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TUESDAY, JULY 11, 2023

\$2⁰⁰

No Helmets

Two killed in separate motorcycle crashes

Napoleon

From staff reports

A woman died in a single-vehicle motorcycle crash in Napoleon on the afternoon of the Fourth of July.

Just before 3:30 p.m. on Tuesday, July 4, the Napoleon Township Police Department responded to a motor vehicle crash on Austin Road near Chicago Road.

Kimberly Kraska, 65, of Pinckney was driving north on Chicago Road and turned east onto Austin Road. The preliminary investigation shows that shortly after her turn, the 1996 Honda motorcycle she was driving had a tire failure, causing her to lose control of the vehicle.

The motorcycle overturned, ejecting Kraska from the vehicle. Kraska was not wearing a helmet and struck her head on the roadway.

The Napoleon Township Fire Department and Jackson Community Ambulance arrived on the scene shortly thereafter, however, Kraska had already succumbed to her injuries and was pronounced dead at the scene.

Kraska was released to the Jackson County Medical Examiner's Office for further investigation, however, neither alcohol nor drugs appear to be a factor in the crash. Next of kin was identified and notified within a short time of the crash.

Franklin Twp.

A 60-year-old man from Carleton, Michigan was killed in a head-on collision on U.S. 12 Sunday, say officials. His name was not released by press time.

On Sunday July 9, 2023 at approximately 5:00 p.m. Lenawee County Sheriff's Office deputies responded to the area of U.S. 12 and Mull Highway in Franklin Township for a report of a serious motorcycle crash. Upon arrival, sheriff's deputies determined that a 56-year-old man from Adrian was driving a 2022 blue Ford Maverick truck westbound on the shoulder of the east bound lane approaching Mull Highway.

The man from Carleton was riding his 2018 Harley Davidson motorcycle with a group of fellow riders, was traveling east, navigating the curve near Mull

Brother, sister meet



Half-brother and sister Lonnie Chester, left, and Robi Roberts, right, meet and hug for the very first time, both at the age of 81. They are only six months apart.



Laura Hammond, left, helped research the family tree that linked Lonnie Chester and Robi Roberts, who are seen at right holding a photo of their father, Ralph Durham.



DNA testing help brother, sister decipher a confusing family history

Story and photos
By John Hummer
Editor

It was a Fourth of July that will live on in eternity for a Brooklyn man and his recently-discovered half-sister, as the pair were united for the first time last Tuesday. The emotions on both of their faces told the story of how much that moment meant to them.

Lonnie Chester and his half-sister, Robi Roberts, who came all the way from Florida to meet Lonnie, were overjoyed when Robi stepped out of her car and hugged as they met for the very first time, both at the age of 81, at Lonnie's house on Glendale Court near Vineyard Lake.

Lonnie was born on Dec. 31, 1941. Robi was born on July 1, 1942.

"This is one of the best days of my life," Lonnie said with excitement in his voice.

"I'm glad I have a good-looking brother," Robi said with a smile on her face. "I'm very excited – I'm all of a sudden in a family that I didn't know I was in. Everything is meant to be. But you can redirect yourself – you can go off course – it's up to you."

Some time ago Robi submitted her DNA to 23andMe, a site similar to ancestry.com, where

people can trace their family background.

Eventually, the connection was made linking Lonnie and Robi through a mutual relative.

Robi said she didn't know much about her and Lonnie's biological father, Ralph Durham. "I traced back that they all worked around the same area in Detroit and [her parents] both married other people, so to speak.

"I always thought that there was something wrong in my family because my parents gave me up for adoption," Robi continued. "But then when they wanted to make it final – I was about a year old – they wouldn't sign the papers. So, they came and got me from the people that were supposed to adopt me. The people that were supposed to adopt me paid the hospital and paid all the bills. I knew them until I was about 20. I used to always cry when they'd say, 'This is the daughter we almost adopted. I would cry and cry to think my parents gave me up. That was the story – I never had time to think about it. So now, after this happened, we know what happened. It was the war. They didn't come back from the war. My dad was in the service,

See *Brother, sister meet* page 6

'Ridiculously bad'



Jackson County Sheriff Gary Schuette points out a panel that powers the downtown jail's phone and security services. The panel is mounted below pipes that regularly leak water and sewage.

Pending lawsuits, suspended arrests linked to decrepit county jail

Story, photos by Julie Riddle
Contributing writer

Raw sewage dripping on inmates proved too little an incentive for Jackson County voters last November to agree to replace a crumbling county jail building.

Now, residents could take a hit in their wallets — and in their safety — because of the building, where at least one inmate death has sparked an intended lawsuit against the county and overcrowding means police make fewer arrests.

A recent increase in violent crime in the county is reflected in the county's downtown jail facility, crowded with people accused of murder, rape, and other violent crimes, according to Jackson County Sheriff Gary Schuette.

In the 1950s, 15 beds were adequate for the county's arrests. Now, with 185 beds in its downtown jail, the county is maxed out. Police can't follow up on many of the county's more than 10,500 active arrest warrants because they have no place to put low-level arrestees, Schuette said.

The 70-year-old facility adjacent to the Jackson County Courthouse regularly leaks sewage from overhead pipes. Its maze-like design places corrections deputies far away from inmates who might hurt themselves or overdose on smuggled-in drugs. Cell corners invisible to workers provide opportunity for inmates to beat and rape one another, the sheriff said.

About six months ago, an inmate overdosed and died. Corrections deputies could not see the man had passed out until it was too late to save him, Schuette reported. He recently received notification that the man's family intends to sue the county because of the death.

Voters in November rejected a 20-year millage that would have funded a new facility, at an estimated construction cost of about

\$50 million. The property tax would have cost the owner of a home with a taxable value of \$200,000 an extra \$200 per year.

A separate millage, which supported the 2002 construction of the county's 252-bed low-level offender jail facility on Chanter Road, expired last year. The county now must find a way to pay the \$1.5 million annual operational costs for that jail, previously funded by the millage.

Hoping to snag a piece of a multi-billion dollar state surplus, the sheriff begged locally connected senators and representatives for help getting state money for a new jail. That hope died with the unveiling of the proposed 2024 state budget late last month.

"Nothing for us," Schuette grumbled, noting the \$40 million earmarked in the proposed budget for an addition at the Macomb County Jail. "We've got nothing. We're on our own."

An advisory committee is exploring less-expensive options for a new jail and hopes to try again with voters next year.

Meanwhile, taxpayers could be on the hook for lawsuits related to the jail's leaking pipes, poor sightlines, and other hazards, and people accused of low-level crimes remain free because the county has no place to put them.

"It's ridiculously bad," Shuette said. "In 2023, we shouldn't be worried about this kind of stuff."

Sewage and broke parts

In a dim hallway where sheriff's deputies pass each day on their way to road patrol duties, a small puddle gleamed on the cement floor during a recent personalized tour of the jail.

Above, orange and brown decay oozed across dirty-white tiles and encased low-hanging pipes that criss-cross the ceiling.

On a good day, liquids dribbling from the pipes are clear or yellow, Jail Administrator Capt.

See *Ridiculously bad* page 2

See *Crash* page 3

Hooray for the Red, White and Blue!



COURTESY PHOTO

Left: Russ Peterson holds his great-granddaughter, Violet Meyers, during Brooklyn's July 4 parade. Incidentally, little Violet is an 8th generation resident, starting with patriarch Daniel Peterson. (Think of Peterson Road near Clarklake.) This year's parade was special, and the fireworks brought back memories of past Fourth of Julys in the village, as thousands turned out to enjoy the display and their community.



Scrap tire collection at Jackson Fairgrounds

The Jackson County Conservation District with funds from EGLE Scrap Tire Grant Program is holding a scrap tire collection at the Jackson County Fairgrounds on Saturday, July 22. Individuals may bring 10 tires per visit, no business or AG tires, from 9 a.m. to noon. Participants are asked to use the entrance off Blackstone Street. This is a free event, but donations are accepted.

Ridiculously bad . . . from page 1

Anthony Stewart said. "If it's brown, you can guess what that is," Stewart said. "All three of those colors drop on our staff as they walk out." Escaped sewage is a fact of life at the jail, built in 1952 when the state ordered that a previous building be shut down because of its poor condition. Asbestos-covered pipes carrying the building's water and sewage regularly leak or burst. Several times in recent years, corrections deputies have had to work around inches of sewage spread across the central booking room floor, piling blankets across it so they had someplace to step, Stewart said. "Plumbers hate coming here," Schuette said, despite the premium prices the county pays to hire someone willing to work in the jail's conditions.

Jail workers have created workarounds, like the turkey basting pans embedded in the ceiling of a medical room, catching sewage over a chair where workers treat patients. Many of the building's fixes have been cobbled together from parts purchased on eBay. To keep the building temperature tolerable — between 70 and 85 degrees in summer — workers use a pole to prop up a vice grip clamped on a furnace valve where the knob fell off. A meat thermometer shoved in a hole tracks the temperature. Nobody makes parts for a 1950s building anymore, said Stewart.

'Imagine the outcry' He also can't find parts to fix cell locks when they break, like one did a few years ago, trapping an inmate inside. Jail staff had to use a blowtorch to get the inmate out. At one end of the building, far from the corrections deputy's station, an inmate in an isolation cell added in a 2002 jail addition lifted his head and peered at a jail visitor. Schuette, a former detective, once investigated the death of an inmate who hung herself with a bedsheet in that cell, the sheriff said. People die in jail, or almost die — some by accident and some with intent. Last year, corrections

deputies prevented 11 suicides, six by overdose and five by hanging, Stewart said. They responded to and stopped another four hanging attempts already this year, including one last month. "Imagine the outcry if those attempts were successful," Stewart said, acknowledging the possibility of a slew of lawsuits against the county related to such deaths. Based on its arrest rate, the downtown jail should have 25 isolation cells for incoming inmates who pose a danger to themselves or others, Schuette said. The building has four. Mental health treatment happens in a cramped former inmate visitation booth just big enough for two chairs separated by a see-through panel. "It's pathetic," Schuette said. "But we've got no place else to put them."

Drugs, violence and fewer arrests A \$150,000 scanner used by some jails would catch drugs smuggled into the facility in stomachs or shoved into body crevices. A worthy investment, but the Jackson jail's cramped quarters leave no room for the sizable machine, Schuette said. About six months ago, an inmate smuggled in drugs and shared them with two cellmates. When the three men overdosed, corrections deputies saved two, but one died before they could resuscitate him. That expected lawsuit is only one of several currently lodged against the jail, Schuette said. Inmates and their families could sue the jail for cruel and unusual punishment attributed to the building's poor conditions, for overdoses on drugs inmates brought in themselves, and for the assaults, rapes, and suicides that happen in dark corners of cell pods, hidden from the jail's out-of-date cameras and from passing officers. Such attacks become increasingly probable as the jail holds more and more violent offenders. Most inmates at the downtown facility are locked up on "extraordinarily serious" charges or are chronic repeat offenders, Schuette said.

As of the end of June, those charges included kidnapping, bank robbery, seven people accused of murder, and more than 20 people accused of rape. Police have to make arrests on felony warrants, but the jail currently won't take warrant arrests on most misdemeanor charges because there's no room, Schuette said. Offenders know they won't get arrested for low-level crimes, so they have no reason to not commit them, the sheriff said. "There's no deterrent. They know they're not going to do any time. They know they're not going to go to jail, so who cares?"

What comes next A committee representing the sheriff's office, county commissioners, and several townships has been tasked with figuring out how to get a new jail built. First, they have to come up with a way to keep the lights on at the Chanter Road facility, now that its \$1.5 million in operational costs has no designated funding, said committee chairman Corey Kennedy, Jackson County District 3 commissioner. If they can't come up with another alternative, the county may have to make budget cuts, possibly starting by reducing road patrol, Kennedy said. The committee has requested bids that would scale back the original new-jail proposal — including a \$10,000 savings by mothballing the current structure instead of demolishing it — in hopes of getting an OK from voters, probably during the November 2024 election, Kennedy said. "People tell me all the time, 'So what?'" Kennedy said. "They're criminals. They don't deserve a nice facility." But when corrections staff have to dodge feces raining on their heads from exploding pipes, and when dire conditions put the county at risk of substantial lawsuits, it's time to do something, he said. "We need to make sure that we're taking care of our job," Schuette said. "It's just critical that we do that right. And it's increasingly difficult in the setting that we have here."

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These comments from social media about Brooklyn’s July 4th parade and fireworks make our hearts sing. Whether you gave \$1.00 or \$1,000 -- or anything more or in between -- every dollar was important in reaching the goal.

- Every dollar bought a smile, a giggle, a hug or a handshake.
- Every dollar bought a grandfather’s memory of his bike ride in the parade.
- Every dollar bought a grandmother’s memory of baking a cake for the sale at the field.
- Every dollar bought wide grins of pride as parents watched sports teams pass by.
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And when the sky lit up for the first time maybe we felt a connection that had been missing for a while.

We hope so. That was the real goal.
And worth every penny.

!! THANK YOU !!

Brooklyn’s July 4 Fireworks Committee

Who has access to attorney?

Council passes attorney policy, but not without discord

By John Hummer
Editor

At their July 10 meeting, the Brooklyn Village Council approved a Village Council Attorney Privilege Policy, but it wasn’t unanimous, as the policy called into question who on the council or village staff should have the privilege to contact the village attorney.

The topic was added to the agenda at the start of the meeting by council member Patti Robinson. “I put this forward because we work with a village attorney who said the council needs to establish a policy,” she stated. “A common practice is that only specific officials need to contact the attorney without council authorization. For instance, the village manager, president, or whatever.

“I came up with this policy because in March I noticed that there were some expenditures under our council budget for attorney fees, which I questioned.” Robinson continued. “I came up with this policy because the attorney fees were done by our (village) president without any knowledge of the rest of us. To date, there have been over \$3,000 of approved fees on the council from interactions with our (village) president.”

Robinson asked Village Attorney Fred Lucas, who was present at the meeting, if most municipalities have a policy regarding attorney contact. “Most of them do,” he said. “I think it’s a good thing for the council to decide who can call.” When asked by Robinson who he communicated with mostly in the past, Lucas noted that it has been primarily the village managers with whom he spoke.

“Once we have a procedure, then the lawyer knows who he can talk to,” added Robinson. “I just think if we have a concern, then we put it in writing, it goes

to the village manager – he can communicate with us.”

The purpose of the new policy comes, in part, from the Michigan Municipal League, as it is stated at the top of the policy: “Michigan Municipal League ‘Handbook for General Law Village Officials’ states that the council needs to establish a policy for contacting the attorney on record.”

“I feel the president should have access to the attorney, and the manager, too.”

Terry Mahr
Brooklyn Village President

The new policy states: “Any village council member, president, or pro-tem that has concerns they feel need to be discussed with the village attorney will put said communication in writing. Upon completion, that correspondence will be submitted to the village manager who will then communicate with the attorney of record.”

The policy continues: “In the instance, there is an issue that a council member feels the need to bypass the village manager, (i.e., a concern that relates to performance evaluation, action or inaction), the council member may put that concern in writing and submit it to the Personnel Committee for review. Upon review and approval, the Personnel Committee will authorize the village president to contact the attorney of record.”

“I just feel there has been a lot of contact with our lawyer that we don’t know until the bills come in that this amount of money has been spent of taxpayers’ money, and I feel that this is not transparent,” Robinson stated. “I feel that this (new policy) will make the council work as a team, and it would control spending.”

Council member Phil Bliven added his thoughts on the matter. “I think we have a personnel committee that is not functioning or being made aware of what’s going on and being bypassed,” he said. “That’s what I’m seeing, and I don’t understand why.”

Village President Terry Mahr then weighed in, defending her contact with the village attorney.

“When I came on board as

president, I did not receive any information from a past administration or president,” she said. “I met with the attorney one time. I did not spend 10 hours with the attorney between our last bill and this bill. If you look closely at the notation, it says ‘council’ also. Some of the hours he spent clarifying issues that both [Village Manager] Matt [Swartzlander] and I had for the council are part of what was billed to me.” She added that there were several emails that went to and from the attorney, some of which Swartzlander was copied. “I spent one hour on June 5 with the attorney.”

“As far as your policy, I feel that the president should have access to the attorney, and the manager, too,” Mahr continued, adding, “I was under the impression that both the manager and the president could consult with the attorney. I think that this is a policy that should be reviewed by the attorney.”

She also noted that she wasn’t in favor of the proposed policy being an action item later in the agenda.

Later in the meeting, Lucas said it was the council’s responsibility to develop its own policy. “You set the policy. It’s not for me to decide. It’s whatever you guys decide what policy you want. Whatever you decide on, I’ll abide by, of course.”

“The policy should also speak to the village manager communicating his correspondence with the attorney to the president, who then communicates it to the council – and that’s not what this (proposed policy) says,” Mahr stated. “I guess that’s my issue with it.”

Council member Phil Krauss supported Mahr’s position. “We should all know what’s going on, but she should have the right to [contact the attorney] if there is a question,” he said. Krauss felt the policy should not have been acted on at the meeting without a chance for council member input.

“We should iron out a professional policy.”

In the end, the council voted 4-2 to approve the policy as put forth by Robinson. Mahr and Krauss voted “no”. Trustee Gabriella Bach was not present at the meeting.

Crash . . . from page 1

Highway and was struck head on by the Ford Maverick in the east bound lane. The driver of the motorcycle was ejected from the bike, succumbed to his injuries and died at the scene. The driver of the Ford Maverick fled the accident scene on foot. A K-9 track was initiated by Michigan State Police, assisted by Lenawee County sheriff’s deputies. The suspect was apprehended within a mile of the crash scene, as he exited the woods on Collier Highway. He was arrested and transported to the Lenawee County Jail.

Alcohol was not believed to be a factor. The investigation is ongoing.

The driver of the motorcycle was not wearing a helmet. No one else involved in the crash was injured. The sheriff’s office was assisted by Cambridge Twp. Police Department, Michigan State Police, Sand Lake Fire Department, the Lenawee County Accident Investigation Team, Lenawee County Community Ambulance, and the Lenawee County Medical Examiner’s Office.

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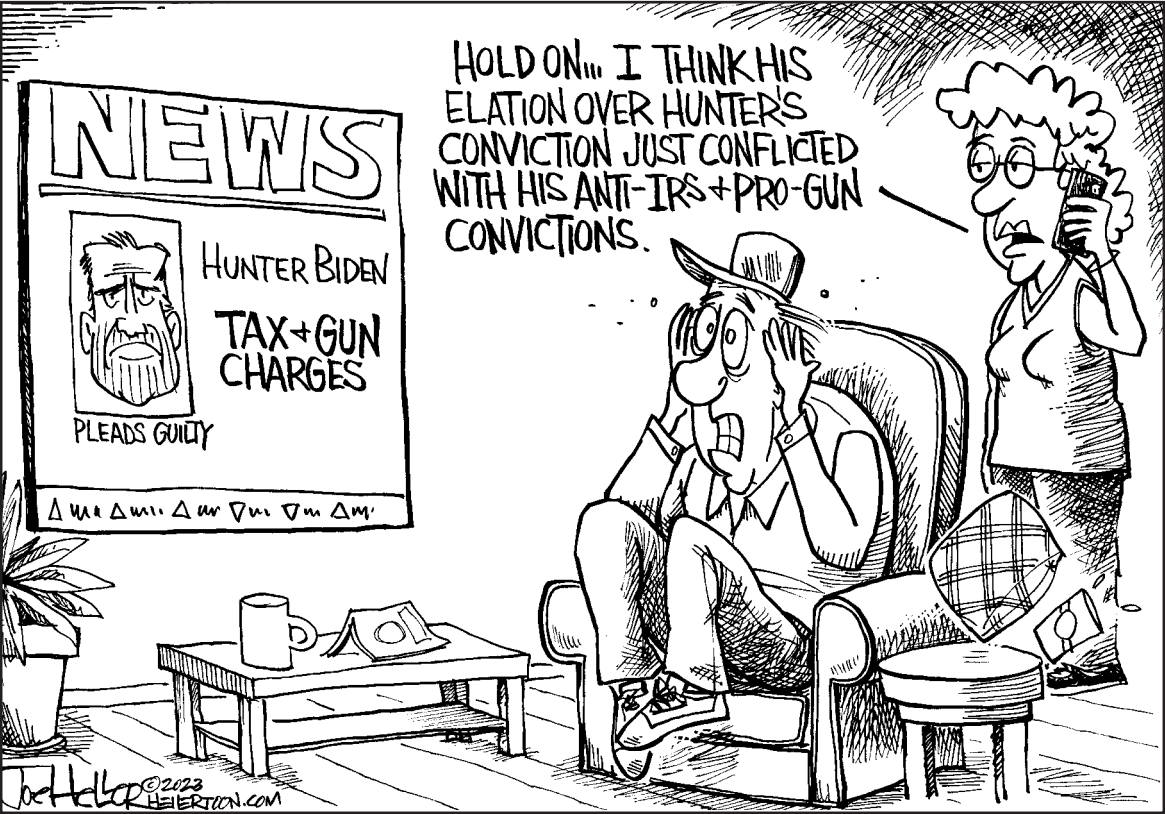
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Letter to the editor

Court needs to be reigned in

Dear editor,

Our fundamental freedoms are being attacked by the Supreme Court.

The partisan right-wing majority on the bench gutted voting rights, opened the floodgates to unlimited corporate money in our elections, struck down gun safety laws, and limited the government's ability to protect our air and water.

In the year since they overturned *Roe v. Wade*, abortion

has been effectively banned (with extremely limited exceptions) in fourteen states. Nearly one in three Americans have lost access to abortion care.

This year, the court overturned access to clean water and student debt relief for millions of middle- and low-income borrowers. They've set the precedent of overturning policies simply because they were enacted by a Democratic president.

This can't go on. We need to

move away from these types of extremely partisan rulings and restore the legitimacy of the court.

Congress has a constitutional duty to act as a check on the Supreme Court and restore faith in our judicial system. It's time they acted before it's too late.

Peggy Walling
Jackson

It was time for Affirmative Action to go

Dear editor,

The purpose of Affirmative Action in the United States was to create government programs to overcome the effects of past societal discrimination by allocating jobs and resources to members of specific groups, such as minorities and women.

There is no question that past societal discrimination occurred in the United States and perhaps the only appropriate remedy (at the time) was affirmative action. However, I believe this policy has outlived its purpose.

Anywhere you look in the United States, minorities are well

represented. Besides, there is a limit to punishing people for the sins of their forefathers. It is unfair to award preference based on race when all other qualifications are equal. This not only undermines the means to determine the best candidates but also serves to de-legitimize the accomplishments of someone who was given preference based on race. Those opposed to affirmative action look to section one of the Fourteenth Amendment of the Constitution of the United States.

I believe the minorities of this

country have been given enough time to allow for the "cream to rise to the top" and now must take their equal position alongside the majority. The time is long overdue to stop rewarding underachieving individuals because of their race and start rewarding overachieving individuals because of their accomplishments. To do otherwise, would mean denying the very principles set forth in the Fourteenth Amendment.

Joe Bialek
Cleveland, Ohio

Grass Lake boat race crew



This is the hard-working crew that organized Grass Lake's Fourth of July Cardboard Boat Races. From left: Tom Denig, Cindy Popovitch, Jennifer Keener, and David Keener. There were 33 boats that participated in the event for ages four and up, with different age brackets, and one free-for-all race.

Looking for members of the Class of 1973

The Columbia Central Class of 1973 is planning a 50-year class reunion and they are looking for the following classmates.

Nancy Biggs, Randy Baker, Roger Arkabauer, Vicki Bertram, Judy Bail, Carol Finch, Kathy Friday, Michelle Friday, Archie Goals, Rachelle Hammer, Zane Brashares, Susan Chandler, Susan Callazo, Victor Berger, Rick Hayford, Gayle Kalis, Cerise Karpinski, Mary Estey, Jean Giersbach, Joan Giersbach, Dennis Colburn, Karen Leinaar, Patricia Linton, Jim Miles, Susan Hull, Christine Taylor, Ken Lausch, Charlotte Kujat, Carla Rothfuss, Carol Linenfelder, David Szabo, Michelle Seltzer, Eric Wardwell, Paul Reipma, Robin Retter, Tony Watson, Manetta Tappen, Dave Wheaton, Kathy Trembley, Bob Stalhood, Jamie Staton, Susan Shrader, Julie VanTyle, Mark Whitney, Barbara Yeider, Paul Williamson, Dena Vandenburg, Karen Stone, Bill Shrock, Bob Gelia, Brad Johnson, Tom Lewis, Glen McJennett, Christine Shuh, Larry Musko, Gayle Otts, Mark Petterle, James Reaume, Colleen Reeser, Ed Travolli.

Individuals wishing to submit contact information on any of the above individuals, or acquire information on the reunion may do so by contacting Joseph Folts on Facebook or email at libertyjaf@yahoo.com.

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Potential training center sale still being discussed

By Dan Cherry
Lenawee County contributing writer

Details are still being worked on by Addison village and fire board officials for possibly selling the Addison Fire Department's training center.

The Addison Village Council at its meeting July 3 heard an update from village trustee Dean Bowman, who also serves as the five-member panel's fire board representative.

The fire board has been discussing offloading the facility, which was constructed in 2012 along U.S. 12 near Wheaton Road. Bowman's report to the village council stated a quote for an appraisal came to \$2,950,000 for the training center and the three lots that are part of the facility. The center itself sits on the westernmost lot, with the other two undeveloped plots to the east.

The training center was built to be a hub for inter-departmental exercises and an event rental space, as well as an unmanned station to serve the northern portion of Woodstock Township, including Cement City. The fire board is looking to trim unnecessary expenses and divert funds for updated and needed equipment. The fire board met twice in June and discussed details behind selling off the facility.

Questions have arisen about selling the facility, including how the sale proceeds would be used. Fire board president Mike Vischer reported to the fire board that money would be held in an investment account and used only for capital purchases, such as a fire truck or ambulance. Vischer reported he would wait for attorney guidance on the proper way to sell the facility: through a real estate sale or by competitive bidding.

The Addison village council approved the cost of appraisal.



COURTESY PHOTO

Officers were elected for the coming year for GFWC—Heart of the Lakes Women's Club at the June 27 meeting. From left are treasurer Shari Walters, secretary Holly Cogan, vice-president Michelle Ackerman and president Carol Wilson. Sue Wacker conducted the installation.

Heart of the Lakes Woman's Club elects officers, approves budget

Current officers were re-elected and projects for the coming club year were planned by GFWC-Heart of the Lakes Woman's Club, Brooklyn at a meeting held on June 27 at the home of president Carol Wilson at Clarklake.

Wilson was joined on the roster by vice-president Michelle Ackerman, secretary Holly Cogan, and treasurer Shari Walters. Sue Wacker, one of many former presidents present, conducted the installation.

In keeping with tradition, a country was chosen by the International Affairs Committee as the subject of a quiz and this year's choice was The Netherlands. The prizes were

plants placed in wooden shoes and windmill cookies. Edam and Gouda cheeses were also served.

Each month the club chooses a non-profit organization to adopt. Needed items for the John George Home, for gentlemen, in Jackson were collected for June. In July the Friendly Home for Women in Jackson will be the beneficiary and in August classes at Columbia Elementary School will be gifted with requested supplies.

The budget for the coming year reflects contributions in the areas of education, fine arts, home life, international affairs, public affairs, and conservation. The planters in downtown Brooklyn are filled with flowers each spring, and the gazebo on

the village square is decorated for Halloween and again for Christmas. The local Girl Scout troop is supported as are the Priceless Toy Store, the Brooklyn Food Pantry, and the International Heifer Project which provides families in Third World countries with animals, seeds, or other health-oriented items to encourage their abilities to thrive. The woman's club also supports a child in Indonesia through Compassion International and gives financial support or in-kind gifts to Operation Smile, the Jackson Interfaith Shelter, Kiwanis Bikes for Kids, Brooklyn Community Chest, SOAR, My Place, and the fireworks for Brooklyn's Fourth of July celebration.

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Summer Sighting



Bumble bee, bumble bee, come from the farm...Norma Tackett captured this nectar-swilling bumble bee on camera recently. The bee was visiting her hollyhocks, and made for a fun photo.

Do you have a Summer Sighting or other fun picture to share with our readers? Send it to news@theexponent.com, along with your name and a brief explanation, and we may share it.

Brother, sister meet . . .continued from page 1



Lonnie Chester and his half sister, Robi Roberts, get to know each other.

and obviously he didn't want somebody else's baby. Then they changed their mind. I always knew the story wasn't right – and neither of them ever told me. My parents kept such a good secret. People were embarrassed back then to have babies when they weren't married the full nine months.”

Robi's biological mother was Margaret (who went by Kaye) Cleveland. Lonnie's biological mother was Frieda Weingarten.

“I feel like [Robi],” Lonnie agreed. “We weren't quite accepted in the family.”

Details emerge from a niece's research on ancestry.com

Laura Hammond played an integral role in bringing him and Robi together.

“I have been passionate about genealogy my entire life,” Hammond said. “I was born with all eight of my great-grandparents living. “Literally, since I was five years old, I wanted to know who people are and where they came from.” As websites such as ancestry.com came of age, she began studying her family background. “I believe wholeheartedly that it's accurate,” she stated with conviction.

“We always knew Lonnie didn't know who his father was,” Hammond said.

At one point, Lonnie had put his DNA into ancestry.com. Lonnie's wife, Susan took an interest in it as well. “I told [Susan] that I can work on that and see if there are any kind of connections. When I looked at the DNA file he submitted to Ancestry, there was a half-sister right there.” That half-sister is Roberta (Robi) Roberts. That was a few years back, she said.

“When you match, you have about 3,600 centimorgans with your parents,” she explained. Centimorgan is the measurement of DNA on how you match with relatives. Children with the same two parents have 50 percent of centimorgans from each parent. She said Lonnie has about a 1,900 centimorgan match with Robi.

“That was kind of a surprise and a big clue,” Hammond noted. “The first thing to think is that her father is his father.” But here is where the plot thickens. “[Robi] was not raised by her biological father – her legal father was not her biological father, and she didn't know that until she had put her DNA into Ancestry and a cousin matched her. Her cousin said, ‘I know all my cousins, so who is this woman?’”

“When looking at Lonnie and looking at Robi (in Ancestry), who else in there has both of their DNA?” postulated

Hammond. “That comes from the Durham family which shows their biological father. His name is Ralph Durham. “We were able to narrow it down actually pretty quickly as far as what family they came from,” she stated. “I was able to narrow that down because there were other Durham descendants of Ralph's brothers' children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren.” That allowed Hammond to determine definitively that Lonnie and Robi's biological father was, in fact, Ralph Durham.

Upon further research, Hammond found a marriage license in Ohio that came into the picture. “That seemed to be a very popular thing for Michiganders who didn't want to wait three days (per Michigan law) to go down to Ohio and get a license and get married the same day.”

Hammond explained the significance of that. “Just before a bunch of men enlisted before World War II, they went down and got married. Eight out of 10 marriage licenses issued in Toledo at that time were for Michiganders.”

Durham was one of those men who enlisted to serve in World War II. Prior to deployment, he went to Defiance, Ohio, and got a marriage license issued with his presumed wife-to-be Frieda Weingarten, Lonnie's biological mother. “But her age was wrong, and it didn't get executed, so they never got married,” she noted. “She never admitted to what happened and never told anybody. She had a baby (Lonnie) and raised it on her own.”

In the meantime, Durham enlisted. “He enlisted on the same day as Robi's (legal) father at the same place in Detroit,” Hammond stated. “We conclude that they knew each other – we think that maybe they were friends.” Robi's father, Robert Cleveland, got married two weeks prior to Durham's attempt to get married. Her mother is Margaret Harris. They lived in the Detroit area (Royal Oak) while Robi was a child. They later moved to Florida where Robi graduated from high school and has lived since.

To continue her research, Hammond started sending out emails through Ancestry to the Durham family that had DNA matches with Lonnie. A woman named Karen (Thorman) Arnold, a granddaughter of Martin Durham, Ralph Durham's brother, replied. “Karen had already been talking with Robi. She brought it up with Robi that she had a half-

brother. She said Robi was kind of in shock. So, I left it alone until both Robi and Lonnie were ready to try to talk to each other.”

A bit of sad news that both eventually learned is that their father was killed in action in the war on Dec. 9, 1944, in Bischwiller, France at around the age of 28. He was first buried in a United States military cemetery in Hochfelden, France. Later his mother, Lily Plumsteel, had his remains brought back and he was buried in Ludington, Mich. as a war hero. He had served twice, the second time with the 79th Infantry in Gen. Patton's Third Army. He held the Combat Infantryman's badge and the Purple Heart.

“He wasn't killed too far from where I was stationed,” Lonnie said, who was enlisted in the U.S. Army. “I was at the place in France where he was killed and never knew it. My mother never told me.”

Hammond said Karen was open to providing her with more information. “Karen and I talked and got it worked out how everybody fits into the family,” she stated. “I was then able to talk to Lonnie about it, and Lonnie's family.”

As it turns out, Lonnie and Robi are only six months apart in age. “They have a lot in com-

mon, so they started talking to each other (by phone and email) and connecting,” Hammond said. “He was just so excited to have a sister. He wanted to know about her – he was really, really excited.”

“The Durham family look is strong in both Lonnie and Robi,” she continued. “You can tell they

are related by looking at them – absolutely. He looks exactly like, at this point in his life, Karen's grandfather (Martin Durham). “Any questions, any rumors, any ideas are gone. He knows exactly where he came from now. He's pretty excited.”

We were here when...

20 years ago ...

- Lee Robinson, a former superintendent, was chosen again as interim superintendent for the Onsted School District 20 years ago. When asked what his priorities were, Robinson said “The kids, the kids, the kids.”

50

years ago ...

- An ancient skeleton was accidentally unearthed near Addison 50 years ago. It was estimated that the skull was around 3,000 years old and thought to be an American Indian. A long cylindrical sea shell, believed to have come from Florida, was also unearthed near the skeleton.

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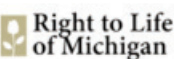
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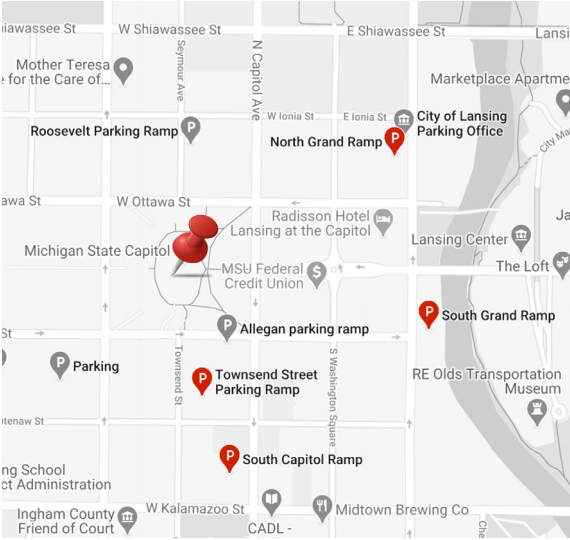
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The March will take place outside the State Capitol building at 100 N. Capitol Ave., Lansing, MI 48933

Find more info and RSVP at: RTL.org/events/march

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Reeling in awards



Rylan Hamlin and Jack Swihart recently competed in the 2023 High School Fishing National and World Finals in La Crosse, Wisconsin. They competed against 400 teams from all over the United States and the world, some from as far away as Zimbabwe. They placed seventh in the nation and tenth in the world.

This summer they are competing in two circuits: The Michigan B.A.S.S. Nation High School tournament series and the Michigan Major League High School tournament series. They will also be attending nationals for both circuits from their success last year and those tournaments are out of state. They have a tournament every

week/weekend from May-October so they are traveling nonstop. Both are 16-years-old. Rylan will be a junior at Michigan Center High School and Jack a senior at Lumen Christi this fall. Chad Hamlin, Rylan's dad, serves as the boat captain.

Household hazardous waste collection July 18

The Jackson County Conservation District, of Jackson County, along with the Jackson County D.O.T, Jackson County Recycles and Emmons Service, Inc. is sponsoring a Household Hazardous Waste Collection Day on Tuesday, July 18. Individuals may bring their items, from 1 to 6 p.m. at the Jackson County D.O.T. lot on N. Elm and Chanter Road.

Accepted items include: aerosol cans; automotive products (brake and transmission fluid, anti-freeze, motor oil, gasoline); batteries (household and car); cleaners/caustics/solvents; fire extinguishers; flammable liquids; items containing mercury; lightbulbs; medical sharps (must be in a rigid container); medications; paint (oil, lead-based) paint thinner/turpentine/mineral spirits; pesticides/herbicides/insecticides; propane tanks (up to 100 pounds); smoke alarms/carbon monoxide detectors.

Items not accepted: latex paint; electronics; tires; scrap metal; businesses/farm materials; explosives; radioactive materials.

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A most excellent July 4 in Brooklyn



Melissa Goings, left, who works at the Brooklyn American Legion, and her friend Karen Bone of Brooklyn sold American flags during the parade to support the programs of the Legion.



Brooklyn's Eva Lang went all out for the Patriotic Hat Contest prior to the parade.



Debbie Pitock of Brooklyn, left, and Brenda Lang donned patriotic attire while looking their best for the Patriotic Hat Contest.



The Vuncannon and Northrup families came together to watch Brooklyn's Fourth of July Parade. From left: Abigail Vuncannon, two-year-old Vivian Northrup, Amy Northrup, three-year-old Caroline Vuncannon, 10-year-old Yvan Northrup, Victoria Wishau, and Reeves Northrup.



Rich Turner, grand marshal of the 2023 Brooklyn Fourth of July Parade, claps for the large crowd that watched him pass by.

PHOTOS BY JOHN HUMMER

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