

CASS CITY CHRONICLE

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FIFTY CENTS

14 PAGES PLUS ONE SUPPLEMENT



BUSINESS WAS hopping Friday at Cass City Floral, where workers were busy arranging Valentine's bouquets. Above, Manager Eugene Wyman prepares a customer's order.

Scholarships give caregivers break

Tendercare Cass City officials are pledging to "share the care" in 2004 with a respite scholarship program designed to give local family caregivers a much-

Nowak said, "and 52 percent of family caregivers help chronically ill or disabled loved ones with activities of daily living, such as dressing and toileting."

nursing home services as a way to provide family caregivers a much-needed break. However, nursing home services can be provided on a short-term basis. The service is referred to as respite care, which is temporary care designed to provide families with a helpful break from the responsibilities of caring for a loved one.

"Respite care is a wonderful 'share the care' service," said Donna Lenhard, admission coordinator at Tendercare Cass City. "Our family caregivers express their appreciation for Tendercare's respite care service," Lenhard added. "Respite care can be a real lifesaver for family caregivers who may benefit from a weekend or a long-awaited vacation, or who may need to engage in business travel."

She noted Tendercare provides diversified adult health care services such as skilled nursing care, hospice and re-

habilitation.

Cass City resident John Cech, who serves as facilitator of the Thumb Area Parkinson's Support Group, agreed. At 44, Cech was diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis. By age 46, Cech required bilateral knee and hip replacement surgery.

Rheumatoid arthritis transformed Cech's vigorous life. For most families, the introduction of disease or disability and subsequent transition into caregiver-care-recipient roles is traumatic enough, but for Cech, the experience repeated itself.

"Nancy, my wife, became my caregiver. Then, 15 years ago, Nancy was diagnosed with Parkinson's," Cech said. "Unfortunately, when someone is diagnosed with Parkinson's at a younger age, the disease progresses at a much faster pace. And hers did, so I became her caregiver," he added. "For the last 3 years of Nancy's life, she was totally unable

to speak or walk, and had about 60 percent use of her hands and arms."

Her disease created another transformation in Cech's life: he became the family caregiver and she became the care recipient. Cech used an arsenal of "share the care" strategies, including respite care, to combat isolation and exhaustion.

"When I first became a care recipient, I had tons of friends I golfed with, played in a band with, coached with, and played cards with. We used to go to the Red Wings games, to Pine Knob for concerts," he recalled.

"They slowly disappeared. Once you turn friends down, they stop calling. Refusing social invitations is the slippery slope. Often, when a loved one becomes ill, the caregiver loses friends, too. This is because both the caregiver and the care recipient and his or her friends may not know how to maintain the friendship through an extended illness in the family. Respite allows everyone to learn to socialize through extended illness."

Respite care has an added benefit for care recipients, according to Lenhard.

find enrollment numbers leveling off.

Last week's count totaled 226 students in the district, with 82 students at the elementary school and 144 at the junior-senior high school. The enrollment is about the same as it was last fall.

The Owen-Gage School District has lost roughly 68 students over the past 6 years, from nearly 300 students in 1999-2000 to 225 students last year.

Fortunately, the state's decision to allow a handful of smaller, rural schools to compute their enrollments by averaging student numbers over a 3-year period has made a huge difference for Owen-Gage, giving the district an additional 18 students, or about \$118,000 in state funding.

*Kingston Community

School officials reported a decline in student numbers for the first time in 5 years.

Supt. George Bednerek said last week's count totaled 659 students, down 7 students from last fall. The enrollment includes 346 students in grade K-6, with 320 students in grades 7-12.

The net enrollment loss for Cass City Schools last year was actually about 20 students, due to the formula the state uses to determine enrollment. However, the decline still added up to \$134,000 in state funding.

"The last few years we've seen a dip (in the student count) from September to February, so maybe that's a trend," Cass City Supt. Ken Micklash said of last week's count. "It's hard to predict. At least we've maintained rather than see the decrease."

Micklash noted there was celebrating over the state's decision to continue paying districts \$6,700 per pupil, rather than continue to reduce that amount. However, he pointed out, under the original funding plan, districts were supposed to re-

ceive \$6,900 per pupil this year and more than \$7,000 next year. "So, I'm not that thrilled about it."

"What they're talking about is giving us the \$6,700, which is what we were supposed to have 2 years ago."

Last year's rollback of the per-pupil funding level to \$6,616 cost the Cass City School District some \$130,000, and over the past 2 years the district has lost \$424,000 in state funding due to rollbacks.

As for student numbers, enrollment in Cass City has fluctuated over the past several years, with the numbers ranging from this year's low to a high of 1,683 in 1999.

The district today has about 100 students fewer than it did 4 or 5 years ago, and Micklash is concerned about the future.

"I think we're going to remain pretty stable for next year," he said, adding, however, that with freshmen and sophomore classes numbering in the 140 to 150 range,

Please turn to back page.

Deputies seek man in robbery

Sanilac County Sheriff's deputies are looking for a young male suspect who broke into a woman's Banner Road residence early last week, brandished a weapon and robbed her of cash and valuables.

The 60-year-old victim was not hurt in the Tuesday, Feb. 10, crime in Wheatland Township, which is located in north-eastern Sanilac County.

The robbery was reported shortly before midnight, according to investigators, who said the homeowner heard some breaking glass, went to investigate and was met by the armed suspect.

Prior to leaving the home, the suspect restrained the woman, who had to struggle her way to freedom. She then left the residence and sought help from a neighbor in the area because her phones had been disabled to prevent her from calling for help.

Other details of the crime scene are being held to allow investigators time to establish additional evidence.

Deputies said there may be a second person involved in the crime along with a vehicle. The suspect is described as being in his mid to early 20s, about 5 to 6 feet in height and average build.

The sheriff's department and other agencies are continuing their investigation. Officers ask that anyone with information related to the suspect(s) or the crime call the sheriff's department at (810) 648-2000. Anonymous tips may be phoned in at the Crime Stoppers Tip Line, 1-800-773-2587.

needed break. "Our family caregivers are supporting our healthcare system by providing more than 80 percent of all home care services," said Jan Nowak, regional director of operations for Tendercare (Michigan) Inc., Mid-Michigan Region. "Today, 46 percent provide some level of nursing support, including wound and medication management."

Nowak said caring for an elderly relative puts a tremendous physical, emotional and psychological strain on family caregivers, their families, and the ones being cared for. "There is a 63 percent higher mortality rate for elderly caregivers with a history of chronic illness who are currently caregiving than their non-caregiving peers," she added. Most people don't view

Down Under Cass City senior ready to play in Australia

A Cass City varsity football player is looking forward to matching his gridiron skills with other high school players in the land "down under" this summer.

Brice Stine, 18, son of Ivan and Roxanne Stine, has been selected to compete in the "Down Under Bowl", sponsored by the North Logan, Utah-based International Sports Specialists Inc. June 15-28.

Stine, a 5-foot 6-inch, 150-pound senior who played right cornerback and half-back for the Cass City Red Hawks, is one of just 35 Michigan high school players selected for the competition, which will pit teams from a host of states as well as Australia and New Zealand.

"There are only 2 ways that these boys can be picked - either (a nomination) from their high school coach or by a state football coach," explained Stine's mother, Roxanne, who added the

family isn't certain which Michigan high school coach nominated Brice.

They do know, however, that Stine's accomplishments in the past 2 seasons - second team all conference in his junior year and first team all conference in his senior year - are what opened the door for him.

"I can't wait," commented Stine, who said he had a good season in his junior year and a decent season last fall, although a dislocated shoulder before the season slowed him down.

Players selected to compete will practice and then play in 2 games. "After the games we'll go to Sydney, Australia, and sightsee for 2 days," said Stine, who plans to major in chemistry and secondary education at Saginaw Valley State University.

The sights will include the Australian Zoo, home of Crocodile Hunter Steve Irwin, as well as the Sydney Please turn to back page.



The old fashioned way...

VILLAGE ROAD crews have been kept busy with several inches of snowfall. In spite of more snow over the weekend, local roads were cleared, making for safer travel for all modes of transportation, including this Amish horse and buggy.



CASS CITY High School senior Brice Stine has been selected to compete in the "Down Under Bowl" this summer in Australia. The 18-year-old, who has played football since the seventh grade, is one of only 35 Michigan high school players chosen for the international competition.

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ROOM TO BREATHE!
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Daily attends conference

Tuscola County Farm Bureau President Greg Daily traveled to Holland to take part in Michigan Farm Bureau's 2004 Council of Presidents' Conference, Feb. 5-6.

The annual conference brings county Farm Bureau presidents together for 2 days of informative programs, guest speakers and practical instruction in making the most of their role at the helm of their local farming organization.

Following a brief greeting from MFB President Wayne H. Wood, a trio of speakers brought Daily and more than 50 other local Farm Bureau leaders up to speed on agriculture-related issues at the state level. State Budget Office Director Lynn Owen offered a briefing on the status of the state budget - a theme continued in more detail later that morning by Michigan Department of Agriculture Director Dan Wyant. Dr. Jeffrey Armstrong, dean of Michigan State University's College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, updated attendees on the status of Ag

education at MSU. MFB leaders took over in the afternoon, bringing the gathered county presidents up to speed on progress at the state-level organization. Topics included the expansion project under way at the MFB Center in Lansing, the pending implementation of a new, comprehensive member database, and the 5-year anniversary of the Michigan Farmland and Community Alliance, an MFB affiliate company.

During the County Program Showcase, leaders from Oakland and Van Buren counties shared information about their successful community-relations and membership programs. Ogemaw County Farm Bureau President Bob Bennett spoke of his success with MFB's Adopt-A-Farm program, which has helped foster a mutually rewarding relationship between his dairy farm and a local radio station.

The afternoon session included brief presentations regarding several more MFB programs and helpful information about how to in-

crease the effectiveness of the county Farm Bureau presidency.

After updates on the ongoing MFB membership campaign and the MSU Product Center for Agriculture and Natural Resources, the second day of the conference was dominated by tours of the Zeeland Farm Services Soybean Crush and Refinery plant and Bristol Meyers Squibb.

Decline

Continued from page one.

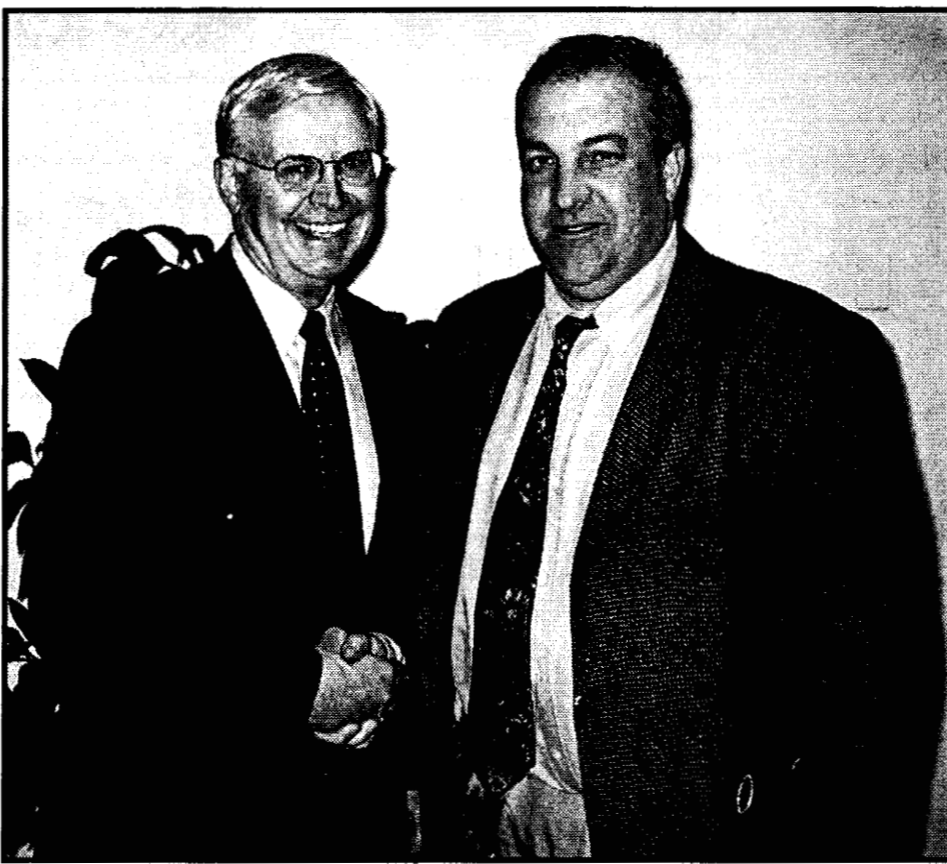
and kindergarten classes numbering in the 100 to 110 range, it's likely Cass City will lose another 100 students over the next 5 years.

Micklash said the Schools of Choice law hasn't had a negative affect on the district. In fact, he said, the school has picked up more than 100 students thanks to the legislation. The problem, he said, has been the loss of thousands of jobs in recent years in the Thumb, forcing many families to relocate in order to find employment.

Enrollment has been a key factor in school funding throughout Michigan since voters approved Proposal A, which put the lion's share of local funding in the hands of the state for distribution to individual school districts.

Schools receive the majority of their funding in the form of a state foundation allowance, which is applied to the number of students enrolled in each district. The enrollment is determined by "blending" 2 separate student counts; one conducted in September and another during the previous February.

The state's formula currently places a heavy emphasis on the fall count, which is worth 80 percent of a district's blended total enrollment.



MICHIGAN FARM Bureau President Wayne H. Wood (left) greets Tuscola County Farm Bureau President Greg Daily at the 2004 Council of Presidents' Conference in Holland.

F.B. disappointed with NRC

Given concerns about animal disease spread, the Michigan Farm Bureau officials say they are disappointed the state Natural Resources Commission (NRC) did not stick to its decision to ban supplemental feeding of deer and instead bowed to public pressure to resume the risky practice in parts of the Upper Peninsula.

"It's unfortunate that the NRC wasn't able to hold firm in the first winter after implementing the ban," said Rob Anderson, MFB legislative counsel.

"We understand that people feel sympathy and are compelled to feed deer to help their survival through a harsh winter. But now's the time when the NRC needed to hold firm to its original decision, rather than reverse course less than one year later based on social concerns rather than disease risk."

Last Friday, the NRC approved an interim order allowing residents in certain parts of the Upper Peninsula to apply for permits that would allow supplemental feeding from Jan. 1 through May 15 as long as certain conditions were met. The eligible counties are: Ontonagon, Houghton, Keweenaw, Baraga, Alger, Luce and portions of Marquette and Chippewa counties north of the T43N-T44N boundary line.

Back in June 2002, the NRC, in response to concerns about the potential spread of chronic wasting disease (CWD), voted to ban supplemental deer feeding in U.P. counties that border Wisconsin and extend the supplemental feeding ban to all of the Upper Peninsula beginning May 2003. At that time, supplemental feeding was already banned in the

Lower Peninsula as a firewall against the spread of bovine tuberculosis (TB).

MFB member-developed policy supports a statewide ban on feeding and baiting of free-ranging deer.

"We know that supplemental feeding is a prime way for animals to transmit disease," said Anderson. "No matter how much the public may desire to feed deer, it's a luxury we simply can't afford when there's even the slightest chance of spreading devastating diseases like TB and CWD." The more responsible move, said Anderson, would have been for the NRC to remain firm, reinforce the reasons why the ban was put in place and allow time for review.

The newest order is valid for one year.

Scholarships give caregivers a break

Continued from page one.

caregiving costs an estimated \$257 billion in out-of-pocket expenses annually.

"On top of worrying about how much care your loved one may need financially, there may be a question of how you can afford to pay for respite care," Cech said. "Tendercare's respite scholarship program is a godsend for family caregivers with limited financial resources who may not meet eligibility requirements of foundation- or agency-sponsored respite programs."

Tendercare's respite schol-

arship program - the first of its kind in the area - will be offered in Nowak's region, which includes the Cass City facility.

"Tendercare Cass City is partnering with local civic, faith, healthcare and other communities to ensure the greatest opportunity for respite scholarship candidates to learn about and then access Tendercare's respite scholarship program," she said.

Family members interested in applying for the program can contact Lenhard at (989) 872-2174 for more information.

Stine picked to play

Continued from page one.

Harbor, Blue Mountains and Olympic Park.

The "Down Under Bowl" was the brainchild of George O'Scanlon, who grew up in Australia and later coached football at Utah State. He always dreamed of taking a team back to Australia to teach the natives about the sport. The first game was played in 1986 in New Zealand, although the event

is now held in Queensland, Australia.

Although Stine is excited about his opportunity to participate, he has his work cut out for him - the trip is going to cost \$4,500. His mother said the family plans to organize some fundraisers, and they hope the community will help to support Brice.

"It's expensive, but it's the experience of a lifetime for a high school senior boy," Roxanne said.

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