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Rooted in tradition



Susan Choma, of Novi, shows the first page of a booklet that traces her family lineage to William Bradford, who arrived in America in 1620 on the Mayflower and later became the first governor of Massachusetts. SUSAN BROMLEY/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

Woman traces family tree to Mayflower passenger

Susan Bromley Hometownlife.com USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

When Novi resident Susan Choma celebrates Thanksgiving, it will be with the knowledge that she is related to one of the pilgrims to which the American holiday traces its own roots.

The General Society of Mayflower Descendants recently certified Choma as a member after she submitted docu-

mentation that traces her lineage to William Bradford, an English pilgrim who sailed to America in 1620, landing at Cape Cod. Bradford helped establish the Plymouth colony in Massachusetts and became its first governor.

"I won't be wearing a costume of any sort, but I host Thanksgiving and I do look forward to it," Choma said. "It's a nice holiday to celebrate and we have a personal connection and that is fun." It wasn't an easy task to trace 14 generations of family history to find Bradford, who was one of 102 passengers who made the voyage, the 400th anniversary of which will be celebrated next year.

The ship anchored in Cape Cod in November 1620 with English settlers who were seeking religious freedom.

See MAYFLOWER, Page 8A

State police: Extortion accusations in Milford 'unfounded'

Susan Vela Hometowniife.com USA TODAY NETWORK – MICHIGAN

A fired public services worker is suing his former employers – the Village of Milford and Public Services Director Robert Calley – despite Michigan State Police ruling his extortion accusations were unwarranted.

"My investigation revealed (Michael) Esson was being dishonest about his allegations and the matter would be closed as unfounded," concluded a report by MSP Detective Sgt. Mark Lambert.

Esson, the village's former assistant public services director, filed his federal suit demanding a jury and more than \$75,000 in October.

In his suit, Esson claims Calley was extorting him by demanding money

See ACCUSATIONS, Page 9A

Area malls list hours for Thanksgiving, Black Friday

David Veselenak Hometownlife.com USA TODAY NETWORK – MICHIGAN

Several area malls will open their doors early this holiday season to handle the bevy of shoppers looking for that perfect gift. Here's what to expect this week as you prepare to put down that pumpkin pie and pick up that shopping bag.

Twelve Oaks Mail

The lone mall in the Hometown Life area that will be open Thanksgiving Day is Twelve Oaks Mall, 27500 Novi Road, Novi.

The mall will be open from 6 p.m. to midnight.

"We found that a lot of people, after they eat, they come to the mall and do

See HOURS, Page 9A

October restaurant in specific in Specific for Oakland County

David Veselenak Hometownlife.com
USA TODAY NETWORK – MICHIGAN

Bugs found in liquor bottles. Moldy food in the refrigerator. Restaurants marketing the wrong kinds of fish on the menu.

that
In October
of restaurants, char
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helped to hens.

wreaths curants in the following commuand bus listed "priority" violations, the
and 23 derious of violations. Lesser violaannual exclude "core" and "priority foundownto," which are not listed in the rePriority violations can lead to

foodborne illness.

Hometown Life requested Oakland County's inspection reports for October and found the following priority violations:

See INSPECTIONS, Page 3A

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Robert Meisner

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Rex was spotted by GM staff members, including Operations Manager Frank Taverna, repeatedly in those areas in the week following his escape on Halloween night from the home he shared with Annette Jones near Commerce and Hickory Ridge roads.

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Miesha Krueger, communications lead for the proving ground, said, "4,000 acres is a lot of space for a little pug to hide. We are working hard with the owner and with South Lyon Murphy. We are happy to help as best we can and are keeping our fingers crossed."

Taverna said while they are all heartbroken, they don't know what else to do.

"We have done everything we could have imagined," he said.

Jones is emotionally drained, but holds out hope Rex will come home, no matter how far he may have

"I am mentally tapped, this has really taken a toll on me," she said. "It would be great if he is out there and someone found him. People are supportive and praying and our family really appreciates that. ...

"If you see him, don't go after or call out to him, just take a picture and tell us where you saw him."

Anyone who sees Rex should call Annette Jones at 313-461-4302 or Ted Jones at 248-880-5541, or send a message to the South Lyon Murphy page on Facebook. Contact reporter Susan Bromley at sbromley@ hometownlife.com or 517-281-2412. Reach her on Twitter @SusanBromley10.

Watch out for Black Friday-related scams



Money Matters Rick Bloom Guest columnist

I first would like to take this opportunity to wish you and yours a very Happy Thanksgiving. What makes Thanksgiving or any holiday special is that we get to spend time with family and friends, so I hope you take this opportunity to enjoy your loved ones.

Recently, I received an email from a reader who told me the trouble she encountered last year on Black Friday when she bought some holiday gifts on a bogus website. She received an email about a Black Friday special and it turned out the website was bogus. Her credit card information was stolen, and she told me all the problems she encountered.

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It is important that if you're using a website you're unfamiliar with, before you give them any of your sensitive information, do some research to make sure that the website you're using is legit.

Another thing to do to protect yourself is to not click on pop-up ads. In many situations you see pop-up ads on legitimate sites, so you assume it's okay to link to them; unfortunately, that is not the case. Once again, a better way of going is to type the web address in the browser yourself.

Lastly, one way to protect yourself is to use a charge card versus a debit card. Under our consumer protecp laws, charge cards have a little more protection ebit cards. When shopping online I generally

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Have a wonderful Thanksgiving holiday!

Good luck!

posts that

Rick Bloom is a fee-only financial advisor. His website is www.bloomassetmanagement.com. If you would like Rick to respond to your questions, email rick@bloomassetmanagement.com.







NORTHVILLE GARDEN CLUB READIES HOLIDAY WREATHS



Northville Garden Club members Liliana Miyahora, left, Feranda Ruaro and Nachiko Hirato tie pine cones to a wreath using wire Nov. 19 at Cady Inn at Mill Race Village in Northville. PHOTOS BY JOHN HEIDER/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM



Garden club members Sharon Smith, left, and Suemarie Klimek work to finish a wreath for delivery.



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Garden club members take a break from putting together wreaths to enjoy lunch. The club raised about \$7,000 at its annual Greens Mart. The funds will go toward the club's scholarship program to benefit Northville High students attending Schoolcraft and other higher education institutions.





Julie Mantay, past president of the garden club, chats on the phone outside the inn. Mantay, who is still a member of the garden club, was one of many people who helped to distribute wreaths to local families and businesses Nov. 19 and 23 during the club's annual Greens Mart in downtown Northville.



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Robert Meisner **Guest columnist**

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Where to find Small Business Saturday deals

David Veselenak Hometownlife com USA TODAY NETWORK – MICHIGAN

Of course you can shop in the large stores for those presents for your family. You can head to the mall. But going small will show them you really hunted for that special gift this holiday season.

Thanks to the multitude of options across the region, shoppers can head out across most Hometown Life communities to help shop small during Small Business Saturday. The event, which has been a national initiative since 2010, has garnered a following across several communities. Some communities have special events just for Small Business Saturday, and others have other events throughout the weekend.

Here's what's happening across several communities this weekend if you're looking to celebrate the beginning of the holiday shopping season.

Birmingham

The area around Old Woodward and Maple has long been a haven for local shopping, but can be tricky when it comes to driving and finding a place to park. That's why the Birmingham Shopping District has teamed up with ridesharing service Lyft to provide discounts on rides to downtown.

"That's the biggest thing," said Ingrid Tighe, executive director of the Birmingham Shopping District. "People can come in and get that big discount for that ride into town."

Shoppers can type in the code BHAMDAY19 from noon to 5:59 p.m. to obtain \$7 off a ride to downtown Birmingham. Type code BHAMNIGHT19 from 6 p.m. to 11:59 p.m. to receive \$3 off a ride. The promotion runs through the end of the year or until funds for the promotion run out. For those who do drive, parking will be free in the city's parking garages that day, and there will be free two-hour valet at two locations: North Old Woodward at Hamilton, and South Old Woodward near Merrill.

In addition to those rides, shoppers can enjoy the second Santa Walk, which kicks off at 9:30 a.m. Saturday in the parking lot near the southwest corner of Maple and Bates. Families will be able to

welcome Santa Claus to town as he sets up shop in his little house in Shain Park, where he'll hear the requests of area children for what they want for Christmas.

Complimentary carriage rides will take place through the city's streets from II a.m. to 3 p.m. that day as well.

In addition, all Oakland County communities are participating in the Small Business Saturday contest, where shoppers can enter to win vouchers for Southwest Airlines. Those who shop at small businesses across the county are eligible. For more information on how to enter, visit the Oakland County website at oakgov.com.

Farmington

Head to downtown Farmington to peruse several shops offering deals for Small Business Saturday.

Several stores, including Page's Food and Spirits, Clothes Encounters and more will have specials running on the day. Shoppers can pick up a special downtown Farmington passport and collect stamps to enter to win a downtown Farmington "swag bag."

"We are also encouraging additional merchants to jump on and use a passport we have available," said Kate Knight, the executive director of the Farmington DDA.

A full list of deals being offered on Small Business Saturday can be found on the downtown Farmington website, downtownfarmington.org.

Novi

When one thinks of shopping small, Novi might not be the first city that comes to mind. But Hillary Hentschel is hoping it can become one thanks to a new program she's heading at the Novi Public Library.

The library at 45255 W. 10 Mile will host several small businesses selling their goods from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday in the meeting room near the Read-a-Latte Cafe.

Hentschel, a business librarian at the library, said she had heard about this being hosted in libraries in other parts of the country and decided to bring it to Novi.

"I had been reading about other libraries who have done similar concepts," she said. "I thought why couldn't we do that? I talked to (Library Director) Julie (Farkas) and we worked it out to try and do that this year."

She said they'll have a room full of businesses selling items such as jewelry, essential oils, home decor and more, with many of the sellers coming from the Novi area.

It's Hentschel's hope the program is one that can take place every year. She said it's a great way for those working additional "gigs" to have some exposure without needing their own shop.

"I think part of what led to this is understanding there are more and more people that are working more than one job at the same time," she said.

Milford

While there's nothing specific organized for Small Business Saturday in Milford, the downtown area encourages shoppers to head out Friday for the annual Give Back Friday event. Come out and shop specials at several stores in downtown Milford, with businesses donating a portion of their sales to charities of their choice.

Come back Saturday to celebrate the holiday season with the annual Christmas parade, beginning at 10 a.m. through downtown Milford.

Northville

Downtown Northville does not have an organized Small Business Saturday set of events, but Jeri Johnson of the Northville DDA said this is the time of year most businesses look forward to for sales.

"For us, it's just very charming," said Johnson, the DDA's marketing and communications director. "It's very picturesque at the holidays. It's very walkable and people can go from store to store."

While there aren't a lot of events this upcoming weekend, Northville will host Shop Till You Drop on Dec. 6. The event focuses on plenty of sales and shopping throughout downtown Northville and takes place 5-9 p.m.

Plymouth

Another community without an organized event for Small Business Saturday is Plymouth. But those looking to spend time along Ann Arbor Trail and Main Street can do this on Friday when Santa Claus returns to Plymouth to kick off the holiday season.

The arrival of Kris Kringle begins at 5:15 p.m. with the P-CEP choir performing. Santa will arrive via fire truck and turn on the city's lights at 6 p.m.

"We always have a huge crowd any time Santa comes to town," said Tony Bruscato, the director of the Plymouth DDA. "It's just a festive feeling that everyone likes to start the holiday season off."

If you're looking to shop in a holidaythemed atmosphere, the annual Christmas in Plymouth event takes place 5-9 p.m. Dec. 5 downtown. There will be plenty of sales at shops, as well as horse-drawn carriage rides, live music and live reindeer with elves.

In addition, the Mistletoe Market will open from noon to 9 p.m. that day at The Gathering and sell fresh greens for the holidays and other goodies.

Wayne

Looking for some free money to shop small? Downtown Wayne will be where you want to head on Small Business Saturday

The annual celebration along Michigan Avenue kicks off at 10 a.m. Saturday at Karma Coffee, 35634 Michigan Ave., where shoppers can pick up a tote bag that contains items such as a gift card of a random amount to a random store.

"I think it's a really important time for the downtown area," said Sam Rainey, interim director of Wayne Main Street. "I don't think people realize what type of shops we have."

The first 100 guests will receive a free coffee as well.

And for those looking to visit with St. Nick, he'll be holding court from noon to 2 p.m. at the State Wayne Theater, 35310 Michigan Ave. There, children can visit and take photos.

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



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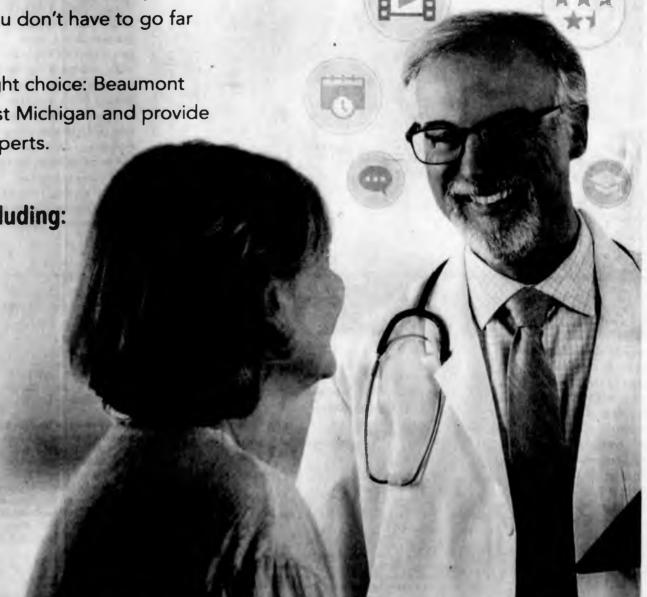
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Immediate Occupancy Opportunities Available

design. The first-floor of the Pentwater is an open-concept space with a well-appointed gourmet kitchen and center island, spacious family room, and formal dining area. The second-floor offers an expansive master suite with large walk-in closet and lavish bath, and two additional bedrooms share a secondary full bath. The Pentwater is exceptionally priced at \$449,995.

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Judge rules to send Brennan to trial

Cobb argued Brennan did not commit perjury and

did not tamper with evidence when removing personal

information from a cell phone during her 2016 divorce

al, said last month Guinn made the right decision to

But Daniel Grado, an assistant state attorney gener-

Kayla Daugherty Livingston Daily **USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN**

A Wayne County Circuit Court judge ruled that former judge Theresa Brennan will stand trial on three felonies despite her request for the charges to be dis-

Britt Cobb, one of Brennan's attorneys, argued last month that Genesee County District Court Judge David Guinn didn't have enough evidence to bind her over for trial on the charges after a preliminary hearing that ended in June.

Wayne County Circuit Court Judge Paul Cusick dis-

agreed.

"In this case, there is enough circumstantial evidence that Defendant actively delayed recusing herself in her own divorce case to 'plot and scheme' what she should do with evidence that was being requested," Cusick wrote in an opinion issued Friday.

He said proof of guilt beyond a reasonable doubt is not required to bind over a defendant, simply credible evidence.

Brennan was charged last year with perjury, tampering with evidence and common law offenses by the Michigan Attorney General's office.

Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel's office alleges Brennan gave false testimony regarding a cell phone that was considered a marital asset during proceedings in her own divorce case. It also said she committed misconduct by failing to recuse herself immediately from her own divorce case and used the delay to dispose of evidence.

"If the credible evidence conflicts and raises a reasonable doubt as to Defendant's guilty, then the issue of guilt becomes a question of fact left to the trier of fact," he said.

bind the case over for trial. Any other arguments over the evidence should be left for a jury to decide, he said.

About the charges

from Don Root.

Last year, Brennan testified she had the cell phone restored to factory settings, contrary to her previous testimony in her 2016 divorce case. That phone is currently in the custody of the Michigan State Police.

During a Judicial Tenure Commission hearing last year, Brennan's court reporter, Felicia Milhouse, said she was asked by Brennan to look up how to delete Hotmail and Gmail accounts from a phone.

The Michigan State Police Computer Crime Unit confirmed Milhouse's work computer was used to make searches on how to deactivate and terminate a Hotmail account two days after a motion was filed by the attorney for Root seeking to preserve evidence in the divorce case, according to the charging affidavit.

The perjury charge is punishable by a maximum sentence of 15 years in prison. Tampering or destroying evidence is punishable by up to four years in prison, and the charge of common law offenses is punishable by up to five years in prison.

Change of venue

Brennan's attorneys also asked that the trial, now scheduled for January, take place outside of Livingston County, saying Brennan would not receive a fair trial due to extensive media coverage.

"The publicity in this case is rather pervasive, particularly locally," said Larry Willey, one of her attorneys, "The point that distinguishes from yes, there is a criminal charge, is that the publicity also involved the Judicial Tenure Commission proceeding ongoing at the same time and dealt with the result of the proceeding, as well as the events leading up to this."

Cusick acknowledged there has been significant media coverage of the case but said there must be a showing of actual prejudice for the venue to be changed. Willey agreed that the motion can be decided after attempts have been made to seat a jury in Livingston County.

Removal from the bench

On June 28, just over a year after the Judicial Tenure Commission filed a wide-ranging complaint against the former judge, the Michigan Supreme Court ordered Brennan's removal from the bench.

The Supreme Court determined Brennan committed eight instances of misconduct, including not disclosing her relationships with then-Michigan State Police detective Sean Furlong and local attorney Shari Pollesch.

"In determining appropriate sanctions, we seek to restore and maintain the dignity and impartiality of the judiciary and to protect the public," the opinion

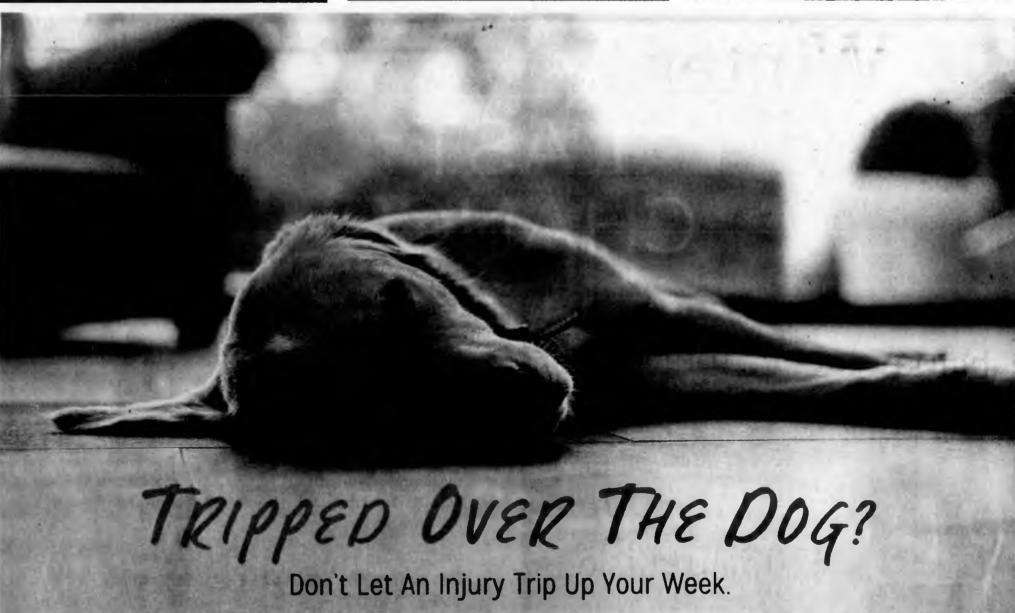
Brennan was sued by Livingston County, which claims she abused her authority by using court employees "as free labor" to perform personal tasks while being paid by the county. But that lawsuit has since been dropped due to lack of notice to Brennan but could be refiled.

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Wayne County commission to look at sale of Hines Park mills

David Veselenak Hometownlife.com
USA TODAY NETWORK – MICHIGAN

It's been a long process since it was made public that Wayne County would pursue the sale of three historic mills in Hines Park.

Soon, it appears the Wayne County Commission will get its chance to weigh in on the sale of two of them.

It's expected that the commission's committee on public services will take up the two purchase agreements for the Wilcox Mill, which sits at 230 Wilcox in Plymouth, and the Newburgh Mill, at 37401 Hines Drive in Livonia.

The agreements, if approved Tuesday by the committee, would then go to the full county commission for a vote on whether to sell the two parcels. No agenda for the meeting had been posted as of Wednesday morning, though several county officials said they expected it would be taken up then.

While the plans for the Wilcox Mill have long been public — Plymouth resident Tony Roko hopes to turn it into an art center — the plans for the Newburgh mill haven't been discussed as publicly. But plans for the mill will seem familiar to those who have followed the saga.

The county selected Richard Cox, a developer known for redeveloping the mill in downtown Northville, to sell to. At the former mill, which operated as a factory for Henry Ford in the first half of the 20th century, would be a distillery and a small area for a place such as a coffee shop or smoothie bar. It would also house amenities such as bicycle rental for people in Hines Park, said Khalil Rahal, assistant Wayne County executive. A small park would also be installed on the grounds of the Livonia mill.

The project was selected utilizing a committee of people representing both county and Livonia city officials.

"In the end, we ended up taking the highest and best project," Rahal said.

Cox is familiar with the process of purchasing mills owned by the county: he bought the Phoenix Mill in Plymouth



About 50 people attended an informational meeting hosted by Save Hines Park recently at Schoolcraft College. DAVID VESELENAK/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

Township from the county and is in the process of having it developed into a restaurant and banquet facility. Cox told the Plymouth Township Planning Commission earlier this year he hopes to reopen the facility some time next year.

The Newburgh Mill sits on 1.8 acres and the selling price is \$405,000, Rahal

In addition to selling the land with restrictions to Cox, Rahal said the county commission will also look to take up acquiring some additional land for the Wayne County Sheriff to use. Currently, the mounted division is housed next to the Newburgh Mill, and the county is looking at purchasing land not only

from the Wayne County Land Bank in Westland in the Hawthorne Valley area but also a private holder to develop a new facility for horses. That area would be located not far from the current parks headquarters in the 8000 block of Farmington Road in Westland.

Rahal said the land is being purchased by for \$200,000, who will then deed it to the county. Cox will then develop the stables and facilities for the mounted division, and must stay under the remaining \$205,000. Any expense above that figure, Rahal said, will have to be paid by Cox.

In addition, the sheriff's facilities must be built before Cox has access to

the mil

"We have taken all the risk off of the county. The developer here has all the risk," Rahal said. "Until they get a certificate of occupancy, they cannot get the Newburgh site."

The county commission's committee on public services is scheduled to meet at 9:30 a.m. Tuesday in the Guardian Building, 500 Griswold in Detroit.

While there are pretty of advocates for the sale, Save Hines Park, a group that formed to speak out against the sale of the mills to private developers, met Monday at Schoolcraft College to share updates and to rally their supporters to contact their county commissioners to vote against selling the mills.

The group has its roots in a group that rallied against the sale of the Warren Valley Golf Course in Dearborn Heights several years ago.

The group has said they have no problem redeveloping the mills — which have been underutilized for decades — but are against the sale of public park land to private developers.

"We are not against partnering with private individuals," said Nancy Darga, a former chief of design for Wayne County parks and a Northville resident. "We're against losing control or ownership of the facilities themselves."

County Commissioner Diane Webb, D-Livonia, said she supported the sale of the Phoenix Mill when it came to the commission, because that mill hadn't been in the park system for decades, according to the deed. It had been an asset of the roads division.

But Webb, who represents Redford, Dearborn Heights and part of Livonia, said she's against the current proposals.

"Wilcox Mill and Newburgh Mill are park assets," she said. " ... they've been taking your park millage money all these years to pay for those parks and they are selling them on you, which is wrong."

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



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Mayflower

Continued from Page 1A

Bradford was among 41 colonists to sign the Mayflower Compact.

During their first winter in America, half of the Plymouth settlers died.

Bradford, who was about 30 when he landed in America, lost his first wife, Dorothy, when she fell off the deck where the Mayflower was anchored while he was on land searching for the best place to build a settlement.

He married Alice Southworth three years later, shortly after she arrived in Plymouth. The pair had three children together, including eldest son William, from which Choma's line descends.

Choma said her aunt did most of the work tracing back these earlier generations, and she has handled more recent documentation.

"I knew the society was out there, and it's really hard to prove lineage to be accepted," she said.

When her father, Leonard Andrus, was nearing the end of his life a year and a half ago, Choma came across the various documents that would help her prove she was a Mayflower descendant, including birth and death certificates and marriage licenses.

"Some of it was tricky, there were a couple pieces of documentation that I had a hard time coming by when I sent in the application, but I got them at the end of the day," she said. "I waited a year and now just received verification and I am part of that special group."

Choma joked that her sister calls her a nerd, but she is thrilled to look back at her origins and see the migration from Massachusetts to New York, the Grand Rapids area and, finally, to Novi.

"If it had been on me and my aunt hadn't paved the way, we wouldn't be sitting here talking right now, but I have always been interested in history and people, and love reading biographies about people all over the word and this was a cool connection for my family," she said. "If William hadn't come over, I guess I'd be in England or Holland."

She said she feels fortunate to know where her father's family came from and wishes it was possible on her mother's side. Tracing that family history would be a challenge, as her mother was raised in a foster family from the time she was 5.



Susan Choma's paternal greatgrandmother Nellie Williams, seated at left in front of husband Emory, was a descendant of Mayflower passenger William Bradford.

"I think it's really cool and
I am honored to have that
connection (to the pilgrims).
It feels good to know that
you know your background
to that extent."

Susan Choma Descendant of William Bradford, who was a passenger on the Mayflower in 1620

Choma said she believes there are probably "a heck of a lot" of people who can trace their ancestry all the way back to the Mayflower pilgrims but haven't investigated or explored the possibility.

The Society of Mayflower Descendants in Michigan alone has more than 800 members.

According to their website, The General Society of Mayflower Descendants has "established a network of more than 150,000 descendants all over the world who form lifelong bonds, cherish the sacred memory of our ancestors and continue on their legacy through purpose,



Choma shows the massive family tree that traces her father's side of the family. PHOTOS BY SUSAN BROMLEY/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

preservation, and education."

Choma is happy to be a part of it, and already has taken advantage of resources that allow her further examination of her history.

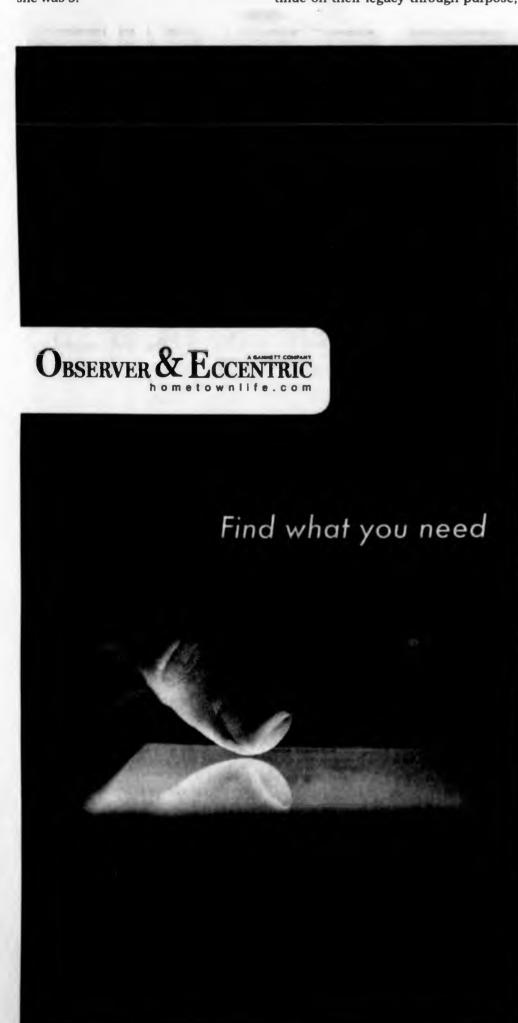
She also recently attended a luncheon for society members in Frankenmuth, at which the Mayflower Compact was read.

At the meeting, she also learned of a

DNA project to help connect more peo-

"I think it's really cool and I am honored to have that connection (to the Pilgrims)," she said. "It feels good to know that you know your background to that extent."

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





Accusations

Continued from Page 1A

from cement work he did as a side occupation during his off hours. Esson further stated he was fired over the summer because he took his extortion claims to state troopers.

Esson's attorney, Scott Batey, of Bingham Farms, disagreed with Lambert's conclusion, along with the the state agency's decision to investigate after Village Manager Christian Wuerth – not his client – took his own concerns to state troopers.

"Their findings are completely false," Batey said over the phone. "They put him (Esson) through a grueling five-hour polygraph examination, which far exceeds the normal limits. They went until midnight. You're going to be able to find discrepancies. Fatigue sets in.

"We have little to no confidence in the polygraph or the investigation conducted by the state police."

Hometown Life filed Freedom of Information Act requests for incident reports involving Esson, Calley and Corey LeMarbe, another of Calley's fired employees, because Esson and LeMarbe sued the village separately in U.S. District Court.

LeMarbe, a maintenance worker who has "essential tremors" in his hands, accused Calley of Americans With Disabilities Act violations but only named the village as a defendant. Batey is his attorney, too.

Wuerth and Calley have declined to comment about Esson and LeMarbe's allegations.

However, MSP's FOIA response showed troopers began investigating May 6, the day Lambert and his colleague, Detective 1st Lt. Robert Weimer, interviewed Wuerth, a month after, according to his lawsuit, Esson had gone to state troopers.

Esson had sent a May 1 letter to the village manager. The village manager said the accusations of extortion were

the first he ever heard pertaining to Cal-

Wuerth also told state troopers he and Calley met with Esson two years prior because Esson hadn't completed certain certifications. Wuerth also noted Esson and LeMarbe were friends.

MSP's Lambert interviewed Calley June 17. The public services director said he and Esson have known each other for 25 years and they did side jobs together once Esson began working for the village in 2014.

Esson's lawsuit alleges that Calley agreed to letting him use vacation time to complete a six-figure 2014 cement job in Indiana – if he paid Calley 20% of his earnings. Later, the lawsuit alleges, Calley agreed to a \$5,000 payment for the approved vacation time.

"Calley stated he never force(d) Esson to pay any money," Lambert's report reads. "Calley stated he was told by Esson he would possibly need help with the job and once Esson had an opportunity to evaluate the job he would let him know

"Calley went on to say Esson went and completed the job and he was never call(ed) by Esson to help, but once Esson returned he gave him \$5,000 for being on standby."

Calley then told Lambert he never asked for Esson's money and "he would never jeopardize his job."

The FOIA response included some receipts with handwritten notes such as "\$200 to Bob."

A polygraph document shows Esson agreed to the exam at 6:37 p.m. June 10. Esson also was able to write down his version of the truth, which he signed at 9:54 p.m. that day.

Lambert also interviewed Esson at least twice in May.

"Discrepancies were noticed between Esson's written statement and the information he provided during the interview," Lambert concluded.

Esson and LeMarbe's separate lawsuits are scheduled for December proceedings before different judges.

svela@hometownlife.com

Inspections

Continued from Page 1A

- 45 priority violations in the Birmingham/Bloomfield area
- 45 priority violations in Farming-
- ton and Farmington Hills

 24 priority violations in Novi
- 16 priority violations in South Lyon and Lyon Township
- 11 priority violations in Milford and

Highland townships

■ 20 in Northville and Northville Township

Check hometownlife.com to see the full reports from the previous month's inspections from each individual community. Those include the names of places in violation, as well as details on what caused the violations to be issued.

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

Hours

Continued from Page 1A

their shopping," said Kelsey Kiefer, a marketing specialist with the mall. There are some changes to Black Fri-

day at Twelve Oaks: Kiefer said the mall will be open at 8 a.m. instead of 7 a.m. Kiefer said the mall typically gets busier later in the morning and early af-

ternoon on Black Friday.

In addition to the mall, several anchor stores at Twelve Oaks will welcome shoppers on Thanksgiving. J.C. Penney will open at 2 p.m. and remain open un-

5 p.m. on Thanksgiving and remain open until 10 p.m. Friday.

Lord and Taylor will open at 5 p.m. Thursday, but will close at 1 a.m. It will reopen at 5 a.m. Friday and stay open

til 10 p.m. Friday. Macy's will open at

until 10 p.m.

Nordstrom will be closed for Thanksgiving but will be open from 10 a.m. to

Westland Shopping Center

9 p.m. Friday.

The shopping center at 35000 Warren in Westland will remain closed for Thanksgiving, but opens Friday from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m.

The mall will partner with other businesses in the Shop and Dine District for a holiday promotion to award two people \$5,000 shopping sprees good at all the stores in the mall, which will be awarded in a raffle Dec. 14. Shoppers in the mall between 10 a.m. and noon that day will have a chance to win one of the shopping sprees, among other prizes.

"We've put all of our efforts into this partnership," said Patrick Derrig, the mall's marketing director. "We want to support our city. It's a mutual reward for us."

For those looking to head out Thurs-

day night, there are a few options.

Kohl's will open at 5 p.m. at the Westland Shopping Center and remain open until midnight the following day – 31 hours straight.

J.C. Penney will open at 4 p.m. Thursday and remain open until 10 p.m. Friday night. Sears will open at 6 p.m. Thursday and close at midnight. It will reopen from 5 a.m. to 9 p.m. Friday.

Laurel Park Place

Dunham's, which opened Nov. 15 in the former Carson's space on the north end of the Livonia mall, will open at 3 p.m. and close at 1 a.m. It will reopen from 5 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. Friday.

The mall will reopen at 8 a.m. Friday and remain open until 10 p.m.

"We're excited to be able to give that day back to all of our staff and our community and turn Black Friday into a big shopping (day)," said Catharine Wells, director of corporate marketing for CBL Properties, the company that owns Laurel Park Place.

Von Maur, on the south side of the mall, will be closed on Thanksgiving and open from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Friday.

Other malls in the region

■ Somerset Collection, 2800 Big Beaver in Troy, will close for Thanksgiving. Those looking to shop can return at 8 a.m. Friday. The mall will remain open until 9 p.m.

■ Oakland Mall, 412 W. 14 Mile in Troy, will be open 6 p.m. to midnight Thanksgiving and that will be a voluntary open, so some stores may not be open. The mall will reopen at 6 a.m. Friday and be open until 10 p.m.

Southland Center, 23000 Eureka in Taylor, will be open 6 p.m. to midnight on Thanksgiving and 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. on Black Friday.

Great Lakes Crossing Outlets, 4000 Baldwin in Auburn Hills, will be open 6 a.m. to midnight on Thanksgiving and 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. on Black Friday.

Briarwood Mall, 100 Briarwood Circle in Ann Arbor, will be open from 5 p.m. to 1 a.m. on Thanksgiving and will be open 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. on Black Friday.

Contact reporter David Veselenak at dveselenak@hometownlife.com or 734-678-6728. Twitter: @davidveselenak. Oriental IMPORTS
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Area churches throw party for foster care families

Diane K. Bert Special to Hometownlife.com USA TODAY NETWORK – MICHIGAN

Thanksgiving filled the air as groups supporting people who provide foster care presented an evening of Thanksgiving.

Brightmoor Church, The New Foster Care organization, University Presbyterian, Kirk in the Hills Presbyterian and First Presbyterian Church of Birmingham volunteers planned a dinner and party for foster care families, adoptive families, and kinship families. Over 160 adults children attended the festivities at FPC. Guests came from Wayne and Oakland counties.

The New Foster Care agency believes it takes a team of organizations, partners, and great people to address the urgency for improved foster care in Michigan.

They provide clothing, bedding, crisis intervention, food assistance, mentoring and wrap around support for families. This organization was developed by Brightmoor Church in an effort to change the trajectory of youth's lives. Rev. Liza Munro provides leadership for this effort along with volunteers.

Over 40 volunteers helped make the evening a success. Dan Munro led activities for children with great enthusiasm.

"These children are in my heart," he noted. "They didn't choose to be in this situation but I can choose to help them out."

Children had fun with balloons provided. Some had butterfly wings on their backs made out of the balloons. They played, sang, and watched life size puppets on the stage as well as played word games with scripture words.

"The children can peek out and see that people love them," Menzaire Boykins said. "The community is able to help support them. The kids enjoyed themselves. I love to give back and see people happy and smiling."

Volunteers Elaine Mondt and Sue Herrick of University Presbyterian Church echoed this sentiment. "I enjoyed meeting and interacting with the families."

Many of the volunteers from Brightmoor Church prepared the bountiful Thanksgiving feast of salad, corn, green beans, potatoes, dressing, and turkey.



Regina Harrison, mentor for New Foster Care, and her colleague, Latrice Marshall, hold some of the stuffed animals available for children to take home from the Thanksgiving event. Foster families, adoptive families and kinship families were invited to attend the Thanksgiving Gathering to thank them for their care. DIANE K. BERT/SPECIAL TO HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

Vegetable trays were on the festively decorated tables and pumpkin pie completed the menu.

John Bassett, one of the volunteers, said: "We care about foster kids and hope this event brings a little relief, fellowship, and camaraderie. I hope patents can meet other foster parents and have a good time."

The smiles on faces and comments indicated that the foster parents were indeed having a good time as the children moved about with their balloons and chatted with one another.

Two of the helpers, Jon and Becca Kolenda, are directors of a week-long summer camp for foster children called Royal Family Kid's Camp and operate a mentor program. Many children have fond memories of these experiences.

Karen Gullberg Cook was present. She is a volunteer from Kirk in the Hills Church who brings a unique perspective to the realm of foster care. For over 30 years she has been an attorney dealing with child advocacy issues including abuse and neglect, guardianships, and termination of parental rights. She has been honored many times for her work.

She explains: "Because foster children fall through the cracks, and in the past did not have the support of the community, the involvement of churches and agencies has improved the delivery of services."

Rev. Kate Thoreson of FPC coordinates a statewide program called The Faith Community Coalition for Foster Care which unites congregations throughout the state to provide services for foster children, especially those aging out of foster care.

"These people are natural ones to extend love to children in rough situations. Faith communities have much to offer with donations, mentorships, and respite care," Thoresen notes.

Jasmine Uqdah is an articulate, soft

spoken worker in the New Foster Care Agency. She knows firsthand the challenges of being in foster care. She was in over 18 foster homes and changed schools frequently. She now wants to help current children in foster care.

Each of the children could choose a stuffed animal from the enticing array of possibilities. The girls received necklaces or jewelry. Boys and girls could also choose a beautiful warm winter hat knit by groups at First Presbyterian and Kirk in the Hills churches. The foster, adoptive, and kindred parents each received a \$50 Kroger gift card.

Some grandparents who are raising their grandchildren in kindred care situations had tears in their eyes as they saw volunteers lovingly 'making a fuss' over their children.

It was fun-filled evening for the families and a chance to thank foster parents for their fine, loving care of children in great need of a community that cares.



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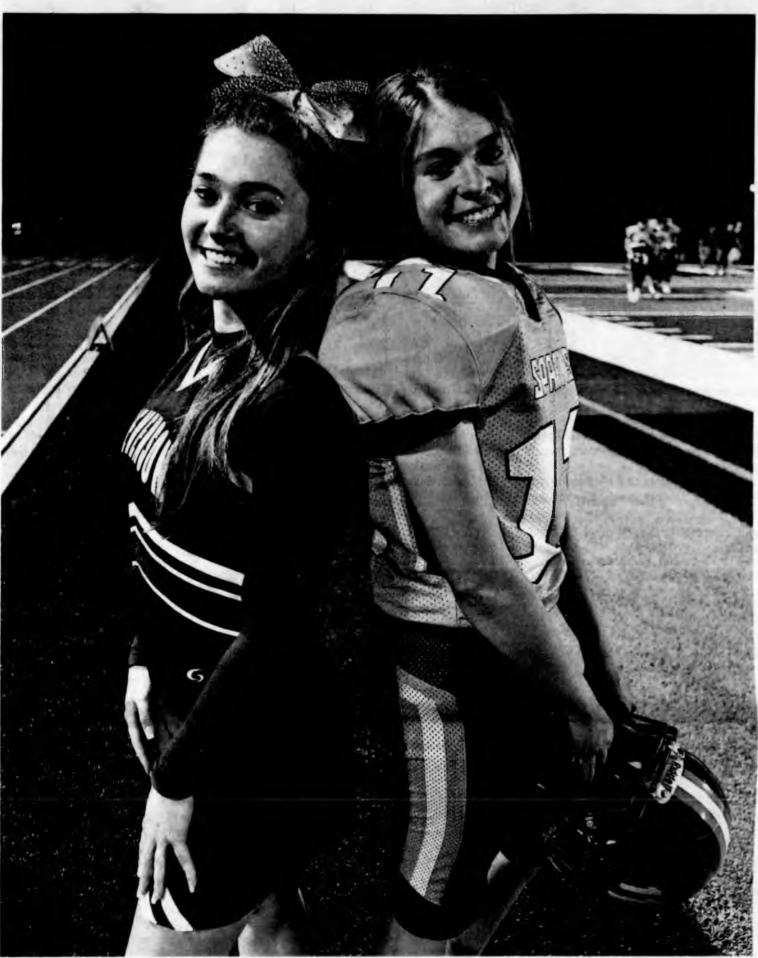
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DOUBLE THREAT



Twins Jenna Millis, left, a varsity cheerleader, and Maya, extra point kicker, both contribute to Livonia Stevenson football. JOHN HEIDER/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

Twin sisters tackle Stevenson football as kicker, cheerleader

Andrew Vailliencourt Hometownlife.com USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

Each week throughout the fall, twin sisters Maya and Jenna Millis prepared for Friday night football, hopeful for a Livonia Stevenson victory.

Maya plays on the football team, while Jenna is a varsity cheerleader.

After rising through the freshman and junior varsity ranks, this was Maya's first year on the varsity squad, making it the first season with Jenna - who has been on varsity all three years -

cheering her on. The Stevenson juniors have been looking forward to it ever since they began high school.

"We've always been waiting for the year we're both on varsity and I can

See TWINS, Page 2B

South Lyon **FC records** undefeated season

Colin Gav Hometownlife.com USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

Natalie Mac, Andrea Williams and Sophia Ohland grew up together on the soccer field. They know each other's tendencies, and each can predict what the other is going to do.

In the spring, when Mac and Williams take on Ohland as the South Lyon girls soccer team takes on South Lyon East, they joke around on the field, laughing as they have to mark each other in different jerseys.

"Both teams give 110 percent because we just want to rub it in their faces," Ohland said.

In the fall, however, Mac, Williams and Ohland are teammates, each suiting up for South Lyon FC, a local club

While none of the players knew the exact number of years they had played together, they knew it was for the majority of their childhood.

With all three being seniors, 2019 was the last season they would suit up for South Lyon FC, so they made it something special.

South Lyon FC finished the season undefeated, winning seven of eight matches and outscoring opponents 24-11. It was the first time the girls high school open team had finished at the top of its division in its history.

Head coach Matt McGlinnen, who has coached with South Lyon FC since 2011, credited the team's success to its being "senior-heavy," having 10 seniors throughout the season.

"That meant an amount of experience, an amount of leadership, an amount of experienced players being on the field for a good amount of game time," McGlinnen said. "It was really helpful for us."

But while the seniors ended their club career on a high note, Mac said winning is not the main reason why this team is special to her.

"Because I have been a part of this team for so long, I have kind of like grown up with some of these girls," Mac said. "It's really cool because winning is not necessarily the main thing. It's more like us being together."

Ohland remembers the amount of time the players on the team would hang out together, coming together off the field at parties their parents would throw or at hotels during tournament

That was when the players bonded

"You kind of build a friendship that you know won't break because you've been there with them since Day 1," Ohland said.

See UNDEFEATED, Page 2B

Lions, Thanksgiving a decades-long tradition for fans

Colin Gay Hometownlife.com USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

Denise Harting remembers her first Lions game. She remembers sitting in the back row of Tiger Stadium, where the Lions played from 1938-1974.

"We were up at the very top, and it was very cold, and a very gray day,"

Harting said. "The wall was behind us, so we were way at the top."

Little did the Bloomfield Hills woman know that it was the start of a tradition: It was Thanksgiving Day.

Detroit has hosted a Thanksgiving game 79 times, starting its streak in 1945. The Lions have a record of 37-40-2 on Thanksgiving Day.

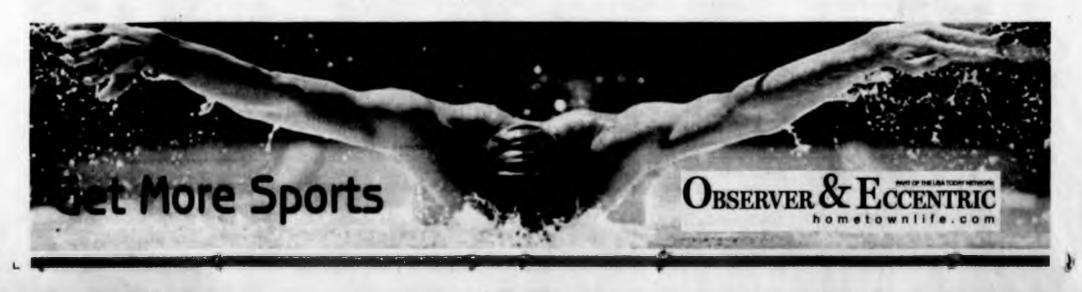
For the Harting family, it has been tradition since 1951.

"The Thanksgiving game is tradition. It's more family-oriented. You get people who go to Thanksgiving game that really want to be there for the experience," Harting said "It's a different environment.

"It's family."

Originally, Harting's grandfather acquired the tickets for his now-defunct downtown Detroit business on Woodward Avenue. He distributed the tickets he owned to his employees, but decided to save the Thanksgiving Day game tickets for his family.

See LIONS, Page 2B



Undefeated

Continued from Page 1B

While many players have known each other for a long time, Williams said the team chemistry is what brought South Lyon FC success, working together better on the soccer field.

Early on in the season, the players knew the atmosphere was different than in years past.

"Once I started to realize we could win this, I was making sure I was encouraging people in practice to stop slacking off because we could win this and there was a high probability that we could do it if we stayed focused," Mac said.

With an undefeated season in the fall, Mac said this could bring momentum to the spring season for her teammates' respective schools, knowing what success is like and having that experience of winning.

As a senior, Ohland wants this to continue for South Lyon FC moving forward

"At the end of the day, it's all about how much you want to win," Ohland said. "If they are kind of like 'Oh, we have a couple more years, it doesn't really matter,' they are not going to get it.

"If they want to keep the streak going, just because they want it, I believe they will get it."

In the last game of the season, what would have been the last game in her club career, Williams had to sit out due to sickness.

Because she was not contagious, Williams watched South Lyon FC from the sidelines.

"I could just tell everyone was putting their heart on the field and trying as hard as they could and giving their all for the last game," Williams said.

With a group of seniors that had played together for most of their childhood, who learned the game of soccer



Sophia Ohland is one of 10 seniors who helped South Lyon FC record an undefeated season this year. COURTESY OF JILL OHLAND

and learned to play with each other from an early age, this represented the end of an era.

After the game, the players hugged each other, taking pictures to memori-

alize what had just ended.

Williams was a part of that, but she did have one wish.

"I wish I could have been out there with them," she said.

Contact reporter Colin Gay at cgay@hometownlife.com or 248-330-6710. Follow him on Twitter @Colin-Gay17. Send game results and stats to Liv-Sports@hometownlife.com.

Lions

Continued from Page 1B

Each season, the schedule was the same for the Hartings: a group went to the game and the Thanksgiving meal would be waiting for them when they got home.

"At that point, I wasn't cooking dinner, so it didn't matter to me. I just came home and ate," Harting said.

When the Lions moved to the Silverdome in 1975, the Hartings continued to go to games, holding six tickets. But with the 2002 move to Ford Field, the family's tickets were cut down to just two. With seniority, though, the Hartings secured their two seats on the 40-yard line, just two rows back from the field.

Being so close to the field has its perks, especially as Harting's three sons grew up.

She said her sons received footballs, gloves and towels from the sideline, calling out to players, including her favorite: Jason Hanson, who kicked for the Lions from 1992-2012.

"My kids would just be there begging for that attention and (the players) would come over and give them something, acknowledge them," Harting



Denise Harting stands with her son, Jeff, in their seats ton the 40-yard line two rows behind the Lions during a game at Ford Field. The Hartings have attended the Lions home game on Thanksgiving Day since 1951. COURTESY OF DENISE HARTING

said. "When you have kids, it's a cool experience to see your kids light up at this athlete just asknowledging them"

athlete just acknowledging them."

While the Lions continued their

struggles, especially in the postseason – winning only one playoff game since that 1957 championship – the tickets were not about success, but about fam-

ily.

"One year, my mom's father had never been to a Lions game. We took him to the Lions game and he passed away the next month," Harting said. "Those kind of things, it always goes back to that family."

To Harting, the tickets are priceless.

To Harting, the tickets are priceless. The two seats at Ford Field represent the years of memories she has watching the Lions in person, enjoying the atmosphere of a devout fan base cheering for a historically stagnant football team.

She said, for her, it's not all about winning. It's more about the experience. However, she hopes to one day see the team reach the success she has been waiting for since she attended her first game in the 1960s.

"I always have the eternal hope that they are going to win," Harting said. "I'm the eternal optimist."

But if she were to sell those two seats, she said, it would break 68 years of tradition, something she is not willing to do.

"My dad sometimes says, 'They're losing. Why do you want to keep paying for that?' " Harting said. "It's a memory. It's tradition."

Contact reporter Colin Gay at cgay@hometownlife.com or 248-330-6710. Send game results and stats to Liv-Sports@hometownlife.com.

Twins

Continued from Page 1B

cheer her on," Jenna said. "It's so cool, all of my friends know she's my sister so when she kicks we all go crazy, it's so much fun."

Maya is a kicker for the Spartans and handles all of the extra points and shorter range field goals.

She split time this season with senior Ethan Hamm, who handled kickoffs and longer field goals.

She is one of several girls playing varsity football in the area, a trend that is becoming more popular, especially among kickers.

Stevenson only attempted six field goals this season, but Maya made her opportunity count, making her lone field goal. She ended the season with 25 total points, 22 from extra points.

She has played soccer for most of her life and currently plays at the academy level for the Michigan Jaguars, based in

lovi.
She plans to play soccer in college.

Her freshman year, she was approached by the freshman football coach because the team was in need of a kicker. Maya was friends with the coach's son and had the talent to do the job.

She was in – after she talked with her

"My dad was more for it I'd say," Maya said. "My mom was more hesitant about me being out there with a ton of giant

"My first year, it was different for everyone because they'd never had a girl on their team, but throughout the years, now I'm just part of the team."

Now she's in line to be the lead kicker on the varsity team as a senior.

"It's a surreal experience," Maya said.
"It's like nothing that I ever thought I'd
get to experience. Obviously growing
up, I never thought I'd be a part of the
boys football team. But having a ton of
'brothers' all around me and them having my back is something cool."

The experience is made even better by having her sister at the stadium with her – and both parents, who can finally see their daughters in action at the same time after years of juggling separate schedules.

Friday nights in the Millis household now leave the whole family tired.

"They love this now because before we always had to split up. Now they can come here to watch me and my sister,"

Jenna said. "We all have such busy schedules and now there's one thing they can watch both of us at.

ey can watch both of u "They really love it."

Jenna, who makes Maya's locker

poster each week, said she isn't shocked one bit that Maya has thrived at football.

"I wasn't that surprised, she's always been a tomboy, she's always been into that stuff and all her friends play football," Jenna said. "I was so excited though to have someone on the football team. I don't have any brothers."

Playing football was never a thought that crossed Jenna's mind.

Her background is in gymnastics, making becoming a cheerleader a more natural path. She prefers cheering Maya on from the sidelines.

"We're very similar in that we're both outgoing, we always have had the same type of friends, the same friend group," Jenna said. "If someone were to describe Maya, they'd say bubbly and fun. I'm more down to earth and straightforward and she's very fun. We balance each other out."

Maya has busy football and soccer schedules in the fall, but her work ethic has caught the eye of Stevenson coach-

"She's a great kid," Stevenson head football coach Randy Micallef said. "She's friends with all these kids in school. She comes out and we know her soccer schedule with our football schedule.

"She'll come to practice for an hour, get her kicks in, do the special teams stuff and then hustles off to soccer.

She's got some insane amount of practice time with soccer as well. She's a super kid, hard worker and an awesome member of the team."

Stevenson improved greatly from 2018 to 2019, finishing this season 4-5 and one win away from a potential playoff berth.

"She's very accurate," Micallef said.
"We know when we put her out there she's pretty automatic."

Maya is the second girl to play for Micallef at Stevenson.

Jenna noted that it's exciting to see girls being accepted on the football field, especially with how good many are at the game. Maya echoed her thoughts.

"I think it's really cool," Maya said. "I think it's cool that girls are getting the chance to do what traditionally they're not supposed to."

Heading into next year, Jenna, who is eight minutes younger than Maya, hopes the Spartans can reach the playoffs and end their high school careers on a high note.

Regardless of how it ends, both girls are excited they have one more year of football Fridays together.

Contact reporter Andrew Vailliencourt at availlienc@hometownlife.com or 810-923-0659. Follow him on Twitter @AndrewVcourt. Send game results and stats to Liv-Sports@hometownlife.com.

Brother Rice opens hockey season with dominant victory

Colin Gay Hometownlife.com **USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN**

The Brother Rice varsity hockey team opened its season Nov. 21 in dominant fashion, defeating Grosse Pointe North, 11-3, at Oak Park Ice Arena.

After allowing a power-play goal in the first minutes of the first period, the Warriors went on an eight-goal run, including four in the first period alone.

Brother Rice captain Ryan Murphy started scoring for the Warriors with a goal, assisted by Sam Yono and Alec Hamady. Murphy scored two goals in the

eight-goal win for the Warriors, adding an assist on Matt DeTar's goal in the third period, ending the 8-0 run.

Hamady was also busy, scoring two goals: one in the first period and his second in the third period, assisted by Yono that gave the Warriors the 10-3 lead.

After scoring the Warriors' third goal of the game in the first period, Ryan Marone scored a power-play goal, ending the match in a mercy rule.

Contact reporter Colin Gay at cgay@hometownlife.com or 248-330-6710. Send game results and stats to Liv-Sports@hometownlife.com.



Brother Rice captain Ryan Murphy faces Grosse Pointe North's William Weiss. **COURTESY OF ALYSON BROWN**

Late goal lifts Howell over Novi in hockey opener

Bill Khan Livingston Daily **USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN**

Steven Miller was a hockey player without a defined role for Howell last season, shuffling between forward and defense.

What he provided in versatility he lacked in consistency.

"It was hard to get used to playing with everyone, because I was just bouncing back and forth, more toward the beginning and the end of the season," Miller said.

Miller had three goals and six assists in 28 games as a sophomore, but should blow past those numbers this season.

He scored two goals, including the game-winning shorthanded goal with 1:30 left in the game, in Howell's 4-3 season-opening victory over Novi Nov. 20 at 140 Ice Den, formerly known as Grand Oaks Ice Arena.

While Miller played some defense Tuesday, he was used primarily up front to take advantage of his speed. His wheels were on display on the winning goal, as he outraced a Novi player for a



Novi's Liam McCarthy, left, and Howell's Treven Pennala battle in front of the Novi net Nov. 19.

TIMOTHY ARRICK/FOR THE LIVINGSTON DAILY

clearing pass to score on a short break-

"I just saw the puck, I saw the opportunity and I took it," Miller said. "My speed really helps me."

Howell coach Rocky Johnson expects this to be a breakthrough season for Mil-

"He hadn't quite found his niche last year," Johnson said. "We had him at 'D' a few times, we had him at forward a few times. Now we've found a good position for him to use his speed."

Howell's other two goals were scored by senior Brent Wolf, who also had an assist. Wolf had 12 goals and seven assists in 27 games last season.

Two sophomore goalies played in their first varsity games. Howell's Ean Badgett made 31 saves, while Novi's Austin Muirhead made 39.

"Austin Muirhead, playing his first varsity game as a sophomore, was phenomenal," Novi coach Mark Vellucci said. "He made some great saves, and their goalie did, too. It was an even game overall. Both teams are pretty compat-

It was a back-and-forth game, with neither team leading by more than one

Novi's Mike Small opened the scoring

with a power-play goal at 7:24 of the first period. Miller tied it at 11:02 of the first.

Maanas Sharma gave Novi a 2-1 lead at 1:55 of the second, but Wolf scored with 48.7 seconds left in the period with a quick shot from the line after Muirhead left his crease to play the puck.

Wolf gave Howell its first lead of the game with 11:05 left in the game, only to have Novi tie it on a goal by Nate Erskine with 6:49 to go.

The Wildcats got a prime opportunity to leave with a road victory when Howell's Andrew Mitter was penalized for roughing with 2:31 left. Novi's special teams had been strong all night, killing a five-on-three power play that lasted 1:33 in the first period, but the Highlanders won by scoring shorthanded.

"A couple little mistakes here and there were the difference," Vellucci said. "The shorthanded goal at the end of the game and the goal at the end of the second. You never want to get scored on at the end of the period, the last minute of the period. We did tonight; that kind of cost us the game."

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ATHLETE OF THE WEEK

Churchill senior Lowry's 46-yard TD reception pushes him to No. 1

Andrew Vailliencourt

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Livonia Churchill's magical playoff run came to an end at Walled Lake Western, but Charger senior Brendan Lowry made sure he did everything he could to keep his team alive.

Lowry, this week's Athlete of the Week winner, scored both of Churchill's touchdowns, including a 46-yard touchdown reception in his team's 21-14 loss in the state quarterfinals.

To win the honor, Lowry received 14,567 votes (47.42 percent), edging out South Lyon golfer Katie Potter, who received 12,097 votes (39.38 percent). Birmingham Seaholm's Chaz Strecker finished third with 3,723 votes (12.12 percent), Country Day football's Saborn Campbell placed fourth and Mercy volleyball's Charlie Atiemo came in fifth.

We caught up with Lowry, who has signed to play baseball at Central Michigan University next year and asked him some questions:

How special was this playoff run for Churchill? What was the best part?

"This playoff run has been one of the most special things I've ever been a part of. Our senior class started their first and second years off with a total of one win so this means a lot to us to even make the playoffs. We never stopped working and always played for each other. We have a strong family here at Churchill. The best part of the playoff run was beating Dexter. It was an 'upset' game and we played well. Everybody doubted us and it really fueled our team because we love being underdogs."

Why did you decide to play baseball at Central Michigan? Were you always set on playing baseball over football at the next level?

"I decided to play baseball at Central Michigan because they have a good physical therapy program which is what I would like to study for now. I feel it is the best fit and I felt the most comfort-

Beltone

"Our senior class started their first and second years off with a total of one win so this means a lot to us to even make the playoffs."

Brendan Lowry Athlete of the Week

able there when I was on campus and around the coaches. I feel it's the best opportunity for me there. I was always set on playing baseball over football because I always thought I was a better baseball player than football player so I never really focused on football at the next level. Baseball has always been a sport I loved since I was able to hold a baseball bat."

What's your favorite TV show and why?

"My favorite TV show would probably have to be Pawn Stars because some of the things on the show are interesting. Also me and my older brother used to watch the show all the time while we were little so it brings back some memories from my childhood."

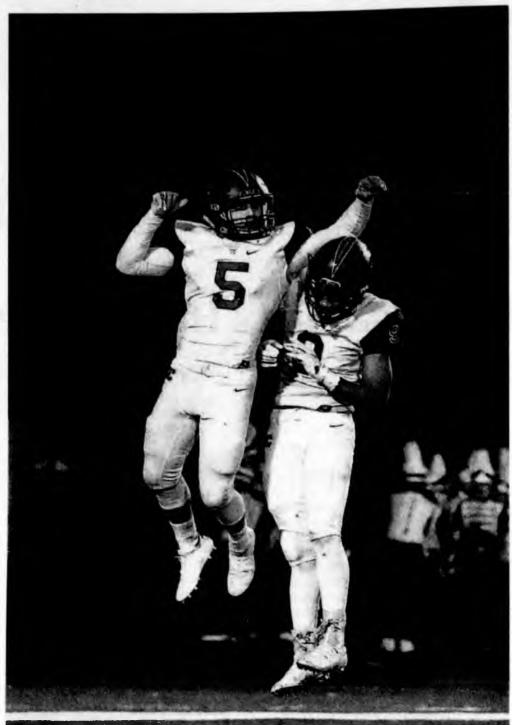
Who is your favorite band or musical artist and why?

"My favorite artist is J Cole because he has music for whatever type of mood you're in and he is influential about real life."

Who is your favorite athlete to watch and why?

"My favorite athlete to watch is Mike Trout. He's my favorite because I aspire to be as good as him. He has been the greatest player in baseball since he came to the league. He is just amazing to watch"

Contact reporter Andrew Vailliencourt at availlienc@hometownlife.com or 810-923-0659. Follow him on Twitter @AndrewVcourt. Send game results and stats to Liv-Sports@hometownlife.com.



Wide receivers Brendan Lowry and Khalil Ford celebrate a touchdown during Churchill's 41-39 win over Dexter in the predistrict round of MHSAA high school football playoffs. TOM BEAUDOIN/SPECIAL TO HOMETOWNLIFE.COM





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Employer has right to fire with no warning



Johnny C. Taylor Columnist USA TODAY

Johnny C. Taylor Jr., a human resources expert, is tackling your questions as part of a series for USA TODAY. Taylor is president and CEO of the Society for Human Resource Management, the world's largest HR professional soci-

The questions are submitted by readers, and Taylor's answers below have been edited for length and clarity.

Question: Can I be fired due to my performance without warning or documentation? - Sarah

Johnny C. Taylor Jr.: This might be hard to hear, but it depends. If you signed a contract when you accepted the job offer, you should check the specific terms and conditions of your employment.

Many employment contracts state an employee can be fired without "just cause" or notice. This is called "at-will" employment, which is standard in the United States. All U.S. states, except Montana, are "at-will" employment states, meaning employers or employees may terminate the employment relationship at any time - with or without notice and with or without a reason.

Some contracts state an employer must provide a reason for terminating an employee, along with a certain number of days' notice. If you work in a unionized workplace under a collective bargaining agreement, again, you can check the agreement for policies and procedures regarding involuntary termination of employment.

If you never signed an employment contract, then it is likely that you can be fired due to performance without warning or documentation.

On the other hand, employers may not fire you in retaliation for exercising your rights under the law, such as taking leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act. Employers also may not terminate you if there was an implied agreement that you would work there for a specific amount of time, or could



Many employment contracts state an employee can be fired without "just cause" or notice. PEOPLEIMAGES /GETTY IMAGES

only be terminated for serious job-related infractions. And, no employer may fire you for discrimination based on a protected class, such as race, sex or disability.

If you feel that you've been unlawfully terminated, I suggest seeking advice from legal counsel.

Q: I'm a frustrated HR generalist at a nonprofit suffering from nepotism. The CEO's daughter and a board member's daughter work here, and they get away with a lot. Many staff members have complained and raised concerns. However, nothing has changed. Is this favoritism illegal? What advice do you have? - Vee

It sounds like your nonprofit's business practices are producing a toxic workplace culture. However, such nepotism and favoritism are not necessarily illegal, unless that special treatment results in discrimination and harass-

For example, if an employee did not receive a promotion because they belong to a protected class, it could be illegal discrimination. Likewise, physical harassment of any employee is illegal.

While nepotism and favoritism often result in low morale and high turnover, there may be little that employees can do if people managers are unwilling to address those issues. Changing your workplace culture for the better requires direct involvement from senior management, in conjunction with the HR department, to root out such special treatment of certain employees.

If complaints have been made, and management isn't addressing these issues directly, it may be time for a more indirect approach. Consult your HR colleagues and come up with ways to involve your senior leaders. One way could be to review and update the employee handbook, asking senior management for input. Once they're involved, they may at least acknowledge the underlying problems in your workplace - if not solve them.

If your complaints continue to fall on deaf ears, ask yourself: Is it worth staying? At that point, it might be time for you and your co-workers to decide whether to leave the organization or accept the status quo.

That is a calculation you'll have to make for yourself, though going to and leaving work frustrated only leads to stress and burnout down the road. You deserve better than that.

Retailers play new game to get your money

Point-of-sale loans will be popular this season



Susan Tompor USA TODAY

This holiday season, it's not enough to spot a great Black Friday deal on a big-screen TV or a sweater. You need to consider whether you want to take out a

loan at the checkout, too. Walmart is offering a new way to buy clothes, electronics, furniture and sporting goods, as well as other items, this holiday season as an alternative to cash and credit cards. Think of this one as a new way to buy now, pay later by breaking up payments into monthly installments. Yes, even if you're buying

toys or clothes. While Walmart is a major player initially introducing installment loans in February – plenty of other retailers are playing the same game to get your

money, too. Point-of-sale loans – a way to borrow money to buy specific things - are likely to be hot this holiday season, as retailers try to drive sales and shoppers demand easy-to-understand credit.

Need a loan for a Shinola watch?

Want to buy a \$140 Fair Isle sweater with shimmering stripes at Anthropology? You can have it for just four easy payments online of \$35 with Afterpay. (Late fees could apply with this offer; installments are due every two weeks.)

Or how about a \$1,195 Shinola Runwell Automatic Watch? It could be yours for \$105.14 a month for 12 months based on a 10% annual percentage rate.

Silicon Valley startup Affirm - which is working with Walmart - has point-ofsale financing partnerships with a variety of retailers that sell online, including Shinola, Casper, Warby Parker, Delta Vacations, the RealReal, StockX, American Girl and Ring. See www.affirm-

And there's a new Affirm app for that

when shopping elsewhere. Yet is this a cool Yule deal that could help you score the perfect gift, maybe a thing but new tires for the family car. bike for your girlfriend? Or are we looking at a high-tech way to load up on debt to buy something that you really cannot

And should you be paying up to 30% for financing holiday gifts? Even if you're paying off that loan in six months?

The fintech pitch is that the new installment loans give people a way to control their debt - and access to credit for some that might not qualify for a rewards-based credit card.

The new types of loans use proprietary algorithms that focus less on traditional credit score models and more heavily on your on-time payments or even ask to review your checking account transactions.

Oddly enough, some consumer watchdogs say this new idea could work better than credit cards for some consumers, especially if the consumer has a tendency to pay late and trigger highcost fees on their credit cards.

By making fixed regular payments, consumers aren't dragging around their debt for years, as they would by making only the minimum payment on credit card bills, according to Chi Chi Wu, a staff attorney at the National Consumer Law Center, a nonprofit that advocates for low-income families.

Many installment plans don't have late fees, so you're not fearing a \$39 charge for being late on a credit card payment.

"One late fee and that's way more expensive than a 30% APR," Wu said.

Some retailers, such as furniture stores, have offered shoppers installment loans for years. But now startups, as well as banks, are tapping into technology that can offer consumers the option of a loan instantly and nearly everywhere.

"Think of the owner of a roofing company at the house to give an estimate on a project whipping out an iPad to offer an instant loan to pay for the work," according to a report in the American Banker.

Sure, it's great in an emergency, but toys?

Rosann Love, 49, didn't need any-

She shopped online at Walmart, found tires for about \$644 and then was happy when she spotted a chance to apply for an installment loan that would break the cost down into a predictable \$224 a month for three months. She ended up paying nearly \$30 in interest. She doesn't remember the interest rate. (On a loan that size with those terms.

though, it could have been around 25%.) "It was hassle-free," said Love, who lives in Warren, Michigan.

Love and her husband both have jobs at Fiat Chrysler Automobiles, and they paid the bill off in three months.

"I'm a 90-day type of person," she said. "If I can't get it paid in 90 days, I don't need it."

Love, who bought Christmas gifts Wednesday night at the Walmart in Warren, used her debit card then. She doesn't think an installment plan makes sense for gifts.

"For stuff like toys and that, I wouldn't do that. It's setting people up for debt if you can't afford to pay it," she

Though, she later adds that she has used some installment plans for a few splurges online, such as when buying a Dooney & Bourke purse last year. She didn't want her husband to spot the high cost of that luxury brand purse all at once.

Black Friday bulks up on real-time lending

Holiday wish lists give everyone a shot at dreaming big, of course, and offering a way to split payments can turn those dreams into boxes under the tree.

The push to move big ticket items on Black Friday - and Cyber Monday - is likely to drive many 0% special deals,

Shoppers need to pay close attention to specific deals, though, as the annual percentage rate connected to such loans can be all over the map based on promotions being offered by retailers. Some retailers are subsidizing that interest to move product out the door - much like the car industry.

A 0% APR is being offered if you buy a Peloton Bike online.

You could pay \$2,245 upfront for the

heavily advertised indoor exercise bike. Or as the Peloton site says: "Ride now, pay over time."

The site says you'd pay the same amount over time by breaking those payments into 39 months at \$58 a month. The price does not include taxes or accessories. (The \$58 is a rounded-up number, according a live chat I had at the site. Obviously 39 times \$58 equals

The Peloton membership fee is another \$39 a month. The fine print notes: "Subject to credit check and approval. In cases of partial approval, a down payment may be required. Estimated payment amount excludes taxes. Offer subject to change at any time. Previous purchases are ineligible. Affirm loans are made by Cross River Bank."

How much can it cost you?

While no interest is charged on that deal, interest rates would range from 10% to 30% APR at Walmart, based on your creditworthiness.

If you're spending \$500 total and spreading out it over three months, the payment would be \$169.50 a month - totaling \$508.50 - if the APR is 10%.

If the APR is 30%, the payment would be \$175.07 a month for three months if you spent \$500 - totaling \$525.21. That's \$25.21 in interest vs. \$8.50 in interest, depending on the rate. You'd pay more in interest if you extended that loan to six months or 12 months, too.

Walmart said it has retail tags on eligible items in its stores that show the Affirm monthly payment price.

Walmart continues to have a layaway program and a new Capital One Walmart Rewards Mastercard that offers 5% cashback at Walmart.com for the first year.

At Walmart, the monthly payment plan is available on eligible purchases of \$150 to \$2,000. It is limited to specific categories. Instant financing won't work for buying some items, for example, including alcohol, tobacco, groceries, pharmacy and personal care, long barrel deer rifles and shotguns and gift

Walmart shoppers pick whether they want to repay for the item in three months, six months or 12 months.

Apps can lighten Black Friday's load

Marc Saltzman Special to USA TODAY

When the season arrives for gift-giving – or even treating yourself to something new – why spend more than you need to?

There will be sales and deals aplenty over Black Friday (Nov. 29) and Cyber Monday (Dec. 2), but your smartphone or tablet may be able to help you out even more.

A handful of shopping apps are designed to sniff out great deals at retail or online by alerting you to a fire sale on something you've had your eye on, providing coupons to scan at the store, or giving you cash back on purchases.

If you are on the hunt for holiday bargains, the following are four fantastic freebies to download at the App Store (for iPhone, iPad) or Google Play (for Android devices).



SLICKDEALS

Slickdeals

Dubbed the largest online deal-sharing community, this popular app (and 20-year-old website) lets people share the best deals they've found on products, services, travel and more.

Every online or retail deal discussed on Slickdeals' forums is voted on by the community, and the hottest ones move up to the Popular Deals section (such as 50% off an Amazon Echo Dot smart speaker). The best of the Popular Deals are then screened by the company's

Deal Editors, to see if the deal is good enough to graduate to the app's coveted Frontpage. There also is a dedicated Black Friday section.

If you want to price-watch an item – such as a specific TV model you want once it drops to at least \$700 – you can sign up for "deal alerts" and be notified when and if one posts.

Website Slickdeals net also offers coupons, promo codes, weekly ads, freebies and a new Chrome browser extension that pushes deals to your deskton.



FLIPP

Flipp

A stellar app for retail shoppers, Flipp not only aggregates all of those paper store circulars that are delivered to our door but highlights the best deals, too. A special Black Friday section is available.

To get started, type in your ZIP code and the app will show you all your local retailers and the sales they're offering, whether you're looking for consumer electronics, household or home improvement items, fashion or groceries. Plus, the app (and site) will find related coupons for you to use for even more savings.

Tap and hold to learn more about a product you're interested in, or quickly tap to virtually clip it into your shopping list. It's a "smart" shopping list that also lets you type in a phrase, such as "video

doorbell," and it will show you the best deals nearby.

The app also holds your loyalty cards, so you don't have to carry all that plastic with you.



EBATES DBA RAKUTEN

Rakuten

It's one thing to save money while shopping smartly, but what about apps that can help make you money? Rakuten (previously known as Ebates) pays members cash back every time you shop online through participating retailers – and there are many.

Here's how it works: Sign up for a free account and launch the app or site when you want to start shopping. Now you can tap on (or select) the logo of a supported store to search for products – such as Amazon, Macy's, Walmart, eBay and Kohl's – or type in a keyword in the search bar at the top.

Buy the item at the online store and you'll start earning cash that can be sent to you via check or deposited into a PayPal account. The percentage you get back varies from retailer to retailer, but Rakuten says you can get up to 40% cash back at more than 2,500 stores.

Similar cash-back apps include Ibotta, Shopkick and Swagbucks.

eBay

While many prefer shopping at a store (or its website or app), don't forget



about online marketplace apps, too, as you may find a great deal on Black Friday or Cyber Monday.

Contrary to popular belief, not all goods on eBay are "previously enjoyed" – most are brand new, in fact, says the company – and if you don't want to bid for something in an auction, most items can be purchased outright.

You can find some amazing deals on the eBay app (and the site ebay.com/deals), including many exclusive, hard-to-find and out-of-country items, that could be shipped to your door – or a loved one's residence or place of business.

The app is easy to use and lets you chat with the seller right from within the app. Just make sure you factor in shipping time if you'd like it under the tree this holiday season.

Research the seller before you buy – you can check their rating and comments – and don't be afraid to ask questions before you pay.

Local classifieds apps – such as Craigslist, Letgo and Facebook Market-place – are good sources to find a local deal (and not wait or pay for shipping). Be sure to meet the seller in a public place (and maybe bring a friend along) and inspect the items before you hand over the cash to ensure it is as advertised.

Email Marc or subscribe to his Tech It Out podcast at www.marcsaltzman.com.



Mazda's CX-30 will make its U.S. debut at the 2019 Los Angeles Auto Show this week. MAZDA

Mazda is best brand, again

Daivin BrownUSA TODAY

Mazda is the best car brand in the USA for the fifth year in a row, according to an annual report from U.S. News & World Report Autos.

The publication will hand out its "Best Vehicle Brand Awards" at the Los Angeles Auto Show on Wednesday, and before the official crowning, it released the names of the automakers taking home this year's highest honors.

The publication says its rankings are meant to "cut through the marketing jargon and overly technical reviews" to spotlight the brands that are the best at creating the kind of vehicles that matter to shoppers.

The winners are chosen from a group of 35 top companies and divided into four categories: Cars, SUVs, Trucks and Luxury Vehicles.

Days after scoring high on reliability rankings from Consumer Reports, the Japanese car manufacturer Mazda will take home the title of Best Car Brand.

"Mazda won this car class on the strength of the Mazda3, Mazda6 and Mazda MX-5 Miata," U.S. News editors said in a news release. "All three models have top-notch performance that puts an emphasis on direct, sporty handling,

"Mazda won this car class on the strength of the Mazda3, Mazda6 and Mazda MX-5 Miata."

U.S. News & World Report editors

as well as quality interiors that are more upscale than their price tags might suggest."

Kia tops the SUV category thanks to its subcompact Niro to the three-row Telluride. The South Korean automaker's lineup of "practical, affordable SUVs and crossovers" have new designs and the kind of features that impress car reviewers, U.S. News said.

Ram beat out Ford, taking home the best truck title for the first time. And Porsche kept its winning streak going, conquering the best Luxury Brand category for the fifth year in a row.

Ram won, in part, because its 1500 is comfortable enough for commuting and capable-enough for serious towing and hauling, the editors at U.S. News said. Porsche was victorious over other high-end carmakers because it offers a full lineup of impressive vehicles.



An Uber feature would let riders add a layer of security on a trip. UNSPLASH

Uber may listen in on your rides

Daivin BrownUSA TODAY

Uber reportedly wants to start audio recording rides in the U.S. "soon."

The ride-hailing giant is poised to start beta testing a new security feature in parts of Latin America in December, the Washington Post reports. In the U.S., the company has to contend with state-by-state recording laws first, which makes the rollout timeline unclear.

An internal memo viewed by The Post said Uber plans to pilot the feature in the U.S. before long. "We hope to be able to make this available nationally," the email said.

The tool could allow the company to better protect riders amid high-profile assault scandals and mounting safety concerns, though it would raise another set of questions concerning privacy.

Uber wasn't immediately available for comment.

The feature, which has yet to be publicly named, would allow riders to optin for an added layer of security during trips, according to The Post. Riders and drivers can't playback the audio.

"The encrypted audio file is sent to Uber's customer support agents, who will use it to better understand an incident and take the appropriate action," The Post said, citing an internal email from an Uber executive.

The move is the latest in a string of features meant to protect riders and drivers

In September, Uber rolled out a feature called Ride Check, that flags unusual events like long stops or car crashes. Uber has also integrated an inapp emergency button and other improvements to double down on safety.

Jeep gets a lot right with diesel Wrangler

Power and torque put it at home off the road, too

Mark Phelan **Detroit Free Press USA TODAY NETWORK**

There's never been a diesel-powered Jeep Wrangler before, but after 20 minutes behind the wheel of the new 2020 Wrangler EcoDiesel, it's hard not to ask yourself, "What took 'em so long?"

Developing 442 pound-feet of torque at just 1,400 rpm, the 3.0L diesel V6 is a natural for clambering over boulders and through soft sand - just what Wrangler owners love. Add surprisingly quiet operation and an expected 30% improvement in fuel economy - it should approach, maybe achieve, 30 mpg on the highway - and it's easy to see the EcoDiesel becoming the premier Wrangler powertrain.

I spent a day driving Wrangler Eco-Diesels on highways, country roads on rugged canyon trails in southern Utah.

The diesel provided plenty of power and proved as adept at fast highway cruising as scaling rock.

Farmers and other folks who tow heavy loads like diesel because the engines develop plenty of torque at low engine speeds. Torque is the twisting force that turns a vehicle's wheels. Generating lots of it at 1,400 engine rpm, like FCA's third-generation EcoDiesel does, means you don't have to rev the engine madly to pull a heavy load; smooth steady pressure on the accelerator does the trick. That trait is just as useful when you're easing over a rockfall as it is when you're hauling a horse trailer.

Add the Wrangler's rugged suspension, 70:1 crawl ratio and off-road tires, and the EcoDiesel made easy work of grades up to 30 degrees, loose rock and soft sand.

The Wrangler has a 44-degree approach angle. That's the steepest incline the vehicle can take without scraping its front bumper. Its departure angle, the maximum incline it can drive off without scraping the rear, is 37 degrees.

Official EPA fuel economy ratings are expected any day, but Jeep executives promise more than 500-mile highway range, enough for a day's offroading and



The 2020 Rubicon off-road EcoDiesel. FCA

a long ride home. I averaged a shockingly good 35.6 mpg in several hours of onroad driving.

The diesel's 18.3-gallon fuel tank is smaller than gas models because the Jeep has a 5.1-gallon tank of urea to treat its exhaust. Drivers should need to refill the urea only every 10,000 miles.

One of the trade-offs for diesel's power and fuel economy is generally noise and vibration. The engines are inherently louder and shakier than a comparable gasoline engine.

Jeep engineers used hydraulic engine mounts to keep vibration from reaching the passenger compartment - even when the engine auto-stopped to save fuel at traffic lights. New carpet and sound deadening foams between engine and occupants locked out most

noise, even in a soft-top Wrangler.

The ride was smooth at up to 80 mph on paved roads.

Price is not cheap

The diesel is available across the Wrangler lineup. It's not cheap, a \$3,250 premium over the 3.6L V6 and \$4,500 more than the base 2.0L turbocharged four-cylinder.

Jeep will offer the diesel only with four-door Wranglers with four-wheel drive and an eight-speed automatic transmission. The four-door Wrangler, called the Wrangler Unlimited when it made its debut, accounts for 90% of Wrangler sales.

The 2020 Jeep Wrangler EcoDiesel should be in dealerships any day. The least expensive diesel Wrangler will cost \$32,290.

While you can get a base Wrangler with the diesel, executives expect most will be high-end Sahara or Rubicon models. If you check every box on the option sheet, it'll be possible to drop about \$62,000 on a Wrangler EcoDiesel.

What's new with this engine

Jeep reworked its 3.0L V6 significantly with changes including sealing for water fording and sound insulation.

The EcoDiesel weighs about 400 pounds more than a comparable Wrangler with a gasoline V6. About 375 pounds of that is because of the engine, whose iron block is needed to deal with the higher stress on a diesel.

Sometimes waiting is the road to the most reliable vehicles

Nathan Bomey USA TODAY

Want a reliable car? A little patience

It might sound counterintuitive, but the latest redesigned car model may not hold up as well on the road as versions that come out a year or two later when the early kinks have been worked out.

That's one of the takeaways from the annual Consumer Reports Auto Reliability Survey released Thursday.

Though redesigned vehicles and brand-new models often fetch headlines and social media buzz, the old stalwarts are typically more likely to hold up well on the road.

"When you redesign a new vehicle, often you get better fuel economy, better safety, potentially better features," said Jake Fisher, senior director of auto testing for Consumer Reports. "But if you want ... reliability, your best bet is to wait a year or two until those initial growing pains have been worked out."

In the Consumer Reports reliability rankings. Toyota's luxury brand, Lexus, and its namesake brand ranked first and third, respectively. Mazda was second.

The Lexus **GX** was ranked as one of the 10 most reliable cars. **DAVID DEWHURST** PHOTOGRAPHY/

LEXUS



10 most reliable models of 2020. according to Consumer Reports

- Mazda MX-5 Miata ■ Toyota Prius Prime
- Mazda CX-3
- Toyota Prius
- **I** Lexus NX ■ Toyota 4-Runner
- Lexus GX

Hyundai Kona

Lexus GS

10 least reliable models of 2020, according to Consumer Reports

- Chevrolet Colorado/ GMC Canyon (same body style, different badging)
- **I** Chevrolet Camaro
- Jeep Wrangler Alfa Romeo Giulia
- Mazda CX-9

- 2 Mazda 3 Toyota
 - 4 Porsche

1 Lexus

How automotive

brands ranked

for reliability

- 5 Genesis 6 Hyundai
- 7 Subaru
- 8 Dodge 9 Kia

11 Nissan

12 Honda

13 Infiniti

15 Lincoln

14 Audi

- Volkswagen Atlas 10 Mini
- Volkswagen Tiguan Acura MDX
- Chrysler Pacifica

■ Tesla Model X

■ Chevrolet Traverse

Doorbell security may not ring true

Ken Colburn Special for The Republic Lazcentral.com

Question: How can I tell if my Ring doorbell has the update that protects me from the latest vulnerability?

Answer: The Ring doorbell is an extremely popular device that millions of households around the world have installed for security purposes and because it's so popular, it's also the constant focus of security researchers.

In the most recent vulnerability, it was discovered to be possible for your Ring doorbell to broadcast the password for your Wi-Fi network in plain text (http://instead of https://), which could technically allow anyone nearby to capture it and access your home network.

Once a malicious user has access to your home network, they can potentially access sensitive information or other devices connected to your network.

This vulnerability was only possible during the initial setup process, but researchers pointed out that fake messages to the user could trick them into thinking that they needed to reconfigure their Ring device and it's not hard to figure out which homes have the

While from a technical standpoint this could have been a major issue, the likelihood that anyone that had the knowledge of how to exploit this hole would bother with such a random set of variables is pretty low.

This type of vulnerability is generally referred to as "proof of concept" when reported by researchers that can demonstrate it in a controlled laboratory setting that often has very little resemblance to real-world scenarios.

The patch

Despite the low likelihood of it being exploited, the researchers reported the issue to Ring before publicly disclosing the issue so the company could create and distribute a patch for the hole.

Updates to hardware are generally



It was discovered a Ring doorbell can broadcast the password for a home Wi-Fi network REVIEWED COM

done through "firmware," which is software specifically designed to control hardware devices.

Is my doorbell updated?

Ring doorbells are set up to automatically install updates, so your device should already be protected, but here's how to check for yourself:

■ Open the Ring app and select your Ring device.

■ Click on "Device Health" near the

bottom of the app. ■ Under Device Details, find Firm-

■ If your firmware is up-to-date, it will say "Up to date." If there is a number, your firmware needs to be updated.

When Ring devices are in the process of updating, the light surrounding the button on the device will generally be flashing, so when this is happening, make sure not to press the button.

What's connected to my Wi-Fi?

This points out how any device you connect to your network can potentially be exploited to allow unauthorized users to access your entire network. Routinely checking to see what devices are connected to your network can be done easily with an app called Fing.

Ken Colburn is the founder and CEO of Data Doctors Computer Services. Ask any tech question at: facebook. com/DataDoctors.

Motorola Razr needs more than nostalgia

It will be a pricey sell to finicky younger buyers



Personal Tech Edward C. Baig USA TODAY

People of a certain age fondly remember Razr, the Motorola clamshell phone that became a status symbol among high-tech fashionistas circa the mid-2000s. I'm tempted to say these are the same people who still remember Motorola itself, given how far the once leading brand has fallen since its heyday. Its single-digit U.S. market share pales next to market champs Apple and Samsung.

Motorola (these days owned by China's Lenovo) is pinning its hopes on the Razr again, having showcased a fresh bendable-screen Android version of the flip phone at a media event in Los Angeles. Moto's partner Verizon will start taking preorders after Christmas, and the new Razr is set to hit stores Jan. 9.

It won't be an easy sell. Younger buyers don't have the same attachment to the Razr that, say, their parents have. Trips down memory lane haven't exactly worked out for other once-dominant phone brands Black-Berry and Nokia.

Motorola has tried the back-to-thefuture route before, without a lot of success. In 2011, it teamed with Verizon on a Droid Razr Android phone that shared little in common with the original Razr.

Putting nostalgia aside, the new Razr comes with another very modern challenge: a humongous price tag. It costs \$1,499.99 outright, or \$62.49 monthly over two years.

It wasn't lost on my colleague Michelle Maltais who attended the loud LA launch party that most everyone snapping pictures did so with their iPhones and Galaxy devices.

Foldable screens: Intriguing but unproven

Looked at generously, you might



The new Razr, MOTOROLA

even call the new Razr cheap, at least compared with the \$2,000 Samsung asks for its Galaxy Fold phone.

Samsung, like Motorola, is trying to ignite the nascent market for bendable or foldable-screen phones, a category featuring intriguing if unproven designs. Samsung is trying to sell a single device that morphs between a largescreen phone and small-screen tablet.

Motorola's device comes off like a large phone/smaller phone combo.

Hands-on first impressions

The main 6.2-inch internal display seamlessly bends completely in half, revealing a 2.7-inch touchscreen outer display on which you can view notifications, control music or snap highquality selfies. It has a 16-megapixel camera and night vision mode for capturing images in dim light, an in-vogue feature among premium smartphones.

Michelle found the phone easy to flip open and close and was impressed that the hinge practically melts into the main display.

There's been a fair amount of interest surrounding this modern throwback. In the end, though, retro goes only so far. What will ultimately make or break the Razr is how easy and fun it is to use. And dropping the price wouldn't hurt.

New MacBook Pro boasts a big screen, better keyboard



Personal Tech Edward C. Baig USA TODAY

Laptop buyers considering the new 16-inch MacBook Prothat Apple started selling Tuesday should take that pro designation seriously. These pricey (\$2,399 on up) and muscular machines are indeed aimed at pro-type customers - video editors, game developers, scientists, Hollywood creators, and the like.

But consumers seeking more power than they get from Apple's Mac-Book Airs buy them, too, even as some Pro features have trickled down to the Airs of recent vintage.

The first thing you'll likely notice is the brilliant-looking 16-inch Retina display (nearly 6 million pixels) which thanks to narrower bezels fits into an 4.3-pound overall package that's roughly the same size as the 15-inch MacBook Pro that this new model re-

Apple fixes the keyboard

But likely the first thing you'll want to try is the newly designed "Magic Keyboard," modeled from the keyboard on the iMac Pro.

If you've been following the saga around MacBook keyboards, you know that the "butterfly" type mechanism on previous MacBook Pros generated so-so reviews at best, and at worse resulted in class-action filings around defective or faulty keyboards.

Apple acknowledged the problems and issued an apology this year, while working to remedy butterfly key-

The butterfly flew away on the new Pros. Apple says it focused on "human factors" in coming up with a refined "scissor mechanism" that delivers 1mm of key travel and results in more stable and responsive keys.

It sure felt that way to me, at least judging by my limited time banging away on the new keyboard. I compared it, quite favorably, to the butterfly keyboard on a 13-inch MacBook



Apple's 16-inch MacBook Pro APPLE

Pro I bought only a few weeks ago.

While on the subject, users also will appreciate the return of a physical escape key on the MacBook Pro that had disappeared on models with a virtual Touch Bar above the physical keys. And the new models have a Touch Bar, along with a Touch ID fingerprint sen-

Powerful comes with a high price

Harder to gauge without running benchmark tests or putting the new computer through its paces over time is the (up to) 80% performance boost Apple is claiming, but there seems little doubt these laptops can handle heavy

Apple plugs the computer's thermal design, 6- and 8-core 9th-generation processors, next-generation graphics with up to 8GB of VRAM and memory that maxes out at 64GB. You also can get it with a whopping 8TB of storage, (The base model comes with 512GB of storage and 16GB of RAM).

Keep in mind that fully configured, the price exceeds, ouch, \$6,000.

The new laptop has got a bigger battery too, with Apple claiming 11 hours of wireless web browsing between charges, or about an hour longer than its predecessor.

If you are into podcasting, or creating music, you'll appreciate the minimal hiss built in microphone array.

Let me also praise the 6-speaker high-fidelity sound system with what Apple describes as "force-canceling" woofers. In a test, they sounded great. Or put another way, very professional.

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the job network

How to relate to your younger coworkers in the office

Eric Titner
thejobnetwork.com

For those of us who have been employed for more than a little while — including all of you seasoned veterans out there with many years of on-the-job experience — navigating the work world these days can be a bit of a challenge. We often have to fight against some of the misperceptions that come with being older in the workplace: that we're out of date or technophobic, unable to relate to a younger demographic, devoid of energy, and unable to think innovatively. The list is long and has remained unfortunately persistent over the years.

The workplace can be a challenging environment when you're on the wrong side of a noticeable age gap. Feeling like everything from clothes to conversations highlights the differences between you and your colleagues can make your professional life more uncomfortable and less satisfying than it

Being judged based solely on your age can also have a negative effect on your career and opportunities and can make it hard to form satisfying and productive professional relationships with younger coworkers. It can also affect your health and well-being. According to a recent study reported in the Journal of Vocational Behavior, "Older workers tend to feel more stress than younger workers when their employers don't provide them with the support and resources needed to do their jobs well."

Thankfully, not all is lost. There are strategies that older workers can utilize to help them relate more effectively to their younger colleagues — and hopefully reduce or eliminate any false negative misperceptions based solely on their age. Consider the following tips if



GETTY IMAGES

you find yourself surrounded by younger coworkers and are eager to bridge the

Be open-minded

Chances are, your younger work cohorts are going to do things differently than you do — everything from how they talk and dress to the tools, processes, and systems they use for attacking tasks and staying organized. You may feel an impulse to write these differences off as not worth your time to consider adopting, or simply things that are merely passing fads or emblematic of their lack of experience and seasoning. Bad move! The truth is, staying openminded to new ways of doing things is

among the best ways to give off the impression that you're not too old or incapable of embracing change — and can really help bridge any age-related divides and help you relate to younger colleagues. If you're an older worker, it's up to you to convince the younger folks that you indeed can teach an old dog new tricks — and you just may doubly benefit by picking up some new and improved ways of doing things along the way.

Show your value

Now that we've established that staying open-minded to the notion that you can learn a thing or two from your younger coworkers is a smart move, don't forget to show that you have a lifetime of valuable experience to offer them in return. It may be unavoidable for some younger folks to immediately try to dismiss older employers as ineffective dinosaurs, but your best counterargument to this unfortunate impression is by proving to them exactly how wrong they are. Keep the lines of communication open and mutually respectful and do what you can to impart your hard-earned wisdom. Many of us have had the opportunity to learn and grow with a mentor, so don't be afraid to pay it forward.

Don't sell yourself short

Too often, older employees try to deal with age differences by joking about it in a self-deprecating way. Not only is it a terrible way to try and relate to your coworkers, but it's also only going to make relating to younger coworkers even more challenging by reinforcing any negative biases they may have. like coming to work with a stain on your shirt and dealing with it by using a neon highlighter. Instead, avoid the "I'm just a dinosaur" jokes and focus on being the best and most effective employee possible, and someone who's easy and enjoyable to talk to and work with. It's a formula sure to win over younger col-

Are you a seasoned veteran of the work world and searching for ways to improve your relationships with younger coworkers? Keep your head up and your mind open and use the strategies presented here to help make your work-

life successful and enjoyable.

Eric Titner has been an editor and content creator for more than a decade.

His primary professional focus has been on education- and career-related topics.

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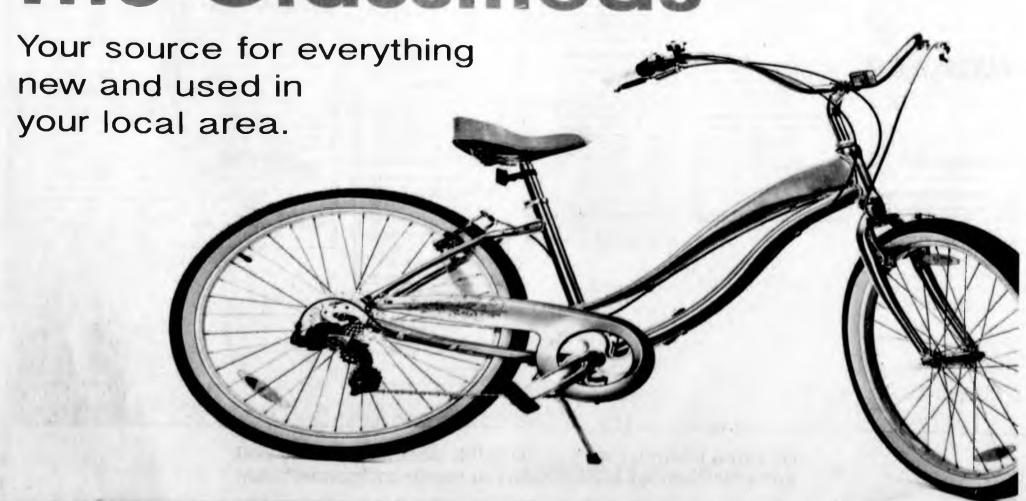
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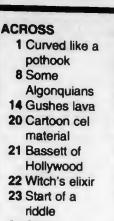
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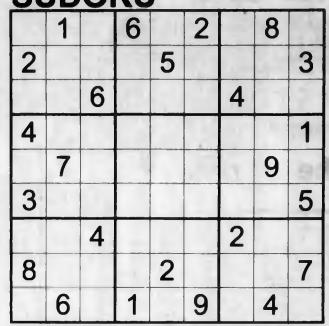
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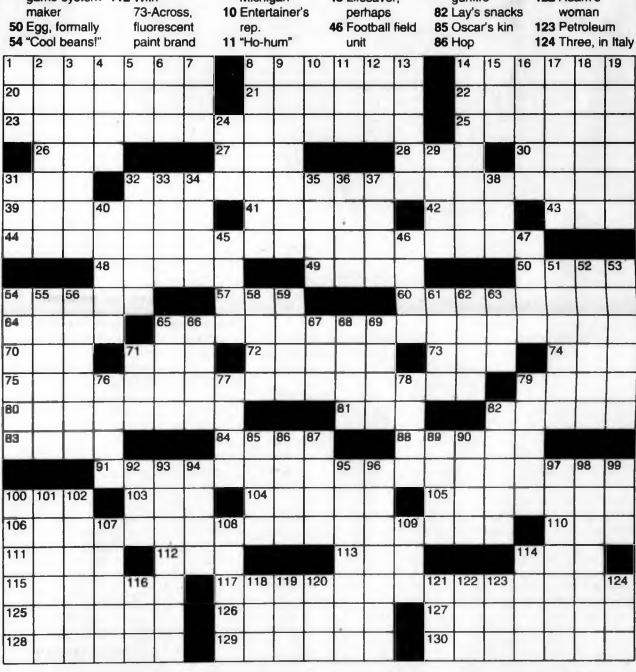
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