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SPORTS, 1B

# NORTHVILLE RECORD

THURSDAY, JUNE 29, 2023 | HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK

## Plymouth Township cites road congestion in vote to deny Meijer plan

Laura Colvin  
Hometownlife.com  
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

PLYMOUTH TWP. — Plans for a new Meijer supercenter on the west side of the township won't be coming to fruition anytime soon.

After a three-hour meeting Wednesday, including two hours of comments from angry and agitated residents, the Plymouth Township Planning Commission voted 5-1 to deny a special land use request from the Grand Rapids-based retail chain.

The request was the first of a two-step township approval process required before Meijer could potentially begin construction of a 159,000-square-foot supercenter and gas station on a 21-acre parcel located on Five Mile Road west of Beck Road.

The denial does not mean Meijer can never build in that location, but it does mean a new application cannot be submitted for one year, said township planner Laura Haw.

### Too much traffic

A steady stream of residents from both Plymouth and Northville townships came to the podium during the June 21 meeting to object to the development proposed on the border of both communities.

Judy Garbarino-Willard said much has changed since she moved to Plymouth Township 35 years ago.

"I was so grateful to be here, it was a wonderful community (that) cared about their residents," she said. "It was warm, it was friendly, it was a small-town atmosphere. That has changed dramatically in the last few years. Shame on the people who didn't continue that."

Garbarino-Willard and others who spoke also voiced ire over already-heavy traffic conditions in the area. Some were concerned about the potential for increased crime. Others said they felt the store was unnecessary, given the proximity of other grocery options in the area. Many thought the development was disruptive to the peaceful nature of Plymouth Township.

See MEIJER, Page 7A



Playlabs owner Nathaniel McClure, third from right, and Farmington Hills community leaders celebrate the opening of playlabs on Thursday, June 15, 2023. SHELBY TANKERSLEY/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

## Esports lounge opens in Farmington Hills

Shelby Tankersley  
Hometownlife.com  
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

FARMINGTON HILLS — A gamer's paradise where people can compete and hone their skills has set up shop inside The Hawk.

Playlabs recently held its grand opening in the community center's

third-floor suite, 29995 W. 12 Mile Road. Owner Nathaniel McClure said he hopes the business serves as a community space for gamers of all ages.

"Traditionally, gaming is an at-home experience for a lot of reasons," he said. "You combine the pandemic with that, and it's been isolating for a lot of gamers. We wanted to provide that social aspect. That's so critical, especially for

youth who just went through a pandemic."

Playlabs held a soft opening in the spring, and McClure said the reaction has been positive. He said users enjoy having a place to play games in-person with people who share their interests.

"Learning how you can connect

See ESPORTS, Page 7A

## Livonia HopCat location to have largest bar yet

Shelby Tankersley  
Hometownlife.com  
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

LIVONIA — In just a few weeks, HopCat fans will have another metro Detroit restaurant to visit.

Renovations of the former Claddagh pub at 17800 Haggerty Road are nearly complete. With a more modern, open design, the building is nearly unrecognizable.

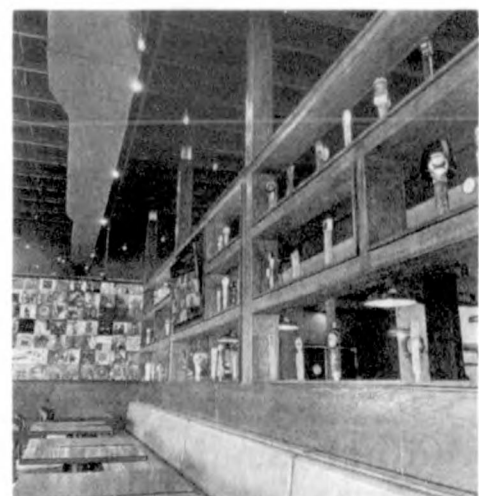
"We just feel the metro Detroit market is extremely strong," said Craig Stage, vice president of operations for

Project BarFly, HopCat's parent company. "Even though we are a chain, this is our 11th location, we thought the community could use a Michigan-based company. We think we bring something different to the market."

HopCat is known for its burgers, beers and Cosmik Fries. The Livonia location will host the chain's largest bar, offering 50 Michigan-brewed beers at all times.

"For people who enjoy craft beer, we're going to have pretty much the best

See HOPCAT, Page 6A



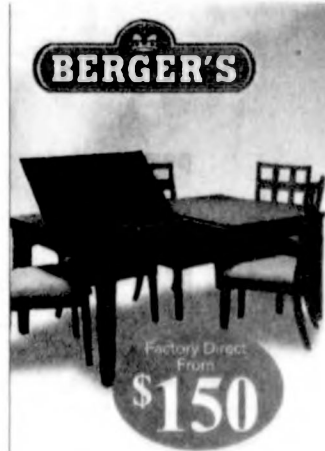
HopCat's renovations of the former Claddagh pub at 17800 Haggerty Road in Livonia are coming along.

SHELBY TANKERSLEY/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

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# Meet the candidates running for Westland mayor

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

**WESTLAND** — Six candidates are vying to become Westland's first non-elected mayor in almost 20 years.

Candidates Ali Awadi, Kevin Coleman, Jim Godbout, Anthony Jones, Mike Londeau and Ronald Sassak will appear on primary ballots Tuesday, Aug. 8. Voters will narrow the field to two candidates who will move on to the November general election.

Westland's mayor is a nonpartisan official who serves as the city's chief executive. The mayor serves a four-year term and currently makes \$121,574 annually.

## Meet the candidates

**Ali Awadi, 54**, works as a consultant and has a Ph.D. in public administration. According to his campaign website, Awadi is a former police chief and has spent time volunteering in the community.

State Rep. **Kevin Coleman, 40**, is serving his third term in Lansing. Coleman is a former Westland City Council member and, according to his campaign website, has volunteered with the Westland Festival Committee and the Westland Veterans Association.

Councilman **Jim Godbout, 68**, has been on council for 23 years and was council president for 13 years. He works as vice president of Midwest Recycling and has been involved with many community groups.

**Anthony Jones, 56**, works as a truck driver. He also has a background in coaching and refereeing hockey games.

Interim Mayor **Mike Londeau, 44**, was appointed by city council in January. Londeau is a former city councilman and, according to his campaign website, previously chaired the city's downtown development authority.

Hometown Life sent each candidate a questionnaire asking about their platforms and ideas. Candidate **Ronald Sassak** did not return the questionnaire.

Here's what five of the six candidates had to say:

## Why are you running?

**Coleman:** I have a lifelong commitment to Westland and want to see it thrive. My experience as Westland's State Representative gives me the ability to navigate government and get results for our community. Working with local, state and federal leadership, I've secured millions in funding for Westland and passed laws that have directly helped improve our area. Whether it comes to boosting school funding, fixing the roads or expanding healthcare, we've got the job done and that's the kind of leadership I want to see for our city as well.

**Godbout:** Evaluating the field of candidates who had filed to run for Mayor, the lack of leadership, knowledge, and transparency convinced me that Westland needs experienced leadership at this critical point in time for the long term growth and stability of the City. I have the background and experience to improve services and lead Westland now, not learn on the job, and provide the residents with a City they can be proud to call home.

**Jones:** Because I love this city and I think it can be better.

**Londeau:** I am deeply committed to serving my community and making a positive impact. I believe in the power of effective leadership and want to contribute my skills and expertise to address the pressing issues our city faces. I am driven by a strong vision of a city that thrives economically, socially, and environmentally. I'm passionate about creating opportunities for all residents, fostering inclusivity, and ensuring that everyone's voice is heard. Running for Mayor is my way to continue to actively shape the future of our city and make it a better place for everyone to live, work, and thrive.

**Awadi:** I am running for mayor because I have a passion for this community and a desire to make a positive difference. I see the potential for growth and development as I lead with innovative ideas and effective policies. As mayor, I can tackle key issues such as transparency, wasteful spending, and public safety. This is a unique opportunity to lead and inspire by bringing together diverse voices and implementing effective policies. My candidacy stems from a genuine commitment to the residents. I will embrace the chance to be a catalyst for progress and contribute to the betterment of Westland.

**What's the top issue you think Westland is facing? What will you do about it?**

**Godbout:** Public Safety staffing and financial stability without raising taxes is now the top issue that the next Mayor will have to handle. The City has allocated or spent almost \$10 Million of one-time American Rescue Plan funds over the past couple of years to balance the budget. "Free" services and exorbitant costs that cost us millions will require new revenue to pay for once that money is gone. We need to start now to improve efficiencies and reduce costs so that tax increases are not necessary.

**Jones:** There are many issues that plague this city but, I think one of the biggest is the litter that is everywhere. If you drive past any business you will see litter. We will have to start requiring businesses to start cleaning up their premises.

**Londeau:** The top issue facing the city is public safety. I believe that every resident deserves to feel safe in their homes, schools, and neighborhoods. By continuing to prioritize public safety, I aim to continue my focus on implementing comprehensive strategies that address crime prevention, community policing, and emergency preparedness. Collaborating closely with the Westland Police and Fire Departments, community organizations, and residents, I will continue to work tirelessly to strengthen relationships, enhance training, and promote proactive measures. Investing in advanced technologies, supporting social programs, and ensuring effective coordination have been central to my approach.

**Awadi:** Transparency. The residents strongly believe in the importance of open and accountable governance. They demand clear communication and access to information about government decisions, policies, and initiatives. Transparent processes and public



Awadi



Coleman



Godbout



Jones



Londeau

involvement are key to building trust and ensuring that the needs and concerns of the residents are heard and addressed. My administration will recognize that transparency is vital for fostering a healthy democratic environment, promoting fairness, and enabling informed decision-making. By prioritizing transparency, Westland aims to create a more engaged and empowered community that actively participates in shaping its future.

**Coleman:** Westland's Deputy Mayor, Police Chief, City Council members, and other staff members have all described police and fire department staffing as being "in a crisis" because of failures to recruit and retain employees. This is making our city less safe. I believe that my experience improving public safety at the state-level will give our city the edge it needs to fix this critical issue.

**Westland's mayor serves as the city's chief executive. What makes you qualified to be Mayor of Westland?**

**Jones:** Since there is no college classes for any political position, I will count on the Council members to help do what is right for Westland. I have owned my own business and I'm a Military Veteran.

**Londeau:** My experience as a councilperson, prior to my appointment to the mayor's position, has prepared me well for this role. I have gained invaluable insights into local governance, understanding the intricacies of municipal administration, and my legislative and policy-making skills have been honed, allowing me to analyze complex issues and make informed decisions. I also believe my experience in budgetary matters and financial acumen will continue to provide a solid foundation for making sound fiscal decisions. I am confident that I have the necessary skills, knowledge, and understanding to confidently resume the responsibilities of mayor.

**Awadi:** A mayor should have, at a minimum, leadership skills, communication and interpersonal skills, problem-solving and decision-making abilities, ethical conduct, and integrity. I hold a doctorate in public administration and have over 30 years of experience in leadership. I was a professor in leadership and management and held the positions of director of public safety/chief of police, regional manager, director, and vice president. My successful career was attributed to being transparent, fiscally responsible, implementing diversity, and having effective communication. I intend to continue these qualities as mayor while encouraging community involvement in every aspect of my job.

**Coleman:** I'm the only candidate running for Mayor this year that has served at multiple levels of government, including the state and local levels. I had a record of success on City Council and achieved great results as State Representative. Our Mayor should be someone that knows government and how to get things done but more importantly, I'm a compassionate person who listens and can run great team at City Hall.

**Godbout:** My educational, business and municipal background experience make me the ideal choice for Westland's Mayor. I have over 40 years' experience in business leadership, successfully managing and leading global organizations in the electrical industry. Over the past 23 years on City Council, 13 of those as Council President, the residents of Westland have trusted me to make decisions based on what is best for the City and all of the residents. I have made decisions that were not always popular, but always made sure the best interests of all residents were considered. There is no other candidate better qualified.

**Is there anything else you'd like to say to voters?**

**Londeau:** Voting for me for Mayor is the right decision because I bring a unique combination of experience, passion, and a proven track record understanding the challenges our city faces, I am equipped to make informed decisions and implement impactful solutions. I am a dedicated advocate for transparency, accountability, and inclusive governance. By prioritizing public safety, I will work tirelessly to create a secure and thriving community for all residents. With your vote, together, we can shape a brighter future for our city and ensure that every voice is heard and valued.

**Awadi:** I want residents to know that their voices will be heard. After all, I will work for them. My administration will be transparent and financially responsible to ensure no increase in taxes and no new millage. I will also work diligently to save Westland Mall. This may include utilizing an empty anchor store such as Macy's and converting it into a recreational center for residents, diversifying the Mall by adding other venues like a billiard hall or arcade or adding additional restaurants. Ultimately, the residents must be confident in their government. Please visit my website for more in-depth information.

**Coleman:** Our right to vote should never be taken for granted and this election may very well be the most significant Mayoral election in many years. Please do your research and know that I give out my cell phone to every voter so that you can reach me directly with questions or concerns. I can be reached at (734) 751-6321, KevinColemanCC@gmail.com ColemanforMayor.com and "Kevin Coleman for Mayor" on Facebook.

**Godbout:** Westland is an almost \$80 Million business and needs a Mayor who has a strong business background and understands the complexities of running a City. Since being on the City Council, I have been active and have a good working relationship at the local, County, State, and Federal levels of government. These relationships are critical in assuring Westland gets the resources necessary to help our residents. If you have any questions or would like to discuss any issue I can be reached at jim@jimgodbout.net or (734) 331-6665. Thank you and Vote Jim Godbout for Westland Mayor.

**Jones:** I don't promise anything I can't fulfill. So the only promise I make is to do the best job I can with the help from the Council members and the employees of this great city. I want to leave a better place for my great, great, great, great grandchildren.

Contact reporter **Shelby Tankersley** at [stankersle@hometownlife.com](mailto:stankersle@hometownlife.com).

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## South African automotive company sets up shop



DESign Group is building its new U.S. headquarters, DESign USA Inc., in South Hill Business Park in New Hudson. The facility is 153,000 square feet and will enable manufacturing of assembly equipment for electric vehicles.

COURTESY OF DESIGN GROUP

## DESIGN USA Inc. to build US HQ in Lyon Township

**Susan Bromley**  
Hometownlife.com  
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

**NEW HUDSON** — Lyon Township is turning into a major hub of automotive suppliers, as the DESign Group prepares to open a new U.S. site in August.

The South Africa-based company engineers, manufactures and installs robotic equipment used to assemble vehicles. The company, founded in 1998, will open its first U.S. headquarters and manufacturing operation, DESign USA Inc., in a 153,000 square-foot facility in South Hill Business Park.

The \$19 million project, approved in the fall of 2022, is expected to create 45 "high-paying" jobs and be an economic boon for the area.

"We're obviously appreciative that the township has welcomed us and see a

See **AUTOMOTIVE**, Page 3A



# 'Chiefs was not an option'

Committee member speaks out on new name for Canton High mascot

Laura Colvin  
Hometownlife.com  
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

PLYMOUTH — One member of a committee assembled to consider changing the name and mascot at Canton High School is speaking out against the process, saying the group ignored survey data and did not discuss keeping the Chiefs name.

At a June 13 meeting of the Plymouth-Canton Community Schools Board of Education, Cameron Miller said that as a member of the Canton High School Mascot Committee he was led to believe the group would review whether the school's mascot logo should be changed — or not.

"At the very first meeting, it became clear that the committee was not going to consider whether it should be changed, only that it was going to be changed," said Miller, a Canton High School alumni and Plymouth attorney. "Our first week's homework assignment...included a list of what we thought the mascot should be. Chiefs was not an option."

A call to change the mascot began in 2021 when students gave a presentation to the board of education, arguing that the Chief mascot and accompanying arrowhead logos are disrespectful to Native Americans and can lead to cultural appropriation.

In February, the district convened a committee of district staff, parents, students and alumni, including Miller, to consider the topic. In May, the group published a survey to collect input from the community. At the June 13 meeting, Trustee Patti McCoin announced the group had finished its work and made a recommendation to the superintendent. McCoin did not share any details about the content of the recommendation.

## Survey responses

Miller told the school board the committee received 6,206 responses to the May survey, which asked respondents to share opinions on questions such as, "How offensive is the current Canton High School mascot?" and "Are you in favor of changing the Canton High School Chiefs name?"

The committee's recommendation to the superintendent, Miller said, would say a "slight majority" of respondents favored keeping the Chiefs name, but that the actual number was higher.

"The one thing that was clear was that the committee didn't want anything to do with the results of the survey," Miller said. "The non-unanimous majority simply ignored the community's voice."

He added that many who responded to the survey noted they would like input on the topic from Native Americans. A person who attended the meeting with Miller provided the board with copies of the survey submitted by individuals claiming Native American history. Most of those, Miller said, were in favor of keeping the Chiefs name.

Neither the survey data or the committee's recommendation to the superintendent have been made public at this



Canton High School is located at 8415 N. Canton Center Road in Canton Township. LAURA COLVIN/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

time. After the meeting, Miller said a "gag order" had been instituted for committee members, preventing him from providing other information about the group's work, including names proposed to replace Chiefs.

## Superintendent plans 'thorough review'

The Canton High School Mascot Committee was co-facilitated by Kurt Tyszkiewicz, P-CCS Assistant Superintendent for Student Services, and Hal Heard, Director of High School Education.

Heard did not immediately return a call seeking comment. Tyszkiewicz deferred comment to Nick Brandon, the district's executive director of communications and marketing. Brandon said district comment would be limited to a statement provided by Superintendent Monica Merritt.

Merritt acknowledged that she has received the committee's recommendation and would pursue next steps in the process according to board policy.

"We want to make sure we're taking the time to thoroughly review the recommendation and all the information provided by the committee," Merritt said.

Once that process is complete, Merritt said she will make a recommendation to the board of education. The board will hold a first reading, followed later by a second reading, before any potential changes are finalized.

A timeline for the decision was not clear. Merritt could decide to follow the committee's recommendation or pursue a different path.

## Others voice opposition to name change

In addition to Miller, four others who attended the June 13 meeting spoke against changing the Chiefs name and mascot. No one who spoke at the meeting was in favor of a change.

Steve Robb told the board he is a member of the White Earth Tribe of Minnesota Chippewas and that his mother was born on the White Earth Reservation and is buried there.

"I have relatives on the reservation that I still visit," he said. "The last thing the people on the reservation are worried about are school mascots' nicknames and logos."

"Like many Americans, they're concerned about living conditions, affordable housing, healthcare, educational opportunities, and feeding their families. The nickname Chiefs is not offensive to any Native American that I know. To the people on my reservation, it is an honor to be called chief."

"I applaud students who want to make a difference," Robb added. "But in my opinion, the time, energy and money spent on this issue could be better spent and applied to actually helping Native American families."

Robb said that as a Salem High School graduate and former Canton High School football coach whose children attended Plymouth High School, he has strong ties to the district's high school campus.

"In my opinion, the Chiefs have the best traditions (on the high school campus), the most energy and the greatest spirit," he said. "I would not like to see that spirit diminished or taken away."

Alexis Fernimos, Robb's niece, said she is a Plymouth High School graduate and the daughter of a Salem graduate and a Canton High School graduate.

"Indian pride never dies," said Fernimos. "And by the way, the word Indian is not discriminatory or racist in any way toward any Native American person that I personally know or am related to."

"Natives from all tribes are proud of our history, our struggles and most of all our perseverance," she added, noting that states, cities, schools, and sports teams with Native American-influenced names pay homage to those roots.

"They do not offend, criticize or disrespect Native American Indians or our cultures or values," Fernimos said. "The idea that non-Natives, individuals who carry no Native blood and no generational ties, hurt or traumas, are trying to strip away Native culture is truly disrespectful, detrimental, and very hurtful to our future generations."

Several of those who spoke at the meeting referenced the mission of the Native American Guardians Association (NAGA): Educate Not Eradicate.

A letter from NAGA addressed to the Plymouth-Canton Community Schools Board of Education and community members was shared with *Hometown Life*. The letter strongly opposes the change.

A video recording of the June 13 meeting is available on the Plymouth-Canton Community Schools YouTube page.

Contact reporter Laura Colvin at [lcolvin@hometownlife.com](mailto:lcolvin@hometownlife.com) or 248-221-8143.

## Automotive

Continued from Page 2A

great opportunity to expand this business in New Hudson," Ruaan Holtzhausen, automation manager for DESign USA, said. "There are various other businesses in New Hudson that are suppliers of ours and now (are) just a door-step away and our neighbors."

Holtzhausen expects the upcoming move to Lyon Township to be the company's last, after establishing an initial North America foothold in Macomb Township in 2017, where he said they worked on the reintroduction of the Ford Ranger. The company moved from that site to one in Livonia, followed by Plymouth for warehouse space, and then to a 33,000-square-foot Canton facility.

The new 153,000 square-foot facility will give DESign USA the space to manufacture the assembly equipment for new Ford and Lincoln electric vehicles. He also notes there is room for expansion

in the business park.

The company currently manufactures assembly equipment for Ford's electric vehicles in Canada.

It previously manufactured the body in Mexico for the Mach-E, also known as the electric Ford Mustang, although Holtzhausen notes "people are divided on (the name) because it doesn't look like a Mustang."

The Michigan Strategic Fund is supporting DESign USA Inc.'s New Hudson headquarters with a \$466,650 Michigan Business Development Program performance-based grant. Michigan was chosen for the project over a competing site in South Carolina because of the company's established relationships with Michigan-based suppliers and customers.

DDA Director Amy Allen said the company did not receive a tax abatement, an incentive the township board put an end to last year.

DESign USA Inc. will be situated on a roughly 8-acre lot behind Magna, another automotive supplier, in the business park, which Allen said has five or

six more parcels available.

"We are still competitive with bringing in larger companies to the area and this just verifies that we do need to continue to build our community and create more recreational and entertainment destinations to serve the new employees and families moving into the area," Allen said. "It's good news for our community."

"We are very excited to be relocating our U.S. headquarters to our new facility

in Michigan," DESign Group Director John Ferreira said. "We are grateful to the Michigan Economic Development Corporation and their local partners who have helped us with our United States expansion. We look forward to working with the local workforce, innovators and manufacturers in Michigan."

Contact reporter Susan Bromley at [sbromley@hometownlife.com](mailto:sbromley@hometownlife.com) or 517-281-2412. Follow her on Twitter @SusanBromley10.

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City of Northville Tax Department

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# Moms for Liberty named 'extremist group'

Will Carless and Sarah Leach

Livingston Daily  
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

LIVINGSTON COUNTY - The Southern Poverty Law Center is, for the first time, labeling several "parents' rights" groups as extremist, including one group with a member leading the Livingston County GOP.

The Florida-headquartered Moms for Liberty and 11 other right-wing "parents' rights" groups received the "extremist" designation in the SPLC's annual report released Tuesday, June 6.

Moms for Liberty and the other organizations are being designated as "anti-government extremist groups" based on longstanding criteria, SPLC Intelligence Project Director Susan Corke told USA TODAY. Corke said the grassroots conservative groups are part of a new front in the battle against inclusivity in schools, though they're drawing from ideas rooted in age-old white supremacy.

"[The movement] is primarily aimed at not wanting to include our hard history, topics of racism, and a very strong push against teaching anything having to do with LGBTQ topics in schools," Corke said. "We saw this as a very deliberate strategy to go to the local level."

Jennifer Smith, who heads the Livingston County Chapter of Moms for Liberty, was elected chair of the Livingston County GOP in December to serve through 2023.

Smith has been a vocal opponent of quarantines, mask mandates and other public health policies discussed by school boards over the course of the pandemic.

The 12 new groups brought the total number of active extremist groups to 1,225 nationwide. Of those, the SPLC designates 702 as anti-government groups and 523 as hate groups. That's almost unchanged from 2021, when the SPLC counted 1,221 extremist groups.

The SPLC is one of the most widely recognized research organizations tracking hate and extremism in the United States. Being added to its watchlist means almost certain notoriety. Over the years, the center has brought new focus to self-described militias, anti-immigrant groups and outright hate



Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis is presented "The Sword of Liberty" at the Moms for Liberty National Summit in 2022 in Tampa. MIKE LANG/HERALD-TRIBUNE FILE

groups. The SPLC has also sued hate groups and individual extremists in the civil courts, often with great success.

But the SPLC has also been criticized for designating as extremist some groups that argue they simply take a political position, and has defended itself in lawsuits, including from immigration policy groups it has designated as anti-immigrant hate groups. (The organization is also currently fighting a lawsuit from Gavin McInnes, who founded the Proud Boys and who has argued the SPLC's hate group designation harmed his career.)

Moms for Liberty did not respond to USA TODAY's request for comment Tuesday. Smith did not respond to a request for comment from The Daily.

The report also has other findings, including that the so-called "militia movement" declined significantly last

year, that antisemitism continues to be a major force animating the extreme far-right and that alternative tech sites aren't as niche as perhaps might be expected.

## Moms for Liberty

Moms for Liberty has made headlines across the country since its founding in 2021.

The SPLC study concludes the group is part of a broader anti-government movement focused on local politics that sprung up during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Founded by three Florida Republicans, the "social-welfare" nonprofit group can engage in political activity without disclosing its financial backers.

The group pitched itself as a potent grassroots movement of outraged par-

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See GROUP, Page 5A

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## Group

Continued from Page 4A

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"Over the past two years, reactionary anti-student inclusion groups have been popping up from coast to coast, claiming to battle for parents' rights. Just like their predecessors, their rhetoric takes on marked anti-LGBTQ, racist



Livingston County GOP Chairperson Jennifer Smith reviews an exhibit in the Washtenaw County 22nd Circuit Court on Tuesday, March 21, 2023. PATRICIA ALVORD

and nationalist themes, excluding from their parental concern large demographic segments of American society," the report states.

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The primary focus of these groups has been twofold: They've fought against curriculums that teach about America's racist and violent history and have more recently taken aim at any educational efforts to teach children about LGBTQ issues. To attract attention and seek new followers, groups like Moms for Liberty promote the false claim that left-wing teachers and educators are engaged in a conspiracy to "sexualize" or even "groom" the schoolchildren under their care.

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ful in leveraging their relationships with school officials, and extremist groups, to put them kind of in a place where they can make sweeping changes for the majority of people, when they're actually in the minority," said Maya Henson Carey, a research analyst at SPLC.

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The SPLC report notes that, at the group's first national conference, former U.S. Department of Education Secretary Betsy DeVos said, "I personally think that the Department of Education should not exist," a quote the group then used on its website.

Moms for Liberty joins the ranks of the Oath Keepers, the Three Percenters and the United Constitutional Patriots, a self-styled militia that "patrols" the U.S.-Mexico border.

• **The 12 "parents' rights" groups labeled by the SPLC as extremist groups include:** Moms for Liberty;

Moms for America, Army of Parents; Courage is a Habit, Education First Alliance, Education Veritas; No Left Turn in Education; Parents Against CRT (PACT); Parents Defending Education; Parents Rights in Education; Purple for Parents Indiana and Parents Involved in Education.

### Other findings

The comprehensive annual SPLC report has a number of additional findings, including:

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• **Antisemitism continues to motivate the extremist far-right:** "In 2022, Jewish people and spaces were regularly harassed, assaulted, vandalized and threatened," the report found.

Contact executive editor Sarah Leach at sleach@livingstondaily.com. Follow her on Twitter @SentinelLeach.

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# Moms for Liberty named 'extremist group'

Will Carless and Sarah Leach  
Livingston Daily  
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

LIVINGSTON COUNTY — The Southern Poverty Law Center is, for the first time, labeling several "parents' rights" groups as extremist, including one group with a member leading the Livingston County GOP.

The Florida-headquartered Moms for Liberty and 11 other right-wing "parents' rights" groups received the "extremist" designation in the SPLC's annual report released Tuesday, June 6.

Moms for Liberty and the other organizations are being designated as "anti-government extremist groups" based on longstanding criteria, SPLC Intelligence Project Director Susan Corke told USA TODAY. Corke said the grassroots conservative groups are part of a new front in the battle against inclusivity in schools, though they're drawing from ideas rooted in age-old white supremacy.

"[The movement] is primarily aimed at not wanting to include our hard history, topics of racism, and a very strong push against teaching anything having to do with LGBTQ topics in schools," Corke said. "We saw this as a very deliberate strategy to go to the local level."

Jennifer Smith, who heads the Livingston County Chapter of Moms for Liberty, was elected chair of the Livingston County GOP in December to serve through 2023.

Smith has been a vocal opponent of quarantines, mask mandates and other public health policies discussed by school boards over the course of the pandemic.

The 12 new groups brought the total number of active extremist groups to 1,225 nationwide. Of those, the SPLC designates 702 as anti-government groups and 523 as hate groups. That's almost unchanged from 2021, when the SPLC counted 1,221 extremist groups.

The SPLC is one of the most widely recognized research organizations tracking hate and extremism in the United States. Being added to its watchlist means almost certain notoriety. Over the years, the center has brought new focus to self-described militias, anti-immigrant groups and outright hate



Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis is presented "The Sword of Liberty" at the Moms for Liberty National Summit in 2022 in Tampa. MIKE LANG/HERALD-TRIBUNE FILE

groups. The SPLC has also sued hate groups and individual extremists in the civil courts, often with great success.

But the SPLC has also been criticized for designating as extremist some groups that argue they simply take a political position, and has defended itself in lawsuits, including from immigration policy groups it has designated as anti-immigrant hate groups. (The organization is also currently fighting a lawsuit from Gavin McInnes, who founded the Proud Boys and who has argued the SPLC's hate group designation harmed his career.)

Moms for Liberty did not respond to USA TODAY's request for comment Tuesday. Smith did not respond to a request for comment from The Daily.

The report also has other findings, including that the so-called "militia movement" declined significantly last

year, that antisemitism continues to be a major force animating the extreme far-right and that alternative tech sites aren't as niche as perhaps might be expected.

## Moms for Liberty

Moms for Liberty has made headlines across the country since its founding in 2021.

The SPLC study concludes the group is part of a broader anti-government movement focused on local politics that sprung up during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Founded by three Florida Republicans, the "social-welfare" nonprofit group can engage in political activity without disclosing its financial backers.

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ents, many of whom weren't active in school politics until COVID-19 restrictions forced them to pay attention. It's sprouted local chapters in at least 40 states, claims more than 100,000 members and has the ear of the Republican establishment: Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis has championed their efforts to restrict teaching about race in schools and universities. Critics in Florida slam the group for turning schools into a political battlefield.

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# Group

Continued from Page 4A

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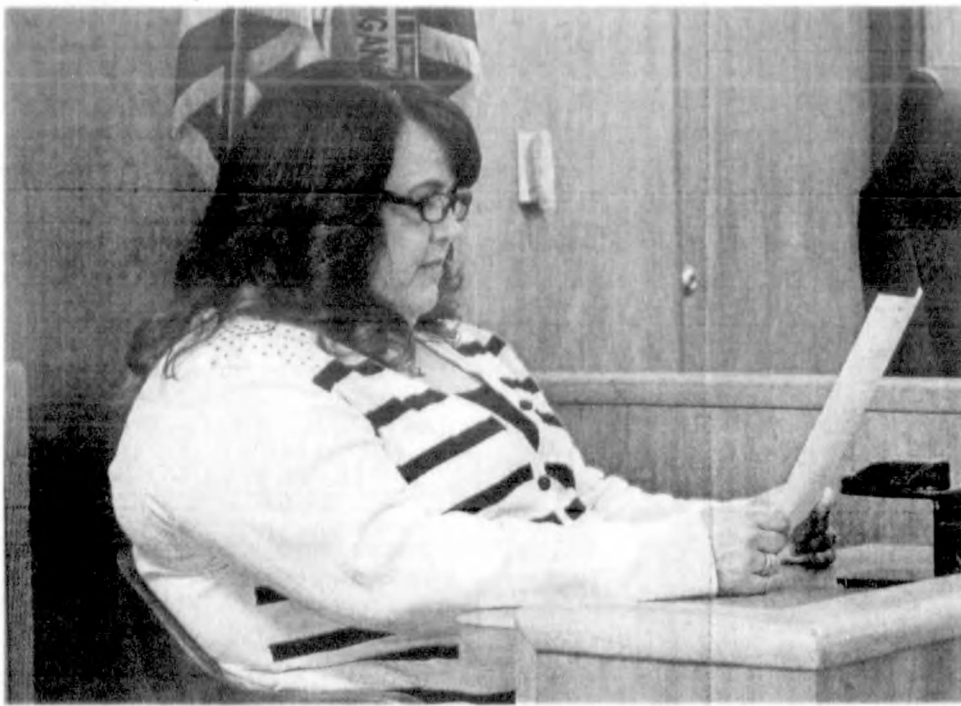
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Emergency medicine physician

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Corner of Ann Arbor Road and N. Haggerty







## Esports

Continued from Page 1A

esports with your community has really broadened my vision of what I think can happen with video games," said Jake Harless, a recent Farmington High School grad and employee at playlabs. "For a long time, especially through quarantine, I kind of figured it was just an online environment where you couldn't really socialize. Playlabs completely changes the game."

Playlabs offers leagues, parties, training and free play opportunities. McClure said he emphasizes physical health, mental health and communication with competitive players. People who come in for free play will pay \$8 to \$10 per hour depending on the day.

McClure has a professional background in video game design and said he hopes to highlight gaming's most

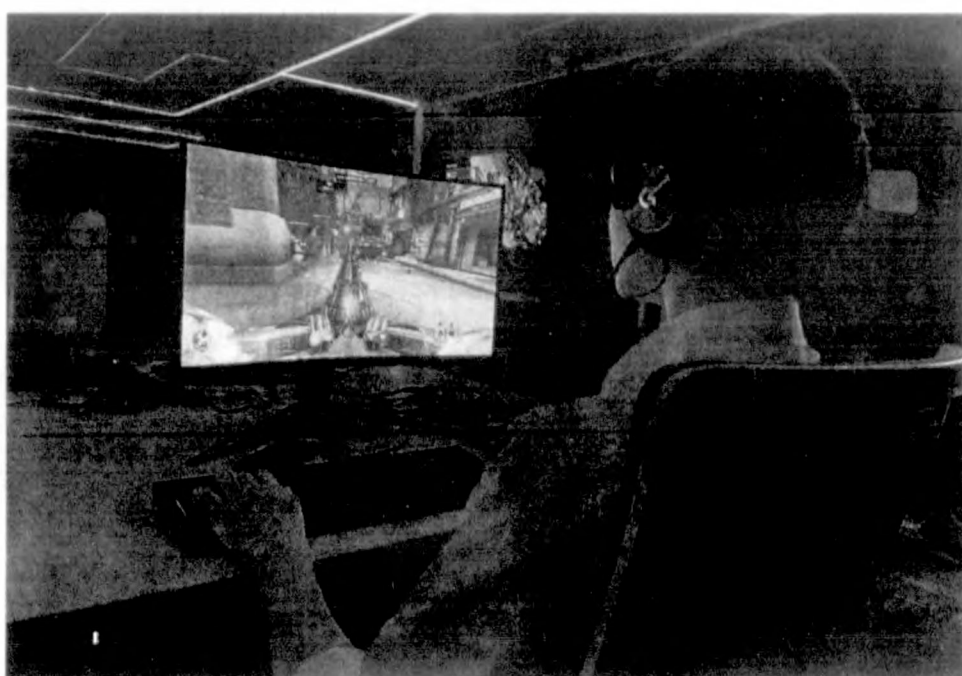
positive aspects. He said esports will create experiences for gamers that others get from playing traditional sports.

Esports is growing and can be pursued in college. In Michigan, Oakland University in Rochester, Lawrence Technological University in Southfield and Michigan Technological University in the Upper Peninsula are among the schools that offer esports as part of their athletic departments.

"We have a vision of using the love of games as a positive tool to build a life-long hobby and engage with our community," McClure said. "As a parent of teens, I understand there's such a thing as too much gaming. At playlabs, our goal isn't more gaming. It's better gaming."

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The new playlabs esports lounge in Farmington Hills allows gamers to play a variety of video games. SHELBY TANKERSLEY/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

## Meijer

Continued from Page 1A

The planning commission ultimately agreed with concerns about traffic, as outlined in criteria that must be considered when making a decision on special land use. Two separate traffic studies also conclude that road improvements are needed in the area.

Bob Doroshewitz, the commission's board of trustee liaison, noted Meijer's proposed plan showed only two ways in and out of the store's parking lot, and would thus cause a "massive amount of impact on Five Mile Road."

Early stages of road improvements are underway in the area - potentially with funding from Lansing to be announced soon - but Doroshewitz said roadwork should come before development, not the other way around.

"After the roads are in and the improvements are made, then we can talk about what kinds of facilities those roads will support, but right now they will not support it," he said. "If that money never comes through from the state or from developers to widen Five Mile, we will have a bloody, freakin'



A rendering shows part of the façade of the Meijer store proposed at 47500 Five Mile Road in Plymouth Township. COURTESY PLYMOUTH TOWNSHIP

mess on our hands."

Commissioner Tim Boyd agreed. "In general, I believe Meijer is probably a good thing for the community as a whole," Boyd said. "However, until we get some certainty around the road situation...I just don't feel comfortable going forward with this."

Doroshewitz and Boyd, along with commissioners Kendra Barberena, John Itsell and Gail Grieger voted to deny the special land use request. Planning Commission Chair Dennis Cebulski cast the

dissenting vote. Commissioner James Berry was absent.

### Second try for Meijer

The 21-acre parcel where Meijer would like to build its new supercenter in Plymouth Township is currently located within the Michigan International Technology Center (MITC) and owned by REDICO, a Southfield-based development firm. REDICO owns much of the former Detroit House of Corrections

land within the MITC.

The proposal denied this week marks the second time REDICO and Meijer have planned a Meijer store in the area.

In 2016, Northville Township approved a Meijer at the northwest corner of Five Mile and Beck Roads. At the June 21 meeting, REDICO CEO Dale Watchowski said the store was never built because REDICO sold the land to M/I Homes.

"In exchange for 100 additional home sites, we retracted the Meijer transaction," Watchowski said.

Watchowski and others requested the developer be allowed to withdraw the current application to address concerns, rather than having it denied by the planning commission. A withdrawal would have allowed the developers to make changes and resubmit the plans immediately, but planning commissioners did not honor the request.

It was not immediately clear whether Meijer would resubmit a request in the future.

A full video recording of the meeting is available on the Plymouth Township YouTube channel.

Contact reporter Laura Colvin at [lcolvin@hometownlife.com](mailto:lcolvin@hometownlife.com) or 248-221-8143.

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# SPORTS

## 'Ice in his veins'



Novi pitcher Uli Fernsler celebrates after beating Woodhaven to win the D1 baseball state championship on Saturday, June 17, 2023, at McLane Stadium on the MSU campus in East Lansing. NICK KING/LANSING STATE JOURNAL

### Uli Fernsler pitches Wildcats baseball to 1st state title

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

As Novi pitcher Uli Fernsler left the dugout to shut the door on Woodhaven during Saturday's Division 1 baseball state championship at Michigan State, Andrew Abler pulled the sophomore aside and offered some advice.

"Soak this all in," the captain said he

told Fernsler. "This is going to be one of the best memories of your life. He's going to go out and play Division 1 baseball one day, for sure. But it's hard to beat the memory of winning a state championship."

Moments later, Fernsler's 3-2 changeup struck out Woodhaven's Gary Pilgrim, ensuring the 8-3 victory for the Wildcats and giving them their first state title in program history.

It was another stellar playoff performance for the 15-year-old lefty, as he pitched a complete game, struck out eight and gave up just two earned runs.

"For most of the game, he was just lights out with first-pitch strikes," Novi coach Rick Green said. "It's kind of easy when you know he's on the

See WILDCATS, Page 2B

## Novi super fan Tom Marcus dies at 85

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

Following Novi's 8-3 win over Woodhaven during Saturday's Division 1 baseball state championship at Michigan State, coach Rick Green was handed a microphone to give a celebratory speech.

The 23rd-year coach quickly thanked the fans who made the trip to East Lansing and then used the rest of his time on stage to dedicate the victory to Novi super fan Tom Marcus, 85, who died this week.

Marcus, alongside dear friend George Kortlandt, has been a staple at Novi games since the school was founded in 1966. And it wasn't just the big football or basketball games he attended. He made it to almost every game on the sports calendar.

The outcome didn't matter to him either. It was all about supporting the student-athletes. He'd show up whether the team was winless or on the verge of winning a state title. Whether it was freshmen, JV or varsity.

"Mr. Marcus was a true Wildcat," athletic director Don Watchowski told Hometown Life on Saturday. "He was our No. 1 fan. His energy, his enthusiasm and his support for our kids and our coaches was unbelievable. He's going to be missed, and we'll always remember him. He made us a priority, and he cared about us sincerely. He enjoyed every minute. He's the kind of person you want around because he just brings a zest for life, and it was infectious."

He certainly was.

The football field has "Tom's Tunnel."

The softball stadium has "Tom's Corner," a spot the Wildcats dedicated to him in 2021 so he could have a comfortable spot with some shade to watch games from.

He'd lead the football team onto the field. He'd sprint up and down the field to rally the fans. He'd wave a Wildcats flag after touchdowns. They used to include his name in the game program.

He'd bring the softball players candy such as Starburst and Skittles before games.

See MARCUS, Page 2B

## Canton's Quincy Isaac wins state title in long jump

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

Even if Jon Mehl had the secret formula, he wouldn't be sharing it anyway. What a time to be a jumper at the Park.

A year ago, Canton's Nathan Levine cleared 6 feet, 8 inches to win an individual state championship in the high jump during the Division 1 track and field state championship as only a sophomore. Not to be outdone, another sophomore, Salem's Madison Morson, went 5 feet, 8 inches for a state runner-up finish on the girls side.

And it's only gotten better since then. Levine (6-06) and Morson (5-10) just

followed up last year's effort with a pair of state runner-up finishes in early June. But the big surprise was Quincy Isaac, another sophomore phenom at Canton, who won the state title in the long jump with a distance of 22 feet, 11 inches, beating Rockford junior Carter Bissell by a full 4 inches.

That's right. The Chiefs have had back-to-back individual state titles won by sophomores, while Morson, who is expected to be a Ms. Basketball candidate in 2023-24, continues having her own success in a sport that she doesn't get to put all of her focus on throughout the school year.

"They were asking me about that at the state meet because everyone knows that we've got something special here

with these kids," said Mehl, an assistant coach specializing in the jumps at Canton. "If there were a secret formula, I would probably not give it up. But when you consider we're not an open district and these kids are homegrown talent, it's really something you don't see very often. They have promising Division 1 careers."

So how did Isaac get so good at the long jump then?

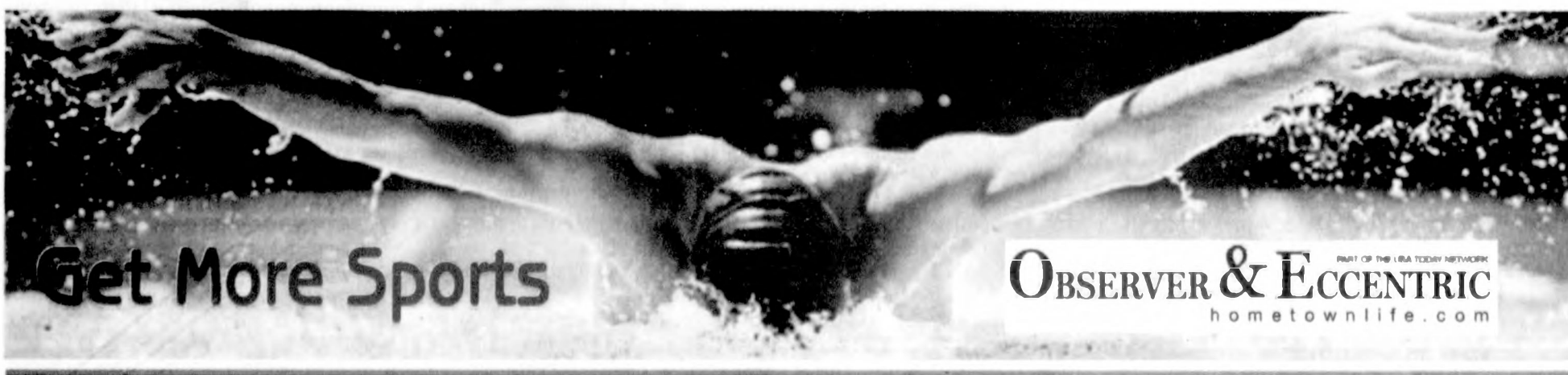
"He's been practicing for months by just cross-training in basketball," Mehl added. "When he showed up in the spring, we had a little bit of time to work on technique. He made a lot of progress and came out of the box and jumped

See LONG JUMP, Page 3B



Canton sophomore Quincy Isaac won the Division 1 boys track and field state championship in the high jump Saturday, June 3, 2023, at Rockford.

COURTESY PHOTO



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## Marcus

Continued from Page 1B

He'd hit the road to see the basketball teams play in nearby gyms around the Kensington Lakes Activities Association.

"He was just an outstanding person, and he just loved everybody," Green said. "He was at every single game. Even in his '80s, he'd run up and down the track at the football games with that flag."

Football coach Jim Sparks met Marcus during his first day on the job while former AD Brian Gordon was giving him a tour of the athletics facilities.

Sure enough, Marcus was hanging out in the basketball gym at the time.

"He indoctrinated me into the history of the whole program and every great player they ever had," said Sparks, who took over in 2021. "I think he said he had been to every football game they've had since the school opened. It never ceased to amaze me when he'd grab that flag, run up the sideline and lead our kids out of the tunnel."

"It was incredible to know we had that much support from him."

In the past, boys basketball coach Chris Housey has used Marcus as an example for his players to follow.

"We talked to the kids about having the kind of loyalty he had," the sixth-year coach said. "Good times or bad, these guys (Marcus and Kortlandt) are always there. It was an important lesson

because it's about being part of a team. Sometimes you're going to be good, sometimes you're going to be bad. But you can always be there for each other and support each other no matter what. And that's what he did for us."

During home basketball games, Marcus liked to sit a row or two behind Novi's bench. That didn't go unnoticed by Housey or his players.

"Whether there were 100 people there, 1,000 people there or nobody there, I could always turn around and look behind the bench, whether it was in frustration or excitement, and see him sitting right there," Housey said. "It's great to have that kind of support and know that he's always there and always behind you."

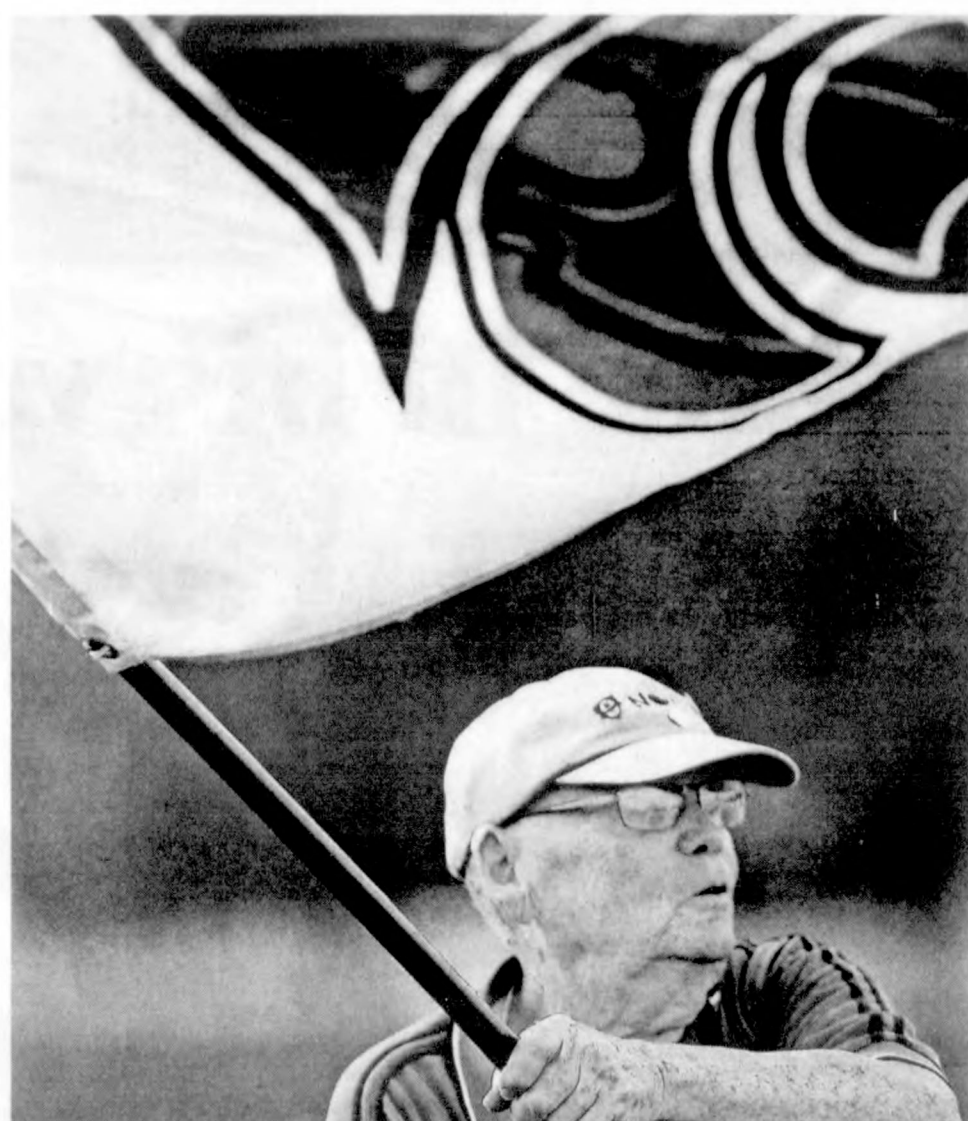
Marcus has been spotted supporting Novi athletics all spring. It's a shame he was unable to see the baseball team win its first state championship in program history.

Or maybe he was watching. It depends on who you ask.

"I'm telling you, he was looking down on us today," Green said. "He would've been saying, 'That a boy, Novi. Way to go, Novi.'"

Each coach interviewed for this story agreed about one thing, though. When they see a Wildcats flag waved at a football game this fall, their first thought will be about Marcus and how much he meant to the school.

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



Longtime Novi super fan Tom Marcus died this week at 85. He was a staple at almost every sporting event the school hosted. JOHN HEIDER/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM



Novi's Andrew Abler, right, hoists the D1 baseball championship trophy after beating Woodhaven on Saturday, June 17, 2023, at McLane Stadium on the MSU campus in East Lansing. PHOTOS BY NICK KING/LANSING STATE JOURNAL

## Wildcats

Continued from Page 1B

mound. You can call the pitches, and he believes in what you're calling. He never questions it. He never shakes off a call and just goes out there at them."

The Wildcats (32-8) made just their second-ever appearance in the state finals and first since they lost to Blissfield 4-0 in the Class C championship in 1973, just seven years after the school was founded.

It took both Abler, who's signed with Harvard, and Fernsler pitching a combined 10 innings to come back and defeat Mattawan 4-1 in extra innings during Thursday's final four. It was no easy feat, and Fernsler's ability to shut the door certainly gave Novi confidence entering the championship game.

So the Wildcats had no doubt the underclassman could finish the deal against Woodhaven, despite this being the biggest stage they've been on in 50 years.

"Everyone knew he'd get it done," Abler said. "We have full trust in him. And he's a great player. It's just amazing because he has ice in his veins for being just a sophomore."

Novi carried a comfortable 8-1 lead



Novi head coach Rick Green thanks fans while celebrating.

into the final frame thanks to Thad Lawler smacking a two-run single to center field in the third inning, Clemson commit Brendon Bennett, Andrew Kummer and Brett Reed tallying RBI singles in the fourth as well as Reed recording a two-

run double and Bennett scoring on a wild pitch in the sixth.

But Woodhaven rallied a bit to make it interesting in the bottom of the seventh. In fact, the Warriors scored two runs as Fernsler gave up four of the eight

hits he allowed all game early in the inning.

Green approached the mound for a skull session with Fernsler and his infield to sort out things. Seconds later, Reed threw out a runner at second base and then Fernsler struck out Pilgrim looking to halt the potential comeback.

"I just told the guys to calm down, get the out at second base and just relax," Green said. "I said, 'Uli's going to lead us through this,' and he did."

Fernsler celebrated by tossing his glove into the air and giving a bear hug to Reed. Then he was mobbed by his teammates who sprinted onto the field from the east dugout at McLane Stadium.

Following the handshake line, Novi's student section fired up the "Uli! Uli! Uli!" chants, and then the sophomore gave his schoolmates a hat tip in response.

"This is what we've been going for all season long," Fernsler said. "This is why we've been playing baseball. It's the best experience I've ever had, and I almost passed out (celebrating the win). It just hit me after that last strikeout what we did. It was just awesome."

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



# Seaholm senior ends year with MAC vs. OAA All-Star game

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

Jack Hulgrave couldn't stop calling it "a great experience." And for the Birmingham Seaholm baseball team that has struggled to find postseason success for almost four decades, it certainly was just that for the senior.

The Maples lost just five games all spring, won the Oakland Activities Association-White and upset fourth-ranked Brother Rice to win its first district championship in 35 years.

Hulgrave capped off his career by playing outfield during Tuesday's third annual MAC vs. OAA all-star game at Jimmy John's Field in Utica, home of the United Shores Professional Baseball League.

Sure, Seaholm (26-5) was hoping to get past Detroit U-D Jesuit in the Division 1 regional semifinal. The Maples wound up losing, 7-4, but they have to be proud of what they accomplished.



**Birmingham Seaholm's Jack Hulgrave warms up in the batter's box during the third annual MAC vs. OAA All-Star baseball game Tuesday, June 20, 2023, at Jimmy John's Field in Utica.**

TOM BEAUDOIN/SPECIAL TO HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

The last time they had won a district was the year they won a state championship.

"It was an unfortunate way to lose (in the playoffs), but I don't care," Hulgrave told Hometown Life after the MAC and OAA settled for a 10-10 tie. "We beat Brother Rice, and it was the first time in 35 years (getting out of the district). (John Toth Jr.) is a great coach, and he really pushed us to be better."

Nick Shenefelt was named a first-team all-stater by the Michigan High School Baseball Coaches Association, while Shenefelt and twin brothers Colton and Granden Kinnie made the all-region team and Shenefelt, the Kinnie brothers, Kyle Robbins, Jack Lewis and Hulgrave were named all-district.

All of them except for Hulgrave are expected to return next season.

Seaholm lost two league games early in the spring, but then it played a doubleheader at Cadillac. Not only did the Maples sweep the Vikings, 7-0 and 12-1, but they spent that weekend up north camping and bonding as a team.

Hulgrave said that was a pivotal moment for the team. And it certainly was.

They wound up winning their next 19 games.

And that streak was only snapped because they lost 3-0 to Walled Lake Northern during their annual senior day picnic doubleheader, more of a celebration than a serious baseball game.

"We had a lot of fun," Hulgrave said. "We had that team trip up to Cadillac, and we just all got so close. We all held each other accountable. I just thought we all clicked after that and just had a great year. It was a great team bonding experience. We stayed in the cabins and spent all day together up there and had a great time."

Hulgrave's playing days are done. He's headed to Michigan State for college. His next great experience on the diamond will likely be returning home next spring to watch his old teammates take that next step as a program and compete for a regional title and — who knows? — maybe try for their first state title since 1988. They certainly have the returners to do it.

## Long jump

Continued from Page 1B

22-08 in our first meet in March at Eastern Michigan. That was remarkable. It's not crazy because he doesn't lose much by playing basketball, and that's why I'd encourage him to keep playing basketball. I wouldn't ever want him to specialize in track unless he was a senior and the college offers were coming in."

Isaac wasn't worried about spending the winter on the basketball team and then coming into the long jump with rusty technique. He was more focused on building on his previous experience on the track team.

Yeah, he won the regional a year ago and earned a berth into the state championship. But last year's trip to the state finals was all about getting the experience of being around the top athletes in the state. He cleared 22 feet, 19 inches, good enough for 22nd place. But, more importantly, he learned what to expect at the biggest meet of the spring.

He was more prepared for what to expect this time around.

"I wasn't as nervous as I was last year," the sophomore said. "I didn't feel as ready last year as I did this time. I was a lot more prepared than last year, and I just had a different experience in general. I knew more of the pits, and I felt more prepared with what I needed to do and what techniques I needed to use."

Not bad for a kid who didn't participate in a single indoor meet during the wintertime.

The kid who focused on indoor meets was actually Levine, who not only competed at Nike Indoor Nationals but recorded an All-American effort of 6 feet, 6.75 inches and a sixth-place finish. That came just three weeks after he was the state runner-up during the Michigan Indoor Track Series state championships with a height of 6-06.

Levine would've preferred winning a second-straight outdoor state title, but what he has achieved since his sophomore season has been truly remarkable.

"Convincing a former state champion that second place is good enough is not an easy thing," Mehl said. "But that's what had to be done with Nathan.

Hopefully, he's taken a deep breath and understood what he's been able to accomplish."

Levine spent the winter working with Mehl, who's coached with the Dearborn Track Club since 2010, and improving his technique.

"He spent a lot of time at Eastern Michigan over the winter," Mehl added. "The high jump is the kind of thing where you just can't do the same thing over and over when you get him to 6-06. You can't just assume that he'll become a 7-footer. So he worked with Mike Montijo at (Farmington Hills) Mercy. The Levines are a fantastic family and worked with Coach Mike, and Nathan made a lot of progress technically. He's disappointed he only went 6-06 because he's been going 6-06. He was waiting for a breakthrough, but he didn't have it yet."

You might be wondering why Mehl had Levine work with Montijo?

Well, it just so happens that this year's individual state champion on the girls side was Mercy junior Milena Chevallier, whose personal best of 5 feet, 11 inches edged Morson for the state title

by 1 inch. And Morson had a PR herself.

And that, right there, speaks to how talented Morson is. She recently led Salem to the girls basketball final four, an effort that earned her Hometown Life's Player of the Year honor, so she missed about two weeks of track practice while the Rocks were on their campaign to get to Michigan State University.

"She is a special talent," said Mehl, who technically isn't Morson's coach but spends plenty of time around her since they're both practicing at Plymouth-Canton Educational Park. "She's one heck of an athlete and a great kid. Our guys love her. Everyone is friendly with Madi. With the cross-training she does with basketball, and with track being her second love, it's crazy she's able to come out and be one heck of an athlete out of the box as soon as March shows up."

It's a great time to be a track and field athlete at the Park. And the best part? These three are expected to be back next spring. That's plenty of time for Mehl to share the secret formula with a few more of the Park's jumpers.

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# Plymouth Christian baseball's effort falls just short in 2-1 loss in state finals

Brandon Folsom  
Hometownlife.com  
USA TODAY NETWORK - MICHIGAN

Tyler Scott was hurting. That was evident when Aaron Etnyre's fatherly instincts kicked in and the Plymouth Christian Academy assistant quickly gave his sophomore pitcher a hug before the Eagles lined up to shake hands with Beal City.

But 16th-year coach Joe Bortorff was hurting just a little bit more.

No one wanted them to win a Division 4 state championship more than their longtime coach. His blood, sweat and tears — literally — have gone into building PCA into a winner in baseball.

And they came two wild throws away from claiming that first-ever state title Saturday at Michigan State.

Scott, who has been the Eagles' workhorse and ace all season long, just had an off night. It wasn't his fault. That's life. He's still one of the top arms in Michigan. He's still going to be feared when he takes the mound next season.

The Eagles (34-8) pride themselves on how tough their defense is. You could probably tally up the number of errors they've made all season in a matter of seconds. They rarely occur.

But capitalizing on two PCA errors is all it took for the Aggies to come back from a one-run deficit, beat PCA 2-1 and claim their fifth state championship.

You could tell Scott was placing the blame on himself. And that's what a leader does.

He got into a jam in the fourth inning, putting runners in scoring position. And then a throwing error to first base allowed Beal City's Jake Gauthier to score a free run to knot the score at 1.

Two innings later, it happened again, only this time it was Scott throwing to an unattended third base, and Gauthier scored one more free run, which went down as the game-winner after PCA couldn't rally offensively.

Scott looked gutted. His coach appeared to be in even worse shape.

When Bortorff was asked what mes-



Plymouth Christian Academy's Tyler Scott pitches against Beal City during their Division 4 MHSAA championship game, Saturday, June 17, 2023, at Michigan State's McLane Stadium. AL GOLDIS/FOR THE LANSING STATE JOURNAL

sage he was going to deliver to Scott when the dust settled on the state final, the coach paused for 12 seconds while failing to fight back tears.

"I'm going to tell him I love him," Bortorff said. "He's a great player. He'll be back here and be even stronger."

This was a deep roster for the Eagles, from seniors such as Noah Etnyre, Joey Weertz, Riley Brodhagen, Braydn White and Jordan Scott, Tyler's older brother, to the underclassmen like Michael Fernandez, Luke Janigian and Tyler himself and everyone else who contributed. It took a total team effort, as cliché as it sounds, for them to make it this far.

But Tyler's effort all spring can't be overlooked. He set school records left and right on the mound. He was un-

touchable down the stretch of the regular season. It was clear he was going to give PCA its best shot to win the state championship. That's why Bortorff saved him for Saturday and elected to pitch Jordan during Friday's final four.

Officially, Tyler went six innings, gave up four hits, two runs and hit two batters. He struck out four and walked only one.

And it was his single to right field that gave Brodhagen enough time to scoot home from second base in the top of the fourth inning to put the Eagles ahead, 1-0.

He was a warrior out there. He emptied the tank for his teammates, and that didn't go unnoticed.

It was just his first official loss through 10 starts.

"I feel bad for him. He's taking it pret-

ty hard," Bortorff said.

Bortorff accepted the state runner-up trophy at home plate after the game, but, once again, he couldn't hold back the tears as he hoisted it above his head. But then he mustered the courage to holler over to his seniors to come and take the hardware from him.

It was a battle for Bortorff to hold his head high at that moment, but he did it. And in time, Tyler's going to be able to do it, too. He's got nothing to be ashamed of. His teammates were proud of his effort all spring. And so, too, was his coach.

"We'll be back," Bortorff said.

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

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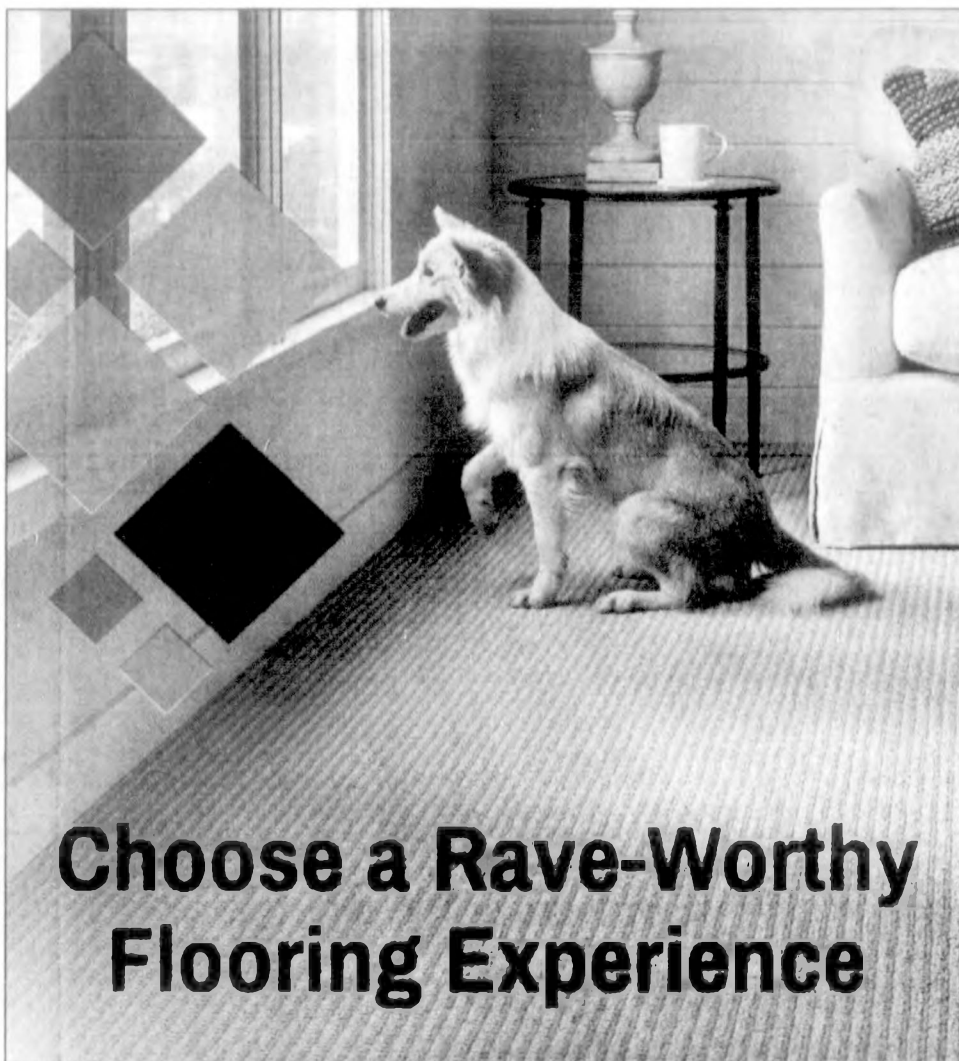


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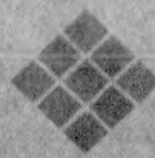


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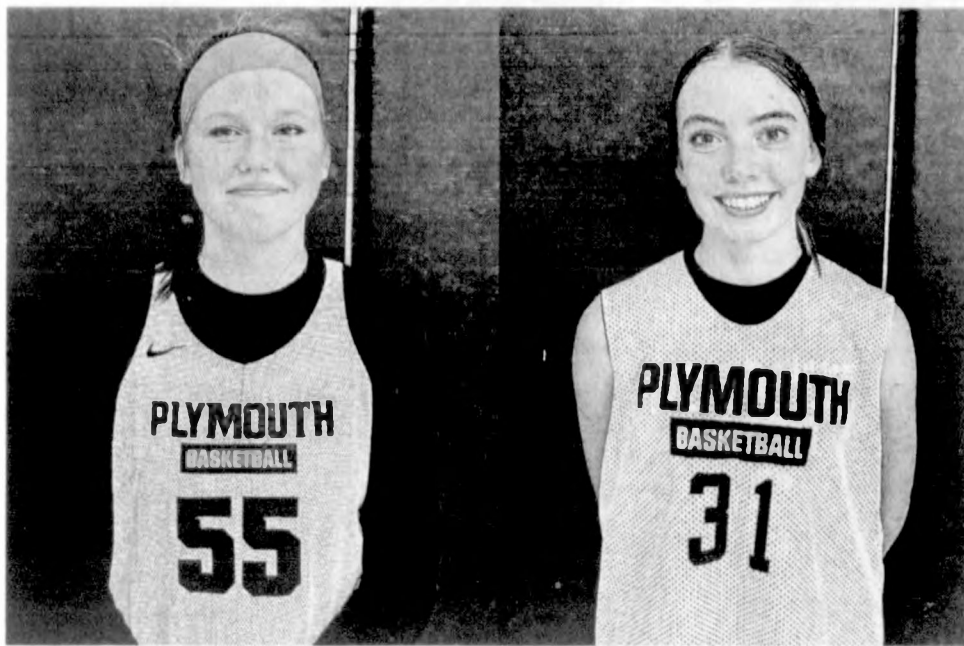
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# Wildcats preparing for comeback season



Plymouth's Elena Dimaria and Mackenzie Dicken hope to turn around the girls basketball team this winter. RACHEL PIERSON/SPECIAL TO HOMETOWNLIFE.COM

**Rachel Pierson**  
Special to HometownLife.com

The Plymouth girls basketball team expected Elena Dimaria to be one of its leading scorers last season.

But after the devastation of losing senior Meghan McCarthy, arguably the Wildcats' top player entering 2022-23, to her second ACL tear, that meant Dimaria was forced to carry the offense in the post.

And the almost 6-foot-2 did.

She led the team with 8.7 points per game, shot a team-best 43% from the field and totaled 148 points as Plymouth went 6-17 overall and finished last in the Kensington Lakes Activities Association-West.

McCarthy wasn't on the floor to take some of the pressure off of Dimaria's shoulders. And that was a challenge for the center. But it likely made her better while battling in the paint.

That experience should make Dimaria one of the top post players in the division as the Wildcats look to rebound from a rough winter that saw their best player sidelined by crutches.

"It was a challenge, but she (McCarthy) came back and was always on the sidelines helping me out," Dimaria said following Wednesday night's Summer League Shoot-out games. "She worked on post moves with me and pushed me to be the best."

Being the next leader in line was unexpected for Dimaria, but she didn't let that hold her back. She used it as motivation to continue improving.

"I came to practice early, stayed late, got

more shots in and worked on my post work by myself," Dimaria said. "I wanted to always cheer up my team. Even when we were down, I still wanted to help out and keep giving positive energy."

Coach Ryan Ballard actually had no idea who Dimaria was when she got to high school because she enrolled during the pandemic. He quickly sold her on joining the basketball team after watching her play volleyball.

She's gone from being an unknown to becoming a leader like McCarthy, Morgan Miller and the rest of the veteran Wildcats that have come before her.

"It really is amazing to see how amazing of a player she has become," said Ballard, who's entering his eighth season as head coach. "She is one of the best-kept secrets in the state, I would say, and she doesn't play AAU basketball. So a lot of college coaches don't know about her. But those that do know her know that she can play."

Of course, helping Plymouth turn around the program won't be only Dimaria's responsibility. She has some talent surrounding her, including senior forward Zaynab Saab.

But Ballard also had seven underclassmen on last year's squad that got plenty of experience. And perhaps the biggest standout of that bunch was Mackenzie Dicken, who has made strides in the backcourt since her freshman season wrapped up in March.

"Being a freshman on varsity was a crazy experience, but as the season progressed, all of my teammates made me feel more comfortable," Dicken said. "My experience could've been stressful, but my teammates made

it exciting." Dicken might not be the tallest on the team, but she is quick and light on her feet. That makes it tough for opponents to defend. But her goal is to be more physical next winter.

She appeared in all 22 games last winter and averaged 4.5 points, 2.7 rebounds, 1.5 assists and 1.6 steals per game.

"I have been in the weight room because that was an issue for me last year," Dicken said. "I felt like I was getting pushed around, and I knew that if I were stronger I could be a better player."

Surprisingly, she's already a player her teammates look up to on the court.

"Her teammates love her, she is an amazing teammate," Ballard added. "The team loves to follow her, and I think everybody is really excited to let her run the show as the point guard this year by distributing the basketball and making winning plays. She is tough and stronger this year, along with shooting better. I am really looking forward to what she brings to the table this year because she is also just a really fun kid to coach."

Dimaria and Dicken are just two of the players who should help make the Wildcats more competitive this year.

"I hope to see more growth in our win-loss column this season, but every day we are focusing on being the best versions of ourselves," Ballard said. "It has always been our focus to continue to be 1% better every day, and if we do that, things will take care of itself and we will win."

Rachel Pierson is the summer sports department intern at Hometown Life. Follow her on Twitter at @rachelmpier-son.

## Community Worship

<p><b>BRIGHTON</b></p> <p><b>HOLY SPIRIT ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH &amp; SCHOOL</b> www.hsccc.net at the corner of Winans Lake &amp; Musch Rd. 810-231-9199 Fr. John Rocus, Pastor Weekend Liturgies Saturday 4:00 p.m. Sunday 9:00 &amp; 11:00 a.m. Please visit our Shrine of Our Lady Display and Book &amp; Gift Shop</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 <a href="mailto:wellstrov@aol.com">wellstrov@aol.com</a> Come and worship at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church!</p>
<p><b>NORTHVILLE</b></p> <p><b>United Methodist Church - Northville</b> (248) 349-1144 777 West 8 Mile Road (8 Mile and Taff 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. Woodley, Lead Pastor <a href="http://www.umcnorthville.org">www.umcnorthville.org</a></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 <a href="http://www.hope-lutheran-church.com">www.hope-lutheran-church.com</a> 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 349-3810 Religious Education 349-2598 Rev. Denis Theroux, Pastor</p>	<p><b>RESERVE YOUR SPOT TODAY!</b></p>	<p><b>RESERVE YOUR SPOT TODAY!</b></p>

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## Obituaries

### George Wilfred Beno

George Wilfred Beno (age 76), passed away June 16, 2023, due to complications of Endocarditis (infection of the heart, specifically the heart valves). Born to George William Beno and Alice Catherine (Gray) Beno on May 6, 1947, in Highland Park, MI. George was preceded in death by both parents, daughter Jennifer Alice Beno Hunter and brothers Robert and Lawrence Beno.

George is survived by his wife of 56 years, Patricia Ann (Young) Beno; son and fiancé, George Wesley Beno III and Ashlee Jurski; son-in-law Chris Hunter; grandchildren: Julia Hunter, Seth Hunter and Sophia Hunter; sister and brother-in-law: Ellen Jane Flynn and Ted Flynn, as well as many nephews, nieces, great-nephews, great-nieces and many great friends.

George served in the Army from 1966 - 1968 and worked at General Motors Proving Grounds for "36 years, 5 months, 9 days, and 7 hours", until retiring on April 1, 2004.

George enjoyed many activities over the years, including: hunting, motocross and enduro motorcycling, boating, playing golf, grilling, and later in life he enjoyed cooking and using his New Holland tractor. He was always an automobile enthusiast and NASCAR fan. George loved his family and being in the woods.

George was a member of the Highland Moose, Milford American Legion and Atlanta Fraternal Order of Eagles Aerie #4077. He enjoyed the friendships he developed over the years through these organizations, and through work.

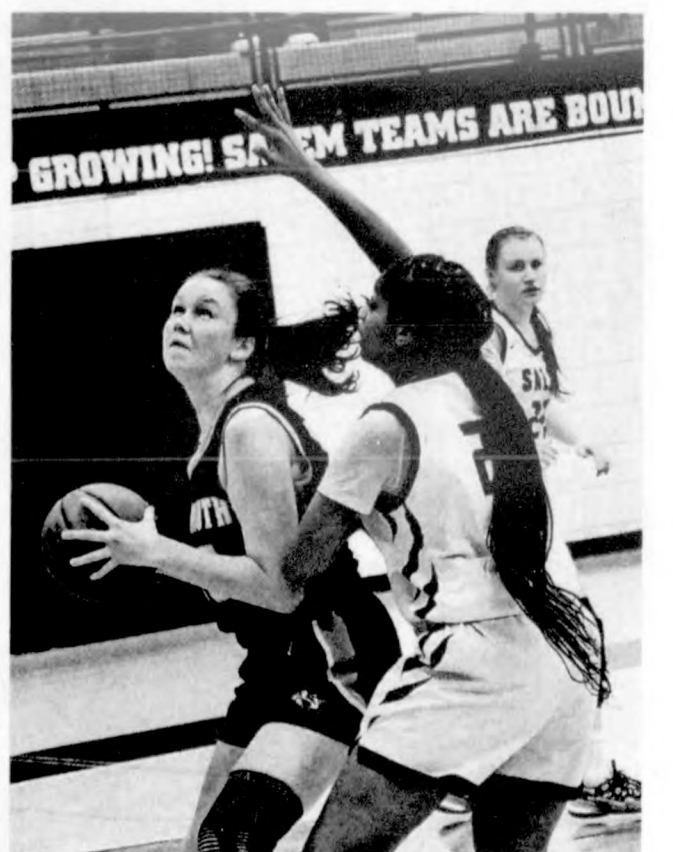
As were his wishes, he was laid to rest on Tuesday, June 27, 2023 in Great Lakes National Cemetery in Holly, MI.

Plans for a celebration of life will be made for a later date.



### Timothy L. Durocher

RIDGEWOOD - Durocher, Timothy L. age 55 a resident of Ridgewood and formerly of Garden City, MI and Sanford, FL died peacefully on Saturday, June 17, 2023. Devoted father of Jack Thomas and Chloe Marie Durocher. Dear brother of Joseph Durocher and his wife Alaina. Loving son of the late Spike and Mary Jo Durocher. Dear uncle of Anthony, Patrick, Nicholas, Joseph, Kara, Evan and Lucas. In his last days, Tim was lovingly cared for by his former wife, Julie Durocher. Tim earned his undergraduate degree in finance from Central Michigan University in 1990 and later his JD from Michigan State University College of Law where he graduated as class president in 1994. He was licensed to practice law in Michigan, New York, and Florida where he was Board Certified in Real Estate. He most recently worked for Advance Publications (Conde Naste) where he was Senior In House Counsel in Real Estate and Media Law. He was ACC Certified In House Counsel in 2019. He was also an adjunct professor of legal studies at Purdue University Global and Florida Southern University. Tim was a dedicated father, an avid runner, and also enjoyed golf and photography. Family and friends are invited to a celebration of Tim's life on Friday, June 23 from 2-6PM at the Volk Leber Funeral Home, 268 Kinderkamack Rd., Oradell. Details of a service to be held in Michigan in July will be provided privately. In lieu of flowers, donations in Tim's name are appreciated to his son Jack's school, The Phoenix Center, 16 Monsignor Owens Place, Nutley, NJ 07110, [www.thephoenixcenternj.org](http://www.thephoenixcenternj.org) or to Jack and Chloe's trust. Please call the funeral home at 201-261-1088 for details of the trusts.



Plymouth's Elena DiMaria scores down low during a Kensington Lakes Activities Association-West girls basketball game Friday, Jan. 6, 2023, at Salem. PHOTOS BY BRANDON FOLSOM/HOMETOWNLIFE.COM



Plymouth coach Ryan Ballard talks to his players during a KLAAs-West girls basketball game Tuesday, Jan. 24, 2023.





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Accepting resumes until the position is filled.

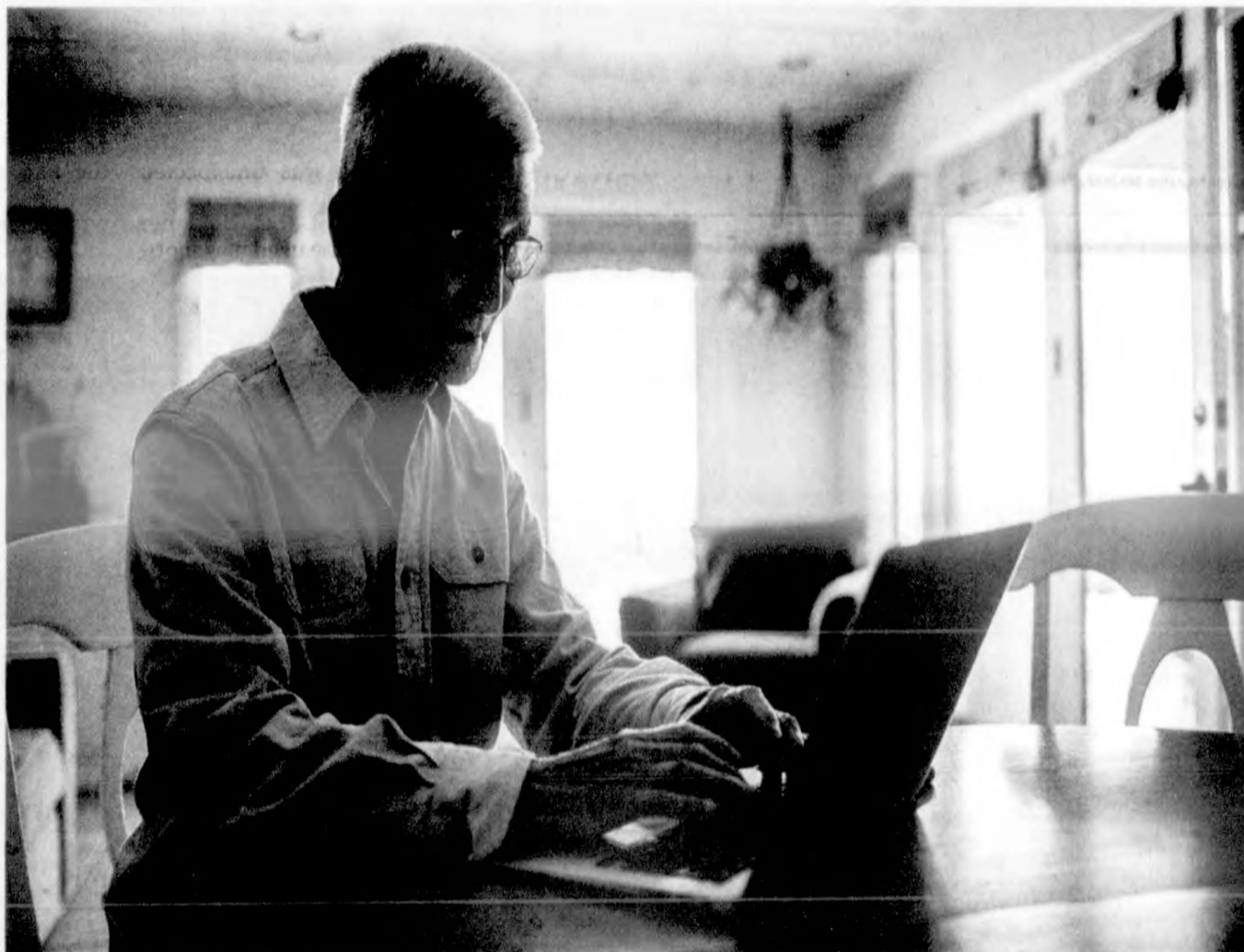
## Tips to make a computer run more smoothly

Computers play an important role in daily life. Whether it's a handheld device like a smartphone or tablet or a more traditional tool like a desktop or laptop, computers are ubiquitous and vital to life in the 21st century.

The daily reliance on computers is one reason why slow ones can be so frustrating. No one wants to miss a work deadline or struggle to read or watch a news story online because of a slow computer, but users know that such scenarios play out every day. Thankfully, slow computers are often easily fixed, and these strategies might help users' computers run more smoothly.

- Uninstall apps you don't use. Applications use up memory even if they're not used. Unused apps and other programs also may be updated automatically, leading to computer performance issues that make it hard to do things quickly. Many computers utilize apps that users are unaware of, so it's important that users familiarize themselves with such programs so they don't uninstall anything that is necessary for the computer to operate. Once that research has been done, users can then begin to uninstall apps they don't need or use.

- Install more memory. Extra memory can go a long way toward helping a computer run more smoothly and with greater efficiency. Online tutorials on sites such as YouTube can instruct individuals how to install RAM on their laptops or desktops, and this quick and relatively simple step can be great for users who have seen far too much of the dreaded color wheel in recent weeks and months.



- Clear data from your web browser. Another contributor to poor computer performance is a lagging web browser. If web-sites are taking longer to load, the culprit could be a full cache, which includes files held as information about your internet browsing and viewing habits. Individuals who use the internet a lot but rarely empty their cache are likely dealing with lagging browsers that have nothing to do with their computers. Computers are different, but in general emptying the cache involves going

into the settings of a user's go-to browser and choosing an option like "empty cache" or "clear browsing data." If this is what's behind a computer's poor performance, users will notice an immediate improvement upon emptying their cache.

- Turn automatic startup off. Many people may notice multiple programs starting up when they restart their computers. Though some of these might be apps users utilize every day, others might be set to

start up the moment the computer comes on, even if they're rarely used. In the latter case, users can adjust the settings on their computers so only those apps they use with great frequency open upon restarting. Users also can improve performance by closing apps and internet tabs once they no longer need them.

A slow computer can be incredibly frustrating. But a few simple strategies can help users improve computer performance so machines can run more smoothly.

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