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Contract not renewed for field hospital

David Veselenak Hometownlife.com
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

The State of Michigan will not renew contracts that created a pair of field hospitals to treat COVID-19 patients in an overflow capacity earlier this year.

Lynn Sutfin, public information officer for the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, said in an email to Hometown Life the state will not renew the contracts after they expire Dec. 31. The field hospitals were established at the Suburban Collection Showplace, 46100 Grand River in Novi; and the TCF Center in downtown Detroit.

"The alternate care sites were established so that Michiganders with COVID-19 could receive high-quality care despite hospital beds filling up in southeast Michigan," she said. "The second surge of the virus in Michigan is very different than the first, which means a different approach is needed for patients to receive the care they need and deserve as hospitals experience the potential for capacity issues. There is no longer a need for regional alternate care sites in southeast Michigan, so the leases for the TCF Center and Suburban Collection Showplace will not be extended once they expire at the end of the year."



The Army Corps of Engineers sets up the Suburban Showplace in Novi to treat COVID-19 patients on April 11 in Novi. The state will not renew the contract to keep the facility as a field hospital in 2021.

KIRTHMON F. DOZIER/DETROIT FREE PRESS

Both convention centers were tapped earlier in the spring as overflow facilities to treat COVID-19 patients as they filled hospitals across the region. TCF Center was brought online in early April and treated patients for less than a month before closing; Suburban Collection Showplace was opened in late April and closed in early June after treating 16 patients.

The original contract with Suburban Collection Showplace was in place until Sept. 30, though the state extended that contract by three months earlier in the year to keep the facility as a backup in

See CONTRACT, Page 4A

YEAR IN REVIEW PHOTOS

2020 wasn't all COVID-19 and face masks, but mostly it was



John Heider
Hometownlife.com
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

You could say I miss seeing and photographing people's faces and large, joyous groups together. Perhaps we all do. When I look back at the 3,500 images I submitted in 2020, as the staff photographer for Hometown Life, it all looks pretty normal for the first few months. • Last January photos taken at a Farmington High and South Lyon East basketball game showed athletes arm-in-arm, a few inches from each other, and then young fans

See 2020, Page 4A

Susie Thurukian, left, gets a puppy kiss from Murphy held by Lauren Sumerix at the Oct. 22 Northville Farmers Market. Both women were masked up at the outdoor event, but no one told Murphy he had to wear his.

JOHN HEIDER/
HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

Huron Valley residents, businesses rise to the occasion

Susan Bromley Hometownlife.com
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

Sherise Assad figured she had a pair of options in a year in which the world got turned upside down by the COVID-19 pandemic.

"You can be one of two people: you can sit back and watch it all go down, or you stand up and try to be someone who does better," she said.

She chose the latter, and for her efforts she was one of 20 honorees recognized in the Huron Valley Chamber of Commerce's Rise to the Occasion awards.

Assad's also the reason Jen Hill, HVCC event and communications manager, has been in tears — overwhelmed by the generosity.

Hill's heart is also warmed by the good deeds of the other 19 honorees for the first ever Rise to the Occasion awards, which replaced Citizen of the Year in this tumultuous 2020.

"We are all blown away and feel so privileged to work in this community and at the chamber and to work with these people we are honored and humbled," she said.

See RISE, Page 6A



Sherise Assad (in blue cap) with friends after loading a truck with \$100,000 worth of toys for children in need this Christmas.

COURTESY OF SHERISE ASSAD

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Northville students find silver lining in gloomy year

Ed Wright Hometownlife.com
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

Like a ray of sunshine breaking through an ominous dark cloud, a group of Northville elementary school students managed to end the gloomiest year in recent memory — 2020 — on an illuminating note.

Guided by classroom teachers Nicole Wesley and Daniel Spitzley, members of Thornton Creek Elementary School's Student Lighthouse Team and Culture Action Team capped their year-long mission to recognize everyday heroes by honoring Marlene Kunz, the engine behind Northville Civic Concern, an all-volunteer organization founded in 1983 by a group of concerned citizens to benefit the needy of our community.

The non-profit group's primary purposed, according to its website, is to provide food to those in need on the second and fourth Friday of each month.

To show their appreciation for Kunz's selfless contributions to the community over the past several years, the Thornton Creek students organized a canned-food drive that collect more than 650 items that were delivered in mid-December to Northville Civic Concern.

"In our community, we like to focus on the whole child, not just academic success," explained Thornton Creek principal Deagon Jewett. "While we're proud of the district's outstanding testing numbers, projects like this that promote making sure our kids are good people as well as good students are important."

"Despite the challenges that come with living in 2020, the students collected so many food items that we could barely fit them all in the trunk of the vehicle that transported them to Northville Civic Concern."

Jewett said Kunz was selected as the first recipient of the award because of her long-term commitment to helping the less-fortunate in the Northville community.

"The theme of the project for our students is, 'How can we be heroes?'" Jewett said. "The hero program started as a year-long project last school year, but when school was shutdown in March, it wasn't complete, so we picked it up against this fall. The enthusiasm the students have for this program is off the charts."

Jewett said more community heroes will be recognized once students return from the holiday break in January, although a the future recipients have not yet been determined.

At Thornton Creek, the acronym HERO stands for "Help Everyone & Respect Others" — a motto that can warm hearts even in the coldest months of the cruelest year anyone can remember.

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

hometownlife.com

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CITY OF NORTHVILLE NOTICE OF ENACTMENT ZONING ORDINANCE #11-16-20Z

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Northville City Council has adopted Ordinance No. 11-16-20Z for the purpose of amending the City of Northville Zoning Ordinance. The ordinance amendment amends the zoning map to change the zoning of parcel numbers 48-22-34-377-005, 48-22-34-377-006, 48-22-34-377-007, commonly known as three lots formed from 711 N. Center Street, Northville, Michigan, 48167, from First Density Residential District (R-1B) to Second Density Residential District (R-2).

The ordinance was introduced for first reading on November 16, 2020, and was adopted by the City Council on December 21, 2020. The ordinance shall become effective on January 8, 2021. The complete text of the ordinance amendment is available for public review at the City of Northville Municipal Building, Office of the City Clerk or the Building Department, 215 W Main Street, Northville, Michigan, 48167, 248-349-1300, Monday through Friday, by appointment only or on the City's website at www.ci.northville.mi.us.

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DIANNE MASSA, CMC, CITY CLERK

Published: December 31, 2020

New two-story Planet Fitness opens in Novi

David Veselenak Hometownlife.com
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

New year, new gym.

As the clock runs out on 2020, a new, highly-visible fitness center has opened its doors off Interstate 96 in Novi, and there have been plenty of eager people looking to give it a try.

Planet Fitness opened its newest location at 26885 Adell Center Dr., part of the new development at the site of the former Novi Expo Center. The 29,000-square-foot, two-story building opened for business Dec. 23 after a lengthy construction period and after repeated in-person inquiries from potential members.

"We've definitely had people come up to the doors over the last couple of days ... and try to open the door," said Alex Petroski, the club's general manager. "There's been a couple of lucky members who have gotten to see it."

It's a fairly unique gym given its massive size for a Planet Fitness. The first floor consists of the cardio equipment most Planet Fitness gyms are known for, including treadmills and stair climbers. The second floor has more cardio machines, as well as a room that contains its TRX training system and PF 360 total body workout machine.

It also has its Black Card lounge, which contains tanning beds, massage chairs and more for those who subscribe to the gym's top-tier subscription. Customers can subscribe to the basic plan, which allows for access to a member's home club. The Black Card membership allows for members to visit any Planet Fitness, as well as other perks.

While the gym is open for individual workouts, there's no escaping the fact that it's a gym open during the COVID-19 pandemic. The building is reduced to 25% occupancy and many of the workout stations are marked off for "Social Fitnessing" (the company's term for social distancing) to keep 12 feet between guests, and flags indicate where cleaning stations are. Masks are also required of members who visit while they work out as well.

"People are pretty understanding," said Mary Scott, director of marketing for PF Michigan Group, the Northville-based franchise which owns the gym. "If you want to be open, this is one of the requirements."

Club members can also check online before they get to the club to see how busy it is, a function that every Planet Fitness now offers, Scott said.

Newest Adell Center addition

The gym becomes the second Planet Fitness in Novi; another is operated by a different franchise owner at Beck and Pontiac Trail. PF Michigan Group also owns nearby gyms including Milford, Bloomfield Township, Farmington Hills, Plymouth and Livonia.

It becomes the latest attraction to open in the Adell Center complex. Texas Roadhouse opened earlier this summer, followed by Carvana in the fall. An iFLY indoor skydiving facility is currently under construction and several hotels are also planned at the site.

Being in the heart of what's happening in Novi makes it easy for the club's members to access the site, as well as all the other amenities in the area.

"It's just a great location, you're kind of in the middle of everything. Convenience is always important to our members and to us," Scott said. "We want to make everything as easy as possible."

The gym is currently offering a discounted rate for



The area's newest Planet Fitness opens on Dec. 23 at Novi's Adell Center.

PHOTOS BY JOHN HEIDER/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM



Melissa Lamb works out at Novi's Planet Fitness on its first day of operations.

new Black Card members if they sign up before the end of January. Petroski said they've had about 100 members sign up and expect to pull members who attend other area Planet Fitness gyms as well.

Those interested in signing up can do at the gym or online.

Gyms are typically popular places after New Year's Day when plenty of people pledge to get into shape after the holidays. This year is a little different with the pandemic, but Regional Manager Erik Boyd said it was important for them to get the facility open and available to those looking to keep fit.

"We want to get as many new members as we can," he said. "With COVID this year, it's going to be a little different, but it was important that we get it open for members to come in and check it out and hopefully kick 2021 off in a positive light."

Teacher facing CSC charges rejects plea deal

Susan Vela Hometownlife.com
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN



Dean

Jason Dean, a teacher and soccer coach charged with sexually assaulting a former middle school student, was willing to take responsibility for whatever he did if it meant less than 10 years in prison.

"My client was willing to take responsibility," his attorney Nicole Blank Becker said during a Thursday Zoom hearing. "I believe the number was somewhere around seven

years, Judge. I have indicated numerous times to the prosecutor that my client does not want to have put the victim through a trial."

But Becker said the prosecution wouldn't budge from a minimum of 10.5 years in prison, and, for inexplicable reasons, the judge's nine-year Cobb's agreement was unacceptable.

During the Zoom hearing, Becker officially rejected visiting Oakland County Circuit Judge Edward Sosnick's offer of a Cobb's plea, where admission to responsibility would give Dean some certainty of his sentence.

Becker acknowledged any new Cobb's offer will have to come from a newly-appointed judge.

"It's over. It's rejected," Sosnick said, interrupting Becker's remarks about Dean. "It's time. He either goes to trial and he gets acquitted or he gets convicted or he works something else out. This dan-

gling out here like this is not good for him and it's not good for the victims."

Sosnick scheduled another pre-trial hearing for Feb. 12 and a trial for March 9.

The visiting judge asked Dean if he was agreeable to what happened over Zoom.

"I am," said Dean, wearing a collared shirt, tie and mask while sitting next to Becker. "Thank you, your honor."

Afterward, Becker talked to Hometown Life over the phone. She didn't want to be recorded and then recanted the unrecorded statements she had made about Dean, the Cobb's offer and discussions with the prosecuting attorney.

"We're at a dead end on our resolution," prosecuting attorney Shannon O'Brien had said during the Zoom hearing.

Dean, a Northville teacher, was charged about a year ago with five counts of first-degree criminal sexual conduct. Two counts were entered in Waterford's 51st District Court; three, in Clarkston's 52-2 District Court.

A former student from Cedar Crest Academy, a private K-8 School in Springfield Township, told law enforcers she and Dean had a sexual relationship in 2010.

Dean was in his late 20s and was coaching soccer and basketball at the charter school. She was 14. She said his sexual assaults happened at places that included her home, his classroom, a hotel, and, for months, the teacher's secret apartment in the Rivers Edge complex in Waterford Township.

Dean, a Livonia resident, was then placed on administrative leave by Northville Public Schools.

Prosecutors have said Wayne Memorial and Northville high school students came forward with more examples of Dean's inappropriate behavior.

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

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

Pot houses blow up in processing of hash oil

Authorities: Butane fuels string of recent explosions

Bill Laitner Detroit Free Press | USA TODAY NETWORK

The explosion and fireball that incinerated a garage in a Commerce Township neighborhood Dec. 19 and sent a man to the University of Michigan Trauma Burn Center was no isolated incident.

It was the latest in a string of statewide explosions and fires, erupting when home marijuana processors used butane to refine cannabis into a concentrated form called BHO — or butane hash oil.

The Commerce blast, in a neighborhood three miles north of Wixom, prompted Oakland County Sheriff Michael Bouchard this week to call for stiffening Michigan's marijuana laws. Under state law, using the butane process in residential areas is illegal. Yet there is no penalty for doing so, Bouchard said.

The process is so lucrative that home processors flock to it, often with tragic results. No agency tracks each butane blast, but a review of recent reports turned up these examples:

- Commerce Township — A house explosion on Sept. 24 rocked the area on the 3000 block of Arbutus Street and sent at least two people to hospitals with injuries.
- Berkley — in December 2018, a blast rocked a garage, badly burning the processor.
- Orion Township — in January 2018, a blast badly injured a home processor when he lit a cigarette.
- Genesee County — in January 2018, a mobile home kitchen exploded, seriously burning the occupant.
- Northern Michigan — in May 2017 at a motel south of Cadillac, a 13-year-old boy was seriously burned in an explosion caused by his mother's use of butane; she is serving a six-year, eight-month sentence for child abuse while her son undergoes reconstructive surgeries.
- Warren — in September 2015, an explosion blew a freezer door 35 feet through the back of a house that was unoccupied at the time. That prompted Mayor Jim Fouts to say: "The recipe for this is on the internet, and you have amateurs doing it in their kitchens and basements."

Authorities say that the victims of severe burns often require more than \$1 million in medical care and the fires they start with highly flammable butane are harder to control than ordinary residential fires. Michigan's Legislature needs to stiffen state marijuana laws, Bouchard said.

"The state just left a huge gap of what happens in neighborhoods," he said.

"I've visited facilities that are doing it right, using butane in an extraction process. But these are commercial facilities, and they spend huge amounts of money for the proper equipment and training," Bouchard said.

Those who pursue butane extraction at home are as



A garage on the 2700 block of Phillips Avenue in Berkley collapsed after a butane hash oil production-linked explosion on Nov. 20, 2018. BERKLEY PUBLIC SAFETY DEPARTMENT

bad as "someone distilling gasoline for resale in their garage — you wouldn't want that happening next door," Bouchard said.

He added: "All I'm saying is, these operations should be in community-approved and safety-approved facilities. The Legislature needs to take all marijuana production activity out of neighborhoods," and deter it with "clear policy and penalties."

The 25-year-old man in Commerce who suffered severe burns to his face and arms likely will face charges for other violations, but he can't be penalized for using butane in the garage, Bouchard said. Police said several butane tanks that were in the garage exploded.

Michigan's marijuana laws clearly prohibit using butane for at-home cannabis processing. One section prohibits "separation of plant resin by butane extraction or another method that utilizes a substance with a flash-point below 100 degrees Fahrenheit in any public place, motor vehicle, or within the curtilage of any residential structure." But there is no penalty for violating the provision, according to the statute's wording. (Curtilage is a legal term that means the area around a home.)

The explosion in Commerce was in the district of state Sen. Jim Runestad, R-White Lake. Asked to comment, Runestad sent this statement: "While the investigation is ongoing, the reality is something that needs to change. We can't be having bombs going off in our neighborhoods."

Fewer of those "bombs" explode in warm months, when processors can take their production outdoors to let the butane disperse safely. Fall through spring are high-hazard months in cold-weather states like Michigan, according to online warnings.

The process of using butane to extract marijuana's intoxicating component, called THC, aims to "get rid of the plant stuff and just keep the good chemicals," said Rick Thompson, a marijuana podcaster and CEO of the Michigan Cannabis Business Development Group,

which stages marijuana business conferences.

The butane acts as a solvent, dissolving THC from cannabis leaves, stems and buds to form a concentrated oil, after which the poisonous butane must be allowed to escape, Thompson said.

"Sometimes, people try to rush that process and that's when explosions happen," he said. Butane is an odorless, colorless gas that is heavier than air, so as it bubbles out of the concentrated cannabis oil, it can build up on the floor of an enclosed space, creating an explosion hazard that awaits only a small spark, Thompson said.

"If butane gas hits a hot-water tank, it can fire up" from the tank's pilot flame, he said. Some processors put their freshly extracted oil into freezers to accelerate the off-gassing of the butane.

"When you open the freezer door and activate the light bulb inside the freezer, you can cause an explosion, just from the freezer light coming on — that little spark," Thompson said.

Contact: blaitner@freepress.com



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TOP: Livonia Fire Department personnel salute during the playing of the National Anthem.

LEFT: Nada Mickels uses a bullhorn to get a call-and-response going with other protesters on June 4 in Livonia. Mickels was there with her children Natasha and Jadan. PHOTOS BY JOHN HEIDER /HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

2020

Continued from Page 1A

in the stands — mouths wide open in a wild cheer. Later that month it was throngs of people crowded into Novi's Suburban Collection Showplace, more than a hundred in one room, hoping to get a tryout for America's Got Talent.

Later still that first month of 2020 I photographed a bunch of Salem Rock kids crowding around Michigan's Lt. Governor Garlin Gilchrist II for a selfie photo. Even then I privately worried about this infectious virus radiating out from China: "should 30-some people be together in a small high school room at the same time?"

The concept of keeping six feet from one another and mask-wearing would come later and begin to infect the vast majority of photos I snapped for the rest of the year.

The first of my photos that showed the impact of the coronavirus begin in late March of this year. Images of eerily-empty school and mall parking lots contrasted with an oddly over-crowded parking lot at Royal Oak's Beaumont hospital — one of the first in the area to offer testing for this novel coronavirus.

Around that same time I photographed a novel concept whereby Plymouth neighbors got together outdoors, spaced well apart, to catch up with one another. We started calling it "social distancing."

After March 2 it was a marathon, for months on end, of photos of empty stores with encouraging signs for their customers, food distributions for those families needing a little extra support, communities staging acts and events of appreciation for their front-liners, images of tentative re-openings, drive-up graduations and businesses adapting to, and sometimes thriving in, the new era of pandemic life.

Here is a look at some of our favorite images from 2020. It wasn't all COVID-19 and face masks and social distancing... but it was, mostly. And it wasn't all bad or sad, but honestly it wasn't that much fun either.

John Heider is the staff photographer for Hometown Life and can be reached at jheider@hometownlife.com or 734-972-6545.



As they await the flyover by the Michigan Air National Guard 127th Wing, Novi Ascension Providence Hospital nurse Gabrielle DoPico, right, takes a group selfie of some of her compatriots from labor and delivery.



Northville Township Precinct 12 worker David Pitcock, left, signs up voters so they can cast their ballots on Aug. 4.



Santa Claus helps to deliver some holiday cheer on Dec. 4 at Northville Civic Concern's annual holiday distribution day. Civic Concern made sure that its clients received food and essential household goods and a fair amount of gift cards to local retailers so they could shop for their own Christmas needs.

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Contract

Continued from Page 1A

case it was needed.

The contract at the Suburban Collection Showplace originally called for the state to pay the center \$1.1 million per month in the first six months, followed by \$975,000 per month for the final three months of 2020 for usage of part of the center. The convention center has seen little activity since the pandemic hit Michigan in March: many of the events planned at the center were canceled, including the upcoming Southeast Michigan Auto Show originally scheduled for January.

The center did host one big name this fall: Eric Trump appeared at the center during a campaign rally for his father, President Donald Trump, in October.

While the number of cases in Michigan is significantly higher now than in the spring, the virus is more spread out

across the whole state as opposed to the spring, where it was heavily concentrated in metro Detroit, Sutfin said. That geographic spread calls for a different plan for treating patients, and the field hospitals did not fit into that plan.

"With cases now spread around the state rather than mostly in southeast Michigan, the state is focusing on supporting local hospitals so that they can best meet the needs of COVID-19 patients in their local communities," she said. "Since March, the state has approved the addition of 5,261 beds at hospitals and 326 beds at skilled nursing facilities across Michigan to address COVID-19 related patient care and helped facilities address PPE needs. In addition, support is being provided to hospitals in implementing their surge control plans."

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

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VOLUME 30, ISSUE 12.4

ELDER PLAGUE... WARP SPEED VACCINES...

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2020 HINDSIGHT – IN THE REARVIEW MIRROR AT LAST! 2021 – A NEW HOPE

MIDDLE CLASS AMERICA –
THE GLUE

Do you remember impeachment? It was only 12 months ago. Seems like a different era. Seemed important. But only empty drama. Then came COVID. Shut down China flights? Or shop in Chinatown? Yuge big deal? Or despicable diversion? Not enough of anything. No masks. No ventilators. No supplies. No clear idea what to do next. Fifteen days to "flatten the curve" turned into 30. Imperial Governors decreed that unprepared facilities must accept COVID positive patients. Resulting in the highest death rates worldwide (despite accounting shenanigans). Fear. Uncertainty. Dread.

Middle Class Americans responded. Setting aside personal interests, personal planning. Amazing. Suddenly manufacturing all sorts of Personal Protective Equipment. Filling the empty cupboard. Navy hospital ships ready in days, not months. Jump-starting ambitious vaccine programs. Ventilator manufacturer to the world!

Regular folks. Punching in for the overtime. Working round the clock. Making it happen. You did that. Despite political petulance. Preening celebrities and posturing politicians. Riots as peaceful protests. Organized destruction as a First Amendment right. Glib experts who insisted that vaccines would take years. Same ones who now take Warp Speed progress for granted.

Through it all, you came through. Shifting



David Carrier

through conflicting orders. Sacrificing lifelong traditions. Accepting the isolation of our most vulnerable... our parents and grandparents. You are the glue of America. Common sense, hard work. Justified skepticism. You have brought us through the crisis, at great cost to yourself.

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GLENN H. REYNOLDS, *INSTAPUNDIT*

Dr. Fauci drops his mask at a baseball game. Governor Cuomo and Dr. Bix gather their families for Thanksgiving. Speaker Pelosi and other politicians continue their "beauty" treatments. For political advantage, the House of Representatives stalls for months. No relief to destitute, hungry Americans. Political winds change. Now the deal, laden with pork, is done in less than a day. The Elder Plague COVID kills nursing home residents at 70 times the rate of younger people. Yet the vaccines go to people at minor risk. Why? Rules for thee but not for me. The hypocrisy piled up so fast in Hollywood and Washington, D.C., you needed wings to stay above it.

And yet. We are the deplorables, the bitter clingers, the little people. And yet. We make it all work. We keep plowing ahead. Undeceived by childish lies. Undaunted by the glaring failures of our "elites." But the time has come to refocus. Thousands of families have lost an entire year of planning for their own lives.

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Time and again you have answered the call. Yesterday Detroit churned out bombers, fighters, tanks, and trucks. Today it is ventilators, PPE, and vaccines. Today's war. Today's weapons.

In 2020, our crisis caseload skyrocketed. Special rules expanded PACE. Fewer people focused on planning ahead, LifePlanning™. Although our team has been busier than ever, 2020 has been a year of wasted opportunity for regular families. I am extremely concerned.

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to accomplish your life's work, we are on the same journey. By your side. Making the rules work for the people who play by the rules.

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ONE IS THE LONELIEST NUMBER...
WHEN YOU ARE THE ONLY HELPER

Can I have sole legal claim over my father's home? I will have to move to Oklahoma. I will be responsible for paying mortgage, bills, and other living expenses. Along with caring for his medical needs. My two siblings will not be helping. The significant sacrifices I have hurt me financially.

NO GOOD DEED GOES UNPUNISHED



Everyone helps at Christmastime! But that was last week. What about the rest of the year? Your father is blessed to have you. Many people do not have anyone willing to step up. But you must protect yourself to protect Dad.

UNDUE INFLUENCE

Basic Rule: Everyone can leave anything to anyone. It is Dad's stuff. Dad decides who gets it. But. It gets tricky when the favored beneficiary also helps the giver.

Dad changes his plan to increase benefits to you. Here is what happens next:

Case #1: You are just one of the kids. The other kids can complain all day long. It is up to *them* to prove that you used "undue influence" on Dad. And that is almost impossible. You win!



BUT

Case #2: Dad has special trust and confidence in you. Dad depends on you emotionally, medically, and financially. Dad gave you power of attorney. Dad made you his trustee.



Things are different. You are Dad's "fiduciary." Dad is dependent on you. Then dies. The other kids complain. Now the "burden of proof" shifts to you! You must prove that you did not use "undue influence on Dad. And that is almost impossible. You lose!

SOLUTION!

Your friendly neighborhood elder law attorney has seen this movie before. Frequently. To avoid the hassle after Dad dies, prepare now. Several techniques are commonly used to protect Dad's wishes. And you! We can help you determine the best strategy.

But please. Get this fixed now! Family strife hurts everyone. Save your family. Save your sanity. Save your inheritance.

Happy New Year!

IN GOD WE TRUST... ALL OTHERS PAY CASH!

DO I HAVE TO WATCH MY MOTHERS SPENDING BEFORE ENTERING A NURSING HOME? My mother is 95 and living in her home. She withdraws \$2000.00 cash every month for her groceries, eating

out, clothing, house cleaning, lawn work etc. She has done this for at least the past 10 years. My question is, if she goes into a care home, will the home consider these withdrawals of money a concern, and prevent her from entering home?thankyou

OLD HABITS DIE HARD

Today we have COVID. In the 1930's it was the Great Depression. Cataclysmic events change the survivors. Like your mother. Depression Era folks never trusted banks again. Cash is king!

Your mother's cash habit is very common. Social Security checks used to be mailed. Many retirees would immediately cash the check. And go walking around with the cash money. Nowadays, Social Security is Direct Deposit. No paper checks in the mail.

Undaunted, folks like your mother go to the bank and withdraw the cash, just like before. This can be a problem.

PROVE YOU DID NOT GIVE IT AWAY!

Nursing home expenses break most middle-class folks. When broke, Medicaid may pay. But not if you gave your money away. When your mother applies for Medicaid, she must prove that she spent her money correctly. For the last five (5) years.



How can mother prove she did not give her money away? No receipts. No cancelled checks. No paper trail. If mother's caseworker is a stickler, mother can be in trouble.

Nursing homes want to get paid. Mother has no money. Medicaid will not pay. Now what? Now the nursing home sues mother. Mother has no money. But mother has a house! Not for long...

SOLUTION! SAVE THE HOMESTEAD

Record mother's spending now. Collect receipts. Write checks. Set up Direct Pay for utilities. Develop a track record. When the time comes, you can demonstrate that \$2000 a month is mother's routine spending. Your friendly neighborhood elder law attorney can help.

AND BEYOND!

Applying for benefits does not mean Nursing Home Poverty or silly Spend Down. Learn how to preserve your loved one's lifesavings, business, cottage, life insurance. Thousands of middle-class families have learned and use these techniques. Why not yours?

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Rise

Continued from Page 1A

Assad's got a lot on her plate. The 1997 Milford High School graduate has a blended family of six, she runs a mobile laser therapy business, "Bye-Bye Pain" that visits numerous locations in metro Detroit, she moved her kids and animals from Milford to Brighton this year to get a house big enough for all of them.

But she's got empathy and compassion to spare and when she heard a story early this year about a child who had a meltdown over a garbage bag the child had used to transport her clothes and toys being thrown away, Assad took action.

She visited several businesses in Huron Valley and surrounding areas to ask them to be drop-off points for donations of new or gently used luggage for children in the state's foster care system who are often moved from home to home. And then she put out a call for donations, and the suitcases rolled in—more than 300.

She didn't stop there.

This fall, as the pandemic raged on and the second round of shutdowns began, Assad worried about those foster children, as well as the children of out-of-work restaurant employees, and what kind of Christmas they might have.

In the past week and a half, she pulled her "tribe of good humans" — family, friends, strangers — together and recruited Party City for donations.

Her efforts netted more than \$100,000 worth of toys for children at Samaritas and Whaley's Children Center in Flint, Brightmoor Church, and for 18 children in Milford, the youngsters of local restaurant workers and others in need.

More than \$1,000 in gift cards were donated, too.

"We started a toy drive with 'It takes a village' and it takes our village," Assad said. "Our village has a heart and soul that is bigger than New York City... I love my good humans."

Rise up

Here are some more good humans who rose to the occasion, according to

the Huron Valley Chamber of Commerce announcement on the awards:

Wendy L. Reichenbach, Respiratory Therapist, Huron Valley Sinai Hospital: Wendy's job at the hospital was working with outpatients on pulmonary rehab. During the lockdown, her program was eliminated. She stepped up and volunteered to assist the staff working with COVID patients, putting herself at risk of exposure.

The Red Dog Saloon, Milford: The Red Dog hosted Wing Night during the pandemic. They raised \$1,925 and added an additional \$2,075 for a total of \$4,000 and donated this to the Feed America program. It also sent dinners to the Henry Ford West Bloomfield nursing staff.

Shelly Dickerson, Steve Peacock, Sue Vanderwall, Huron Valley State Bank: This team worked with customers and noncustomers guiding them through the PPP process and securing business saving funds, giving people hope during this year.

Cory DiMaria, Core 4, Milford: When the mandatory lockdown began, Cory's two gyms were closed, he instantly went to work to bring online/virtual workouts to the community and also launched "In Shape at Home" a 28-day online fitness program and donated the proceeds to the local restaurants to help their staff.

John Kozicki, Michigan Rock School: When all businesses were shut down, Kozicki, embraced technology and implemented online music lessons, connecting students and teachers and continuing his student's instruction and employing teachers. When business opened, he again restructured to continue instructions in a safe format. Also, he recorded an album of his student's music, sold it and donated the proceeds to The Skatepark.

LaFontaine Automotive Group, Highland: LaFontaine has donated, sponsored, partnered with and supported so many local organizations, businesses and customers, that is too lengthy to list here. We, as a community, are so fortunate to have a business that not only cares but shows they care in million ways.

Greg Brainer, The Village Elves, Huron Valley: When the lockdown started, Greg, despite his brain disease, Greg visited local businesses and start-

ed a support our businesses campaign on social media. He gave regular update on available cleaning supplies and toilet paper to the general public, helping those businesses as well. He took on 12 families in need through the Village Elves during this Pandemic Holiday Season.

Highland Supply, Highland: Highland Supply reinvented their business during the shutdown. They provided PPE, disinfectants and toilet paper to the community. They started driving to Detroit, daily, to get fresh produce and perishables created a drive-through store for those people who could not go to the grocery.

Brenda Oldham, RAM Insurance, Highland: Brenda, along with a committee, started The Huron Valley Unity Project to address the world's racial disharmony and social unrest. It was formed to create understanding, oneness, and deepen relationships among each other. There were 2 projects created. One, Walk a Mile in Another's Shoes, art project and Unity Dollars.

Together We are One, Huron Valley: This group of 33 formed in March to make over 1,800 masks and 200 nursing caps. They went to first responders including Milford police and fire, Highland fire, Highland Township offices, Jackson State Prison, Providence Hospital, Huron Valley State Bank, Planned Parenthood, Milford Urgent Care and more.

2 Moms & A Mop: This business provided first responders and open businesses with hand sanitizer, disinfecting cleaners, wipes, etc. It also made and donated hand sanitizer to area businesses, fire and police departments.

Glo Jackson, Highland: Jackson, 90, has continually given back to the community from being a driver to seniors at the Highland Activity Center, teaching the elderly to read and write, making masks and donating them to Meals on Wheels, and first responders, working the election for Highland Township.

Bear & Cheryl Hall, Mi Abilities, Milford: During the shutdown, Bear and Cheryl went into immediate action and began grocery shopping for those people that were compromised and couldn't go to the grocery. The helped dozens of people every day.

Kelley Kirchner & Bert Lanny Community Sharing, Highland: Communi-

ty Sharing knows first hand about the great need in this community and this year they know it even more. Kelley and Bert stepped up and did whatever they had to keep Community Sharing up and running. Losing their big fundraisers, they still managed to continually support those families who suddenly found themselves in need as well as those that continually need help. They are a gem in our community.

Linda Lowe, Milford Farmers Market: The Milford Farmers Market was able to open this year, despite the restrictions, creating opportunities for local farmers to sell their produce as well as providing a sense of normalcy to our community. Not to mention drawing people out so that maybe they stop and get carryout from a local restaurant.

The Burger Joint, Milford: Brian and his staff never missed a beat. They started carryout immediately with online ordering and added outside tables. He also added an option to donate to Community Sharing every time a customer order's online. He has also done frequent fundraisers and give backs throughout the year including sponsoring the Chamber Golf Outing lunch.

JE Strauss Consulting, Milford: Joe assisted his customers and businesses that aren't his customers apply for all the funding offered from the national, state, and county governments, helping to secure vital financial support for their existence.

Huron Valley Sinai Hospital, Commerce Township: The hospital, of course, was front and center during this time. They had to pivot on a dime to change protocols, develop medical teams, create a safe environment for all workers, secure and find new vendors, plan for worse case scenario and deal with the ever-changing demands of public health in general.

Beyond Juicery & Eatery, Milford: Before the business opened, Matt Long, purchased a dining patio for all of Milford patrons to use. After a very successful opening, they store pivoted and started offering gift boxes full of locally made products. In his short time in the Chamber, he has already made a huge impact on the community.

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

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Area playoff volleyball teams enjoy brief return to court



Colin Gay Hometownlife.com
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

Marian head volleyball coach Maysa Cook was not able to attend her team's first practice Dec. 21. With the announcement of the return to play happening the Friday before, Cook, a nurse, could not get the time off work on such short notice.

But when she entered the Mustangs' gym the next day, she saw a team that really had not missed a beat.

She saw a resilient group united in the uncertainty, a team without a single senior ready to take the court against Macomb Dakota in the state quarterfinal and finish what it started.

Cook knows there's a year to build and knows that the pause in the post-season, along with the unprecedented

See VOLLEYBALL, Page 5B



TOP: The Novi High Wildcats varsity volleyball team hits the gym on Dec. 21 to prepare for the resumption of the state playoffs in the new year.

LEFT: Novi High varsity volleyball head coach Kacy Byron adjusts a net in the school's gym.
PHOTOS BY JOHN HEIDER/
HOMETOWNLIFE.COM



Colin Gay
Columnist
Hometownlife.com

Athletics give high schools a chance at normality

Why do you love sports?

This is a question I asked countless student-athletes and coaches throughout 2020. There's a lot of similarity in their responses, no matter the sport they play: it's the competition, the camaraderie, the familial atmosphere, the shared experience on a football or soccer field, on the wrestling mat or in the pool.

With this, I tried to bring athletes and coaches back to the beginning, back to when they first started. I wanted to give them an opportunity to reflect on the role high school athletics plays on a micro level: what it means for the individual student-athlete or coach, and at a macro level: what it means for the school, community or even the state.

When I ask those same athletes and coaches what they have learned this year, the answer remains pretty much the same too: don't take this for granted.

That reality appeared the same day for just about everyone: March 11.

I was at Garden City High School, watching a boys district semifinal doubleheader in which Livonia Churchill and John Glenn advanced to the final. After the second game, I drove to a nearby Taco Bell, took a seat at a table nearest to an outlet — a victory for sports writers everywhere — and got to work.

By 9:45 p.m., I returned to my car and looked at Twitter: the NBA season had been postponed due to COVID-19. Less than 24 hours later, the Michigan High School Athletic Association postponed and later canceled the rest of its winter postseason and its spring season, leaving athletes without closure and without their outlet of expression.

My life as a high school sports writer quickly changed. Instead of going to games and practices, building relationships with student-athletes, coaches and athletic directors in person, my single-room apartment became my home base, conducting phone interviews day in and day out, continuing to find stories, getting per-

See GAY, Page 3B

MHSAA puts fall sports back on pause

Colin Gay Hometownlife.com
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

The Michigan High School Athletic Association announced Dec. 23 that it would be pushing back its fall postseason dates after receiving full details from the Michigan Department of

Health and Human Services about its pilot rapid testing program.

The MHSAA has instructed schools still involved in the football, volleyball, and girls swim and dive postseasons to halt practices immediately.

Fall teams are expected to receive the rapid antigen tests and more in-

struction by Dec. 29 — with the MDHHS conducting webinars Dec. 28-29 to train school personnel who will be involved in testing.

The first tests are scheduled to be administered Dec. 30, and then full prac-

See FALL SPORTS, Page 3B

Brighton woman third in elite 24-hour track race in Phoenix

Bill Khan Livingston Daily
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

Running 415 laps around a high school track might seem like mind-numbing endeavor for someone accustomed to racing long distances on scenic trails.

But sharing the same 400-meter oval with some of the best ultrarunners in the country was an exhilarating experi-



Tobolske-Horn

ence for Loretta Tobolske-Horn of Brighton.

Tobolske-Horn was the third woman and 12th overall finisher in the elite invitation-only Desert Solstice 24-hour race held in Phoenix.

She ran 103.15 miles, all of it in the first 21 hours. Battling tightness in her legs and with third

place secure, she pulled the plug after that. She reached the 100-mile mark in 19 hours, 21 minutes and 34 seconds.

"Everybody who watched the live stream said, 'You smiled all day,'" Tobolske-Horn said. "I did. I was enjoying the moment so much. It was amazing. I qualified and got to be there. The setting was just so cool. You could see the mountains, the palm trees, the city scape. Watching other runners compete

was exciting for me. (Track running) didn't really bother me. I was just in the moment and the excitement of it all.

"It was an amazing experience. There were so many elite, top-of-the-world runners there. Watching them as records got broke and people qualified for (national) teams was amazing."

Tobolske-Horn, 49, qualified with

See RACE, Page 4B



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Edwards' recruitment came down to pros, cons

In a Google doc, top recruit reveals why he picked U-M

Jeff Seidel Detroit Free Press
USA TODAY NETWORK

A few days before Donovan Edwards announced he was going to sign with Michigan, he sent a text to West Bloomfield coach Ron Bellamy.

"Hey, check your email, coach," he wrote.

Edwards had filled out a Google document, listing the pros and cons of going to different schools and shared it with Bellamy. It's an exercise that Bellamy makes all of his players go through before picking a school.

Edwards was ranked as the No. 4 running back in the nation, according to the 247Sports Composite rankings, and he had narrowed his list to four: Michigan, Georgia, Notre Dame and Oklahoma.

When Bellamy read through the document, he noticed Edwards was far more thorough with Michigan.

"At that point, I was, 'Damn, this is where he's going to go,'" Bellamy thought.

"Do you have what he wrote?" I asked Bellamy on the phone.

Bellamy called up the document and read it to me. Under the first pro of going to Michigan, Edwards wrote something revealing.

"Number one was competition," Bellamy said while reading from the document. "He goes, 'Big Ten football. I get to play in the greatest rivalry in history.'"

Edwards is a gifted running back — strong, tough and powerful between the tackles with a surprising burst of speed in the open field.

But it's his inner drive that Michigan coach Jim Harbaugh truly appreciates. "One word to sum him up would be competitor," Harbaugh said on Jon Jansen's In the Trenches podcast. "Love that about him. And really everyone that Ron Bellamy coaches. That's a stamp I would put on them — they're great competitors."

At one point, Ohio State was the clear leader to sign Edwards. He had developed strong relationship with the Ohio State staff when Urban Meyer was the head coach, but Edwards didn't want to commit early. When he was a sophomore, he had clear vision. He told me that he wanted to take all his official recruiting visits and announce on signing day of his senior year — the last possible moment.

Ohio State wouldn't wait for him. The Buckeyes signed five-star TreVeyon Henderson from Virginia and four-star Evan Pryor from North Carolina.

"I have my reasons why I would love to play against Ohio State," Edwards wrote in the Google doc.

To Edwards, that Ohio State game is going to be personal.

Which should be great news for Michigan fans.

'My heart's not (in Georgia)'

Now, before I go further, I want to explain why this is a tricky story for me to write. My son, Nick, was a senior captain at West Bloomfield when Donovan was a freshman who got moved up from the JV. It was a team stacked with talent — 19 players from that squad would get Division I football scholarships — and it advanced to the state championship, losing to Clarkston by one point.

I've seen Donovan play countless times. I've watched him practice and I've talked to him off the field. I like him and his father, Kevin, a lot. They are good people.

And when Donovan lost his grandfather, I went to the funeral.

But Edwards' recruitment and his decision offers an unique perspective on how Michigan football is viewed by recruits, especially at a time when there is so much uncertainty around the program.

So I asked Bellamy to keep reading from the Google doc.

"Development of players," Bellamy said, reading from the doc. "He goes, 'They have had players like Tom Brady, Chris Perry, Charles Woodson. But recently, there haven't been those types of names doing it big. I feel like I can make a historical name for myself. The cons? I want to see more players develop in the skilled area, specifically offensively and defensively.'"

It's hard to argue Edwards' evaluation. The Wolverines didn't place a player on the first-, second- or third- team All-Big Ten offensive teams. Michigan has not had a running back drafted in the NFL since Mike Hart was taken in the sixth round in 2008 and the Wolverines haven't had a first-rounder since Perry in 2004.

Simply put, for Michigan to improve,



West Bloomfield running back Donovan Edwards attempts to make a catch behind Oak Park defensive back Emmanuel Hall during the first half of the Lakers' season opener at Oak Park High School on Sept. 18. JUNFU HAN/DETROIT FREE PRESS

the Wolverines have to do a better job developing players.

Now consider Edwards' option. Georgia wanted him desperately. And that created an alluring dilemma, considering it is a school that has produced NFL players such as Nick Chubb, Todd Gurley, Sony Michel and D'Andre Swift.

"Georgia is the best spot for me, if I want to play in the NFL," Edwards told Bellamy about two weeks ago.

"So why don't you sign with Georgia?" Bellamy replied.

"Because my heart's not there right now," Edwards said.

No, his heart was in Ann Arbor.

Edwards took a leap of faith, showing that he believes in this school and program, and picked the Wolverines.

"Love Donovan," Harbaugh continued on the podcast. "There's a guy that's a real go-getter and leader. Tremendous football player."

The uncertainty surrounding Harbaugh's future didn't play a role in Edwards' decision, in part because he had been preparing for it for years. Back in 2018, I talked to Edwards before Michigan played Ohio State.

"Does it affect you when you hear stuff about Urban Meyer? That he might retire?" I asked him when he was a sophomore.

"Not as of right now," Edwards said.

Because Bellamy has drilled an idea into his players heads: Coaches come and go. Pick the right fit, not the right coach.

And Michigan was clearly the right fit, in his eyes.

Pros and cons

Bellamy moved down to another topic.

"Strength and conditioning staff," Bellamy said, reading Edwards' words. "I started to develop a relationship with Coach Herb (Ben Herbert, Michigan's Director of Strength and Conditioning) last week. He's going to get me right. He was excited when he answered the phone when I called. I rock with him and I know he's not going to let me be anything but great in the weight room. No cons."

Bellamy moved to another topic: Relationship with staff.

"He goes, 'I believe the staff and I are on the same page,'" Bellamy said. "I like the staff. I also think they are supportive and will do anything that I need.'"

Michigan gave Edwards his first scholarship offer. He developed strong relationships with current players, members of this talented incoming recruiting class and the staff.

Two of his West Bloomfield friends and teammates — Makari Paige, a safety, and Cornell Wheeler, a linebacker — are at Michigan.

"Did that play a role?" I asked his dad.

"I'm sure they did," he said.

Bellamy kept reading. "He did have a con," Bellamy said about his relationship with the staff. "Since they have recruited me, it has always been cool vibes. I want them to bring the best out of me. I know they want the best out of me. Can they get it out of me?"

Clearly, he decided yes to that question, otherwise he wouldn't have picked Michigan.

Then, he moved to another topic. "Academic support," Bellamy said. "He's good there. No cons."

Fan support.

"He loved the fan support, especially with the Name, Image and Likeness," Bellamy said. "I think that was one of the big reasons why he went to Michigan. He thought, being a local kid, if he is the man, he couldn't do it bigger at any other school."

Direction of the program.

"He said, 'It's down, but it's going to go up,'" Bellamy said.

Edwards listed another con: the negative attitude swirling among some Michigan fans, who are down on the program. Bellamy stopped reading and injected his own opinion. "Fans don't understand how it affects recruiting," Bellamy said. "When you start talking crazy, these kids read that stuff and they see it."

Then, Bellamy ripped off several topics.

Distance away from home.

"He said 42 minutes, there are no cons," Bellamy said.

Chance to play early.

"He said, 'I understand nothing is guaranteed but if I showcase the talent God has given me and if I continue to work hard, not only do I feel I will play, I will make a huge impact,'" Bellamy said. "He did list a con about playing early. He said, 'I want a chance to have an opportunity to start and be the man Day One, regardless of my age. Will I get that opportunity?'"

Weather.

"He goes, 'It's Michigan, the weather sucks,'" Bellamy said, laughing. "He knows. Whatever. He's from here."

Finally, there was another positive.

"He likes the idea of games on TV for friends and family to watch," Bellamy said. "Every game is broadcast on national television by Fox, ABC, ESPN, BTN."

Ready and fresh

So what is Michigan getting?

A running back who is fresh. Donovan has little wear and tear on his body because of how Bellamy has used him. After Edwards broke his ankle during his sophomore year, Bellamy has limited his carries — and limited his hits — with the long-term, big picture in mind. "Your body is like a piñata," Bellamy told Edwards. "It can only take so many hits."

I watched most of West Bloomfield's games this fall online. After the number of fans in the stands was allowed to increase because of COVID-19, I went to a game and Edwards hardly touched the ball. He was a glorified decoy.

Bellamy was setting him up for long-term success.

Edwards does have areas he needs to improve. He has not been asked to do much pass protection, so that will need to improve.

But Edwards is a tremendous threat as a receiver. The most amazing thing I ever saw Edwards do was catch a simple pass on the sideline, after he lined up like a wide receiver, and he took off like a blinding flash. Whoosh. He was gone.

He looked like a sprinter, not a football player.

No place like home

Several schools recruited Donovan until signing day.

"I talked to (Georgia coach) Kirby

Smart on Monday," Kevin Edwards said. "I told him that I love the way he interacts with his players. I told him, 'You're an awesome coach. The way you build rapport with the kids. How you do team building with the kids.'"

Kevin Edwards had already thought through how he would travel to Georgia for games. Because he wasn't sure where his son would pick. Over the last four years, Donovan bounced back and forth. "I mean, he was crazy about Oklahoma," Kevin Edwards said.

But Donovan never visited Oklahoma because of COVID-19. "He's still crazy about Georgia," Kevin Edwards said. "Crazy about Notre Dame."

But in the end, it was Michigan. "When he goes up to Michigan, he knows everybody," Kevin Edwards said. "Everybody knows him. The players. The coaches, the trainers. He has a good rapport with Michigan."

'Historic' role in a comeback

The night before Donovan announced his decision, he went through a series of mock interviews to prepare for the media onslaught.

The announcement was going to be broadcast live on ESPN. And Bellamy didn't want Edwards to get stumped on national TV.

During the mock interviews with Bellamy's wife Aamira and one of the West Bloomfield coaches, Edwards was asked what positives he saw in his new school.

"It's 42 minutes from home," Edwards said.

"That's when I knew he was going to Michigan," Bellamy said.

Getting Edwards was a tremendous get for Harbaugh. There was a desperate need to inject offensive talent and that's what he did with this class.

But this was bigger than Harbaugh. It was a program win. Every aspect of U-M pulled Edwards to Michigan.

Because of the elite education.

Because of Paige and Wheeler.

Because he felt so close to the coaching staff and the current players.

Because he already felt a tight bond with J.J. McCarthy, the five-star quarterback from Illinois. Donovan feels all of them — the incoming players, the current players, the coaches and the staff can make Michigan a winner again.

But most of all, Donovan picked Michigan because it felt like what he had at West Bloomfield, a place where former players come back and hang out together during the summer, and the players respect each other, and Bellamy treats everybody like his own kids, and Mike Stone, from 97.1 FM, is up in the press box screaming: "Touchdown L-A-A-KERS!!"

Still, that Google doc shows that Edwards is going to Michigan with wide-open eyes and clear understanding. He knows this program has struggled. He knows it hasn't produced many NFL running backs. He knows there is uncertainty.

But he has this vision. He is confident enough in himself to think he can play, in his own words — a "historical" role — in bringing it back.

Contact Jeff Seidel: jseidel@free-press.com. Follow him on Twitter @seideljeff. To read his recent columns, go to freep.com/sports/jeff-seidel.

Gay

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spectives on what could have been for these teams.

As spring turned to summer and summer to fall, those interviews and conversations blossomed into more than just about what could have happened on the field. It was talking to people about the emotional toll this pandemic took, asking about the people they had lost, the loneliness they felt, the uncertainty and anxiety people felt, being bombarded by COVID-19 and a slew of other events that defined our world in 2020.

Sports became a much bigger conversation: it was a conversation of normalcy. It was a conversation of unity: people of different backgrounds coming together to play the game they love, loving your brother or sister next to you on the bench, "regardless," in the words of Wayne Memorial head girls basketball coach Jarvis Mitchell.

That's why the MHSAA brought back fall sports in the first place: to give student-athletes a chance to do something normal in a world that just was not. State champions were crowned, tears were shed after victories and defeat, I was logging late nights in McDonald's parking lots.

It was normal. But it was so much bigger. There was a distinct level of gratitude in each moment, seeing the smiles, the intensity, the tenacity in the eyes of players with the rest of their faces covered with a mask.

Was it perfect? Absolutely not.

Every time I stepped onto a football field or into a gym, COVID-19 was the elephant in the room. There were moments of blatant disregard for social distancing and mask wearing by players, coaches, fans in the stands, sometimes in the middle of a gym filled more than it should have been.

With the year coming to a close, the miscommunication between the MHSAA and its member schools still participating in a fall postseason tournament was palpable, pausing practices for yet a third time as they wait for rapid COVID-19 tests to come in from the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, causing even more



Churchill Charger teammates had about a month off with no practices or games until they got together at the school on Dec. 21. JOHN HEIDER/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

confusion and frustration among all parties involved.

2020 was an emotional roller coaster. And heading into 2021, there are questions still to be answered:

Will fall teams actually have an opportunity to finish what they started? Will winter and spring teams have a semblance of normalcy as they prepare for their seasons?

But the question I have thought of more and more as the season has gone on is this: What is the importance of high school athletics?

With this, I think of Cranbrook Kingswood head football coach Ben Jones, who died in a car accident in August, right as practices were ramping up for a fall season.

His mantra was "Get to."

You get to practice, get to play with

your friends on a football field or a golf course. You get to have the opportunity to rally a community around 60 minutes of play, to feel joy after wins and sadness after losses. You get to cement your legacy with a banner on the ceiling of your high school, like Northville girls golf did, like Detroit Catholic Central boys soccer did, like Marian or Novi volleyball hope to do.

You get to be remembered.

"Get to" is the answer to the question of why do you love sports.

And heading into 2021, I hope that we don't take that for granted if given the chance.

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

Fall sports

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tices may begin again. If schools are delayed in the start of testing, teams may start practice after one negative test.

With teams not permitted to start practices until Dec. 30 at the latest, postseason competitions could be rescheduled. Confirmation will come from the MHSAA at a later date.

The MHSAA and the MDHHS announced Friday that fall postseason teams would have the opportunity to finish their seasons after being postponed due to state guidelines combating the spread of COVID-19.

The rapid tests will be provided to schools by the MDHHS at no charge and will be added to the safety protocols already in place, and if teams or players refuse to participate, they will not be able to compete in their respective fall tournament event.

The high school football season will begin in the regional round, the volleyball season will start in the state quarterfinal, while girls swim and dive is schedule to host its state meet.

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

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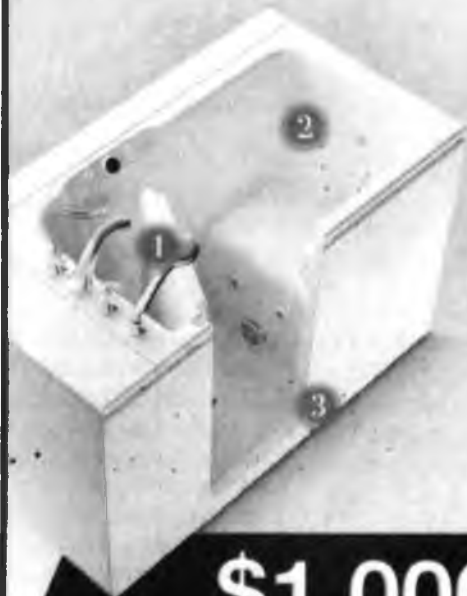
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MHSFCA releases 2020 All State football teams

Colin Gay HometownLife.com
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

While those teams still in the playoff race wait to see if they will get a shot at a state title, the Michigan High School Football Coaches Association released its 2020 All State teams.

Here's a look at the members of the team who made it from our coverage area.

Division 1

First team defense

Canton senior linebacker Aran Patrick

Division 2

First team offense

- Seaholm offensive lineman Caden DeWald
- Livonia Franklin offensive lineman Kyle Fugedi
- North Farmington junior tight end Aaron Rice
- North Farmington senior running back Justin Whitehorn

First team defense

South Lyon senior defensive lineman Gus Taylor

Division 3

First team offense

Garden City senior offensive lineman Hunter Ohman

First team defense

Brother Rice senior defensive back Rocco Milia

Division 4

First team offense

Detroit Country Day senior offensive lineman Caleb Tiernan

First team defense

- Cranbrook Kingswood senior defensive lineman Bryce Hall



6'6", 298 lb. Franklin offensive lineman Kyle Fugedi, left, engages with a Franklin player before pulling to his right to block for a run play. JOHN HEIDER/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

● Detroit Country Day senior defensive back Danny Maclean
Contact reporter Colin Gay at [cgay@hometown-](mailto:cgay@hometown-life.com)

life.com or 248-330-6710. Follow him on Twitter @ColinGay17. Send game results and stats to LivSports@hometownlife.com.

Longtime Oakland County GOP leader Bullard dies

Angie Jackson [Detroit Free Press](http://DetroitFreePress.com) | USA TODAY NETWORK

Friends and former colleagues are mourning the death of Bill Bullard Jr., a longtime Oakland County Republican leader described as a "legend" in local and state politics.

Bullard, 77, died Dec. 18 of cancer and complications of COVID-19, said friend and former state Sen. Mike Kowall. His death was first reported by Crain's.

Bullard's career in public service spanned roughly four decades, beginning in 1978 with his role as Highland Township trustee. He went on to become the township's supervisor. From 1983 until 2002, he represented western Oakland County in the Legislature, first in the state House and then the Senate.



Bullard

Following his time in the Senate, Bullard, an attorney, was elected to the Oakland County Board of Commissioners and served as chair. In 2011, he took office as county clerk and register of deeds, succeeding Ruth Johnson. He lost reelection for the seat in 2012.

Last month, Bullard was sworn in as deputy clerk of White Lake Township, a role that Kowall said his friend was excited to delve into.

"He's a legend in the state and in Oakland county," said Oakland County Commissioner Mike Gingell, a Republican who regarded Bullard as a friend and mentor. "He's going to be sorely missed."

In 2015, Bullard told Hometown Life he was proud of his work modernizing and digitizing record keeping as clerk of Oakland County.

"We moved forward with technology, e-filing, e-recording," he said.

Bullard was a budget-conscious conservative who was adept at "reading the tea leaves," Kowall said. He was good friends with L. Brooks Patterson, the late Oakland County executive. Kowall and other Republicans who worked alongside Bullard knew him as a strategist who could be a loyal ally and also a tough adversary to those in his party.

"He was formidable," said Larry Obrecht, a former county commissioner. "If you had a disagreement, you

better have done your research and you better know what you're talking about. I assure you he would be prepared."

Gingell said Bullard had a way of bringing people together to focus on solutions instead of "petty partisan politics."

Oakland County Executive David Coulter, a Democrat who served with Bullard on the Board of Commissioners, wrote on Twitter that he admired Bullard's "deep knowledge and ability to get things done." Coulter went on to describe Bullard as "a man of his word, a genuine public servant and a friend."

Oakland County Republican Party Chairman Rocky Raczkowski served in the House when Bullard was a senator. He credits the late politician with impacting many of the laws that work well in Michigan today.

Following Wayne County Sheriff Benny Napoleon's death to COVID-19 on Thursday, Raczkowski said it comes as a shock to lose "another titan of history."

"He was truly one of the old guard for Oakland County, one of the last of those that truly put Oakland County's development on the trajectory that it's at now," he said of Bullard.

Kowall said Bullard was fun and witty. He enjoyed visiting restaurants in downtown Milford, where everyone seemed to know him.

"He could actually make you laugh without saying a word," Kowall said.

Obituaries

To place an ad, call 588-826-7171 or visit mideathnotices.com/place.php

Thomas Barton Chlebo

MILFORD - On Thursday, Dec. 17th, Thomas Barton Chlebo passed away unexpectedly in Milford, MI. He was 71 years old.

Tom is survived by his wife, Dawn Chlebo, his two children, Heather (Lee) Humiecki and Ryan (Erica) Baughman, as well as his sister Lauri (Mark) Klemmer and nieces Jessica and Kelly. He was also a loving brother-in-law to Sandy (Rich), Kevin (JoAnn) and Karen (Terry) and son-in-law to Barbara Taylor. He was a proud uncle to many. He was preceded in death by his parents Paul and Caroline Chlebo.

Tom was born on August 5, 1949 in Detroit, Michigan. He graduated from Redford High School and later graduated from Lawrence Tech.

Tom married Dawn in 1981. They met while working together at Redford Presbyterian Church. Tom whole heartedly accepted Heather and Ryan as his own.

His career was in the Restaurant Management field. His last few years were spent with assisting Rottermonds Jeweler's.

He was most known for his kindhearted personality and his warm belly chuckles. Many called him a friend.

There will be a private gravesite burial. Donations can be made in Tom's honor to the Milford Public Library.

For further information phone 248-684-6645 or visit www.LynchFuneralDirectors.com



Race

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her first-place time of 17 hours, 21 minutes, 56 minutes in the Tunnel Hill 100-mile race in November 2019 in Vienna, Illinois. By achieving the B standard of 17:30 for Desert Solstice, she had to wait until runners with A standards of 15:35 or faster committed.

She didn't receive her invitation until six weeks before the race, leaving her little time to prepare her body for the unique challenge of running an ultra on a track.

"I'm not on the track very often," she said. "I'm on the track to do an interval workout or something like that, but not a lot of miles. I did put in a 20-miler on the track, some 10-milers. I felt great doing that amount of distance. When it gets into 50, 60 miles, the track is kind of sneaky. It's flat, but you have to run on the inside lane. You're always on a little bit of an angle the whole time."

Things were going well for Tobolske-Horn — until they weren't.

She was clicking off splits at a consistent pace, with only two laps slower than 2 minutes, 20 seconds

through the first 74 laps. The pace gradually slowed as the race went on and she needed to stop to get tight adductor and calf muscles massaged.

"I was just over eight hours at 50 miles," she said. "I had a really good race going. I started falling apart a little bit. When I was nearing 100, I realized I could get my second-fastest 100-mile time. I gutted it out to get 19 hours. After that, I figured it wasn't smart to keep pushing my miles. I only needed just under 102 miles to get third place, so I just went long enough to get that."

Tobolske-Horn hoped to reach the 130-mile minimum to qualify for the U.S. 24-hour team. She chalked up her race at Desert Solstice as a learning experience. She still ran the 21st-fastest 100-mile women's time in the country this year.

"Maybe I went in with too high of expectations for my first 24-hour event on a track," she said. "Those were kind of unknowns for me. I always set the bar pretty high. When I go now, I'll have more knowledge, more experience. People asked me Sunday if I would do another track event. I couldn't think that far ahead, but Monday I said I would. I love being on the track. For some people, it's mentally difficult. It wasn't mental for me. Falling apart physically was my issue."

Contact Bill Khan at wkhan@gannett.com.

Tobolske-Horn, 49, qualified with her first-place time of 17 hours, 21 minutes, 56 minutes in the Tunnel Hill 100-mile race in November 2019 in Vienna, Illinois. By achieving the B standard of 17:30 for Desert Solstice, she had to wait until runners with A standards of 15:35 or faster committed.

Volleyball

Continued from Page 1B

nature of the 2020 season due to the COVID-19 pandemic, has accelerated this team's potential and chemistry to unmatched levels.

"I think this is going to be one of those moments that build character, resiliency and if they find themselves in a tough position next year, they'll say, 'We got through COVID last year, this is nothing,'" Cook said.

Hours after Cook returned for her first practice, the postseason was halted once again.

The Michigan High School Athletic Association suspended practice again Dec. 22, awaiting more information from the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services about the rapid antigen COVID-19 testing fall postseason teams would be receiving prior to the restart of competition.

According to an announcement made by the MHSAA, teams are expected to receive tests by Dec. 29, and will be permitted to return to practicing Dec. 30, after the first round of testing is complete. With the postseason being pushed back again, the MHSAA said competition dates could be rescheduled for a later date.

But Marian and Novi were in the gym Tuesday afternoon — unaware of another postponement coming that evening — preparing for Battle Creek, awaiting that Jan. 5 state quarterfinal game, that final week of play that will crown a champion.

They were both trying to regain that chemistry that they had before the first pause, one that takes time to rebuild.

Start to rebuild

Novi head volleyball coach Kacy Byron knew that her team was going to finish. And when she heard Friday's announcement that a return was imminent, she and the rest of the coaching staff sent a three-word text message to the team:

"We're back baby."

"The energy in here was just so exciting," Byron said of the first day of practice. "It was great to see them, and you could tell, they were so excited to be back to be able to finish."

Many girls on Novi's team, similar to other teams around the state still in contention, reverted to practicing with their club teams over the month-long pause. And while players continued to work on skills, they knew it takes time to get back to where the team was before.

Marian sophomore setter Ava Sarafa knows this better than anyone. Playing with her club team, she was working with other people who have different qualities and characteristics she likes to



Novi High varsity volleyball practices in their gym on Dec. 21 after taking about a month off from competition due to the pandemic. JOHN HEIDER/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

exploit. So in those first days of practice back at Marian, she was working on location and consistency, putting hitters like junior Ava Brizard and Sarah Sylvester in the best position to succeed.

At Novi, prior to even taking the court for the first practice, the team gathered together, talking about just where they were at and where they were going.

"We just talked through our feelings," sophomore outside hitter Sarah Vellucci said. "Everyone is obviously so happy to be back playing with each other, but we also realize that we only have three weeks as a team left with each other. So we just want to soak up all we can and just really focus on these practices."

Novi senior libero Rachel Jennings said the first set of practices back showed that everyone has the skills, but it does take awhile to get back into the swing of things, back into the Wildcat system of play, similar to every team in their same position.

But as Novi left the court, they were still confident with where they are at.

"As a team, our first practice yesterday really showed us that we are still in it. We didn't even have a bad practice," Jennings said. "Everyone was training for the past month, so everyone just kind of came back and really clicked. There is pressure, I think, but I think we can use these practices to alleviate the pressure."

Shared adversity

Marian and Novi are in completely different spots as a team, but are striving for the same goal.

Novi is an experienced team — carrying seven seniors and five juniors on its 16-person roster. They have been in a similar place before: ending its 2019 season in the regional final in a three-set sweep to Ann Arbor Skyline, their upcoming opponent in the state quarterfinal.

Byron knows what the Eagles are going to do. But she is more focused on her team and their experience.

"We're all on the same page, and that, as a coach, is really the difference maker when you are going into these final games is 'Is everyone together,' or are you riding off of one, two, three hot players?" Byron said. "I think right now, we have a whole team that wants to get, definitely, to the final four if not further."

Cook's team is not as experienced: carrying a roster of three juniors — Sylvester, Brizard, Janiah Jones and Sophia Treder — with the rest sophomores and freshmen. A five-set win against defending Division 1 state champion Mercy in the regional final brought a level of expectation to this young group.

"Especially since we have no seniors and we are such a young team, we wanted to do this two years in a row," Brizard

said. "We wanted to do this twice and we just kept up that hope that we could play again because we worked so hard for the season. We know how many challenges we had to overcome to get to this moment, and we didn't want it to go to waste. We didn't want it to, poof, out of thin air."

But both teams can unite on the fact that they have something special going on in their respective gyms. Both have a chemistry that has only been upped through shared adversity, through the experience of almost losing what they had worked so hard for. For Cook, that's the purpose of practicing: to play the game itself, to compete.

"You come to practice because you want to play," Cook said. "To have five weeks where, yes, you might be training two, three times a week and you are getting reps, and yes, you love volleyball, but you want to compete. Who knows, maybe they will play a lot better because they have been starved for five weeks."

After a taste of normalcy back in the gym for two practices, both Marian and Novi leave the gyms, waiting for Dec. 30, waiting for that chance to finish what they started.

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

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Improve your research skills

By Kaila Kea
ZipRecruiter.com

Research skills are a valuable part of your professional toolkit. Employers want job applicants who are not just curious, but who possess the skills to systematically research the answers to questions.

An administrative assistant, for example, might be expected to conduct research about client needs to ensure that the company offers suitable services. A paralegal may be required to conduct research on old legal proceedings to aid lawyers in presenting a strong court case. In order to design equipment for safe everyday use, a mechanical engineer would conduct research on how people use machines. Across industries, researching is a highly useful skill.

We have compiled four tips to help you conduct better general research, strengthening your ability to present practical findings, formulate solutions and exceed your company's goals.

1. Define your research

Put down a brief paragraph summarizing what you are researching. What is the question you are trying to answer? What will the research help you to accomplish? These questions will define the end of your research.

2. Make a plan

Now that you have identified the ends of the research you are conducting, you should identify the means. Make a plan for the project. Include a timeline, potential sources and deliverables.

Create the timeline to have a visual representation of when each item must be done. Make a note of potential sources to gain an idea of what people, places or publications you might consult to find the information you need. Deliverables are products of your research that you can present to your manager in intervals leading up to the deadline. If you are on track to conduct research for three weeks, you might

present one deliverable at the start of each week.

3. Know your sources

The more research you do, the more familiar you will be with the resources available to you.

Internet searches are frequently a good starting place for research. You can try a few different ways of formulating your query to see what gets you the best results. You should also familiarize yourself with authoritative websites and online databases or libraries related to your particular field. For some research you may need to

seek out physical resources from museums, libraries or other facilities.

People can also be valuable resources. Consult with colleagues, local researchers and industry specialists. Start by drafting a brief email to introduce yourself, explain the nature of your research, and ask if they would be willing to share their insights with you.

4. Check authority and expertise

A sound source is one that is reputable. This means that you can trust the information you find

there because it has been properly researched, vetted and verified. This is especially important for information you find on the internet. You should prioritize sites with .gov or .edu domain names. Be sure to consider the authority and expertise of all your sources.

When you conduct research for a report, project or presentation, you are becoming a source of information yourself. People will look to you as a knowledgeable conveyor of information. In improving your researching skills, you are empowering others to do the same.

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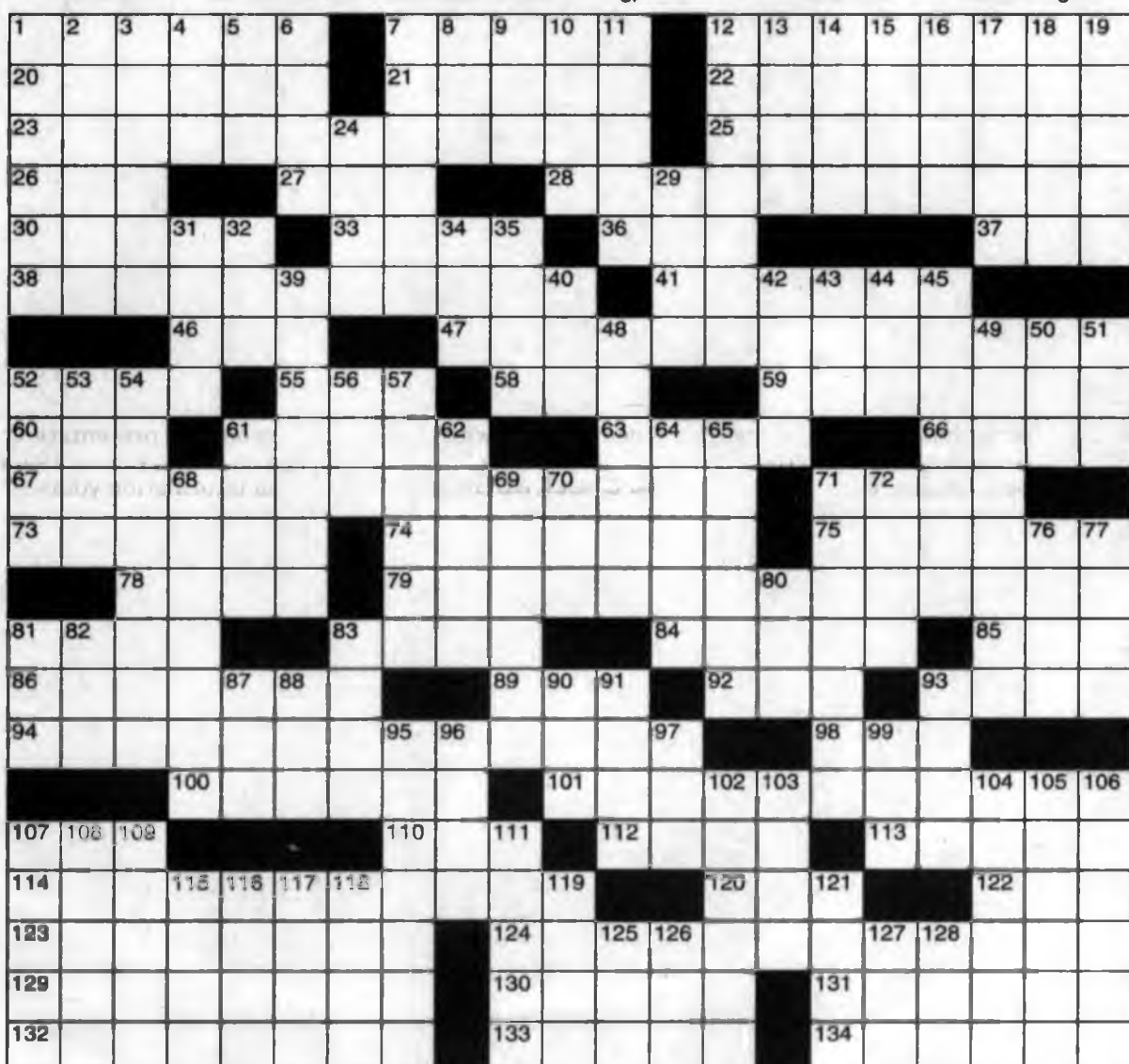
THURSDAY PUZZLE CORNER

CROSSWORD PUZZLER

PREMIER CROSSWORD/ By Frank A. Longo

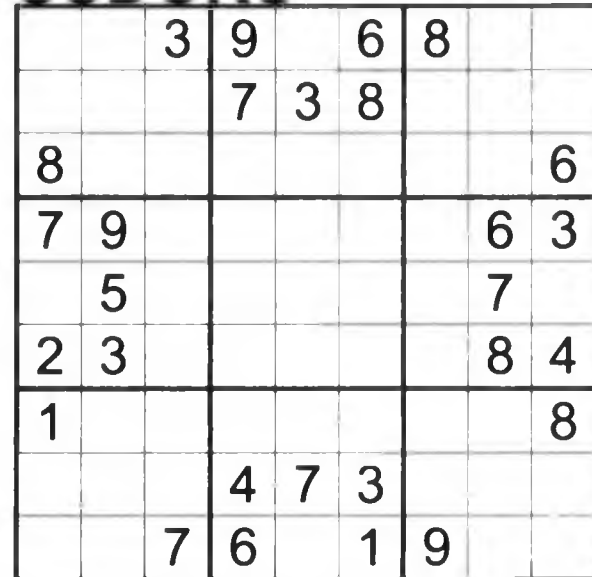
GROUP DYNAMICS

- ACROSS**
- 1 Actress Seyfried
7 Buffets, e.g.
12 More dismal
20 Kind of tire or saw
21 Kate's TV housemate
22 Back wheel pin
23 "Sunshine of Your Love" band sitting in for another band?
25 Satellite dish precursors
26 In the know
27 Onassis' nickname
28 Condition of the "Dust in the Wind" band?
30 "Rocket Man" singer John
33 Qualified
36 Permit
37 Despite that
38 Plea to hear a song from the "New World Man" band?
41 Tiny setback
46 Livid
47 "A Horse With No Name" band doing a webcast?
- 52 Crib sleeper
55 Prefix with life or west
58 Quarterback Manning
59 Kind of clam
60 Tooth
61 doctors' org.
61 Composer Franz — Haydn
63 Wide receiver Carter
66 Urban haze
67 "More Than a Feeling" band performing for 24 hours straight?
71 "Woe — you!"
73 Ancient
74 Puts back on, as weight
75 Christie's Hercule
78 Grass houses
79 Maestro directing the "Drops of Jupiter" band?
81 Recipe directive
83 Small, agile deer
84 Fake fat brand
85 Year, in Brazil
86 "The" or "an"
- 89 Prefix with realist
92 Summer hrs. in D.C.
93 Infamous "Impaler"
94 "Beth" band's last utterance at the end of a concert?
98 Greek letter
100 Kleenex sheet
101 "These Dreams" band's musical beat?
107 Recipe directive
110 Hosp. areas
112 Nagging pain
113 Brutish sort
114 "If You Leave Me Now" band playing the same tune over and over?
- 120 Granola tidbit
122 Slip up
123 "Be well"
124 Smoke generator used by the "Make It With You" band?
129 Scrooge's first name
130 Lofty nest
131 Hardy's bud
132 High anxiety
133 Salon tinters
- 134 Top points
- DOWN**
- 1 Bow wielder
2 "Taxi" actress Henner
3 Very skilled people
4 Long of "House of Lies"
5 Flow checker
6 — Romeo
7 Beach city near L.A.
8 Building wing
9 With
52-Down, he said "Open, sesame!"
10 Connect
11 "The Goldbergs" actor George
12 Extreme
13 Soap actress Sofer
14 Chows down
15 God of war
16 Angry talk
17 "No way," slangily
18 Overjoy
19 Put back to the default
24 Neighbor of Saudi Arabia
29 Classic soft drink brand
31 "Yowza!"
32 Gun rights gp.
34 Meadow
35 J.D. Salinger title girl
39 "Drums Along the Mohawk" novelist Walter D. —
40 — Aviv
42 "Mama" Elliot
43 Folding bed
44 French "a"
45 Malleable
48 Having a lot of, as a nutrient
49 Undying
50 Prefix with realist
51 Unit of work
52 See 9-Down
53 As sick as —
54 Batters' successes
56 Belief suffix
57 Cherished by
61 Abrupt shock
62 "— Jacques"
64 Veg-o-Matic company
65 Boot part
68 Sightseer
69 Tennis' Andre
70 Mai —
71 Revision issuer
72 Verb go-with
76 Actress Chaplin
77 Stomped (on)
80 Toon
81 Hefty's Cinch —
82 Bi- plus one
83 Classic autos
87 Film special FX
88 — Alamos
90 "Disgusting!"
91 Zeus' mother
93 "— con Dios" ("Go with God")
95 Hamilton and Burr, notably
96 Roman tyrant
97 Tic — toe
99 "Know — enemy"
102 — Scholar
103 Athletic group
104 Belonging to them
105 Kind of wasp
106 Edible mushrooms
107 Wasn't idle
108 Abu —
109 Flood barriers
111 In the worst way, informally
115 Euro fraction
116 Laptop brand
117 Stare intently
118 Tram loads
119 Hunted beast
121 Soft mineral
125 Afore
126 Atmosphere
127 "Wheels"
128 Color grade



For assistance or suggestions on the Puzzle Corner, contact Steve McClellan at (517) 702-4247 or smcclellan@michigan.com. Want more puzzles? Check out the "Just Right Crossword Puzzles" books at QuillDriverBooks.com

SUDOKU



Difficulty Level ★★★

12/24

Here's How It Works:

Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!

ALL AT SEA

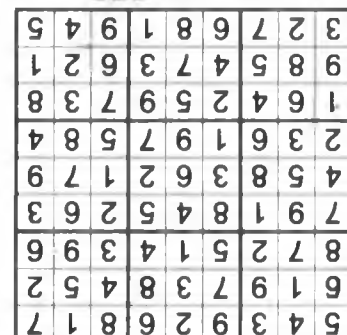
Can you find all the words hidden in the grid? Read backwards or forwards, up or down, even diagonally. The words will always be in a straight line. Cross them off the list as you find them.

G C S Y O H A D G A F T Y A T S A
L E N N A H C N K F H T S A M A B
P R A D A R I T A O B G U T B I O
R E N I L V S T A R B O A R D L A
F E N L I G H T H O U S E A I O R
I S W D C O R X D K A N C H O R D
S U A C M O T E C K R K N O T S S
H B V S Z R M A L I H A B T L W X
Y M E R O B B P K W O O B E I E Y
H A S P U I S C A R A A R M A S Q
T R U O N H E O R S V R M I E C Y
R I Y Q A D G O Y O S I T G Z H H
E N S R X S B T Y B N B X B A O G
B E K I E R T A N G N I W O R O N
L S C P A E G T A O B E F I L N I
U J O H J E G C O A S T L I N E D
S R D X F U L E S S E V C P S R M

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AHOY
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BAY
BEACH
BERTH
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CABIN
CHANNEL
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KNOTS
LIFEBOAT
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OAR
PORT
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RADAR
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