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SPORTS, 1B

# NORTHVILLE RECORD

THURSDAY, JANUARY 26, 2023 | HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

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## Milford votes down public path on private property after protest

Susan Bromley  
Hometownlife.com  
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

A proposed public safety pathway in Milford that would have traversed multiple private properties was shot down in short order at a well-attended Jan. 18 township board meeting.

The pathway rejection also led to a temporary scuttling of a 5-year parks and recreation master plan that may eliminate any possibility of a 2023 Department of Natural Resources grant application considering a looming Feb. 1 deadline.

The proposed 10-foot-wide, shared use asphalt path along the east side of Milford Road would have extended more than a mile from Maple Road to Huron River Parkway. It was proposed by the Parks and Recreation Commission, but drew an outcry over privacy, liability and environmental concerns even prior to the board meeting.

Numerous residents, among them Joe Robach, had made their displeasure with the master plan known in letters and emails. Robach restated his opposition during public comment that concluded with the master plan's proposals for more pathways near homes being sent back to administrators for more review.

"I am opposed to the parks and recreation master plan to the extent it includes trails on private property," Robach said, explaining that he purchased his property to preserve a natural setting. "The liability is immeasurable... Please stop this trail on Milford Road. We don't want it on private properties."

Immediately after Robach's comments, Trustee Bill Mazzara attempted to stem a possible tidal wave of similar objections by citizens in attendance by nipping the plan in the bud.

"The whole idea of the pathway is it would offer transport," Mazzara said simply. "We wanted to find out if there was support. Obviously, there is no support. It doesn't make sense to move forward because we aren't going to get a grant and if we don't get a grant, we don't have money. We can't afford

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## New athletic fields, parking garage planned at Detroit Catholic Central

David Veselenak  
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USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

The first major addition to Detroit Catholic Central High School's athletic fields since the school relocated to Novi could come in the near future.

A new set of athletic fields, as well as a 700-space parking garage, are

planned at the Novi school, 27225 Wixom Road. Estimated to cost several million dollars, the project will expand the campus' building footprint north of its current layout and could begin in earnest as early as this year.

"The goal has been we're able to start this year or next year," said Jake Mar-mul, the director of admissions and public relations for the all-boys Catholic

high school. "The goal is that that would be coming soon."

Football, soccer and lacrosse players could compete on the new fields, which also would include track and field features, such as discus and shotput fields. Plans also include a small concession/hospitality building. The last piece

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## Highland teen killed in crash with bus made his mark as a hard-working kid

Susan Bromley  
Hometownlife.com  
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN



Tricia Barrett with her son, Jordon Shenberger. The 16-year-old died in a collision with a school bus on Jan. 19, 2023. COURTESY OF TRICIA BARRETT

Jordon Shenberger was just 16 years old, but he already was making his mark on his little corner of the world in Highland Township.

The Lakeland High School junior was on the honor roll, had earned the respect of his employers at Highland House, and was adored by his family.

"He was a great kid, he never did anything wrong, he never harmed anyone," Tricia Barrett, Jordon's mother, said. "He went to school and church and work and just got his license the day after Christmas. He saved up and bought his own car and paid his own tab fees. He was very responsible."

Jordon was driving his car, a 2008 Chevy Cobalt, on Jan. 19, when he turned left in front of a school bus at the intersection of Duck Lake and Cooley Lake roads. He died at the scene.

"It's so terrible," Olivia Amaya, manager of the Highland House where Jordon had worked for the past year, said. "I can't even imagine for his mother... I just want to say that we see thousands of kids and employ so many, but Jordon was just the top tier of children. He never complained."

"He was hard-working, polite - just every attribute you look for in an employee. It's just so sad."

Amaya said Jordon was a quiet young man who kept his head down at work, but he was so excited to save his money for his first car. She recalled that the teen didn't want to put the burden on his mom.

Barrett said her son had worked since he was 14, while also maintaining honor roll status at Lakeland High School and perfect attendance both there and at Oakland Schools Technical Campus, where he was studying to be a mechanic. He had recently been hired by

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# What does a library look like in 2023? Novi's wants your help to find out

David Veselenak  
Hometownlife.com  
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

When's the last time you checked out a book at the Novi Public Library? Or perhaps studied in one of its quiet rooms? Whatever your thoughts on the building on 10 Mile Road, the city's library staff wants to hear from residents.

The library has launched plans to craft a new 5-year strategic plan to help guide programs and services for the facility, located at 45255 W. 10 Mile in front of Novi High School. Part of that plan depends on community feedback to help craft the future of the institution, said Dana Brataniec, communications manager for the library.

"We want to see what the Novi community wants," she said. "We want to make sure we hear from as many of the community members as possible to really digest that and to make sure our services, programs, our outreach, our communications to them, is the way that they want it."

To give feedback, several avenues are available to Novi residents, including an online survey that Brataniec said takes about 10 minutes to complete.

There is also a slate of meetings for giving feedback. They are:

- From 7 p.m. to 8 p.m. Feb. 7 in the



Patrons use the Novi Public Library on Jan. 12, 2023.  
DAVID VESELENAK/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

library

- From 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. Feb. 9 in the library
- From 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. Feb. 10 virtually
- From 7 p.m. to 8 p.m. Feb. 16 virtually

Once feedback is collected, the consulting firm the library hired to work on the plan, Indiana-based ReThinking Libraries, will develop a plan and present findings to the library board. The board will then make a decision on the plan, which aims to guide library services in the city for the next half decade.

The library has budgeted no more than \$23,665 for the contract with ReThinking Libraries, Brataniec said. While the last plan was done in-house, Brataniec said it created a lot of work for library staff in addition to current responsibilities.

One of the other benefits to contracting the work to an outside firm, she said, is the ability to have a neutral party step in and help see things differently.

"We wanted the outside perspective," she said.

Kathy Crawford, the library board president, said after the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, such a plan is more

crucial than ever. Having an outside agency come in should hopefully garner more responses from a wider range of the community.

"We're trying to do some creative thinking here about it," she said. "A lot of the assumptions we make ... I think we really need to hear from the public more."

The plan is to have results presented to the library board at the beginning of spring, with a plan hopefully in place later this spring.

The library operated with nearly \$2.23 million in expenditures and \$2.29 million in revenue last fiscal year.

## Accomplishments in recent years

The most recent library plan was for three years, Brataniec said, though that was put in place before the pandemic, which completely altered how libraries served their communities. Thinking quickly, library staff adjusted to assist patrons in non-traditional ways, including online story times and other virtual options.

In addition to those changes, the library has added more permanent services, including a new kiosk with hun-

dreds of materials to check out located in Lakeshore Park along Walled Lake in the northern part of the city. That development came as the new building at the park opened, and it allows cardholders to peruse a variety of books and films to check out without needing to drive to the main library.

"That's growing by leaps and bounds," Crawford said. "We were the first one in Michigan to install that."

It's gotten traction: 1,288 items were checked out from the lending kiosk during the fiscal year that ended in July, according to the library's annual report.

Another initiative involved outreach into the community. Brataniec said they worked with the Novi Community School District and Walled Lake Consolidated Schools — which serves the northern part of Novi — to get students signed up for library cards.

The library also implemented a new mailing service to bring materials directly to patrons' doors; it's a service that's still gaining traction. It launched its NPL@Your Door program as a way to mail materials to users. The library's annual report shows 154 materials were sent in just the first few months of the service launching last March.

"We'll bag it up, put it in the mail and send it to them," Brataniec said. "People can sign up for a month if they want, and they can drop off."

The library also axed late fees, something that's currently in place until June 30. More details, including usage information, can be found in the library's annual report.

Crawford said having a strategic plan in place will help guide the library and its expenditures to better serve the city's residents, along with its budget.

"I just feel it's our responsibility to the taxpayers," she said. "I think it's our responsibility as a board to provide the most appropriate programming and collections to meet their needs."  
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## hometownlife.com

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## Plymouth Township could get new Northville Downs horse racing facility

Laura Colvin  
Hometownlife.com  
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

Harness racing could be coming to Plymouth Township.

Representatives from Northville Downs this week submitted a proposal

to build a new operation in northwest Plymouth Township, just a few miles from the current location at Seven Mile and Sheldon Road in Northville.

The current Northville Downs site was sold in 2018 to Hunter Pasteur Homes. The company is planning to develop the land with 450 new residences, commercial space and parks, but for now, Northville Downs is continuing operations, with live racing scheduled for April through September of 2023.

The new project, dubbed Northville Downs at Plymouth Township, is proposed on part of a 128-acre parcel near the southwest corner of Five Mile and Ridge roads. The area is within Michigan International Technology Corridor (MITC).

According to the submitted plans, the first phase of the proposed project, if approved by Plymouth Township, would include construction of a half-mile oval harness racetrack, a two-story, 4,900-square-foot grandstand with a large patio for standing room race viewing, a 23,000-square-foot racing building, a 35,000-square-foot horse barn and a 3,200-square-foot maintenance building.

An anticipated future phase of the proposed project, pending legislative approval, is the construction and operation of a 54,000-square-foot gaming facility with additional parking.

The project could come before the Plymouth Township Planning Commission as soon as February, but an agenda has not yet been set. If the project is approved by the planning commission, it will then go before the Plymouth Township Board of Trustees for consideration.

A representative from Northville Downs did not immediately return a call seeking comment, but Plymouth Township Supervisor Kurt Heise said the project was unique and interesting.

"We're flattered that Northville Downs would consider us as the site of their new operation," Heise said. "We know horse racing is a lot different in Michigan than it was 100 years ago, and the proposal they're putting forward is for a much more efficient operation than what they currently have, because the business model has changed."

"It's a very environmentally responsible site with as much clean energy and

green technology as possible, which is a big leap over what we see right now in Northville."

If the plan moves forward, Heise said, the township will work to negotiate a community benefit agreement, which could include the ability to hold community events such as the return of the Fourth of July fireworks show, which was canceled in 2017. Other events could include recreational events like soccer, car shows, concerts and other equestrian-type events.

By state law, Plymouth Township would also be entitled to breakage fees, the difference in cents between the winning payouts and the nearest dime. For example, according to the 2021 Michigan Gaming Control Board Horse Racing Report, if a winning bet is computed to pay \$3.12, then the bettor receives \$3.10. The breakage of \$0.02 is deposited into a fund distributed and used by the cities or townships where the tracks are located.

In 2021, the City of Northville received \$214,203 in breakage fees from Northville Downs, according to the report.

If the proposal is approved, the new facility will be another MITC addition to the Five Mile corridor between Plymouth Township and Northville. Concerns have been raised about road conditions in the area, and Heise said MITC is actively lobbying the State of Michigan for funding to rebuild and widen Five Mile Road between Napier and Beck roads. The project is expected to cost an estimated \$25 million or more.

The current Northville Downs facility receives approximately 200 cars daily, about 450 cars on Friday and Saturday, and upwards of 800 during special events such as Kentucky Derby Day, the proposal says.

Established in 1944, Northville Downs is the oldest and only remaining nighttime harness racing track in Michigan. The initial phase of operation for the new facility will include daylight only racing. In addition to seasonal live harness racing, Northville Downs also offers year-round simulcast wagering and is the host for special events such as the Northville Spring and Summer carnivals.

lcolvin@hometownlife.com

### Request for Proposal

The Northville Public Schools (also referred to as the District or NPS in these documents) will accept sealed bids for:

#### 2023 Cooke School and Moraine Elementary Drainage Improvements

Sealed bids are due no later than 11:00 a.m. February 1, 2023

A non-mandatory pre-bid meeting will be held at 15045 Fogg Street, Plymouth, Michigan 48170, on January 26, 2023, at 11:00 a.m. The plans, specifications, and bidding documents will be made available online at [www.michigan.gov/sigmavas](http://www.michigan.gov/sigmavas) or [www.northvilleschools.org](http://www.northvilleschools.org). Bid documents will be placed on [Buildingconnected.com](http://Buildingconnected.com) with the following link: <https://app.buildingconnected.com/public/5cc9d7f837c1a90018cb55dc>. Bidders are encouraged to visit the site. The following link is for instructions for [Buildingconnected.com](http://Buildingconnected.com): <https://buildingconnected.zendesk.com/hc/en-us/categories/360001889773-Getting-started-for-subcontractors>

If not attending the pre-bid walk-through, bidders are encouraged to visit the site but must make an appointment. Contact Mr. Steve Banchemo, 248-231-9879 or [banchemost@northvilleschools.org](mailto:banchemost@northvilleschools.org)

Proposals should be submitted through [Buildingconnected.com](http://Buildingconnected.com) with the following link: <https://app.buildingconnected.com/public/5cc9d7f837c1a90018cb55dc>. No physical bids will be accepted in person or via delivery service. Proposals must be submitted no later than 11:00 AM Local Time on February 1, 2023. The District will not consider or accept a bid received after the date and time specified for bid submission. Bids will be publicly opened immediately following the close of receiving bids with the following virtual meeting link: <https://northville.zoom.us/j/96461688881?pwd=LzFMWlh6Wm1uSjNnWUlpZYTZ0LUZkQ109> Meeting ID: 964 6168 8881. Passcode: 226854 or by phone at +1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago)

The Board of Education reserves the right to accept or reject any or all proposals in whole or in part; or, for reasons of establishing uniformity, delivery time or preference, to award the contract to other than the low bidder.

The contents of RFP and Bidder's (also referred to as Contractor in these documents) Proposal will become contractual obligations if a contract ensues. Failure of the Bidder to accept these obligations will result in cancellation of the award.

In compliance with MCL 380.1267, the proposal shall be accompanied by a sworn and notarized statement disclosing any familial relationship that exists between the owner or any employee of the bidder and any member of the board, or the superintendent of the school district. The Board shall not accept a bid that does not include this sworn and notarized disclosure statement.

All proposals shall be firm for at least sixty (60) days from the date of opening of the proposal. All proposals submitted must meet or exceed all specifications herein.

A certified check or Bid Bond must accompany each proposal by an approved surety company in an amount not less than 5% of the proposal amount. If the bidder is providing a certified check as bid security, the certified check must be delivered to the Northville Public Schools Board of Education Offices located at 405 West Main Street, Northville, MI 48167 prior to the bid date and time. All bids shall be firm for at least sixty (60) days from the date of opening of bids. The length of time required for completion shall be specified in the bid. All bids submitted must meet or exceed all specifications herein.

Bids are to be submitted on our Bid Proposal Form through [Buildingconnected.com](http://Buildingconnected.com) with the following link: <https://app.buildingconnected.com/public/5cc9d7f837c1a90018cb55dc>

All questions should be referred to Steve Banchemo at the e-mail address: [banchemost@northvilleschools.org](mailto:banchemost@northvilleschools.org) or phone number 248-231-9879.



# Driver told Westland Police she thought she hit a deer; it was a teenager

Susan Bromley  
Hometownlife.com  
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

The driver who struck and critically injured a 15-year-old Westland girl last month when running a red light told police she was distracted while feeding her daughter in the back seat and believed she "hit a deer."

She kept driving to Ypsilanti despite a shattered windshield.

Gianna Maria Harris was arraigned in Wayne County Circuit Court on Dec. 9 on a felony count of failure to stop at the scene of a serious injury accident. A not guilty plea was entered on her behalf.

According to a police report Hometown Life obtained this month through a Freedom of Information Act request, Harris also admitted the traffic light she passed through while traveling southbound on Newburgh was "not green" and that she was traveling over the 40 mph speed limit.

In the report, a witness told the police that at about 6:45 a.m., Dec. 8, a truck had already passed through a red light at the Newburgh and Marquette intersection when a dark-colored SUV followed through the solid red light, and she then heard a loud "thud."

The witness, who had stopped for the red light in the northbound Newburgh curb lane, looked over to see a girl, later identified as Aalyiah Rasheed-Wiley, laying in the roadway and rushed to render aid.

She was joined by a Wayne-Westland School District bus driver who had been stopped on Marquette waiting to turn left onto southbound Newburgh when he saw the dark-colored SUV fail to stop for the red light. After beginning to make his turn, he saw a boot in the curb lane

and then saw the victim, he told police minutes later.

Aalyiah, a 15-year-old who had been on her way to John Glenn High School where she is a sophomore, was rushed to St. Mary's Hospital in Livonia. She was later transferred to Children's Hospital in Detroit with traumatic brain injuries.

Both the bus driver and the witness who had initially begun first aid stated that they had seen Aalyiah walking to school before on this same route, and the witness said she frequently saw the girl running eastbound across Newburgh because the light was timed so short.

There are no pedestrian signals at the intersection's crosswalks.

According to the report, no skid marks or tire impressions related to the accident were found on the dry pavement, nor any vehicle fluids. Several items from the victim were found in the roadway, as well as several small fragments of a lightbulb encasement lens.

The vehicle that struck Aalyiah had never stopped, witnesses said, and police immediately began searching for a dark SUV with front-end damage.

According to the police report, about eight hours after the accident Harris' husband called police and said his wife "had admitted to him that she hit something while she was on her way back to her house."

## One terrible moment leads to lives upended

Police responded to the Ypsilanti address where they were greeted by Gianna Harris, who was "visibly upset."

Harris told police she had been staying at her mother's house in Westland

and typically takes Newburgh south to Michigan Avenue. She began crying as she noted, "It's really dark, that time in the morning," and according to the police report, continued by saying that she was turned around tending to her daughter "trying to hand her some pretzels and milk ... and I knew I hit something."

She told police she thought she hit a deer, but because of the darkness, she was unable to tell what she hit. According to the police report, she saw news about a girl who had been hit by a car in the same area and time as she had been driving through.

When police asked if she noticed the traffic light was red, she replied that she thought it was yellow. She also believed she was traveling at about 45 mph.

According to the report, a Michigan State Police analysis of electronic data recovered from Harris' 2011 Chevy Equinox revealed the vehicle was traveling at about 47 mph and half a second prior to the accident, some type of braking occurred.

The Equinox had "significant damage" to the front passenger fender and the windshield was shattered on the passenger side, as well as the passenger side headlamp, according to the police report.

Harris was released on bond with a GPS tether and is under house arrest. Her next court date is set for later this month. Her defense attorney did not immediately return a call for comment.

## A petition to make changes at busy intersection

Aalyiah has "shown more improvement," said her aunt, Tamara Rasheed. She declined to elaborate further, but in

a gofundme update shortly before Christmas, noted that Aalyiah had been moved from the intensive care unit to a regular room at Children's Hospital due to how well she was doing. She expressed her gratitude to all who had supported the family with both generous donations and prayers.

Aalyiah's family has also collected more than 440 petition signatures thus far through change.org to persuade the city of Westland and the Wayne County Roads Division to make alterations at the Newburgh and Marquette intersection.

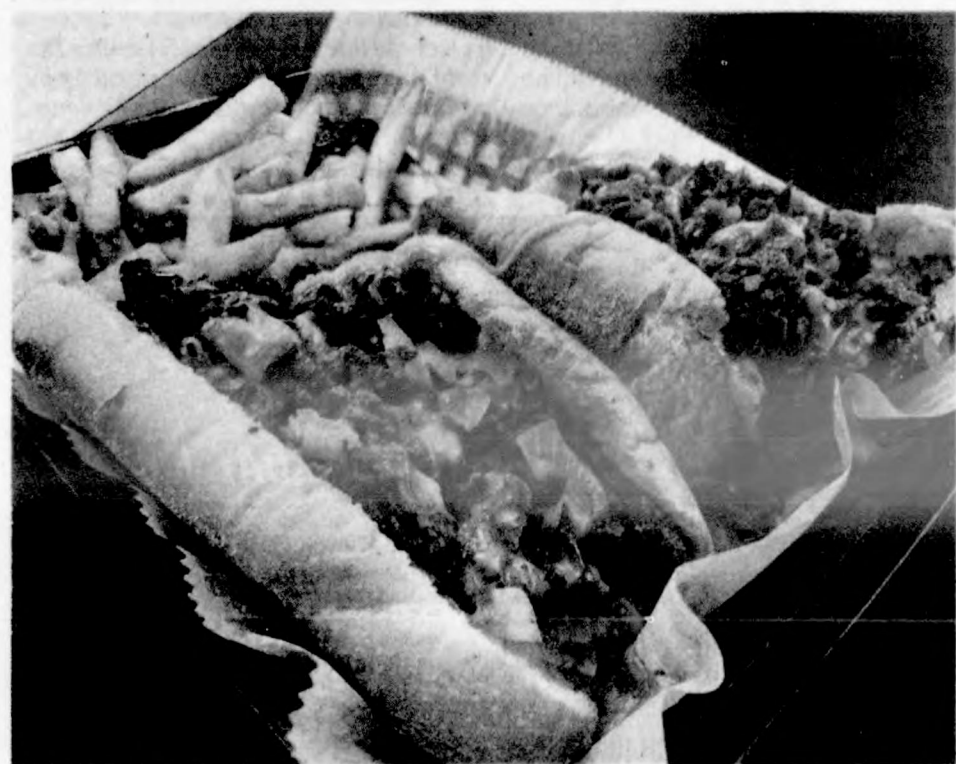
Among the changes they want is designation of the area as a school zone; posting of a crossing guard; installation of "proper pedestrian crosswalks"; and a police vehicle parked in the area to discourage drivers from speeding.

Tamara Rasheed hopes to spare other families a tragedy like the one endured by not only the Rasheeds, but also Harris.

"I don't want another driver to have their life ruined by a tragedy that could be avoided by taking personal responsibility to stop at traffic lights in school zones," she wrote.

"No one else should have to suffer from this pain. The pain of not knowing if their loved one will live after being struck by a driver who doesn't stop for pedestrians. The pain of knowing there wasn't enough support to stop this driver at the light and that this could happen again to someone else."

Contact reporter Susan Bromley at sbromley@hometownlife.com or 517-281-2412. Follow her on Twitter @Susan-Bromley10. Get the latest headlines for metro Detroit every morning in your mailbox by signing up for our daily briefings newsletter.



A classic cheesesteak from Joe Butch Cheesesteaks in downtown Farmington. SHELBY TANKERSLEY/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

## Joe Butch Cheesesteaks opens in Farmington, puts emphasis on high-quality rib eye

Shelby Tankersley  
Hometownlife.com  
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

The owners of Joe Butch Cheesesteaks in downtown Farmington aren't playing around when it comes to meat.

Sandwich shops are common, so they think their new business at 33171 Grand River Ave. has to be unique if they want it to survive.

"We have to be different," said Johnny Dababneh, one of three owners. "We have to use real rib eye and we have to get a bread that compliments the rib eye. We have to have high-quality ingredients, because, I'm telling you, if you cut quality, you're going to struggle."

Dababneh is passionate about food and gets satisfaction from making it well. He learned to cook from his mother while growing up in Dearborn Heights. He said her made-with-love approach is the best there is.

In the two weeks Joe Butch Cheesesteaks has been open, that method seems to be working with customers. Dababneh said most visitors tell him they'll be back.

"I'm a little passionate with food, even at home," he said. "I'm always making sure I can perfect it as much as I can."

Dababneh recommends first-time customers try the classic cheesesteak with provolone cheese and warm cheese sauce. The sandwich, at \$11.99, is the cheapest sub on the menu and is Dababneh's personal favorite.

"It's simple, and it's absolutely delicious," he said. "That's what I prefer, and everyone I've made it for so far has given it a thumbs-up."

Hot dogs, chicken tenders and chicken subs are also on the menu for people who'd prefer to skip the steak. Other cheesesteaks on the menu include sandwiches inspired by Detroit, Philly-style cheesesteaks and even pizza.

Get the latest headlines for metro Detroit every morning in your mailbox by signing up for our daily briefings newsletter.

Contact reporter Shelby Tankersley at stankersle@hometownlife.com or 248-305-0448. Follow her on Twitter @shelby\_tankk.

## Hotel at Novi's Adell Center gets OK from city's planning commission

David Veselenak  
Hometownlife.com  
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

Plans to bring a new hotel to the heart of Novi are finally moving forward after several years and a worldwide pandemic that halted plenty of travel.

Years after originally being proposed, a hotel preliminary site plan for a new Home2 Suites by Hilton in the Adell Center at Novi Road and Interstate 96 is making its way through city approvals.

"It's basically the same plan we proposed several years ago," said Andrew Andre, an architect working on the project. "What we've seen coming out of the pandemic is there's been more demand of this kind of hotel."

"We're very excited about this opportunity."

The hotel, which would stand 5 stories and contain 141 rooms, would join several other businesses in the Adell Center, which also contains Texas Roadhouse, Planet Fitness, iFLY and Carvana, all of which have opened in

the past few years.

The site is where the former Novi Expo Center stood before it was demolished more than a decade ago.

The hotel is designed as an extended-stay facility, which caters more to people staying longer periods of time in the area, oftentimes for work. Rooms would be equipped with amenities such as a refrigerator and kitchenette. There is not expected to be an onsite restaurant in the hotel.

The city's planning commission reviewed the plan at its Jan. 11 meeting in the Novi Civic Center. It unanimously recommended the preliminary site plan and storm water management plan.

Planning commission members were in agreement with moving the development forward.

"Like everybody else, I don't have any comments," said Commissioner John Avdoulos. "I appreciate you coming before the city and hopefully getting this off the ground."

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



A sign for the Adell Center near the land where a proposed extended-stay hotel is planned in Novi. The hotel, a Home2 Suites by Hilton, would locate on the vacant property beyond the sign in the center.

DAVID VESELENAK/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM



# Path

Continued from Page 1A

this.”

The project was projected to cost between at least \$700,000 and \$1 million, for which the township would have sought the DNR grant.

Mazzara’s motion to discontinue pursuit of the shared use path on Milford Road was unanimously supported, but additional pleas by audience members to withdraw any future non-motorized pathways or connections utilizing private property in the master plan drew division among township officials after a presentation by Giffels Webster Consultant Jill Bahm.

The 2023-27 township parks and recreation master plan Bahm presented included “expanding the transportation network for the township,” with proposed pathways to explore during this timespan, as well as future opportunities that could be explored beyond.

The plan includes the Complete Streets Policy, which notes “Non-motorized transportation is a key component of a community’s recreational infrastructure,” allowing for “easy use of walking, biking and other non-motorized transportation.” The policy’s stated benefits include increased safety and more non-motorized trips, as well as improvements in social engagement and physical health for residents.

Bahm said one of the goals of the policy - however lofty it may be - was to get all residents a trail within a mile of their homes. She acknowledged that completion of a non-motorized network could take up to 20 years, but the end results could be appreciated by many.

“A non-motorized transportation system lowers traffic burden by providing alternate routes to school, work, and shopping,” she said. “Reducing traffic congestion lessens environmental costs associated with autos, promotes a healthier community and increased recreational opportunities, and bolsters local and regional economies.”

She cited regional planning data that shows a 100% increase in bike trips since 2005 in southeast Michigan, as well as a 28% increase in walking trips since 2005, with 3,500 miles of bike-ways, 24,000 miles of walkways, and 500 miles of regional trails.

Township Treasurer Cynthia Dagen-



The Jan. 18 Milford Township Board meeting was well-attended as many residents turned out to hear a discussion about a proposed Milford Road pathway that would have crossed private properties. Board members rejected the proposal.

SUSAN BROMLEY/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

hardt suggested moving forward with the master plan, but without the pathways crossing private property.

“The community at this time is not interested in having it,” she said. “If we don’t delete it, people are going to come to us and say, ‘It’s in your master plan, why can’t we do it?’”

Steve Wolfe, chairman of the Parks and Recreation Commission, said the commission had seen a need for a path, with the catalyst being connectivity for future residents of the forthcoming Kensington Ridge development. While the path was ultimately rejected, he said the process that led to it was successful and he felt it should be used for all other proposed pathways.

“The process worked perfectly and now you want to tell everyone else on other streets, ‘we didn’t want the path

and you can’t have it.’ If you gut that plan, pretty soon we won’t have anything,” Wolfe said.

Non-motorized pathways and connections in the township’s master plan are only plans and would still need the board’s approval. Withdrawing them from the master plan could be to the detriment of gaining DNR grants for other parks and recreation amenities including improvements to the Milford trailhead, township officials said.

Mazzara said the trailhead currently violates most of the Americans with Disabilities Act requirements and, without a grant, improvements can’t be made.

“You’re basically saying, we don’t want to be a walkable community,” he said, to which a resident in the audience responded, “We don’t.”

A vote on approving the parks and recreation master plan without the Milford Road pathway, but including potential pathways elsewhere in the township, failed in a tie vote, with Mazzara, Trustee Dale Wiltse and Supervisor Don Green voting yes, and Dagenhardt, Clerk Holly Brandt and Trustee Toni Vulaj voting no.

The board then voted 5-1 to send the master plan back to the Parks and Recreation Commission for review, with Mazzara voting no.

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

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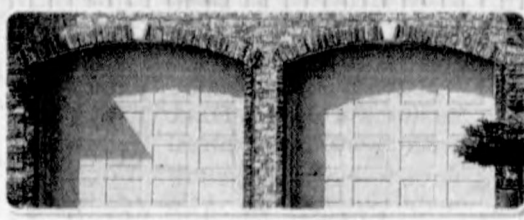


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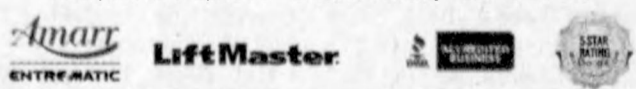
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SCAN TO SCHEDULE SERVICE



# Livonia woman honors late uncle through year-round acts of service

**Shelby Tankersley**  
Hometownlife.com  
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

Sami McKay loves walking through downtown Detroit and passing out her "blessing bags."

The bags full of essentials like food, first aid items and cold weather gear are given to people battling homelessness. McKay said giving the bags away is her way of honoring her late uncle Denny, who died in 2008 after years of living with muscle dystrophy and multiple sclerosis.

"Jan. 26 is actually what would be Denny's birthday. Every year, on Jan. 26, we do the blessing bags," McKay, a Livonia resident, said. "Helping homeless (people) in downtown Detroit was Denny's passion. It was more than giving people money. He worked as a lawyer downtown and he would offer people work to come do odd jobs for him. He'd pay them, get to know them and really connect with people instead of just throwing change at them."

The blessing bags are just one project McKay does through her community service Facebook page, "D.O. it for Denny." She has a new project going every month, some of which have been book drives, creating cards for local veterans and sponsoring families around Christmas.

McKay is currently fundraising for the "birthday boxes" she gives away in February. She partners with local foster agencies to provide families who've fostered a child with a gift card and cake supplies to celebrate their new family member.

D.O. it for Denny projects benefit nearby communities like Livonia, Westland, Redford Township and Detroit. McKay said she started doing random acts of kindness shortly after her uncle's death but became more organized in 2018 with the Facebook page. Now, she has a network of repeat donors and helpers.

"It's turned into so much more than I ever would have imagined," she said.



Sami McKay, left, with her late uncle Denny. Denny's servant's heart inspired McKay to do good deeds in his honor. PHOTOS COURTESY OF SAMI MCKAY

"It's a lot of fun."

McKay said 100% of people's donations go toward service projects. D.O. it for Denny is her personal passion, not a job.

The most popular project of the year is a Christmas sponsorship program McKay runs, connecting families in need with people who will buy Christmas gifts. McKay also offered a free toy store last year that she plans to collect toys for all year long.

"There was just something about seeing the families shop, pick out what they wanted and use the little wrapping station we had," she said. "It was really something amazing to be part of."

Being kind reminds McKay of the person her uncle was. She said many of the people who volunteer with her find how therapeutic it is to focus on someone other than themselves.

"Denny and I were just very close, like kindred spirits," she said. "I loved going and doing that sort of stuff with him. Whenever I was with him, we'd make it a point to do something kind to someone."

People interested in donating to McKay or helping can connect with her at "D.O. it for Denny" on Facebook. People also can buy items from McKay's Amazon wish list or make a donation through PayPal or Venmo.



Sami McKay poses with one of her "blessing bags" in downtown Detroit. The bags are full of essentials and are given to people struggling with homelessness.

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Contact reporter Shelby Tankersley at [stankersle@hometownlife.com](mailto:stankersle@hometownlife.com) or 248-305-0448. Follow her on Twitter @shelby\_tankk.

# Residential construction in Canton Township will add thousands of homes

**Laura Colvin**  
Hometownlife.com  
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

Residential construction is booming across Canton Township as crews work through a mild Michigan winter.

In 2022, Canton Township's Planning Division was keeping tabs on 23 housing projects totaling about 3,500 new homes, condos or apartments. In some cases, construction is wrapping up after several years in the planning and building phase. In other cases, projects are still under review.

"There's a lot going on right now," said Canton Township Community Planner Patrick Sloan. "There's a strong demand for housing in the area and in Canton specifically."

One of the largest projects is Filmore Apartments, where 504 units are planned on the west side of Beck Road between Michigan Avenue and Geddes Road. A few of the units have been finished and are now occupied and the 97-acre parcel is crowded with construction crews on any given day.

## 'Rigorous' residential planning process

According to Census data, Canton's population increased by almost 8,500 people between 2010 and 2020. Over that same time period, Sloan said, the number of housing units in Canton increased by about 3,300, which works out to an increase of about 9.4 percent in both population and housing in the past decade.

"We've been growing fast and continuing that rate of growth since 2020," Sloan said.

He noted developers that want to build homes in the township must first undergo a rigorous process that includes review by the planning department to ensure the project complies with township ordinance for permitted use, as well as with rules for building setbacks, architecture, landscaping, parking, lighting and access management.

"We also look outside the site, at how the project relates to the adjacent properties, the adjacent road networks and the utility networks," he said, noting a traffic study is required in some cases. "Before an application can be submitted for planning commission review, it is also looked at by the engineering division, with the fire department and with the building and inspection services division."

Projects submitted as "planned developments" have slightly different requirements, allowing for development in a way that is not always to the strict letter of the zoning ordinance.

"For the township, the benefits are that by clustering units, that increases the amount of open space that's undisturbed on the property," Sloan said. "That's led to a lot of preservation of wetlands and woodlands that would have otherwise been cleared in a conventional development."

## For developer, Canton is a 'wonderful place'

Sunrise Land Group is planning 449-for-rent homes on a 225-acre parcel north of Geddes Road and west of Denton Road in southwest Canton.

Howard Fingeroot, Sunrise Land Group president, said developers look for a number of factors when choosing a community for a new project.

"First, you look for good school districts," Fingeroot said. "You look for proximity to employment centers and you look for access to major thoroughfares. You look for a diverse amount of retail and commercial and then, finally, recreational opportunities for kids - soccer fields, swimming pools, things like that."

"I've been developing residential properties for close to 30 years and Canton has always been a wonderful place to build new communities."

## 2022 development map included 23 projects

Each year, Canton Township pub-

lishes a residential development map. The document for 2022 showed 23 projects in various stages. Those include:

**Anand Village Detached Condos:** 43 units on 11 acres at the southeast corner of Geddes and Denton roads. The project is still under review.

**Arbor Glen Site Condos:** 36 units on 36 acres at the northwest corner of Warren and Ridge roads. The project is under construction and nearly complete.

**Aspen Ridge Site Condos:** 29 units on 14 acres on the southwest corner of Saltz and Beck roads. The project is under construction and nearly complete.

**Berkshire Apartments:** 172 units on 25 acres on the north side of Saltz Road between Beck Road and Canton Center. The project is currently under construction.

**Canton Shareef Site Condos:** 10 units on 5 acres proposed on the west side of Lilley Road south of Palmer Road. The project is still under review by Canton Township.

**Concord Park Site Condos:** 152 units on 58 acres at Cherry Hill between Ridge and Napier roads. The project is currently under construction.

**Cherry Hill Preserve Detached Condos:** 24 units on 8 acres on the north side of Cherry Hill east of Lotz Road. The site plan has been approved, but the project is still under final engineering review with Canton Township.

**Filmore Place Apartments:** 504 units on 98 acres on the west side of Beck Road between Michigan Avenue and Geddes Road. The project is currently under construction.

**Glens at Cambridge Condos:** 92 units on 11 acres at the northwest corner of Canton Center and Saltz Road. The project was recently completed.

**Grandview Estates Site Condos:** 178 units on 87 acres on the south side of Geddes Road west of Denton Road. The project is under construction and nearly complete.

**Grandview South Site Condos:** 221 units on 77 acres. The project is under construction.

**Hamlet Meadows Site Condos:** 113 units on 52 acres on Napier Road west of

Denton Road. The project is under construction and nearly complete.

**Hamlet Pointe Site Condos:** 109 units on 79 acres on Napier Road west of Denton Road. The project is under construction and nearly complete.

**The Landings Site Condos:** 90 units in 21 acres at the southeast corner of Ridge and Saltz roads. The project is under construction and nearly complete.

**Meadows of Cherry Hill Site Condos:** 38 units on 16 acres near the southwest corner of Ridge and Saltz roads. The project is under construction.

**Monark Grove Housing for the Elderly:** 225 units on 17 acres on the south side of Ford Road west of Canton Center. A site plan has been approved, but the project is still under final engineering review. Tree removal has taken place but construction has yet to begin.

**Park Creek Site & Detached Condos:** 166 units on 89 acres at the northwest corner of Beck and Geddes roads. The project is under construction.

**Redwood at Marketplace Apartments:** 235 units on 48 acres on the north side of Michigan Avenue east of Geddes Road. A site plan has been approved, and the project has proceeded to final engineering review.

**Ridge Creek Site Condos:** 22 units on 21 acres on the south side of Warren Road between Ridge and Napier roads. The project is still under review by Canton Township.

**Towns at Cherry Hill Village Condos:** 93 units on 8.37 acres on the south side of Cherry Hill Road west of Denton Road. The project is currently under construction.

**Tremont Place Attached Condos:** 268 units on 41.5 acres south of Ford Road and west of I-275. The project is still under review by Canton Township.

**Westridge Estates Site Condos:** 274 units on 171 acres south of Ford Road between Napier and Ridge roads. The project is under construction.

**Woodbridge Estates Condos:** 479 units on 68 acres off the south side of Geddes Road between Denton and Beck roads. The project is under construction.



### FIND THE WORDS

This is a theme puzzle with the subject stated at right. Find the listed words in the grid. They may run in any direction but always in a straight line. Some letters are used more than once. Ring each word as you find it and when you have completed the puzzle, there will be 14 letters left over. They spell out the alternative theme of the puzzle.

- |             |         |       |             |
|-------------|---------|-------|-------------|
| Aggro       | Drop-in | Noosa | Swell       |
| Aloha       | Dude    | Heads | Selm        |
| Boardsports | Dump    | Nose  | Tides       |
| Bandi       | Flas    | Point | Turn        |
| Breaker     | Foam    | Rail  | Under       |
| Champion    | Glassy  | Reef  | Wall        |
| Chop        | GoPro   | Rips  | Wave        |
| Cold        | Guns    | Sane  | White water |
| Coagee      | Hang    | Sets  | Wind        |
| Cross step  | Kirra   | Skeg  | Woody       |
| Dive        | Leash   | Skill | Zinc        |

TODAY'S ANSWER

A morning ritual

### Go for a surf

DAALPMUDLMLLOUSI  
RNHEFDRERLABNTD  
OIOAEUEVLDIVERN  
PHLSEDTALLRKEOO  
IPAHREAWALEKSHB  
NLM AOFWMPAWESR  
I OCNIZESTESWSDI  
ODINPMTNRTDNORP  
GRSPSOIBGSRNNAS  
URGEMOHWYSNDUOU  
NADGPAWCSSIRNBR  
SISDAEHASOONUIF  
TLCLDADACARRIKTW  
GOPROTNULCOOGE  
YDOOWAGLGEKSAND

### NEWSDAY CROSSWORD

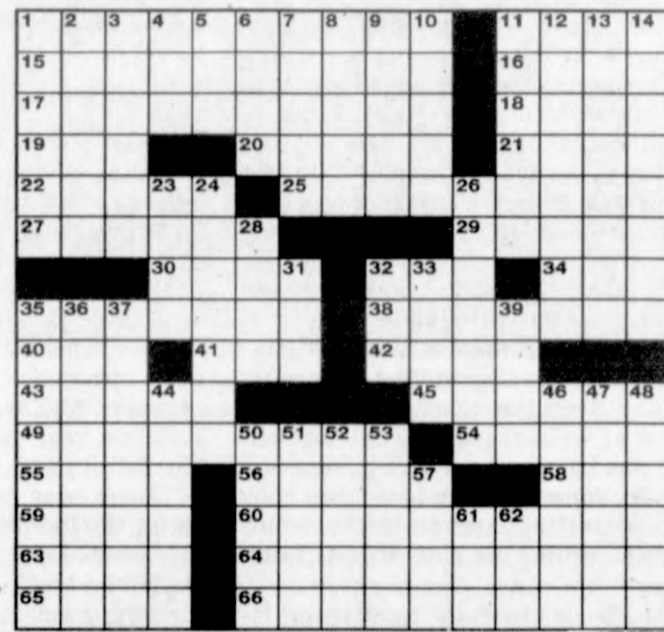
#### ACROSS

- Brown-orbed breakfast
- Son of Marge and Homer
- Newly coined (9/20/22) name in the news
- Certify
- Didn't go
- plié (somewhat-bent position)
- Key to leave with
- Placatory daughter of Zeus
- "Truly!"
- Long divisions
- About a third of 1/2
- Julius Caesar setting
- Chilling
- Most recognized female video game character, per Guinness
- March with no nickname
- Former owner of Avis and Twinkies
- Astute
- Fills with agitation
- Start of a Genesis 4 question
- Staple of Canadian music education
- Where many Georgians live
- Clamshell, for Neanderthals
- Mackie's of Scotland snacks
- One of Rembrandt's occupations
- Advice, for example
- Teen film persona
- General truth
- Don't just look
- Column heading on a Beethoven list
- Small space in big cities

#### DOWN

- Introductions to oboe music
- Light-dawning remark
- Resort north of the Riviera Maya
- See 32 Down
- Toaster's choice
- It means "around"
- End —
- Name on the cover of *Guerrilla Prince*
- Green toon with a "Fairytale" Baskin-Robbins flavor
- Back-of-book listings in older math texts

- Literally, "my lady"
- Schubert sacred song
- Reckless boldness
- What Manhattan was bought with (1626)
- "My dream world is complete Hieronymus Bosch and —": Lennon
- Esteem
- Lead-in to a question since 2014
- Lloyd Webber title role
- Term in baseball, golf and tennis
- , 4 Down (where to sign up for the annual SmileCon)
- Unclassified: Abbr.
- Frequent *Twilight Zone* theme
- Multi-NAACP Image Award actor
- She first met 15 Across last September 9th
- Principal
- Highly favored
- Highly scattered
- Happy home companion
- Bard's "fiery-footed" ones
- Escalate
- Jazz singer with a damehood
- Put to work
- Is borne on
- French Sudan, today
- It's usually the same day as Chinese New Year
- What may be found between two dogs



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## PUZZLES & POSERS

### THE MORSE DECODER — ENCLOSURES

THE INTERNATIONAL MORSE CODE CONSISTS OF DOTS, DASHES, & SPACES. HOWEVER, IN THIS PUZZLE AN INTERESTING PROBLEM HAS BEEN CREATED BY THE ELIMINATION OF ALL SPACES. ~TO SOLVE, EACH OF THE FIVE ROWS BELOW MUST BE PROPERLY SPACED TO FORM A WORD FROM THE ABOVE TOPIC. THE DOTS AND DASHES ARE IN THE CORRECT ORDER.

- 
- 
- 
- 
- 

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

### SUDOKU | CREATORS

Insert numbers 1-9 in each box with every row, column and 3x3 box containing the digits just once. Difficulty level ranges from Bronze (easiest) to Silver to Gold (hardest) RATING: BRONZE

#### TODAY'S ANSWER

8	5	2	7	4	7	2	2	6
4	5	2	1	6	8	8	8	9
1	9	8	8	2	2	2	2	3
5	4	8	9	7	7	6	3	1
6	1	7	4	3	5	8	8	9
5	7	4	8	6	1	8	8	8
4	8	1	3	7	9	5	6	2
9	7	5	1	6	2	2	2	8
3	2	5	6	5	9	5	9	2

		1	4	8		9		
	4	3				1	5	7
2	9						8	4
	7			1				3
6			5		4			9
1				2				4
3	8						6	1
	5	2	1			3	9	
		6		4	7	2		

#### TODAY'S ANSWER

- COOP
- STALL
- PIG PEN
- MANGER
- CAGE

#### NOIIMOS



## Teen

Continued from Page 1A

LaFontaine and was supposed to start work next week.

Jordon was loved his 15-year-old cat, Kitty Girl, and all animals. He had recently learned to ice skate and was enjoying downtown dancing in Brighton with his friend, Aloia Davis.

The two had classes together at Lakeland High School and also attended The Rock Church in Fenton together.

"He was such a pillar in my life and helped me so much in my faith as I got to walk beside him in his," Aloia said. "He was a constant reminder to me of what it means to love others, and he still is and will continue to be exactly that."

Aloia recalled that Jordon was always up to go on spontaneous trips and try new things.

Jordon's mom said he was passionate about anything that grabbed his interest.

"He was the light of my life," Barrett said. "He was perfect. Anyone who knows him, knows how awesome he was."

Aloia said Jordon's death is a tragedy

for anyone who had ever crossed paths with him.

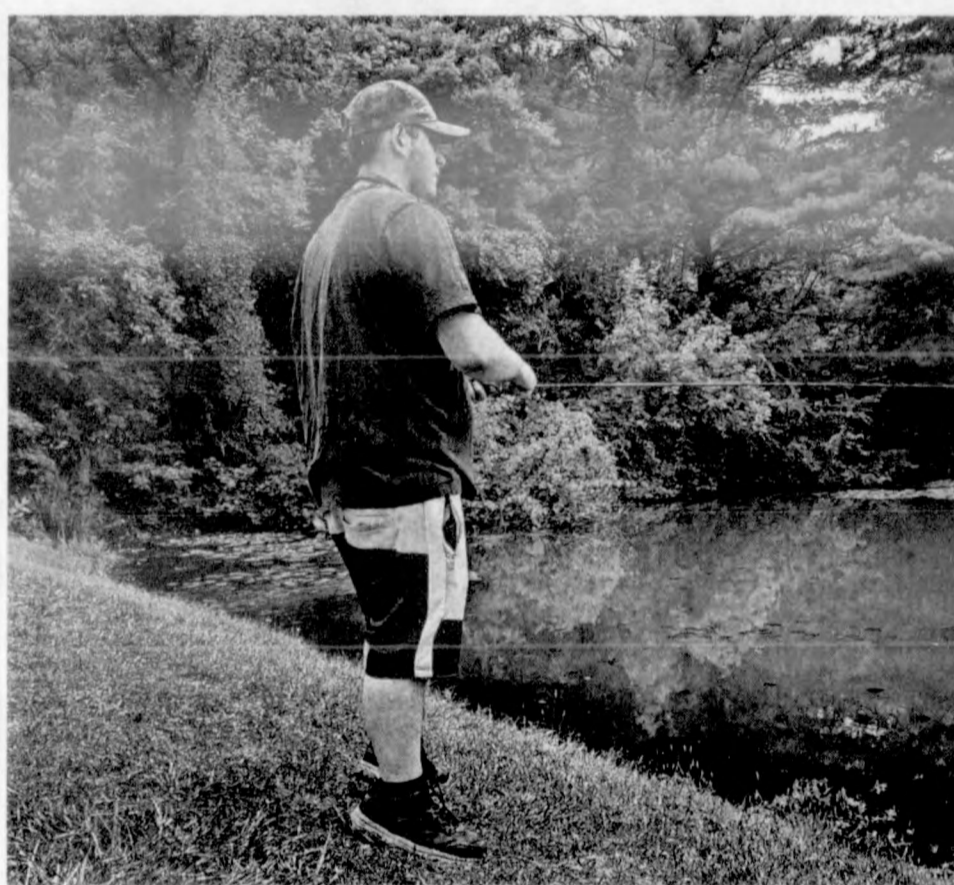
"He was such a light and touched so many lives without realizing the humongous impact he really did have," she said. "My life will forever be changed from meeting him in the most positive of ways, but his loss is such an astronomical sorrow. I'm so grateful that I had the incredible opportunity of meeting and getting to know such a wonderful friend, truly one of the best."

In addition to his mother, Jordon is survived by his sister, Autumn; stepfather, Mike; two half-brothers, Jonathan and William; and a half-sister Shannon. He was preceded in death six weeks ago by his maternal grandmother.

Amaya said Highland House Owner Elia Nicholas will pay for the funeral, for which a date and time has not been announced.

A gofundme has been established to also help support the family as they grieve the loss of Jordon.

Contact reporter Susan Bromley at sbromley@hometownlife.com or 517-281-2412. Follow her on Twitter @SusanBromley10. Get the latest headlines for metro Detroit every morning in your mailbox by signing up for our daily briefings newsletter.



Jordon Shenberger enjoyed fishing. The Lakeland High School junior died Jan. 19, 2023. COURTESY OF TRICIA BARRETT

## Central

Continued from Page 1A

would be a several-story parking garage that students would use to park for school and other activities at the campus.

The city's planning commission took up the development during its Jan. 11 meeting at the Novi Civic Center. It marks one of the biggest developments on the school's property since it relocated to Novi from Redford Township in 2005.

The parking garage would serve students on a daily basis at the school, a solution to a growing problem, Marmul said.

"Especially as we look at the master plan of the full campus buildout, parking becomes harder to figure out," he said. "It's on the inside of the driveway. There's a big student safety element to that."



### The latest project for the high school

It's just the next step in development for the school. Detroit Catholic Central currently is working on a new \$35 million STEM wing, a project Marmul said should be up and running next January. The school also was approved back in the fall of 2021 for a new driveway connecting the campus to Twelve Mile Road to the north, a proposal that originally

New athletic fields, as well as a parking structure, are planned for this section of the Detroit Catholic Central High School's campus near Twelve Mile Road in Novi.

DAVID VESELENAK/  
HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

ruined neighbors' feathers but was eventually resolved when Catholic Central made some changes to the plan and met with nearby residents.

Some vegetation has been cleared to make way for the new driveway, though the building of the road has not yet begun.

Marmul said more information would roll out closer to when the school had raised more funding to develop the property. He said the project will not im-

pact tuition at the private school, which is set at \$15,300 for the current school year.

"We don't want the shift to fall back onto tuition," he said.

The newest project received preliminary site plan approval from the planning commission, with just a few concerns coming from its members.

Commissioner Michael Lynch brought up potential issues over noise levels at the stadium, saying measurements taken could change depending on weather conditions with sound.

But even with that, he said the project appeared top-of-the-line.

"Overall, it's stunning. I think the campus overall is stunning," Lynch said. "It's something that you would expect to see at Comerica Park or a professional stadium."

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





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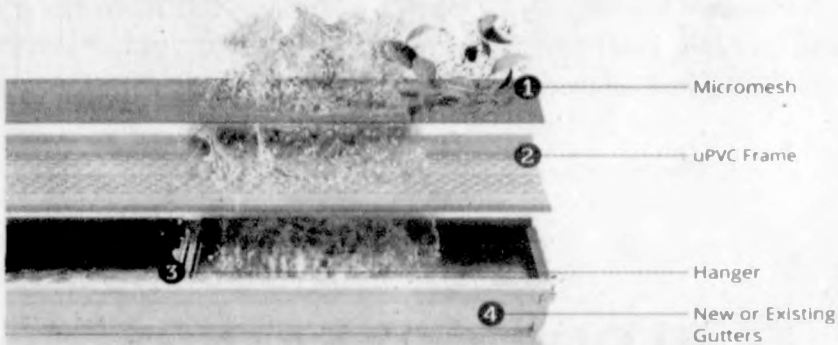
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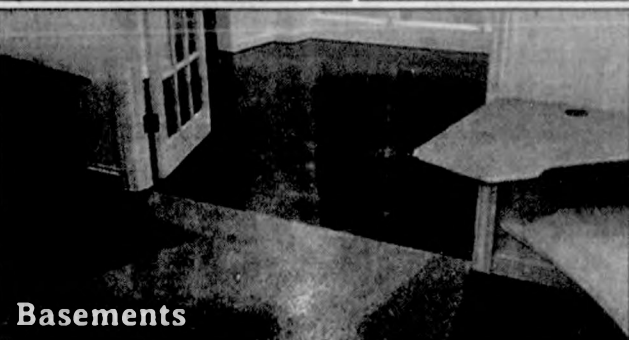


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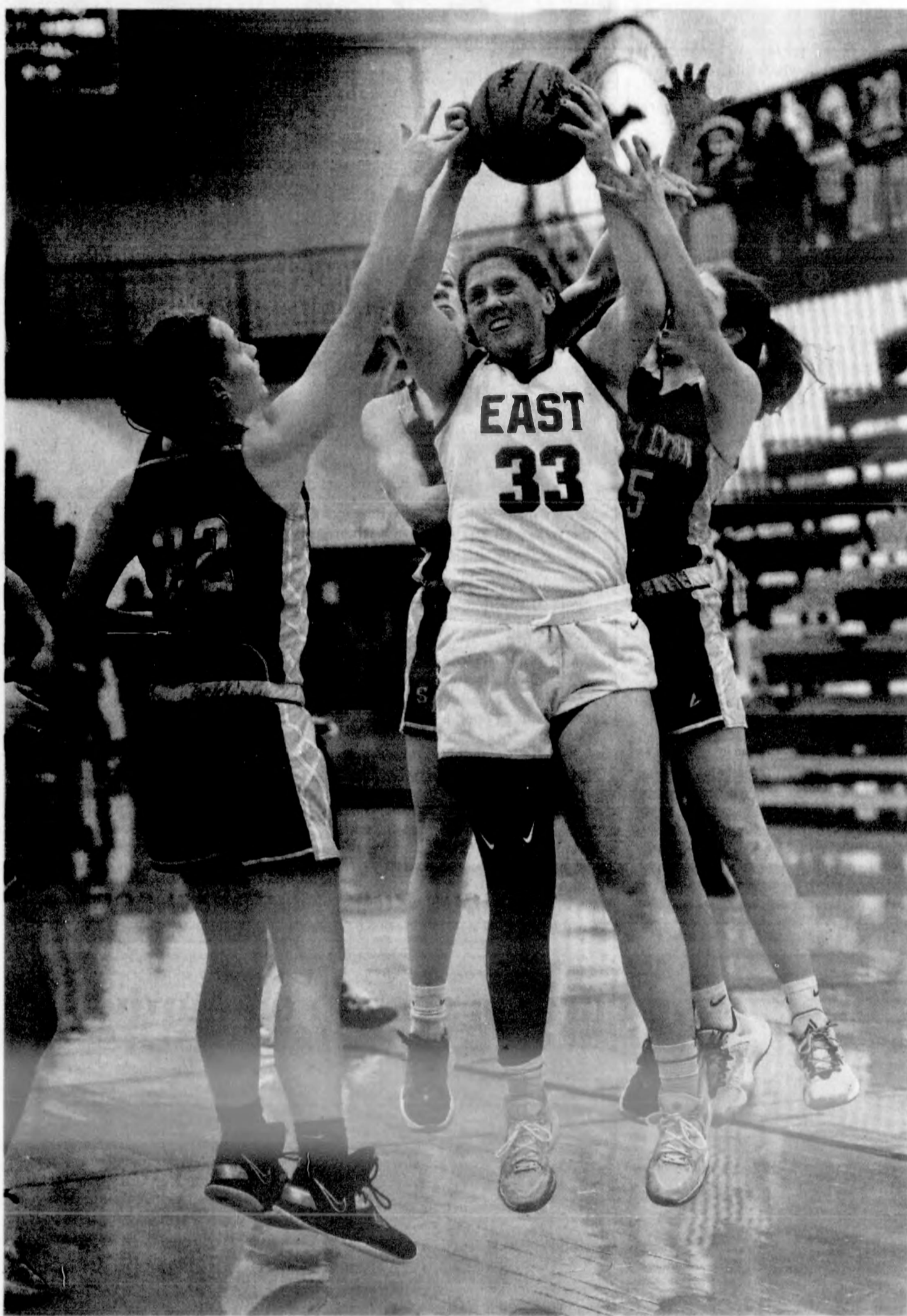
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# SPORTS

## HIGH SCHOOL GIRLS BASKETBALL



South Lyon East's Anna Lissan rebounds during a Lakes Valley Conference girls basketball game Friday, Jan. 13, 2023. BRANDON FOLSOM/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

## South Lyon East boys still alive in LVC, but competition is fierce

Brandon Folsom  
Hometownlife.com  
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

Some of it had to do with it being a crosstown rivalry.

In reality, though, it spoke to just how much parity is in the Lakes Valley Conference this winter.

South Lyon East coach Ron Levin knows.

On paper, the Cougars should've been the runaway favorite Jan. 13 against visiting South Lyon. Instead, they needed a stern talking to at half-time, an elbow to the face (more on this later) and an energetic second-half comeback to sneak past the Lions in boys basketball, 66-58.

East (6-2, 3-1) is absolutely loaded with talent. Jake Fannon is arguably one of the best players in the league. Sprinkle in a handful of Hometown Life All-Area football players in Drew Moyer, Jordan Newbill and Caleb Gash. And don't forget about Joey Andrews and Cameron Crosby as well as some more role players.

But South Lyon? It was decimated by attrition. The Lions brought in a new coach, Jeff Schmitz, and said farewell to point guard Logan Doty, big man Max Peters and Mr. Do Everything, Coy Plummer, one of the school's best athletes as a starter in football, basketball and baseball.

See BOYS, Page 6B

## Arbor Prep's former coach turning around Salem basketball

Brandon Folsom  
Hometownlife.com  
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

Salem girls basketball coach Rod Wells owes a few of his players 12 smoothies right now.

That's the deal with him. If you take a charge in a game, he'll buy you a smoothie as a reward.

So the Rocks (8-5) are averaging almost a charge per game and his wallet is that much thinner because of it.

Wells calls it playing mind games. But, in reality, what he's doing is changing the culture there.

As of Jan. 23, the Rocks were 5-1 in the Kensington Lakes Activities Association-West, good enough for second place in the division. If the regular season ended today, they'd be in the KLAAs tournament.

They entered the week with a six-game winning streak (five straight against league opponents), which included a 62-42 win over Novi on Jan. 20.

See COACH, Page 7B

# South Lyon East could 3-peat as LVC champions

Brandon Folsom  
Hometownlife.com  
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

You can't count out the South Lyon East girls basketball team. And that goes for, literally, anything. Just name it.

The Cougars entered the winter as winners of the past two Lake Valley Conference championships. But there was no way they were going to earn the three-peat this time, right? They graduated five of their top-six contributors

from a year ago, which included Central Michigan signee Taylor Anderson and four-year starter Ella Krushka.

Outside of Anna Lissan, a future college player, and Alyssa Melquist, coach Rob Leadley was unsure who was even going to make the varsity until about a week before the season started. But they're rebuilding and plugging in pieces left and right to keep their well-oiled machine rolling, even without freshman Brooke Moyer, who is out with an injury.

And then the losses started piling up

early on. They lost to Wixom St. Catherine and West Bloomfield, the defending Division 1 state champion, to open the season. They were upset by league foe Walled Lake Northern. And then they lost tough non-conference games to Saline and Temperance Bedford from the Southeastern Conference. But each time, they've bounced back with big league victories. They've ended brief losing streaks with wins over Milford, Walled Lake Western and

See 3-PEAT, Page 6B



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# Wildcats rebuilding, but show signs of growth

Brandon Folsom  
Hometownlife.com

USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

You either weren't at the game or were purposefully ignoring Andrew Meeuwsen if you didn't see it.

Almost every time the Plymouth boys basketball team pulled down a defensive rebound against Canton in the opening half, the first-year coach would throw up both hands and calmly make a "slow-down-and-be-patient" motion toward whichever one of his guards was about to bring the ball up the floor.

That was the game plan for the rebuilding Wildcats on Jan. 17.

Let's slow it down, eat some time off the clock and make the most out of each possession. Let's pass the ball around until we can get a high-percentage scoring opportunity.

It wasn't necessarily stalling, but it definitely was about mitigating Canton's star-studded lineup from turning a close Park rivalry matchup into an absolute blowout.

And, for the most part, that strategy worked. And, of course, Meeuwsen knew it would work. He would know the best way to slow down the Chiefs. He was on Canton coach Jimmy Reddy's staff for the past three years.

Reddy was integral in helping Meeuwsen get the job. In fact, Meeuwsen and Reddy are actually coworkers at Centennial Middle School in South Lyon. They even eat lunch together sometimes.

"Scouting for this was definitely different because I didn't have to watch any film to know what those guys do," Meeuwsen said. "I've been around their program long enough. I coached almost every one of their guys at the JV level. It was definitely a cool experience coaching against them, but, obviously, the big picture here is we want to win it. The guys on our team want to win, and we've got to find a way."

That's right.

The Wildcats (4-7, 1-3 KLA West) couldn't have asked for a better start.

They took advantage of Canton center Dante Favor leaving with an injury on the game's second possession and even benefiting from guard Caleb Williams picking up two early fouls and be-

ing forced to sit on the bench with 3:11 left in the first quarter.

That allowed them to take a 7-6 lead into the next period. And then they slowed it down some more to keep Canton's scorers off the stat sheet, despite a 6-2 run by the Chiefs to close out the first half.

And then that was it. The wheels fell off entirely in the second half.

What was working for Plymouth in the first half couldn't be replicated in the last two quarters, which allowed Canton (6-5, 4-0) to take the 57-35 victory and maintain sole possession of first place in the West.

"We just couldn't move the ball, and that's a credit to their defense because they had a lot of pressure, and we didn't set enough screens or execute how we did on Friday (during a 52-50 overtime win over Howell)," Meeuwsen said. "It wasn't our effort, and I think we still played pretty good defense. They had 57 points, and the goal was to keep them below 50, so we were chasing at times."

So what happened?

Well, it was the first game back for 6-foot-11 center Kelvin Amoaka, one of the most sought-after recruits in metro Detroit, who suffered a concussion two weeks ago. He hasn't been able to practice with the team. So it took a while to ease him back into the flow of things. He also sat out some time in foul trouble but did score a team-best 12 points.

Future Division III college star Bryce Garbacz pitched in 10 points, but the Wildcats are still trying to find their chemistry as a relatively new team. Between injuries and attrition, a lot of players are brand new. Heck, they even have three football players who haven't played in years who tried out for the team.

Those three — Evan Cosgrove, Idrys Cotton and Orlando Daniels — have become contributors.

"Evan's the captain of the football team and he didn't play last year," Meeuwsen added. "Idrys, big No. 33, has got a couple of offers from the MAC in Toledo and Miami (Ohio), and he's a big-time football player. He's new this year. Orlando has a hurt knee, but he hasn't played in maybe two years. We've got guys trying hard. We just don't have a lot of experience on our team, and we're



Canton's Omar Suleiman dunks during a KLA West boys basketball game Tuesday, Jan. 17, 2023, at Plymouth. TOM BEAUDOIN/SPECIAL TO HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

still trying to learn and figure some stuff out and iron out the wrinkles.

"That's the name of the game, to get better every day. It's a long season, though it's halfway done, and the guys are still excited. We took a step back tonight, but we'll rebound."

It might have been a big ask for the Wildcats to upset Canton in Meeuwsen's first game against his former team. But they were right there in the first half.

Their goal was to limit Favor and Lake Superior State signee Omar Suleiman each to 15 points or fewer. And they did. Favor had 15, Suleiman added 14 and Williams scored 10.

As the team grows, it'll have to learn

to put away games, especially against teams such as Canton, which is poised to win the KLA West outright.

"Our game plan was pretty good," Meeuwsen added. "We just need some guys to put the ball in the hoop. The plan was to get the best possible shot and not be in a hurry. We don't want to go up and down if we don't have to. We have the size. It's good for our team if we get good possessions and get a lot of passes. We didn't execute some of the stuff we worked on Friday and in practice Saturday and Monday. We have to get back to work tomorrow and keep executing our game."

Canton coach Jimmy Reddy did not respond to a request for an interview.

# Undefeated Marlins enjoying dream season on hardwood

Brandon Folsom  
Hometownlife.com

USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

Late in the third quarter of the Farmington Hills Mercy girls basketball team's eventual 48-28 win Jan. 19 at White Lake Lakeland, Aizlyn Albanese toed the foul line for a pair of attempts.

The sophomore made the first.

But while her second shot was still sailing through the air, Maya White just took off.

Where?

The senior just sprinted back on defense. She just disappeared altogether. She didn't even bother battling for the rebound, which is wild because, well, her job as an almost 6-foot post player is to, ya know, battle for the rebounds.

And that just speaks to the type of year White and her Mercy teammates are having.

Albanese, who scored a game-high 21 points, has proven to be one of the best scorers in Michigan. From a technical and fundamental standpoint, there aren't many underclassmen as talented as her. She rarely misses, whether that's pull-up jumpers, catch-and-shoot 3-pointers, layups in transition and, as White showed us, gimme free throws.

White took off early because she knew Albanese wasn't missing. And Albanese didn't (she went 4 of 4 on the night).

For White, she's having, literally, the winter most seniors dream about having: A perfect season.

As of Jan. 23, Mercy was 12-0 overall, ranked No. 2 in the Associated Press' most recent Division 1 poll and a win against Dearborn Divine Child on Jan. 24 from finishing its first pass through the Catholic League Central unscathed.

Entering this season, White had a great run on the travel ball circuit, earned a handful of offers, including a Division I opportunity from Detroit Mercy, and ultimately wound up signing with Grand Valley State University.

She's one of three captains. She's the role model the younger players look up to. And her team's a favorite to win both the league and its district (and possibly make a run at a regional title if it can beat crosstown foe North Farmington, which is also undefeated right now, in a likely district final matchup).



Farmington Hills Mercy's Maya White scores down low during a girls basketball game Thursday, Jan. 19, 2023, at White Lake Lakeland.

BRANDON FOLSOM/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

You could call White the Big Marlin on Campus.

And not too many seniors are having as much fun as she is.

"I'm really excited because it's senior year. I have to step up and be a captain, so I'm just having fun leading the way for others," said White, who scored seven points vs. the Eagles.

The Marlins graduated two key start-

ers from a year ago in Hometown Life All-Area first-teamer Sarah Cunningham and Sophia Dugas and, on paper, that should make them a less talented team.

But they just aren't. They have statement wins against Warren Regina, rival Bloomfield Hills Marian and Ann Arbor Father Gabriel Richard, arguably one of the top D-2 teams out there, and even

more big victories are about to come.

How are they getting it done?

"It's really good defense. That's the strength of our team," coach Gary Morris said. "We shoot the ball well. We share the ball, but it's the defense. Especially from the guard play from (Lauren Smiley and Fran DeNardo). They set the tone, and then Maya is really good, too. It's those three seniors setting the tone, and the other kids follow suit."

White was a strong player as a junior, but she's improved tenfold on both offense and defense since the Marlins lost to eventual state champion West Bloomfield in the regional semifinal in 2021-22. And her leadership has improved tremendously, which allows her to, in fact, set the tone.

She credits her time with the Michigan Storm AAU program with helping with that improvement.

She got to work with Storm coach Shane Lawal, who is a former professional player. If you're a passionate fan of girls basketball, you've probably run into him before. At 6-10, he's hard to miss, plus he was the coach at state power Detroit Renaissance up until the NBA's Sacramento Kings hired him to be an assistant before this season started.

He taught her how to battle in the post. He helped her develop confidence as a leader. And he encouraged her to add some range to her shots.

Not too many weekends passed over the summer where Lawal wasn't bragging on Twitter about White's growth as a player.

"He trained me all summer and the summer before that, too," White added. "We do post work and, obviously, he's tall, and he can dunk. He just helped me improve and become a better post player and outside player, too."

"I miss him. I miss him a lot, though. I still talk to him, too."

This hasn't been a free ride for the Marlins. A lot of work has gone into their undefeated season.

But not much has gone wrong for them either. Not even Albanese missing free throws.

And White is enjoying every second of it.

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



# 'CAPTAIN GOAL'

## Pouliot's shorthanded tally lifts Hartland over Stevenson

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

**HARTLAND** — A successful hockey team needs unselfish players like Nick Halonen, who don't mind if they're not scoring goals or that their contributions are largely unnoticed by outsiders.

Of course, a successful hockey team also needs players like Ben Pouliot, who can be counted on to produce big goals in big games.

Hartland is fortunate to have both players, as well as a nice mix of others who combined forces to make the Eagles a vastly improved team from the one that first faced Livonia Stevenson the night before Thanksgiving.

Pouliot's shorthanded goal with 2:43 left in the game gave fifth-ranked Hartland a 4-3 victory over third-ranked Stevenson on Jan. 18 in a clash of state Division 1 contenders at Hartland Sports Center.

It was the second goal of the game for Pouliot, who had gone five straight games without a goal. Halonen scored the other two Hartland goals, including the tying score on the power play with 12:23 remaining in the game.

Halonen has seven goals in 15 games, scoring in four of his last seven games after doing so only once in his first eight.

"I don't necessarily take that as my role," Halonen said. "I look to bring more intensity. To be able to bury a few feels good. I'm not quite worried about that."

Hartland coach Rick Gadwa said Halonen's effort was contagious.

"He was phenomenal," Gadwa said. "His compete level, it's what we really addressed before the game. It was just 100% from start to finish. He was upset he turned the puck over late. He was upset at himself at that. I just look at his response to that to continue to fight to get the puck back, to make sure he works at getting it back out. He just had no quit in him, and the rest of the team responded."

Both of Halonen's goals tied the score, as Stevenson took three one-goal leads before Pouliot gave the Eagles their first lead of the night.

Stevenson's Owen Penny opened the scoring at 7:04 of the first period, only to have Halonen tie it 73 seconds later.

Penny made it 2-1 at 4:01 of the second and Pouliot responded at 8:46 with a shot from behind the goal line that banked in off goalie Riley Martin.

The Spartans regained the lead when Andrew Clark knocked in a rebound with 2:53 left in the second period.

On his second goal, just like his first, Halonen was rewarded for going to the net to score on a rebound with 12:23 remaining.

"I just felt like I had a lot of energy tonight," Halonen said. "We were throwing a lot of pucks to the net. They just happened to bounce right there. I was there, right spot, right time."

Halonen was in the penalty box serving a hooking minor when Pouliot scored the game-winner. An errant Stevenson pass on the power play turned into a critical icing call, bringing the faceoff to the right of Martin.

Hartland's Ian Kastamo, who won big draws all night, got the puck back to defenseman Braden Pietila, who sent a cross-ice pass to Pouliot in the right circle. Pouliot moved around defenseman Dillon McCallion and put a shot between the pads of Martin from close range for his 11th goal of the season.

"All of us have to step up," Pouliot said. "That's what we did. We had a bunch of guys out there, did the right play, scored a goal and won the game."

It was the type of big-time goal a coach wants to see from a senior captain who made all-state as a junior.

"You're on a (penalty kill) and he's doing his job there," Gadwa said. "You don't expect him to score. Then he goes and puts the puck in the net. It's just a captain goal. Obviously, in a time for us when we need to start climbing, your captain getting your game-winner, there's just nothing better than that."

Hartland has gone 11-2 since starting the season 0-2. The second loss was a 3-0 decision to Stevenson in which the Eagles were outshot 29-22. Hartland outshot the Spartans in the rematch, 40-18.

"They played a really, really solid



Hartland's Jack L'Esperance (18) carries the puck while pursued by Livonia Stevenson's Andrew Clark during the Eagles' 4-3 victory Wednesday, Jan. 18, 2023. TIMOTHY ARRICK/FOR THE LIVINGSTON DAILY

game, even when we got a lead," Stevenson coach David Mitchell said. "We weren't very good defensively in our own zone, but they had a lot to do with that. Give them a lot of credit."

"They structured it up pretty well today. We tried to do some things to combat it. They got through us. They're just a solid, solid hockey team. They've got a lot of really high-end players. When they get chances to score, they finish."

The first Hartland-Stevenson game didn't count in the KLAAs standings, but this one did. The result means even more is at stake in the rivalry game between Brighton and Hartland at 7:30 p.m. Friday at Hartland Sports Center. Brighton is 9-0 in the KLAAs West with one game left and Hartland is 7-0 with

games remaining against Brighton, Salem and Plymouth.

Brighton would win the division with a victory. If Hartland wins, the Eagles still need to win one of their two remaining games to represent the West in the KLAAs championship game.

In the East Division, Salem is 6-2 and Stevenson is 5-2, with both teams losing Wednesday. Stevenson has the head-to-head tie-breaker, having won 3-2 on Dec. 14.

"We'll be OK," Mitchell said. "Tonight, they're tough lessons for us. It's a little humbling. It's a little message to us we have to do things right all the time."

Contact Bill Khan at [ukhan@gannett.com](mailto:ukhan@gannett.com). Follow him on Twitter @BillKhan.

# Brighton rallies again, ends 8-year winless streak vs. Hartland

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

**HARTLAND** — When everyone had settled down, at least somewhat, from all the excitement, Kurt Kivisto's first message was a reminder of why every player in that room chose to play for Brighton.

"This is why you play high school hockey, for games like that," he said.

If Kivisto or his Hartland counterpart, Rick Gadwa, ever need to sell a prospect on the benefits of playing for their schools, they need only push play on the video of Friday night's rivalry battle between the neighboring state powers.

"That's a really fun game, a really, really good team, a really neat environment," Kivisto said. "A lot of momentum changes in that game tonight."

Video may not quite do justice to the atmosphere on and off the ice in a jam-packed Hartland Sports Center. Nothing beats the experience of actually being in the barn, watching two teams with state championship aspirations trade blows until Brighton sophomore defenseman Ryan Watkins landed the haymaker.

Watkins snapped a shot from the top of the right circle 1:33 into overtime to give the Bulldogs a 5-4 victory, their first over Hartland in nearly eight years.

One of the most inexplicable winless streaks in high school sports was finally over. Brighton was 0-10-2 against Hartland since winning 1-0 on Feb. 21, 2015. During that streak, the Bulldogs won two state Division 1 championships, finished runner-up twice and beat many other state heavyweights multiple times. Seven of Hartland's victories were by one goal.

"Obviously, they're a really good team," Kivisto said. "They've had a tremendous amount of success during that time. It's a really good rivalry. It probably means a little more now being they're Division 1 and there's a chance

we see them at USA Arena later in the season."

The bounces that always seemed to go Hartland's way finally broke in favor of the Bulldogs.

On the winning goal, Brighton forward Cameron Duffany was without his stick but managed to bat down a clearing attempt with a gloved hand and kick the puck into the corner. Having regained his stick, he kept in another clearing attempt and got the puck back to defenseman Mason Blow.

Blow's shot from the left point went wide, but the puck came around the boards to Watkins, who stepped in from his position on the line to fire the game-winner over the catching glove of left-handed goalie Brady Hubenschmidt.

So, how did it feel to score the goal that finally ended years of frustration against the Eagles?

"It's hard to breathe under there," said Watkins, who wound up at the bottom of a pile of players in a celebration typically reserved for championships.

Besides the oxygen deprivation?

"I know it means a ton to our coaches, so it's awesome to beat them," Watkins said. "We beat them for our coaches and the rest of our team and the guys before us, too."

It looked like Hartland would extend its unbeaten streak against Brighton when second-period goals by Braden Pietila at 9:52 and Luca DiGirolamo at 12:33 gave the Eagles a 2-0 lead entering the third.

The Bulldogs weren't fazed by the deficit. This would be the third time they rallied to win from a multiple-goal deficit against a state-ranked KLAAs team this season, enabling them to win the West Division with a 10-0 record.

Brighton beat Livonia Stevenson 4-2 on Dec. 16 when Lane Petit scored four unanswered goals in the final 6:57. On Wednesday, the Bulldogs fell behind 3-0 to Salem before rallying to win, 5-3.

See BRIGHTON, Page 7B

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# Redford Thurston gains confidence as playoffs approach

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

Redford Thurston's 66-23 victory over Westland John Glenn on Jan. 18 should give the Eagles some swagger and confidence that it can win a playoff game or two in March.

But if it proves not to be the shot in the arm they need before the Division 1 districts begin, perhaps guard Taryn Colston can give the team a lesson in showing out.

After hitting a tough shot in the first half, the freshman raced back on defense all while high-stepping and waving her arms in the air exactly like Deion Sanders used to do decades ago in the NFL.

Thurston (5-6, 4-2) sits in an interesting position. It hasn't been mathematically eliminated from its league race, but, honestly, the Western Wayne Athletic Conference championship is likely already wrapped up. Romulus is 6-0 in the conference and is one of the better D-2 programs in Michigan. It'll likely finish 14-0 and repeat as champions.

So what else is there for Thurston to work for?

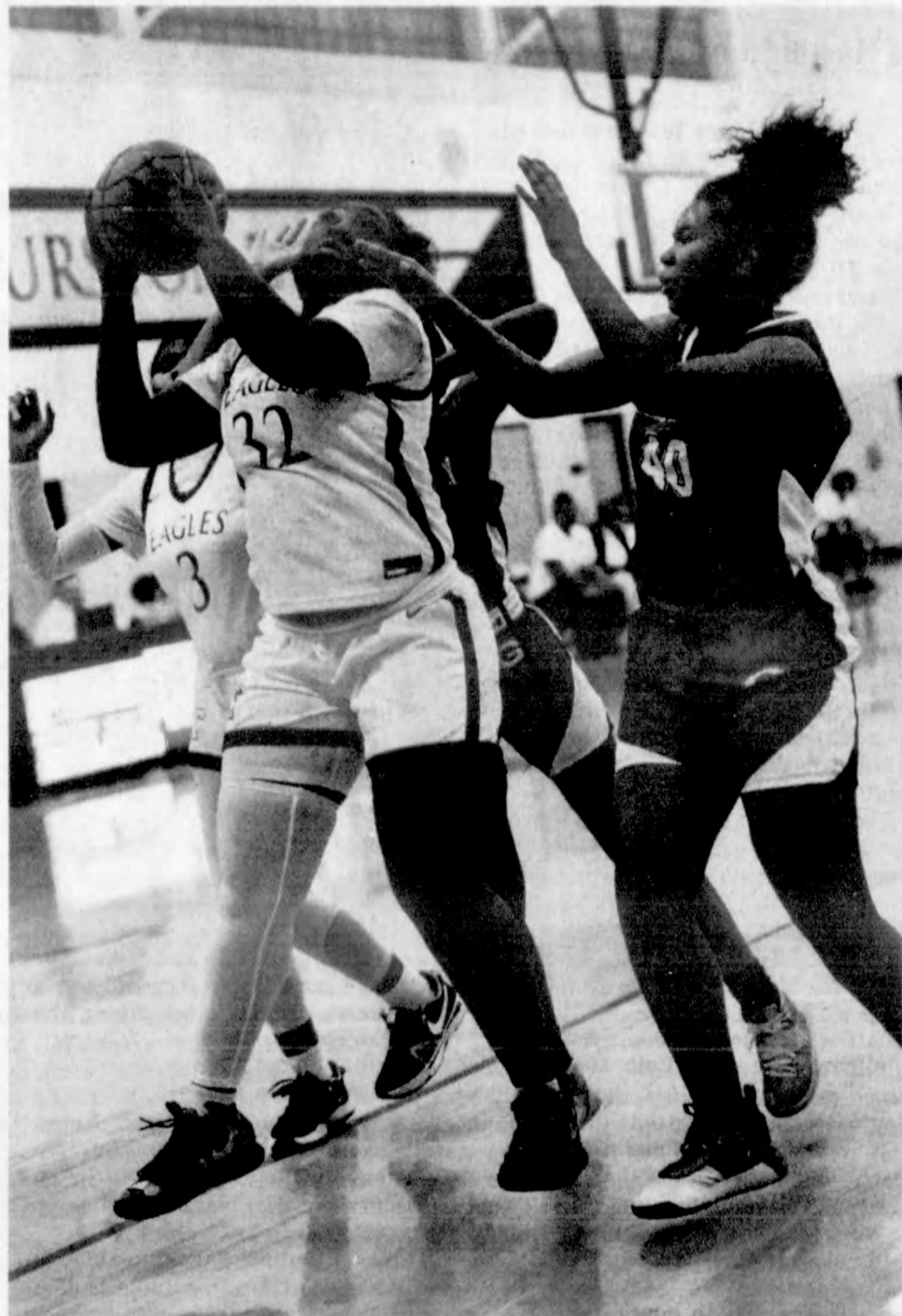
Yeah, it has winnable games left on its regular-season schedule. But it also might have a handful of winnable games coming during the district tournament.

Think about what a playoff victory could do for a growing program's confidence.

Unfortunately, the Eagles' district draw has Wayne Memorial, which is coming off a final four Breslin Center appearance and returns two starters who were recently named McDonald's All-American nominees in Georgetown signee Mayla Ham and North Dakota pledge Paris Bass. Plus, the Zebras have Colleena Bryant, arguably the best sophomore point guard in the state. If Wayne doesn't win a district title, it'd be a shocker.

But if Thurston doesn't draw Wayne early on, it has winnable matchups in the first two rounds of districts.

John Glenn, which the Eagles beat via a running clock thanks to a 3-pointer from Jenac'y Cardwell late in the third quarter that activated the mercy rule, is



Redford Thurston's Mariam Camara scores down low during a girls basketball game Wednesday, Jan. 18, 2023. BRANDON FOLSOM/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

in Thurston's district.

Dearborn Heights Crestwood, a league opponent the Eagles face on Friday, is in its district.

Sure, Livonia Franklin beat Thurston 42-23 in the season opener, but this is a different Eagles team right now. Thur-

ston has won four of its last six games. It's much improved since facing the Patriots on Dec. 2. If it gets Franklin again in the district quarterfinal or semifinal, it could make a game out of it, for sure.

It'll all come down to getting a favorable draw.

But the Eagles definitely have a fighting chance to make it to the district final.

"Yes, definitely," Thurston coach Pysche Gray said when asked if beating John Glenn gives the Eagles confidence they can win in the playoffs. "I definitely agree on the confidence."

So who's going to help them get there?

That's guard Samara Mackey, who scored 21 points and knocked down four 3-pointers against the Rockets. The freshman has unshakable confidence when driving to the hoop and plays well beyond her age.

That's small forward Makayla Hughes, who's almost 6 feet tall and is interchangeable as a wing and post player. The junior scored 23 points, most of it by way of doing the dirty work in the paint (rebounds, putbacks and using her strength to leverage open shots during out-of-bounds plays).

That's Mariam Camara, another strong post player whose senior leadership helps the Eagles stay organized. And she can battle down low as well, as shown by her eight points.

If Thurston can put it all together, don't be surprised if they upset someone in the playoffs. And if it happens, expect even more high-stepping from Colston and the rest of the Eagles.

**BRIEFLY:** Let's call it a Title IX celebration with a twist.

The original idea for Westland John Glenn's annual Honoring Our Heroes night was to celebrate a local police officer, firefighter or person in the community who makes a significant impact.

Since this year is the 50th anniversary of Title IX — a civil rights law that prohibits sex-based discrimination in schools that receive funds from the federal government and has been a boon for women's sports over the years — the Rockets chose to celebrate their female coaches.

During halftime of John Glenn's Jan. 10 basketball doubleheader against rival Wayne Memorial, the school honored its female coaches, while some even spoke at halftime of one of the games about the importance of Title IX and what it means to the Rockets' athletics programs.

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

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# Livonia Franklin wrestling coach earns 400th career win

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

Livonia Franklin's Jan. 18 victory over rival Livonia Churchill gave Franklin wrestling coach Dave Chiola the 400th win of his 43-year career.

"Four-hundred wins is nice considering my second year here we only had one win," Chiola wrote in a statement to Hometown Life. "Each year brings different challenges, but it's the losses that drives us to get better, not the wins."

Chiola had coached at Redford Bishop Borgess, Wayne Memorial, Livonia Stevenson and Garden City before finally landing with the Patriots, who he's coached for the past 23 seasons.

Since arriving at Franklin, he's coached the program to 17 Livonia City championships, three Western Lakes league championships, six KLA-East

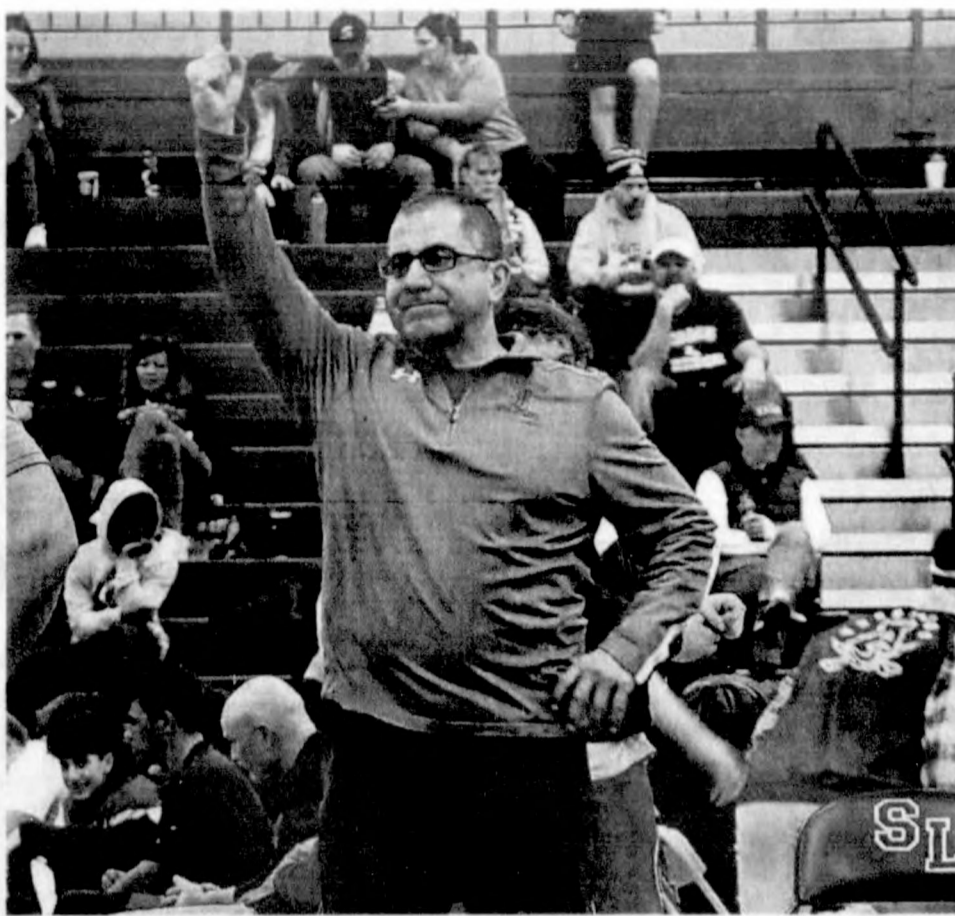
**"Each year brings different challenges, but it's the losses that drives us to get better, not the wins."**

**Dave Chiola**  
Livonia Franklin wrestling coach

division titles, 16 district championships and one regional title.

He's also coached two wrestlers to individual state championships.

The Patriots have a chance to add more hardware to their trophy case when both the individual and team district tournaments take place Feb. 8-11. Team state finals are slated for Feb. 24-25 at Wings Event Center in Kalamazoo while the individual state championship is March 3-4 at Ford Field in Detroit.



Livonia Franklin wrestling coach Dave Chiola recently earned his 400th career victory. LIVONIA FRANKLIN ATHLETICS/COURTESY PHOTO

# Livonia Franklin football to open 2023 season at Dexter

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

Livonia Franklin football will kick off the 2023 season Aug. 25 at Dexter.

The two programs signed the contract for the game earlier this week, according to Patriots athletic director Dusty Hall, who confirmed the news with Hometown Life on Friday.

The Patriots were 10-2 overall last season as they placed second in the KLA-East behind eventual state champion Belleville, defeated Temperance Bedford to claim a district championship and bowed out of the postseason with a 32-25 loss to Birmingham Groves in the regional final. Leading the way for Franklin was running back Cordell Mabins Jr., Hometown Life's Player of the Year.

Carrying Dexter to a 12-1 season was Michigan signee Cole Cabana. The Dreadnaughts won the SEC-Red, beat South Lyon for a district title and topped Midland in the regional championship. Their season ended with a 20-17 loss to Forest Hills Central in the state semifinal.

This non-conference matchup was made possible thanks to a change this past offseason in how the Kensington Lakes Activities Association makes its schedule.

Previously, each conference member would play seven divisional games during Weeks 2-8 as well as play a crossover game with an opponent from the other division in Weeks 1 and 9.

The league voted to no longer make crossover matchups mandatory in Week 1 so teams can schedule an opponent of their choice from outside of the

KLAA. That's an excellent change for rebuilding teams looking to play a more winnable game in Week 1 or for a strong team hoping to challenge itself by facing a state power. It also allows programs to schedule games with opponents out of state.

**Here's a list of the other non-conference games already planned for Week 1 around the KLA-East:**

**EAST**

- Dearborn at Detroit Catholic Central (Aug. 24)
- Redford Union at Westland John Glenn (Aug. 24)
- Livonia Churchill at New Boston Huron (Aug. 24)
- Livonia Franklin at Dexter (Aug. 25)
- Livonia Stevenson will face Lake Orion (TBD)

Belleville will face River Rouge (TBD)  
Dearborn Fordson will face Macomb Dakota (TBD)

**WEST**

- Sterling Heights Stevenson at Novi (Aug. 25)
  - Canton will face Temperance Bedford (TBD)
  - Plymouth will face Traverse City Central (TBD)
  - Northville will face Clarkston (TBD)
  - Salem will face Utica Ford (TBD)
  - Howell will face Hudsonville (TBD)
  - Hartland will face East Kentwood (TBD)
- Season opens for Wayne Memorial and Brighton have not been publicly announced yet.  
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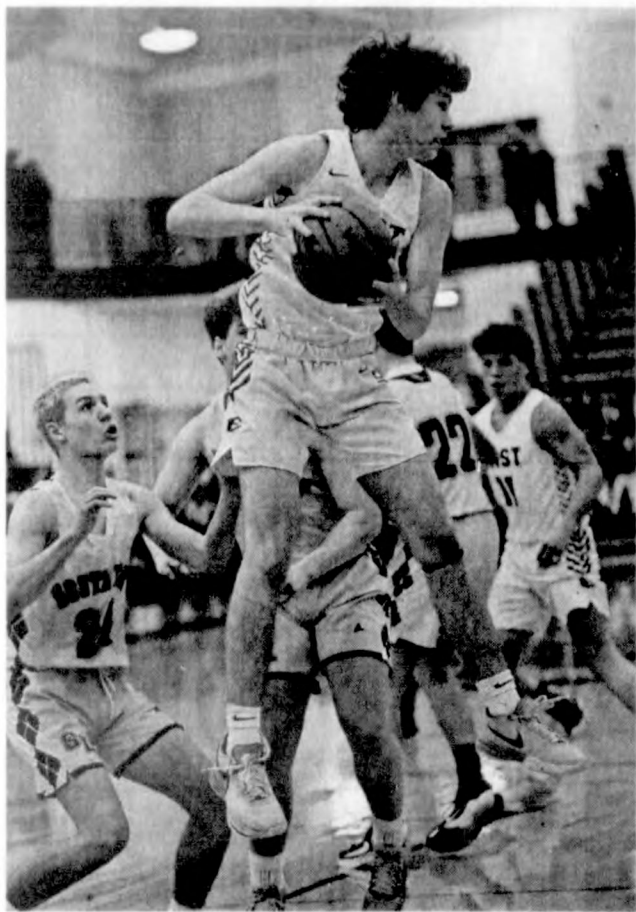
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South Lyon East's Joey Andrews grabs a rebound during a Lakes Valley Conference boys basketball game Friday, Jan. 13, 2023.

PHOTOS BY BRANDON FOLSOM/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

## Boys

Continued from Page 1B

It wouldn't be unfair to call the 1-8 Lions a rebuilding project.

Except it's just not.

This year, more than any year in the past decade or so, the LVC is wide open. Through five league nights, we have Walled Lake Western and Waterford Mott, last year's league champion, at 4-1 overall and tied for first place in the standings, South Lyon East and White Lake Lakeland at 3-1 and Milford at 3-2. And the Lions' lone win? That was over Waterford Kettering.

You could ask why East didn't pound South Lyon. But, honestly, we have a Catholic League-Central-like conference race playing out right in front of us. Every night one good team is going to lose to another good team.

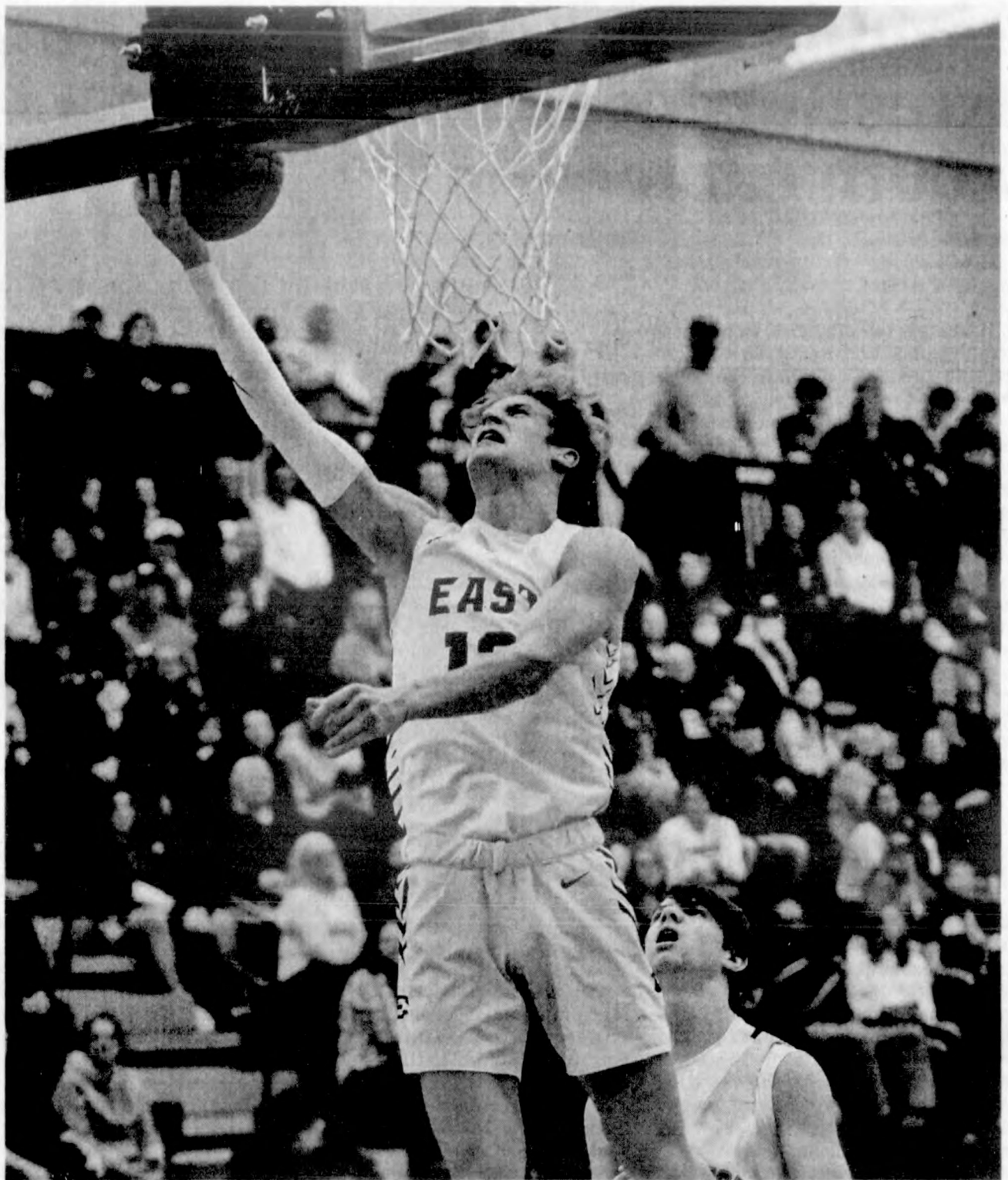
The Cougars were just thankful they didn't lose to their neighbors out west and drop in the standings.

"This is the fifth year (I've been the head coach), and this is the toughest, top to bottom, the LVC has ever been," Levin said. "There is really no nights off. And there are, really, five teams right now that could win the league. It really wouldn't be a shock. So we've had years where it's been (a conference champion at) 16-0 or 15-1. I think it's going to be three or four losses for whoever wins the league, for sure."

So what happened?

For one, South Lyon had a response for every bucket East made in the opening half.

For two, the Lions just wanted it more in the first half. Graham Braun sank four field goals for eight points and six Lions in all found the stat sheet as they took a 27-26 lead into halftime.



South Lyon East's Jake Fannon attempts a layup.

"We didn't quite play East basketball in the first half," Levin said.

The fifth-year coach reminded the Cougars what exactly East basketball looks like in the locker room.

"It was a large crowd and (lots of) fans, and we did a lot of stuff that we've never done before," Levin said. "Not sharing the ball on offense, not sprinting the floor. Basically, the message was: Get back to playing the way we play."

Some of the Cougars heeded that message right away.

But for Andrews, it actually took being on the receiving end of an incidental elbow from Braun before he got out of his own slump and scored 11 of his team's 40 points in the second half. His energy was a catalyst that helped the team complete the comeback.

Fannon, who scored 13 points, iced the win with a layup in the final minute, putting the Cougars ahead by 10.

"After I got hit in the face, I went off after that," said Andrews as he pointed to a spot above his lip where Braun's elbow accidentally made contact with him. "I don't know what happened, really. We came out slow, but we knew we were a better team than we showed. We weren't playing as hard as we could. And then we started dialing it in after halftime. Our coach gave us a good speech at halftime. After that, we were dialed in and knew we couldn't lose on our home court. He just told us to lock in, dial in and get ready."

And that's what we should expect in the league going forward.

There's so much parity that any team can pull off the upset. The Lions didn't get it done this time, but it wouldn't be a shocker if they did during the rematch on Feb. 10.

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

## Obituaries

### Thomas F. Verran

SALEM - Thomas F. Verran, age 78, a lifelong resident of Salem, passed away January 13, 2023. He was born on July 23, 1944 in Livonia, Michigan; son of Fred and Laura (Mc Avoy) Verran. He graduated from South Lyon High School; Class of 1962. In 1965, Thomas was drafted into the United States Army and proudly served his country during the Vietnam War.

Thomas grew up on his family's farm in Salem where he learned to appreciate the dynamics of running a farm. Upon his discharge from the Army, he returned home and chose a career with the Washtenaw County Road Commission as a Truck Driver. In 2000, Thomas retired and devoted his time to enjoying his hobbies.

He spent most of his free time in his garage woodworking. He created beautiful cutting boards, picture frames, and jewelry boxes. Thomas also liked tinkering around his property and driving his tractor. He was a natural fix-it guy and spent many hours fixing his old farm equipment and helping his friends and neighbors do the same. Thomas liked being outdoors and boating. He will be remembered for his woodworking talents and his unsolicited generosity.

Thomas is survived by his sons, Dale (Jane) Verran and John Verran; his brother Dale (Mary Lou) Verran; and his grandchildren, Lindsey Verran, Jake Verran, Dylan Verran, and Thomas Verran. He was preceded in death by his parents.

Private services were held. The family requests memorial contributions be made to the Wounded Warrior Project, PO Box 758516, Topeka, Kansas 66675-8516 or to Shriners Hospitals for Children, 2900 Rocky Point Drive, Tampa, Florida 33607.

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## 3-peat

Continued from Page 1B

White Lake Lakeland (and the Eagles are pretty talented, too).

But perhaps the best example of not counting out the Cougars (6-5, 6-2) came Jan. 13 against rival South Lyon.

They fumbled a four-point lead following the opening period and found themselves trailing for most of the game. In fact, they were held scoreless for almost the entire second quarter until Sophia Propps and Lassan made back-to-back baskets in the waning moments of the half.

But the Lions, a scrappy team currently sitting in the middle of the LVC standings, just wouldn't budge. Every time East scratched and clawed its way back, South Lyon would make a play to stay ahead. Melquist hit a basket to make it a two-point game in the third, but Isabella Nooe buried a buzzer-beater to ensure the Lions would take a five-point advantage into the fourth.

Lassan, who scored a game-high 22 points, knocked down a long jumper with 3:04 left to give the Cougars their first lead since the 4-minute mark of the second quarter. And then Propps hit a jumper from almost the same spot to extend it. East wound up scoring 10 of the final 13 points to ensure the 46-35 victory.

"I think you just got to keep at it," Leadley said about chipping away at the Lions' lead. "The girls were saying they settled down in the second half, but it maybe took us longer. It took us until about the fourth quarter to really settle down. It seemed like in the second half, particularly in the fourth quarter, we got stops and rebounds. That gave us more opportunities, and I think that was a big part of it."

Melquist pitched in eight points, but the four free throws she made in the bonus in the final few minutes were key to the Cougars actually holding onto the comeback win.

"Yeah, I love games like this," the senior said. "Those tied games make it really fun for people to watch. When I got to the line, I just knew I had to make those to make our lead greater. We had, I think it was, a six-point lead, and then we made it a 10-point lead. Our defense was just tight, and we



South Lyon East's Alyssa Melquist drives to the basket during a Lakes Valley Conference girls basketball game Friday, Jan. 13, 2023.

BRANDON FOLSOM/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

locked up for the win."

The best news is the win put the Cougars just a half-game behind Northern (9-3, 6-1) for first place in the LVC standings.

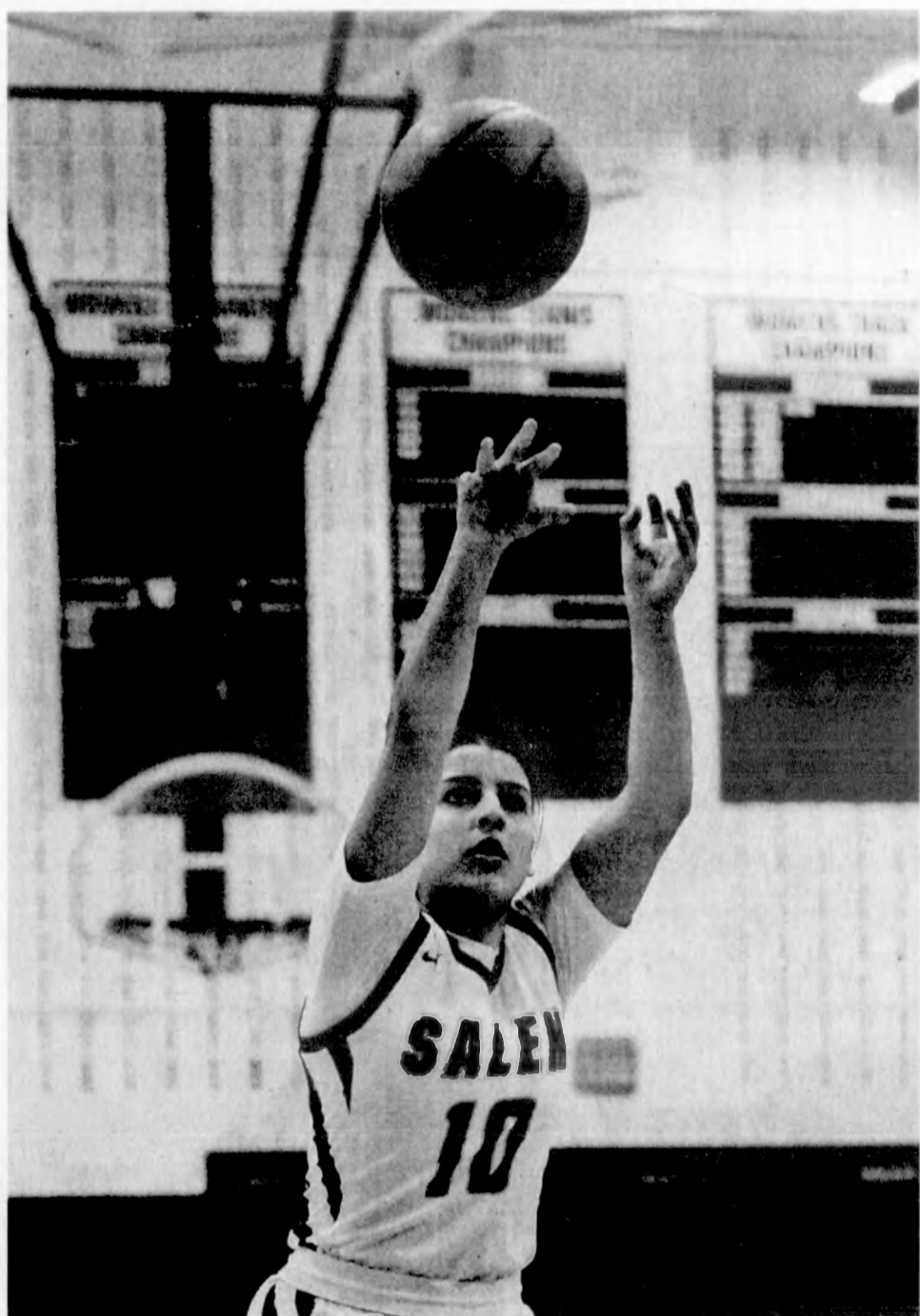
"It's nice because we're on a little bit of a trajectory right now," Leadley said. "We lost Brooke Moyer earlier in the season, and that kind of hurt us a bit. I think the rest of the kids have picked it up. We're starting to play a little more together. It's not a team that has played a lot together. Even in the summer, we really didn't play that much together because we have a bunch of kids who are softball and soccer players. Now they're all coming together, and we're just learning each other."

"We're still in it as far as the league, and we want to win it again. It's definitely a big goal for the girls. They're a little disappointed with that loss to Northern, but, hopefully, they'll be in a situation where we can take care of that because that's a big goal of ours, winning the league championship and making some noise in districts."

There will be more challenges ahead for the Cougars, who started the winter as a rebuilding team not expected to compete for a league championship, but at least one thing's certain: You can't count them out.

Twitter: @folsombrandonj





Salem's Shahd Bakkar shoots a free throw during a KLA West girls basketball game Friday, Jan. 20, 2023. PHOTOS BY BRANDON FOLSOM/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM



Salem coach Rod Wells talks to his players.

## Coach

Continued from Page 1B

So what's changed?

"It's just a matter of mindset," said junior Madison Morson, who scored a career-best 37 points vs. the Wildcats. "Against the bigger-named schools like Hartland, Brighton and Howell, some of our teammates used to be like, 'Oh my God, they're so good. They're historically good.' Then they'll be unprepared for the game and overestimate them. But we'll also go into games against teams that aren't as good and underestimate them, too. It's just a matter of mindset, and we've been on top of it as far as getting mentally prepared."

Wells knows a little something about creating winning cultures.

He's the one who helped Ypsilanti Arbor Prep turn the corner and become a state power. He guided the Gators to their first state championship in 2016 (a 53-37 win over Traverse City St. Francis).

He stepped away from the program to try his hand at coaching in college at Michigan-Dearborn, but Arbor Prep has continued to bully the rest of the state. They've played in three more state finals since his departure, which included the Gators edging Kent City 54-50 in last year's Division 2 state championship.

And despite graduating four-star Mya Petticord, who signed with Texas A&M, Arbor Prep, which is currently ranked No. 1 in the most recent Associated Press D-3 poll, is set up to compete for another state title.

Wells has brought that championship-level expectation to Salem's practices.

And it's already paid dividends.

Take a look at some of the Rocks' wins. They beat Walled Lake Northern, which is currently in first place in the Lakes Valley Conference, by 21 points. They beat Hartland, last year's D-1 state runner-up, by 10. They edged Northville by a point, and the Mustangs were predicted by many to win the West.

"You've got to respect the game, but you can't worry about the jersey on the other side," the second-year coach said. "They've been so intimidated by the other jerseys that they don't play their regular style. We've got to worry about what Salem does. It's just confidence. And they believe in themselves now. We had a great summer. We beat a lot of good teams, and they're believing in themselves, and it's just confidence. The mental thing is gone now. They believe they can play basketball. They believe we can keep a lead. When a team gives them their best shot, they do a good job of handling it."

Salem lost five of its first seven games, which includes a four-game losing

streak, but that can be explained.

Morson, one of the top junior recruits in Michigan, was unavailable to play then. She missed a week of preseason practice in November because her family went on a cruise. And then she missed another two weeks with an ankle injury. So the Rocks were forced to play without their centerpiece. Not only did that riddle their confidence some, but it forced them to retool their team chemistry on the fly.

"I'm still not even in shape right now," the shooting guard said.

So that's a scary thought. The Rocks are getting hot at the right time. They have a chance to steal a win back from Brighton in their rematch with the Bulldogs on Jan. 27. And it wouldn't be a shocker if they end up playing for the KLA West championship, which should be a likely matchup against Wayne Memorial, a final-four team a year ago.

"Now that we've won a couple of games, I think the confidence level of this team and the morale has been very, very high," said point guard Shahd Bakkar, a Rochester College commit. "So going into today's game (vs. Novi), we knew we had to put our best foot forward, but we also knew that we could win. Last season we had a bunch of tweaks we had to fix, and this season we're doing good. The team morale has been going up. Even in practice, the intensity is high and the energy is going

up."

Bakkar and Morson have been the team's go-to one-two punch. But Salem also has plenty of talent surrounding its future college players.

That's small forward Ashley Kopacko helping with ballhandling duties, swinging the ball around the arc and hitting big shots. That's power forwards Leilah Howard and Allie Staudle and small forward Abby Resovsky battling for rebounds down low. And that's Isabelle Kulick playing well above her size with timely jumpers here and there.

The Rocks are only 10 deep, but they each know their roles. And that makes them dangerous.

"They understand what I want, and they're OK with it," Wells said. "They understand my standards are high. Their expectations are high. They believe in themselves. That's the deal we have here."

Two years ago, before Wells arrived on campus, the Rocks were a two-win team and finished last in the league. Now they have a chance to win a KLA West title.

The cost? A lot of hard work in practice, a culture change within the locker room and an expensive tab for Wells at Tropical Smoothie.

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

## Brighton

Continued from Page 3B

"We know we can win the game, even if we're down," Petit said. "We have that mentality 24/7 that we're going to win the game. It carries through the locker room, carries through the bench and you can see it carries on the ice, and things like that happen."

Petit kick-started Brighton's latest rally by scoring at 4:44 and 8:32 of the third to tie the game, 2-2.

Ian Kastamo put Hartland back on top 19 seconds later.

The Bulldogs kept coming, tying the game 3-3 on a goal by Dominic Vincent with 6:36 left and taking their first lead with 2:50 remaining when Evan Woh-lart roofed a shot from close range on a two-on-one.

Hartland pulled its goalie and forced overtime when Pietila put a wrist shot through traffic from the right point with 1:09 left in the third period.

On a team with plenty of firepower, it was a defenseman with only one goal this season who buried the overtime winner.

"I saw the puck coming off in like an open lane to shoot it," Watkins said. "I just wanted to rip it and it got in. It was awesome. That's a great team there and they're our biggest rival, so it feels good

to beat them."

Watkins' contributions for the Bulldogs don't usually make the highlight reels.

"He's really, really good defensively, probably our best defensive defenseman," Kivisto said. "It's really neat to see him chip in offensively like that."

Gadwa couldn't be too upset with the performance of his team, which outshot Brighton, 31-25. The Eagles were coming off a 4-3 come-from-behind victory over Stevenson two nights earlier.

"These two teams, every time they get together, you don't know what you're going to get, except a really good hockey game," Gadwa said. "That's what it was. Tip of the hat to Brighton; they made some adjustments, and it paid off. They've got a not-quit in them that's impressive."

"Credit to us. It didn't go our way as well and we still fought back. We pulled the goalie. It's just a really good hockey game altogether. I think both teams will try to go look at their mistakes and seal those up a bit. I like what we did this week and I think we're moving in the right direction."

Brighton will host Stevenson or Salem in the KLA West championship game at 7:30 p.m. Feb. 10 at Kensington Valley Ice House. Stevenson and Salem are tied for first in the East at 6-2 with two league games remaining. Stevenson owns the head-to-head tie-breaker.

## Community Worship

<p><b>BRIGHTON</b></p> <p><b>HOLY SPIRIT ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH &amp; SCHOOL</b> www.hsccc.net 810-231-9199 Fr. John Riccio, Pastor Weekend Eucharist Saturday 4:00 p.m. Sunday 9:00 &amp; 11:00 a.m. Please visit our Shrine of Turin Display and Book &amp; Gift Store</p>	<p><b>HIGHLAND</b></p> <p><b>Church of the Holy Spirit</b> 3700 Harvey Lake Rd, Highland Saturday Mass 5PM, Sunday Mass 9 &amp; 11AM 248-887-5364   HolySpiritHighland.com The Holy Spirit is Here Come Home <b>All are Welcome!</b></p>	<p><b>NOVI</b></p> <p><b>Good Shepherd Evangelical Lutheran Church</b> 41415 W Nine Mile Rd • Novi, MI 48375 248-349-0565 Divine Service on Sundays at 10am Sunday School &amp; Adult Bible Class 8:45am Rev. Thomas Schroeder wetsnovi@aol.com Come and worship at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church!</p>
<p><b>NORTHVILLE</b></p> <p><b>United Methodist Church</b> (248) 349-1144 777 West 8 Mile Road (8 Mile and Tappan Road) Northville, Michigan Worship Times: September - May 9:15 &amp; 11:00 a.m. Memorial Day - Labor Day 10:00 a.m. Rev. Marsha M. Worsley, Lead Pastor www.uzmchurchofthevalley.org</p>	<p><b>SOUTH LYON</b></p> <p><b>"the WAY" - a ministry of Hope Lutheran Church</b> Worship @Abbey Park 28413 Abbey Lane New Hudson, MI Sunday @ 10am, 248-553-7170 www.hope-lutheran-church.com Rev. Thomas Scherger</p>	<p><b>WHITMORE LAKE</b></p> <p><b>FELLOWSHIP BAPTIST CHURCH</b> 10774 Nine Mile Road Rev. M. Lee Taylor • 449-2582 Sunday School, 9:45 a.m. Worship, 11:00 a.m. &amp; 6:00 p.m. Wednesday Evening, 7:00 p.m.</p>
<p><b>OUR LADY OF VICTORY CATHOLIC CHURCH</b> 133 Orchard Dr., Northville WEEKEND LITURGIES Saturday 5:00 p.m. Sunday 7:30, 9:30 a.m., 11:30 a.m. Church 349-2621, School 349-3610 Religious Education 349-2599 Rev. Dennis Theroux, Pastor</p>	<p><b>RESERVE YOUR SPOT TODAY!</b></p>	<p><b>RESERVE YOUR SPOT TODAY!</b></p>

To be included here call Jabril Bryant at (513) 796-7028 or email JBryant@localiq.com



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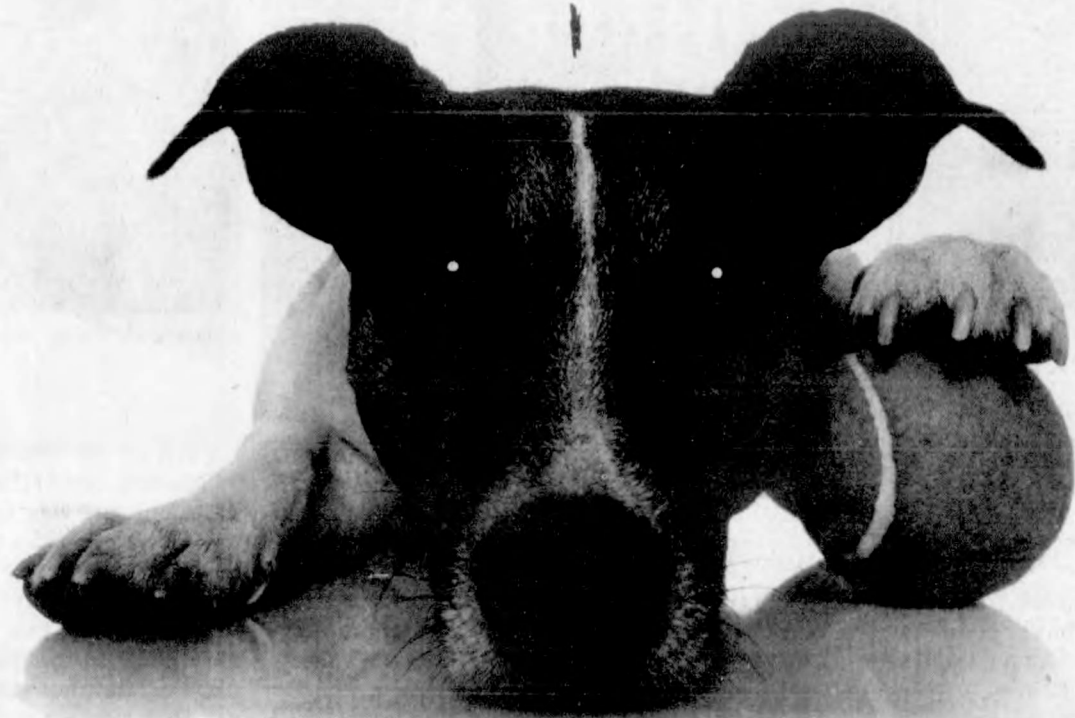
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