



THURSDAY, MARCH 24, 2022 | HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK

Sharpshooters cull 80 deer in Kensington

Program resumes after 1-year hiatus caused by threats

Susan Bromley Hometownlife.com USA TODAY NETWORK – MICHIGAN

Sharpshooters recently culled 80 deer in Kensington Metropark in Milford after a 1-year hiatus in the program, due to threats. The Huron-Clinton Metroparks Authority released a deer herd update report March 10 with deer cull numbers for the 2022 season, stating 330 total deer removed across seven parks.

Danielle Mauter, chief of marketing and communications for the metro-

parks, wrote in an email that the 2022 culls went smoothly after last year's planned cull at Kensington was canceled due to threats. Subsequently, the authority reevaluated the program and released a study in which it was determined that culling of deer was still the most effective strategy for deer management. "We consider it to be a successful program," Mauter said. "The metroparks remain focused on responsibly preserving wildlife and managing the ecosystems that sustain wildlife, including ensuring healthy, thriving deer herds, within our 13 unique parks."

See DEER, Page 4A

Public hearing about Downs development draws crowd

Ed Wright Hometownlife.com USA TODAY NETWORK – MICHIGAN

As one Northville resident cleverly phrased it, a version of "March Madness" unfolded in the city's community center March 15, but it had nothing to do with college basketball.

The main event was the public hearing phase of the planned unit development process for the Downs, a 474-unit project proposed by Hunter Pasteur Homes for the current site of the Northville Downs horse racing venue Limited to five-minute comments - although there were a few "shot" clock violations — citizens delivered a diverse range of opinions, sounding more favorable of the builders' plans than in prior planning commission meetings. During an early-meeting period designed for citizens to comment on nonagenda topics, Jim Long, an outspoken opponent of the developer's preliminary site plans, objected to the fact that the development team was allowed two four-hour presentations in the months leading up to Tuesday's meeting while residents were limited to five minutes.

Plush toy returned to child after social media adventure



Emma Stein Detroit Free Press USA TODAY NETWORK

Austin was accidentally lost by his family at Detroit Metro Airport in early March. He was sitting near the water fountain in the middle of the McNamara Terminal on March 4 when Commerce Township resident Mary Joyce found him.

Austin, a stuffed animal, was left behind in the often stressful craze of airport travel.

Through the power of social media, Joyce was able to return the beloved toy cow to its rightful owner, a baby named Rae from Ohio.

Long said in looking at the rejected proposal from 2019, he doesn't see much difference with the current 2022 plan.

"They're basically the same thing," Long claimed, "except they shuffled the deck a little bit. I am not against development of the Downs site; I'm against harmful development of the site."

See HEARING, Page 4A

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Austin the toy cow posing with a pilot at Detroit Metro Airport. PROVIDED BY MARY JOYCE

"I have seven kids and my two sons are both autistic, and they are very, very attached to their plushies," said Joyce, 51. "I know what would happen in my life if either of them lost their stuffed animals, so I picked him up."

She went to a nearby gate where airport personnel made a lost and found announcement over the loudspeaker, but no one came to claim Austin. Joyce walked around the airport with him, hoping someone would see the cow, until her flight to New York.

Although she had no success at the airport, she was determined not to give up, and Austin became her travel companion. The pilot on her flight thought it was funny and took a picture with the stuffed cow, which led to Joyce creating an Instagram account for Austin.

And then everything exploded.

The DTW Facebook account posted about it, hoping to find its real owner, in a post that now has more than 12,000 shares.

Six days after Austin was left behind, Rae's mom saw it and commented on the post.

See TOY, Page 4A

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2A I THURSDAY, MARCH 24, 2022 I O& EMEDIA (NR)

Reimbursement claims for pothole damage rarely pay

Ed Wright Hometownlife.com USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

Getting reimbursed for vehicular damages caused by potholes on Wayne County roads proved a tall order in 2021.

Results of a Freedom of Information Act filing by Hometown Life revealed that 51 drivers used the county's damage claim process from Jan. 1, 2021 through Dec. 31, 2021, with zero reimbursements issued for damages claimants felt were caused by unkempt roads.

Hometown Life reached out to Wayne County seeking a response to why its damage claim process yielded no reimbursements in 2021, but had not received a response.

The county's damage claim webpage states: If you believe your car was damaged as a result of hazardous road conditions, such as potholes, you may be able to receive reimbursement from the owner of the road (state, county or city). Contact the county and file a damage claim. Claims filed with Wayne County are decided on a case-by-case basis.

Claimants are warned that the standards needed to be met to receive a reimbursement are rather high.

The website explains that under governmental immunity laws, claimants must prove that, "Wayne County failed to maintain the actual road in reasonable repair to prove a road defect claim. You also must show that Wayne County knew of the condition and had an opportunity to repair it, or that the condition existed for more than 30 days."

To file a claim in hopes for a reimbursement for pothole-causing damages, claimants must include the date of accident, exact time of accidents (as close as possible), exact location of accidents (for example: right lane of southbound Greenfield, approximately onequarter mile south of Warren), the estimate or receipt for any vehicle repair needed as a result of the damage and a photograph of the damage and/or road problem.

According to quotewizard.com, whose research stretched back to 2004, Michigan is No. 3 on its list of states with the worst pothole problems, trailing only Washington and Indiana.

Wayne County has been repairing potholes throughout the county, typically announcing what areas are being worked on any given day.



A substantial pothole in the southbound lane of Haggerty as it approaches Seven Mile. JOHN HEIDER/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

hometownlife.com

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Oakland County home prices rose in 2021

From Staff Reports Hometownlife.com USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

The median sales price for a singlefamily home in Oakland County during December was \$295,000.

That's an increase of 13% compared with December 2020, according to a **USA TODAY Network localized analy**sis generated with data from Realtor-.com.

On a year-over-year basis, prices have been rising for 19 consecutive months. December prices are down from \$299,900 the previous month.

The number of houses sold fell by 42.1% from a year earlier. A total of 795 houses were sold countywide during the month of December. During the same period a year earlier, 1,373 singlefamily homes were sold.

Real estate sales can take weeks or months to be recorded and collected. This is the latest data made available through Realtor.com to the USA TO-DAY Network.

Condominiums and townhomes sold in December had a median sales



A home for sale in 2021. NEWS SENTINEL

price of \$260,000. That figure represents a 3% decrease year over year. In Oakland County, 267 were sold, down 28.8% from a year earlier.

Information on your local housing markets is available through the USA TODAY Network, with more data from Realtor.com.

The top 10% of the properties sold had prices of at least \$557,000, up 3.1% from a year before.

In December, 15 properties sold for \$1 million or more: 14 single-family homes and one condominium or townhome.

an offers a more accurate view of what's happening in a market.

In finding the average price, all prices of homes sold are added and then divided by the number of homes sold. This measure can be skewed by one low or high price.

Find the latest data online at data.hometownlife.com/real-estate-market-report/.

The USA TODAY Network is publishing localized versions of this story on its news sites across the country, generated with data from Realtor.com. Localized

CITY OF NOVI PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Planning Commission for the City of Novi will hold a public hearing on Wednesday, April 13, 2022, at 7:00 P.M. in the Novi Civic Center, 45175 W. Ten Mile Road, Novi, MI to consider JSP22-02: ANCHOR PRINTING WAREHOUSE. FOR SPECIAL LAND USE AND PRELIMINARY SITE PLAN APPROVAL. The subject property, 43043 Nine Mile Road, totals approximately 9.32 acres and is located east of Novi Road and south of Nine Mile Road (Section 35). The subject property is zoned I-1 (Light Industrial). The applicant is proposing to fully occupy lease space in an existing building with some minor site modifications, including the removal of a gazebo and the addition of two overhead doors for loading and storage purposes.

Plans and more information are available for review by contacting the Community Development Department at the following email address, bmcbeth@cityofnovi.org.



All interested persons are invited to attend this in-person meeting. Verbal comments may be heard at the hearing and any written comments may be made to the Community Development Department, 45175 W. Ten Mile Road, Novi, MI 48375 during the City's regular business hours, Monday thru Friday, from 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M., and must be received by 4:00 P.M. Wednesday, April 13, 2022.

Published on March 24, 2022

Novi Planning Commission

Michael Lynch, Secretary

Publish: March 24, 2022

The median home sale price — the *versions are generated for communities* midway point of all the houses or units where the data quality and transaction sold over a period of time - is used in volume meets Realtor.com and USA TOthis report instead of the average home DAY Network standards. The story was sale price because experts say the medi- written by Sean Lahman.

CITY OF NOVI PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Planning Commission for the City of Novi will hold a public hearing on Wednesday, April 13, 2022, at 7:00 P.M. in the Novi Civic Center, 45175 W. Ten Mile Road, Novi, MI to consider A RECOMMENDATION TO CITY COUNCIL FOR A PROPOSED RESIDENTIAL UNIT DEVELOPMENT (RUD), JSP 21-47 COVINGTON ESTATES. The subject property is located north of Eight Mile Road and west of Garfield Road in Section 31 of the City of Novi. The applicant is proposing a Residential Unit Development (RUD) on a 55-acre site in order to construct 44 single-family residential units

Plans and more information are available for review by contacting the Community Development Department at the following email address, bmcbeth@citvofnovi.org



Subject Parcel ID's: 50-22-31-400-011, 50-22-31-400-012

All interested persons are invited to attend. Verbal comments may be heard at the hearing and any written comments may be made to the Community Development Department, 45175 W. Ten Mile Road, Novi, MI 48375 during the City's regular business hours, Monday thru Friday, from 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M., and must be received by 4:00 P.M., Wednesday, April 13, 2022.

Published March 24, 2022 Novi Planning Commission Michael Lynch, Secretary

March 24, 202

(NR) HOMETOWNLIFE.COM | THURSDAY, MARCH 24, 2022 | 3A



Aidan Wilson, co-owner of Saturdays skateboard shop in downtown Milford, checks out its scale model of the Milford Skate Park. Some visitors try the miniature version of the park by using tiny toy skateboards. PHOTOS BY JOHN HEIDER/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

New skateboard, snowboard shop opens in Milford

David Veselenak Hometownlife.com USA TODAY NETWORK - MICH.

One of Milford's newest businesses is a journey Aidan Wilson and Jack Weaver have wanted to take for a long time.

The two friends and recent high school graduates have long been skateboarders and assisted in the 2020 opening of Milford's skate park. With that added concrete amenity, they realized the southwest Oakland County village was surrounded by communities



Skateboards for sale.

owner of Proving Grounds Coffee, said she like White Lake Town- was drawn to opening ship, Howell and Far- such a shop after seeing



Wilson, left, and Jack Weaver, co-owners of the new boarding shop to open in downtown Milford.

other side, the skate in- of the above, everydustry, I think, is awe- body." The shop is open some."



What to do with your tax refund

We are in the middle of tax season as many of us are starting to do our 2021 tax returns. An important decision that doesn't get much attention is what to do with your tax refund.

It is critical to have a game plan as to what you do with that refund before you receive it. Having a game plan beforehand will help ensure that the money is not wasted.

If you are receiving a large refund, the first question you should ask yourself is why. It may be that you had too much withheld from your paycheck. If that is the case, it makes sense to adjust your withholdings through work. My philosophy is you do not want to receive large refunds, because it means you've given the government an interest-free loan.

On the other hand, you don't want to owe a lot of money because then you may have to pay interest and penalties. The goal is to either receive no refund or a very small refund. This is why, after completing your 2021 tax returns, it's a great time to adjust your 2022 withholdings.

With rising inflation, many people may need their tax refund to cover the increased cost of living. Using your tax refund to cover those costs is a much better strategy than using your credit card. Therefore, leaving this money in the bank may be appropriate.

If you don't need your refund to cover your current costs, using your refund to pay down debt is another great use of this money, particularly high interest rate credit card debt. Student loans and car loans are also good uses of a tax refund. I believe paying down debt is one of the best investments anyone can make. After all, if you are like most people, you pay 18.5 percent or more on your outstanding credit card balance. By using your tax refund to pay down your credit card debt, you're essentially guaranteeing yourself at least an 18.5 percent return on your money, tax free.

If you do not have any debt, I would recommend establishing an emergency fund of money. I believe everyone needs a three- to six-month emergency fund. Establishing, or replenishing your emergency fund is a fantastic use for your tax refund.

If debt is not a problem and you've established your emergency fund, consider investing your tax refund. For those eligible for Roth IRAs, it is a great way to save for your retirement. Investing your tax refund and letting that money grow will pay dividends into the future.

Although I do believe it is important to occasionally reward yourself and buy something frivolous, keep in mind, you are rewarding yourself by using your tax refund to pay down debt, set up an emergency fund or invest for the future.

I can assure you that life is much easier when your family finances are in order. Therefore, if you are going to receive a tax refund, be productive with it. Use

mington that had skateboard shops.

"Milford's in the dead center of a bunch of different skate shops and snowboard shops," Wilson said. "They're all around us and we don't have anything in the middle so you have to drive out. It's a dead zone, basically, and we're filling in a dead zone."

That realization led to the creation of Saturdays, the new boarding shop to open in downtown Milford. Located at 525 N. Main St., Suite 250, the store opened in February, bringing a new concept to town with Wilson and Weaver managing.

It's something, Weaver said, that's hard to believe that's happened.

"We used to sit there and dream about having our own skate shop and now it's just happening," he said.

Occupying the storefront in the Mill Valley Center that formerly housed Sweetwaters Coffee & Tea, the shop currently is prepared for skateboarding as spring awaits. That includes board, wheel, safety equipment and plenty more. The shop will transition back to selling more snow-related equipment some time in the fall.

Backed by investors Jodie Courtney and George Steiner, the shop hopes to bring local skateboarders and snowboarders in.

It even has a miniature replica of the Milford skate park, designed for use with finger skateboards, another product the shop sells.

Courtney, a former co-

the impact skateboarding had on the Milford community. Add the new skate park and she knew opening such a shop was the right move.

"You add up all those things, it's a no-brainer," she said. "Then on the

While the majority of the clientele are expected to be teenagers and young adults, Wilson said they have supplies for people of all ages.

"We're different," Wilson said. "Our whole market we're aiming for is all

11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Tuesday through 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday and II a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday.

it to improve the quality of your life and trust me, paying down debt and eventually becoming debt free Thursday, will improve the quality of your life. Good luck.

Rick Bloom is a fee-only financial advisor.

STATE OF MICHIGAN COUNTY OF OAKLAND CITY OF NOVI ORDINANCE NO. 22-156.05

AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND CHAPTER 2, "ADMINISTRATION," ARTICLE V, "BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS," DIVISION 3, "BOARD OF REVIEW," SECTION 2-193.6, "GUIDELINES TO BE UNIFORMLY APPLIED," RELATING TO POVERTY EXEMPTIONS, IN ORDER TO REVISE THE STANDARDS FOR UNIFORM APPLICATION OF EXEMPTION PROVISIONS TO COMPLY WITH STATE LAW REQUIREMENTS.

The Ordinance was adopted by the City Council on Monday, March 14, 2022, and the provisions of the ordinance shall become effective fifteen (15) days after its publication. A complete copy of the Ordinance is available for public use and inspection at the office of the City Clerk, 45175 W. Ten Mile Road, during the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., prevailing local time.

Cortney Hanson, City Clerk

Publish: March 24, 202

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Toy

Continued from Page 1A

"I saw someone said, 'This is mine; this is my daughter's favorite toy, and we were devastated, "said Joyce, who contacted the commenter right away.

"The mother texted me immediately and texted me pictures of her daughter with the cow. There had been a few people who had said, 'Oh, this is mine,' but I kind of knew they were fibbing. I don't know how I knew it, but I just knew. I was very positive that this was this cow's family."

And so Joyce packed up Austin and sent him back to his family.

A lot of strangers wouldn't pick up a random stuffed animal from an airport and spend days trying to find its owner. Joyce said she never second-guessed her goal.

If the family had packed the toy cow while trying to travel light, it must have meant a lot to the child, she said.

"I kind of know if a parent brings an animal like that to an airport, there's a reason for it," Joyce said. "And if the kid loses it, it can be a crisis."

Joyce had no idea that her mission to reunite a kid with a stuffed animal would be so popular, but she's so happy that it did.

"I was shocked," she said. "I'm just glad it worked. I'm glad we got it home, and I'm glad the baby was happy to get back because, like I said, I know what it's like."

Rae's family sent Joyce a brand new stuffed cow, so she can keep up the Instagram account.

"It's the exact same cow, it has arrived at my house and he will now be my traveling companion," she said.



Austin the toy cow in a plane seat. PROVIDED BY MARY JOYCE

Hearing

Continued from Page 1A

Craig Serra tipped off the public hearing comments with a pro-developer comment.

"I understand something is going to happen with the property, and (Hunter Pasteur Homes) has put a plan into play that will kind of address some of the issues people have," Serra said. "There are going to be hiccups with it and there are going to be problems along the way, but I think it's going to happen and I'm for it."

David Field, a 35-year resident of Northville, said the demise of the horseracing industry - he cited the closures of the Detroit Race Course in Livonia and Hazel Park Raceway as examples - confirm the property needs to be redeveloped with a forwardthinking plan.

"I am for this project," Field said. "When I moved here this was a racetrack town. It's no longer a racetrack town. That place is a relic now and horseracing isn't coming back. After its initial proposal was rejected, Hunter Pasteur went out and collected public input - a lot of public input.

"About 6,000 people live in Northville and there are 6,000 opinions about the plans for the property. It's time to move on."

Gloria Hage, a resident since 1986, said new development in the city allowed her and her husband to maintain a residence even as their family grew.

"We were able to move from our first starter home to a second larger home

See HEARING, Page 5A

Deer

Continued from Page 1A

The metroparks authority strives to follow the Department of Natural Resources recommendation of keeping a population density of 15-20 deer per square mile to protect the health of the herd, as well as preserve native plants.

In the latest culls, deer were killed at

seven metroparks: 61 at Stony Creek, 28 at Indian Springs, 32 at Hudson Mills, 16 at Willow, 70 at Oakwoods and 43 at Lake Erie.

The parks' deer management program has been in place since 1999. Residents protested in early years of the cull, and the community voiced its ire after a rare albino buck was killed in a Kensington cull almost 10 years ago.

Mauter said special care was taken to avoid killing an albino doe in this cull.

"Adjustments were made to hunting zones to greatly minimize the chance of impacting any known albino deer," Mauter said. "While state law does not specifically protect these deer, Metroparks staff understand that this unique animal is enjoyed by many visitors. ... our staff took all possible precautions to avoid it during culls."

No albino deer were harvested during this year's culls, she said.

Aerial surveys prior to the culls found

that Kensington's herd was about 56 deer per square mile.

The 80 deer taken in the Kensington culls resulted in 2,263 pounds of venison donated to food banks. In total, 9,567 pounds of venison has been donated this year by the metroparks authority.

For more information on the deer herd and ecosystem management program, visit www.metroparks.com/natural-resources/#DOCUMENTS.



(NNNR) HOMETOWNLIFE.COM | THURSDAY, MARCH 24, 2022 | 5A



Northville resident Nancy Rice shares her thoughts on the Downs development during the March 15 public hearing. PHOTOS BY ED WRIGHT/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

Hearing

Continued from Page 4A

as we raised our kids thanks to new development," Hage said. "Now, there are a lot of families like ours with no more kids living at home. We need new development like this to sustain the city's goals. We welcome all new families to Northville and hope they receive the same opportunity my husband and I had."

Hunter Pasteur representative Seth Herkowitz reiterated during the meeting that the developer has listened to the community and adjusted the site plan accordingly, decreasing the number of units from 599 (in the original 2018 plan) to 474, dropping average units-per-acre to 9.85 and receiving confirmation from Northville Public Schools Superintendent Mark K. Gallagher that the school district could handle the influx of new students the development would create.



David Field, a 35-year resident of Northville, shares his thoughts on the Downs.

racetrack property will be developed, but she wants assurance "that it will be developed responsibly."

\$250

"The developer completed a traffic

Nancy Riegner said she accepts the study, but how can you get an accurate traffic study when parts of two downtown roads (Center and Main streets) are closed," Riegner asked the planning commission. "If there are, let's say, two

cars per household in the new development, that could add up to 1,000 cars to our roads. That's not responsible development."

Nancy Rice echoed Riegner's concerns regarding increased traffic.

"Along with the increased number of (the development's residents') vehicles, there are going to be more garbage trucks, more construction traffic, more buses," Rice said. "It's going to take this quaint, beautiful small town and make it look like some other cities in this area that have blown up."

Nancy Darga, who said she has lived in Northville so long that she remembers being awakened every morning to the sounds of roosters crowing, implored her fellow residents to embrace the future of the property.

Through the years, a lot has changed in Northville," Darga said. "To stop change is like me telling my kids to stop growing. It's not possible.'

The planning commission still needs to sign off on the preliminary site plans. which will be held at a future meeting.

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6A | THURSDAY, MARCH 24, 2022 | O&EMEDIA (NNNR)



A rendering of the planned senior playground at Bicentennial Park in Livonia. COURTESY OF THE CITY OF LIVONIA

Senior playground coming to park in Livonia

Site to be modeled after Novi's Wildlife Woods Park

Shelby Tankersley Hometownlife.com USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

Livonia's Bicentennial Park is getting some play structures for people both young and young at heart.

City council recently approved funds for a new play structure and a senior playground at the park. Both developments are part of a rejuvenation effort at the large park in the northwest corner of the city.

The two projects should be completed and ready to be enjoyed later this year.

Outdoor exercise for seniors, those with disabilities

The senior playground will, officials hope, draw older residents outside to exercise. It will be located where the children's play area at Bicentennial is now and include a path from the parking lot.

Senior playgrounds consist of various outdoor workout equipment that, in reality, could be used comfortably by any person over the age of 12. The installation will cost \$150,000 and should be completed by the end of August.

which opened its own senior playground last year. The playground at Bicentennial, 36000 W. Seven Mile Road, should look somewhat similar to the senior playground at Novi's Wildlife Woods park.

"In my parks and rec experience, I've seen people of all ages using these," Jeff Muck, parks director for the City of Novi, said. "I've seen families using them."

Muck added some people have used Novi's senior playground throughout the winter and he expects it'll be a popular destination for residents this summer.

Livonia parks officials worked with See PLAYGROUND, Page 7A

Livonia sought input from Novi, the city's commission on aging to make sure it's a good fit for local seniors. Ted Davis, parks and recreation superintendent, said it's possible Livonia will create more senior playgrounds in the future if Bicentennial's is popular.

"They thought the design was good," Davis said of the commission. "The one thing we really came out of that with was to do classes and orientations after the installation, which I thought was a great idea. That's something we will do."

Davis added people will also be able to use a smartphone app to access instructions for the equipment.



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Some of the outdoor exercise equipment at Wildlife Woods Park in Novi, which Bicentennial Park will be modeled after. PHOTOS BY JOHN HEIDER/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM



The current children's playgound at Bicentennial Park on Seven Mile.



A rendering of the universally accessible playground coming to Bicentennial Park in Livonia. COURTESY OF THE CITY OF LIVONIA

Playground

Continued from Page 6A

A brand new children's playground

Though the current play structure at Bicentennial will be torn down in favor of the senior playground, the city will create a new children's play park adjacent to its current spot.

The city is planning a 6,800-squarefoot universally accessible play park similar to the popular playground at Rotary Park on Six Mile road. The build will

cost \$600,000 and should be completed by the end of October.

"This is larger than the current play area and structure we have at Rotary Park," Davis said. "This includes a wheelchair accessible swing and we also have a merry-go-round feature. This is a universal design."

Davis said he expects the park to be a popular destination once it's finished. Bicentennial also has pickleball courts, a nature trail, a dog park and soccer fields.

"This is going to transform that park immensely," Councilman Brandon McCullough said.



A fitness course at Bicentennial Park.





8A I THURSDAY, MARCH 24, 2022 I O&EMEDIA (NNNR)

Girl's escape lands pot farm predator in prison

Tresa Baldas Detroit Free Press USA TODAY NETWORK

"He made me feel special," 16-yearold Grace told the jury.

He was 25. For months, he groomed her on SnapChat, convinced her they were in love, and met her at Lansing hotels for sex, court records show.

But soon came the violence, the demands for nude photos and sexually explicit videos, threats to kill her family if she told anyone, and a twisted request that she molest her siblings and videotape it. When she couldn't go through with it, she contemplated suicide, so not to disappoint him - but kept her silence.

This would all end one fall evening in Lansing, when, after being held captive in his home and starved for four days. she waited for her predator to fall asleep and escaped in the middle of the night.

Then, she broke her silence.

In U.S. District Court on March 16, with the help of Grace's testimony, 28year-old Michael McShan of Lansing was sentenced to 25 years in prison for the horror he put her and others through as he sought to feed his perverse desires through manipulation and violence.

U.S. District Court Judge David Lawson handed down the sentence four months after a jury found McShan guilty of child pornography, coercion and enticement of a minor, and obstruction of justice. The five-day trial included emotional testimony from Grace and an 18-year-old woman named Madison, who was also beaten and manipulated by McShan.

She was his girlfriend, blinded by what she thought was love, and struggled to leave him.

The USA TODAY Network does not identify victims of sexual assault.

"Michael McShan mastered the art of convincing his victims that his rage, violence, and sexual perversions complimented their relationships," Assistant U.S. Attorney Margaret Smith argued in court records. "No female remained safe in his path."

prison sentence for McShan, arguing the crimes he committed on vulnerable girls and women amounted to "savage" abuse.

Madison knew this all too well.

"He brutally beat her with a PVC pipe for not performing up to his standards," Smith wrote in court documents. "When she tried to leave, he relentlessly pursued her by contacting her mother, looking for her online, and sending doz-

Prosecutors say a Lansing man held an Oakland County girl captive in this rundown house after grooming her on SnapChat and abusing her for months. PHOTOS COURTESY OF U.S. ATTORNEY'S OFFICE



The man also ran an illegal marijuana grow operation out of his home, prosecutors said. One victim said she was starved and forced to work there.

was wrong with her," her mother wrote. Eventually, her parents would learn The prosecution sought a 40-year that McShan had threatened to kill their family if their daughter ever "told" on him. He also made her steal \$1,500 from her parents, the letter stated, and demanded she give him her entire pay-

> check from her job at Chicken Shack. "He made her solely dependent on him," her mother wrote. "She wasn't allowed to talk to her male co-workers as he said he was watching her at work. He had her under his complete control."

Perhaps most traumatic was the un-

the two flirting and getting acquainted on SnapChat.

According to a Homeland Security investigator's affidavit, here is what transpired from that online relationship:

Within three to four months, McShan became controlling. He made Grace wear a bra 24-7, forbid her from wearing shorts or makeup, and ordered her to wear only sweatpants and hoodies. He made her delete all guys from SnapChat, and nagged her about her weight.

"McShan always told her that she

Defense attacks victim's credibility

In court documents, McShan's lawyer described him as a a troubled man whose early childhood was marred with abuse. He never knew his father. His mother couldn't care for him due to severe substance abuse, so he was raised by a stepmother - whose husband beat him, his siblings, and his stepmother.

"This was the only male role model Mr. McShan really had growing up and probably contributed toward his history of abusive treatment of women," defense attorney David Burgess wrote in court documents, conceding his client had a violent history.

"Mr. McShan ... has been an abusive and unkind person, especially toward the women in his life, and he should be sentenced accordingly," Burgess argued in court documents. "But Mr. McShan, neither in his past nor in this case, really fits the profile of the typical sex offender."

Burgess asked the judge to give his client the mandatory minimum sentence of 15 years for his crimes.

"He is not a person who deserves sympathy or understanding for his actions," Burgess wrote. But 15 years behind bars is sufficient punishment for his crimes, he argued, though failed to convince the judge

His trial strategy fizzled. "I'm sure like most people your prob-

ens and dozens of self-made videos that often rose to the level of threatening to kill her if he found her. "

Still, she went back to him. When he got caught for exploiting Grace, prosecutors said, he "capitalized on his girlfriend's love" and convinced Madison to write a false confession to the crimes of which he was accused.

He was trying to get his bond revoked.

It didn't work.

Madison ended up testifying against McShan at trial, telling jurors: "I still feel like I should be loyal to him."

A mother seeks vengeance: 'He has no soul'

If the 16-year-old girl's mother had her way, McShan would be in prison for life.

"He has no soul or conscience. He is a psychopathic narcissist in every nature of the meaning," the mother wrote in a letter to the judge last month. "He will never be able to be rehabilitated."

The mother's Feb. 22 letter offers a detailed look at the horror her daughter endured at the hands of the stranger she met on the internet, the trauma it caused her family, and the pain they continue to live with.

Perhaps better than anyone, Grace's mother understood the darkness that consumed her daughter, who, for two weeks, had to sleep in between her parents, fearful that McShan would find her and kill her.

"Michael McShan groomed, manipulated and preyed on my daughter for months," her letter began. "He controlled everything she did, from what she ate — cans of fruit only — because he wanted her skinnier."

According to the letter, McShan tried getting Grace pregnant multiple times, manipulated her "into thinking her parents were horrible and didn't love her," and told her things like, "I don't care if your Dad is a cop ... he can't do anything to me."

When all this was happening, Grace was in the 11th grade, the year when most high schoolers are prepping for the SAT, and picking out their colleges.

"My daughter was depressed and suicidal and petrified for most of her (junior) year. We couldn't figure out what

thinkable demand he made of her daughter, when he ordered her to molest her younger sister.

"He has SCARRED both of my daughters' mind, body and spirits. He stole their innocence," the mother wrote.

After months of keeping her relationship a secret, her daughter ran away and moved in with McShan in Lansing.

"I was frantic, petrified and anxious not knowing where my child was and who she was with," wrote the mother, whose thick, long hair fell out due to the stress

"I could barely function to take care of the rest of my family," she wrote, noting her other children had a hard time focusing on school and going about their everyday lives.

"There was a dark cloud of impending doom and depression over our family for the two months she was missing," her mother wrote.

But then the girl made her daring escape, fleeing in the middle of the night and walking for miles to the Lansing airport, where she called home.

Her parents' worst fears were over, though her appearance was startling. She was filthy, emaciated from being starved, and she reeked of marijuana. Her once thick, waist-length hair was cut short and dyed blonde by McShan, "so no one would recognize her if she went out in public," the letter stated.

And she was scared.

"She had to sleep between her parents for the first two weeks she was home because she was petrified that Michael or his 'associates' would come and kill her family," the mother wrote. "(She) couldn't go by windows or doors for fear he would see her. My younger children couldn't go outside and play for fear they too, would be taken or harmed."

In closing, the mother unleashed her anger, telling the judge:

'Michael McShan belongs in prison until the day he dies and he goes to hell."

They met on MeetMe

It was December 2018 when Grace met McShan.

She had first met a woman through a phone app called "MeetMe," and that woman then introduced her to McShan. An online relationship began, with

needed to work out and eat right because he wanted her skinny," the investigator wrote.

Over time, he would get mad for no reason and insult her on a regular basis. Worthless." "Pathetic." "Stupid." She heard it all.

He also grew angrier with her because she couldn't meet up with him as often as he wanted, and he was mad about not getting enough sex. To punish her for this, he ordered her to send nudes and videos of herself over Snap-Chat.

She obliged.

This went on for several months, and then he started asking for money. Again, she obliged, giving him \$40 here and there to help him out, but eventually giving him her entire paycheck because he demanded it.

She even stole \$1,500 from her dad once because McShan was threatening her, and spent the money on bills and marijuana grow equipment. In total, she gave him \$4,000.

She ran away to be with him

On Aug. 8, 2019, Grace ran away from home to live with McShan in a rundown green house with a garden on Grand River Avenue in Lansing. There, he ran an illegal marijuana grow operation, and took care of an elderly woman whom he referred to as his mother.

Beatings quickly followed

"While she was at McShan's house, (he) beat (her) until she was black and blue," the Homeland Security investigator wrote in his affidavit, adding the girl said he beat her with a white plastic pole. It was a PVC pipe.

Her situation turned into captivity.

When McShan learned that Grace's parents had filed a missing person's report, he refused to let her leave the house, except to take the dog out or go behind the pole barn. For four days, she was forced to work on his marijuana grow operation, trimming pot plants, and cutting and pruning buds.

"The last four days were terrible. She said she wasn't allowed to eat, sleep, shower or drink water," the investigator wrote in an affidavit.

On the fourth night, she plotted her lifted." daring escape and broke free.

able first reaction is, 'Yuck; gross; icky,' Burgess told jurors in his opening statement. "A lot of you probably already are convinced in your minds. ... 'That's disgusting. That person is sick.'

But then he went on to challenge the credibility of the victims, telling jurors to listen carefully to their testimony before making up their minds.

"She was not the victim that she wants to portray herself to be," Burgess told the jury, referring to Grace. "And there is very little evidence to support her position at all. And you will hear it." The jury disagreed.

After only one hour of deliberations, the jury came back with guilty verdicts on all counts.

A victim finds closure

According to the government, McShan has no prior felony convictions, though police records show multiple arrests for domestic violence. One of those victims was the mother of his child — a woman named Kayla who urged the judge to give McShan "the harshest punishment."

In a letter to the judge, Kayla wrote that McShan beat her when she was pregnant with their child, gave her black eyes after their daughter was born, and attacked her after she discovered he was cheating on her: He stuffed her mouth with a washcloth, choked her, threw a cigarette in her face and poked her in the eye.

"Stupidly, I kept going back because he kept telling me that he was sorry and that he wouldn't do it anymore, he'd say how much he loved me and wanted us to be a family," the woman wrote in her letter.

But the abuse continued.

In 2014, she left him, she wrote the judge, noting she did not begin to find herself until McShan's federal trial, which she attended.

"My heart shatters for the victims involved, and for the victims who have to build themselves up again," Kayla wrote the judge. "I know from experience that it is hard.'

But when she heard the guilty verdicts, she felt "like a weight had been

Her daughter was safe. So was she.

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SPORTS



Wayne Memorial's Mayla Ham, left, and Hartland's Lauren Sollom battle for a rebound during the second quarter in the Division 1 state semifinal March 18 at the Breslin Center in East Lansing. NICK KING/LANSING STATE JOURNAL

Zebras robbed of hype but love experience gained at final four

Brandon Folsom Hometownlife.com USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN



Livonia **United falls** to University Liggett 7-2 in state finals

Brandon Folsom Hometownlife com **USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN**

As far as the Michigan Girls High School Hockey League goes, its state championship was a who's who event.

Crammed into the center-ice press box at USA Hockey Arena were reporters and cameramen, of course. But there was also a hoard of the league's hockey coaches, all wearing their respective team colors and chatting with one another as they watched No. 1seeded University Liggett take on three-seed Livonia United on March 12.

"I wasn't expecting the score to be like this!" one coach said to another after Liggett's Elle Quinlan scored almost 3 minutes into the final period to give the Knights a 5-0 lead.

It's true.

In November, the two squads battled back and forth, with Liggett squeaking out a 2-1 victory. It was everything you'd expect out of a rematch of last year's state championship, a game the Knights also won, 4-2.

But few people expected Liggett to run away with this one. Especially with how well Livonia had played to get itself into a second-straight state final.

But, alas, that's how momentum works in hockey.

"I think we came out and had some pretty good shots, but I think their goalie (Brooklyn Peshi, 21 saves) had some really nice saves," fifth-year Livonia United coach Janine Martinez said following the 7-2 loss. "I think that was the difference. They had some nice saves, and we couldn't catch a break. We had a couple of close ones but couldn't get that break. I think the

The lights inside the Breslin Center were killed so the public-address announcer could introduce the starters.

But, first, a hype video prepared by the Michigan High School Athletic Association was displayed on the jumbotron above halfcourt, in hopes of drumming up a rowdy atmosphere for Friday's Division 1 state semifinal.

Highlight after highlight was shown, from top-ranked West Bloomfield to Detroit Edison and Ypsilanti Arbor Prep.

Heck, even Hartland had two separate clips shown during the brief montage.

By the time the video wrapped up, it was obvious there wasn't going to be a single highlight of Wayne Memorial, and its starters sitting on the bench waiting to have their names announced quickly noticed it.

See ZEBRAS, Page 3B



Wayne Memorial's Paris Bass, center, shoots between Hartland's defense.

momentum swung to them once they got the first goal.

Liggett's AnnaClaire Doppke scored the game's first goal, and it had a domino effect for the Knights, who scored twice in the second and two more in the third before LU could finally crack the scoreboard.

But LU (14-3) took full advantage of the stage once Tymmarie Grom scored the first of her two goals.

Her effort saw LU goalie Annelise Pearce (17 saves) skate toward the bleachers to fire up the Livonia faithful, waving both arms in the air until the crowd gave Livonia's skaters a standing ovation.

Just over 1 minute later, Grom scored again, this time on the powerplay. Another ovation followed.

"I give the girls a lot of credit," Martinez said. "They didn't give up. They

See FINALS, Page 4B

Detroit Country Day girls exit tournament with utter anger

Brandon Folsom Hometownlife.com USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

Detroit Country Day girls basketball coach Jerica Williams didn't even need to say it afterward.

The entire crowd at the March 18 Division 2 semifinal could see for themselves just how angry the Yellowjackets were

Ari'Yana Wiggins spent almost the

entire second half on the bench with a towel-covering her face.

Aysia Yokley slammed a ball after a ticky-tack call didn't go her way.

And when Emma Arico, their chief ballhandler, picked up her third foul in the opening 6 minutes, 13 seconds, and was forced to sit on the bench, the only person at the Breslin Center in more disbelief than the sophomore was her mother, Michigan women's basketball

coach Kim Barnes Arico, who slouched back in her seat five rows behind Country Day's bench and smacked her cheeks with both hands out of frustration

These Yellowjackets were giving a new meaning to the saying mad as a hornet.

It was the second-straight season they had made it to the final four.

And it was the second-straight sea- See ANGER, Page 7B

son they couldn't advance past it, as Grand Rapids West Catholic used its smothering full-court defense to run past Country Day, 62-42.

"Last year when we lost, in the locker room, there was a lot of tears, a lot of sadness," Williams said.

"This year, they're mad." That was plain to see.



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How a backup bus inspired PCA girls basketball in first-ever state semifinal

Brandon Folsom Hometownlife.com **USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN**

A high school as small as Plymouth Christian Academy cannot afford to have a school bus breakdown.

But that's exactly what happened during a class field trip on March 16.

That ill-timed snafu forced the administration to scramble last-minute to rent another one.

And PCA was definitely in need of a bus. How else was its girls basketball team going to travel to its first-ever Division 4 state semifinal appearance on March 17 at Michigan State University?

The new bus came just in time to get the Eagles to East Lansing.

What's more, PCA managed to get the original bus fixed early Thursday morning. So that allowed the school to haul another 40 students to the Breslin Center.

And all 70 or so of those rowdy fans were needed in the Eagles' 50-39 victory over Adrian Lenawee Christian.

"It was crazy. It was kind of one of those things where it's a bad situation but a good thing comes out of it," said senior Anna Fernandez, who scored 12 points. "We were only supposed to have 30 kids come on the bus, and we got 70, which is a huge plus. The crowd has been there for all of our games so just for them to show up and cheer us on and be a big help, the whole team really appreciates them being here."

Plymouth Christian never tailed the entire night, but Lenawee Christian trimmed its deficit to just three points in the third quarter.

The final period is when the Eagles (22-4) started feeding off the energy from their crowd.

Hailey Maulbetsch and Madison Yeager each buried 3-pointers to kick off the quarter, extending the Eagles' lead to 10 points.

And then Morganne Houk scored six of her game-high 19 points, including going 4 of 4 from the foul line in the bonus down the stretch, to help them stay out in front of the Cougars, who have won two of the last three state championships awarded in D-4/Class D. As a last-ditch effort to make a come-

back, Lenawee Christian fouled Fernandez with 17.6 seconds left.

Plymouth Christian's student section started chanting, "Anna! Anna! Anna!" as she approached the foul line.

Fernandez sank the first one. A few of her classmates started to

cheer again, hollering, "Yeah, Banana!" And then the fourth-year starter buried the second shot, the final nail in the coffin.

As she hung her follow-through in the air, she turned her head to the crowd and flashed a giant smile.

Moments later, Fernandez spiked the ball onto the floor as the final buzzer sounded. She was quickly greeted with hugs from Yeager, Houk and Maulbetsh at halfcourt as well as more cheers from the student section.

"It's always encouraging. They always boost our confidence," Fernandez

said. "When we're in close games, they're always just cheering us on. Even when you look over there, they're always just encouraging us or doing something to help us relax."

Plymouth Christian advanced to the state final against Fowler, the defending state champions.

And, yes, if that name sounds familiar that's because the two teams met earlier this season at Little Caesars Arena, home of the Detroit Pistons.

Plymouth Christian's Anna Fernandez celebrates as time expires against Lenewee Christian on March 17 in East Lansing. AL GOLDIS/FOR THE LANSING STATE JOURNAL

PCA boys win 6th straight district title

Brandon Folsom Hometownlife.com USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

PCA's boys basketball team entered the winter with plenty of new faces after graduating eight seniors in 2021.

The Eagles (13-10) needed to break in new starters and assemble a new rotation - on top of playing a stacked nonconference schedule against D-1, D-2 and D-3 opponents.

Was it a surprise to see them beat Ann Arbor Central Academy 72-49 to win their sixth-straight district title?

No, not really, especially with seventh-year coach Matt Windle leading the retooling.

But it was a shocker to see them get a forgiving regional bracket.

Normally, PCA faces the likes of Detroit Douglass or Southfield Christian at that stage. Those two squads have combined to win six of the past nine state titles in D-4/Class D.

All the Eagles needed to do was get past Taylor Trillium Academy in the semifinal, and they had a chance to win their first-ever regional championship in program history.

It didn't happen.

PCA lost Michigan football signee Chibi Anwunah (left ankle) late in the season and was without its 6-foot-7 dunk artist throughout the postseason.

The senior's absence proved to be too much to overcome during its 74-61 loss to Trillium on March 14, especially when it came to rebounding on the defensive end. A victory would've been its first in a semifinal since 2017.

"It was a battle, honestly," Windle said. "They had a little bit of a stretch of the fourth where it was back and forth, and they (Trillium) stretched the lead to four. We had a big turnover, and they stretched it to about seven.

We got it close with 3 minutes left, but we couldn't make our chances."

Still, it was an admirable effort for an Eagles squad that had to replace so many pieces from a year ago.

So, aside from Anwunah, who helped them make it that far?

For starters, Detroit Catholic Central transfer Jordan Scott made a name for himself in the Michigan Independent Athletic Conference.

The junior averaged almost 30 points



Plymouth Christian Academy coach Matt Windle during the Division 4 boys basketball regional semifinal March 14. PHOTOS BY TOM BEAUDOIN/ SPECIAL TO HOMETOWNLIFE COM

per game in the second half of the season, good enough to be named the league's MVP. The guard scored 31 points (27 in the first half) during the district final and had another 29 in the regional opener.

"He's a stud, man," Windle said. "Really, some D-Is and D-IIs (colleges) need to take notice of him. He's smooth, can handle the ball, has confidence and can hit shots.

"When other people see him, they know he's a stud. They know he can play at a high level. He's only a junior and is only going to get better and stronger."

Also helping was junior Nate Pierson and sophomore Evan Southerland.

Pierson was an All-MIAC first-teamer after averaging 20.4 points per game. What's more, the guard tied the school record for most points in a single game with 45 during an 85-56 win over Allen

Park Inter-City Baptist in January. Southerland was a league secondteamer who averaged almost five points.

Others who stepped up all year were junior Cam Weller, freshman Aiden Sexton (a mid-season JV call-up) and senior Mario Cassar (Anwunah's replacement in the playoffs).



PCA's Mario Cassar rebounds against Taylor Trillium Academy

"Not having Chibi was huge, and that was a big impact for us," Windle added. "At the beginning of the year, the storyline was that we graduated eight seniors and had a ton of new kids at the varsity level.

"To start the year, we were worried about that aspect of things, but we knew they were really talented. They grew up and matured this year with the help of seniors like Chibi, Mario, Spencer (Mistele) and Joey (Lavinge). Those seniors all played a big role in our success this year."

Expected returners next winter are juniors Brady White, Weller, Scott and Pierson, sophomores Ray Weber, Zach Blume and Southerland and Sexton, the

team's lone freshman to play major varsity minutes, among a handful of other underclassmen from the JV.

Because of PCA's jump in enrollment, it'll be a D-3 team when the playoffs begin.

That's tough news for a lot of teams. But given the Eagles' past regional draws, moving up a division might be a boon

"We always run into really good teams in the playoffs," Windle said. "It's just a matter of time before we make it over that hump and win a regional title.

Brandon Folsom covers high school sports in metro Detroit for Hometown Life. Follow him on Twitter @folsom brandonj.

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Zebras

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Davai Matthews pointed up at the jumbotron, and then both she and Mayla Ham shared a disappointed smirk.

"That definitely was a stab in the back," Ham later said after the Zebras suffered a heartbreaking 52-42 loss to Hartland. "People thought we were down. We here. It was a tough loss, but we were here.

"And that's all that matters."

That's OK. The Zebras (23-3) have been used to getting disrespected all winter.

As eighth-year coach Jarvis Mitchell often points out on Twitter, his critics have said this is probably the "worst" team he's coached.

Why?

Minnesota freshman Alanna Micheaux isn't on this team, nor is Purdue junior Jeanae Terry. And neither is St. John's senior Camree Clegg.

This year's squad didn't have generational players who were nominated for the Basketball Coaches Association of Michigan's Miss Basketball honor.

But there definitely needs to be an emphasis on the quotes around the word "worst" because this was a team that punched well above its weight all season long, and it did it with inexperienced players up and down the roster.

The Zebras graduate just two seniors in Matthews, who is signed with Division I Long Beach State, and Jaylah Franklin. They'll return two future D-I players in juniors Paris Bass and Ham. They'll bring back sophomore Alexis Halley and four freshmen, three of whom played 20 or more minutes per game. Yes, that's right, they went 14-0 in the Kensington Lakes Activities Association-East with three freshmen playing 2/3 of the team's minutes.

And these aren't your typical freshmen. This year's team likely has five or six future college basketball players. **Even Hartland coach Don Palmer called** freshman guard Colleena Bryant the Zebras' "most important player" during his post-game press conference.

So if this is Mitchell's "worst" team, which made it all the way to the final four with losses to only Arbor Prep and Hartland, which are both playing for state titles on Saturday, and Howell, then this team should be poised to win



Wayne Memorial's Davai Matthews cheers from the bench during the third quarter in the Division 1 state semifinal against Hartland on March 18 at the Breslin Center in East Lansing. NICK KING/LANSING STATE JOURNAL

its first-ever state championship in the next year or so.

"We took a hard first loss (to Arbor Prep in December's season opener) and then everybody kind of wrote us off," Mitchell said. "With us, man, I'm not really concerned with peoples' opinions. Our coaching staff just wanted to coach the girls as hard as we can. If we get there (back to the final four), good. If we don't, that doesn't change our love for them as a basketball team. I'm very pleased with the girls' effort."

Mitchell said the experience gained this season will be a boon for his girls going forward.

Entering training camp, he knew freshmen such as Bryant, Mia Bazzi and Tierra Golden-Patton were going to be needed, especially with just four upperclassmen.

But those three youngsters weren't prepared for it. Now they'll know what to expect heading into 2022-23.

"I feel like the first game against Arbor Prep, they didn't know how big their role was going to be," said Matthews, who scored a team-high 15 points vs. Hartland. "Now they know how they should pick it up and play the rest of their career. They shouldn't depend on just upperclassmen or even me (to carry the load). I can have an off game. They should always play for themselves and be the best player that they can be."

That also doesn't rule out the extra responsibility that'll be put on Ham and Bass now that Matthews, the team's big sister, will no longer ride the bus with them to games. The seniors-to-be should be two of the best players in metro Detroit entering next season, judging by the D-I scouts showing up to their playoff games. Much will be expected of them.

"I'm definitely gonna challenge myself," Ham said. "I know that a lot of people didn't expect us to be here because

we were young. Going into the season, we took a hard first loss, but we got better throughout the season and just got better every game after that. I just feel like next year it'll be totally different. Just getting better, this day forward until the start of the new season. Just reflecting on it, see what happens and see what we can improve going into the next season."

Wayne didn't have what it took to keep pace with the Eagles, who have as many seniors as the Zebras have players on the roster, thanks to a rough first half and an even worse third quarter.

But Mitchell's "worst" team in eight years made it to MSU, and plenty of girls basketball fans around Michigan got a glimpse of what Wayne's future will look like. These young girls can play at a high level, and now everyone knows it.

Hopefully, that means the next time the Zebras make it to the Breslin they'll be in the hype video.



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Livonia United's Martha Blank gets emotional after her team lost to University Liggett 7-2 in the Michigan Girls High School Hockey League state championship on March 12 at USA Hockey Arena. PHOTOS BY BRANDON FOLSOM/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

Finals

Continued from Page 1B

popped two in right in the third. Unfortunately, it was a little too late and too short.

"But it was nice we were able to celebrate with the fans. We had a lot of people come here, and I bet you half those people upstairs don't even have a kid on the team. It was a tremendous amount of support we've gotten from the community to come here and watch this game."

Livonia United has come a long way since its club was founded five years ago.

The team initially didn't have a coach until Martinez's daughter, Corrin, told her mother to step away from the referee ranks and get behind LU's bench so the co-op between Churchill, Franklin and Stevenson could actually play games.

Livonia United was the worst in the league that inaugural year.

But, slowly but surely, the team developed and grew into a well-respected program.

A year ago, LU took Farmington Hills Mercy to five overtimes in the playoff semifinal before finally escaping with a 2-1 win, earning the chance to face Liggett in the championship. And earlier last week, LU played Grosse Pointe South in an almost-allnight classic, edging the Blue Devils 6-5 after three overtimes. Neither team exited the arena until well past 11 p.m.

"(This week) was very motivating, the girls were resilient," Coach Martinez said. "The three overtimes were phenomenal. They never gave up, and I'm proud of them for getting here today.

"This is back-to-back for us to be in the championship game, so when we started this program five years ago, we were in last place, so to be back at a state championship two years in a row, I think is phenomenal. This program has come a long way.

"We have a bad habit of going to overtimes, but it makes it exciting. To me, those are the games that they'll remember for the rest of their lives."

This year's squad also included Martha Blank, Darby Gray, Grace McBrien, Allison Breitbach, Kiera Grom, Aliya Kovie, Rachel DeSantis, Jen Kinast, Ava Korte, Shana Talmon, Noelle Michalski, Carley Nelson, Norah Niva and Kirsten Martinez as well as Tymmarie Grom and Pearce.

Helping Coach Martinez were assistants Todd DeSantis, Corrin Martinez and Carlo Marzolo.

Brandon Folsom covers high school sports in metro Detroit for Hometown Life. Twitter: @folsombrandonj.



Livonia United goalie Annelise Pearce watches her team celebrate a goal.



Livonia United teammates console one another after losing 7-2.





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Is your child burned out? How to tell and how to help

Victoria E. Freile Rochester Democrat and Chronicle | USA TODAY NETWORK

wo years in and we're still struggling. • The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has taken another step toward normalcy as children and adults in schools recently could opt to ditch the face mask. While some families welcomed the change, others grew more anxious. • But for some, to feel overwhelmed is like admitting defeat. In turn, many people brush off or ignore signs that something may feel off. • Bottom line, that simply does not work, said Bill Pearson, a program manager for Rochester Regional Health's Community Youth Behavioral Program, a program that brings therapy and other services to children at their schools throughout the region, giving kids access to mental health care without missing full days of class. • "The best thing you can do is to acknowledge when you are struggling," he said. "Talk about it." • Then you can start working toward how to improve the circumstances. • These past two years have impacted us all with prolonged stress and uncertainty.

Parents have adapted as needed throughout the pandemic, working from home while also serving as a makeshift educator for their kids' virtual classes. Last school year, in-person classes resumed, but with an ever-changing stream of rules that hinge on one's vaccination and current health status, it's tough to plan for whatever comes next.

But in the process, many are overwhelmed, short-tempered and want answers to best cope with any less-than ideal situation. Here's more on how to help:

Defining burnout

Burnout is more than an attitude or mood. It is a psychological condition induced from chronic stress that is not being managed well, explained Dr. Amanda Lloyd, a doctor at Bay Creek Pediatrics in Penfield.

It can stem from feelings of being overwhelmed, prolonged stress and a lack of control over a situation, said Dr. Rebecca Jackson, vice-president of programs and a cognitive specialist for Brain Balance, which offers in person and virtual programs to help to improve focus, behavior, social skills, anxiety and academic performance.

With simply too much going on for too long, we can all become overwhelmed, Jackson said. "While

kids are known to be resilient by nature, we can't lose sight of the fact that the constant changes and stress are impacting them as well," she said.

Signs of burnout

"If you see a child who is burned out, it's likely that their parents are also burned out," Pearson said. With both kids and adults, you may see a lot of overreacting, he said.

Younger children tend to become more clingy to parents or caregivers, Lloyd said. You may notice some regressive behavior including thumb-sucking, bathroom accidents and change in sleep habits.

Teens show signs of burnout through disconnection and isolation, she said. Disruption of typical sleep patterns, lack of interest in their usual activities, isolation from their friends and a change in appetite can be outward displays of something bigger going on with your child.

Among the signs you may notice:

• Irritability, decreased impulse and emotional control and more frequent upsets and meltdowns

• Showing less interest in activities that children typically enjoy, particularly when interacting with friends and family.

• Increased levels of inattention and distracti-

Ways to help

• Give your children a break. Skip an event, gathering or activity and instead prioritize their well-being

 Connect with your children. Set aside all devices, talk and listen

• Give them options - find area where your children can make an age-appropriate choice such as selecting the breakfast menu or picking a movie or game for a family night. Such choices help children feel in control of at least one aspect of their lives.

• Set aside stress and life lessons at the dinner table and simply enjoy the time together as a family.

• Have fun as a family. Set aside schoolwork to be silly, engage and laugh together.

bility, which can also impact memory.

Helping them through

Talk with your children, start by asking how they are feeling and what is happening, Pearson said.

If a child is upset of overwhelming, don't ask "what's wrong with you," but rather, "what's going on?" Pearson suggested

Remind your children (and yourself) that the pandemic won't last forever, and try to maintain routines.

"Knowing situations have beginnings and ends is comforting, especially when it comes to routines," Lloyd said. "Reinforcing that knowledge can provided much needed reassurance."

Share with your children if you are also overwhelmed - explain how the stress also affects you.

"Empathy is a powerful tool. Talk about how you feel like things have been a little unstable lately too," Lloyd said. "Let your child know they are not alone in their thoughts and emotions."

Parents too should seek help if they feel overwhelmed, even if its just to share frustrations, concerns or even blessings with a friend who acts as a sounding board, Pearson said.

Contact Victoria Freile at vfreile@gannett.com. Follow her on Twitter and Instagram @vfreile.

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Detroit County Day's Jaidyn Elam drives through the defense of Grand Rapids West Catholic during during the MHSAA Division 2 girls basketball state semifinal championship at the Breslin Center in East Lansing on March 18. Grand Rapids West Catholic won the game 62-42 to advance to the Division 2 final Saturday. PHOTOS BY ERIC SEALS, DETROIT FREE PRESS



More experience will help, for starters.

This year's squad didn't have a single senior.

Yokley, who led them with 21 points, is just a junior.

Swing forward Jaidyn Elam, who added 17 points, is only a sophomore.

As stated earlier, Arico, too, is just a 10th-grader. As is Peja Liles, Sadie Rifkin and a handful of other players.

Wiggins, believe it or not, is just a freshman.

Most of this group has been to Michigan State twice in their career, and they're not even close to graduating.

Another summer of travel ball. Another 9 months of personal development. Advancing another grade in high school. All of that will help them move closer toward their goal of winning their first state title since legendary coach Frank Orlando retired four seasons ago.

"It's exciting. All of us were here last year. Back again," Arico said. "We want to push for that state championship, of course. Just being here, we all have that experience, and we have some new freshmen coming in next year who will be great additions. Our growth is going to be exceptional next year as we take these experiences with us."

Added Williams, jokingly: "And adding maybe a little height, too. I think we're still learning how to be tough, and I think we're learning how to fight when we're down, and we need (our fight) to be consistent. That's what we need to leam."

Country Day showed glimpses of that toughness with Arico sitting on the bench in foul trouble.

An 8-0 run to end the first half gave Country Day breathing room to make a comeback, as Yokley buried a 3-pointer



Detroit County Day's Ari'Yana Wiggins goes in for the layup while being defended by Grand Rapids West Catholic's Abbey Kimball.

and made a pair of layups and Elam sank one free throw. That trimmed their deficit to just 45-25.

And there were other brief spurts for the Yellowjackets in the second half when Arico returned and was able to calm down its turnover problems.

They've just got to put it all together as a consistent unit on the biggest stage with or without Arico on the floor.

"We lose one of our best players, our primary ballhandler, against a team that applies tremendous pressure, how do we sustain, right?" Williams said of losing Arico. "I told them, 'Let's just sustain.' I think that was my thought with her on the bench. It wasn't surprising we had a bunch of turnovers after she went down. When she's your primary ballhandler, the dynamic shifts. We did a decent job, but we didn't do enough.

"When she was in the game, the turnovers weren't as heavy, and I think that was the difference in the game."

Country Day will be back a year from now. Another deep playoff run is expected. The only question is: Will they be angry again after the semifinal or will they be celebrating once the final buzzer sounds?

Detroit County Day's Peja Liles and Grand Rapids West Catholic's Ellie Bies fight for the loose ball.



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January 2022 Had the Tightest Labor Market on Record

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The recent JOLTS report underscores how remarkable the current labor market climate is. It is the tightest labor market on record, with nearly 5 million more job openings than unemployed Americans. And the Great Resignation continues, with the number of people quitting their jobs each month remaining above 4 million for eight straight months.

By the numbers, it is the best job seeker's market, but the most challenging employer's market on recordparticularly for mid-sized

businesses, which are seeing 3.8% of their employees quit each month.

Business demand for labor remains intense. Job openings hit record highs in the Midwest and Northeast, and in information, finance & insurance, professional & business services, and other services. The increase in job openings in other services was particularly notable, growing from 362k to 498k. As workers return to the office and travel picks up, the downtown businesses that serve office workers and tourists are picking up as well.

Small businesses are particularly hungry for talent, accounting for almost one in two job openings across the economy (47%). They also seem to have been hardest hit by Omicron, however, seeing the largest increase in layoffs in January from 0.8% to 1.2%.

Today's report included annual revisions for 2021. The overall picture it paints is one of a labor market which experienced even more churn than previously recognized, with both more hires and quits, but fewer layoffs. Before the pandemic, quits accounted for 50% of all job separations, on average. In 2021, however, they



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