AN ANALYSIS OF COMMUNITY NEWS WEB SITES:
A COMPARISON OF LOCAL NEWS WEB SITES
TO INDICATE INDUSTRY TRENDS

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Part 1: Introduction

The power of traditional news is declining. Newspapers and local television news stations have entered a bleak period of time in which they are struggling for advertising dollars and trying to retain an audience that is moving to the Internet.

In the past, experts have suggested that newer media cannot fully replace older, established communication systems. Film did not kill theater. Television did not kill radio. With news, innovative thinkers found ways to adapt news to new media. Newsreels turned to newscasts. Newspaper stories were summarized into 30-second stories on the television. The Internet has the ability to combine all forms of media into one place. However, news was not forced to really adapt to the Internet. Instead, something that is printed in the newspaper can easily be posted onto the Web. And now, more than ever, broadcast news can do the same thing—post a video story on the Web and paste the script underneath. Nothing new is needed— or so people thought.

The problem with this mindset is that the audience wanted more. While journalists were happy just sticking old pieces on a new medium—like using used scotch tape to mend a rip— other media companies started innovating and pushing the boundaries of the Internet. Used scotch tape is not good enough to permanently fix a rip. It might work for a short period, but after some use, that rip will continue to
tall. In the same way, other media companies embraced the interactivity that the Internet was capable of, and by doing that pigeonholed news into an old media that just didn’t understand the Internet. Until very recently, that’s where much of the news has stayed. The news industry took a much longer time than most other industries to adapt to the Internet. It is because of this hesitation that Google and other non-news companies have pushed the envelope of new and emerging technology and its uses and news companies have not (Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2005).

However, these old, established news media are still trusted online. While people say they are more skeptical of what the news media says and reports (Pew, 2008), they also continue to trust the Web sites owned by traditional media more than Web start-ups such as The Drudge Report (Pew, 2009). These reports only measure a national audience; thus, only national news sites (such as MSNBC, CNN, The Washington Post and The New York Times) are really evaluated. These large companies have invested time and money into their Web sites in the past few years. They’ve done focus groups and usability testing to ensure that their Web sites are user-and-advertiser-friendly. They have money to hire Web teams who can create Web-only content and interactive elements that supplement stories online.

Many companies that specialize in local or community news do not have the financial resources to do focus groups and usability. They do not have the money to hire online-specific staff or designers for the Web. These news organizations have less money devoted to the Web site than any other part of the operation. They rely
almost completely on their legacy news product to produce content and revenue. A “legacy news product” refers to a news media company’s original product such as a newspaper or broadcast. These companies’ Web products are based on their legacy products because the people who produce for the Web are the same people who produce for the legacy product. The legacy product is also, currently, the source of most revenue for the company. The popular blog 10,000 Words cited 10 reasons why “online news sites suck.” That list included long text stories, multi-page photo slideshows, lack of links to other resources, and poor Web design in general (Luckie, 2009). In addition, many of these sites use the Web as a dumping ground for content that is already published in their traditional formats.

Local news operations are struggling much more than the big, national companies. In a March 2009 survey by Pew, only half of respondents said they believed that losing their local newspaper would hurt civic life in their community “a lot.” “Many of those who say the closing of the local paper wouldn’t make much, if any, difference in their communities note that there are other news sources available or criticize the newspaper’s quality” (Pew, 2009).

This quality crisis for local news has a lot to do with the Internet. The amount of people who rely on the Internet for news has jumped considerably in the past four years (Pew, 2009). While more people are going online to search for news, community news sites have not changed much. Many of these sites are aesthetically unmaintained and hard-to-navigate, making a difficult user experience. According to Jakob Nielsen, in his book Eyetracking Web Usability (2009), “only a person who
really needs something on a particular site will grin and bear it through an unpleasant user experience.” Also, for most of these community news sites, the content is used in the newspaper or broadcast also, thus making the content redundant by the time the user sees it online. This could cause audience members to go to other sources for news about their community.

Larger media institutions such as CNN.com or MSNBC.com have invested time and money into staying current with online trends. However, mid-sized and small newspapers and local television stations, which comprise most of the traditional news sources in existence, have been less adamant about updating the look and capability of their sites. To diminish the decline of local news, local media outlets should focus more attention on the aesthetics and content of their sites and the expectations of their audience online.

These local news organizations generally do not use multimedia or interactive elements such as video or Flash-based presentations, which garner the unique qualities the Web has. This analysis aims to identify factors that contribute to the effectiveness of local news’ use of the Web.

To start an analysis like this, it is important to first look at prior research in the area of mediated communication to define why specific types of stories are best told with specific media. The analysis also requires a look at research in Web design and usability, as these factors also contribute to the overall experience a user of a Web site has when consuming news online. Part 2 will survey some of the research done in this area, as well as show the need for an analysis such as this one. Part 3
discusses and explains the method of this content analysis. Part 4 explains the results of the analysis and applies them to community news Web site development. Part 5 discusses the limitations of the study, the implications for the community news, and the need for future research.
Part 2: Literature Review and Need for Analysis

Most major news media organizations have been slow to incorporate new technology into their business models. As Pavlik (2008) wrote in his book *Media in the Digital Age*, “Like cautious penguins, media executives most commonly prefer to let others test the waters first rather than risk diving in and becoming a quick meal for a killer whale.”

Unlike most industries, news organizations put only a small portion of their budgets into research and development. It is for this reason that Google and other non-news media companies have pushed the envelope of new and emerging technology and its uses (Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2005). The media and technologies used to disseminate news affect the types of news that an audience receives, as well as the types of news that a news company generates (Pavlik, 2008).

The importance and influence of mass media should not be underestimated. According to Snow (1983), mass media are used in four ways: First, as a source of information about topics that are relevant to the sender and receiver; second, mass media provide information about society and culture— the appropriate way to behave, the proper perspective, general common sense and knowledge; third, mass media is a trusted source for reliable and credible information; and “finally, there
are vicarious and overt interaction networks within the media industry and between the audience and the medium.”

News is disseminated through several forms of mass media. Newspapers, magazines, film, television, radio, online and mobile devices, are just a few of the media used to spread information and ideas. This analysis focuses on newspapers and the Internet specifically; however, it does provide some context for other areas of the news industry.

Studying the meaning of communication media, Berlo (1960) held that it was possible for a medium of communication to be a causal determinant or factor in the communication process, and he specifically argued that the medium is “a carrier of messages.” When the sender and receiver use a medium to mediate communication, the medium will actively determine what is being communicated and the effectiveness of the communication (Berlo, 1960). Krugman (1971) also noted that the medium conveys its own sense of reality. Reading a print product, such as a newspaper, is more interactive than watching a television program. The “passive” activity does not require any introspective thought process, and thus people do not necessarily link the content of the program to their own lives (Krugman, 1971).

When talking about news and media used to disseminate news, this can be interpreted to mean that a story in the newspaper will send a different message and a different sense of reality than the same story on the television, radio, or the Internet (Snow, 1983). Each medium seems to stimulate specific senses and ideas for most American audience members.
When Gutenberg’s printing press was invented in the 1440s, the impact of the written word became more prevalent than ever before because information could reach the masses more quickly than before. The written word, because of its reliance on visual perception, emphasized people’s reliance on the visual.

Snow (1983) noted that the newspaper became an iconic institution in society as a credible source for news. The newspaper represented stability, as its basic layout had gone unchanged for a hundred years. It also represented democracy in that it maintained the role of “watchdog” in American society. Democracy is dependent on an informed citizenship, and the newspaper helped fill and provide that role. Snow (1983) wrote the printed word is “a special inflection device itself. Words in print have a formality in appearance that lends a large degree of credibility or an official air to the subject...In this sense, an inflection device that newspapers have established in the minds of the public is the belief that newspaper copy has an official appearing reality.”

A story in the newspaper, because of its “formal” appearance and stability offers a concrete form of communication. The story cannot be changed once it is printed in the newspaper, giving it a sense of trustworthiness. When published online the same story is perceived as easily manipulated and not as stable. There is a direct correlation between the amount of news received online and the decline of believability of news (Pew, 2008; Pew, 2009). Despite this correlation, one Poynter study found that audience members trust information on a Web site owned by a newspaper or television station more than information printed or broadcasted.

Levinson (1999) said that one of the attractions of newspapers, books and other printed products is that the words are stationary and stable. The Internet relieves problems of slow communication, gatekeeping and shutout of alternative ideas (Levinson, 1999). The fluidity of the Internet also enables easy manipulation by users, creating believability problems for the audience.

Photographs initiate the same experience as written stories. The iconic nature of the still image is a major factor in the success of photojournalism. Some of the most memorable moments of history can be identified though news photography— the flag raising at Iwo Jima, the mushroom cloud over Hiroshima, the protester in Tiananmen Square, and the World Trade Center towers standing for the last time, to name a few.

Helfand (2001) wrote that the still picture can provoke and stimulate a person by challenging his or her perception of authenticity. “The relationship between the human memory and the tenacity of images cannot be underestimated.” She also noted that despite emphasis on moving pictures and film, the images people tend to remember are still. The movement to digital photography—and the ease of its manipulation— has shifted the reality that people once associated with photographs (Pavlik, 2008). The filmic image gives an arbitrary reality because the audience has “a perverse habit of assuming that the way they think you are communicating is the way that you intended to communicate. As far as they are
concerned, the message they get is the only message there is to perceive” (Hampe, 2007). Reality, as Bazin (1967) remarked, is fragmented by camera angles, framing, points of view, and other cinematic techniques to create a meaning that might not have originally been there.

Shelton (2004) listed several advantages and disadvantages to using video. First, he wrote, video is a visual medium and it is multisensory, “This multisensory quality, with the right mix of sight and sound portends maximum opportunity for optimizing communications and engendering empathy in our audiences.” However, video has the disadvantage of forcing a linear storyline. As Shelton (2004) explained, video in traditional formats must be seen from start to finish in that order for a viewer to really gain the meaning of the narrative. “There’s no time for reflective thought, for review of difficult sequences, for detailed scrutiny of complex visuals, or for discussion. Too much information is lost and cannot be retrieved...Film/video’s linearity reduces significantly its overall effectiveness in teaching cognitive and perceptual motor skills.”

Television programs attract and retain an audience based on stereotypes, entertainment, drama and ideal norms of the middle class in America (Snow, 1983). The personalities and characters on television that people are most comfortable with are the people who are middle-of-the-road, with the same values and morals that the middle class shares (Snow, 1983). Television entertainment uses drama to draw the audience and capture its attention. Snow (1983) remarked that this drama factor also seeps into news programming:
Network news is dramatic in several respects. First, the anchorperson projects a serious and authoritative demeanor that apparently only middle-aged people can carry off successfully. Credibility is also dramatically emphasized by staging the newscast inside the newsroom. Background music enhances the serious atmosphere, the rhythm and tempo speech are matter-of-fact, story length is short, and almost every news event has film and graphics to emphasize visually the drama. Today there is little difference between a network newscast and the entertainment format used in theater—both employ dramatic staging techniques to frame their subject matter. By contrast, local newscasts in the seventies used a comedy framework called “happy-talk.” Newscasters bantered back and forth with short quips, there always seemed to be a remote minicam report with some eccentric character, whether forecasters dressed in clown suits, and the newscast always ended with a humorous bit of irony. Sometimes it seemed the only straight reporting occurred on the sports segment.

Television reporters are seen as the ideal. They are truth seekers who will stop at nothing to find out the truth and seek justice for the innocent. Local news broadcasts offer to assist people in the community who feel they have fallen victim to a wrongdoing. The reporters on 60 Minutes are best known for their exposés of corrupt politicians and business people. However, Snow (1983) warned that television news, because of its drama and intensity, can lead to what he calls an “unquestioned trust.” Anchors appear to be experts on the subjects they report because of this authoritative requirement for television. However, television news
people are not initially hired based on their expertise in journalism. They are hired for their ability to write short, dramatic stories that can capture the attention of the mass audience. (This is not to say that successful television news anchors and reporters are not high-quality journalists. Quite the opposite is true in many cases.)

More people are reaching to the Internet to find news and information (Pew, 2009). What is truly significant about the Internet is its ability to allow immediate two-way communication, like the telephone. Unlike many previous media, the Internet allows users to browse, review, scan, fast-forward, etc., at their own pace. This provides the platform for the possibility of truly non-linear storytelling (Shelton, 2004). Shelton wrote that the interactivity associated with the Internet provides the user with a message of control because it can be self-paced, allowing more time for comprehension. The Internet, Shelton said, gives a multisensory experience, which again engenders empathy and optimizes communication. However, unlike other forms of two-way communication, the Internet allows a message to be sent and received by a mass audience, thus making it a unique medium.

Newscasts on demand have changed the way television news is disseminated. A news consumer can watch stories from the morning newscast during lunch. The use of streaming video on the Internet and World Wide Web has enabled a new kind of news consumer who seeks information on his time, not on the set schedule of the television station.
As with video-on-demand, the Internet has also changed the way news is disseminated. The first newspaper to start publishing online was the Columbus Dispatch in July 1980 (Shedden, 2010). By 1982, The Washington Post, The New York Times, The San Francisco Chronicle, and eight other Associated Press newspapers had partnered with CompuServe to provide news online via VideoTex (Shedden, 2010). Broadcast stations also started posting text stories online at this time. It wasn’t until 1991, when Apple developed QuickTime, that video could be posted online (Lawton, 2000). QuickTime allowed users online to post video; however, users had to download the video to view it. Only in recent years has video become popular on the Web. This trend can be attributed to streaming capabilities and shorter download times caused by a faster connection to the Web.

Levinson (1999), playing off of McLuhan’s descriptions of the electronic age, said the Internet, because of its massive appeal, provides people with a more rich experience. He proposed that the Internet, because of this richness, can provide a “fuller and more accurate understanding of reality.” As with written stories and photographs, anything on the Internet can be perceived as phony or manipulated, leading to an issue of trustworthiness and believability for online news.

If we come to know someone online, even see photographs or live video images of his or her face, we still do not know with certainty various aspects of that person which we could perceive in an instant in an in-person encounter: the photo or even video image, for example could be phony. (Levinson, 1999)
The reason for the perceived disconnect between the newspaper story printed on paper and the same story on the Internet is that anyone can publish whatever they’d like about whatever they want online, no matter their expertise, education, culture, gender, age, or ethnicity. The Internet, in this way, can be used as a representation of democratization. The online format also enables anonymity, which in turn, provides people with freedom. It also gives them the opportunity to lie, distort, and lead people in a direction that could be considered wrong.

The Internet has changed the business models of all news companies. While at one time traditional media relied completely on advertising revenue for their legacy products, now companies are working to find ways to make their Web sites more profitable with several advertising strategies. The once-loyal audience members who would read the newspaper every day at home are now reading it online for free at work and they are checking often for new information. The news company, in turn, should be working harder to provide news faster to accommodate this new breed of news consumer. “Online news has created an environment in which speed and currency often take precedence over accuracy, fact checking, and multiple sourcing” (Pavlik, 2008).

Interest in news is higher than ever according to the 2007 Poynter Eyetracking study (Quinn, Stark, & Edmonds, 2007). Previous research provides a base of information about the news media and how the Internet has changed the news. However, very little research has been done concerning community news
online. This study aims to fill that void by analyzing two local news Web sites for site design and content online.

There is no handbook, no test, for which people in the news media can use to create an effective communicative experience on their Web sites. Within the realm of news, the problem of misuse of media creates confusion and frustration for a sophisticated online audience. The audience for many of these news sites is filled with people who regularly surf the Internet. They know what to look for to identify professionalism and reliability, and thus credibility, within a Web site. These news sites lack the aesthetics and media usage to constitute credibility upon initial contact. This analysis provides a starting point for these site operators.
Part 3: Method

According to Nielsen (2000), usability is the measure that determines whether a site gets customers or not. “Web users exhibit a remarkable impatience and insistence on instant gratification If they can't figure out how to use a website in a minute or so, they conclude that it won't be worth their time. And they leave.” This analysis uses usability studies for much of the basis of the research.

This study analyzes Web sites owned by two newspaper-oriented companies because newspapers have been disseminating information on the Web longer than other traditional news companies such as those in television and radio (Sheddon, 2010). Previous research has shown that traditional community news companies’ primary focus is their legacy product. The Web sites owned by these companies suffer because the Web comes second. These companies hire reporters who write a story for the newspaper. That story is then published online, unchanged. In many cases, the reason for this is a lack of time, staff and financial resources. Companies whose primary product is the Web site deliver a product that is more immediate, engaging and informative to their online audience.

To show this tendency, two local news Web sites were selected for analysis over three random days during a ten-day period. This study employs content
analysis to analyze and interpret correlations between the two sites. According to Krippendorff (2004), “Content analysis is a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use.” This research technique gives the researcher an objective, systematic, and replicable method to analyze texts and other “meaningful matter” such as art, images, maps, and signs (Krippendorff).

The content analysis method is best for this study because it is used to describe trends in communication content, to compare media, and to construct communication standards (Krippendorff, 2004). The purpose of this study is to describe possible trends in community news Web site aesthetics and content, to compare two community news Web sites, and to construct standards based on the patterns and trends utilized by the two companies.

The first of the two sites (www.TheHeraldBulletin.com) is that of a small newspaper located in a city of 56,000 people in Indiana. The 20,000 circulation newspaper is owned by a small media conglomerate. The Web site uses the same template as 75 percent of the 130 news Web sites the company owns throughout the United States, thus making it a good representative of the sites owned by the company.

The second Web site analyzed in this study (www.annarbor.com) is the source of local news for a city of about 114,000 people. The site replaced the daily newspaper that was once the only source for daily news in the city. According to newspaper articles about the closing of the newspaper, The Ann Arbor News had a
daily circulation of about 48,500. The Ann Arbor Web site was designed by Advance Publications to represent the future of online newspapers. The site replaced the 120-year-old newspaper as the sole daily news provider in the city. According to the publisher Laurel Champion, the newspaper closed because of revenue loss, saying the business model was “not sustainable” (Knight, 2009). The closing of The Ann Arbor News was the first time a city as big as Ann Arbor would go without a daily newspaper. Other newspapers throughout the country have started printing fewer days a week or have gone online-only because of the changing media environment in the United States as well as the country’s economic woes.

Out of the more than 1,400 newspapers in existence in the United States, 90% are considered mid-sized or small (Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2009). Researchers have differing views as to what constitutes large, mid-sized, and small; however all measurements are based on circulation. The Associated Press Managing Editors, when awarding newspapers for accomplishments, divides newspapers into three categories: small newspapers are those with a circulation of up to 39,000; mid-sized newspapers are those with a daily circulation between 40,000 and 149,999; and large newspapers are those with a circulation of more than 150,000 (APME). Based on these classifications, the site for The Herald Bulletin would represent that of a small newspaper company and the site for AnnArbor.com would represent a medium-sized newspaper company.

Both sites were viewed in the midst of morning peak traffic hours. According to the online manager of TheHeraldBulletin.com, peak morning hours for each site is
from 8 a.m. to 9 a.m. every weekday (J. Schneider, personal communication, February, 23, 2010). Schneider said the news site hits another peak around noon. At AnnArbor.com, the peak traffic hours are from 8 a.m. to noon every weekday (A. Nash, personal communication, February 23, 2010). The days were chosen randomly from a two-week period. Days analyzed were weekdays, as to show the site during high-traffic days. Generally, news Web sites have similar traffic patterns on weekdays, but the traffic drops dramatically on the weekends. Also, both companies have smaller staffs on the weekends, which can affect how much news is posted online during those days.

For the three days, the sites were viewed between 11 a.m. and noon. By analyzing the sites at this time, one site was viewed in the midst of its high-traffic time and the second site was viewed immediately after the peak times. Viewing them at the same time ensured the study would be consistent. Specifically, if a major news event had happened during the study period, analyzing both sites at the same time would keep results comparable. Both sites have automatic timestamps on stories to indicate when they are published online. Each sites’ top ten stories were analyzed during these times. The top ten stories were determined by their proximity to the priority spots on the page. Only the stories on the main page were analyzed because the main page is a conglomerate of the stories from the other pages on the site. Also, the main page is likely to change more often.

This content analysis compares the two sites based on general, content and usability standards outlined in previous research. Through the decades, people have
created standards they use to determine whether a newspaper or a traditional broadcast newscast is reliable and credible. Individuals will evaluate news sources differently based on demographic, social and psychological factors (Alexander & Tate, 1999). However, Alexander and Tate list five specific standards essential to the evaluation process—whether for traditional media or for online media. These are

- **Authority**: the extent of expertise the author or organization has over the topic at hand.
- **Accuracy**: the extent of quality of truth and preciseness within the context of the Web site, as well as the freedom of error within the copy on the site.
- **Objectivity**: the representation of facts in an independent, fair and accurate manner, without much opinion or other biases.
- **Currency**: the identification that the information on the site is current and up-to-date.
- **Coverage**: the depth of reporting about the particular topic on the site.

In news, these points could include elements such as the inclusion of the name of the author and organization responsible for the content on the Web page; the date and time the page was last updated; clearly labeled opinion writing; frequent updates; and an indication that editors or fact checkers have reviewed the information provided (Alexander & Tate, 1999). While Alexander and Tate provide a starting point for evaluation, they do not go in-depth with their analysis of
evaluating news content on the Web. One of the reasons for this could be because the Web was still a relatively new concept to most of the public in 1999.

Successful Web sites are easy to use, following basic usability standards. Nielsen and Pernice (2009) identified priority spots on Web pages, where the most important information for the user should be located. The highest priority spots are generally in the upper content area, below the global navigation. This is where Web users generally look for information first.

Content is as important as usability when it comes to Web sites. Content that is consistently hard to understand or inaccurate will drive users away from the site. Pavlik (2008) outlines four forms of content for digital media:

1. “Repurposed content using a traditional media design or model.” The content is produced for the traditional delivery system, but instead is delivered via the Internet or other digital delivery system such as mobile devices. This might include a news article that is taken directly from the newspaper and not changed at all for the Web site.
2. “Repurposed content featuring a design unique to digital media or online environment.” This might include a newspaper article unchanged for the Web, but it has hyperlinks in it.
3. “Original content based on traditional media design or model.” This would include an online-only story for a newspaper or news broadcast that is written as if it were going to be printed or broadcast.
4. “Original content featuring a design unique to a digital media or online environment.” This kind of content would include blogs, interactive content, or video with hot spots (i.e. embedded links or other media objects such as high resolution images).

The fourth form of content is what Pavlik says represents the future of media. Media organizations are increasingly adding this type of content onto their Web sites to “engage the next generation of media user. Moreover, appetites for a more interactive and customizable journalism are emerging in which traditional news media face a somewhat dubious future, with audiences for traditional news media forms dwindling” (Pavlik, 2008).

Today’s news readers seek direct contact between themselves and the journalists who report the news. From commenting on stories online to adding to stories on wikis and blogs, the idea of interaction between the consumer and the producer has become a norm for many news organizations. “By engaging sources and audiences in a daily dialog, whether online or off, (news organizations) can improve the quality of their reporting and reestablish themselves as central to the democratic process in the United States and around the world” (Pavlik, 2008).

According to Nielsen and Pernice (2009), images online capture people’s attention when they are high contrast and high quality; cropped rather than scaled to fit a small space; easy to interpret, not excessively detailed; and related to the content of the page. Conversely, people ignore images online that are low contrast and low quality; too busy for the space; look like advertisements; boring; and
unrelated to the content on the page. The Nielsen and Pernice eyetracking study found that people are more likely to look at an image that relates to the content on the page than a generic one or one that adds little value to the page. “When reading a CNN article about smugglers who forced Somali refugees from their boats into shark-infested waters, people looked at the image of the boats that accompanied the article. Some looked at the boats a few times” (Nielsen & Pernice, 2009).

According to Nielsen and Pernice (2009), people look for specific design standards on the Web such as a logo in the upper-left corner of all pages, a navigational menu across the top or along the left, a Home button in or near the menu on the far left, and an open search field on the upper-right of the page. Web pages that are “cluttered or difficult designs make people less likely to find what they want. Only a person who really needs something on a particular site will grin and bear it through an unpleasant user experience” (Nielsen & Pernice, 2009).

Nielsen and Pernice (2009) also report that some content created for another medium, such as television, is not great to experience on the Web. The example Nielsen uses is a video of a person talking about Hurricane Katrina rescue efforts on CNN.com. A user of the CNN site looked at the doctor talking, but then his eye traveled to other parts of the page while he still listened to the video. Generally, people become bored with “talking head” videos but will continue listening to the video if they are interested in the topic (Nielsen & Pernice, 2009).

A video, such as the trailer for the Harry Potter movie *The Goblet of Fire*, translates well to the Web because the quality is high and the subjects appear
mostly in the middle and the content is fast-moving and exciting (Nielsen & Pernice, 2009). If people choose the video content to watch, such as a television show or well-produced movie trailer, they will watch the entirety of the production. Instructional animations also receive a great deal of attention, according to the eyetracking study.

A major advantage the Internet has over a traditional newspaper is immediacy. Journalists can provide information and news in a timely manner, updating stories as they happen rather than waiting until the next press time (Gunter, 2003). Web site designers and online marketers agree that updating a Web site frequently is necessary to maintain a relevant site to users. Fresh content helps Web pages rank high on search engines such as Google and Yahoo. New content also shows an audience that the site is current and worth returning to. If a site operator wants users to return daily, then he must update the site daily. If users should return more than once a day, then the site should be updated more than once a day (Websource, 2009).

According to Pew (2009), many people would not care if their local newspaper were to shut down completely. However, the same study showed that 41 percent of those surveyed got their local news from the newspaper, and about 48 percent said they got their local news from the newspaper and its Web site. Online users can find national news at several other sites such as CNN.com, MSNBC.com, and WSJ.com. The local newspaper and the local news television station are sometimes the only place where people can get news about the community they live
in. Online the newspaper’s Web site should serve the same needs by providing local content. According to one survey from 1999, users of news Web sites seek local news from local news Web sites (Phipps, 1999). Local news was valued more than any other type of content including weather, national, and the classified advertisements. For newspapers with a circulation of less than 250,000, the importance of local news jumped almost 30 percent (Phipps, 1999).

Based on this research, this analysis will consider the following hypotheses:

**H1:** News organizations whose primary product is the Web site will more often post the most important information in the priority spots of the page than news organizations whose Web site is not the primary product.

**H2:** News organizations whose primary product is the Web site will provide pictures that pertain to the specific story more often than news organizations whose Web site is not the primary product.

**H3:** News organizations whose primary product is the Web site will produce videos that are fast-paced and capture the attention of the user more often than news organizations whose Web site is not the primary product.

**H4:** News organizations whose primary product is the Web site will update their site more frequently during peak hours than a news organization whose Web site is not the primary product.

**H5:** News organizations whose primary product is the Web site will produce more specifically local content for the site than news organizations whose Web site is not the primary product.
Part 4: Results of the Analysis

R1: News organizations whose primary product is the Web site more often post the most important information in the priority spots of the page than news organizations whose Web site is not the primary product.

After reviewing the main page and the top ten stories (based on placement on the page) of both sites, results show that both news organizations placed the same types of information in the priority spots on the page. As noted earlier, the priority spot on the page is in the upper content area, below the global navigation (Nielsen & Pernice, 2009). Each day, the news was showcased in this spot on the page. Part of this can be attributed to consistent design.

Generally, a newsroom bases its news hierarchy on several news characteristics such as timeliness, proximity, conflict, prominence, effect and novelty. These characteristics are used to decide what stories are newsworthy and where the stories will be placed in the newspaper or in the broadcast. Based on prior work experience with The Herald Bulletin and AnnArbor.com, both organizations use similar systems to decide what is a top news story both in the print version and the online version.

Online, both sites used time-based systems to present the news, thus the general news hierarchy was displaced. However, AnnArbor.com did place some

\[1\] I worked at The Herald Bulletin as a staff reporter from May 2007 to August 2008. I worked at AnnArbor.com as an intern during July and August 2009. The work experience I've had with both organizations was a factor in the choice to use these organizations as case studies for this analysis.
emphasis on the stories that the people in the newsroom thought were most newsworthy. These stories were positioned at the top of the priority spot. While the top news for The Herald Bulletin was completely time-based, the most important news for AnnArbor.com was divided from the rest in a “Top News” section at the top of the page, then under that was a section called “Today in Ann Arbor” that featured a time-based system of sorting stories. By doing this, the staff at AnnArbor.com is implementing some of its journalistic training and expertise by helping users decide what stories they should read based on news values and characteristics.

Part of a journalist’s job is to relay information that contains context around a particular event or trend so the story pertains to the average audience member’s life. Lists of funerals or events do not perform this action. These lists—while they do provide timely information—do not contain context or other journalistic characteristics. The time-based system moved items such as lists of events and funerals for each day into the top ten listings. While these lists do exhibit some of the news values, they are not what many consider to be news by a standard definition.

Table 1

*Types of Items Posted During Peak Hours*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sites</th>
<th>News Article</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Site 1 (THB)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>23 (76.7%)</td>
<td>7 (23.3%)</td>
<td>30 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site 2 (AA)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Both sites featured articles that were just lists of events or something similar (arrests, births, etc.). These types of items comprised about 23% (7) of the 30 stories analyzed on TheHeraldBulletin.com during the study period; they comprised about 13% (4) of the 30 stories analyzed on AnnArbor.com during the same period.

Based on this information, the results show that while both sites use similar systems to sort news online, the news organization whose primary product is the Web site does present the most important information— in the sense of news values and characteristics— in the priority spots on the page more often than the site of an organization whose primary product is the newspaper. Not only does AnnArbor.com use some hierarchy for newsworthiness on its site, but it also uses more of its priority spots on the page for news rather than informational items.

**R2: News organizations whose primary product is the Web site provide pictures that pertain to the specific story more often than news organizations whose Web site is not the primary product.**

According to research, images that appear on sites should be directly related to the ideas that a page is trying to convey (Nielsen & Pernice, 2009). According to the study by Nielsen and Pernice, people look at images online that are unrelated or somewhat related to the page only 14 percent of the time. However, images that were related to the content were looked at 29 percent of the time (Nielsen & Pernice, 2009). In news, visual journalists (i.e. designers) try to use photo illustrations or other representative graphic when they do not have a photograph
that pertains directly to the story. However, as this research indicates, those illustrations are rarely a point of interest for users.

Table 2

*Types of Visual Elements that Accompany News Items Online*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sites</th>
<th>Pictures</th>
<th>Illustrations</th>
<th>None</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Site 1 (THB)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10 (33.3%)</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
<td>20 (66.7%)</td>
<td>30 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site 2 (AA)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>24 (80%)</td>
<td>3 (10%)</td>
<td>3 (10%)</td>
<td>30 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

THB = TheHeraldBulletin.com, AA = AnnArbor.com

This study looked at how often the two news organizations studied used photographs that pertained directly to the specific story on the page. The study showed that the hypothesis was overwhelmingly correct. Most of the time (66%), stories on TheHeraldBulletin.com did not have a picture with them, let alone a picture that pertained directly to the specific story. On the other hand, AnnArbor.com had pictures that directly pertained to the story 80% (24) of the time. The site for the newspaper did not have any illustrations for stories, while the site that is the primary product had three cases in which the only picture with the story was representative or an illustration.

**R3:** News organizations whose primary product is the Web site produce videos that are fast-paced and capture the attention of the user more often than news organizations whose Web site is not the primary product.
Video is relatively new to the Web. Until recently, a slow speed to access the Web was a limitation to the amount of video that could be uploaded and viewed online. However, in the past couple of years, broadband has penetrated a much larger group of Web users, and video has become more important and prevalent on the Web. In 2005, the service YouTube started. Only five years later, it holds millions of videos that are viewed by millions of people daily. News organizations, especially newspaper companies, have only recently started adding video content on their sites.

This study found that The Herald Bulletin very rarely uses video with its stories online. The last video uploaded to the site’s “Photos & Videos” section was three days before the analysis started. The video before that was published almost three weeks prior. Most of the videos are sports related. As it pertains to this study, there were no instances in which video was used to enhance the news stories analyzed on TheHeraldBulletin.com.

Table 3

*Number of videos used on each site*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sites</th>
<th>Video</th>
<th>No Video</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Site 1 (THB)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>30 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site 2 (AA)</td>
<td>5 (17%)</td>
<td>25 (83%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

THB= TheHeraldBulletin.com, AA=AnnArbor.com

The journalists at AnnArbor.com used video more often than TheHeraldBulletin.com to enhance their stories online. However, out of the 30 stories analyzed, only 5 (17%) had videos with them. None of the videos featured
“talking heads,” which as noted before, is generally boring to audience members (Nielsen & Pernice, 2009).

**R4:** News organizations whose primary product is the Web site and whose primary product is another medium update their sites right before peak hours with fresh content, but not during the peak hours as often.

As noted previously, the peak hours for both news sites are between 8 a.m. and noon. The site for The Herald Bulletin experiences a peak between 8 a.m. and 9 a.m. and again around lunchtime (J. Schneider, personal communication, February 23, 2010), and the same is true for AnnArbor.com (A. Nash, personal communication, February 23, 2010). For this analysis, each site was viewed once between 11 a.m. and noon for the three days. Both sites use an automatically generated timestamp to indicate what time a story is published online. Using these timestamps, the analysis showed that both sites published most of the content right before the peak hours at about 7:45 a.m. or slightly earlier, not during the peak hours as previously hypothesized.

Table 4

*Frequency of Updates During Peak Hours*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sites</th>
<th>Peak</th>
<th>Not Peak</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Site 1 (THB)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>7 (23.3%)</td>
<td>23 (76.7%)</td>
<td>30 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site 2 (AA)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>8 (26.7%)</td>
<td>22 (73.3%)</td>
<td>30 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

THB= TheHeraldBulletin.com, AA=AnnArbor.com
About 27% (8) of the stories posted on AnnArbor.com were added during peak hours. About 23% (7) of the stories on TheHeraldBulletin.com were added during peak hours. However, on both sites the majority of stories were added between 5 a.m. and 7 a.m., which allows the Web sites to have fresh content before the peak hours start.

R5: News organizations whose primary product is the Web site publish specifically local content for the site slightly more often than news organizations whose Web site is not the primary product.

As indicated previously, audience members go to local news Web sites because the sites are often the only places for them to find out information about their community; thus, community news Web sites should place a significant emphasis on published local, originally reported news. The analysis found that both sites do produce local content for the Web more often than they post news wire or national content.

Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sites</th>
<th>Local (%)</th>
<th>Wire (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Site 1 (THB)</td>
<td>30 (100%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site 2 (AA)</td>
<td>28 (93%)</td>
<td>2 (7%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

THB= TheHeraldBulletin.com, AA=AnnArbor.com

Less than 7% of the stories published on TheHeraldBulletin.com were from the news wire The Associated Press. All of the stories published on AnnArbor.com were locally produced.
Part 5: Discussion

Analysis

The results of this analysis can be attributed to the way each organization runs. Based on the analysis and previous work experience with both companies, the results emphasize that the newspaper company focuses on the print product primarily. The most obvious indication of this is the lack of pictures and video that complement stories on the Web site. Because the newspaper’s first priority is the print product, photographers and designers use most of their time and energy on the needs of the print edition. If a story has a picture in the newspaper, it will probably have a picture online. However, this means that if the story in the newspaper does not need a graphic element, the story online will not have one.

The same is true of video. A newspaper cannot print video, and thus the company whose newspaper was the primary product did not post any video during the period of this analysis. As explained earlier, video online is still a fairly new concept, and many community news companies do not have the equipment, staff, or training to shoot, edit, and post videos on the Web.

The result of no graphics, pictures, or video, is a text-heavy page that can be construed as boring to the audience. According to Nielsen and Pernice (2009), pages
should be visually interesting to keep an audience. Pictures and videos are only a couple of several ways to do this. The same research suggested other ways to break up a page such as chunking information instead of designing it all in a homogenous format and providing headings for each section.

Also, the results indicate that both sites were catering to the audience by posting information immediately before high-traffic hours. Peak hours, as described earlier, happen when professionals get to work (8 a.m. to 9 a.m.) and again around lunchtime. Both sites used in this analysis seemed to use these peak hours as guidelines of when to post content. The sites also published mostly local content, which also indicates that the companies are trying to provide stories and information that larger, national sites do not. For Ann Arbor.com, the business model is based on the idea of “hyperlocal” news, which means that the main news priority for the site is proximity. According to this mindset, people can find stories from the Associated Press or other wire services elsewhere on the Web.

Limitations

It is important to critically evaluate the results and the whole study. This study has limitations that should be taken into account when considering the results and their implications. Some of these limitations can be used as starting points for future research.

This analysis aimed to show the current state of professionally produced community news on the Web. Out of the hundreds of professional news Web sites updated daily in the United States, only two were used in this study. The sample size
can be seen as a limitation as it represents only a small portion of the number of professional news Web sites in the country. These two sites were used as representations of traditional community news Web sites. However, both come from medium-sized Midwestern cities. Sites based in larger cities and in different regions could garner much different results. Other sites and other regions report for audiences with different needs and interests than those who live in these Midwestern cities.

The number of stories analyzed can also be considered a small sample size, as they are only part of an ongoing process of news telling that continues daily all over the country. In the entirety of this study, 60 news items were analyzed. However, these items were completely dependent on the staff size and productivity of each organization; the amount of news happening in each city; and the editorial process at each organization putting the content on the Web. Staff size could change the result of on how many stories are reported and how many of those stories make it to the Web product.

The study was done over a 10-day period in February and March 2010. Days were chosen at random during this time period. However, no major news event (such as a Super Bowl or a large earthquake) happened during this research period. Major news events change the dynamics of a newsroom dramatically. Despite the “hyperlocal” mentality of AnnArbor.com, if a national news event had happened, the staff would have been assigned stories to localize the national event. The same is true of The Herald Bulletin. If the research period had been over a longer period of
time, there could have been a larger possibility that a major news event would have happened, thus changing the statistics collected.

**Future research**

Further research of community news is needed to confirm and expand on the information found during this study. A larger content analysis that includes more community news sites and more news items over a longer period of time is necessary to show a trend in community news. Wang (2006) suggested that when performing a content analysis of online news, the best sample to test consistency of a news Web site would require collection of at least 50 samples over a random six-day period from each site. By researching sites for a longer period of time and collecting more samples from each site, the researcher can investigate the site’s consistency with each item (Wang). Also, further research might include the Web sites of broadcast news companies, as they are only recently using the Web as a market for new audience members. Future research could compare trends between newspaper Web sites and broadcast Web sites.

The news and the Web are changing at such a quick pace that a study like this one quickly becomes obsolete as new technology and new storytelling methods are used to disseminate news. Nielsen and Pernice (2009) noted in their study that the presentation of multiple media on the Web has increasingly improved in the past decade and users have come to expect more. The way people view and use the multimedia content on a Web site will most likely change even more in the next decade.
The technology used to disseminate news has changed dramatically in the past decade as well. Newspapers and television stations have become part of an intricate system of media used to find out information. This study mainly focused on the Web sites of two news organizations being viewed on a computer screen. Future research should take mobile devices and other systems into account.

Finally, the majority of previous studies had researched a national audience, and thus, national news sites. More research is needed in the area of community news and community news outlets, as the majority of news is disseminated through them. Specifically, a researcher should compare locally-owned newspapers such as The Elkhart Truth to conglomerate-owned newspapers such as those owned by Gannett or Scripps.

**Conclusion**

This analysis suggests that some community news Web sites are using techniques described by Web experts as effective means of usability and communication for content and aesthetics on their sites. This implies that companies without the financial means to pay for extensive focus groups and usability testing such as The Herald Bulletin can still stay with the trends on the Web.

However, these standards are bound to change as technology continues to advance. Only a few years ago, pictures were difficult to load on a Web page. Now, a Web page without some graphic element is considered boring. Soon sites without video will suffer from the same classification. As broadband penetrates more and
more of the Internet user population, more interactive elements and videos will be expected to keep the attention of audience members.

As this technology becomes more prevalent, companies that disseminate community news will need to invest far more in the Web. Hiring Web-specific staff such as interactivity developers, Web writers, and video editors, is just one of many needs that must be addressed at these local news companies. While some suggest training current staff to perform these functions, it is important to note that a separate staff emphasizes the importance of the Web site. That emphasis on the Web is what differentiates a news organization that can adapt to change and one that cannot. Ultimately the organization that cannot adapt will fail.

A factor in the news’ slow move to the Web is the lack of a successful business model for Web-based news companies (Garrison, 2005). While AnnArbor.com is attempting to create a successful model, it has yet to prove that the business model is sustainable. When transitioning from The Ann Arbor News to AnnArbor.com, the company cut hundreds of staff members. Because of the lack of a successful, sustainable business model, companies that still primarily produce a newspaper have been reluctant to produce online-only content (Salwen, 2005).

However, the need and audience is present for online news. As online news becomes even more prevalent to Americans, these companies will have to adapt and offer online exclusives that include investigative reports. “Online news sites will have to offer original news if they are to evolve into more legitimate and original
news resources in their own right and become more than promotional outlets for parent media outlets” (Salwen, 2005).

Online, news can be supplemented with powerful elements that add to the content in a news story. With added content such as videos and interactive graphics, audience members can easily become more informed about their community and the issues that affect them. “Independent sites such as Salon and Slate show that there is an audience for in-depth, original online news” (Salwen, 2005). Knowing this, community news sites should take more initiative to produce in-depth reports about issues and people in their community.

An example of this type of news reporting might come in the form of short photo-based documentaries like those on the site MediaStorm.org, which has been very successful in creating meaningful, impactful narratives about issues that face people throughout the world. Despite an obvious bias for the underdog, the stories featured on MediaStorm are informative, yet capturing.

Another example of this type of storytelling is the short documentary Alhur: The Free Ones. This narrative follows the same ideas as those on MediaStorm.org; however, the documentary and the Web site for the documentary were made over a long period of time by a small group of people. This documentary follows the lives of a family of Iraqi refugees as they try to adjust to American culture and lifestyles. The documentary uses this family as representatives of a group of people in the United States. They have the same problems as thousands of other refugees throughout the country; however, their locality to the Indianapolis area makes the story much more
prevalent to audience members in the Midwest. This story also brings a war that is thousands of miles away back to the United States and into the lives of Americans.

On the Web site for the documentary (www.thealhurs.com), there are several short videos and interactive graphics for people to use to find out more about the Iraqi family and the Iraqi refugee situation in America. The videos on this site are less than three minutes long. As studies have shown, highly produced, short-form videos are gaining popularity online (Rick, 2009). This site provides that type of content to complement the long-form story in the documentary.

Newspapers and other news Web sites should consider projects like this for their Web sites. A project like this one could be done by a small staff at a community news office. Stories like this are available in every community, and while they take a long hours and investigative reporting, sites like MediaStorm have shown that there is an audience for these types of investigations and narratives. Adding a short video does not require much more than a reporter having a video camera with them at interviews and events. For TheAlhurs.com, the short videos came from content that could not be used in the documentary. If not for the Web site, this content would have stayed on the tapes never to be seen again.

Journalists on the job hunt are continually being asked for skills in multiple media platforms, but the evidence of these skills has yet to be realized online. Companies should take the initiative to give each reporter a camera and really push for multimedia content. Prior experience at AnnArbor.com showed that the company placed more emphasis on getting that extra content for the Web site;
while, experience at The Herald Bulletin showed a much larger emphasis on filling space in the newspaper, leaving multimedia behind. Of course it is important to note that The Herald Bulletin staff does not have the training or the equipment necessary to easily produce video for the Web.

In summary, community news sites should take more initiative to be present on the Web. Having a Web site with the news that was in the newspaper is not enough. Online, sites should have interactive elements that complement the stories and help audience members relate to the stories. These sites should also invest in long-term, in-depth, visual reporting, as there has been evidence of a demand for this type of storytelling online. While a newspaper reporter can tell a very in-depth story in 40 inches of copy on newsprint, the audience is looking for the depth but with visuals that keep their attention. They are seeking a narrative that they can relate to and that tells a compelling story, while at the same time explains a complicated process in terms they can relate to and understand.
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Top Stories

K2: Easily accessible substance that mimics marijuana - and is legal - sold in Ann Arbor

6:52 a.m. Today

An easily accessible substance that mimics marijuana is sold in Ann Arbor and at head shops across the country - and there's not much law enforcement authorities can do about it. Called K2 - or "Spice," "Genie" and "Zohai!" - it is commonly sold in head shops as incense. Produced in China and Korea, the mixture of herbs and spices...

University of Michigan doctor helps to stop in multi-vehicle accident on I-94

Yesterday Michigan and the NCAA Investigation: Your guide to the coverage

Today in Ann Arbor

Chelsea author to appear on Dr. Oz show Thursday

Tina Reed Ann Arbor.com

Today, 18 minutes ago

The only way Susan Urquhart can describe how she's been feeling lately is to say she's been floating on air. Late last week, the Chelsea resident was flown to New York City to film a guest appearance on The Doctor Oz Show to talk about an issue very near and dear to her heart: hysterectomies. Last year, Urquhart published...

Ann Arbor news roundup: Feb. 24

Erica Holtz Ann Arbor.com

Today, 33 minutes ago

Great Honda lease and financing offers - stop by today!

Howard Cooper Import Center: Visit Our Web Site Expires on February 24, 2010 11:59 PM 10 Votes

DAILY LINKS TO ANN ARBOR: Panel discusses Native American remains; Q&A with Eve Aronoff

Amalie Nash Ann Arbor.com

Today, 46 minutes ago

Man destroys 'obscene snowman' after someone calls Ypsilanti police

Lee Higgins Ann Arbor.com

Today, 1 hour ago

A Patient Advocate's Point of View

Raymond Ron M.D.

Today, 2 hours ago

FREE Lecture - A Cure for Atrial Fibrillation? (AF)

Join nationally known speaker and AF survivor Melanie True Hills, cardiothoracic surgeon, cardiologist and president of the American Heart Association of Michigan. Melanie will share her personal experience with Atrial Fibrillation and how she took control of her life. The event is free and open to the public. Attendees may pre-register by calling 414-764-9289.
"You're exactly right Blue Marker, although there already is a Marijuana lobby called National Organization to Reform Marijuana Laws (NORML) but they just don't have the power that the tobacco and paper lobbies have. As for this being the same thing as Salvia, no it isn't. Salvia's effect occurs naturally without needing to spray on extra chemicals...."

Freemad2

Read Full Comment

ACTIVE DISCUSSIONS
- Michigan football program faces 5 NCAA violations, university has 90 days to respond (74)
- More taxes in Ann Arbor would drive businesses away (99)
- Concerns about Rich Rodriguez and Michigan's football program shouldn't be brushed aside (60)
- Ann Arbor police chief to City Council: "We can't afford to lose a police officer" (55)
- Zingermann's Deli taking a second shot at expanding in Ann Arbor (55)
- Michigan football coach Rich Rodriguez at Wolverines Rally: "I'm a Michigan man" (53)
An easily accessible substance that mimics marijuana is sold in Ann Arbor and at head shops across the country - and there's not much law enforcement authorities can do about it.

Called K2, or "Spice," "Genie" and "Zohai," it is commonly sold in head shops as incense. Produced in China and Korea, the mixture of herbs and spices is sprayed with a synthetic compound chemically similar to THC, the psychoactive ingredient in marijuana. Users roll it up in joints or inhale it from pipes, just like the real thing.

Though banned in most of Europe, K2's key ingredients are not regulated in the United States - a gap that has prompted lawmakers in Missouri and Kansas to consider new legislation.

In Ann Arbor, the mixture is sold inside the Stairway to Heaven shop on South State Street. For between $7 and $18, a person who is older than 18 can purchase an ounce of the herbal substance that resembles green kitchen spices.

"This isn't Jerry Garcia's marijuana," said state Rep. Jeff Roorda, a Democrat from the eastern Missouri town of Barnhart. "They've used chemicals to avoid creating something that's already illegal."

Authorities in Johnson County, Kan., discovered ex-convicts on probation smoking K2, and said it is spreading to high school students.

"This has become extremely popular," said Linda Weber, owner of The Vise smoke shop in the St. Louis suburb of St. Peters, who said she only sells to adults.

K2 costs between $20 and $50 for three grams - similar to the street price of marijuana - but with the key advantages of being legal and undetectable in drug tests.

The key ingredients are believed to be the unintended result of scientific research on marijuana's effects.

Dr. John Huffman, a Clemson University organic chemistry professor, was researching the effects of cannabinoids on the brain when his work resulted in a 1995 paper that contained the method and ingredients used to make the compound. The recipe found its way to marijuana users, who replicated Huffman's work and began spraying it onto dried flowers, herbs and tobaccos.

"People who use it are idiots," said Huffman, referring to K2 smokers.

A proposed bill in Missouri would make possession a felony punishable by up to seven years in prison - identical to punishments given to users of real marijuana. A similar bill in Kansas would make possession a misdemeanor punishable by up to a year in jail and a $2,500 fine, the same as marijuana convictions.

The products are sold widely, but authorities in other states contacted by The Associated Press, including Pennsylvania, California and Michigan, said they haven't heard of their use as a drug.

Locally, spokespersons from the Ann Arbor Police Department and the University of Michigan Department of Public Safety said they weren't familiar with the substance.

And if no regulations exist at this point, said U-M police spokesman Diane Brown, educating local emergency room doctors, substance abuse counselors and others about K2 could be the first step.
Police in Missouri and Kansas said they've become aware of K2 in recent weeks. The federal Drug Enforcement Administration has classified it a "drug or chemical of concern."

"A 10-year-old child could walk into a head shop and buy it," said West Plains Detective Shawn Rhoads.

Connor Moore, 20, said he and his friends started smoking K2 after reading online news articles and postings about the substance. He compares the high to smoking medical marijuana.

"We just got on forums and looked it up and saw what other people said about it," he said. "Obviously if it comes out being bad, I'll obviously stop using it. There's really no sites out there that says what is in K2." There is no data on the drug's toxicity or how long it stays in the body. In mice, it can lead to a lower body temperature, partial paralysis and the temporary inability to feel pain, according to the DEA.

One of the few studies of the compound's use was performed by the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction, a Portugal-based agency of the European Union, in November 2008. The study found the amount of synthetic compound varies widely between brands, and despite being widely available, it isn't clear how many Europeans use it.


"If government is genuinely concerned about controlling cannabis-related products, there is really only one thing that seems to have an effect: a tax stamp," St. Pierre said.

By the Associated Press and Tina Reed of AnnArbor.com.
University of Michigan doctor stops to help in multi-vehicle accident on I-94

By Tom Perkins
Posted: Today, 5 hours ago

David Grainger can't recall much in the moments after the high-speed car crash on I-94 earlier this month.

But what Grainger does remember after being involved in the Feb. 13 accident came as a great relief. Dr. Ed Wilkins, a reconstructive surgeon at the University of Michigan Hospital, came to his side.

Wilkins informed Grainger he was a trained doctor and told him not to worry. Wilkins then began working to get the 51-year-old Utah resident onto a blanket.

The crash occurred as Grainger was traveling eastbound on I-94 at about 2 p.m. Feb. 13 with three friends - all of whom live in Utah - to look into real estate development possibilities in Detroit.

According to the Michigan State Police, Grainger's car rear-ended a Chrysler Town and Country minivan. Investigators couldn't determine the speed of Grainger's car because there were no skidmarks.

One of the responding officers, Sgt. Chris Pascoe, said it appeared a driver cut off another car several vehicles ahead of the rented Camry that Grainger was traveling in. Pascoe said the driver of the Camry never saw the minivan ahead, quickly hit the brakes.

The Camry slammed into the rear end of the minivan driven by a 43-year-old Ann Arbor woman. Her van hit another vehicle, and all the vehicles were knocked several hundred feet off the road, according to witness statements.

Pascoe said both cars were totaled, and all four men were transported to the U-M Hospital, while the woman driving the van and another person were taken to St. Joseph Mercy Hospital.

"Of course it's going to make you elated to hear that a doctor stopped," Grainger said. "It was awesome. He was there within minutes of me remembering what was going on, and I can remember him helping my friend and making sure he wasn't going into shock. That's all I remember."

Wilkins said Grainger appeared headed toward hypothermia, and although medical authorities say to never move traffic accident victims before first responders arrive, Wilkins knew how to proceed.

He log-rolled Grainger onto blankets while keeping traction on his neck to prevent further damage if Grainger had a spinal injury. He made certain Grainger's head, neck and back remained in a single axis, which Wilkins said is essential in preventing injury.

"He was on his side in the snow and looked extremely pale and cold," Wilkins said. "I felt we needed to keep him off snow onto something warmer. But unless people have trauma training, they should not try to move anyone hurt in an accident at all."

Grainger, who was released from the hospital Saturday after spending a week there, said he has only briefly spoken with his friends and doesn't know the extent of their injuries. No information on any of other injuries was available from police or U-M Hospital officials.

Pascoe applauded Wilkins for helping to make sure everyone was secure before the first responders arrived.

"I was grateful he had everything under control when we got there," Pascoe said. "I thought it was neat that he had taken his coat off and was making sure the gentleman didn't hurt himself anymore."

Wilkins said several other motorists stopped and donated their coats and blankets. He also commended the first responders for arriving so quickly.

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From Our Partner: The Michigan Daily

Much work left for '14 before NCAA probe's conclusion, experts say
February 10, 2013, 11:00 AM

While yesterday's announcement that the Michigan football program allegedly violated NCAA regulations was billed as the culmination of the NCAA's four-month long evaluation of Michigan's Athletic Department's compliance with NCAA rules, it was by no means the end of the process. read more...
"The other people who stopped who were very helpful, and the first responders were there within five minutes," he said. "Their response time was very quick."

"Once the pros get there and get to work, the best thing I can do is get out of the way."

Tom Perkins is a freelance writer for AnnArbor.com. Reach the news desk at news@annarborm.com or 734-623-2530.

Related Articles:
2/23: Pedestrian refuge sign at Seventh and Washington hit again
2/20: Ypsilanti woman injured after her bike collides with car
2/20: Pittsfield Township police arrest drunken driver accused of causing 3-car crash
2/17: Semi crash closes ramp to Washtenaw Avenue from US-23

Your Voice

Log in to contribute.

Kudos to Dr Wilkins!!! He sure lived up to the Hippocratic Oath he took when he became a physician.
Ann Arbor news roundup: Feb. 24

Ann Arbor.com's daily roundup offers you a look at some of the stories on our site today, as well as other content about Ann Arbor around the Web.

University of Michigan President Mary Sue Coleman and football coach Rich Rodriguez listen to incoming athletic director David Brandon speak at the Michigan NCAA media briefing on Tuesday.

Angela Cusumano | Ann Arbor.com

Top headlines on our site:
- $1 million spent on Michigan presidential visit: at least
- K2: Easily accessible substance that mimics marijuana - and is legal - sold in Ann Arbor
- Men destroys 'obscene snowman' after someone calls Ypsilanti police
- University of Michigan doctor stops to help in multi-vehicle accident on I-94
- City officials hope to make Ann Arbor pilot city for new Google initiative
- Father accused of shooting his son in the abdomen in Superior Township
- Michigan gets a C for getting dental services to kids in need
- Ann Arbor police chief to City Council: 'We can't afford to lose a police officer'
- Plan to close Houghton and shuffle Saline students draws reaction from large crowd of parents
- Driver sentenced to probation in death of bicyclist in Pittsfield Township

Other news by section:

News:
- Snow leads to numerous crashes in Washtenaw County, but no road closures
- Two burglaries on Ann Arbor's south side under investigation
- Ypsilanti Township driver accused of fleeing scene of accident that injured man
- Washtenaw County Road Commission suspends seasonal weight restrictions
- University of Michigan Depression Center and Ann Arbor District Library to host forum on later-life depression
- Car stolen at Pittsfield Township apartment complex
- Catalytic converter taken from car in Pittsfield Township
- Ypsilanti police seize marijuana during traffic stop

Business Review:
- Los Angeles Times: John Dingell presses Toyota executive in congressional hearing on recalls
- Red Robin to open in May at former Bingham's location near Briarwood Mall
- Zingerman's Deli taking a second shot at expanding in Ann Arbor
- Howard Cooper Honda earns national dealership honor
- USA Today: David Brandon: 'I have no problem calling the play'

Sports:
- Today's Olympic Links: Canadian skater Joannie Rochette has an emotional performance on a record-setting night
- Today's Pro Sports Links: Tigers open full camp full of hope; Pistons beat Kings and more links
- Michigan basketball team struggles on offense again in a 51-44 loss to Illinois

Get News? Tell Us
Submit a story to the Community Wall

Sponsored Links

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Over $70,000,000 sold! Search All Local Homes For Sale Now
www.annarborhome.com

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www.belltowerhoteln.com

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You're Already Helping Others. Develop Your Passion. Free Class
www.catchthemarriage.com

Ann Arbor, MI Homes
View Pics and Home Listings Throughout Ann Arbor, MI Area
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UofM Student Housing
On and off campus @Reis in Ann Arbor Call now - rentals are going fast!
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Grades: Michigan basketball team’s offense falls again
Notebook: Michigan basketball team still searching for answers after latest defeat
Video: Michigan basketball coach John Beilein is puzzled by his team’s performance
Video: Illinois basketball coach Bruce Weber says Michigan disrupted his team’s offense
Pioneer boys’ quest to win out in SEC still alive after dropping Dexter
Huron girls basketball subdued as it clinches first SEC championship
Father Gabriel Richard is Gallian Hall-bound after win over Brother Rice
Boys Basketball Roundup: Huron gets (even more) defensive, Saline edges Lincoln and more Tuesday results
Girls Basketball Roundup: Pioneer wins district preview, Skyline falls in OT and more Tuesday results

Entertainment:
• Art Review With Slideshow: River Gallery digs up fascinating "notes from a quarry ..."
• Concert Preview: Carrie Curtis headed to The Ark
• U-M's student radio station, WCBN, seeks listener testimonials for funding petition
• Event Preview: Talk to explore development of Rock and Roll Hall of Fame
• Concert Preview: Eric Vloeimans, acclaimed Dutch trumpeter, coming to Kerrytown for rare appearance
• Bonnie Raitt highlights Breakfast benefit for St. Andrew's food program
• Current exhibit and this year's Great Michigan Read take us outside our borders
• Performance Network announces new spring fundraiser; "Taste of the Season"

Community:
• Master Gardener Volunteer Program: pesticide science
• A Cake a Week: Week 7: Argroves Manor Coffee Cake: the good, the bad and the ugly
• Earthworm Barbie and the souls of the children
• Pondcast 7: Insects, woodpecker, and a boring pond
• Links: Asian carp, aka silverfin - good eating if prepared correctly?
• Peggy Lampman's Wednesday dinner: Feed: Spanish tomato soup
• Parenting: Fun train trip to Chicago turns into traveling nightmare - but family is worth the effort
• Food/For Thought: Ovensong cinnamon pecan coffee cake - what is it?

With Slideshow and Poll: Vote for your favorite snow creation!
DAILY LINKS TO ANN ARBOR: Panel discusses Native American remains; Q&A with Eve Aronoff

Here's a sampling of links to news about Ann Arbor in other media:

- Michigan Daily: Panel discusses Native American remains
- Chelsea Update: String Cheese does Haiti benefit concert
- Milwaukee Journal Sentinel: Kitchen, not TV, is reality for Ann Arbor's Eve Aronoff
- Livingston Daily: Voters OK nearly $90M for schools - Pinckney, Hartland look to get rolling on bond projects
- Reuters: University of Michigan researcher finds vision problems linked to higher dementia risk

Here's what people are clicking on today from our stories on Ann Arbor.com:

- A link to the Google fiber for communities initiative in the entry: City officials hope to make Ann Arbor pilot city for new Google initiative
- A link to The Itinerant Chorister blog post on spirit-filled and spirit-led singing in the entry: What church is on Webster Church Road?
- A link to the Zingerman's Deli website in the entry: Zingerman's Deli taking a second shot at expanding in Ann Arbor

Here are a few useful links some of our readers have posted in comments on our stories:

- A link to the LocalCurrency.com website in the entry: Think Local First to study if local currency makes sense for Ann Arbor businesses
- A link to the Ford Pinto case in the entry: John Dingell presses Toyota executive in congressional hearing on recall
- A link to the city of Ann Arbor's real property miles to be levied in 2010 in the latter: More taxes in Ann Arbor would drive businesses away

A few of today's links from Ann Arbor.com's lead blogger Ed Vielemetti, writing about Asian carp - and whether you can eat them:

- A link to the Bowfishing Association of Illinois' list of recipes, which includes ones for smoked and pickled Asian carp.
- A link to a video by researcher and experienced Illinois fisherman Duane Chapman on how to fillet an Asian carp.
- A link to Chef Philippe Parola's website featuring Silver Fin recipes.

Your Voice

Log In to contribute.
Man destroys 'obscene snowman' after someone calls Ypsilanti police

A man who helped build a snow structure "resembling that of the male anatomy" destroyed it Tuesday after someone who was offended called Ypsilanti police, a police incident log said.

An Ypsilanti police officer responded to a North Summit Street home about 3:31 p.m. to investigate a report of an "obscene snowman," the log said.

Someone reported the large snow structure, which was in the man's front yard, was "offensive" and in "open view of kids," the log said.

The 20-year-old man destroyed the structure in front of the police officer, and the officer asked him to refrain from such behavior in the future, according to the log.

Ypsilanti police officials couldn't be reached this morning for additional details.
A Patient Advocate’s Point of View

February is Heart Month. We are getting lots of good advice on what to eat; how to stay active and the need to reduce stress and enjoy life. A rift on how to enjoy life and reduce stress is lending a hand to those in need - a generous soul is good for the heart. We feel better helping others and it gives us much needed perspective on our lives through serving each other and our community.

So what is the best way to get started? Let me tell you about an interaction I had as a Patient Advocate at Packard Health.

Packard Health has a food pantry supported by Food Gatherers, as well as by other donor donors. In a recent conversation with one of our patients, I was asked “How long will the food pantry be stocked?” I was bewildered because the food pantry is always stocked even though there are occasionally times. He continued, “You know people like to give in December but then they lose that giving spirit in January. They seem to think that we only get hungry at the end of the year.”

More than 43,900 people receive emergency food each year through the network of emergency food centers and meal sites served by Food Gatherers. There is a 138% increase of people in need of food since 2006. In Washtenaw County more than one in three client households are experiencing very low food security or hunger.

Washtenaw County homelessness grew by 32% in calendar year 2008 and an additional 18% in calendar year 2009. The County close to 5,000 homeless people.

Washtenaw County unemployment increased by 3.8% between 2007 and 2008 and the county ranked 261 among the 335 largest counties for the worst rate of job loss. It is estimated that for each 1% increase in unemployment there is a 0.96% loss in health insurance coverage. Loss of employment also leads to other deficits in housing, food transportation of all which impact the health and wellness of our community.

Currently, there are over 68,000 Washtenaw County residents who lack appropriate access to health care. This includes almost 47,000 uninsured individuals and almost 22,000 who have some form of limited insurance such as Medicaid. Washtenaw County Medicaid eligibility rose 31.2% from fiscal year 2004 to 2008, a dramatically more rapid rate of growth than the State of Michigan growth rate at 13.5%.

The folks experiencing these losses are our friends, neighbors and families. They are finding it increasingly more difficult to make important decisions when they are hungry or to find a way to pay for medication. They may skip meals or take less medication than prescribed to make it last longer. They will eat high sodium and fat products to stop the hunger pangs even though their doctor has advised against it.

A Patient Advocate plays an important role in many safety net organizations. At Packard Health, we receive referrals from our doctors and nurses for any patient or family needing support. Patient Advocates help find resources, such as food, clothing, government sponsored health plans or prescription assistance programs. We enable patients to make productive decisions that they may struggle with due to the stress from being low-income, uninsured, and/or unemployed, etc.

We try to assist these households in making better investments in their future by allowing them to explore opportunities they might otherwise miss. The goal of a community should be to protect families during times of hardship and help these families gain independence.

There are all types of non-profit agencies working together to assist individuals in need such as Friends in Deed, SOS, Salvation Army and safety net providers such as Packard Health: Home Medical Clinic. The Comer Health Center and Community Health Care Services also offer support and services.

We are always looking for volunteers and need help. If you want to help, please contact us. We are looking for volunteers to help with the food pantry.

Thank you for your time and for considering the issues of individuals and families in our community. If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact me at packard.heart@umich.edu.
1. **Become aware of the issues.** Washtenaw County is a relatively wealthy county, however there are sharp contrasts between the more stable and affluent and the less visible poor and working poor populations.

2. **Donate.** Donations are not necessarily dollars, though most not for profits must rely on donations either directly or through the United Way. Donations of time through volunteering or in kind donations, such as food or clothing are critical to the functioning of local agencies.

3. **Help someone get the services they need.** Sometimes this is merely linking someone to a service or agency, and sometimes it is the moral support to seek help. The best access point for services in Washtenaw County is through the United Way 211 hotline. By simply dialing 2-1-1 from any phone in Washtenaw County (also available in other counties in Michigan), a person will be connected to a call center that can connect them to any type of human services in the area: from food assistance, to non-emergency medical care, to financial assistance and more.

4. **Become a Patient Advocate.** Currently there are no certification requirements for becoming a Patient Advocate. An advocate need not be a health care professional and can come from any walk of life. Even people who are simply concerned about someone in need by listening, taking notes and keeping track of ideas in a sometimes confusing situation, helping the person communicate their needs, as well as understand, remember and cope with a complex or fearful process.

The people in Washtenaw County are generous and give graciously to many organizations that are stretched to the limit during these tough economic times and there are many big-hearted volunteers who fill in the gaps for organizations who need additional staffing. We salute and thank you. And for those of you who are thinking about volunteering or giving, start small with the friends and people you know - it may surprise you - who may need an advocate.

It is still important to eat more fresh fruits and vegetables and to get more exercise to improve heart health. However, become aware of the issues facing our community and consider ways of giving back. Your soul will soar and your heart will be stronger for it and so will our community.

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This guest commentary A Patient Advocate’s Point of View was written by one of the patient advocates on the Packard Health staff who works with Dr. Rion, Jennifer Green. Both she and Dr. Rion can be reached at info@packardhealth.org

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**Your Voice**

[Log In to contribute.]
PARENTING: Fun train trip to Chicago turns into traveling nightmare - but family is worth the effort

My first mistake was thinking it would be easy.

A long weekend in Chicago - how tough could that be? Yes, we'd be traveling with two kids under age 3, but this is Chicago we're talking about! We've taken them across international waters. Surely we can take them round the corner of Lake Michigan. Chicago is familiar territory - home (well, Evanston anyway) to my alma mater Northwestern University, not to mention home to my brother and his family. Chicago is close! Chicago is fun! Chicago is my kind of town.

And we'd be taking the train! A dream come true for my sweet little boy, who counts Thomas (and Percy and Edward and Henry and James, oh all!) among his favorite and dearest friends. His first train ride! We talked about it for weeks; how he'd hear the engine's whistle, feel the rattle of the rails. How not only would he be riding on a bona fide, actual train, he'd be riding it with his grandparents! My mom and dad would be joining us for the trip, as my little boy frequently told anyone who would listen. He had it all planned out: He'd sit on Gino's lap (Grandpa's) and Tota (my mom) would read him stories. What fun!

Except that my parents missed the train.

Never mind - time to regroup, dry one disappointed little boy's eyes and move on. My parents promised they'd find a way to make it to Chicago, and we were still on a train - a train! What fun! My little Choco Choco was hot with excitement. A little too hot. Like feverish. And maybe just a tiny bit stuffy...

Time for travel triage. From the depths of the diaper bag we dug out the Children's Tylenol and the digital thermometer (yes, I travel with one) and prayed for the best.

By Kalamazoo his temperature hit triple digits.

The Indiana state line brought us to 104. It's a nice number if Willard Scott is wishing you happy birthday, but a very ugly one when it comes off your child's forehead. I held him tight and prayed for cool.

And so the child who never sits still and is obsessed with trains spent his very first train ride dozing in and out of a fitful sleep, fever raging inside.

We arrived in Chicago, did not pass go and went directly to Urgent Care. Four hours later ("urgent" is apparently a relative term), we had a not-surprising but comforting diagnosis: a bad cold. And thanks to the miraculous healing power of the waiting room and a dose of Motrin, he was already feeling a bit better. Back to our regularly scheduled family visit! Time to introduce Noah and his sister to their cousins! Family bonding time! What fun!

Except that it turns out my son is terrified of dogs. Namely my brother's sweet, docile, slightly dopy French Bulldog. To Noah she was Temor Wrapped In Fur. He shrieked like a madman the minute she approached and didn't stop until... well, he just didn't stop.

Surely he'd feel better in the morning. A nice warm bath, comfy jammies and bed would do the trick. I tucked him in with his beloved Thomas the Tank Engine Blanket...
Except that I forgot to pack his bunnies.

And when he raised his hot little head off the mattress to ask for them, he wasn't the only one with tears in his eyes.

We were both exhausted and I had failed. Failed to expect the unexpected, failed to prepare for the worst, failed to provide the security and comfort he needed.

I made up a story about the bunnies watching over our house, offered a stuffed penguin as a surrogate, scurried out of the room and prayed for forgiveness.

The weekend definitely improved after that; the fever broke, we all enjoyed our together time. Noah and the dog negotiated a temporary truce.

Traveling with little ones will never be easy, but it is almost always worth the effort. Even a quick trip reminds us and teaches our kids that the world is bigger than the small circle we tend to travel in, that our way of life isn't the only one. Despite the fever, the cough and the lack of bunnies, my kids got their first glimpse at a big city, played with cousins they'd never met, brought smiles to grandparents, uncles and aunts.

A few days later we got back on the train, weary from the experience and glad to be homeward bound. Just an easy ride and we'd be there. I kissed my little boy's now-cool cheek as he gazed wide-eyed out the window, calling "Toot! Toot!" each time the engine whistled, finally feeling the rattle of the rails. For the first time in three days, I felt myself relax and dared to exhale as I held my baby girl in my lap.

A baby who felt a little warm, and maybe just a tiny bit stuffy....

Mona Shand is a radio and TV news reporter. You can read more on her blog.
WITH SLIDESHOW AND POLL: Vote for your favorite snow creation!

Local kids and grownups alike took advantage of yesterday’s great packing snow to make some interesting — and even scary — creations.

We asked readers to send in photos of their best efforts, and we have compiled them in the gallery below.

Take a look through the gallery, and then use the poll below it to vote on your favorite!

Which snow creation is your favorite?
CONCERT PREVIEW

Hello, stranger: Catie Curtis headed to The Ark

Posted: 5:08 a.m. Today

For a long time now, fans of contemporary-folk music have, in a way, been able to enjoy the best of two musical worlds.

When in the studio, many artists in the modern folk genre add tastyful amounts of pop-rock elements — electric guitar, bass, drums, organ, etc. — to provide more varied sonic textures.

But most of these artists don't have the budget to take a full band out on the road. So, in a live setting, fans get to hear "alternate versions" of these songs, performed in more unabashed, folkier fashion — maybe just acoustic-guitar-and-voice, or perhaps augmented by a fiddle, mandolin or accordion.

Catie Curtis is one of those. In the past, she's often toured with a fiddler and mandolin player — who, onstage, have given her songs a rootsier or more austere character than the more produced, pop-folk versions on her albums.

But for her latest disc, "Hello, Stranger," Curtis decided to take that more rustic string-band instrumentation into the studio — partly because fans asked for it. "When people would come up to the table after the show, and look at my different CDs that I had for sale, a lot of them would ask, 'Which one sounds most like the show?' So, now I have a record like that that I can point to and say 'this one,'" says Curtis, who comes to The Ark on Wednesday.

And the musicians on "Hello, Stranger" constitute what is essentially an all-star bluegrass band. For starters, the players include the virtuoso, Grammy-winning banjo player Alison Brown — who, not coincidentally, also runs Curtis's label, Compass Records, along with her husband/producer, Garry West. Also lending their considerable talents are the much-sought-after Stuart Duncan (fiddle), Todd Phillips (bass), George Manielli (guitar/mandolin/oboe) and Kenny Malone (percussion).

"I really do love the string-band sound, so when Alison offered to play on it, and Garry offered to produce it, I said, 'Sure!' It seemed like a cool opportunity for me to see if this might be a new direction I could explore on a regular basis on my records," says Curtis by phone from her home in Newton, Massachusetts, near Boston. "I really wasn't sure how it would turn out, or whether or I would want to keep making this kind of record.

"So, I went into it pretty open-minded, just to see if it was just something we could have fun with — to maybe get out of that emotionally intense state that you can sometimes get into in the studio when you want so much to make sure that everything is 'just right.'"

To that end, instead of showcasing a batch of Curtis's newly written songs, the album covers well-known songs from the American folk tradition, including "The Farmer's Banana," "Forsyth County," and "On My Own."
And the disc reveals Curtis's great choice in covers. She and her band give a Soulful twist to traditional songs like Richard and Linda Thompson's heart-wrenching "Walking on a Wire," the Carter Family's iconic country song "Hello Stranger," John Martyn's "Don't Want You to Know (No Evil)"); and Cat Stevens' "Tuesday's Dead."

And Curtis invited the great alt-country artist Mary Gauthier to sing a duet with her on "Hello, Stranger" — which "helped me get over my self-consciousness about my Yankee identity," jokes Curtis, who's originally from Maine. "It was a stretch and a challenge for me, but I could tell Mary really felt connected to it. And I was totally charmed by her southern accent."

And the result is a delightfully down-home bluegrass shuffle, highlighted by Gauthier's assured, appropriately twangy vocals.

As for "Walking on a Wire," Curtis recalls it as "a song that I fell in love with when I was in college. I'd been looking for a way to cover it. There's no getting close to that almost painful intensity (that Richard and Linda delivered on their original), but I also didn't want it to be a light folk-pop version." Hence, the midtempo, wistful, country-bluegrass reading, with Duncan's signing fiddle right up front.

After pondering which of her own, previously recorded songs to rework for the album, she chose "100 Miles," "Dad's Yard," "Passing Through," "Deliver Me" and "Saint Lucy." Mostly, I picked the ones that I had written in that ka-chunk, ka-chunk, 2-beat style that's similar to the rhythms used in a lot of bluegrass songs," shares Curtis. "And in a couple of cases — "Dad's Yard" and "100 Miles" — I do think I like these newer versions better."

Curtis is not sure this will be her new musical direction as far as her studio recordings go, however. "Right now, I'm actually eager to get back to using drums and some electric guitar. So, I guess we'll have to see how I feel when I feel when I'm ready to make my next record."

Meanwhile, Curtis has also been busy with Aspire to Inspire, a charitable group she formed last year. It's a youth music endowment that gives away guitars to underprivileged kids who can't afford their own. She says it's her way of giving back, as a tribute to sorts to a neighbor who gave Curtis her own first guitar back when Curtis was just 15. "Her name was Lynee Ramseddell, she was an artist, and she saw me looking at her guitar one day," recalls Curtis. "And she just gave it to me, with the caveat that I had to promise her that I would learn to play it."

A couple of years ago, "I tried to track Lynee down," says Curtis — but she was not able to. But Curtis did dedicate her '08 album, "Sweet Life" to Ramseddell. Then, just last month, Curtis learned that, sadly, Ramseddell had died in '08, a few months after the release of "Sweet Life." "I met with her family, and they showed me some of her art, and we're trying to set up a fan page where people can see some of it," says Curtis.

"Her giving me that guitar was what first put me on the road to becoming a singer and songwriter and performer, which obviously has been very meaningful to me," says Curtis affectionately. "So, I decided to start this foundation, to hopefully put guitars in the hands of young musicians, so that maybe they can use them to create that kind of life for themselves, if that's something that's meaningful to them, as well."
Hello, stranger: Catie Curtis headed to The Ark

For a long time now, fans of contemporary-folk music have, in a way, been able to enjoy the best of 2 musical worlds.

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But most of these artists don't have the budget to take a full band on the road. So, in a live setting, fans get to hear "alternate versions" of these songs, performed in more unadorned, folkier fashion — maybe just acoustic-guitar-and-voice, or perhaps augmented by a fiddle, mandolin or accordion.

Catie Curtis is one of those. In the past, she's often toured with a fiddler and mandolin player — who, onstage, have given her songs a rootsier or more austere character than the more produced, pop-folk versions on her albums.

But for her latest disc, "Hello, Stranger," Curtis decided to take that more rustic string-band instrumentation into the studio — partly because fans asked for it. "When people would come up to the table after the show, and look at my different CDs that I had for sale, a lot of them would ask, 'Which one sounds most like the show?' So, now I have a record like that that I can point to and say 'this one,'" says Curtis, who comes to The Ark on Wednesday.

And the musicians on "Hello, Stranger" constitute what is essentially an all-star bluegrass band. For starters, the players include the virtuoso, Grammy-winning banjo player Alison Brown — who, not coincidentally, also runs Curtis's label, Compass Records, along with her husband/producer, Garry West. Also lending their considerable talents are the much-sought-after Stuart Duncan (fiddle), Todd Phillips (bass), George Marinell (guitar/mandolin/dobro) and Kenny Malone (percussion).

"I really do love the string-band sound, so when Alison offered to play on it, and Garry offered to produce it, I said, 'Sure!' It seemed like a cool opportunity for me to see if this might be a new direction I could explore on a regular basis on my records," says Curtis by phone from her home in Newton, Massachusetts, near Boston. "I really wasn't sure how it would turn out, or whether or I would want to keep making this kind of record.

"So, I went into it pretty open-minded, just to see it as just something we could have fun with — to maybe get out of that emotionally intense state that you can sometimes get into in the studio when you want so much to make sure that everything is 'just right.'"

To that end, instead of showcasing a batch of Curtis's newly written songs, the album is about half covers and half re-recordings of some of Curtis's older songs. "I thought that you'd be better for an end of the sort where you'd want to connect with songs that have been a part of your life," she says.
PREVIEW

Catie Curtis

Who: Contemporary-folk singer-songwriter.

What: Intelligent, thoughtful songs about love, loss, hope and life's small pleasures, punctuated by Curtis's amusing anecdotes.

Where: The Ark, 316 South Main Street, Ann Arbor.
When: Wednesday, March 3, 8 p.m.
Details: 734-761-1451; AnnArbor.com calendar; The Ark web site.

And the disc reveals Curtis's great choice in covers. She and her band give a Southern folk/roots treatment to songs like Richard and Linda Thompson's heart-wrenching "Walking on a Wire," the Carter Family's iconic country song "Hello, Stranger," John Martyn's "Don't Want You To Know (No Evil)" and Cat Stevens' "Tuesday's Dead."

And Curtis invited the great all-country artist Mary Gauthier to sing a duet with her on "Hello, Stranger" — which "helped me get over my self-consciousness about my Yankee identity," jokes Curtis, who's originally from Maine. "It was a stretch and a challenge for me, but I could tell Mary really felt connected to it. And I was totally charmed by her southern accent."

And the result is a delightful-down-home bluegrass shuffle, highlighted by Gauthier's assured, appropriately twangy vocals.

As for "Walking on a Wire," Curtis recalls it as "a song that I fell in love with when I was in college. I'd been looking for a way to cover it. There's no getting close to that almost painful intensity (that Richard and Linda delivered on their original), but I also didn't want it to be a light folk-pop version." Hence, the midtempo, wistful, country-bluegrass reading, with Duncan's sighing fiddle right up front.

After pondering which of her own, previously recorded songs to rework for the album, she chose "100 Miles," "Dad's Yard," "Passing Through," "Deliver Me" and "Saint Lucy." Mostly, I picked the ones that I'd written in that kachunk, ka-chunk, 2-beat style that's similar to the rhythms used in a lot of bluegrass songs," shares Curtis. "And in a couple of cases — "Dad's Yard" and "100 Miles" — I did think I like these newer versions better."

Catie Curtis performing "Passing Through" live in New Hampshire last fall.

Curtis is not sure this will be her new musical direction as far as her studio recordings go, however. "Right now, I'm actually eager to get back to using drums and some electric guitar. So, I guess we'll have to see how I feel when I feel I'm ready to make my next record."

Meanwhile, Curtis has also been busy with Aspire to Inspire, a charitable group she formed last year. It's a youth music endowment that gives away guitars to underprivileged kids who can't afford their own. She says it's her way of giving back, as a tribute of sorts to a neighbor who gave Curtis her own first guitar back when Curtis was just 15. "Her name was Lynne Ramstead, she was an artist, and she saw me looking at her guitar one day," recalls Curtis. "And she just gave it to me, with the caveat that I had to promise her that I would learn to play it."

A couple of years ago, "I tried to track Lynne down," says Curtis — but she was not able to. But Curtis did dedicate her '08 album, "Sweet Life," to Ramstead. Then, just last month, Curtis learned that, sadly, Ramstead had died in '08, a few months after the release of "Sweet Life." "I met with her family, and they showed me some of her art, and we're trying to set up a fan page where people can see some of it," says Curtis.

"Her giving me that guitar is what first put me on the road to becoming a singer and songwriter and performer, which obviously has been very meaningful to me," says Curtis affectionately. "So, I decided to start this foundation, to hopefully put guitars in the hands of young musicians, so that maybe they can use them to create that kind of life for themselves, if that's something that's meaningful to them, as well."

Kevin Ransome is a free-lance writer who covers music for AnnArbor.com. He can be reached at kransome@annarbor.com.
UPDATED: Michigan basketball team struggles on offense again in a 51-44 loss to Illinois

Not even John Beilein knows what to do about the Michigan basketball team.

After the latest loss, 51-44 to Illinois on Tuesday at Crisler Arena, the third-year Wolverines coach looked around and essentially shrugged his shoulders. He’s been a head coach for 32 years and even he’s baffled.

“I don’t know if you’ve ever seen anything like this because I haven’t,” Beilein said. “I haven’t seen anything like this before where we put the whole package together today.”

And Michigan still lost.

Beilein’s plans on offense worked well - and Michigan’s players missed layup after layup, including three by junior guard Manny Harris. The Wolverines found open shots on the perimeter and continued to miss, shooting 6-of-31 overall from 3-point range.

The Michigan defense played well, holding Illinois 21 points under its scoring average, forcing more Illini turnovers than assists. Illinois shot 9 percent under its season average and 12 percent under its 3-point season average.

Yet Illinois (16-10 overall, 10-5 Big Ten) by seven points.

How did Michigan (13-14, 6-9) end up there?

The Wolverines had their worst shooting performance of the season, 24.6 percent (16-of-65), almost 8 percent worse than their second-worst game, a 32.3 percent night against Boston College on Dec. 4.

“They are thinking too much,” Beilein said. “It’s a shame right now, because I really thought we played one of our better defensive games of the year. They’re 6-9, they’re 7-1, 6-9 (on the Illinois front line), right from the beginning we missed, we got DeShawn ( Sims) kicking them to the rim.

“I liked the shot distribution, I liked everything, but the ball just won’t go in.”

The woes came from the likely sources. Sophomore guard Laval Lucas-Perry

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Sophomore guard Stu Douglass was also scoreless, despite playing 36 minutes in a 0-of-8 performance.

It also came from unlikely areas. Harris, who led Michigan with 15 points, missed three layups in the second half, turns were mostly unproductive otherwise, making just three of 11 shots against a taller Illinois front line.

"Our confidence has got to get better for some guys," Harris said. "I think they are playing off confidence. Some guys, they'll be them type of games when you're just in a slump or you can't finish at that time but we going to get better.

"There's three games left, but finishing strong is still important.

Michigan, though, kept it close. Again. But Illinois made the play it needed to at the end.

Freshman guard D.J. Richardson threw up a prayer of a shot with the shot clock at one and the ball glanced off the rim.

It also set up a chance for Illinois to pull away when Mike Tisdale grabbed the rebound.

Tisdale found Illinois junior guard Demetri McCamey, who threw in a alley-oop to junior forward Mike Davis and gave the Illini a six-point margin they could feel comfortable with as 1:50 remained on the clock.

The way Michigan's season has gone, those sort of plays are almost expected to happen for opponents at this point.

The Wolverines had Michigan State guard Kalin Lucas make a jumper with 3.5 seconds left to give the Spartans a win in Ann Arbor. They'd watched as JaMychal Green blocked a Darius Morris shot to preserve a Crimson Tide win in November.

And on Saturday, Penn State's Jeff Brooks hit a jumper with 14 seconds left to give the Nittany Lions a win.

So another crucial play by an opponent isn't out of the ordinary. At Illinois, with McCamey, who led the Illini with 14 points - it isn't a surprise.

It's expected.

"It was a broken play," McCamey said. "Tia found me on the back door, and I see Mike Davis cutting, so it was an easy play for an easy two.

"That sent the momentum."

And it sent Michigan to another loss.

---

Box score | Big Ten standings

Michael Rothstein covers University of Michigan basketball for AnnArbor.com. He can be reached at (734) 623-2558, by e-mail at michaelrothstein@annarbor.com or follow along on Twitter @michaelrothstein.

Your Voice

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15 Comments:

Illinois: The Refs 51
Michigan 44

The NCAA should have their noses in the background of these refs, NOT in our King's dealings.

But we'll come out ahead. We always do.

We always do...
Anderson gives one away to Noblesville
Anderson's 61-59 loss to visiting Noblesville on Tuesday came down to one word as far as the Indians were concerned: poise. After battling back from a 16-point deficit in the first half, Anderson has taken the lead in the third quarter with a 9-0 run that put the Indians up 47-42 with 8:17 to go in the period....more>

• Highland pushes past Shenandoah
• Pendleton Heights doubles up Frankton, 68-34

2010 Winter Olympic Medalists
Click for complete coverage of Vancouver 2010 +

Special Reports
Boy Scout troop opens fire capsule
ANDERSON, Ind. — More than 30 years ago, Madison County's oldest Boy Scout troop decided to leave its future troop members with a special gift. Since their fire capsule didn't make it far into the future, but it still gave them a bit of history as its 1062 Inception, when it opened on Wednesday.

• Boy Scouts: Scout performs Heimlich maneuver, saves brother
• Boy Scouts: Timeline

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Community Math Night * fun
ANDERSON, Ind. — As if there weren't enough fun going on in Anderson for students at the Elementary Math Night, the event also served as a fundraiser.

Photos & Videos
Video: Scots play their last home game
Video from Highland's final regular season home game....more>

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The Herald Bulletin is a community-owned newspaper serving Madison County, Indiana. We strive to provide accurate, timely and relevant content that is of interest to our readers. Our website, www.TheHeraldBulletin.com, is a valuable resource for local news, events, obituaries and more.

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Opinion

Primus Mooty: Remembering a lost friend

I missed last Wednesday’s column because I was busy tending to a dying friend. The week before, I took four personal days off work and drove to his home in Chicago where I sat with him and his family as he fought his last battle against death. His name is Crandall....more>

• Editorial: South Madison making painful but necessary budget changes
• Editorial: Landfill challenges should continue

The Herald Bulletin Calendar

February-March

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Voting for your vote

Welcome:

No discussion of current events is relevant without the voice of the people. The Herald Bulletin online forum is designed to provide the public with a medium to express their opinion on the issues that matter most. Browse the threads within the News, Business, and Community categories and participate in the discussion by posting your own comments. The Herald Bulletin believes that a civil and constructive conversation is essential to our mission.

Indiana Gov. Mitch Daniels, who last year said he had no interest in running for president, now says he will keep the door open to a possible 2012 presidential run. Who would you be more apt to vote for?

- Mitch Daniels
- Jeff Daniels
- Jack Daniels

View Results
Published February 24, 2010 9:28 am -

Time running out for landfill legislation

Lawmakers say they won’t give up on blocking rash site

BY ALANNA STANDISH, HERALD BULLETIN STAFF WRITER

ANDERSON, Ind. — While local lawmakers aren’t ruling out a last-ditch effort to legislatively combat a planned Madison County landfill, time is running out to get anything done on it during the current General Assembly session.

Legislators would have to start over on legislation that would prohibit the Mallard Lake Landfill, which developer Ralph Reed says will be constructed starting in spring. The deadline for filing new bills in the current session, however, has passed, and the only way General Assembly members could address the issue now is to attach an amendment on a related bill.

“I’d like to try, but I don’t know if we can,” said Rep. Scott Reece, a Democrat who represents parts of Madison County. “It’s not that easy. Time’s pretty much running out.”

A previous amendment to a bill passed in June by the House of Representatives was and the Senate would have sent the landfill back to the Madison County Board of Zoning Appeals before it could be constructed in its planned location northeast of Anderson. In January, however, Marion County Judge Michael Keele ruled that legislation as unconstitutional, saying the Mallard Lake Landfill was the only situation to which it could be applied.

In February, the Indiana Department of Environmental Management issued a solid waste facility permit renewal to Reed’s company, AJL Corp.

“[In accordance with the court’s requirements and state and federal law, AJL Corporation provided] all information necessary for the agency to make a final decision about the permit renewal,” according to an statement issued Monday. “When the court ruled that the statutory change did not apply for Mallard Lake, IEM completed its review of the information and issued a renewal permit that holds the Mallard Lake responsible for complying with today’s stringent landfill construction and operating standards that protect Hoosiers and our environment.”

Remonstrators has 10 days from the date of the permit issuance Feb. 11 to file a petition against it. On Monday, a representative with the Indiana Office of Environmental Adjudication said no petitions had been filed in remonstrance.

Sen. Tim Lanane, a Democrat who represents Madison County, said he didn’t understand Keele’s decision regarding the landfill legislation.

“I worry that the precedent there is that if the problem only exists one place in the state, no matter how egregious it is, that you shouldn’t be able to address it legislatively,” Lanane said.

Lanane said part of legislators’ problem was the timing of Keele’s decision, which didn’t leave them many options for this legislative session.

“I think the problem we’re running into is the longer the session goes on, your options get limited,” Lanane said. “Now you have to look at any opportunity to amend. Try to do something at this late date, it will be a challenge.”

“It very well may be an issue that has to wait for future sessions of the General Assembly. That’s probably not what remonstrators want to hear.”

Rep. Jack Lutz, a Republican representing parts of Madison County, has been involved in the Mallard Lake Landfill issue for years. He wouldn’t say if he knew of specific plans to address the landfill in the current session, saying “the session is not over until it’s over.”

Reed isn’t worried about the opposition, he said, as he continues to plan for a spring construction of the landfill, which has been in the making for 31 years and overcome obstacle after obstacle thrown at it by legislators and members of the Killbuck Concerned Citizens Association.

“I don’t think there’s time on it,” Reed said. “I can’t believe a bunch of rusties would try to pass a law and put somebody out of business.”

Read more >>
If Reike is against the landfill, the landfill most likely would be a good thing!
Posting date: 2/23/2010 11:49 PM
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Highland again wins Rube Goldberg title
Long, complicated road to victory includes 29 steps

BY DAVE STAFFORD, THE HERALD BULLETIN STAFF WRITER

ANDERSON — What do you get when you put together a toy car, a Viking sail, an axe, Easter island heads and more than a dozen other doodads?

If you are entering Highland High School students, you get a state championship.

Highland continued its recent dominance of the state's Rube Goldberg Machine Contest at Purdue University, winning the high school title for the fourth time in five years this past weekend.

The Highland team of Dylan Piko, Josh Huser, Derek Cox, Nathaniel Fey, Mitch Fulton, Andrew Murrell and Jesse Wilkinson succeeded in devising the winning contraption that successfully accomplished the task of dispensing an appropriate amount of hand sanitizer using at least 20 steps.

Team members demonstrated their winning machine after school on Tuesday. Elements of its design are taken from the film "Night at the Museum." The team spent months perfecting a design that accomplishes its task in about 15 to 20 seconds and takes only about three minutes to reset. "We just kind of think about the kinds of things that are interesting," Piko said. "Vikings are cool."

Huser said "we knew our last step, and we worked back to the beginning."

After two successful runs on Tuesday, students said the machine had executed its task on seven straight attempts.

Team sponsor David Perelli, a physics teacher at Highland, said the students had been working for months on the device, which he said teaches more than engineering principles.

"They see how brainstorming and coming up with ideas has to be transformed into reality," Perelli said.

Perelli said the students came up with all kinds of inventive ways to accomplish the mission. "Sometimes, they definitely like to push the envelope of the rules," he said, noting matter-of-fact that contest rules forbid open flames, explosions and live animals.

"The Rube Goldberg competition is one of those things that is a fun, inspirational way of teaching those kids that strive toward a career in engineering," Perelli said.

He owes the success of the team to a steady stream of students who've returned over the years, ensuring continuity.

Work on the device began after Thanksgiving, Perelli said, but some team members were at the drawing board before that. "The first day of school we have kids thinking about it and they're working on it," Perelli said.

Contact Dave Stafford: 844-4250, dstafford@heraldbulletin.com
Published February 21, 2010 01:32 am -

Class teaches children to run from stranger
Children learn simple self-defense techniques

BY CHRISTIAN M. WRIGHT, HERALD BULLETIN STAFF WRITER

ANDERSON, Ind. – “What do you do?” Madison County deputy prosecutor Ed Leonard asked a group of about 70 children Tuesday night at the PAL Club.

“You run!” they screamed in response.

Leonard and Madison County Prosecutor Thomas Brodock Jr. explained the idea of running away from a stranger, no matter the circumstance, and the second children’s self-defense class sponsored by the prosecutor’s office.

“Kids, as often, are taught that you should respect your elders,” Brodock said. “We want to let them know it’s OK to say ‘no’ to a stranger.”

Throughout the one-hour program, Leonard paused between sessions teaching kicking and empty-hand techniques to lay off nonviolent, simple-strike-by-one technique. He pretended to be an assailant in a car: a false police officer and an assistant with a puppy.

“Sometimes people pretend to be people they’re not just to get you in the car,” he said.

With volunteers, he showed the children how the scenario would go if they went along with a play, usually ending in their abduction. Then, he played the scene out once again and told the children that the right response is to run away.

“Sometimes bad people will try to do bad things, but they have to get a hold of you in order to do those bad things to you,” Leonard explained to the children.

Leonard, a former police officer for about 30 years, told the children that even running away from a police officer is OK.

“If it turns out to be a real policeman and you’re not going to get in trouble, that will be worked out later with your parents,” he said.

He added that most police officers wouldn’t be forceful or urgent. They would approach the child and calmly explain whatever situation, and, whenever possible, speak to the parents instead of the child.

The class, for children ages 7 to 12, also included lessons on a range of defensive techniques that children can perform to break an attacker’s hold on them.

“We try to teach them techniques that don’t require much strength,” Brodock said.

“Most people wouldn’t expect children to do stuff like that. It takes them by surprise and the child can get away.”

Dressed in pink, green and yellow shirts that declined them as members of the “Crime Free, That’s Me!” Prosecutor’s Club, the children learned to ram their palms into someone’s nose, stamp someone’s toes, kick someone’s groin and use an assailant’s hold.

Parents were encouraged to practice each of the techniques with their children for four hours.
More from the Local News section

Time running out for landfill legislation
Highland again wine fluke Goldberg title
Class teaches children to run from stranger
Woman arrested on trafficking charges

Birth: Feb. 24, 2010
Women arrested on trafficking charges

By CHRISTINA M. WEBERT, HERALD BULLETIN STAFF WRITER

PENDLETON -- Two Indianapolis women were arrested Tuesday on charges of attempting to smuggle drugs and a cell phone into the Pendleton Correctional Facility, according to a press release.

"This serves as another outstanding example of state agencies working together in a collaborative effort to ensure the safety of our facilities," said Indiana Department of Corrections Commissioner Ervin Bross in the release, of the work between the facility's investigators and Indiana state troopers.

Sawallet Cobb, 30, and Rubi Henderson, 31, were both charged with Class B felony trafficking with an inmate. They were being held at Madison County Jail on $40,000 bonds.

According to the release, Cobb "received the items on her body." It also said Henderson "accompanied Ms. Cobb to the facility." Beyond that, few details were available at publication time, such as how the investigations were made aware of the items and what kind of drugs were involved.

The release said Charles Westmoreland, 49, was the inmate involved. He has been at the facility since October 2008 serving a 40-year sentence for dealing cocaine, according to the release.

"According to Internal Affairs Officer Terry Silveira, offender Westmoreland will be facing facility disciplinary charges and possible criminal prosecution in connection with the incident," the release said.

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More from the Local News section
Time running out for landfill legislation
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Women arrested on trafficking charges

Births: Feb. 24, 2010
BIRTHS: Feb. 24, 2010

SAINT JOHN'S
- A girl to Stephanie and Wendy A. Buck, Anderson, Feb. 3.
- A girl to Jordan P. and Jill B. Bamer, Anderson, Feb. 11.
- A girl to Chad A. and Sha M. Henry, Indianapolis, Feb. 9.
- A girl to Aaron P. and Christine R. Adams, Middletown, Feb. 12.
- A girl to Sherman D. and Gina E. Long, Pendleton, Feb. 11.

COMMUNITY
- A boy to Danielle Kuble, Anderson, Feb. 10.
- A girl to Melissa Plock, Alexandria, Feb. 11.
- A girl to Creasy Harris, Pendleton, Feb. 22.

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More from the Local News section

Time running out for landfill legislation
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Women arrested on trafficking charges

Births: Feb. 24, 2010
Arrest log: Feb. 24, 2010

Arrests made by Madison County law enforcement on Friday, Saturday and Sunday, based on Madison County jail records. (Some information was not recorded on arrest cards.)

- Madison County deputies arrested Justin W. Heeter, 18, of the 60 block of East 900 North, Alexandria, at 4:37 p.m. Tuesday at his home. Bond was set for $3,000 on charges of Class A misdemeanor driving while suspended.

- Indiana State troopers arrested Rubi D. Henderson, 53, of the 4200 block of David Street, Indianapolis, at 5:19 p.m. Tuesday at Pendleton Correctional Facility. Bond was set for $40,000 on charges of Class B felony trafficking with an inmate.

- Anderson police arrested Cynthia D. Wolf, 58, of the 500 block of West Adams Street, Alexandria, at 3:10 a.m. Tuesday in the 4000 block of Scatterfield Road, Anderson. Bond was set for $3,000 on charges of Class A misdemeanor criminal conversion.

- Indiana State troopers arrested Scarlet Y. Cato, 30, of the 2000 block of North Oxford Street, Indianapolis, at 4:20 p.m. Tuesday at Pendleton Correctional Facility. Bond was set for $40,000 on charges of Class B felony trafficking with an inmate.

- Anderson police arrested Michael A. Goiser, 35, of the 2800 block of Delaware Street, Anderson, at 10:47 p.m. Monday at his home. Bond was set for $25,000 on charges of invasion of privacy.

- Madison County deputies arrested Timothy J. Stevenson, 25, of the 700 block of West 22nd Street, Anderson, at 9:45 p.m. Monday at his home. Bond was set for $20,000 on charges of Class B felony burglary and Class D felony theft.

- Anderson police arrested Jon E. Holmen, 18, of the 1300 block of 30th Avenue, Anderson, at 6:45 a.m. Monday at Anderson Police Department. Bond was set for $5,000 on charges of Class C felony forgery and Class D felony theft.

- Anderson police arrested Carl M. Killers, 19, of the 2500 block of Main Street, Anderson, at 4:30 p.m. Monday at Anderson Police Department. Bond was set for $5,000 on charges of Class C felony forgery and Class D felony theft.
ACS plans magnet engineering curriculum
Project Lead the Way to be offered next year

ANDERSON, Ind. — Students thinking of a career in engineering will have a course offering tailored instruction next school year at the consolidated Anderson High School.

"Project Lead the Way is a pre-engineering curriculum that develops problem-solving skills by engaging students in real-world engineering problems with project-based, hands-on experiences," according to Janet Burrows, director of curriculum and professional development at Anderson Community Schools.

In the 2010-2011 school year, a course called introduction to engineering design will be offered. Current Highland High School physics teacher David Perrel has been trained to teach the first class.

The following school year, a principles of engineering course will be offered. According to Burrows, additional courses will be offered to provide a four-year, pre-engineering course of study.

"Schools of engineering are very competitive to get into and succeed," Perrel said. "This will help better prepare those students who are considering studying engineering in college.

The Project Lead the Way curriculum is among a number of targeted "schools within a school" that ACS is attempting to develop as part of a K-12 instructional overhaul. ACS also is exploring possibilities including a medical academy, a New Tech High School and other possible tailored courses of instruction.

Contact Dave Stafford: 648-4250, dave.stafford@heraldbulletin.com

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More from the Local News section
Time running out for landlord legislation
Highland again wins Rube Goldberg title
Class teaches children to run from stranger
Women arrested on trafficking charges
Births: Feb. 24, 2010
Community Math Night = fun

Students, parents magically appear at Eastside Elementary event

BY JAY SHAPIRO, HERALD BULLETIN STAFF WRITER

ANDERSON, Ind. — As there wasn't enough snow on the ground last week, students, parents and staff were cooking up some school in Eastside Elementary.

"Math magic" was the theme of Community Math Night at Eastside Elementary School.

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The Herald Bulletin, 24 February 2010

Weaver hinders pothole repair

Wednesday, Feb. 24, 2010

The Herald Bulletin

Good morning.

It's 6:30 a.m. Wednesday and the staff of The Herald Bulletin is getting down to work. We will publish news throughout the day and will have frequent updates here on our Web site.

Today, Greg Doherty with the city of Anderson says the street department is having a difficult time with potholes this year because of weather and a loss of revenue due to the gas tax.


We want to hear what you think. Leave your comments online or feel free to contact us with your news tip at (765) 649-4800 or via email at newstips@heraldbulletin.com.

And remember, if you sense of suspending events that are open to the public, add them in The Herald Bulletin's online calendar. Just click on the grid calendar near the bottom of the home page, register for free and fill in the information.

Don't forget to follow The Herald Bulletin on Twitter (www.twitter.com/wheraldbulletin) and stay with us by clicking the "Sign In" link on our homepage. You can also sign up for e-mail and text message alerts.

— Justin Schneider, online reporter/manager

Add a comment on this story

Your comment

Your email address

Your name (for public display)

Submit

Greg, ets not talk about what the problem is! Let talk about what your plan will provide the citizens of Anderson to include auto repair.

Posting date: 2/24/2010 5:44 AM

Posted by: concerned

Greg, ets not talk about what the problem is! Let talk about what your plan will provide the citizens of Anderson to include auto repair.

Posting date: 2/24/2010 5:44 AM

Posted by: concerned

Is this not surprising? The wheel tax gave us a few miles of poorly paved roads and now the city can't scrape up money to fill the pot holes. What a shame.

Posting date: 2/24/2010 7:22 AM

Posted by: TAO

More from the Local News section

Time running out for landfill legislation

Highland wins Rueb Goldberg title

Class teaches children to run from stranger

Women arrested on trafficking charges

Births: Feb. 24, 2010

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VEHICLE RENTALS

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View Rental
Weather: Clouds and flurries today and tomorrow
Forecast highs only in the upper 20s

The Herald Bulletin

More clouds and more flurries and snow showers are in the forecast for today and tomorrow. Forecast 8 is also tracking arctic air. Forecast 8 is also tracking arctic air. Forecast highs are only in the upper 20s for today and Thursday. These temperatures are about 10 degrees too cold for late February. Temperatures will begin to rebound on Friday and that will continue into the weekend.

Add a comment on this story

More from the Local News section
Time running out for landfill legislation
Highland again wins Rube Goldberg title
Class teaches children to run from stranger
Women arrested on trafficking charges

Births: Feb. 24, 2010
Top Stories

Despite crime being down, Ann Arbor officials say cuts to police department must be avoided
Today, 5 hours ago
Crime in Ann Arbor dropped 7 percent last year, continuing a long-term trend. Mayor John Hieftje says that the police are becoming smaller. "Crime tends to be coming down in a pretty definite trend," he said. "Overall, the trend is down since 2003."

* 1 vote now  ** 11 Comments

Ann Arbor restaurants

University of Michigan monitoring relationship with Shanghai university tied to Google cyber attack
Today

Quality-control coaches at the center of NCAA allegations against Michigan football
Today

Today in Ann Arbor

Numerous crashes reported on surface streets in Washtenaw County
Today, 1 hour ago
Ann Arbor.com Staff Ann Arbor.com

* 9 votes  ** 1 Comment  Topics: News

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Today, 5 hours ago
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Conductor Michael Tilson Thomas and the San Francisco Symphony will perform two different programs as part of a weekend residency, Friday and Saturday, March 19 & 20.
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University Musical Society: Visit Our Web Site Expires on March 3, 2010 11:59 PM  ** 1 Vote

Home energy audits can stop money from flying out the window
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Ann Arbor.com Staff Ann Arbor.com

* 2 votes  ** 5 Comments  Topics: Crime, News

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Chelsea author to appear on Dr. Oz show Thursday

The only way Susan Urquhart can describe how she's been feeling lately is to say she's been floating on air. Late last week, the Chelsea resident was flown to New York City to film a guest appearance on The Doctor Oz Show to talk about an issue very near and dear to her heart: hystereconomics. Last year, Urquhart published...

University of Michigan doctor stops to help in multi-vehicle accident on I-94

"Cheers to Dr. Wilkins for his fine work in lending a helping hand. While the accident may or may not have been precipitated by aggressive driving by a car ahead, it likely came to pass for one simple reason. The vehicles were following too closely to one another and did not have sufficient time to respond to the events that..."
WITH POLL: Despite crime being down, Ann Arbor officials say cuts to police department must be avoided

Crime in Ann Arbor dropped 7 percent last year, continuing a long-term trend Mayor John Hieftje says proves the city is becoming safer.

"Crime tends to be coming down in a pretty definite trend," Hieftje said. "Overall, the trend is down 15 percent since 2003."

The Ann Arbor Police Department released unofficial year-end crime statistics for 2009 this week, showing a total of 3,182 crimes in eight major categories: murder, assault, arson, burglary, larceny, motor vehicle theft, robbery and rape.

In 2008, the total for those crimes was 3,429, according to official statistics reported by the FBI.

Violent crimes came down by 18 percent from 2008, while property crimes came down 6 percent.

Another trend: The number of police officers in the city has been declining for the last decade. But city officials say that trend can't continue.

Police Chief Barnett Jones said the number of sworn police officers has dropped from 216 to 124 since 2000. He told the Ann Arbor City Council this week that any further staffing cuts could have serious consequences.

Specifically, he said, it could hinder proactive policing methods that have helped solve crimes in neighborhoods - like a rash of burglaries on the Old Northwest Side officers investigated and put a stop to this past fall.

"If we lose those police officers, I may lose my proactive ability to do things like that," Jones said.

<table>
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<th>Assault</th>
<th>Arson</th>
<th>Burglary</th>
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<th>Motor Vehicle Theft</th>
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<td>2197</td>
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<td>62</td>
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Crime statistics for the city of Ann Arbor. The figures for 2003 through 2008 are official statistics reported by the FBI. The 2009 figures are preliminary and were reported by the police department.

The city's ability to maintain adequate police services dominated the discussion Monday when the City Council met for another budget session. The city is trying to close the gap on a $5.2 million deficit in the general fund for next fiscal year. Because public safety makes up half the general fund, police and fire services face the largest cuts.

"Obviously with any reduction, it's going to impact how responsive or proactive we'll be able to be," said Deputy Chief John Seto. "That's what the chief is talking about, and obviously everyone is concerned about what's going to happen."

From Our Partner: The Michigan Daily

Class trip to study Philippines experiences funding troubles February 24, 2010, 8:14 AM

A group of about 25 graduate students will be heading to the Philippines next week to study various aspects of economics and government in the country. But the trip, which is part of a Public Policy course, was harder to fund this year than in years past due to the down economy. read more

Much work left for 'U' before NCAA probe's conclusion, experts say February 24, 2010, 12:00 AM

While yesterday's announcement that the Michigan football program allegedly violated NCAA regulations was billed as the culmination of the NCAA's four-month long evaluation of Michigan's Athletic Department's compliance with NCAA rules, it was by no means the end of the process. read more

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 offering early refinements. The city offered buyouts to officers and expected 18 to go, but 24 took the offer, along with two dispatchers.

The department needs to trim an additional $1.68 million from its $26.5 million budget to meet a 7.5 percent reduction all departments are asked to make.

In the police department, that means the potential elimination of another 17 positions by laying off nine sworn police officers and cutting seven positions in the community standards division and one management assistant.

"I totally stand behind what the chief said the other night: We can't afford to lose any police officers," Hieftje said Wednesday, adding he can't recall Ann Arbor ever laying off a police officer and he doesn't want to start now.

Still, he said, layoffs in the police department aren't off the table.

The jobs of hundreds of police officers are on the line all across Michigan as communities are hit hard with the realities of a bad economy. The city of Troy asked residents to approve a 1.9-mill tax increase on Tuesday, but voters defeated it by a 12,631-7,316 margin. About 47 officers are slated to lose their jobs now.

Voters in nearby Bloomfield Township approved a 1.3-mill public safety millage by a 53 percent to 47 percent margin, which will keep fire and police services safe from cuts for now.

Jones told Ann Arbor council members on Monday he's spent the last three years and seven months shifting officers around to keep an adequate number patrolling the city's streets. But he says he's running out of bodies to reassign.

The last official comparison of crime statistics between Ann Arbor and other Michigan cities was reported by the Michigan State Police for the first half of 2009. According to the figures, Ann Arbor is the second safest of the seven largest cities in Michigan, trailing only Sterling Heights, where Jones used to work.

Ann Arbor had only a fraction of the crime that communities like Lansing, Flint and Grand Rapids experienced.

Deborah Cauffiel, neighborhood watch coordinator for the Ann Arbor Police Department, said residents can help keep the city safe by playing an active role in deterring crime.

"I would hope that people, on their own, would see the need in that, whether or not there's cuts," she said. "Either way, we like to encourage people to become involved in the neighborhood watch program. It's just a good thing all around."

Cauffiel said she works with more than 300 residents who serve as "block captains" for neighborhood watch groups. Each of them represents about 10 to 15 homes on average.

Residents can get a neighborhood watch group started by contacting Cauffiel at (734) 794-4900, ext. 49346.

Do you worry further cuts in the Ann Arbor Police Department could impact safety?

> Yes, fewer officers could cause crime to go up.
> No, the department just needs to reorganize to do more with less.
> Unknown, we'll just have to wait and see.

Vote

View Results

Ryan J. Stanton covers government for Ann Arbor.com. Reach him at ryanstanton@annarbor.com or 734-623-2529.
University of Michigan monitoring relationship with Shanghai university tied to Google cyber attacks

The University of Michigan is closely monitoring developments following allegations that cyber attacks were launched from the China campus of a university with ties to U-M.

Shanghai Jiao Tong University, with which U-M has a joint institute, is a central focus of an investigation into global cyber attacks on American companies like Google. The attackers reportedly gained access to the American companies' servers in 2009 and spread malicious software in hopes of stealing sensitive information.

Analysts familiar with China's political system and a professor who taught last summer at U-M's Joint Institute with SJTU in Shanghai said they weren't surprised the attacks may be connected to other branches of the Shanghai school.

But U-M, which sends about 10 engineering professors a year to teach at the Joint Institute, has no plans to reconsider its relationship with SJTU unless further evidence implicates its international educational partner.

"The Joint Institute provides an excellent opportunity for students from both schools to study abroad and come to better understand the implications of globalization," James Holloway, associate dean for undergraduate education for U-M's College of Engineering, said in an e-mail.

Internet protocol addresses for SJTU computers were identified as the source of attacks that resulted in security breaches at Google, which immediately threatened to leave China, according to The New York Times.

Technology experts told AnnArbor.com it's possible investigators won't be able to determine the exact location of the attacks. Attackers may have shielded their operation under the guise of IP addresses from SJTU computers.

But SJTU is essentially controlled by China's Communist government, which is actively involved in clandestine cyber intelligence operations. China's government has denied any involvement in the cyber attacks.

David Mumsen, dean of U-M's College of Engineering, which operates the Joint Institute along with SJTU, said he doesn't see much reason for concern.

"We don't know anything other than what we've read in places like The New York Times, and there isn't any indication that the Joint Institute, which is our initiative over there, is involved in any way," Mumsen said. "There isn't any reason to believe that our relationship would be affected."

U-M spokesman Rick Fitzgerald said evidence tying SJTU to the attacks isn't firm.

"It's way too early to talk about how this will affect the relationship," he said. "This is one incident where no one is really sure where the source is... It's clearly one of those things where we're watching the situation closely."

Mumsen and U-M professors said they don't teach advanced computer science skills to students at the Joint Institute with SJTU, although some basic algorithmic and computer programming skills are taught there.

U-M officials stressed the Joint Institute is a source of educational and marketing cooperation.

Cyber attacks and Shanghai Jiao Tong University

- New York Times: 2 China schools said to be tied to online attacks
- New York Times: Hacking inquiry puts China's elite in new light
- Michigan Daily: Chinese Institute with U looks accused of Google cyber attacks
- Duke Chronicle: SJTU may be linked to attacks on Google
- Wall Street Journal: People's Revolution of hacking
The focus here is really on engineering,” Fitzgerald said. “It’s not computer science programming.”

SJTU, which has more than 30,000 full-time students, is a sprawling university with a broad range of expertise and initiatives.

Some 160 SJTU students are currently studying at U-M in Ann Arbor through the Joint Institute. Fitzgerald said about 50 SJTU students had received U-M degrees as of 2005, the most recent data available.

U-M electrical engineering and mechanical engineering professors teach courses to SJTU Joint Institute students in China and in Ann Arbor. The only U-M professor currently working at SJTU in Shanghai is Jun Ni, dean of the institute. He did not respond to requests seeking comment.

U-M engineering associate professor Mingyan Liu, who taught SJTU students in Shanghai in the summers of 2006 and 2007, said she wouldn’t be shocked if SJTU students were involved in the Google attacks.

“It wouldn’t surprise me at all if students did malicious things on their own. Perhaps malicious is not the right word. Let’s say illegal. Students have been known to do that,” Liu said. “If they’re capable, they’re probably intrigued and challenged to do things they’re not supposed to do. That happens all the time.”

But Liu said she would be surprised if SJTU students were coordinating global cyber attacks on behalf of China’s Communist government or its industrial leaders.

“The government can certainly do this on their own. They have the resources,” she said. “Would they actually commission the students to do this? Now that seems far fetched.”

But Don Blumenthal, a former director of Internet Investigations for the Federal Trade Commission and Ann Arbor security consultant with DMB Associates LLC, said student hackers could be working with the government.

“I would be skeptical that this is just kind of random hit,” said Blumenthal, who is also an adjunct lecturer at U-M’s School of Information. “Once you start organizing things, I start disbelieving that there’s anything random or just a bunch of students playing a game.”

History of U-M’s relationship with SJTU

The relationship between U-M and SJTU dates back to 1997, when the two universities formed a joint manufacturing research center.

U-M and SJTU formed the Joint Institute in 2005 as the university sought to broaden its international connections and offer opportunities for its own students and professors to experience foreign cultures. U-M students study at SJTU during the summer; none are studying there right now.

U-M President Mary Sue Coleman traveled to China in 2005 to sign the Joint Institute agreement and speak at SJTU’s commencement ceremony. She became the second person in the 115-year history of SJTU to receive an honorary doctoral degree.

In December 2009, SJTU officials and U-M executives — including Coleman, Munson and Provost Teresa Sullivan — discussed the future of the Joint Institute in a meeting conducted via video conference. Stephen Forrest, U-M’s vice president for research, was visiting SJTU at the time and attended the video conference from Shanghai.

The executives agreed to explore future collaborative research opportunities between professors from U-M and SJTU and graduate students, according to details of the meeting published on the Joint Institute’s Web site.

According to the report, Forrest said the partners had reached a tentative agreement to collaborate on research in clean fuel vehicles and biomedical science.

Coleman has plans to return to China in June to visit SJTU. Fitzgerald said he had no knowledge of any changes to those plans, and U-M officials didn’t make Coleman available to comment.

Cyber culture

People familiar with SJTU had differing perspectives on whether the Chinese university encourages a culture of hacking and cyber crime.

Chinese citizen Peter Lu said he was stunned by the accusations that SJTU was involved in the cyber attacks. He studied mechanical engineering at SJTU’s Joint Institute with U-M in Shanghai and is currently studying aerospace engineering in Ann Arbor.

“I’m pretty surprised by this,” he said. “We don’t really do that. I don’t think any of my friends or colleagues are involved in that.”

Numerous e-mails requesting interviews of SJTU faculty members and executives went unanswered.

Online, some SJTU students in China didn’t appear astonished their university might be involved in cyber attacks.

University of Michigan's ties to Shanghai Jiao Tong University

- U-M established a manufacturing research relationship with SJTU in 1997.
- In 2005, both universities established their Joint Institute to educate engineering students.
- 10 U-M professors teach per year at the Joint Institute in Shanghai.
- 160 SJTU students are currently studying at U-M in Ann Arbor.
- U-M President Mary Sue Coleman in 2005 received the second honorary doctoral degree in SJTU’s history.
- Coleman has had plans to visit SJTU in June 2010 to advance the relationship.
U-M engineering assistant professor Seth Pettie, who taught "Intro to Algorithms" at the Joint Institute in Shanghai last year, said in a brief interview he doesn't believe his students were involved in hacking.

"Not in my classes," said Pettie, who said his class didn't involve programming, "I just heard stories about this occurring in other classes."

Amy K. Bell, a Columbia University graduate who studied Mandarin in Shanghai and managed the U-M SJTU Joint Institute's Web site in 2007 and 2008, said she would be "pretty surprised if anyone from JI had anything to do with it simply because they're an undergraduate school and they're just green kids."

But Bell said she wouldn't be surprised if other SJTU students were involved. She said students there have set up a network to access pirated movies, books and other stolen media, for example.

"Those guys - they all knew exactly how to exploit the system for common college mischief, she said.

**Chinese government's relationship with SJTU**

It's not a stretch to assert the Chinese government could leverage its university system to steal political secrets or intellectual property, experts said.

"The relationship that the Chinese government and Chinese Communist Party have with their universities is not the same as the relationship that we have with the U.S. government," said political scientist Mary Gallagher, director of U-M's Center for Chinese Studies. "It's a much closer relationship. It's less clear where the boundary is."

U-M's SJTU Alumni Association declined to discuss the Google allegations.

"The Joint Institute between the University of Michigan and SJTU provides the students in both institutes with a great opportunity to study in different cultures and academic environments," wrote Yiwen Jiang, the association's president, in a statement sent in response to interview requests. "But I do not want to speculate or comment on the issue about cyber attacks against Google."

Contact AnnArbor.com's Nathan Boney at (734) 623-2587 or nathanboney@annarbor.com or follow him on Twitter. You can also subscribe to AnnArbor.com Business Review's weekly e-newsletter or the upcoming breaking business news e-newsletter.

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**Your Voice**

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4 Comments:
Quality-control coaches at the center of NCAA allegations against Michigan football

As best Jim Donnan can remember, quality-control coaches came upon the college football landscape a couple of decades ago when the NCAA enacted legislation limiting schools to nine full-time assistants.

"It used to be you had unlimited assistant coaches," said Donnan, the former Georgia coach and current ESPN analyst. "Back in the day, you had 14, 15 assistants. Now they're down to nine.

"But the staffs around the country, because of so many demands on the head coach - fund-raising, recruiting, what all they've got to do - you really do need a lot (more help)."

That help is at the center of five infractions the NCAA said Michigan committed under football coach Rich Rodriguez over the last two years.

In Notice of Allegations released Tuesday, Rodriguez was accused of failing "to adequately monitor the duties" of his staff.

Specifically, six quality-control assistants are alleged to have exceeded their responsibilities by directly coaching and working with players during off-season workouts in Michigan football coach Rich Rodriguez's program.

The other allegations entail exceeding limits on practice time, a graduate assistant coach trying to NCAA investigators, and the athletic department failing to monitor the football program to ensure compliance.

Incoming athletic director David Brandon acknowledged that Michigan violated rules on coaching limits, saying, "We clearly made mistakes in these areas and we have already taken action to prevent any of those mistakes from being repeated."

Brandon did not detail what changes were made or what punishment, if any, the quality-control assistants face. But Michigan's web site was updated last season to reflect several small changes.

Quality-control assistants no longer exist on Michigan's football staff, but the Wolverines do have four "staff interns," including Brian Wright and Jordan Ison, offensive and special-teams quality-control assistants last year. Alex Herron, the offensive graduate assistant accused of lying to investigators, also is a staff intern, as is Cory Zirbel, a student-coach last year.

Eric Smith and Dan Hott, named along with Wright, Ison, Adam Brathwaite and Bob McClain as quality-control staff members who engaged in on- and off-field coaching activities, are now offensive and defensive graduate assistants. Brathwaite has been promoted to outside linebackers-safeties coach, and McClain is an assistant at Tulsa.

The distinction between graduate assistant and quality-control coach or staff intern is important because graduate assistants can take part in actual on-field coaching.

Quality-control coach is a much more loosely defined position - the NCAA doesn't even recognize the term in its 438-page Division I Manual - with responsibilities that vary, generally focusing on rules, compliance, academic advising and nutrition.
Most Big Ten schools employ quality-control assistants, though Michigan was the only school with more than two last year.

Donnan said having five quality-control staffers, as Michigan did, does not seem excessive.

“There’s certainly ones with less, that’s for sure, but there’s probably some with more,” he said. “It’s a real fine line between what you can do and can’t do as far as on the field and off the field. I think there are some people trying to get an advantage. I’m talking generically here. I’m not talking about Michigan or anybody else. But I don’t really feel like the quality-control issue is one that, based on my going around and watching teams practice, I don’t think anybody tries to take advantage of that.”

Whether the NCAA decides Michigan was trying to gain an advantage or not might ultimately decide what sort of punishment the Wolverines face. Michigan is due before the NCAA Committee on Infractions Aug. 13-14 in Seattle.

In its Notice of Allegations, the NCAA said staff members in Michigan’s compliance department became “concerned about the duties and activities” of quality-control assistants “shortly after” Rodriguez was hired.

The department failed to gather information that explained quality-control duties, and athletic administrators with responsibilities in the football program failed to provide (the) appropriate information,” according to the notice.

Rodriguez is not the first Michigan coach to employ quality-control assistants. Lloyd Carr had three on his staff in his final season, including Tom Burpee, now a full-time assistant at Eastern Michigan.

And Donnan said the concept of quality-control coaches, which dates back Tom Landry’s days with the Dallas Cowboys, is important to the coaching profession and college football.

“The thing you got to look at is the people that are trying to get into coaching, there’s only so many ways you can do it and you got to bite the bullet and then take one of these jobs and hope you can get from there,” Donnan said. “That’s how you move up.”

- NCAA rules spell out how many and what types of coaches a program can employ.

Download:
- Michigan football staff intern job description.pdf

What is quality control?
A quality-control assistant is a loosely defined position. At Michigan, they are now called staff interns and responsible for things like distributing scouting reports, charting opponent play calls and monitoring curfew. No matter the name, they cannot participate in coaching activities.

According to NCAA rules, schools can have nine assistants and two graduate-assistant coaches take part in football coaching duties. The NCAA alleges that six additional quality-control assistants also took part in coaching at Michigan over the last two years.

Last season, Michigan had more quality-control staff members than any school in the Big Ten. The Wolverines employed five quality-control coaches last year (two for offense, two for defense and one for special teams). Here’s how the rest of the Big Ten stacked up:

Illinois: 0 quality-control assistants, but does have a video graduate assistant whose duties are exclusively film related.

Indiana: 2 quality-control assistants

Iowa: 1 quality-control assistant

MSU: 0 quality-control assistants, but a third graduate assistant with similar duties

Minnesota: 2 quality-control assistants, one each for offense and defense

Northwestern: 0 quality-control assistants

Ohio State: 2 quality-control assistants

Penn State: 0 quality-control assistants, but a third graduate assistant with similar duties.

Purdue: 1 quality-control graduate assistant

Wisconsin: 2 quality-control assistants

Dave Birkett covers University of Michigan football for AnnArbor.com. He can be reached by phone at 734-623-2552 or by e-mail at davidbirkett@annarbor.com. Follow him on Twitter @davebirkett.
| Your Voice | Log In to contribute. |
Numerous crashes reported on surface streets in Washtenaw County

Posted: Today, 2 hours ago

Numerous crashes are impacting traffic in Washtenaw County this morning, dispatchers said.

The slick and snow-covered roadways have resulted in many crashes, but the majority are on the surface streets and not the freeways, dispatchers said.

Among the reported crashes:
- North Territorial and US-23 at the overpass.
- Golfside Road south of Clark Road.
- Ford and Prospect roads.
- Congress and Hewitt roads.
- Northbound US-23 and Joy Road (three-car crash).
- Dixboro and Plymouth roads.
- Washtenaw and Golfside (clearing).
- Packard and Golfside roads (clearing).
- Golfside north of Packard.
- Hewitt and Washtenaw.
- Plymouth and Eashart.
- Huron River Drive and Superior Road.

Tags: crashes, Washtenaw County Sheriff's Department

Related Articles:
- 2/24: Snow leads to numerous crashes in Washtenaw County, but no road closures
- 2/22: Snowfall totals in the Ann Arbor area: 8.8 inches and counting
- 2/22: Where are the crashes in Washtenaw County? Everywhere, police say
- 2/16: Weather-related crashes cause traffic tie-ups on I-94 in Washtenaw County

Your Voice

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Ann Arbor launches six new neighborhood pages for the city of Ann Arbor

Today, our mission to make Ann Arbor.com a hub of hyperlocal news takes a big step forward with the launch of six new neighborhood pages.

The unveiling of these pages marks the culmination of months of effort we've put into carefully thinking through how best to represent the city and all the news happening in it. Over the coming months, you can expect to see these neighborhood pages grow by leaps and bounds, featuring everything from neighborhood block party and garden photos to coverage of elementary school fundraisers and softball leagues.

The new pages are Downtown Ann Arbor, Ann Arbor's West Side, Ann Arbor's South Side, Ann Arbor's North Side, Central Ann Arbor, and U-M Campus. They will replace the previous neighborhood pages on Ann Arbor.com.

We've divided the city up into these areas primarily by zip code. Why? There are a few reasons. First, we determined that sectioning Ann Arbor off into pieces any smaller would not generate enough news to be sustainable or useful. We also know that many data sets and maps use zip code boundaries to break the city up. And zip code boundaries naturally fall in places where folks already seem to geographically define themselves as living in - now often have you heard someone say, "I live on Ann Arbor's North Side," or "I live on the West Side of the city."

Of course there are many smaller neighborhoods that are strong and active in our city - places such as Burns Park, the Old West Side and Ann Arbor Hills are bonafide neighborhoods and will be treated as such within the context of our larger geographical choices.

Our new neighborhood pages include spots for local news generated by our staffers and local community bloggers, and also features our Got News? Tell Us portal which anyone can use to post a local story. Each page also has a slideshow of photos taken in that neighborhood, community data sets, a community guide that showcases a biography of the neighborhood and links to local resources. The data sets feature school population and demographic information, local real estate numbers and statistics about the area from the U.S. Census Bureau.

Each neighborhood page also includes links to homes for sale in that specific area.

What I'm most excited about with the launch of these pages is that now, there's finally a place for micro-local community news that hasn't seemed to have a real place in traditional media in recent years.

News like who won the elementary school spelling bee. Who traveled to Europe last weekend and came back with some great stories. Why everyone's favorite safety guard hasn't been seen for a few weeks. Why mailboxes keep getting knocked over on a specific street. How much the Girl Scouts raised last week's bake sale. Why the hockey team is holding a fundraiser at the corner gas station. Who's buying the house on the corner that's been vacant for three years.

We plan to work diligently to get such news up on Ann Arbor.com, and we invite you to share. Consider your neighborhood's news on Ann Arbor.com as a hub of information, a place to read news and submit your own stories, photos and ideas. If you've got something to share, post it on your neighborhood's page using our Got News? Tell Us box. If you have photos, email them to us so we can post them.

Let me know what you think - email your feedback to community@annarbor.com.

Stefanie Murray is the Community Director for Ann Arbor.com. Contact her at stefaniemurray@annarbor.com or 734-623-2571.
Home energy audits can stop money from flying out the window

Posted: Today, 5 hours ago

Wilfred Smulders is no stranger to being energy efficient. Smulders grew up in the Netherlands, where energy costs are sky high and gasoline goes for $10 a gallon. "Wilfred would rather replace windows than buy a new leather couch," said his wife, Megan.

They dial their thermostat down to 50 degrees at night.

So after the couple bought their first home, a 1948 two-story, wood-frame house in Ann Arbor Hills neighborhood, they took Realtor Rob Ewing up on his offer for a free energy audit. Their house would be analyzed from the basement to the chimney top for energy efficiency.

They waited six months after they moved in to have the audit performed, Megan said, so they would feel attached to the house before they were hit with any bad news.

Their winter heating bill has been confusing: $230 in December when they were gone most of the month and had dialed down and $240 last month when they were home.

Enter Nate Munson, owner of EverGreen Energy Sevices, armed with a blower door (a fan in a temporary door) that creates a vacuum throughout the house, an infrared camera that reveals breaches and a sleuthy little smoke stick that ferrets out drafts around molding, lighting fixtures, switch plates and more.

Munson creates the vacuum and then uses the smoke pen to look for breaches, from the baseboard to the trim above an inside wall door to the rim around a ceiling lighting fixture. If the tiny wisp of smoke moves horizontally, it is being pushed by a stream of cold air from a breach.

The infrared camera takes a picture of the house's heat signature, looking inside the walls of the house for insulation - or the lack of it.

Ewing, a certified appraiser and real estate agent with Charles Reinhart Company, said the audits are now part of his routine.

A fan is mounted at the door at the home of Wilfred and Megan Smulders during an energy audit. The fan blows air out of the house so that air leaks can be found from air coming back into the house.

Angela J. Cassese | AnnArbor.com
done after closing and when there is at least a 10-degree difference between the outside and inside.

"It's a closing gift that keeps on giving," Ewing said.

The energy efficiency of most houses can be improved between 25 and 75 percent, he said, and there are government incentives for many of the improvements.

While pricey solutions such as replacing old windows and installing a high efficiency furnace will improve energy efficiency, so will simple and relatively inexpensive fixes such as caulk, weather stripping and insulation, Ewing said.

"Air infiltration is the biggest way to lose energy efficiency," Ewing said. That means leaks around outlets, around windows, where the ceiling meets the wall - anywhere that leads outside.

"Air infiltration is the most common but the least understood," Munson said.

"It's where your heating costs go out the window. Insulation, everyone understands. But insulation without air seal is ineffective."

The warmed air will travel over the insulation to the hole or cracks that leads outside. Simple solutions such as sealing up the drafts and installing insulation in key places can save 25 to 50 percent of annual heating costs, Munson said.

Once the seals are tighter, attention can be turned to creating the heat, Munson said. Older furnaces are 75 to 80 percent efficient while new ones are up to 95 percent efficient.

New windows will also cut energy bills but will take much longer to recover the investment, Munson said.

The Smulders' preliminary results showed some of the usual suspects in Munson's energy audit:

They could reduce 35 percent of their energy loss simply by sealing leaky areas. Munson listed 29 separate locations, from the plumbing penetrations in the basement to the front door on the first floor to single-pane windows on the second floor.

They could add insulation to the attic along with the foundation walls.

They could seal and weatherstrip windows and replace the single-pane basement windows with glass block.

There were also recommendations, further down the list, that would require more of an investment, including replacing the old inefficient furnace and air conditioner with high-performance units.

The Smulders plan to start simple.

"We're looking for easy fixes that will save the most on our energy bill," Megan said.

Jenet Miller is a freelance writer for AnnArbor.com. Reach the news desk at news@annarbor.com or 734-623-2530.

More Info:

Energy audits

• The cost of an energy audit runs between $200 and $300.

• DTE offers incentives for the audits along with incentives for energy efficiency improvements, such as $750 for new windows.

• For more information on DTE incentives, go to: www.dteenergy.com/residentialCustomers/saveEnergy/rebates/homeAudits/freeEnergyAudit.html

Your Voice

Log In to contribute.
WITH POLL: Tell them about vacation when you get back to avoid break-ins while you're gone

Please.com is a website that searches social networking sites and reports where people have written they are or where they’re going. The point of the site is that when people share where they are, it might also show a threat when they’re not at home.

Perhaps we put too much information on social networks. It may impress some of your closest friends on Facebook that you are jetting off to Europe with Paris, London and Rome, but it tells others of your unguarded home that your home will be empty for the next several weeks.

It would be wise to show pictures of your trip after you get home to prove you won’t be returning to Europe with the girls and not to drug rehabilitation with them.

With winter snowing down upon us, many are making travel plans to somewhere warm and sunny. It is again time to safeguard our homes on the way out of town.

One of the easiest ways burglars find unoccupied homes in this weather is to look for the house with the snow-covered driveway. Make sure if you’re traveling that someone is familiar with your home and driveway for you. It is not only a good crime prevention technique, but it also looks like your house is being taken care of.

Suspect newspaper delivery while you’re gone and have your friendly neighbor who is shoveling your walk also collect your mail. It’s not a bad idea to have your neighbor park in your driveway at least drive up and down a few times to put some tire prints in the drive.

If you’re the neighbor checking a property, look for snow right in the middle of the property and make sure the snow hasn’t been stored inside. If you find a broken down snow blower where entry has been gained, back off and call 911 so the police can check it out.

Be careful who you let in when leaving on vacation. Whoever it is online or in person, it probably won’t be a friend who breaks into your home, but a friend of a friend who gets the information may decide to break in. Caution your teenage children not to make your house go on vacation. Again, it’s the “friend of a friend” with a third leg or heart and a self-defense abuse problem who will break in to your home.

Remember to use light timers in various rooms and consider installing a time delay sensor to be activated when someone is waking up or someone in the area. Remember to leave your trusted neighbor know you will be gone and leave them with contact information so they can get in touch with you should the unthinkable happen.

If you’re a student leaving on winter or spring break, make sure to lock your doors and take all your valuable electronics with you or leave them as small as you can. If your schoolwork isn’t on your laptop, make sure you back it up on an external storage device and hide that separately.

I wish you well on your trips to warm climates. I will be enjoying a Michigan winter, watching the snow falling, writing these pleas and showing my traveling neighbors’ walks.

Lock it up, don’t leave it unattended, be aware and watch out for your neighbors.

Do you post information online about your whereabouts or vacation plans?
- Sometimes, I try to be careful what I say.
- Yes, and I’m not worried about it.
- No, I’d never do that.

Rich Kinsey is a retired Ann Arbor police detective sergeant who now blogs about online and safety at AnnArbor.com.

Your Voice

Log In to contribute.
CINEMA CHAT: Oscars preparation, Bruce Willis and Tracy Morgan, and more

Win free movie tickets

Editor's note: Comment on today's "Cinema Chat" for a chance to win free movie tickets to the Michigan Theater. Some time between now and 6 p.m. Wednesday, leave a comment on this column, written by the Michigan Theater's Russ Collins. Offer your opinion on a recent movie you've seen, or on anything Russ mentions. We'll randomly select a winner and notify that person via the email address they signed up with. They will get two passes to a movie of their choice.

Oscar-mania is reaching a fever pitch! In just over a week, the Academy Awards will be bestowed. Steve Martin and Alec Baldwin are polishing their ad-lbs, gowns are being fitted, and bets are being placed as to who will win those lovely golden statues.

A forerunner of the Oscars, with an English accent, is the British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA) awards, which were handed out last Sunday. The big winner was director Kathryn Bigelow's "The Hurt Locker," it won Best Picture, Best Original Screenplay, Best Cinematography, Best Editing and Best Director. That means the Brits gave the nod to Ms. Bigelow over her ex-husband James Cameron and his film "Avatar"—kind of surprising, don't you think? Will Oscar voters follow suit?

If you missed "The Hurt Locker," please know it will play for 1 show only next week, March 5, at the Michigan Theater, the Friday before the Oscars ceremony, on Sunday, March 7.

(You can also get in on the Oscars fun by entering Quality 16's Oscar Contest. Choose the movies you think will take home the top honors for a chance to win a package of film passes for Quality 16. The contest ends March 7 at 4 p.m.)

The award for Outstanding British Film went to "Fish Tank," which will play exclusively at the Michigan Theater March 12-18. The BAFTA award for Best Actor went to Colin Firth for "A Single Man," which is currently playing at the State Theatre. Be sure to see this wonderful film by first-time director Tom Ford before it heads out of town.

Opening this week

"The Last Station" opens Friday, and with 2 Oscar-nominated best acting performances—Helena Bonham Carter for Best Actress and Christopher Plummer for Best Supporting Actor. Set during the final year of Russian novelist Leo Tolstoy's life, writer-director Michael Hoffman's period biopic explores the fractious relationship between Tolstoy (Plummer) and his wife, Sofya (Bonham Carter), as he embraces a life of asceticism. Paul Giamatti co-stars as impassioned Tolstoy devotee Vladimir Chertkov, with James McAvoy playing the aging writer's assistant. The always tough New Yorker magazine review, "It's the most emotionally naked work of Plummer's movies career, she gives poetic form to the madness and the violence of commonplace jealousy." Playing exclusively at the Michigan.

"The Crazies" opens at your local multiplex this week. It is directed by Breck Eisner, the son of former Disney CEO Michael Eisner, and tells the improbable story of tourists turning the residents of Ogden Marsh, Iowa into violent psychopaths. Sheriff David Dutton (Timothy Olyphant) tries to make sense of the situation while he, his wife (Radha Mitchell), and 2 other unaffected townspeople band together in a fight for survival. Preliminary reviews are so-so: "Tense, if overstuffed, this is really 3 films awkwardly but enjoyably combined," says the Internet review site TotalFilm.

"Cop Out," directed by Kevin Smith ("Clerks," "Jersey Girl," "Jay and Silent Bob Strike Back," "Chasing Amy") is a comedy about a veteran NYPD cop (Bruce Willis) whose rare baseball card is stolen. Since the card is his only hope of raising the funds to pay for his daughter's upcoming wedding, he recruits his partner (Tracy Morgan) to help him track down the thief, a memorabilia-obsessed gangster. This is the first time Kevin Smith has directed someone else's screenplay, but the buzz about this film (which was originally set to star Robin Williams) is not so hot. Opens Friday at your local multiplex.

Special screenings

From Our Partner: The Michigan Daily: Arts

Campus Clash: Rodriguez vs. NCAA
February 25, 2010, 2:39 AM
Last week's results: read more

Promoting literacy with a little help from the Voice
February 24, 2010, 1:58 PM

The allure of the mustache has always been in the eye of the beholder. From the thick bristles of the roaring '20s to the sloppy '70s, the facial hair has long been a symbol of masculinity. But today, the mustache seems to have been revitalized by mainstream society, read more
"Pather Panchali," acclaimed Indian director Satyajit Ray's first international hit, will play Monday, March 1 as part of the Michigan Theater's World Cinema Film Series. This is the 1st film in Satyajit Ray's famous Apu trilogy.

"Bridging the Gap: The Joe Dulin Story" is being shown Wednesday, March 3 at 7 p.m. at the Michigan as part of a benefit for The Dispute Resolution Center's family mediation programs. It is a fascinating documentary about local hero Joseph Dulin, who took on the unenviable task of transforming an inner-city school in Detroit into an educational success story with his unique blend of charisma, discipline and unconditional love. Dulin's school achieved a 78 percent college enrollment rate in a city where the dropout rate is 79 percent. Support the Dispute Resolution Center and see this inspiring film about Joe Dulin's fight to educate all students on equal terms, regardless of geography race or socioeconomic status.

See you at the movies!

Russ Collins is executive director of the Michigan Theater in Ann Arbor. Tune in to the audio version of "Cinema Chat" on WEMU radio (89.1-FM) each Thursday at 7:40 a.m. and 5:40 p.m., or listen to it online at WEMU's web site.
The Pittsfield Township Department of Public Safety is seeing some major changes.

From an internal reorganization to improving officer and firefighter equipment, department leaders say they’ve focused on changing the philosophy of providing services while improving community interaction over the past six months.

"We’re looking to change the direction of the organization and look at it from the community’s perspective so that they get what they want out of having a public safety department," said Matt Harshberger, who became director last May.

Harshberger highlighted the changes and his vision for future improvements during a presentation at Wednesday night’s township board meeting.

Harshberger said the department is in the initial phase of his long-term strategy to reshape it over the next three to five years. The goal is a more pro-active and community-oriented agency.

The first step was to address the department’s presence in the community. That included increasing officers’ visibility throughout the 28-square mile township, quicker response times and more community interaction - which were sorely lacking, said Harshberger, a township resident for 13 years.

That required a shift in officer assignments. Pittsfield Township pulled its lone investigator out of the county’s major crimes task force, freeing up another officer to form a community patrol unit.

The new CPU team works flexible hours and responds to issues throughout the community.

Through early retirements, Harshberger also cut two lieutenant positions and added sergeants to support more road patrols. An overhaul of patrol-shift hours is also under consideration.

And officers have more tools at their disposal. Roughly $20,000 was spent from mileage and grant funds to improve body armor, and the department added two vehicles, including a 4 by 4 for all-weather purposes. Stabilized Remington shotguns and Colt AR-15 assault rifles are now in every patrol car.

By 2011, mobile computers and digital video systems will be standard in every vehicle through a $128,000 investment. The township board recently approved $16,875 for portable citation printers.
Communication is key

Harsheberger said the equipment improvements were necessary to bring the department on-par with other law enforcement agencies. But he believes the officers will benefit more from new methods of interacting with citizens.

The benefits of the community patrol unit, operational since last fall, are already evident, said Jane Kretzschmer, manager of the Sleepy Hollow Apartments along Washtenaw Avenue.

"I don't say enough about them. The department has really stepped their game up and is really focused on what the community needs," said Kretzschmer, who has managed the 551-unit complex for 20 years.

She said she's called on the unit several times to remove people trespassing in the Internet cafés, settle disputes and even break down communication barriers as interpreters for Spanish and Chinese-speaking residents.

In a way, they act as a neighborhood watch for the complex.

"We don't have anything like that here, and no matter how big or small the problem is, they're there and are finding ways to solve problems," she said.

The praise is not lost on the officers, who say they back the initiatives strongly.

"We're doing a lot more pro-active contacts, and we're just in a much better place now to help residents," said Matthew Hornebeck, a nine-year veteran now assigned to the CPU.

The department also recently joined the Nine line community alert system, allowing officials to deliver important emergency information to subscribers by e-mail and text. Roughly 300 residents have registered since late last year.

Other communication improvements include a daily 24-hour incident log for the public. Harsheberger said crime mapping and opportunities for citizen feedback on the township's website aren't far off.

The department also made changes in fire services, including hiring three full-time firefighters and purchasing a new truck. The department now has 24 full-time firefighters and 10 paid on-call personnel.

But response protocols also were shifted, enabling just one unit to respond to calls when appropriate and reducing overtime costs by providing more "on-duty" training.

A ticking clock

As Harsheberger sees it, the clock is running.

Although he was able to usher in the expensive equipment improvements by shifting expenditures in the budget, the township administration asked Harsheberger to cut 10 percent from his budget this year.

And more could be slated for next year, given the state's current economy.

Harsheberger dealt with his share of budget cuts as Ypsilanti's police chief, but Pittsfield's department depends solely on approval of a public safety millage, which expires in 2012.

The township has historically had strong support for its police and fire operations, and each of the recent expenditures had unanimous approval from the township board. But success at the ballot box is never a given, especially in tough economic times, officials said.

It's too early to talk campaign strategies, but Harsheberger said he believes implementing the changes now and making the strongest possible impact will help down the road.

"The renewal will be critical because our service levels hinge on it," he said. "I think that when the community sees the service we can provide, it will be possible to get a renewal. But we have a ways to go."

Art Alaimo is a freelance writer for AnnArbor.com. Reach the news desk at news@annarbor.com or 734-623-2530.
Lawsuit: University of Michigan closed session reportedly called to discuss NCAA probe illegal

University of Michigan says meeting was appropriate

"Thanks again and Go BLUE!", write University of Michigan alumnus Robert Davis, after requesting the minutes to a closed special session, reportedly called by the school's Board of Regents to discuss an NCAA probe into its football program.

In an equally polite response, he was told that minutes to the 8 a.m. session on Feb. 3 don't exist.

Davis sued the U-M Board of Regents in Washtenaw County Circuit Court on Feb. 16, alleging violations of the Michigan Open Meetings Act, the law that spells out circumstances under which public bodies can hold closed meetings.

This wasn't one of them, the suit says.

Reached Wednesday, Davis said that the notice of allegations announced Tuesday by U-M officials outlining five alleged major NCAA violations doesn't change the course he's taken.

"The regents revealing the NCAA probe does not stop the intent behind the lawsuit - to have them to reveal the minutes of the meeting and to ensure that those type of meetings do not happen again."

Davis, 30, is described in the lawsuit as a former law clerk intern to a Michigan Supreme Court justice and a Wayne County elected official. The Highland Park School Board member lives in Ferndale and works as a union staff representative, he said.

University of Michigan spokesman Rick Fitzgerald defended the closed session in question.

"We are confident the Board of Regents has been meeting appropriately," Fitzgerald wrote in an e-mail.

Davis said he has been "very successful" in winning open meetings cases against "a few" different municipalities in Wayne County, but wouldn't say which ones.

Subpoenas of top university officials are forthcoming, he said. Carl Matting, the former Macomb County Prosecutor who is currently running for State Senate, has recently joined his legal team, Davis said.

Juliana Keeping covers higher education for AnnArbor.com. Reach her at julianaking@annarbor.com or 734-623-2529. Follow Juliana Keeping on Twitter. 

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From left, U-M President Mary Sue Coleman and football head coach Rich Rodriguez listen while Athletic Director Dave Brandon speaks during the Michigan NCAA media briefing on Thursday, Feb. 23.

Angela J. Cesere | AnnArbor.com
Sports

Pendleton beats Fishers, 57-48
PENDLETON, Ind. — Pendleton Heights senior Nathan Hendershot admitted he didn’t have his best game on Senior Night on Monday against Franklin. But armed with a shot at redemption in his final game Wednesday on his home court, he wouldn’t repeat the feat. Hendershot managed 16 points, including a perfect 4-of-4 night from 3-point range, to help lead the Arabians past Fishers, 57-48. “We had Senior Night (Monday) night, and Nathan struggled shooting the ball,” Pendleton coach Brian Hahn said. …more>>
• Lapel shuts down Ritter
• Anderson gives one away to Noblesville

Special Reports

Boy Scout troop opens time capsule
ANDERSON, Ind. — More than 30 years ago, Madison County’s oldest Boy Scout troop decided to leave its future troop members presents from their time with the intention it would be opened in 2026. …more>>
• Boy Scouts: Scout performs Heimlich maneuver, saves brother
• Boy Scouts: Timeline

Celebrations

Use Celebrations to announce your special event
Use Celebrations to announce your special event: anniversaries, birthdays, engagements and weddings. Or search Celebrations to find out who is celebrating in your community. …more>>

Photos & Videos

Photo gallery: Arabsians down Tigers 57-48
Photos from Pendleton Heights Wednesday as the Arabsians hosted the Fishers Tigers to close out their regular

Community

Highland students performing one-acts for charity
ANDERSON, Ind. — A series of one-act student-directed plays will be presented today and Friday by the Highland High School Drama Club in the school’s auditorium. The plays are part of the school’s annual One Acts for Charity project, which has raised over $30,000 for various local organizations since its inception in 2008.
Opinion

Editorial: Feds: Show us the money for a really bright idea
Some of the best ideas never come to fruition. Because of lack of commitment, planning or foresight, they wither on the vine...more>>

- Primus Moodry: Remembering a lost friend
- Editorial: South Madison making painful but necessary budget changes
City, county work to relieve potholes

Winter weather wreaks havoc on roads

By ERIC LAMBERT, HERALD-BULLETIN STAFF WRITER

ANDERSON, Ind. — It was a matter of records after Anderson Street Commissioner Todd Loewer heard Wednesday about potholes that were causing problems at East 20th Street before he was on the push-pull phones informing a work crew of the obstructions.

The crew leader agreed to send workers there as soon as possible.

“Immediately I’ll tell it with them, we’ll check it out and fix it as soon as possible,” Loewer said.

Potholes have been popping up on city streets and county roads as the weather has been accelerating back-and-forth between rain and snow, freezing and thawing cycles.

“The potholes are worse than they usually are for this time of year because we don't have much snow accumulation,” Loewer said. “We're getting them as fast as we can. Here recently we’ve been in the 20s and the last couple days we’ve been in the high 30s. Now they’re taking the weekend to get in the high 40s.”

The Street Department had two crews working Wednesday on filling potholes, and Loewer hopes to have three crews today. The asphalt mix, however, hasn’t been delivered to 400th Street and it could take a few days to get it there, depending on the weather and traffic conditions.

Loewer said hot mix suppliers, such as E&B Paving in Pendleton, won’t start making the material until temperatures stay above 40 degrees for a week or two and stop in the meantime. The Street Department is using cold mix to fill in some of the potholes and plans to dry out the last batch of mix that has been heated in the department’s hot box.

“Tires work the same way (as hot mix), but it’s just less efficient,” Loewer said.

The mix works better because it’s made fresh and contains more oil and binding agents, Loewer said. The department is working with the best product available, he said, although he plans to try out other alternatives.

“We’re looking at that bit, it’s just as expensive,” Loewer said. “We’re going to try a couple products this spring. I don’t want to spread hundreds of thousands of dollars paying something.

“We’re at the point of no return. If we can come up with a miracle patch, we’d use that.”

In the meantime, both the Street Department and county Highway Department have systems set up to respond to complaints about potholes as soon as possible.

With a slashed budget and less manpower — the Street Department is down to 13 workers — employees have had to work overtime to fill potholes.

“We're making it fine,” Mayor Kris Doty said. “They understand the crisis we’re in, and they’re willing to work. We’re actually more efficient than we were before. We’re doing the taxpayers’ money by doing it with less.”

Some extra money is available because the Street Department saved money during slower seasons by using a one-time solution to test stores instead of using up to two load of street salt. Loewer said the department spent $200,000 last year on salt and had used only $200,000 this year.

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Your comment

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Add a comment on this story.

The potholes are definitely worse, but not because “we didn’t...” there have been much snow last year. Using the same thing that aligns, for cars and bikes, aren’t fine.

Posting date: 2/24/2010 7:23 PM

Posted by: Kellie One Way D The Other

Then why did Doty’s street workers fill 41 potholes last year near my home on a rainy day and the potholes already had water in them before the workers arrived? Of course, the potholes are back again because of the
Highland students performing one-acts for charity

ANDERSON, Ind. — A series of one-act student-directed plays will be presented today and Friday by the Highland High School Theater Department.

The annual "A Night of One Acts" will be at 7 p.m. each night in the high school auditorium.

Admission is by donation only and all proceeds will be given to the Red Cross to help its relief efforts in Haiti.

"We want to find a way to do our part to help those who have suffered so much as a result of the earthquake and its aftermath," said Highland Theater Director, Dean Simpson. "And we thought this would be a nice way for us to assist the Red Cross in helping the people in Haiti."

All one-act plays are directed by Highland theater students. The students do all of their own casting, set design, costume design, lighting and directing their acts.

The one-acts being presented include: "The Aunciation of Rome and Julius," which is retelling the classic story in a Seussian rhyme style that also has a happy ending; "Jack, the Beanstalk, and Social Services," which puts a new twist on an old story by introducing several additional characters, including a social worker and a critic; and "The Escape," in which two mice escape from a barn only to be chased by a cat on a chaise longue, all of which is written by its director, Will Joynson, and "Don't Fear the Reaper," a comedy about a day in the life of Death himself.

In addition to Johnson, Ashley Blankenship directs "The Aunciation," K'Marie Kaede and Renee Werner direct "Jack," and Kaitlyn Kasper directs "The Escape."

In addition to the four short plays, the second act will begin with a powerful monologue called "Reparations," about a German man speaking before an audience at the National Holocaust Museum.

"I think our show offers a little something for everyone and I hope the people of the community can come out to support the students and, in turn, help the people of Haiti as well," said Simpson.
DOE releases annual school reports

Thursday, Feb. 25, 2010

Good morning.

It's 6:30 a.m. Thursday and the staff at The Herald Bulletin is getting down to work. We will pursue news throughout the day and will have frequent updates here on our Web site.

Today, the Department of Education is expected to release its annual performance reports on Indiana schools. We'll see how local schools scored.

Plus, Anderson Elementary School will hold a celebration in honor of Black History Month.


We want to hear what you think. Leave your comments online or feel free to contact us with your views (at 765-649-4800) or e-mail at newencom@heraldbulletin.com.

And remember, if you know of upcoming events that are open to the public, add them to The Herald Bulletin's online calendar. Just click on the grid calendar near the bottom of the home page, register for free and fill in the information.

Don't forget to look for The Herald Bulletin on Twitter (www.twitter.com/heraldbulletin) and blog with us by clicking the "Blog" link on our homepage. You can also sign up for e-mail and text message alerts.

— Justin Schreder, online reporter/manager

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City, county work to relieve potholes
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DOE releases annual school reports
Weather: Another coating of snow on the way
What's Where for Feb. 25
Driver killed in crash near Greensburg February 25, 2010 10:44 am

Published February 25, 2010 06:45 am -

Weather: Another coating of snow on the way

Highs remain in the 20s, 10 to 20 degrees below normal

The Herald Bulletin

Watch out for a few slick spots again this morning, due to snow showers. There will not be much snow, but another coating is possible. A mix of sun and clouds is on the way for this afternoon, with highs only in the 20s. These temperatures are 10 to 20 degrees colder than average. A few flurries are still possible today. More sunshine is in the forecast for Friday, as temperatures rebound into the 30s.

No records found

More from the Local News section

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What's Where for Feb. 25

Thursday, Feb. 25

Anderson

* Free Clothes Closet, 10 a.m.-2 p.m., Allen Chapel AME Church, 1610 Sheridan St.
* Denise Hummer, free concert, noon, Central Christian Church, 10th and Jackson streets.
* Senior bridge, 12:30 p.m., Redbud Community Room, 1800 W. 38th St.
* Beyond Idle Worship Tour, 7 p.m., Madison Park Church of God, 67th Street and Columbus Avenue.
* Freeling and Friends, 7:30 p.m., Park Place Church of God, Anderson University Concert Salas.
* Economic Development Revolving Loan Fund Board, 8:30 a.m., Conference Room 1, City Hall, Executive session at 8 a.m.

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City, county work to relieve potholes
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Feb. 25: Arrest Log

Arrests made by Madison County law enforcement Friday, Saturday and Sunday, based on Madison County Jail records. Some information was not recorded on arrest warrants.

* Edgewood police arrested Jeff L. Kitterhouse, 30, of 1362 block of Indiana 37, Edgewood, at 2:02 p.m. Wednesday at the Iroquois at North Avenue and Park Road, Edgewood. Bond was set for $5,000 on charges of Class A misdemeanor operating a vehicle while intoxicated and possession of paraphernalia.

* Alexandria police arrested Travis M. Cooks, 25, of 900 block of Oak Street, Tipton, at 12:36 a.m. Wednesday in the 1500 block of North Madison Avenue, Alexandria. Bond was set for $10,000 on charges of Class C felony resisting law enforcement, Class D felony criminal confinement and residential-entry Class A misdemeanor domestic battery and resisting law enforcement, and Class B misdemeanor public intimidation.

* Anderson police arrested April D. Dudley, 46, of 2900 block of Noble Street, Anderson, at 2:46 a.m. Wednesday at his home. No bond was set on charges of Class A misdemeanor domestic battery.

* Indiana State troopers arrested Calvin L. Nunn, 41, of the 2400 block of Halfway Street, Anderson, at 9:40 p.m. Tuesday in Elementary and Third streets. Bond was set for $9,500 on charges of Class D felony resisting law enforcement, Class B misdemeanor criminal recklessness and Class A misdemeanor possession of marijuana and operating a vehicle while intoxicated.

* Indiana State troopers arrested Monica L. Rogers, 47, of the 800 block of Cracking Lane, Indianapolis, at 10:05 p.m. Tuesday in Indiana 37 and I-465. Bond was set for $10,000 on charges of Class A misdemeanor operating a vehicle while intoxicated.

* Elwood police arrested Danny K. Hughes, 34, of the 1600 block of 1600 block of South Sheridan Street, Elwood, at 4:17 p.m. Tuesday in the 1900 block of South B Street. Elwood. Bond was set for $35,000 on charge of Class A felony child molestation and Class C felony child molestation.

* Madison County deputies arrested Duane L. White, 26, of the 200 block of North Bicentennial Avenue, Indianapolis, at 6:30 p.m. Tuesday at the Madison County Jail. Bond was set for $54,000 on charges of Class B felony criminal confinement, Class B misdemeanor battery and Class D felony intimidation and pointing a firearm.

* Anderson police arrested Conney M. Addison, 26, of the 200 block of East John street, Alexandria, at 2:05 p.m. Tuesday at Walmart. Bond was set for $5,000 on charges of Class A misdemeanor conversion.

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What’s Where for Feb. 25
Charges upgraded for alleged jail smugglers

By CHRISTINA M. WRIGHT, HERALD BULLETIN STAFF WRITER

ANDERSON — Criminal charges have been upgraded for two Indianapolis women who attempted to smuggle drugs and cell phones into Pendleton Correctional Facility on Tuesday, and additional charges may be filed Monday.

"Especially with people getting killed at the institution. And at the same time they're bringing in drugs," said Madison County Prosecutor Tom Broderick. "We've got to do something about that."

According to Madison County Jail records, 30-year-old Scarlet Cob and 53-year-old Ruby Henderson are now charged with Class A felony dealing in cocaine. They were originally charged with Class A felony trafficking with an inmate.

Broderick said he made the change after reviewing preliminary police reports and suggested charges Tuesday morning.

"It appeared they were focusing on the trafficking," he said. "It just seemed to me that it was more serious than that."

Indiana State Sgt. Mike Burns, a spokesman for the department, said Wednesday that authorities found 39.8 grams of marijuana, 7 grams of cocaine and three cell phones.

Broderick said his office has received all evidence, and has until Monday afternoon to file any additional charges related to the same phones and marijuana.

Pendleton Correctional Facility spokesman Neil Potter said investigators would prefer to release exactly how personnel were made aware of the contraband because it "could compromise security." He said it was through "staff observation."

Potter and Burns also said they could not release exactly where the items were hidden. The Tuesday press release said the items were "located" on Cobb's body.

According to a press release issued Tuesday, Cobb and Henderson were attempting to smuggle the items to inmate Charles Westmoreland, 40. The release said Westmoreland has been on the payroll since October 2009 serving a 40-year sentence for dealing cocaine.

According to police reports of the incident, Cobb said her neighbor — one of Westmoreland's relatives — promised her $600 for the delivery.

The report said Henderson authorized the search of her truck, which both women had arrived in. Officers found other items used for sizing and packaging drugs, the report said.

Henderson also admitted to giving Cobb a cell phone to deliver to her ex-boyfriend, Tony Houston, according to the police report.

Both women were being held at Madison County Jail on $70,000 bonds, increased from $40,000 on the previous charges.

Contact Christina M. Wright, 640-4863, christina.wright@heraldbulletin.com.

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Riverboat bill means little to Hoosier Park

BY BRANDY WATERS, HERALD BULLETIN STAFF WRITER

ANDERSON — A bill that would’ve moved gambling riverboats where all but died on the House floor Tuesday, but the bill meant little to gambling revenue here in Anderson.

Jim Brown, gaming manager for Hoosier Park, said the measure would’ve had little affect on the local racino.

Those wanting to move casinos inland say it would make them more accessible and enticing to gamblers, helping them to keep the casino competition in Ohio from overtaking the casinos.

Brown said he’s confident the Blue Chip and Hollywood casino riverboats are not moving inland, even if the bill passes due to expensive improvements made to the boats recently.

And if they did, riverboat competition would not have a material impact on Hoosier Park, he said.

The real threat comes in the form of a gaming license, he said.

If another Indiana city is given a gaming license, the casino could suffer, he said. “Putting a casino in Fort Wayne or Indy would be devastating to our operation.”

Contact Brandi Waters 640-4847, brandi.waters@heraldbulletin.com
Feb. 25: Local Briefs

Library changes meeting date
ANDERSON — Anderson Public Library’s Board of Trustees meeting scheduled for Wednesday, March 17, has been changed to Wednesday, March 24, at 4:15 p.m.

The meeting will be held in the board room of the library at 111 E. 12th St.

Second Harvest Tailgate on Friday
ANDERSON — Second Harvest Food Bank of East Central Indiana will provide food for families in need at the monthly tailgate distribution on Friday. The Second Harvest Tailgate will be held at Athletic Park, Eighth and Wilkinson streets. The distribution is from noon to 2 p.m. while supplies last.

For more information: foodbank@unehunger.org, 800-886-0882, or www.unehunger.org.

Free bingo event today at MCL
ANDERSON — Countryside Manor and Rawlings House are sponsoring a free bingo event today from 1 to 2 p.m. at MCL Restaurant and Bakery, Mounds Mall.

Prizes will be awarded ranging from household items to baked goods and all things in between.

The event is free but you must purchase lunch at MCL prior to the event. For more information, contact Mike Woods at 649-4058.

Local AARP chapter to meet Wednesday
ANDERSON — The local chapter of AARP 1866 will meet for breakfast at Perkins on Wednesday at 8 a.m.
Driver killed in crash near Greensburg

GREENSBURG, Ind. — Police say a driver fleeing from officers went as fast as 110 mph on a rural southern Indiana highway before he was killed in a head-on crash.

The crash on Wednesday killed 19-year-old Matthew Henderson of North Vernon, while the other driver was treated at a hospital for minor injuries.

Police say the chase began after a North Vernon police officer spotted Henderson's car stopped in the middle of Indiana 3. Henderson drove off as the officer approached and the chase continued into neighboring Decatur County until the crash a few miles west of Greensburg.
Think Local First disappointed at turnout for local currency forums; 3rd meeting is Wednesday

Today, 4 hours ago
Organizers hoping to gauge interest in a local currency for Washtenaw County say they’ve been disappointed by the light turnout at two community meetings in Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti last week. But they’ll have a third shot with a final public meeting on Wednesday, March 3 at Vitrosha Guest Haus Inn. The public is welcome to drop in any time between...

Controlling employee costs may be Ann Arbor’s biggest challenge

Yesterday

ANN ARBOR’S NORTH SIDE: Podcast 8: Scientific inquiry discussed with day campers

Today, 58 minutes ago

Peggy Lampman’s Monday dinnerFeed: Soba noodles and Asian meatballs

Today, 4 hours ago

Go to medical school in the Caribbean!
The ONLY hospital-integrated medical school in the Caribbean! AUA College of Medicine AUA College of Veterinary Medicine & Biomedical Sciences ATTEND OUR ANN ARBOR INFORMATION SEMINAR: Saturday, March 13, 2010...

A2 Topics

Most Popular

News (8 today)
Arts & Entertainment (4 today)
Opinion (2 today)
Government (1 today)
Education (3 today)
Crime (4 today)
Business Review (7 today)
YpsiLife (1 today)
Health (5 today)
Sports (6 today)
UM Football (2 today)
UM Basketball (3 today)
Prep Sports (1 today)
Home & Garden (2 today)
Faith (1 today)
Food & Drink (2 today)
The Deuce (1 today)
Passions & Pursuits (8 today)
Parenting (6 today)
Books (6 today)
Your Voice

"Wow, I wonder if the other commenters have ever run any organization before. Maybe people haven't noticed it, but the American health care system is bankrupting all of us. The benefit parts of these contracts make sense when they were set up. Health care costs have risen much farther and faster than people thought was really possible. But every time..."

Controlling employee costs may be Ann Arbor's biggest challenge

ACTIVE DISCUSSIONS

- Controlling employee costs may be Ann Arbor's biggest challenge (121)
- Men convicted of beating puppy with the iron in Ypsilanti's 2-4 years in prison (27)
- Think Local First disappointed at turnout for local currency forum; 3rd meeting is Wednesday (21)
- Naked man steals children's books from the Ypsilanti District Library, police say (2)
- Builder of "abandoned snowmen" isn't upset police told him to destroy it (7)
- New Ann Arbor school promises students environment of freedom, democracy (20)

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WITH POLL: Think Local First disappointed at turnout for local currency forums; 3rd meeting is Wednesday

Organizers hoping to gauge interest in a local currency for Washtenaw County say they’ve been disappointed by the light turnout at two community meetings in Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti last week.

But they’ll have a third shot with a final public meeting on Wednesday, March 3 at Ypsilanti Guest Haus Inn. The public is welcome to drop in any time between 6 p.m. and 8 p.m.

Based on input from the meetings, put on by Think Local First - an organization that promotes individual businesses in Washtenaw County - the local currency idea may move forward or be shelved.

Last week’s events - at the Ann Arbor District Library and Ypsilanti Senior Center - were poorly attended, said Ingrid Ault, executive director of Think Local First.

“What has this told us is that if we were to move forward, it would require more information on our part,” Ault said. “It’s been a little sad. What we really hope to accomplish is a dialog in the community, and that hasn’t happened. Currency automatically implies dollars to people and they aren’t really aware of the different options.”

Think Local First received a $6,000 grant from the Ann Arbor Downtown Development Authority to research different kinds of local currency.

Think Local First chose four options, which include:

- Paper currency, where local money is printed and used much like the federal currency. It could only be spent at participating businesses and could include a discount.
- Time share currency, where participants would earn local currency by working and spend it at local businesses.
- Barter currency, where participants register online for a nominal fee to list goods and services they have to offer.
- Coupon currency, where currency is printed in various denominations that could be used toward making purchases at local participating businesses.

Business owners expressed mixed reactions to the idea.

“It’s great that people trying to do something like that, but there’s probably other areas that could be looked at,” said Eddie Phelps, owner of Fast Eddie’s Music in downtown Ypsilanti.

Kim Anderson, the general manager of Club Divine in downtown Ypsilanti, said she’s against a barter system.

“Our prices are set that way for reason,” Anderson said. “But we don’t have any issues with coupons.”

Other businesses owners are embracing the idea of a Washtenaw County currency.

“I think it’s a great concept to help raise awareness about what is in the community rather than what’s available in the big boxes,” said Vicki Honeyman, owner of Vicki’s Wash & Wear Haircuts and Heavenly Metal in downtown Ann Arbor.

Brian Brinkley, the owner of The Tap Room in Ypsilanti, agreed.

“Obviously anything you can do to get people into downtown Ypsilanti where the parking isn’t great, and especially if it creates a better value by being paid for in part by another organization,” Brinkley said. “But it’s only a tool to get people in the door in the first place.”
Do you support the idea of a local currency in Washtenaw County?

- Yes, I think it will promote local businesses.
- No, I wouldn't use it.
- Maybe, I need more information.

View Results

John Garcia is a freelance writer for AnnArbor.com. Reach the news desk at news@annarbor.com or 734-923-2539.

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I'm shocked that the DDA wasted $6000 on this effort.
Controlling employee costs may be Ann Arbor’s biggest challenge

By Ryan J. Stanton. AnnArbor.com Staff

City Administrator Roger Fraser acknowledges Ann Arbor city employees enjoy more lucrative benefit packages than many others in the public and private sector.

"Looking across the organization, what we have consistently found is that wages tend to be closer to the middle of the marketplace," Fraser said. "Where we're out of sync with the rest of the marketplace is in the amounts that the employees contribute to those non-wage costs, and we've been trying to focus on that."

The city is paying more today to employ 766 people than it did earlier this decade when it had 959 workers. And the costs that are nagging city officials as they look to confront an additional $5.2 million general fund budget deficit - on top of millions already cut.

Despite efforts to slash personnel costs, pay and benefits in Ann Arbor city government - including retiree pensions - have risen to $114.9 million this year. In 2002, with a much larger staff, those costs totaled $66.7 million - or 104.4 million in today's dollars.

Employees are earning more, and their benefits are costing more. Annual expenses for benefits for city employees and retirees have nearly doubled from $32.7 million to $59.4 million since 2002.

The rising expenses are partly tied to the city being more aggressive about funding future liabilities for retiree health care and pensions. But officials also say the cost of health care has risen sharply, and employees aren't paying their fair share.

With wages and benefits for three-quarters of the city's workforce linked to union contracts, changing that could be difficult.

"Do we need improvements from employees? Absolutely," said Tom Crawford, the city's chief financial officer. "Are we working really hard at that? Absolutely. Are we having a hard time? Hell yeah."

This graph shows the average Ann Arbor employee last year paid 6 percent of the $881 monthly cost of his or her health benefits. Across the marketplace, the average monthly cost was $532, and employees typically picked up 41 percent of that amount.

A closer analysis of those figures suggests Ann Arbor paid $0.8 million more for health insurance last year than it would have if its benefit plans were in line with the rest of the marketplace.

"The city's costs in general are significantly higher than the prevailing costs out there."

Greg Surmont, account director for McGraw Wentworth, the city's employee group benefits brokerage firm, said his firm surveyed more than 600 public and private organizations throughout the state. The survey found Ann Arbor employees enjoy top-tier benefits at little cost to them.

According to the survey, the average Ann Arbor employee last year paid only 6 percent of the $881 monthly cost of his or her health benefits. Across the marketplace, the average monthly cost was $532, and employees typically picked up 41 percent of that amount.

A closer analysis of those figures suggests Ann Arbor paid $0.8 million more for health insurance last year than it would have if its benefit plans were in line with the rest of the marketplace.

"The city's costs in general are significantly higher than the prevailing costs out there."

Click here to leave a comment.
compared only with other municipalities in Michigan, Ann Arbor’s employee benefit packages still are far more generous, the survey found.

City officials say it’s been a challenge getting the needed concessions from labor unions, specifically with the police and firefighters unions, whose members enjoy premium-free health insurance.

“We are still struggling with labor contracts that were heavily one-sided that were decided back in the 70s and 80s,” said Mayor John Hieftje. “We’ve been working very hard to try to do more. Employees are contributing more to their health benefits, but not nearly what they need to.”

One of the challenges is the Michigan Public Act 312, a 1969 law that provides for compulsory arbitration of labor disputes in municipal police and fire departments. Hieftje claims the law unfairly favors the unions and has led to situations in which third-party arbitrators decide whether to dole out raises—-even if the city can’t afford them.

The average Ann Arbor city employee earns a base salary of $65,198 and receives $32,993 in benefits. By those calculations, the average active employee costs the city $98,191 per year, a figure slated to rise to $103,769 next year. And that’s not including overtime, which is an expense of more than $2.76 million on its own.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau statistics, the average per-capita income in Ann Arbor is $30,410—less than half that of a city worker.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the average rate of pay for a government employee in the United States is $25.97 an hour, compared to $29.29 for a city of Ann Arbor employee. Total benefits for a typical government employee come at a cost of $13.64 per hour, while in Ann Arbor city government it’s $18.82.

With personnel costs accounting for such a large portion of the city’s budget, the jobs of city workers are on the chopping block. The latest proposals call for eliminating 17 positions in the police department and 20 in the fire department in July.

Hieftje has issued a call to the labor unions to take a 3 percent pay cut to help avoid layoffs. He said that would yield savings of $875,000 in the general fund and $1.1 million across all city funds.

So far, only the firefighters union has responded, agreeing to a 3 percent pay cut and a 1 percent increase in employee pension contributions. But even if every other labor group followed suit, it still would fall short of closing the budget gap.

An analysis by AnnArbor.com shows it would take a 6.7 percent across-the-board reduction in total compensation—pay and benefits combined—to achieve a savings equal to $2.1 million. That theoretically would balance the budget without layoffs or cuts to services, but would result in a $5,653 hit to each employee on average.

If the city went that route, the cuts could be achieved by implementing a 5.25 percent reduction in salaries and requiring each employee to contribute $200 a month more for health insurance.

But the City Council can’t unilaterally impose that without consent from the unions.

“[In the public sector, we don’t have the same rules the private sector does to solve our personnel issues],” Crawford said. “Public Act 312 is a huge issue for us and part of the reason why change is so hard and so delayed. The math may work. But is it practical? Not in any short time frame.”

Robyn Willersen, the city’s human resources and labor relations director, is currently attempting to negotiate with each of the city’s eight collective bargaining units. She said it’s difficult to ask employees to take deep cuts when the city’s budget still isn’t hit bottom. City officials are predicting they’ll need to cut an additional 8 percent from the budget in 2011–12.

As part of negotiations, Willersen said she’s working to address what she considers a “horrific disparity” between different labor groups when it comes to how much employees pay toward their health benefits.

“Our non-union employees and a couple of our Teamster groups pay 10 percent premiums now,” she said. “Groups like the police, PDA, COAM and AFSCME don’t pay premiums at all and they have goals, quite frankly, is to get everyone on the same plan just in terms of equity from an administration standpoint.”

AFSCME President Nicholas Nightingale, who heads up the city’s largest labor union, acknowledged his bargaining unit historically has shared little of the cost of health insurance increases.
"But when we negotiate a contract, both sides sign off on the agreement," Nightwine said. "So the city has not given us anything that they have not signed off on giving us. We don't make our own wages or benefits."

AFSCME has yet to respond to the city's request to open up its contract, which includes 3 percent raises next year.

"I'm not going to sit here and say we're going to absolutely say no to the city, but we feel we've already given back," Nightwine said. "Until last year, we went three years without taking a raise across-the-board."

According to year-end audits, expenses in the general fund - the city's chief operating budget - increased from $74.5 million to $83.8 million from 2003 to 2009. That's a 12.6 percent increase over six years.

All told, the city has a budget this year of about $351.7 million, which has grown by $132.8 million, or about 61 percent, in the last eight years, according to city records. Crawford claims comparing the city's overall budget today to past budgets is skewed because the city's accounting procedures have changed and capital projects weren't factored in before but now are.

Crawford also points out that the city's budget is about $25 million lighter this year than it would have been had not the city eliminated 239 jobs since 2001.

Council Member Carsten Hefner, D-5th Ward, said city officials must closely examine every area of the city budget in the coming weeks, and that includes employee pay and benefits.

"Labor costs are a significant part of the organization," he said. "I don't think it's unusual. In an organization like ours, the people going to be a big part of the expense, but compensation is definitely something that we have to look very hard at."

Ryan J. Stanton covers government for AnnArbor.com. Reach him at ryan@annarbor.com or 734-623-2529.

More Info:
Previous city budget coverage on AnnArbor.com:
- Roger Fraser, others asked to take a pay cut by Ann Arbor City Council
- Ann Arbor mayor and most council members take symbolic pay cut
- Ann Arbor mayor proposes 3 percent pay cut for all city employees
- Ann Arbor officials say firefighters' unwillingness to negotiate partly to blame for layoffs
- Ann Arbor's budget problems grow more imminent at City Council retreat
- Ann Arbor firefighters union approves new contract that includes voluntary pay cuts
- Ann Arbor city employees bracing for cuts but staying positive in light of challenges facing city
- Ann Arbor police chief to City Council: 'We can't afford to lose a police officer'
- 19 Ann Arbor firefighters, 11 police officers facing layoffs
- Tough budget decisions he's asked for Ann Arbor City Council
- Roger Fraser tells Ann Arbor City Council to set aside politics to make budget decisions
- Ann Arbor officials consider selling parks, privatizing Huron Hills golf course to trim city budget
- Is it time to start thinking about a city income tax? Ann Arbor council members weigh in

Your Voice

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121 Comments:
Right here...this tells every voter all they need to know.

"the average Ann Arbor employee last year paid only 6 percent of the $981 monthly cost of his or her health benefits. Across the marketplace, the average monthly cost was $632, and employees typically picked up 41 percent of that amount."

Many employees in the corporate world are paying $700/month plus deductibles and copays. Small business owners can be paying $14,000 or more per year for their medical benefits.

We can NOT vote for a tax increase. Any tax increase will just end up in the pockets of Fraser and other government employees who are already enjoying pay and benefits that far exceed what the everyday non-government worker is getting. When the city pays wages and benefits equal to a non-government worker for the same job...then lets talk about a tax increase.

GoblueBestGSO
Posted 1 day ago

So who has been the Mayor for the last ten years? Who is up for reelection in the
Ann Arbor's North Side: Pondcast 8: Scientific inquiry discussed with day campers

We started out with a massive headwind, temperatures approached 5 degrees F. It felt almost like snowing. Participants from the Leslie Science and Nature Center’s "Sail Your Best Blue" photography safari joined me. We discovered the initial stage of organisms on the surface of the pond. This segment did not make the final cut of this week's video pondcast due to time constraints. I'm trying to keep these videos at about five minutes. I appreciate their company and hope they had a good time in their photographic endeavors.

On Monday, Feb. 22, Ann Arbor was inundated with nine inches of snow. This is great news for Black Pond, a vernal pool, which only fills with water from precipitation. The thick layer of snow did provide a minor challenge when I headed out to the pond with a group of day campers from the Leslie Science and Nature Center's Mid-Winter Grass Day Camp.

We hopped through the ice to collect a water sample filled with aquatic organisms and measured the depth of the pond on the north side of the floating downwind on Black Pond. We had a wonderful discussion about parts of the scientific inquiry: observation and data collection.

Observations are made through the use of all five senses, when appropriate. Chipping through the ice, we came to a layer of leaf litter. Instead of sifting the litter, as in the middle of the pond, this layer smelted of feces, commonly known as poos. I was a bit concerned that we had uncovered a deposit left by an unhatched larva visitor to the pond but was relieved that we only met with frozen leaves. Perhaps in the early stages of decomposition, decaying leaves in the pond do smell like vegetables. We'll have to keep this thought in mind for future visits.

As we hopped through the ice, the campers made a hypothesis or prediction about whether or not there would be liquid water under the ice. There was water, and it was cold.

Once a sample was collected, we measured the depth of Black Pond using a non-standard measurement device: a bamboo pole. Campers predicted how many segments deep the pole would go. It turned out to be just under 7 segments, or about 19.5 meters, once we used a standard tape measure to get an accurate measurement.

We then took the sample to the center house where we took up the organism - entangled the organiser under the microscope. This discussion and organism identification will be presented in next week's episode.

Stefan Jaramillo is a middle school science teacher by trade, an outdoor environmental educator by calling, and a homesteader by choice. Stefan can be reached at stefanjaramillo@gmail.com.

Your Voice

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WITH POLL: 1 in 4 parents believes vaccines cause autism, University of Michigan study shows

By: AnnArbor.com Staff AnnArbor.com Staff

Posted: Today, 3 hours ago

6 Comments. Comment Now

From The Associated Press

One in four U.S. parents believes some vaccines cause autism in healthy children, but even many of those worried about vaccine risks think their children should be vaccinated, a University of Michigan study shows.

Most parents continue to follow the advice of their children's doctors, according to a study based on a survey of 1,552 parents. Extensive research has found no connection between autism and vaccines.

"Nine out of 10 parents believe that vaccination is a good way to prevent diseases for their children," said lead author Dr. Gary Freed of the University of Michigan. "Luckily their concerns don't outweigh their decision to get vaccines so their children can be protected from life-threatening illnesses."

Fear of a vaccine-autism connection stems from a flawed and speculative 1998 study that recently was retracted by a British medical journal. The retraction came after a council that regulates Britain's doctors ruled the study's author acted dishonestly and unethically.

The new study is based on a University of Michigan survey of parents a year ago, long before the retraction of the 1998 study. However, much has been written about research that has failed to find a link between vaccines and autism. Mainstream advocacy groups like Autism Speaks strongly encourage parents to vaccinate their children.

"Now that it's been shown to be an outright fraud, maybe it will convince more parents that this should not be a concern," said Freed, whose study appears in the April issue of Pediatrics, released Monday.

In 2008, unvaccinated school-age children contributed to measles outbreaks in California, Illinois, Washington, Arizona and New York, said Dr. Melinda Wharton of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Thirteen percent of the 140 who got sick that year were hospitalized.

"It's fortunate that everybody recovered," Wharton said, noting that measles can be deadly. "If we don't vaccinate, these diseases will come back."

Some doctors are taking a tough stand, asking vaccine-refusing parents to find other doctors and calling such parents "selfish."

A statement from a group practice near Philadelphia outlines its doctors' adamant support for government recommended vaccines and their belief that "vaccines do not cause autism or other developmental disabilities.""Furthermore, by not vaccinating your child you are taking selfish advantage of thousands of other who do vaccinate their children... We feel such an attitude is self-centered and unacceptable," the statement says, urging those who "absolutely refuse" vaccines to find another physician.

"We call it the manifesto," said Dr. Bradley Dyer of All Star Pediatrics in Linoisville, Pa.

Dozens of doctors have asked to distribute the statement, Dyer said, and only a handful of parents have taken their children elsewhere.

"Parents have said, 'Thank you for saying that. We feel much better about it," Dyer said.

The new study is based on an online survey of parents with children 17 and younger. It used a sample from a randomly selected pool of nationally representative participants. Households were given Internet access if they didn't already have it to make sure families of all incomes were included. Vacines weren't mentioned in the survey invitation and vaccine questions were among others on unrelated topics.
Nearly 12 percent of the parents said they'd refused a vaccine for their children that a doctor recommended. Of those, 56 percent said they'd refused the relatively new vaccine against human papillomavirus, or HPV, which can cause cervical cancer. Others refused vaccines against meningococcal disease (32 percent), chickenpox (32 percent) and measles-mumps-rubella (18 percent).

Parents who refused the HPV vaccine, recommended for girls since 2006, cited various reasons.

Parents who refused the MMR vaccine, the shot most feared for its spurious autism link, said they'd read or heard about problems with it or felt its risks were too great.

The findings will help doctors craft better ways to talk with parents, said Dr. Gary S. Marshall of the University of Louisville School of Medicine and author of a vaccine handbook for doctors.

"For our children's sake, we have to think like scientists," said Marshall, who was not involved in the new study. "We need to do a better job presenting the data so parents understand how scientists have reached this conclusion that vaccines don't cause autism."

Has concern about autism influenced your decision about whether to vaccinate your child?

- Yes, it's caused me to decline a vaccine
- No, I'm not worried about it
- I choose not to vaccinate for other reasons

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poll by twigs.com

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Your Voice

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6 Comments:
Peggy Lampman’s Monday dinnerFeed: Soba noodles and Asian meatballs

By Peggy Lampman

This is one of those “I can be anything you want me to be” recipes. Skip the meatballs and it’s a wonderful Asian noodle salad. It can be served hot, cold or in-between.

Or add the meatballs — the meatballs are a wonderful addition to the noodles and incorporate many of the same seasonings as the noodle dish. Put them in or leave them out.

I prefer the fresh flavor of this quickly assembled dressing. To save a few minutes, you could skip the last seven ingredients and substitute a bottled Asian dressing, such as Soy Vay Veri Teriyaki or Annie's Asian Sesame Dressing, to taste.

Yield: 3-4 servings
Time: 20 minutes (without making meatballs)
Cost: Approx. $7.50

Ingredients

- 8 ounces soba noodles (Asian buckwheat noodles)
- 12-16 ounces broccoli slaw or Asian vegetable mix
- 3 tablespoons soy sauce
- 2 tablespoons lime juice
- 1 tablespoon honey
- 1 tablespoon sesame oil
- 1 teaspoon minced garlic
- 1 teaspoon grated ginger
- 1/2 cup minced fresh cilantro
- 1 recipe for Asian Meatballs (optional)

Broccoli slaw is generally a mixture of broccoli, carrots and red cabbage. Pre-packs of Asian vegetable could include napa, bok choy, carrots and broccoli.
1. Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Add noodles and cook for 6-7 minutes or until tender. In last two minutes of cooking time, add broccoli slaw or Asian vegetable mix. Drain.
2. While noodles are cooking, whisk together soy sauce, lime juice, honey, oil, ginger, garlic and cilantro. Toss with noodle and vegetables. Serve with Asian meatballs, if using.

Visit me on dinnerFeed for more more seasonal recipes and local value (recipe search engine on site) Mini-recipes daily fed to you on my dinnerFeed Twitter.
WITH VIDEO: Ann Arbor area business school applications down, but plenty of students pursue the BBA

Ann Arbor area business schools are seeing lower application numbers this academic year, but still no shortage of students to fill their slots.

Nationally, interest in business majors and careers is hitting the lowest levels since 1976, according to this year’s "Freshman Survey," which has been conducted each year since 1966 by the Higher Education Research Institute at the University of California at Los Angeles.

In 1976, the last year interest was as low, recovery began for the recession that started with the 1973 oil embargo and energy crisis.

Around the area:

- The University of Michigan Stephen M. Ross School of Business saw actual undergraduate applications drop 17 percent - or 143 students - from 2008 to 2009. But the number of students who were admitted and enrolled in the program’s newest class increased 8 percent - or by 25 students - to 384 students in 2009.

- The Eastern Michigan University College of Business experienced an 8 percent drop in applications - or 20 fewer students - from 2008 to 2009. The school rejected 17 percent of 236 undergraduate business school applicants this fall and admitted 198 students, five fewer than in 2008. School officials said the numbers are up again this winter.

- Cleary University, which specializes in business degrees and has campuses in Ann Arbor and four other Michigan cities, received one fewer application in 2009 than in 2008 for its undergraduate or associate business programs, at 286. Dean of enrollment Roy Coons said enrollment is consistent, and the school is working on a number of initiatives to help students gain access to education.

Local students say the gloomy economic forecast they faced last year hasn’t deterred their interest in business careers - and they say things are looking up.

"Finance companies have taken interns, which wasn’t the case last year," said Alex Paley, a junior at the U-M Stephen M. Ross School of Business.

"The economy is cyclical," added U-M business junior Jason Jacob. "It’s going to go back up at some point. I definitely have no regrets at pursuing a career in business."

The study, released in January, is based on the responses of 220,000 first-time, full-time students from 287 four-year institutions. The data was statistically adjusted to reflect 1.4 million freshmen who entered college in the fall.

Students who reported their intent to major in a business field dropped from 16.8 percent in 2008 to 14.4 percent in 2009, the lowest level for business majors in 35 years. Those who reported they intended to pursue a career in business also dropped, from 14.1 percent in 2008 to 12.1 percent in 2009, the study found.

The future looks bright to business students
Dexter Stucchi's expands to include Bearclaw and Mr. Pita in co-branding triple header

Jim Seta had a Dexter Stucchi's ice cream franchise where 70 percent of sales occurred during just five hours of the day.

"The question was: What do I do with the other 19 hours," he said.

And then there was wintertime, when sales of the hand-dipped ice cream fell 80 percent. He'd added a line of gourmet chocolates to get him through Valentine's Day and Easter, but cold weather still slowed sales.

While a number of franchise owners are jumping on the dual-brand bandwagon - think Pizza Hut and Kentucky Fried Chicken sharing space - Seta decided to take it an extra step. He added a Bearclaw Coffee Company franchise Feb. 1 and will add Mr. Pita franchise March 1, making it a co-branding tripleheader. Seta said he could be the only triple-brand franchise in Michigan and even the nation.

All three brands will co-exist in the same roughly 1,400 square feet in the Dexter Plaza east of downtown Dexter. And all three are Michigan-based companies.

The co-branding means overhead efficiencies with space, utilities and staff. Seta said. It also has the potential of cross marketing: A customer may come in for a Mr. Pita salad but may be convinced to also buy a Bearclaw latte.

There are other synergies, Seta said. Stucchi's offers dairy-free, sugar-free and low-fat alternatives just as Mr. Pita offers choices such as an ultra-light pita with less than 5 grams of fat. "You will be able to come in here and fully indulge or have a healthy snack or lunch," Seta said.

Still, there are co-branding challenges, Seta said. "Do you individually brand each of them?"

Not quite. For instance, the Mr. Pita menu carries the Bearclaw logo on one page and the Stucchi's logo on the other. And Seta was able to tweak the Mr. Pita menu to reflect his unique position. He added a breakfast pita not on the standard Mr. Pita menu to capitalize on the morning traffic. Bearclaw will attract, and a kids' menu, also not standard for Mr. Pita, to serve the youth population that comes for ice cream.

There are also potential catering synergies: A party or organization can have Mr. Pita cater a meal while Stucchi's provides the dessert. Alternatively, an office meeting could have Bearclaw Coffee furnish the coffee and Mr. Pita follow up with a catered lunch, Seta said.

The three franchises - coffee, pita and salads and ice cream - complement each other, Seta said. "They attract customers at three different times of the day so they won't compete for seating," he said. The store has indoor seating for 24. Many successful co-branding efforts complement each other, he said, such as Baskin-Robbins (busy in the afteroon and evening) and Dunkin' Donuts (busy in the morning).

Sexta has expanded his noon-8 p.m. hours to 6 a.m. - 9 p.m. and tripled his staff. While Seta didn't have to add square feet, he configured his space, creating a corner for the Bearclaw equipment and hanging the vinyl log cabin graphic in that space. He shifted Stucchi's wall menu to make space for Mr. Pita's wall menu. And he hung the logos of all three on the front of the store.
Seta said he had a life-long love affair with ice cream (he has an ice cream cone every night!) and had an entrepreneurial spirit since he was young.

After customers began asking if Seta could expand into the lunch market, talks began with Mr. Pita, which, along with the Papa Romano chain, now owns the Sustichi's chain. It will be the only Mr. Pita in Washtenaw County. There are six Sustichi's franchises, 23 Mr. Pita stores and 16 Beantown locations, Seta said.

Janet Miller is a freelance reporter for AnnArbor.com.

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11/13: Dexter teenager with inoperable brain tumor asks community to help charity

11/9: Shooting stuff at the Mill Creek Sport Center

Your Voice

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2 Comments:

Great idea, and sure to be a success. At one time I owned a TCBY franchise and they have the very best product, however very difficult to make any money in a cold weather state like Michigan. I wish them the very best and sure they will succeed! Michigan need more people like this creating jobs!
WITH POLL: What's happening around Ann Arbor, March 1-7: Our picks & your votes

Check out our picks for the best in visual art, music, family fun, theater, film and more this week, and then vote on the event that interests you most.

- **Monday, March 1**: *Intermission*; Films, new media, and film-inspired works by six Michigan artists, curated by Donald Harrison, Executive Director of the Ann Arbor Film Festival. At the Ann Arbor Art Center, 117 West Liberty Street. [Dates and times](#)

- **Tuesday, March 2**: Read Across America: Dr. Seuss' birthday. Storytime featuring "Green Eggs and Ham," plus games. At Barnes & Noble, 3235 Washtenaw Avenue, at 11 a.m. [More info](#)

- **Wednesday, March 3**: "Bridging the Gap: The Joseph Dulin Story"; Benefit for the Dispute Resolution Center's family mediation programs, featuring a screening of "Bridging the Gap," the story of a failing educational system and the life of an extremely unique man named Joseph Dulin, who has devoted his life to successfully educating kids whom under normal circumstances, would have fallen through the cracks of the urban educational system. At the Michigan Theater, 603 East Liberty Street, at 7 p.m. [More info](#)

- **Wednesday, March 3**: [Catie Curtis](#); Contemporary singer-songwriter performing intelligent, thoughtful songs about love, loss, hope and life's small pleasures. At The Ark, 316 South Main Street, at 8 p.m. [More info](#) [AnnArbor.com story](#)

- **Wednesday, March 3-Sunday, March 7**: *Gravitation*; World-premiere run of David MacGregor's play about Isaac Newton — specifically, the secret work he pursued in isolation after his book "Principia Mathematica" rocked the world, and his relationship with a mysterious patroness. At the Purple Rose Theatre, 137 Park Street in Chelsea. [Dates and times](#) [AnnArbor.com review](#)

- **Thrusday, March 4**: "Light Bright: DIY Design"; Build your own puzzle piece pendant light or custom cylinder table lamp in this workshop. At the University of Michigan Museum of Art, 525 South Main Street, at 6 p.m. [More info](#)

- **Friday, March 5**: [Ann Arbor Soul Club](#); Monthly soul dance party featuring DJs Robert Wells, Brad Hales, Breck T. Bunce and Aaron Anderson, with special guest Nick S tolerance of Windy City Soul Club. [More info](#) [AnnArbor.com story about AASC third anniversary](#)

- **Saturday, March 6**: Dance Alliance Repertory Company Annual Benefit Concert: At Saline High School's Ellen Ewing Performing Arts Center, 1300 Campus Parkway in Saline, at 7 p.m. [More info](#)

- **Sunday, March 7**: Cook Michigan: Cooking contest inviting participants to create a dish featuring at least one made or grown in Michigan food product. At the Whittaker Road branch of the Ypsilanti District Library, 5577 Whittaker Road, at 2 p.m. [More info](#)

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- "Read Across America: Dr. Seuss' birthday"
- "Bridging the Gap: The Joseph Dulin Story"
- Catie Curtis
- "Gravitation"
- "Light Bright: DIY Design"
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Your Voice
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CONCERT PREVIEW

WITH JUKEBOX: Rock icon Stephen Stills playing the Michigan Theater

Last year was something of a milestone for Stephen Stills — and for his bandmates David Crosby and Graham Nash. 2009 was not only the 40th anniversary of their 1969 debut album, "Crosby, Stills & Nash," but also the 40th anniversary of the Woodstock Festival — their first-ever live gig together.

CSN also performed at the Rock and Roll Hall Of Fame's 25th anniversary concerts last fall, which later aired on HBO, ensuring that a huge national audience would be on hand when Stills demonstrated that his guitar chops have not faded with time.

His bluesy, nimble solo on "Woodstock" that night was tough, lean and blistering — just in case anyone needed reminding that, while CSN has mostly been known over the years for its layered, intricately crafted vocal harmonies, they still have a gritty rock 'n' roll heart in Stills. Indeed, Rolling Stone magazine ranked Stephen Stills No. 28 on its list of the Top 100 Guitarists Of All Time.

Crosby, Stills & Nash performing "Woodstock" at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame 25th anniversary concert.

That aspect of Stills' talents — his scrappy, more guitar-intensive rock n' roll side — is generally the focal point of his solo tours. It's on those tours where he stretches out, rocks harder and fires off more of his signature, blistering solos. He's on one of those solo tours now, and it comes to the Michigan Theater on Saturday.

He'll likely be in a retrospective state of mind, since, last year, he also rerecorded the release of "Manassas — Pieces." That disc pulled together previously unreleased outtakes and alternate takes that he recorded during the sessions for the two albums he made with Manassas in the early '70s. (Manassas also included Chris Hillman from the Byrds.)

PREVIEW

Stephen Stills

Who: Iconic guitarist/songwriter/singer.
What: A mix of songs he's recorded for his solo albums and tunes he's recorded with CSN, Manassas and Buffalo Springfield. (Solo shows tend to rock harder than those of CSN.)
When: Saturday, March 6, 8 p.m.
Where: Michigan Theater, 603 East Liberty Street.
In addition, "Pieces" includes some great covers that remind us how eclectic Stills' tastes were — and how stellar the musicianship was in Manassas. The band executes, with assurance and verve, some classics from the Western swing, country music and bluegrass songbooks — like Bill Monroe's "Uncle Pen," Joe Maphis's "Dim Lights, Thick Smoke (And Loud, Loud Music)" and Leon McAuliffe's "Panhandle Rag." In addition, they effortlessly master the Latin rumba grooves of "Tian Sola y Triste" (a song authored by Stills and Nelson Ecolsa).

Plus, there's "Like a Fox," showcasing the sultry vocals of a young Bonnie Raitt, a sinuous "Love and Satify" (written by Hillman) and a live take of "High and Dry" that eloquently rocks the blues.

"What started out as a really good country-rock band — eventually emerged as a band that could reflect the hard edge of our blues, the cracking pulse of our sales, and the honking laments of Appalachia that we loved so well," Stills writes in the "Pieces" liner notes. "The fact that Al Perkins could play a pedal steel and sound as good as every great guitar player alive didn't hurt, either."

"Pieces" is reportedly the first of what will be a string of retrospective-type projects that Stills will be releasing in the next few years, including a box set and an album of studio demos he recorded with Jim Hendrix (who played on Stills' first solo album, as did Eric Clapton).

Late last year, Stills also released a live CD / DVD, "Live at Shepherd's Bush," recorded in the fall at the famed London music venue. It starts with an acoustic set, which includes favorites like "4 + 20," "Treetop Flyer" and a cover of Bob Dylan's "Girl From the North Country." Then, the more rousing plugged-in showcases such '60s and '70s-era Stills nuggets as "Isn't it About Time," "Rock & Roll Woman," "Bluebird," "Love the One You're With" and "For What It's Worth."

Listen to the Stephen Stills album "Live at Shepherd":

One serious local Stills fan is Tom McLinden of Ann Arbor. "Stills is an absolute legend, and that first Manassas album is definitely on my list of Top 10 desert island discs," says McLinden.

"I've always liked him better when he was by himself, or on the Manassas records, as opposed to being with Crosby and Nash," says McLinden. "When he's on his own, or when he was with Manassas, his music has so much more variety — he'll go from rock 'n' roll to blues to Caribbean to bluegrass and country — and he brings a great voice to all of those."

McLinden was at the Michigan Theater when Stills last played there, in 2006.

"It was a great show," McLinden recalls. "I liked being able to see him in a smaller venue, as opposed to a big arena and having to look at a big Jumbotron screen or whatever. I liked that he was so informal and didn't take himself too seriously. He forgot the words a couple of times, and once, he just stopped, and just laughed at himself. I like that aspect of his personality.

"And, of course, his guitar playing is wicked."

Kevin Ransom is a free-lance writer who covers music for AnnArbor.com. He can be reached at KevinRansom@ann.com.

More Info:
- Stephen Stills event details in AnnArbor.com calendar
- Stephen Stills web site
- Stephen Stills on MySpace

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Your Voice

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Art Review

WITH SLIDESHOW: Work gallery show examines illusion and reality

The University of Michigan Work Gallery’s current exhibit is called “Dis Illusion,” but there’s nothing disillusioning about it. In fact, the exhibit’s exploration of illusion and reality is nothing short of energizing.

Art’s penchant for swinging from giddy optimism to penetrating pessimism shines through in this exhibit fearlessly exploring what curators E.E. Campbell and Ashley Elander call “positive shift(s) in our vision” facing illusions and disillusions that have the power to “destroy” reality.

This could indeed be pretty hard stuff — depending upon whose reality was getting destroyed. But the old saying that you can’t make an omelet without breaking a few eggs applies. “Dis Illusion” works from this premise in both art and life.

Some of the best student talent at the University of Michigan’s School of Art and Design (as well as U-M staff and U-M art instructors; and artists from across the country) have contributed to the proceedings.

As E.E. Campbell (speaking on behalf of co-curator, Ashley Elander) said in a recent interview, “Ashley and I both have an admiration for optical art and the science behind visual illusion. Using this as a starting point, we wanted to expand the understanding of illusion from visual trickery to illusion as a concept or idea.

“In doing so,” said Campbell, “we were hoping for a very broad interpretation of illusion, pushing creators to determine how to create a reality, or how to destroy a reality altogether.”

Campbell and Elander should consider their goal accomplished. Among U-M undergraduates creating and destroying realities are the curators themselves, Kent Caldwell, Jack Carder, Paolo Carone, Emily Cromwell, Jeremy Daly, Jack Doehring, Caitlin Dronen, Erica Fink, Evan McLaughlin, Erica McTurk, Courtney Michalk, Jenna Lyn Utter, and Shwana Wei. Other U-M connections are U-M School of Art and Design lecturer Katie Rabin, and U-M Slusser and Work Gallery Director Mark (“Uncle Art”) Nielsen.

Ann Arbor artists are “Dad,” Peter Baker, Tom Buckholz, Louis Dickinson, Brian
What these artists share is some sense of illusion — or, in some instances, disillusion. But it's not a matter of simple positivity or negativity. Rather, there's a fine line between optimism and pessimism in these artworks.

The exhibit's inspiration is 20th century French-American maven Marcel Duchamp, who won no stranger to either illusion or disillusion. And it's his brand of puckish neo-Dada (as well as its variants, such as op-art) that's touched upon in one way or another by these artists.

For example, Kent Caldwell's installation, "Balder's Nightmare," features a clever cross between J.R.R. Tolkien's demonics' "The Fellowship of the Ring" Balrog and Duchamp's 1969 "Erlkonig" — yet done with a knowing twist. Caldwell's young "Balder" stands resolutely in front of the monster and his sole defense is a flickering lamp. The installation, built into the Work gallery wall, invites the viewer to explore his hidden world — and the lamp's flickering invites a tongue-in-cheek distant comparison to Duchamp's illuminating masterwork.

Likewise, Unica Art's vinyl tape and marble "Skin" and Erica Fink's paper "Piles" are colorful variations of what at one time were called "unhappy ready-mades." Fink's paper shavings "Piles" were collected from under her desk and "piled" for the exhibit. Meanwhile, Unica Art's "Skin" consists of small bunches-up balls of vinyl that had once been attached as alphabet letters to gallery walls as the dormant remnants of what he calls "transient attempts to define reality."

Stephanie Tita's 16mm film "Two Minute Painting" explores one of those territories Duchamp tossed off in the first half of the 20th century. Tita's film — a cascading purple-hued gestural abstraction — runs on the Work gallery wall. Relentlessly sloshing and sliding, "Two Minute Painting" creatively picks up where latter-day experimental filmmakers have left off.

One of last year's most intriguing artworks is making a welcome return in this exhibit. Katie Ruby's 2009 Ann Arbor Art Center Janet Gallup (Best of Show) "The Print" award-winner, "Mounting on Wells Street," is set against the Work Gallery's far wall. The roughly 4-by-6-foot print consists of more than 1,000 inner-threaded intaglio pieces ranging from inches to not much more than a foot in size. Cutting and splicing her work from a few base images — foremost a window sill (which, inadvertently or not, seems a diminutive homage to Marcel Duchamp's "The Bride Stripped Bare by her Bachelors, Even") — Rubin skilfully knits her multi-faceted collage.

And speaking of "The Bride Stripped Bare," history records that Duchamp considered his intricate glasswork finished when fate dictated that it should be utterly smashed and laboriously pieced back together after its initial 1926 display. Similarly, Jerami Daily and Jack Doehring's "Sweet Light" installation in the basement of the Work Gallery has undergone a significant modification from its original form.

"Sweet Light" was meant to shine an otherworldly pale fire in its confined basement installation space with light bulbs glittering underneath haphazard piles of tossed sugar. But physics dictated otherwise as the bulbs overheated and exploded, leaving clumps of burnt sugary mass strewn about. Rather than consider the work anything other than what it is, Daily and Doehring have left behind its remnants. And this ultimately makes "Sweet Light" nothing less than a kind of aesthetic disillusionment working for their art — instead of working against it.

"Dis Illusion" continues through March 12 at the University of Michigan Work Gallery, 306 S. State St. Gallery hours are noon to 7 p.m., Tuesday-Thursday; noon to 9 p.m., Friday-Saturday; and noon to 5 p.m., Sunday. For information, call 734-998-8178.

John Carlos Canto is a freelance writer who reviews art for AnnArbor.com.
Crosby's goal wins gold. Canada beats US 3-2 in OT

VANCOUVER, British Columbia — Best assured, Canada, the national honor is served. With a flick of the wrist from The Next One, Sidney Crosby, Canadians found Olympic redemption Sunday. The call of a luger's death, a series of embarrassing pitches, a first-half goal denied the hosts conceded the medal race, a loss to the upstart Americans in a preliminary game.

Canada is the Olympic champion in men's hockey, and the whole country can finally celebrate its Winter Games. Canadians survived one of the greatest games in Olympic history to beat the Americans 3-2 in overtime and cap the host country's record gold run in Vancouver....more >>

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Special Reports

Boy Scout troop opens time capsule

ANDERSON, Ind. — More than 30 years ago, Madison County’s oldest Boy Scout troop decided to leave its future troop members presents from their time with the intention it would be opened in 2020....more>>

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Community

BSU students, faculty do videos on Alzheimer's

MUNCIE — When telecommunications professor Maria Williams-Hawkins got the phone call that her friend was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease, she knew she had to do something to help. She knew that her friend in the School of Nursing would help

Photos & Videos

Photo gallery: Anderson University vs Defiance College Men's Basketball

Photos from the Anderson University vs Defiance College Men's Basketball game on 2/27/10.

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March-April

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Highland breakaway group taking case to state

By Dave Stafford, Herald Bulletin Staff Writer

ANDERSON, Ind. — The group hoping to break away from Anderson Community Schools and form a new school corporation with the traditional Highland High School district will make a pitch today to state education officials.

The Madison County School Alliance will meet with Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Bennett and Department of Education staff today.

Bennett's support would be crucial for the alliance to have its plans considered by the Indiana State Board of Education.

The state board's approval would be required to form a new school corporation.

"We have not issued a position on this," Department of Education spokeswoman Lauren Auld said.

"Their school board or the state superintendent would need to kind of jump on board with the idea of breaking away from the school corporation, and they must meet certain requirements," Auld said.

Alliance Vice President Richard Fulgham said the group was collecting information for a feasibility study required under the state code that authorizes creation of the new school districts. He said today's meeting would give the group a sense of whether their effort to break away from ACS might be successful.

"We've got almost all the information we need for the feasibility study," he said.

He said Anderson Community Schools had not provided a breakdown of students per grade who live in Richland and Union townships, the core of what the alliance hopes will be a new school district consisting of Richland and Valley Grove elementary schools and Highland as a junior/senior high school. He estimated the number in total is 1,800 to 2,000 students.

In recent informational meetings, the alliance has proposed assuming its share of debt from ACS if a new district is authorized.

"We do know of over 500 students who will be leaving the district," Fulgham said. "Our hope and our goal is, if we are successful, a lot of student won't leave the school district."

Felix Chow, ACS superintendent, restated a statement he has made regarding the alliance's plans. He likes the proposal to create a new district to receiving a baby — along with the diapers.

"Everyone has a right in terms of exploring the option available to them," Chow said. "That's democracy."

The ACS board has not formally addressed the alliance's proposal, and Chow said he was unaware of any pending action to do so. Any formal proposal would be subject to public hearings before any action by the state board of education.

Contact Dave Stafford: 548-4250, dave.stafford@heraldbulletin.com

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Highland breakaway group taking case to state
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Sheriff: Suspect "surprised" SWAT members
Schools sue over funding formula
Officials deny lawsuit that uses state funds

BY DAVE STAFFORD, HERALD BULLETIN STAFF WRITER

ANDERSON, Ind. — A lawsuit filed by growing school systems that claims Indiana's school-funding formula treats them unfairly is being criticized by leading officials in both political parties.

Republican Attorney General Greg Zoeller was one of those to take issue with the lawsuit. Zoeller said that the shareholders are being represented by the state to defend the system, but he added that it's up to the courts to decide whether the funding system is constitutional.

"All schools are struggling, and the state of Indiana is working on it," Zoeller said. "It's important that we continue to work together to make the best decisions for our students."

Zoeller also noted that the lawsuit is one of many that have been filed against the state over the years. He said that the state has been able to successfully defend the funding system in court in the past.

"We have a strong funding system in place, and it's working well," Zoeller said. "We are committed to ensuring that every student has access to a quality education, and we will continue to work hard to make that happen."
More from the Local News section

Schools sue over funding formula

Erskine to receive state's highest honor

On the Job: Exploring the science of soil

Third House, Mellencamp for Senate, AU opens garden

Weather: Cloudy skies and a chance of flurries
Erskine to receive state's highest honor
Daniels to present 2010 Satchem Award on Tuesday

The Herald Bulletin

INDIANAPOLIS — Baseball legend and Anderson native Carl D. Erskine will be awarded the 2010 Satchem Award, the state's highest honor, in a ceremony Tuesday with Gov. Mitch Daniels.

"As big a thrill as it is to give this award to one of my childhood sports heroes, it's not Carl's baseball career, it's the totality of the life he has lived, that made him a Satchem," said Daniels.

"Taken together, his character, his faith, his integrity in business, his marriage and his devotion to his community make him as great a man and the kind of person we want our children to emulate."

The Satchem is given annually to recognize a lifetime of excellence and moral virtue that has brought credit and honor to Indiana.

Previous recipients include college basketball coaching legend John Wooden, the late Reuben Theodore M. Hirsch, G.S.C., president emeritus of the University of Notre Dame and world statesman, philanthropist Jane Blaffer Owen, gospel music singing and songwriting pioneers Bill and Gloria Gaither and businessman and civic leader Danny Darstenson.

"Most of us who have 'so-called' achieved anything in life are merely the end result of good mentoring. Most teachers, coaches and parents got more out of me than I thought I had in me. I am overwhelmed," said Erskine.

Erskine, 83, was a pitcher for the Brooklyn and Los Angeles Dodgers and member of the famous Boys of Summer teams in the 1950’s. During his career he accumulated 122 wins, pitched in five World Series, made the National League All-Star team, and threw two no-hitters.

After retiring from baseball at the age of 32, Erskine returned to his hometown of Anderson where he started a business and began a career in banking and community leadership that continues to this day.

Born and raised in Anderson, Erskine learned to play the game he loved in local park baseball programs and with his father and older brothers. After graduation from Anderson High School in 1945, Erskine was drafted and served in the U.S. Navy during the closing months of World War II. While in the Navy, he was inducted by the Dodgers and, upon his discharge, spent a year and a half in the minor league before making his major league debut in 1948.

Erskine, or "Gisk" as he was affectionately nicknamed, became the team's starting pitcher in 1961, playing alongside Jackie Robinson, Gil Hodges, Pee Wee Reese, Roy Campanella, Preacher Roe, Duke Snider and Carl Furillo. He was a part of teams that won five National League pennants as well as the 1955 World Series.

"Carl Erskine is class personified. Not only was he a great pitcher, he is a great person, which is why you love him. I played with Carl, and I've admired him for many years. He's the best," said former Dodger teammate Tommy Lasorda, who is expected to attend the ceremony.

Today, Erskine is most known for his community involvement, advocacy and civic leadership. After starting his own insurance business, he later served as president and director of Star Financial Bank.

Outside the office, he spent 12 years coaching the Anderson University baseball team, winning four conference championships. He also has served as a member of the board of trustees of Anderson University, St. John's Medical Center, Fellowship of Christian Athletes among other civic organizations. His greatest contributions have been through his more than 40 years of service as a volunteer with the Special Olympics and as a supporter of the Hospice Center, a non-profit agency that serves persons with developmental difficulties.

Erskine's contributions to the Anderson community are evident throughout the city. At Saint Joseph Medical Center, the Carl D. Erskine Rehabilitation and Sports Medicine Center is named in his honor.
On the Job: Exploring the science of soil

By BRANDON WATTS, Heralds Bulletin Staff Writer

ANDERSON — Soil scientist Tom Adams, 42, and his sister, Vicki Adams, 39, have made a living in the dirt for the past 20 years, using their knowledge of soil science to help homeowners determine where to place septic systems.

Adams and his sister are co-owners of two businesses, Adams Environmental Corp. and Adams Septic.

Tom Adams said the pair make their own soil test kits but also know what it is like to do the dirty work, spending much of their time outside, taking samples from area fields and turning from angry animals they encounter along the way.

Tom Adams graduated from Purdue University with a master's degree in Soil Genesis and lives in Anderson with his wife.

Q. How long have you been at your job?

Adams: 20 years.

Q. What do you like best about your job?

Adams: I'm self-employed so I'm my boss. Other than that, I get to set my schedule. I come to work when I want to come to work but I'm usually getting up at 5:30 a.m. and I'm here till 6 p.m. I can take it off when I need to. I'm working outside. Not in the same place all the time.

Q. What do you like least?

Adams: I spend a lot of time driving to different jobs. I may have three or four different counties that I visit in one day.

Q. What's the funniest thing that has happened to you on the job?

Adams: Vicki got chased by a Clydesdale horse. The horse just went crazy. Me and horses, that's probably the funniest thing. Every time I'm out in the field with a horse anywhere, it's bound to do something—bite, kick, chest bump. Horses do not like me—any hoofed animal. Liars, I got spit on by a llama.

Q. What's the most serious thing that has happened on the job?

Adams: I think back in the early 1990s, I did have a client that collapsed on me out in the field and ended up having a heart attack. The person didn't pass away but that was kind of scary.

Q. What kind of jobs does Madison County need?

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Third House, Mellencamp for Senate, AU opens garden

Third House, Mellencamp for Senate, AU opens garden

Good morning.

It’s 6:30 a.m. on Monday, March 1 and the staff at The Herald Bulletin is getting down to work. We will pursue news throughout the day and will have frequent updates here on our Web site.

Today, state representatives and senators will gather at Anderson Public Library at 8 a.m. for the final installment of the Third House Legislative Session. A group of local supporters is attempting to draft musician John Mellencamp for the U.S. Senate. And Anderson University will break ground on its first campus garden at 5 p.m.

Look for those stories and more in The Herald Bulletin and online at www.meridianbulletin.com

We want to hear what you think. Leave your comments online or feel free to contact us with your news tip at (765) 640-4800 or e-mail at newsroom@heraldbulletin.com.

And remember, if you know of upcoming events that are open to the public, add them to The Herald Bulletin’s online calendar. Just click on the grid calendar near the bottom of the home page, register for free and fill in the information.

Don’t forget to look for The Herald Bulletin on Twitter (www.twitter.com/heraldbulletin) and blog with us by clicking the “Blogs” link on our homepage. You can also sign up for e-mail and text message alerts.

— Justin Schneider, online reporter/manager

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Just what we need another die hard Liberal. I won’t buy his music anymore due to his liberal stand let alone vote him in office. Stick to what you do best John and thats music.

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Weather: Cloudy skies and a chance of flurries
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More sunshine expected for Thursday

For the first week of March, we will start off with cloudy skies and a chance for flurries or sprinkles Monday through Wednesday. Forecast highs expected to be in the mid 30s during this time. By the end of the week, improving weather returns to Central Indiana. More sunshine by Thursday and temperatures will be more seasonal for this time of year, even a few 60-degree days are possible by the upcoming weekend.
Funeral services for Monday, March 1

Local funeral services and visitation hours are listed for publication in The Herald Bulletin on Monday, March 1.

BENNERT, JERALY M. — Graveside service and burial 11 a.m. today at Anderson Memorial Park Cemetery. Arrangements by Roop-Johnson Funeral Service, Anderson.

COOK, WILLIAM R., JR. — Memorial service 10 a.m. today in Gardens of Memory Cemetery, Muncie. Arrangements by the Whites Funeral Home, Muncie.

KASDOM, JACK W. — Service 11 a.m. Tuesday at Willow St. Pierre Funeral Service, Lapel Chapel, Pendleton. Visitations 3 to 8 p.m. today at the Lapel Chapel.

MCDOLE, MARY A. — Service 11 a.m. Tuesday at Scott E. Herbstler Funeral Home, Lapel. Visitations 2 to 5 p.m. today at the funeral home.

MENILY, DORIS M. — Service 11:30 a.m. today at Robert D. Loose Funeral Home South Chapel, Anderson.

MURDOCK, MARY E. — Service 11:30 a.m. Tuesday at Wesley First Methodist Church, Anderson. Visitations 4 to 8 p.m. today at Robert D. Loose Funeral Home South Chapel, Anderson.

PEGEL, SANDRA R. — Service 10 a.m. today at Jenkins & Sons Funeral Home, Silverlake. Visitations one hour prior to today’s service.

SAFFORD, GEORGE F. — Service 11 a.m. Tuesday at Robert D. Loose Funeral Home South Chapel, Anderson. Visitations two hours prior to the Tuesday service at the South Chapel.

SWERLER, BETTY JOAN — Service 1 p.m. Tuesday at Brown-Bible DeGroot & Dehmler Funeral Home, Anderson. Visitations 4 to 8 p.m. this evening at the funeral home.

THOMSON, EDWARD J. — Service 7 p.m. this evening at Robert D. Loose Funeral Home South Chapel, Anderson. Visitations two hours prior to the service.

VANNART, HAROLD V. — Service 2 p.m. Wednesday at Wheeler Funeral Service, Alexandria. Visitations 4 to 8 p.m. Tuesday at the funeral home.

WHITE, LINDA L. — Service 11 a.m. today at Reed Station Christian Church, Yorktown. Visitations one hour prior to the service at the church. Arrangements by Gillam Funeral Home, Yorktown.

WILHAIN, JOHN E. — Celebration of Life service 11 a.m. today at Florida State Church of God. Visitations one hour prior to the service at the church. Arrangements by Wheeler Funeral Service, Alexandria.
Marie Osmond's son commits suicide in L.A.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LOS ANGELES – Marie Osmond's 18-year-old son Michael Blosil has died, the entertainer said Saturday.

Osmond said in a statement through her publicist that her family is devastated by the "tragic loss." She did not provide details on the death.

"Entertainment Tonight" reported on its Web site that Blosil jumped to his death Friday night from a downtown Los Angeles apartment building.

Officers responded to an apparent suicide jump in the area, but the victim was not identified Saturday, Los Angeles Police Officer Gregory Buiak said.

"My family and I are devastated and in deep shock by the tragic loss of our dear Michael and ask that everyone respect our privacy during this difficult time," Osmond said in the statement.

Blosil reportedly left a note which referred to a lifelong battle with depression.

In 2009, Osmond said Michael was treated at a rehabilitation facility, but she didn't disclose the nature of his problem.

Donny Osmond, Blosil's uncle, told "Entertainment Tonight": "Please pray for my sister and her family."

Michael is one of Osmond's five adopted children. She also has three other children from two marriages. She divorced Brian Blosil in 2007 after two decades of marriage. She and her first husband, Stephen Craig, divorced in 1985.

Osmond earned fame at age 13 with the hit song "Paper Roses," and starred with her brother, Donny, on television's "Donny and Marie Show" during the 1970s.

They perform a musical variety show regularly at the Flamingo Las Vegas Hotel and Casino. The hotel said Saturday's performance was canceled.
Sheriff: Suspect ‘surprised’ SWAT members

Officials didn’t have time to assess scene, Richardson says

By CHRISTINA M. WEGLING, Herald Bulletin Staff Writer

ANDERSON — The Madison County Sheriff said deputies who were setting up a perimeter for a possibly armed man never got the chance to evacuate nearby residents.

“He surprised the officers by being back in the woods,” said Sheriff Ron Richardson.

County SWAT team members Capt. Rob Okowy, a 14-year veteran, and Officer Dave Morgan, a 26-year veteran, were setting up a perimeter Friday afternoon in the 700 block of East Sixth Street in Alexandria on a tip that Mark E. Croy, 47, was at a residence there, Richardson said.

Croy, wanted on a misdemeanor and armed with a sawed-off shotgun, refused to surrender, so the officers shot him “multiple times,” according to the sheriff.

Neighbors expressed concern Saturday that they were sitting in their homes with no knowledge that the SWAT team members were literally in their backyards. Richardson called Friday that the tip in the department warrant “may have been wrong.”

“That’s not right that nobody came around and said anything — and with my granddaughters in there,” said Tammy Combs, who lives directly west of the wooded area where Croy was shot.

“If they’re going to be that close, they need to warn somebody.”

Dustin Summers, the father of Combs’ three grandchildren, said the kids — six months old, 14 months old and 2-year-old — were in a bedroom that lay a hundred yards from the crime scene.

“I was outside in the garage and didn’t even hear anything,” he said.

Richardson said the team typically evaluates the danger of a situation, and if it “presents some type of immediate danger, that immediate area would be evacuated.” But, this time, the suspect appeared before they could do any of that on Friday.

Croy was in a wooded area sitting a creek behind the target residence, the sheriff said.

The house lay about 50 yards or so from the back of the house.

“So that was not part of our plans,” the sheriff said.

Garrett Crist, who lives about three houses down from the wooded area, said he was sitting in his living room chair Friday afternoon just before the shots.

“I just heard one big, loud shot,” he said. Crist added he stood on his porch and watched as Croy was loaded into the ambulance.

The Indiana State Police are investigating the incident and will turn their results over to the Madison County Prosecutor’s office to be reviewed, said a news release issued Saturday.

Court records show Croy had a criminal history that includes numerous battery charges and protective orders. He was released from Madison County Jail on Feb. 17, after posting a $5,000 bond on charges of Class D felony domestic battery, strangulation and criminal confinement. The records show a warrant was issued Feb. 24 on a charge of Class A misdemeanor invasion of privacy.

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I can’t blame the man. The system has no answers but violence. Deadly
Children greet tooth fairy, get screened
Dental professionals volunteer to help kids

An seller — Children were greeted by the Tooth Fairy and learned all about taking care of their teeth at the 13th annual Dental Health Fair at the Anderson Public Library on Saturday.

"It's for public information and to reach out to the families in the community and teach them about good health habits," said Dr. Heidi Hecht, a member of the East Central Indiana Dental Hygienists Association who set up helped coordinate the event. "And to provide a service that's free."

Nine dental hygienists and dentists Dr. Dan Buell of Midtown Family Dentistry, and Dr. Tony Grasso, retired, volunteered their time for four hours on Saturday. They offered the free dental screenings that included a fluoride treatment and dental hygiene education.

According to assistant children's librarian Janneeta Graham, about 40 of the 80 children attending the fair received two screenings. The other children were given gifts with dental care products, she said.

"They had a good turnout with it because it was a steady flow of people," she said.

Hecht said the association also put up a puppet show for the children, "teaching brushing twice a day, eating healthy foods, flossing, using toothpaste with fluoride."

The fair, which takes place in the children's section on the second floor of the library, has been at the Anderson Public Library for at least 10 years, Graham said.

"We used to go into the schools," Hecht said. "At this time, Anderson has a lot of elementary schools and it was hard for us to get into all of the schools."

Hecht said the fair allows children an opportunity to have their teeth looked at in a non-threatening atmosphere.

"Some of the kids we saw today had never been to a dentist," she said. "For them, if we saw something that needed attention right away, we do tell the parents about that."

She recommended a few local places that cater to families who may not have dental coverage, such as the Madison County Community Health and the new dental hygienist program at Ivy Tech Community College.

"It takes you longer because these are students and you're in a learning situation," Hecht said of the community college clinic. "But it's a very relaxed tool.

Major problems with children's oral care include not brushing often enough and eating unhealthy snacks. Hecht said.

"It's not only not healthy for their bodies but they're also going to have more cavities," she said of the very unhealthy diet for national childhood obesity.

The Anderson Public Library and the dental association work well together, according to Graham and Hecht. So, next year has already been set up for the last Saturday in February, Hecht said.

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