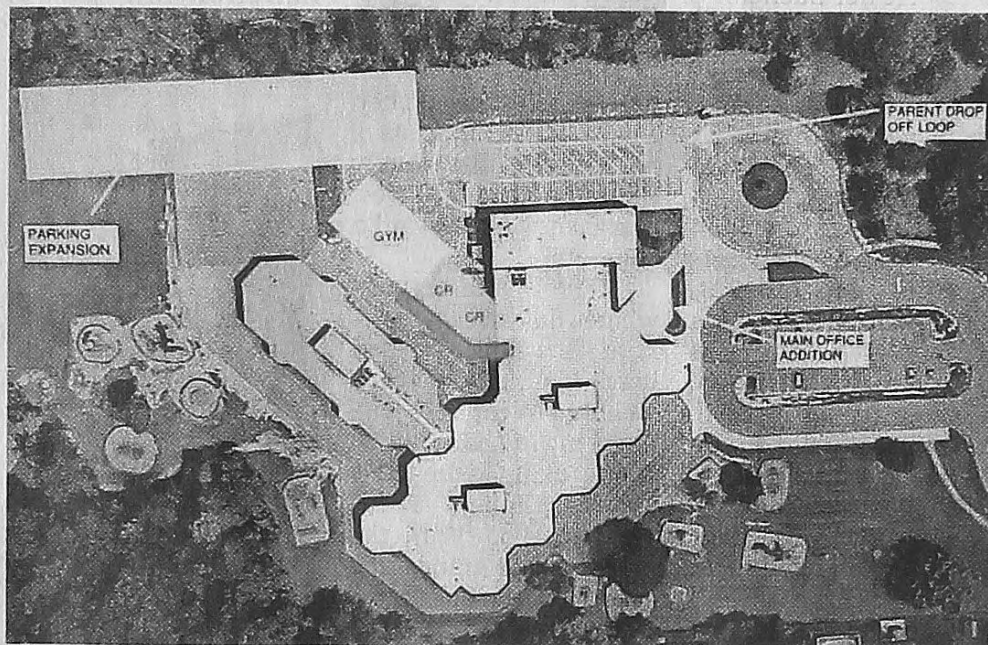
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a community thrives

* SEE OFFICIAL RULES FOR DETAILS AND ELIGIBILITY



Eriksson Elementary School will undergo extensive renovations beginning with the design phase in September. COURTESY OF PLYMOUTH-CANTON COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

List

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Expanded parking and a more spacious student pick-up loop will be added to the three older schools' grounds.

Bill Weinrauch, of TMP Architecture, said that everyone from building staff, parents and even students will be able to provide input into the ultimate design details of each school.

Following the completion of the ele-

mentary projects, the next layer of work is scheduled for Plymouth High School (addition of a band room and natatorium) and Salem High School (expansion and renovation of performing arts center).

The timeline for the design phase of these projects is expected to stretch from October 2020 to August 2021.

The bond projects will stretch over 10 years.

Contact reporter Ed Wright at edwright@hometownlife.com or 517-375-1113.

Brewery

Continued from Page 1A

garden. The space would only serve beer; no kitchen is planned at the site.

The project originally received a recommendation for approval from the planning commission in spring 2019 and received city council approval a few months later.

Andrew Schumacher, one of the owners and a Livonia resident, said he anticipates getting building permits for the site in the next few weeks. He said they plan on opening the brewery, tentatively called Coppersmith Brewing, in either spring or summer 2021.

With the recommended approval, the extension now goes to the city council for review.

A website for the brewery lists several beers planned, including a smoked porter, English-style IPA and high-gravity saison.

Once open, the brewery will join two others operating in Livonia. Supernatural Brewing and Spirits opened on Plymouth Road back in 2017, and Schoolcraft College students have brewed and sold beer the last several years at the college's VisTaTech Center off Haggerty Road.

Contact reporter David Veselenak at dveselenak@hometownlife.com or 734-678-6728. Follow him on Twitter @davidveselenak.

Obituaries

Emory Curtis Daniels

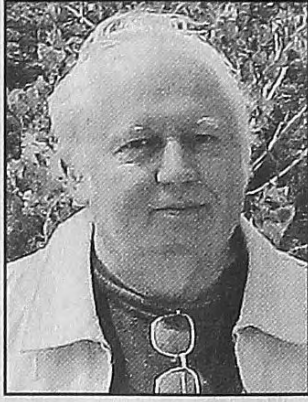
Born in Saginaw, Michigan, Westland resident Emory Curtis Daniels, 76, died of cancer complications on August 19, 2020.

After moving to Garden City with his family in 1959, he graduated from Garden City High and then earned a journalism degree from Central Michigan University, associates degree in business from Schoolcraft College, and a professional development graduate degree from University of Michigan-Dearborn. Married to Beverly Hudson in 1966, he was the father of Bridgette Redman (Richard) and Lyle Daniels, and grandfather of Dominic Redman. Beverly and Emory celebrated their 50th anniversary in 2016.

A journalist by profession, Daniels worked a year for the Wayne Dispatch after college, and then worked 33 years for the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers serving as Editor in Westland, Garden City, Farmington, Plymouth, Canton, Livonia, and serving as Internet Editor for three years. After retiring he wrote marketing and public relations material as an independent contractor and was an official reviewer for Amazon.

He served on the Board of Directors for Community Opportunity Center, a non-profit providing housing and support for persons with developmental disabilities, and served as board president, vice president and secretary. He volunteered as Camp Grandpa for ten years for Royal Family Kids Camp, a non-profit serving children in the foster care system. He was a member for many years of Detroit First Church of the Nazarene in Northville and served on its church board. He attended Ward Presbyterian Church for several years. He was a member of Farmington, Plymouth and Livonia Rotary, and Livonia Exchange Club. He was a volunteer for compassionate ministry projects in Detroit and Indianapolis and for Blight Busters.

Gathering of family and friends Saturday, September 5th from 11 AM until the 12 PM Memorial Service at Hilltop Nazarene Church, 21260 Haggerty Road, Northville, MI 48167. Please wear masks and we will observe social distancing. The service will be live streamed by Hilltop Nazarene. In lieu of flowers, we welcome you to make a donation to Community Opportunity Center, 14147 Farmington Road, Livonia, MI, 48154; or to the Royal Family Kids Camp at Hilltop Nazarene or the Compassionate Ministries at Hilltop Nazarene, 21260 Haggerty Rd, Northville, MI 48167.



Joann Eleanore Gustafson

Joann Eleanore Gustafson, a former soprano, longtime vocal music teacher, fierce advocate for public education and host of many legendary dinner parties, died at her home in Ann Arbor on Sunday, Aug. 16. She was 78.

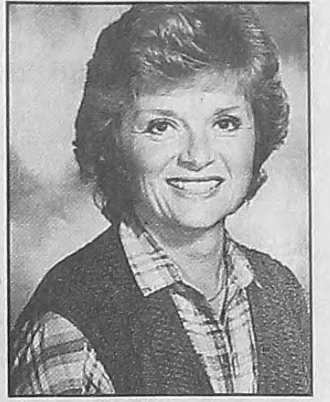
Joann was born in Detroit on April 1, 1942 as the youngest of two children to Robert and Eleanore (Jacobson) Berquist. She graduated from Redford High School in Detroit, then majored in music at North Park University in Chicago. There, she met and later married her classmate, Paul Gustafson. They moved to Ann Arbor, where she earned a Master of Music (Voice) from the University of Michigan. The couple then started a family and began a long love affair with cats.

Joann enjoyed 38 years teaching elementary music and conducting middle school chorus at Plymouth-Canton Community Schools. She became increasingly active in the Michigan Education Association, where she provided training for teachers, and she was also active in her district, where she fought for her colleagues' rights as a union bargainer. A consummate entertainer with a gifted voice, she also kept busy outside of work, with lead performances in opera productions including La Bohème at U-M, the Gershwin and Cole Porter songbooks at Kerrytown Concert House and the Michigan Union, and writing and performing musicals for the Thurston Players among her many credits.

Joann's voice also rang out in the kitchen, where she was inspired by the trailblazing culinary personality Julia Child, her idol and muse. For 15 years she and her late friend, Barbara Thompson, hosted an annual Smorgasbord dinner party, meticulously planning and preparing multiple sumptuous courses of authentic Swedish fare for more than 100 guests each December.

She was a loyal friend to many and a doting mother who inspired her children greatly. Her sense of humor was unflagging, carrying her through a rich life and aiding her through to the end. She is survived by Paul, her husband of 55 years; two sons, Sven (Kristen) and Lars (Kate); three beautiful grandchildren, Niklas, Aron and Lois; and brother George (Jane) Berquist. All will miss her dearly.

Contributions in her name may be made to Arbor Hospice, 2366 Oak Valley Dr., Ann Arbor, MI 48103 or arborhospice.org.



Joan Eleanor Geary (Pfefferle) "Mimi"

LIVONIA - Age 79, passed away peacefully on Tuesday, August 18th, 2020 at Angela Hospice Care Center. Joan was born in Elkhart, Indiana on August 12, 1941. She was a graduate of Niles High School in Niles, Michigan. She went on to receive her Bachelor of Arts Degree in Elementary Education from Michigan State University and taught kindergarten and piano in Livonia, Michigan. Joan was also a faithful volunteer at Sword of the Spirit Lutheran Church, a member of the Junior Women's Club and the Gardening Club in Livonia. Joan married Forrest Alan Geary on May 2, 1964. Joan is forever remembered and survived by her loyal and loving husband and best friend of 63 years, Forrest; her children Greg (Vicki) Geary and Tracy (Scott) Mastenbrook; two grandchildren: Madelyn and Meghan Mastenbrook; her sister Patricia (John) Meadows; many loving nieces, nephews, extended family/friends and faithful canine companion Maizee. Joan was predeceased by her parents Paul and Beatrice Pfefferle and Carlton (Florence) Geary. An outdoor memorial ceremony was celebrated Wednesday, August 19th at Parkview Memorial Cemetery in Livonia-led by Pastor Wayne Kurtycz of NorthRidge Church. The family welcomes donations in memory of Joan Geary to the Angela Hospice Care Center <https://angelahospice.org/donate/> and the Alzheimer's Research & Prevention Foundation <https://arpf.donorshops.com/products/01194B4/donatetoday>



Karen Wagner

PLYMOUTH - Karen Wagner, 73, of Plymouth, Michigan, passed away on Tuesday, August 18, 2020, after losing her long battle with Idiopathic Pulmonary Fibrosis. Daughter of John and Lillian David's of Salem, Michigan, she was born in Detroit, Michigan, on February 10, 1947.

Karen lived in Plymouth, Michigan, with her husband, Michael Wagner, until they retired and moved to Calumet in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. They built their dream home on Lake Superior, where they spent their honeymoon 45 years ago. In 2018, they moved to Cornville, Arizona, in hopes of improving Karen's health.

Karen's interests were many; she adored all animals, and loved to cook, garden, travel, go antiquing, decorate her home, and partake in any arts and crafts with her friends. But most of all, she loved spending time with her husband and daughter.

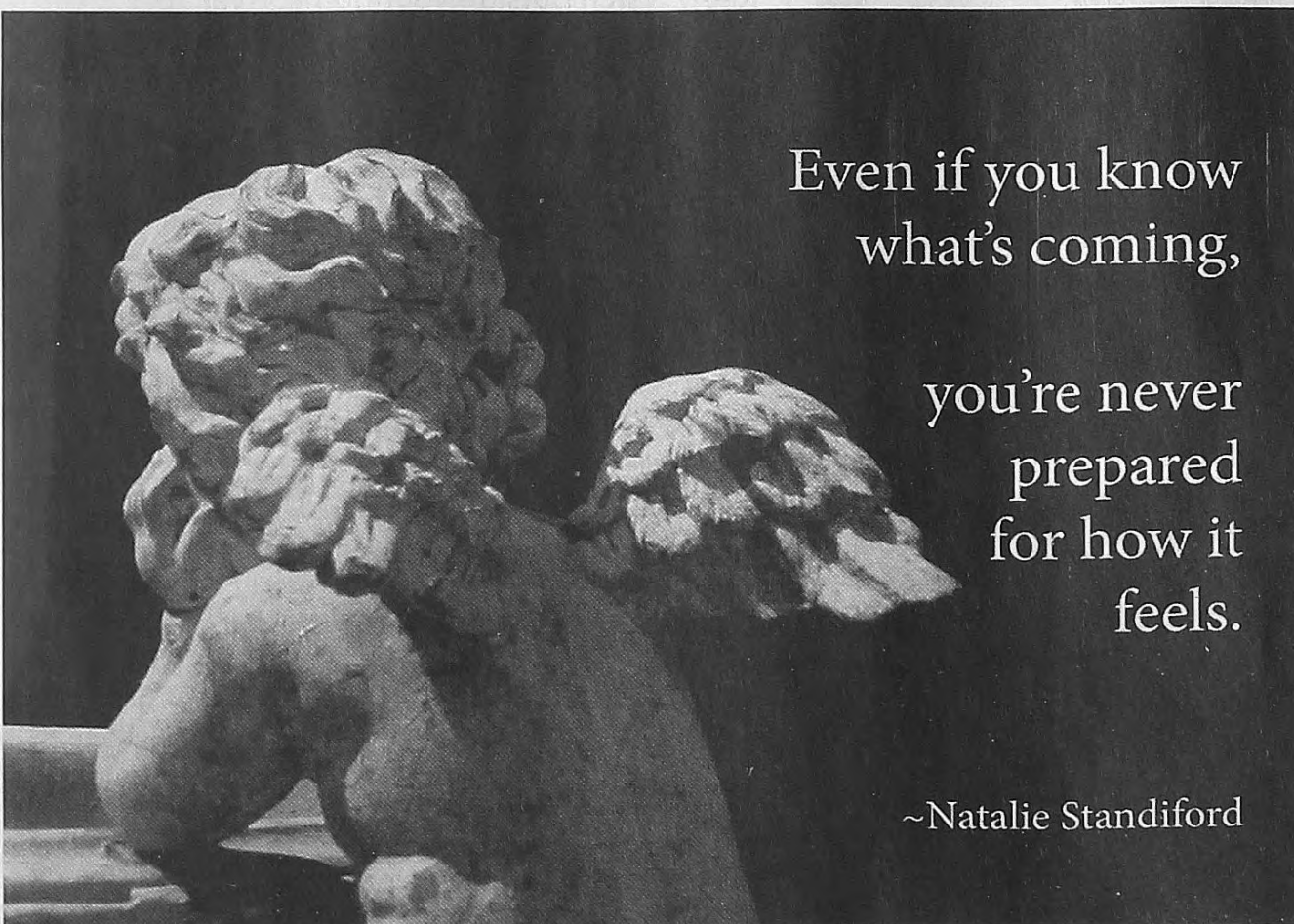
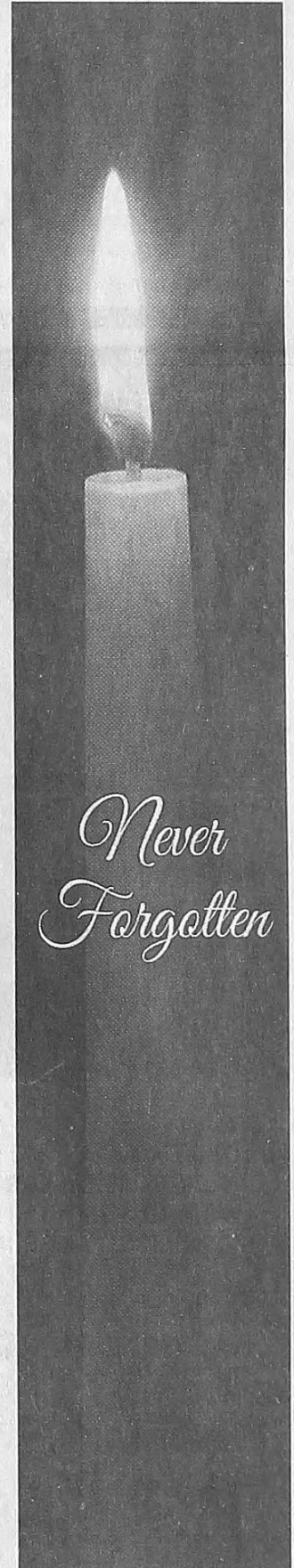
Karen is survived by her husband, Michael Wagner, Cornville, AZ, and daughter, Melissa Wagner, of Brooklyn, NY.

Instead of flowers, please consider donating to the IPF Foundation: <https://ipffoundation.org/>



Dorothy J. Maass

August 2, 1930 - August 19, 2020 Dorothy J. Maass has left this world for greener fairways. Born to George and Verna Amos on August 2, 1930 in Portage, Ohio, she twirled and cheered her years at Portage High and working at a Bowling Green family restaurant met her husband for 70 years, Al; a student at BGSU, who had just returned from serving on the USS Iowa in the Pacific. Raising two kids, they lived in Ohio, Michigan, Indiana & Tennessee. An avid bridge player, golfer and sports fan, Dort lived a peaceful and fun filled life. She is survived by her husband, Al; children, Peg and Craig; 4 grandchildren; and 5 great granddaughters. Donations in her memory may be made to the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, Sacred Space Phase II Building Program, Birmingham, MI 48009.



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prepared
for how it
feels.

~Natalie Standiford



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SPORTS

Coach remembered for love of people, football

Colin Gay

Hometownlife.com
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

Ahead of the 2019 football season, Cranbrook Kingswood was looking for a new head coach.

Athletic director Stephen Graf was looking for a candidate with specific skills that he felt would lead to success: a knowledge and passion for football, an incredible work ethic, a teaching ability and an ability to connect with those around him.

The Cranes' offensive and defensive line coach Ben



Ben Jones spent one season as Cranbrook Kingswood's head football coach. He died after being involved in a four-car crash on Aug. 19.

Jones thought he met the criteria. He felt his time had come.

"Ben stepped up, came in my office and said, 'Coach, you don't need to look for a head coach. I'll be your head coach, and I'll do the job you need me to

do,'" Graf said.

Cranbrook senior Bryce Hall already knew the passion Jones had for the game.

As a junior defensive lineman, Hall had firsthand experience of Jones' coaching: his drive and expectation that each rep, each drill, each play would not be only OK, average or just all right, but great.

Hall watched that mentality Jones instilled blossom for the entire team. And even before the Cranes took their first snap of the 2019 season, Jones' first as

See JONES, Page 3B

Short-handed Brother Rice tennis picks up 6-2 win against Groves

GOING AHEAD WITH A NEW LINEUP

Colin Gay

Hometownlife.com
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

Heading into the first match of the season against Birmingham Groves, Brother Rice tennis thought its lineup would look different.

The Warriors expected to head into 2020 with junior JJ Etterbeek at the top, the No. 4 seed in last season's Division 1 tennis final, who lost in the state final as a sophomore.

However, with the uncertainty of coronavirus, Brother Rice will be without its No. 1 singles player. Etterbeek announced his intention to transfer to Smith Stearns Tennis Academy in Hilton Head, South Carolina, Aug. 20, less than a week before the season started.

Despite the change in lineup, Brother Rice still came out on top, beating Groves, 6-2, in the Warriors' first match of the season.

Going into the season, Brother Rice head coach Casey Cullen said he had high expectations for his group, with Etterbeek at the helm. But, moving forward, he said all the Warriors can do is move forward.

"Obviously the guys love him. He's a team player. I think it's more of he doesn't know what's going to happen with COVID," Cullen said. "The state tournament is still up in the air, so the guys all love him, we want him to do the best, but it was a blow to our team in terms of what we were expecting."

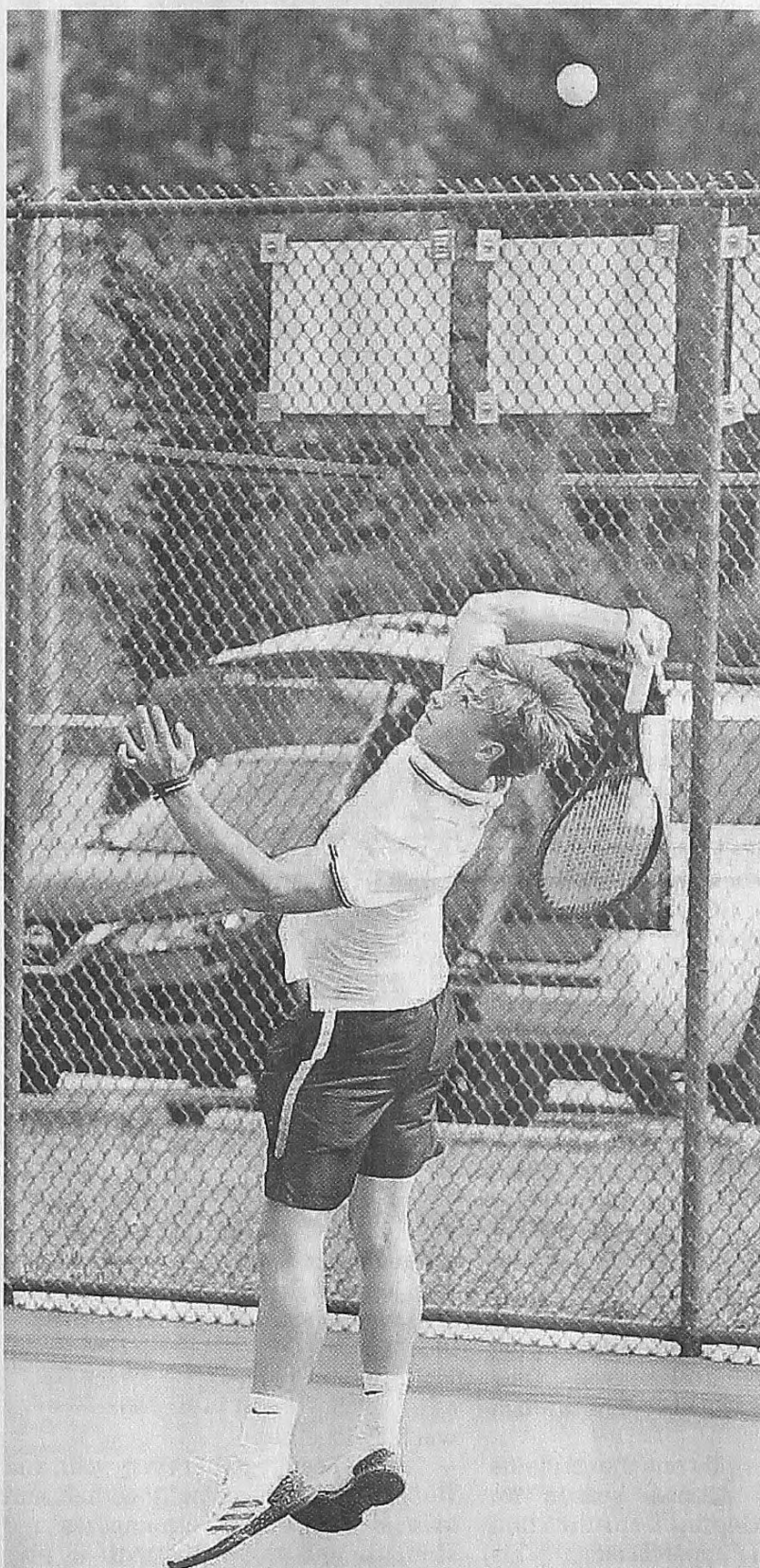
Cullen said many of his players, including seven newcomers, were playing in new spots, but found success against the Falcons, giving them confidence moving forward.

Doug Prew moved up to the No. 1 spot for the Warriors, sweeping Groves senior Jonah Liss, 6-3, in straight sets for his first win of the season.

While the loss of Etterbeek brings a different look than Prew expected, the senior captain still believes in the talent remaining on the roster.

"We're definitely at the top," Prew said. "Our lineup isn't set yet, so I mean we are still figuring everything out, but we're definitely up there in high seeds."

Cullen described both Prew and sophomore Dimitri



Brother Rice senior Doug Prew won in the No. 1 singles spot for the Warriors. He succeeds junior JJ Etterbeek, who announced his intention to transfer. TOM BEAUDOIN/SPECIAL TO HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

Moriarty as fighters and battlers, with the latter also earning a sweep against Groves sophomore Nolen Kovan Thursday afternoon.

Cullen also has high expectations for freshman Devyn Gans, who beat Groves junior R.J. Carrel, 6-3, 6-1, in his first taste of high school action.

Warriors senior John Carthew completed the singles sweep with a sweep of Groves junior Gabe Klein.

With a different roster, Cullen said older players on the Brother Rice roster need to lead the way and show younger players what is expected.

"The leaders and the older guys need to be like, 'Hey, this is how it is, this is how intense we are. This is Brother Rice tennis,' and they're doing their job,"

See BROTHER RICE, Page 2B

VOLLEYBALL

Northville hopes for a strong yet uncertain season

Colin Gay

Hometownlife.com
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

Northville volleyball head coach Rick VanDerVeer gathered those vying for a spot on the varsity team together before the second-to-last day of tryouts late last week.

"I have a suspicion that we will have another chance," VanDerVeer encouraged.

But like all other volleyball, boys soccer, and girls swim and dive teams in the state, wondering if their fall season would happen in 2020 due to the coronavirus, VanDerVeer did not know the answer.

He remained in the dark.

"I just wish somebody would let me know what to do," VanDerVeer said. "I got a lot of girls that are either wishing for a season or want to know if they can relax about things until spring."

The Michigan High School Athletic Association set an Aug. 20 deadline to announce a decision. But the Mustangs remained in the same boat they were in at the start of practice that day.

The MHSAA ruled that schools in regions 1-5 and 7 of the state were permitted to continue practices, but that the start of competition was reliant on status of multiple executive orders made by Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, closing indoor athletic facilities and maintaining social distancing measures. She has not announced a decision on when that may be.

VanDerVeer and the rest of Northville volleyball continues to wait, continues to be patient to see if the 2020 season, one with high expectations of eclipsing the district final the Mustangs lost to Novi in during the 2019 season, could actually happen.

Much to accomplish

Northville was determined to have a season in 2020.

A year after finishing third in the Kensington Lakes Activities Association West division, neck and neck with Novi and Brighton, suffering a 3-1 loss to the Wildcats in the district final, the Mustangs are confident and expectant to make it past that point.

"A lot of high school teams see a really talented group and then, all of a sudden, once one or two people, key people, leave, they are stuck with whoever they have," senior middle and outside hitter Laryssa Imbuzeiro said. "We've been lucky to have a consistently talented program."

"This year, I have a lot of high hopes, just because

See NORTHVILLE, Page 2B



Northville head coach Rick VanDerVeer addresses his team before an outdoor tryout session.

COLIN GAY/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

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GOLF

Seog opens season with breakthrough round

Bill Khan

Livingston Daily
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

HARTLAND — Morgan Seog could sense she was about to break a significant barrier in her golf career.

So could her coach.

It seemed like just a matter of time before the Hartland High School junior broke 80 for the first time.

As it turned out, it didn't take much time at all.

Seog shot 79 in the Eagles' first tournament of the season, leading Hartland to a fifth-place finish against a field of powerhouse teams in the Hartland Invitational Aug. 21 at Hartland Glen Golf Course.

"I've been starting to hit my irons more consistently in the right distances," Seog said. "I could feel it coming. With my putting being a little bit more consistent, it's definitely helped.

"It's definitely a big confidence boost, because I know I've got good things ahead of me for the season."

While some high school athletes couldn't have meaningful practice in their sport while facilities have been shut down since March because of COVID-19, golfers have had plenty of time to hone their skills. Seog took full advantage of the opportunity.

"I played a lot, I practiced almost every day," she said. "I worked on my game all summer, and it's starting to show now."

It was a huge breakthrough for Seog, whose previous best was an 82. She averaged 90.3 for 18 holes last season.

"She's been shooting in the 30s for the nine-hole practice rounds, so I know she's got the skills to do it," Hartland coach Mike Joseph said. "She did it today under pressure. I expect that score to come down even more."

Although golf is considered one of the safest sports to play during the coronavirus world, it was still a relief for Hartland's players to get out on the

course and compete for the first time as a team.

It's a day they weren't sure would ever happen during a summer in which all fall high school sports were in limbo. Golf, tennis and cross country are the only fall sports that were given the green light to start competition on time, football was moved to the spring, and volleyball, soccer and swimming are being delayed in lower Michigan.

"I'm excited for the season," said Hartland senior Violet Sinishtaj, who shot 81. "I was really hoping we would have a season like we are now. So, I'm really happy it's happening, but I wasn't expecting it at first."

Golf still has to operate under some guidelines in order to be played. The key limitation is having no more than 72 golfers per 18 holes, which required some creativity by Joseph and cooperation from Hartland Glen to pull off Friday's tournament.

There were 24 teams, with potentially 144 players entered. Joseph took the top 12 teams and put them in a 7:30 a.m. morning wave, then placed the next 12 in a 12:30 p.m. wave.

Players were asked to leave after turning in their scorecards and grabbing a complimentary lunch. Teams arriving for the afternoon round were asked to stay in the parking lot or driving range while players from the morning were turning in their scores.

On the course, players couldn't touch the flag stick.

"Can you see the stress in my face?" Joseph said. "It was tough. But fortunately, the pro at Hartland Glen, Nic Thompson, and this course have been very receptive to high school golf in general. They allowed us to have two starting times so we can accommodate everybody. Kudos to them for doing that."

"We're all kind of just feeling our way right now. We're trying to do the best we can. The biggest thing is to try to have everybody wear their mask until they actually start golf and make sure there's



Morgan Seog of Hartland shot 79 in the season-opening Hartland Invitational Aug. 21 at Hartland Glen Golf Course. GILLIS BENEDICT/USA TODAY NETWORK-MICHIGAN

no congregating between teams. That's a battle we're going to have to fight the whole season."

Joseph's biggest regret was not having an awards ceremony.

"That was kind of a bad part, because you like to give kudos to the teams," he said. "We had some really good scores today, with Rochester Adams shooting a 290. We had a 301 and a 302. Those are just some great scores for this early in the year."

The Hartland Invitational attracted

six of the top 11 teams and two of the top nine individuals from last year's state Division 1 tournament.

Adams, which was seventh in the state last year, got a 68 from Grace Wang and a 70 from Laura Liu on its way to a first-place score of 290. Grand Blanc, fourth in Division 1 last year, took second with a 301, led by medalist Kate Brody's 5-under-par 67. Brody bogeyed the final hole.

Northville, the two-time defending state champion, was third with a 302.

Completing Hartland's score were Audrey Brown with an 87 and Allison Schram with a 90.

Hartland Invitational Morning wave

Team scoring: 1. Rochester Adams 290; 2. Grand Blanc 301; 3. Northville 302; 4. Ann Arbor Pioneer 322; 5. Hartland 337; 6. Farmington Hills Mercy 341; 7. Ann Arbor Skyline 350; 8. Troy 352; 9. Walled Lake Northern 358; 10. Clarkston 383; 11. Farmington 391; 12. Lansing Catholic 392.

Top individuals: Kate Brody (Grand Blanc) 67; Grace Wang (Adams) 68; Amaya Melendez (Pioneer) 68; Laura Liu (Adams) 70.

Tennis

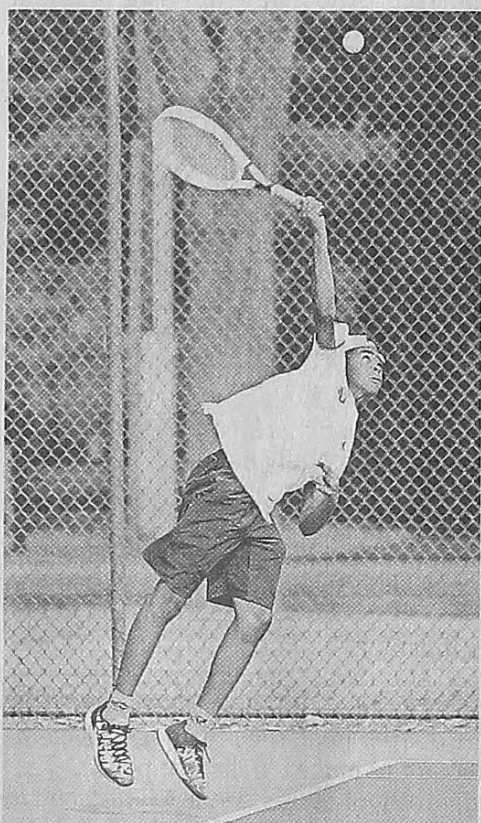
Fowlerville recorded the 100th victory in program history, improving to 3-0 this season, with a 6-2 victory over Ionia.

The Gladiators are 12-0 in doubles matches so far.

Singles: Sam Eppler (I) d. Carter Young 6-3, 6-2; Jack Eppler (I) d. Isaac Way 7-5, 7-6 (4); Calvin Dowker (F) d. Brett Longanbach 1-6, 7-6 (4), 6-3; Lucas Anderson (F) d. Miles Gregory 6-3, 6-4.

Doubles: Logan Flanery-Garrett Hearl (F) d. Collin Palmer-Brett Peterson 6-2, 6-1; Tyler Bulszewicz-Greg Wilkinson (F) d. Ethan Rowland-Colter Clark 6-2, 6-2; Jimmy Buurma-Ben Wykes (F) d. Ben Marhofer-Joel Cairns 6-1, 6-1; Anthony Bassett-Isaac Farmer (F) d. Elijah Hatfield-Lucas Wandell 6-4, 7-5.

Contact Bill Khan at wkhan@gannett.com.



Brother Rice has high expectations for freshman Devyn Gands. PHOTOS BY TOM BEAUDOIN/SPECIAL TO HOMETOWN LIFE.COM

Brother Rice

Continued from Page 1B

Cullen said. "The younger guys are, 'OK, we'll join you. We'll bring that intensity. We'll bring that level.'"

Groves steps up in No. 1 doubles

While Brother Rice showed its dominance for the majority of the match, Groves stepped up in the No. 1 doubles spot.

Senior Ryan Duffy and junior Dylan Brown fought back after losing their first set, 6-3, and won two straight against Warriors juniors Sam Brockhaus and Nathan Grobbel, earning their fourth win as a tandem in 2020.

"I just told (Dylan), 'We're not losing this. We're not losing this season,'" Duffy said. "I think we just fought through the whole thing."

The pair is the only one that remains from the 2019 doubles season for Groves, catapulting up from the third spot to the top as upperclassmen. This will be the third year Duffy and Brown



Groves senior Ryan Duffy teamed up with junior Dylan Brown for one of two wins for the Falcons against Brother Rice.

will play together.

"We've been together every year, and we just kind of came together and learned each others' weaknesses and strengths and tried to play to them, play into them," Brown said. "When every-

thing meshes and everything goes well, you get that emotion and effort, and everything just starts working out.

Groves senior Liam Keane and junior Alexandras Abarius earned the Falcons' second win against Brother Rice, earning the win after a 7-5 win in the third set.

However, Groves head coach Dave Farmer did not see much success, especially after playing in tournament games prior to this dual-match against Brother Rice.

He said the Falcons looked young, carrying a lot of players who are learning the game of tennis for the first time.

"They've got a long way to go. We've got a lot of seasoning to do," Farmer said. "By the time, if this season does play out, by the time we get three-quarters of the way through, you'll see a different team. Hopefully you see a more polished team, a team heading and moving more aggressively around the net."

Contact reporter Colin Gay at cgay@hometownlife.com or 248-330-6710. Follow him on Twitter at [@ColinGay17](https://twitter.com/ColinGay17). Send game results and stats to LivSports@hometownlife.com.

Northville

Continued from Page 1B

we have a lot of girls that want it. We're blessed to have tons of talent. I'm really looking forward to see what we can do."

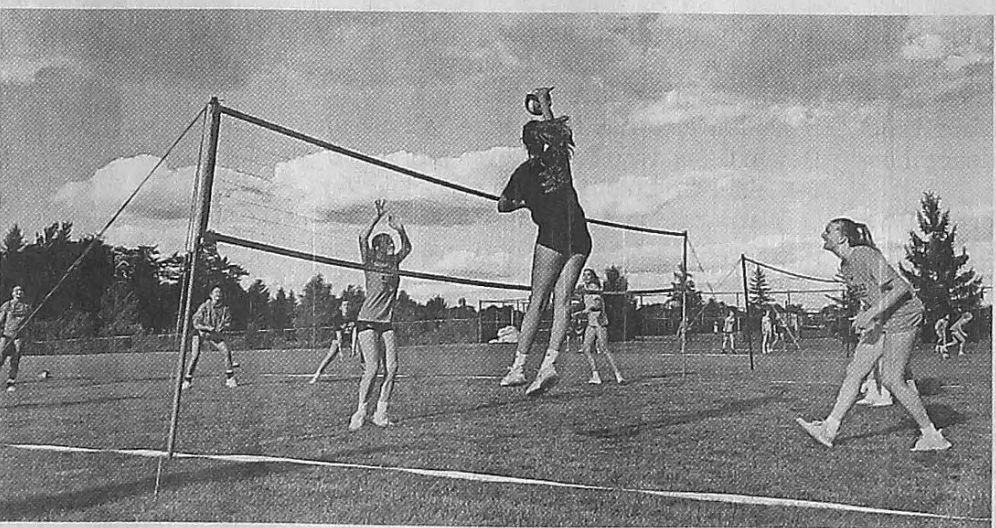
Livvy Setla, a senior defensive specialist and libero, feels like the Mustangs have a leg up on other teams across the state. With the amount of experience the team holds, chemistry becomes a major advantage, creating relationships and bonds that impact players on and off the court.

The Mustangs know what it takes to get to the state competitions, having last competed in the state semifinal in 2018.

To VanDerVeer, this is the year to return, using motivation and drive from the loss to Novi in 2019 to catapult Northville back into the state conversation.

Looking at Northville heading into 2020, it seems to be the school's time to shine. But to Setla, that mentality hurt the team last year.

"When we think of expectations, a lot of people are like, 'Do you think you will make it to states?' Setla said. "That's such a fun idea to think of, but I think it's something that came to our downfall last year because we thought of it so much



With seven seniors on the roster, Northville volleyball hopes for a chance to get past the district final in 2020. COLIN GAY/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

instead of taking ourselves in the moment."

The waiting game

Preparing for the 2020 season, the Mustangs tried to remain in the moment.

As they practiced outside, VanDerVeer said the players were relaxed and having a lot of fun, taking the focus off of the world around them.

"The girls just want to play," VanDerVeer said. "They want to compete. They want to go out and be athletic. They are sick of sitting behind a screen. There's only so much class you can do and volleyball you can watch on TV."

But to the players, the season means more than just winning a state title.

To Imbuzeiro, 2020 provides her with a final opportunity to play with her sister, Juliana, a junior, who took the same path to the Northville varsity team as she

did — playing junior varsity as a freshman, and moving up to the varsity team for the past two seasons.

To Setla, 2020 provides her with a final opportunity to represent her high school before moving across the country to play college volleyball at University of Nevada Las Vegas.

"This is my last chance to finally show my last year at my school, finally make my mark, make my lasting impact," Setla said.

Aspirations remain. But uncertainty has not been squashed.

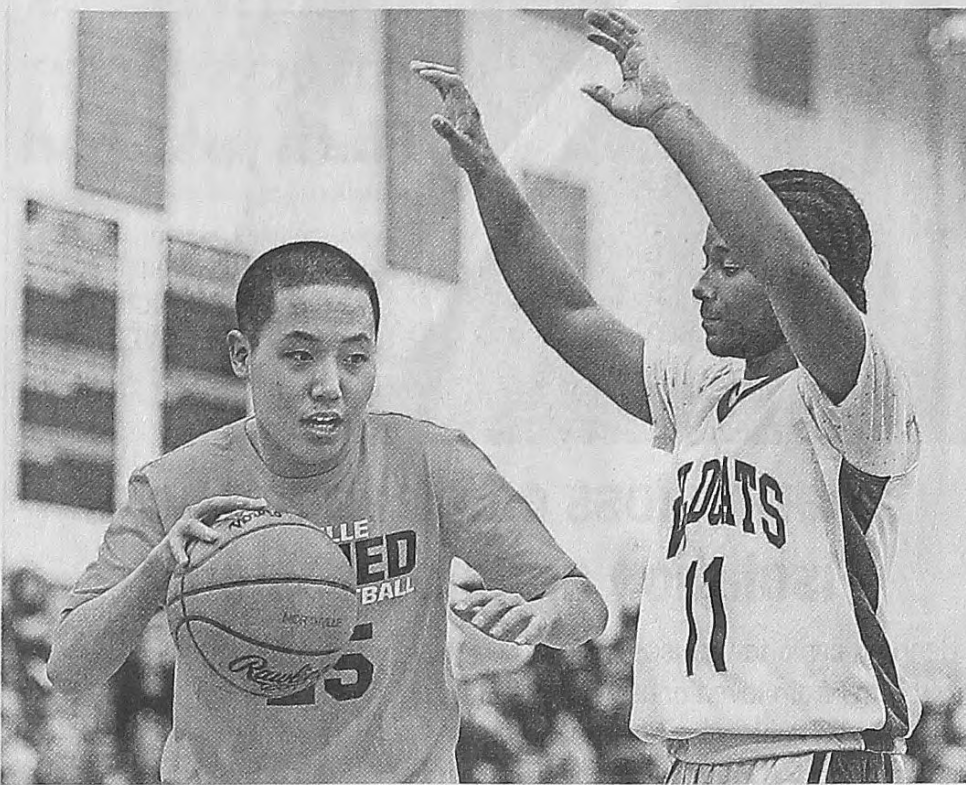
The practice nets behind the track on Northville's campus will remain up. The varsity team, including seven seniors, will continue to practice, to prepare.

Setla knows she will work hard for what could be. But until the MHSAA or the state provides an answer for her fall season, a question will continue to remain at the back of her mind.

"Every day we come in, I know we all want to work hard and, 'Hey, let's just play for today,'" Setla said. "But at the same time, 'Well, will this be even worth anything?'"

Contact reporter Colin Gay at cgay@hometownlife.com or 248-330-6710. Follow him on Twitter at [@ColinGay17](https://twitter.com/ColinGay17). Send game results and stats to LivSports@hometownlife.com.

UNIFIED



Unified Sports joins students with and without intellectual disabilities on the same team. Novi has Unified basketball, soccer and bocce teams that compete against Unified teams in other districts. HOMETOWNLIFE.COM FILE PHOTO

Novi High nationally recognized for Special Olympics

Susan Bromley

HometownLife.com

USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

Sports and school have been upended in the coronavirus pandemic, but Novi has earned cheers for a program that celebrates the ultimate in sportsmanship.

Special Olympics North America recently named Novi High School as a National Banner Unified Champion School, one of only five in Michigan earning the recognition, which also included Harland and Howell in Livingston County.

"I think this means a lot to students with disabilities and their general education peers," said Andrew Saari, Novi Unified Special Olympics head coach. "It's a great opportunity to show what is good in society."

Unified Sports joins students with and without intellectual disabilities on the same team. Novi has Unified basketball, soccer, and bocce teams that compete against Unified teams in other districts.

The district's inaugural sport was basketball, which commenced three years ago. Flag football was to be added this fall, but was canceled due to the pandemic.

"We are not going to do fall sports right now, a lot of our athletes are immunocompromised," Saari said. "Kids want to be back to being kids again. Normally, we would have an assembly (for

the school's national recognition). Hopefully we can do something that involves school and gets spirit."

According to Special Olympics, a Unified Champion School "has an inclusive school climate and exudes a sense of collaboration, engagement and respect for all members of the student body and staff. A Unified Champion School receiving national banner recognition is one that has demonstrated commitment to inclusion by meeting 10 national standards of excellence."

In addition to Unified Sports activities, those standards also include inclusive youth leadership and whole-school engagement. Banner Unified Champion Schools should also be able to demonstrate they are self-sustainable or have a plan in place to sustain these activities into the future.

Dan Ekonen, senior director of program leadership for Special Olympics Michigan, said Novi High was an "easy choice" for being named a National Banner UCS.

"When you see how their students interact and embrace UCS as what they do at Novi, it's done at a very, very high level," Ekonen said. "It has infused inclusion throughout their building. They are an easy choice to be recognized at a national level."

Contact reporter Susan Bromley at sbromley@hometownlife.com or 517-281-2412. Follow her on Twitter at @SusanBromley10.



Bryce Hall, inset, a rising senior defensive end, said Ben Jones always had a soft spot for the offensive and defensive linemen. PHOTO COURTESY OF STEPHEN GRAF

Jones

Continued from Page 1B

head coach, the culture had changed.

"You know as well as I do, Cranbrook is not really a football school," Hall said. "You have your West Bloomfields, your Oak Parks, your Cass Techs, your Clarkstons, all those schools. Cranbrook is not one of those football schools."

"When he got that head coaching job, he was going to turn Cranbrook into a football school."

Jones died in a car accident Aug. 19, leaving the potential, leaving the culture he helped create in only his first season as head coach of the Cranes.

But to those closest to him in the football program, Jones' transformation of Cranbrook Kingswood football, and the personnel inside of it, has only just begun.

'I'm not going easy on you'

Hall's first experience of high school football came in the eighth grade, joining the high school team for lifting sessions each morning.

His first example of a high school coach was Jones, a first-year offensive and defensive line coach that was a product of Muskegon Catholic Central and Hillsdale College.

To Hall, Jones had this intimidating stature and a tendency to yell.

"He's not a small guy. He's a pretty big guy, you know: deep voice, the beard," Hall said. "It was just kind of intimidating seeing my first high school coach."

But as time went on, as Hall jumped from junior varsity to the varsity team for playoffs, he saw Jones as an expert motivator, seeing the potential of every player on the other side of his deep-voiced shout.

Prior to the start of the 2019 minicamp in August, Jones met with his varsity players, and asked them two questions: What are your goals for the season, and what are your goals in life?

Hall was clear ahead of his junior season: he wanted to play college football and earn college offers.

"He told me, 'I'm not going to go easy on you,'" Hall said. "Nobody is going to take it easy on you at the next level, so I'm just going to get you ready for that now."

In the 2019 season, Jones led the Cranes to a 5-4 record, earning dominant wins against Pontiac and Ann Arbor Father Gabriel Richard before falling to Harper Woods in the first round of the playoffs.

More importantly, Jones helped Hall get one step closer to achieving his long-term goal: earning 20 offers and cutting that list down to eight schools prior to the start of his senior season.

"It really pains me not to be able to sign in front of him, have him be there when I commit," Hall said. "He really, really helped me live my dream."

Familial bond on, off field

Jones made it clear that he loved football.

When Cranbrook Kingswood took the field for summer conditioning and football practice in the middle of the coronavirus, Jones, according to Hall, was the only person more excited to return to the field than he was.

However, to those close to him in the Cranes football program, Jones clearly loved and cared for people more.

"They saw he cared and that it was not fake," Graf said. "It was a guy that

really cared about the program and each of those kids and their ability to be the best they can be and the program to be the best it could be."

Hall saw that in his life. After his brother, Braden, was diagnosed with leukemia in January, Jones was one of the first coaches who called Bryce.

Between Bryce Hall and Jones, there was a trusting relationship, representative of what the head coach strived for with the rest of the team: a familial, father-son atmosphere.

Hall believes Jones always put people ahead of himself. And to the incoming senior, that was true until the last day of his head coach's life.

Hall met up with his head coach Aug. 19 at a post office at 11 Mile Road and Lahser Road. Jones wanted to return a thermometer to the defensive end's family after using it to check in players that week at practice.

The meet-up was brief, five to 10 minutes. Hall and Jones talked about spring football, with the head coach making sure that his Division I-offered senior defensive end would be available to play in his final semester of high school.

"He told me that he's going to do everything possible to make sure that we are ready," Hall said.

Hall left the conversation believing the same characteristics he had always felt of his head coach: that he was strong, loving and caring. That Jones was an example of what it looked like to be a strong man, who just so happened to coach football.

"He's one of those guys that you don't believe anything bad can ever happen," Hall said. "He was a strong person. I didn't believe something like that could happen to him."

Hall found out the next day, as he took his brother to high school orientation at Birmingham Groves, that Jones - his mentor, his example - died.

"Thinking that I might have been the last person to see him alive, it hurts," Hall said. "I wish I could have held onto him five more minutes so he didn't get in the accident, didn't even have the conversation so he would have passed it."

"Just knowing he's in a better place now is kind of comforting, but this is one of the most difficult times I've ever had. It feels like a part of my family died."

Building off the foundation

Graf knew Jones passed every criteria the athletic director had of being Cranbrook Kingswood's head football coach.

Jones was the young individual who wants to be there, in season and in off-season, who aspires to be great in every aspect of his role.

"Ben, he was every one of those bullet points that I mentioned," Graf said. "He had that."

Hall was confident Jones, if given the time, was going to transform Cranbrook Kingswood into a powerhouse football program.

Instead, Jones built the foundation. With his death, players and coaches will try and continue to build off the foundation.

"He was creating something here," Hall said. "Seeing that cut short, that sparked a fire in every single one of us on the team this year."

"This season's and all the seasons after are for Coach Jones."

Contact reporter Colin Gay at cgay@hometownlife.com or 248-330-6710. Follow him on Twitter at @ColinGay17. Send game results and stats to LivSports@hometownlife.com.

SOFTBALL



The Livonia Storm 12U fast-pitch softball team won the 2020 USSSA Michigan State Championship on Aug. 23. PHOTO COURTESY OF EDWARD BATTAGIN

Livonia Storm 12U wins USSSA Michigan State Championship

From Staff Reports

HometownLife.com

USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

The Livonia Storm fast-pitch softball team won the 12U division of the 2020 USSSA Michigan State Championship tournament Aug. 23 at the Canton Sports Center and Heritage Park.

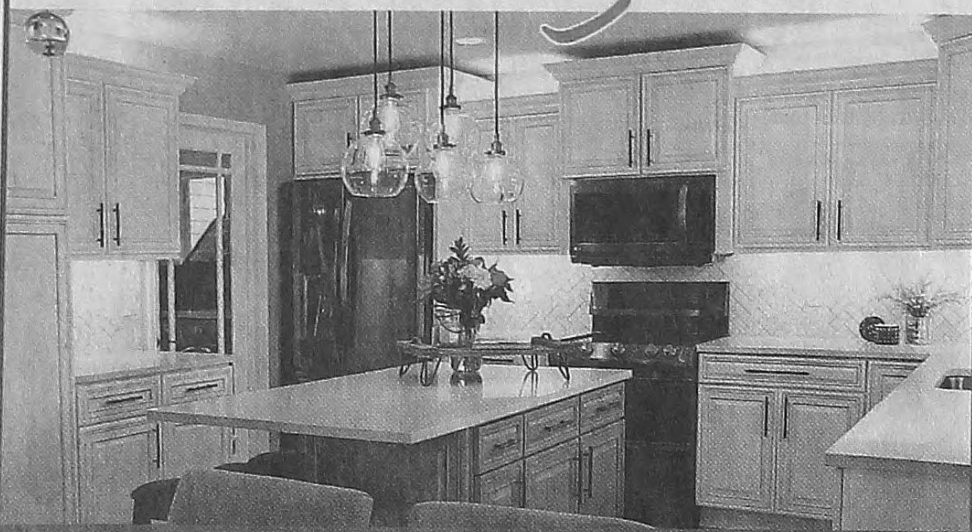
The Storm outscored opponents 59-

18 in its six wins, beating the Motor City Madness 12U team in the final, 9-1.

Led by head coach Stacy Rodopoulos, the Storm consists of Betty Adams, Lydia Aubry, Rachel Balhorn, Anna Battagin, Elaina Braunscheidel, Kendallynn Brockett, Isabella Kutch, Ella McCue, Jessie Rodopoulos, Katelyn Ruth, Brooke Schall and Zoe Seagren.

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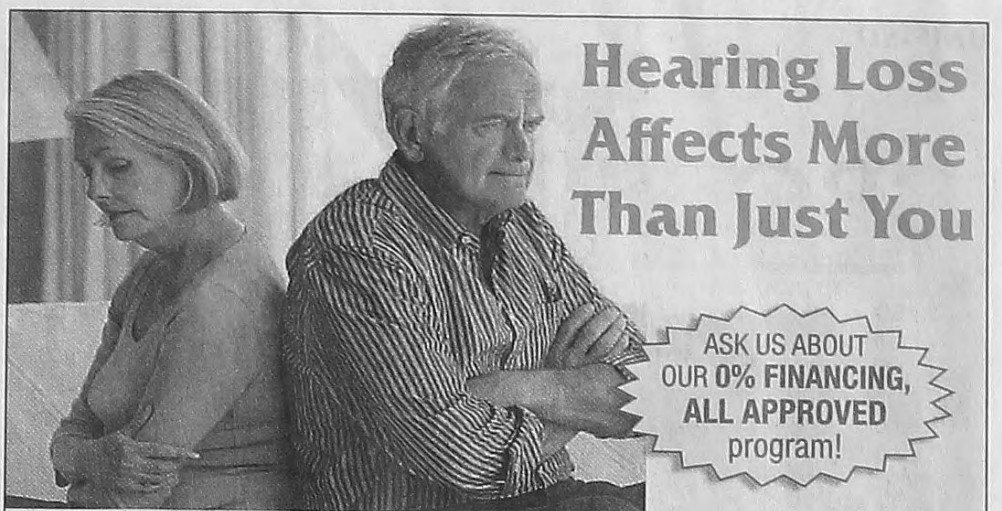
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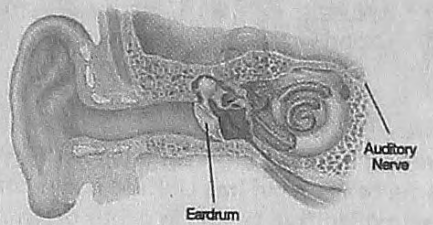


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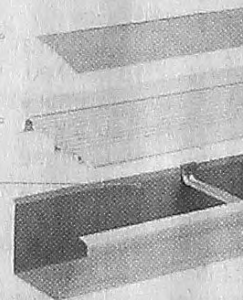
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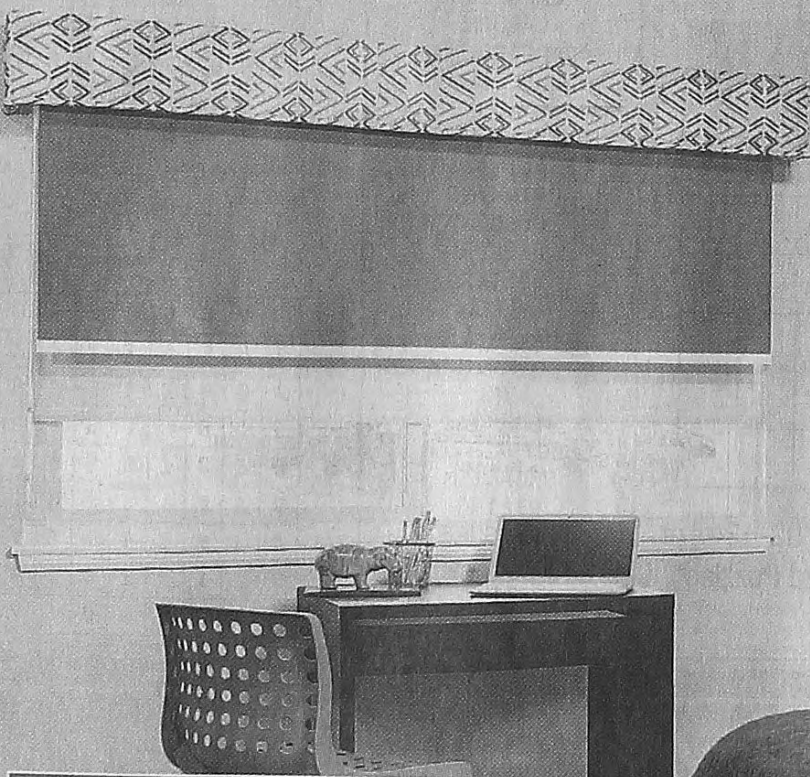
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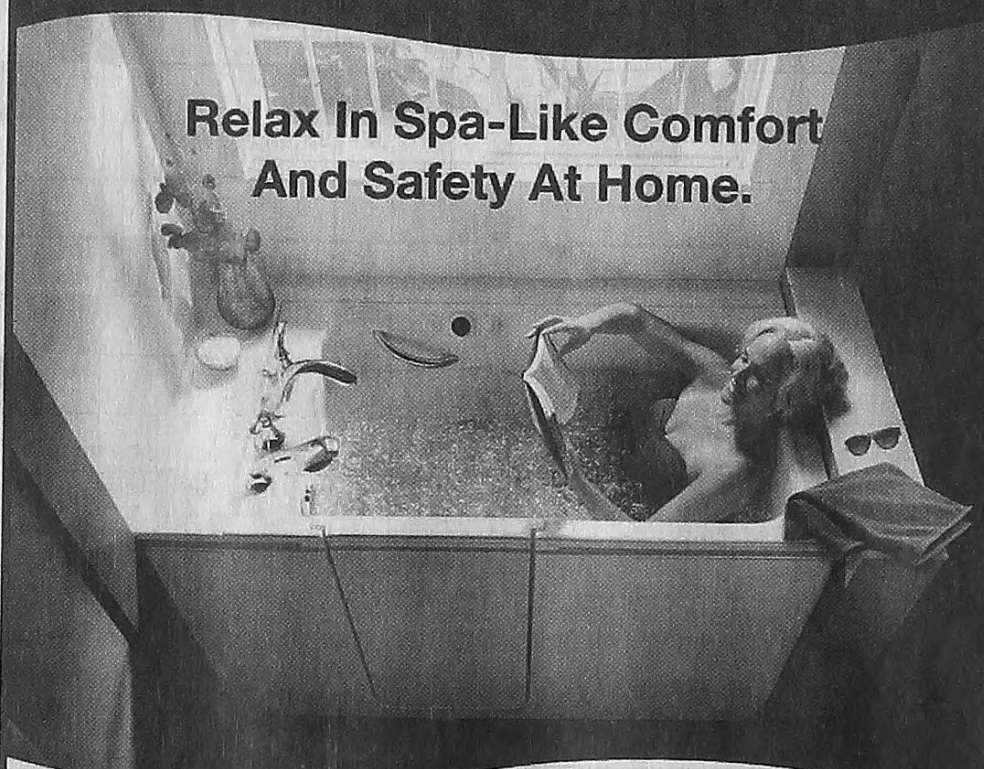


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*Walk-in bath installed in as little as a day. Contact your local dealer for financing details. Limited time offer. Valid through August 31, 2020, at participating dealers only. Not available in AK; HI; Nassau Cty, NY; Suffolk Cty, NY; Westchester Cty, NY; and Buffalo Cty, NY. Also may not be available in other areas. Dealer will provide customer with certificate for free Highline Tall toilet upon purchase of walk-in bath. Certificate to be redeemed directly from dealer. Dealer will provide free installation of toilet at time of walk-in bath installation. Cannot be combined with any other advertised offer.