



**Forever changed?
I sure hope so...**

Reporter's Notebook, page 5

**Even at 90, Plonta
continues expanding**

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**LaCroix, Howard
top O-G grads**

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CASS CITY CHRONICLE

Complete coverage of the Cass City community and surrounding areas since 1899

VOLUME 114, NUMBER 4

CASS CITY, MICHIGAN - WEDNESDAY, APRIL 1, 2020

.75 CENTS - 14 PAGES

COVID-19 creeping into upper Thumb counties

by Tom Montgomery
Editor

Tuscola County's second case of novel coronavirus (COVID-19), confirmed last Wednesday, became the county's first COVID-19-related fatality one day later at the Tuscola County Medical Care Community (TCMCC) in Caro, health department officials reported.

Over the weekend, officials confirmed the third and fourth cases Tuscola County — one of them identified as an 84-year-old male who is also a resident at the TCMCC. State officials reported a fifth person diagnosed with the virus in Tuscola County on Monday.

Statewide, the new virus strain had been confirmed in nearly 6,500 residents as of Monday afternoon and taken the lives of 184 people in Michigan.

In the Thumb, Huron County reported its first, second and third confirmed cases Friday and Saturday. Sanilac County has had five confirmed cases at last count and Lapeer County, four cases.

As confirmed cases continue to rise in Michigan — the number of infected residents increased by more than 1,010 and the number of deaths rose by 52 on Monday alone — local law enforcement and health officials renewed their plea of residents and non-essential employees to heed Gov. Gretchen Whitmer's executive order to stay home in an effort to slow the spread of the virus.

In addition, President Donald Trump announced Sunday that national "social distancing" guidelines will now remain in place through April 30.

A frustrated Ann Hepfer, health officer for the Tuscola and Huron county health departments, ex-

pressed her frustration Friday with those who aren't adhering to Whitmer's executive order.

"I am done being nice about the order to stay at home," Hepfer said. "If you are not working, this is not a vacation. Stay at home — go out for essential needs only."

"People need to take social distancing seriously. Stay home; no groups of friends, no card parties,

bingo, bridal showers or birthday parties. I cannot stress this enough — no one is exempt from this illness. I repeat: no one!"

"Only one person in your family should be going to the store — these are not family outings. You are putting yourself at risk and your loved ones," Hepfer added. "The virus is here and we already have one death in the Thumb. This

illness does pick who and who does not get infected. It is an equal opportunity infection — that means all of us are at risk, (and) the health care system infrastructure cannot stand up to this type of pressure."

Hepfer urged parents not to allow their children to play with other kids, even outdoors. "I witnessed Please turn to page 7.

Area hospitals seeking donations to meet need

by Tom Montgomery
Editor

Area hospitals and other healthcare organizations are welcoming donations of masks and other personal protective equipment (PPE) as they work to stretch existing supplies.

Officials at the Tuscola County Medical Care Community (TCMCC) have also laid out the welcome mat for prospective health care workers to join their team.

"Hills and Dales General Hospital currently has the equipment needed to protect staff as they care for patients with COVID-19, (but) with the rising number of COVID-19 patients in Michigan, we are accepting donated supplies now to prepare for future needs to protect our staff and community," said Danielle Blaine, director of marketing for the Cass City hospital.

Blaine listed the most needed supplies as:

- *New or unused disposable face shields.
- *N-95 masks (sometimes called respirators).
- *Eye protection including face shields and safety goggles.
- *Disposable gowns.
- *Non-latex disposable gloves.
- *Disposable surgical caps.
- *Disposable shoe covers.
- *Wipes (bleach or anti-microbial).
- *Alcohol based hand-sanitizer.

"We are also currently accepting homemade masks from our community members in case our hospital-grade supplies diminish," said Blaine, who noted the hospital is not accepting medications, blankets or medical equipment.

The hospital is accepting donations by appointment only. To drop off a donation or for more information, contact Blaine by calling (989) 912-6401 or via email at dblaine@hdghmi.org.

At TCMCC, officials reported they are preserving their current supply of PPE and actively seeking N95 and regular face masks.

Please turn to page 4.



KITCHEN STAFF and volunteers prepare meal kits for delivery to hundreds of youngsters in the Cass City Public Schools, an effort that was launched shortly after schools were shut down last month in an effort to slow the spread of the novel coronavirus. "My team is amazing," commented Cass City Public Schools Food Service Director Shari Bock. "We have eight people delivering meals, nine of us packing meals, and volunteers at Novesta (Church of Christ) and Revive (Ministries)."

School officials discuss future of education

by Mary Drier
For the Chronicle

Local educators are finding themselves being schooled, day by day, on what the federal government and the state expects

them to do during a statewide shutdown of school buildings.

At first, the federal government stood fast on the rules. Then, the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) received preliminary approval from the U.S. Depart-

ment of Education to waive a number of federal requirements for statewide student testing and school accountability.

State Board of Education President Dr. Casandra Ulbrich and State Supt. Dr. Michael Rice sent a letter to U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos March 17, urging her to grant a nationwide waiver of statewide student assessments in favor of focusing on the more immediate needs of children.

The U.S. Department of Education responded by offering every state the opportunity to submit expedited waiver requests for a number of federal testing and accountability requirements. And, the MDE did submit a request.

"If our state applies and receives the exemption from state assessments, it will be a good thing for students and teachers. Honestly, if we can't get back to school, I don't know how or why we would assess them anyway," said Kingston School Supt. Matt Drake.

In the federal waiver request letter, Rice wrote that because of the extensive school closures resulting from the COVID-19 crisis, Michigan is requesting waivers because it is not possible to administer assessments required under federal law or to comply with the accompanying school accountability requirements.

"In this era of COVID-19, I feel this is the right action to take. Please turn to page 4.

Deja flu?

Local physician's response to Spanish Flu strikingly similar to current advice

Editor's note: The following story was submitted by former longtime Cass City area resident and historian Ty Perry, who today resides in Las Vegas with his wife and daughter. "Recently, I was thinking about the Covid-19 pandemic and how similar the reactions/precautions are to those of the Spanish Flu pandemic of 1918," Perry commented. "I decided to do some digging around on the Chronicle archives to read about what was happening in town at that time, and I was fascinated by the similarities."

by Ty Perry
For the Chronicle

Dr. Loring Miner was doctor to Haskell County, Kansas' 1,720 residents. He enjoyed reading Greek classics and tending his small medical parish. But in the first two months of 1918, his life and practice suddenly became less routine.

The people of Haskell County were presenting with influenza symptoms, if they ever were able to present with them in the first place. Many of the county's strongest and healthiest young people were dying unexpectedly,

Please turn to page 6.



CASS CITY'S Dr. F.L. Morris, pictured above with his family, served as the village's health officer when the dreaded Spanish Flu pandemic swept the globe back in 1918.

Kingston Schools announce 1st semester honor students

7th Grade Honor Roll

Ethan Acker
Mikayla Adamczyk
Isaac Anger
Faith Boyl *
Victor Colman
April Diehl
Meeghan Flikkie *
Hailey Groosbeck
Tyler Hammond
Shelby Hoseclaw
Andie Hurd
Michael Jenkins
Marissa Klupp
Noah Kostrzewski
Lauren Krug
Isaac Marquardt

Isabel Muxlow *
Miley Radecki
Savannah Robinson
Isabelle Sanchez
Mackenzie Scott *
Layla Shinabarger
Kailee Simmons *
Bronson Skinner
Lauren Smith *
Marcus Sommerfield
Nowell VanRijn *
Chesaney Wenzlaff *
Madison Wylie *
Carson Zyrowski *

8th Grade Honor Roll

Daisy Barnes *
Bailey Berridge

Gavin Hunter *
Preston Lupa
Kevin Marcum
Heidi Matheny *
Keira McGarvie *
Jordis Mosher *
Destiny Noakes *
James Rayl
Malawi Roberson
Sophia Schipinski
Hayden Schuler *
Jaylin Skinner *
Myles Spencer *
Delaney St. George *
Zoe VanRijn *
Hunter Vennevy *
Abby Walker *
Ashlyn Walker *
Gracy Walker
Heidi Williams *
Lucas Zajac
Madelyn Zauner *

9th Grade Honor Roll

Cortney Acker
Logan Cloyd *
Emily Coffey
Adrianna Essenmacher
Ethan Green *
Ethan Harrington *
Robert McMaster
Aryanna Miller
Ashley Miller
Brooke Retan
Stefannie Robinson
Conner Seaman *
Wesley Sholes
Riley Smith
Rachel St. George *
McKenzie Taylor
Dixie Thompson
Destiny Traster
Hunter Trovillion
Leah Westover
James Wilson
Coryn Zyrowski

10th Grade Honor Roll

Kendal Belka
Madison Coyer
Joseph Cryderman
Collen Dibble
Gaven Dibble *
Joshua DuRussell
Katelyn Ensign
Kristen Ensign
Pablo Fernandez Larrea
Carter Geister *
Mariae Haag
Isabel Hurd
Summer Jenkins
Alex Kotsch
Chevy LeBlanc
Declan McGarvie
Kali Norris
Jacob Rayl *
Nicholas St. George *
Ethan Ulewicz *
Brooklyn Walker *

11th Grade Honor Roll

Hailey Bitterle
Mark Crousore
Jason Dibble *
Katelyn DuRussell
Lucas Fetting
Elanor Gaiser
Colten Gildner
Morgan Green *
Rayann Harp
Kayla Hobson
Hannah James *
Paige Klupp *
Lillian LaFave *
Ronnie Lemke
Joslyn Lupa *
Dustin Peter *
Ella Retan *
Chloe Russell
Marco Saenz de Lacuesta
Fernandez
Alexandra Sherman
Jessica Stoll
Olivia Ulewicz *
Trayton Wenzlaff *
Madison Wieland
Samantha Wood *

12th Grade Honor Roll

Anna Ahern *
Elissa Bicego *
Quinn Boucard
Anna Crider
Danielle Crisman
Teagan Fisher
Collin Geister *
Caleb Goss
Jack Green *
Katelyn Iseler
Desiree Jenkins
Aaron Koehler
Payton Kolacz
Tristen Lane
Ryan McGarvie
Braden Mosher *
Wren Murdoch
Isaac Muxlow
Evan Neff
Madison Nickens
Tristen Skinner
Joseph Snover *
Brent Warren
*Denotes all A's

News briefs

Public transportation is down

CARO — Residents in Tuscola County who rely on public transportation will have to find a ride elsewhere.

The Human Development Commission (HDC), which operates the Caro Thumbody Express, suspended operations March 23.

The transportation system provides service to Almer and Indianfields Townships as well as the city of Caro, with limited service to Cass City, Mayville and Vassar.

The suspension is expected to impact senior citizens who use the service to go to doctor appointments and stores. It is also used by physically disabled individuals, to shop for groceries and medical appointments, and by employees to go to work.

Local library keeping in touch

CASS CITY — While Rawson Memorial District Library in Cass City has been closed temporarily due to a statewide executive order related to the COVID-19 pandemic, the staff is continuing to find ways to serve the community.

For example, officials announced the library's Wi-Fi network is open and available from the parking lot or along Pine Street. 24/7 while the library is closed. Simply connect to Rawson's Public network on your mobile device (no library card needed).

The library also recently announced that the U.S. children's divisions of Penguin Random House, Penguin Young Readers and Random House Children's Books, in partnership with Meredith/PARENTS, has launched "READ TOGETHER, BE TOGETHER". Originally slated to launch this summer, the program offers a series of daily virtual story times with bestselling and award-winning authors and illustrators, and celebrity readers.

The schedule can be found at readtogetherbetgether.com. The dedicated website will also host reading tips for parents and caregivers developed with parents, as well as an extensive list of recommended age-appropriate books.

Library: online books available

KINGSTON - During this time of social distancing, officials at the Opperman Memorial Library in Kingston are continuing to encourage reading — at a safe distance.

The library is promoting a program offering students unlimited access to read books online. To access the resource, visit the website OppermanMemorialLibrary.com and look for the free Junior Library Guild ebooks access.

Jail lockdown in Sanilac Co.

SANDUSKY — The Sanilac Sheriff's Department is doing its part to address the novel coronavirus pandemic, including taking steps to safeguard inmates, staff and the public.

On-site visits at the jail have been suspended, as have all jail programs, including substance abuse programs, church services, Bible studies, and any other programs that are facilitated by individuals from the general public and require entrance to the jail.

All public contact with the jail will be limited to professional staff and attorneys only, with anyone entering the facility required to go through a screening process.

On-line video visitation will remain available for inmates.

Recycling facility is still open

CARO — Although the Tuscola County Recycling Facility is open, officials are taking precautions.

Recycling workers have stopped all face-to-face contact with the public until at least Monday, April 6. While the facility is open, all recyclables will have to be placed in a bag that can be dropped off.

Employees will not be coming out to the vehicles, and no customers will be allowed in the building, said Mike Miller, director of recycling.

Officials have suspended business pick-up of recyclables, weekend township trailer collections and satellite trailers in the villages of Millington, Mayville and Cass City.

Residents are encouraged to check the county's website for updates and for additional information at www.tuscolacounty.org.

Contractor: tie all trash bags

CASS CITY — For the safety of Emterra sanitation workers, company officials are asking that all trash must be placed in tied bags.

"From this point forward, we are asking all Cass City Village residents to please put all trash in bags and tie them for sanitation purposes, and that the tied bags can be put in barrels," Cass City Village Manager Debbie Powell said. "Doing your part will help keep others safe."

Emterra will continue trash pickup every Thursday in the village as usual.

Burning ban is now in effect

MICHIGAN — Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) officials have announced a statewide burning ban because of COVID-19.

Residents are asked to not burn outdoors in order to limit the contact with local firefighters and other first responders.

Compiled by Mary Drier and Tom Montgomery

SUDOKU

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

Fun By The Numbers

Like puzzles? Then you'll love sudoku. This mind-bending puzzle will have you hooked from the moment you square off, so sharpen your pencil and put your sudoku savvy to the test!

Here's How It Works:

Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!

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In Our OPINION...

Clarke Haire
Publisher

Tom Montgomery
Editor

Drier Humor

by Mary Drier

A rose by another name



Which part of stay home is confusing?

A recent Facebook meme suggests that many segments of this country are facing not one, but two pandemics: COVID-19 and stupidity.

Of course, the meme is referring to individuals who are ignoring recent executive orders across the nation, including one issued last week by Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, prohibiting residents from moving about unless they need to pick up groceries, medicine or fuel.

We understand how difficult – uncomfortable, boring, etc. – it is to quarantine at home.

But it's critical that those of us who can act now, by staying home, if we're going to slow the onslaught of novel coronavirus (COVID-19) cases creeping ever closer to our front doors.

This new virus strain has already infected nearly 6,500 Michigan residents (as of Monday afternoon) and taken the lives of at least 184 people in this state. Tuscola County has confirmed five cases of COVID-19 to-date, with one of those individuals – a 79-year-old male in Caro, becoming the county's first fatality last week.

Huron County has now confirmed three cases and Sanilac County, five cases.

And, yet, just two days after the governor announced her "stay home, stay alive" order, the Caro Police Department shared this note on its Facebook page:

"Several essential business owners have reported that they have families or groups of people coming in to buy groceries and acting as if its business as usual by bringing in their entire family. The reports indicate that there is absolutely no attempt at social distancing by these persons. Please when possible, practice social distancing. Remember that the clerks and owners have families as well and do not want to be exposed to added risk."

"With this virus you may be a carrier and not even know it. You may not even have symptoms," Tuscola County Sheriff Glen Skrent pointed out on his department's Facebook page.

"If you decide to go for a drive, you will need to go to the gas station eventually. If you do not take necessary precautions at the pump you can get the virus from the gas pump handle or anything else you touch or a person whom you get too close too. Or you can unknowingly transfer your virus to those items or persons.

"If you're out and about and you hit a deer, you need a report and probably a wrecker. This causes Law enforcement to respond in some fashion and the wrecker driver if needed. If you get in an injury crash you need more and more first responders and a trip to the ER."

Tuscola County Health Department Health Officer Ann Hepfer is also very concerned, saying COVID-19 is targeting all ages and there is no way of predicting just how sick someone will become once infected, which means every one of us must do our part to stop the virus from spreading.

"People need to take social distancing seriously. Stay home, no groups of friends, no card parties, bingo, bridal showers or birthday parties," she said. "I cannot stress this enough – no one is exempt from this illness. I repeat: no one!"

We all have rights as citizens of this nation, but no one has the right to put the life of another at risk simply because they're bored and tired of staying home, especially when so many are on the front lines of medicine and emergency response, putting their health at risk every day to care for others.

So, please, stay home. It's not only the law right now, it's the right thing to do, for all of us.

Social distancing and sheltering in place are terms being used in place of the word "quarantine."

It has always amazed me how society comes up with "massaged names" to enhance meaning; a housewife is now called a "domestic goddess", a garbage collector is called a "sanitation engineer", and someone who works in a fast-food restaurant is sometimes referred to as a "sandwich artist".

Somehow, being asked and/or required to stay home has shifted from being quarantined to the more genteel term of sheltering in place.

Whatever label you want to put on it, the bottom line is to keep your butt at home until this virus threat is over, and to only go out if you absolutely have to.

It recently dawned on me that my childhood and old age have prepared me for what is going on today to shelter in place.

Because of my health and mobility issues, I don't venture out very often and only go to certain places that are easily accessible.

As for my childhood, I was a "change of life baby", which means my parents were old when I came along. I grew up in the 1950s and 1960s in rural Tuscola County.

Back then, we knew all our neighbors, but socializing wasn't the center of the universe.

We grew a big garden and mom did a lot of canning.

Back then, running to the store for only a few items just wasn't done. Mom would go into town grocery shopping once a month. The cart was full to overflowing with items that would last a month.

Milk was delivered to our door. When store-bought bread ran out, she baked until it was time to go to town again.

The television only had three channels. And, you were lucky if you got all three after moving the rabbit ears with tinfoil around. We played card games and checkers.

I don't remember feeling I was a burden to my parents when I was home during summer vacation.

I could see parents being concerned about their children being out of school and finding someone to take care of them, but now parents are being ordered to stay home as well if they do not have an "essential" job.

So now, the complaining of children being out of school has really increased because some parents have to spend time with their offspring.

Today's world is a lot more fast paced than the one I grew up in. This mandated pause in society is an opportunity to slow down, take a breath, relax, live in the moment, and to reconnect with yourself and those you love and care about.

I realize all of this will cause a huge financial blow, but it also gives us time to reconnect as a family, and as a community of compassion.

People are reaching out to each other (but not touching) to see if they need something from the store, and offering suggestions of websites for children's educational instruction, for virtual tours of faraway places and museums, and for

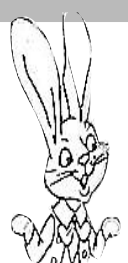
crafts and entertainment.

Now is the time to read that book you were always going to, to finish that craft you started a few years ago, and to telephone friends and family.

Rabbit Tracks

by Clarke Haire

(And anyone else he can get to help)



Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel has issued a consumer alert reminding Michigan residents to be aware of online coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) scams selling bogus products and providing false information on tests and treatments.

Scams related to COVID-19 are climbing with the continued confirmations of positive COVID-19 cases in the United States. These attempts to obtain the personal information of consumers include online posts pitching unreliable products, advice, fake tests and cures to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Additionally, online offers are selling masks – that reportedly are not being delivered – to consumers while using misleading language to convince them to purchase. The CDC has repeatedly warned that wearing a mask does not protect people who do not have the virus from getting COVID-19.

Nessel also warns Michigan residents that misinformation about COVID-19 symptoms and treatment falsely attributed to a "Stanford Hospital board member" is being widely circulated on social media.

We encourage consumers to file complaints with our office and the Attorney General's Consumer Protection webpage is always available as a resource for consumers to turn to. Our Consumer Protection team is also available via phone at 877-765-8388.

If you believe you are the target of a scam, hang up the phone and verify the identity of the caller independently. Do not give out any personal information unless you have first confirmed who you are talking to is actually who they claim to be.

Brush collection in the Village of Cass City is suspended until further notice, reports local Village Manager Debbie Powell, who explained brush collection is a nonessential service.

In accordance with the Governor's order to "Stay Home, Stay Safe, Save Lives," the village employees are performing essential services only and limiting their exposure to COVID-19.

For more information contact the Municipal Building at 989-872-2911.

The COVID-19 crisis has prompted mandated school closures and idled workers, dramatically increasing the need for healthy food. To address the demand on the state's seven regional food banks, the Michigan Farm Bureau Family of Companies and the Farm Bureau Insurance of Michigan Agent Charitable Fund have launched a statewide fundraiser, The Million Meal Challenge.

The Agent Charitable Fund and Farm Bureau Insurance of Michigan will donate \$50,000 during the Million Meal Challenge and will match up to \$50,000 in additional donations from members, clients and supporters.

"Once again, the Michigan Farm Bureau Family of Companies has stepped up during a time of unprecedented need in our state," said Dr. Phil Knight, executive director, Food Bank Council of Michigan. "Together, we can ensure that every child, family and senior has food in all of Michigan's 83 counties as we meet the demands of COVID-19 head on."

The Michigan Farm Bureau Family of Companies and Food Bank Council of Michigan partnership has helped thousands of Michiganders facing food insecurity. The Million Meal Challenge is an opportunity to reach every resident in need during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Right now, it is ever more important for the citizens of our state to come together," said Don Simon, CEO, Farm Bureau Insurance of Michigan. "As we all battle this pandemic, the need to provide Michigan children and families with healthy meals during this trying time is a great way for us to do just that. The entire Farm Bureau family is proud to sponsor this challenge so that together, with our partners and community members, we can provide one million meals."

The Agent Charitable Fund serves as the fund for Farm Bureau agents, clients, and partners to contribute to causes throughout Michigan. Its mission is to end hunger in Michigan. The Food Bank Council of Michigan and Michigan Farm Bureau Family of Companies is dedicated to Michigan residents. To donate toward the Million Meal Challenge, visit <https://www.justgiving.com/campaign/million-meals>.

**Have a concern? A complaint?
Just want to voice your opinion?**


The Cass City Chronicle welcomes letters to the editor.

Letters must include the writer's name, address and telephone number. The latter is in case it is necessary to call for verification, but won't be used in the newspaper. Names will be withheld from publication upon request, for an adequate reason. The Chronicle reserves the right to edit letters for length and clarity.

We will not publish thank you letters of a specific nature, for instance, from a club thanking merchants who donated prizes for a raffle.

CASS CITY CHRONICLE

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PATTY PERUSKI, owner of Hair Benders for the past 43 years, cuts Tuscola County Community Foundation Executive Director John Hunter's hair in this file photo.

Styling the community for over four decades

by Mary Drier
For the Chronicle

There are a number of reasons Patty Peruski's Hair Benders salon has been in business for more than four decades.

First off, she enjoys what she does.

"I thought being a beautician would be something that I might like to do. I went to school for it, thinking I'd check it out to see if I like it, and if I didn't, then I would go on the college," Peruski recalled. "I found I really liked it once I got into doing it, and I've been doing hair ever since."

Peruski attended Bayshire Beauty Academy in Bay City and has worked as a beautician for 46 years. She's owned Hair Benders for 43 years.

She credits her longevity in the business to good service, being dependable, being friendly and her eye for detail, especially when it comes to hair as well as decorating her shop at 6703 Main St. in Cass City.

Peruski says she believes her shop is the oldest continuously operated shop under the same owner in town.

"I keep my prices down, and I've been in business so long I've done hair for a couple of generations of some families, and because of that they are like family," she said.

"I'm honest. I stand behind what I do. If there is a problem I take care of it," Peruski added. "I had a lady a few weeks ago whose hair didn't take the color, and I redid it for nothing."

Peruski provides time tried and true beautician services.

"I just do hair. I don't do manicures or pedicures, massages or facials," she explained. "I just do the basics."

The only product she sells is the "Big and Sexy" hairspray.

Another draw for her clientele is that she goes all out when it comes to decorating her shop for the seasons and holidays.

"Everyone says how much they like my decorations and look forward to seeing them," said Peruski. "You should see the shop at Christmas time. I put up three trees, a village, and I have all kinds of decorations like wreaths and snowmen."

For more information about Hair Benders, call (989) 872-3145.

Health care facilities seeking donations

Continued from page one.

"Helpers in our community have already been stepping up, and companies such as Apex Coatings and Michigan Mobile Blasting became PPE suppliers when they looked at their own inventory and realized they had just what we needed — N95 masks are often used in auto and building trades," officials posted on the TCMCC Facebook page.

"Several people with sewing talent have inquired about supplying regular reusable face masks, and some of our own staff members have been busily sewing when not at work. We are humbled to receive donations of time, talent, and PPE from unlikely sources, and grateful to look around and see helpers."

Residents interested in donating or lending a hand can learn more by calling (989) 673-4117.

TCMCC officials are also compiling a list of health care providers — RNs, LPNs, CNAs, etc. — who might be willing to assist if needed.

"This is great news for many of you who don't currently work in health care, but feel called to use your skills in times of crisis. Or maybe you worked someplace that is not operating in emergency situations and would appreciate temporary employment/income until circumstances return to normal," officials said.

"Based on recommendations from the CDC (Centers for Dis-

ease Control and Prevention) and others, we are ramping up our resources and realized there may be health care providers right in our community that would love to be of service and/or would appreciate the employment."

More information is available by calling (989) 672-0509 or (989) 672-0515.

With many hospitals throughout Michigan facing potential shortages of face masks and other essential medical supplies and personal protective equipment, Gov. Gretchen Whitmer is calling upon Michiganders and businesses to donate items needed most by hospitals and medical providers.

"Our brave medical professionals and first-responders are on the front lines of keeping us safe, and we must do everything we can to protect them and every Michigander we can from the spread of COVID-19," Whitmer said.

"Right now, medical professionals across the state are forced to reuse face masks. This increases the risk of spreading COVID-19 during a time when we should do everything we can to mitigate it. We're not getting the tools we need from the federal government, so it's on all of us to work together to protect each other," she added.

"Our clinicians are working tirelessly to care for those affected by this pandemic," said Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) Chief Deputy for Health and Chief Medical Ex-

ecutive Dr. Joneigh Khaldun. "They deserve to be able to do their jobs safely and these donations will help protect the health and safety of both providers and patients."

Several Michigan businesses have recently stepped up to manufacture personal protective equipment for the state.

Last week, Ford, 3M, the UAW and GE Health Care announced a partnership to manufacture respirators. And, distilleries such as Coppercraft Distillery in Holland and Mammoth Distilling in Traverse City have announced plans to manufacture and distribute hand sanitizer to health care providers in their areas.

Donations of essential items will be used to meet medical providers' most pressing needs during the COVID-19 pandemic. Below are the material donations most needed by hospitals. This list will be updated as efforts continue to progress.

Items most needed at this time:

- *Hospital Gowns.
- *Ventilators.
- *Sanitizer (hand/wipe).
- *Gloves.
- *Surgical masks.
- *Masks (N95-N100).
- *No-touch thermometers.

Donations can be directed to the Michigan Community Service Commission at COVID19donations@michigan.gov or by calling (517) 335-4295.

Local hospitals prepare to take on patients

by Mary Drier
For the Chronicle

Because urban hospitals are facing an unprecedented crisis in caring for patients with COVID-19, they are running short on beds and necessary supplies, and some health care workers are getting worn out from long hours and stress.

During a statewide press conference Thursday, Gov. Gretchen Whitmer said some of those patients could be transported to rural hospitals as the number of cases increases.

Hills and Dales General Hospital could be one of those hospitals.

"We are prepared to take some (cases). We have task force meetings three times a week in preparation for this scenario, and are making sure that staff are fully prepared and ready," said Danielle Blaine, marketing director for Hills and Dales. "We will accept patients and do anticipate that we may have virus cases to care for."

"During this time, we are all in this together," Blaine added. "Our large institutions are becoming overwhelmed, and we will do our part to help the patients who require additional care."

Hills and Dales General Hospital is a 25-bed facility.

"We have 25 beds on our inpatient floor, and we have two-negative pressure rooms and we have four ventilators," explained Blaine. "We have the ability to add beds if it would ever come to

that."

McLaren Caro Region (formerly Caro Community Hospital) President and CEO Marc Augsburger indicated he was not surprised by the governor's statements.

"We are discussing this daily with the other 13 McLaren subsidiaries to be able to easily transfer between each other," he said, adding the staffs at those facilities are prepared.

McLaren Caro Region Hospital is a 25-bed facility.

"We are more than willing to help out in any way we can. We have done a lot of pre-planning to get ready, including providing the proper PPE (personal protective equipment) for all staff. Everyone is to wear a surgical mask at all times. We have added additional hand sanitizers throughout the hospital," said McLaren Caro Re-

gion Marketing Communications Specialist Jamie Wark.

"Our front line staff are also equipped with goggles, N95s, PAPRs (powered, air-purifying respirators), gowns, shoe and head covers. Staff is changing into surgical scrubs when they get here and they are being laundered so they don't have to worry about taking anything home to their families.

"We have canceled all elective procedures to reduce patient and employee risk," Wark continued. "We screen every person that comes into the hospital and we are not allowing any unnecessary visitors at this time. If a possible COVID-19 patient comes in, we are testing them right in their vehicle to minimize the risk to our staff and the entire hospital."

School officials discuss future

Continued from page one.

These are high stake tests that will have impacts on future school data and every opportunity should be available to insure students perform at their maximum potential," said Tuscola Intermediate School District Supt. Gene Pierce.

"These high stakes tests also are considered in teacher evaluations and it is only fair that the students of each teacher be given the full allotment of instructional time to insure students perform well if the tests are to be administered."

The U.S. Department of Education heard the request of Michigan educators to waive the federal requirement for statewide student testing.

"Now, we need the Michigan legislature to amend state law that requires statewide testing and accountability," said Rice.

Cass City School Supt. Jeff Hartel agreed it was the right thing to do. "This decision was inevitable. Testing students that have not been in school for some time would not be fair to the children, nor would the data show accurate results of student achievement," Hartel said. "One year of not testing students is secondary to making sure everyone is safe."

Rice noted that the school closures are in response to extraordinary circumstances for which a national emergency has been declared and that the school closures "will protect the health and safety of students, staff and our communities."

The initial order from the state was for schools to close until April 6, but he governor later extended the date to at least April 14.

And, there is no guarantee the date won't be extended again. At the time of that decision, only a few of the state's counties was reporting cases of COVID-19. As of Friday, all of Michigan's 83 counties had reported cases of the virus.

Whether or not schools reopen in mid-April, Drake is concerned about educational time that has already been lost.

"We are concerned for our current first- and second-grade students. They missed at least 17 days of instruction last year as a result of inclement weather, and now they are missing at least three weeks of instruction this year, and likely more, as a result of COVID-19," said Drake. "This group of students are learning to be readers and they are missing out."

He is also concerned about the impact this crisis will have on the state's high school seniors.

"They are living in the unknown. Will they be expected to go to school in the summer? Will their expectations be waived? How is this all going to work?" Drake questioned.

"In the end, we are in the midst of a global pandemic that is life or death for some of our citizenry. All of the school issues are not life and death. They are inconveniences, some big, some small."

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The year Spanish Flu arrived in area

Continued from page one.

first experiencing chills, fatigue, and fever then developing pneumonia and suffocating to death.

Although the illness' spread was localized and soon ended, Dr. Miner was concerned. He alerted officials at Public Health Reports, a weekly medical journal that notified physicians of outbreaks, to the strange case of Haskell County. His warnings went unheeded.

In the fall of 1918, however, people around the world began experiencing similar symptoms to those of Dr. Miner's patients.

Throughout Europe, North America and parts of Asia, healthy young people fell victim to the flu symptoms, which quickly morphed into pneumonia. Victims' skin turned blue and their lungs

in the town, precautions should be taken to prevent it. The village council responded by banning all public gatherings and closing the town's "school, churches, lodges and theaters", from Sunday, Oct. 13, through Monday, Oct. 21. Hopefully, by then, the mounting tide would be stemmed.

Word of the global scale of the pandemic and its vicious spread alarmed Dr. Morris, who was aware that the end was not in sight and suggested the ban on public gatherings be extended indefinitely.

At the Oct. 25 village council meeting, Morris reported that there were several confirmed cases of the flu within the village limits, a startling fact considering there had been no cases reported just a week earlier. "Influenza cards" were printed and placed on

nity and transmitted the flu to them.

The train depot closed, because all of its staff had contracted the flu, doubtless caused by their frequent contact with people going to and from the city. In Caro, the sugar factory was forced to close due to a shortage of healthy men to work it. By Nov. 15, there were 80 cases of the illness in Cass City, and the village had run out of cards to put on the doors of those infected.

So bad was the spread of the flu that William C. Gorgas, surgeon-general of the U.S. Army, offered the following guidelines for the public to avoid contracting it:

- 1.) Avoid needless crowding; influenza is a crowd disease.
- 2.) Smother your coughs and sneezes; others do not want the germs you would throw away.
- 3.) Your nose, not your mouth, was made to breathe through. Get the habit.
- 4.) Remember the three C's—a clean mouth, a clean skin, and clean clothes.
- 5.) Try to keep cool when you walk and warm when you ride and sleep.
- 6.) Open the windows always at home at night; at the office when practicable.
- 7.) Choose and chew your food well.

On Nov. 11, the armistice was signed by the allies and Germany, bringing World War I to an end. But for Cass City residents, the good news would soon be mingled with tragedy.

In early November, a 32-year-old Cass City native, Edward Kissane, visited Port Huron. A few days after his return to town, Kissane's neighbors noticed that they had not seen him around his place for a while and decided to check on him. What they found was a severely sick Kissane, who was beyond medical help. He died on Nov. 15, the first and only casualty of the flu inside the village limits.

Despite Kissane's untimely death, by Nov. 22 local and state officials were cautiously optimistic that there was a light at the end of the tunnel. Dr. Morris, who had himself contracted the flu a few weeks earlier, announced that the number of cases in the town had diminished significantly, but warned that residents should continue to exercise caution.

Michigan Governor Albert Sleeper issued a Thanksgiving Proclamation in which he thanked God "that a dread epidemic has been stayed, through the prompt measures taken by the public health authorities throughout the state and the intelligent cooperation of the whole people."

While isolated cases of the flu continued to be reported throughout the town — the Brock family on Woodland Avenue, for example, was sick with the flu and pneumonia — Dr. Morris was encouraged by the decline in its spread.

On Dec. 1, the ban on public gatherings — one that village officials originally thought would last just eight days — finally came to an end after 48 days. A community church service was held at the Baptist church in thanksgiving.

It is estimated that one-third of the world's population, 500 million people, contracted the flu. Globally, some 50 million people died as a result of the illness, 675,000 of those deaths being Americans, one of them Edward Kissane of Cass City, Michigan.

The origin of the Spanish Flu is still unknown, although some scholars trace it back to Dr. Miner's patients in Haskell County, Kan. How such a global pandemic could begin in a rural Kansas town remains an unanswered question.

Despite more than a century of medical and technological progress, the world now finds itself in a similar situation to that of 1918. Currently, no vaccine is known to prevent Covid-19, and medical and community leaders are urging the public to practice "social distancing" and good hygiene.

While we have no evidence that the Spanish Flu caused a local shortage of toilet paper or other supplies, we do know that the public was concerned. In fact, one local drug store advertised that the "Spanish Influenza Strikes Quickly — Don't be caught unprepared — an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."

It all goes to show that what goes around comes around.



Together, we will weather this storm

by Senator Kevin Daley

Since the coronavirus first reached our shores, folks across the country have been inundated with information about the spread of COVID-19 and suggested protocols they should be following. The information is ever-changing, and as we see the number of COVID-19 cases in Michigan consistently rising, we all need to do our part now more than ever to help slow the spread of the virus.

However, it is not a time to panic. The growing number of confirmed cases was not unexpected as more testing occurs and more resources are available. The most important thing to do is to simply stay home and limit contact with others as medical professionals work to complete testing and gather data.

Last week, Gov. Gretchen Whitmer continued her emergency response and signed Executive Order 2020-21, or the "Stay Home, Stay Safe" order. This has prompted several questions on social media and among residents in my district. I wanted to provide some additional insight and resources to those who may still have some questions.

Executive Order 2020-21 calls all Michiganders who are able to stay home to do so. The order prevents gatherings of any size and closes all nonessential businesses.

Businesses with questions about their status should visit www.michigan.gov/coronavirus for more information. Employees with questions about their status should call their employers.

Businesses that remain open must take precautionary measures to distance employees from one another as much as possible, promote remote work where possible, and employ other social distancing practices and mitigation measures recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Unemployment claims have also reached record highs as more and more people are laid off due to the outbreak. As a result, benefits have been expanded for those affected by coronavirus. If you have been laid off and have questions, please visit www.Michigan.gov/UIA to file a new claim. Information and frequently asked questions can be found here.

It is important to note that the order does not prohibit essential activities like going to the grocery store, going to the pharmacy, filling your car up with gas or receiving medical care.

You may also continue to enjoy many of your favorite recreational activities. Residents can still go outdoors for things like exercise, fishing, hiking, riding bicycles or motorcycles or to take your pet for a walk. It is simply recommended that you follow suggested social distancing guidelines and limit contact with others.

Additionally, our health care workers and first responders need our help now more than ever. Doctors, nurses, first responders and others who are currently risking their well-being to help the public stay safe deserve equipment that allows them to do so safely. Workers are in critical need of protective equipment like N95 face masks, shoe covers, goggles, hand sanitizer, sanitizing wipes and disposable gloves. Please help if you are able!

These are difficult times for many Michiganders, but I have a lot of faith in our community and I know we will rise to the occasion and beat this virus. My best recommendation is to remain calm, use common sense practices, and follow the guidelines from health and medical professionals. We will get through this.

Information around this outbreak is changing rapidly. The latest information is available at Michigan.gov/Coronavirus, including details for businesses with questions about their status and specific information on the governor's active executive orders. Additional information can be found at CDC.gov/Coronavirus.

For those who have questions about the state's actions to mitigate the spread of coronavirus, please call the COVID-19 Hotline at 1-888-535-6136 between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. daily.

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Cass City Drug Co.

A LOCAL drugstore ad published in the Cass City Chronicle in 1918 warns village residents of the danger inherent in contracting the Spanish Flu.

filled with fluid, ultimately suffocating them to death. Soon, the disease became known as Spanish Influenza, due to its especially deadly impact on the people of Spain.

In Cass City, word of the pandemic had residents and civic leaders on edge. A special meeting of the village council was held Oct. 12 "for the purpose of taking action regarding 'Spanish Influenza'."

The only problem was that little could be done. There were no vaccines or antibiotics. The only thing officials could do was to advocate quarantine and good hygiene.

Dr. F.L. Morris, the village health officer, reported that, while no cases of the flu had been reported

the doors of infected homes as warnings to would-be visitors to stay away.

Dr. Morris told the Chronicle that the flu "is infectious by direct contact, and if we do not run into it, we stand 99 chances of not getting it. So we will ask you again, be patriotic and stay at home. There are several cases in the country and it has been deemed wise not to open the windows at the post office on Saturday night and please do not congregate there or any other place."

Unfortunately, some in the community did not heed the doctor's orders. Thinking their symptoms were mild or that they had become well, the sick gathered with healthy members of the commu-

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MEAL KITS are lined up for delivery in the Cass City Junior-Senior High School cafeteria as local school officials and volunteers work to ensure that students continue to receive healthy meals throughout the week as the statewide shutdown of schools remains in effect.

COVID-19 cases creeping into Thumb

Continued from page one.

groups of kids playing basketball. This is not a safe practice. This infection spreads like wildfire. The playground equipment is stainless steel and plastic. We know that this virus can live for hours on these type of surfaces," she continued, noting golf is also on the list of what not to do.

"We understand that (it) was a tough week for all of us," Hefper said. "Together we can defeat this virus and save lives. Research has shown that social distancing and 'stay at home orders' work well at controlling the spread of infections. Your local hospitals, public health departments, private physicians, long-term care facilities, law enforcement, EMS and emergency managers are all working together seven days a week, 24 hours a day to beat this infection.

"For now, go outside with just your family – no friends – practice social distancing and do limited shopping. Practice one act of kindness – ask your elderly neighbor if they need anything, and leave it on the porch."

County's first death

Hefper confirmed Tuscola County's first COVID-19-related death Thursday, saying the victim was a 79-year-old male residing at the TCMCC.

"Our condolences go out to the family that has lost their loved one. We know that no words will ease the pain or less this family's grief and our community's loss and fears," Hefper said. "His death is an urgent reminder to all of us that we need to act now together to protect everyone's health by staying home as much as possible.

On Saturday, Hefper reported the second confirmed case at TCMCC along with 60-year-old female residing elsewhere in the county.

Hefper emphasized that county health officials as well as the administration and staff at TCMCC are working tirelessly to mitigate any additional infection.

"Brenda Kretschmer, chief executive officer of TCMCC, and all the staff are working around the clock to reduce any transmission of this infection to other residents," Hefper said. "Brenda... and her staff have been on top of this infection from the very beginning of this pandemic. They took all the measures they could have very early by stopping all visitors, and implemented strict infection control measures.

"This just shows you how infectious this is for people who are in the most vulnerable state of health."

In Huron County, the first positive case was reported Friday and involves a 76-year-old female. On Saturday, Hefper reported two additional positive cases – a 55-year-old male and a 76-year-old female.

COVID-19 is targeting all ages and there is no way of predicting just how sick someone will become once infected, which means everyone must do their part to stop the virus from spreading, Hefper pointed out.

Strong community mitigation and prevention measures are already in place in Tuscola County, according to Hefper, who said the department continues to recommend that anyone with symptoms of COVID-19 self-isolate for 14 days to avoid potentially exposing others. COVID-19 symptoms – including fever, cough and shortness of breath – may appear in as few as two days or as long as two

weeks.

All residents are urged to:

*Stay at home except for essential tasks such as purchasing groceries and seeking medical care.

*When out, stay at least six feet away from others and avoid any gatherings.

*Wash your hands often and well, especially after being away from home.

*Do not touch your face or mouth.

*Check on others – call loved ones and neighbors who are at most risk and see how they are doing, and offer to run an essential errand for them if you can.

"There is evidence of community spread locally," Hefper said. "Testing is ongoing. But, with so few tests completed and so many pending, everyone needs to take precautions, practice prevention and assume potential exposure in public locations.

"This virus is within our control if everyone would just stay home," Hefper continued. "Businesses, do your part now – you need to reevaluate if these are essential services. If you determined they are, then you need to start screening your workers before they start work. It does not matter if you are working outside; if you are working with others, that is the risk, handling materials or sharing equipment is all it takes.

"If you are homeowner, this is not the time to call a contractor and ask them to put in new windows or a new roof on your home. If your roof is not leaking and your windows are still in place, then they are not essential to have replaced right now."

The governor's executive order, issued early last week, directs residents to remain at home, prohibits public and private gatherings among non-family members, and bars non-essential work activities.

However, there have been reports that individuals aren't taking the order seriously.

"Several essential business owners have reported that they have families or groups of people coming in to buy groceries and acting as if its business as usual by bringing in their entire family," the Caro Police Department reported on its Facebook page last week. "The reports indicate that there is absolutely no attempt at social distancing by these persons. Please when possible, practice social distancing. Remember that the clerks and owners have families as well and do not want to be exposed to added risk."

School meals

School meals are continuing to be served to Michigan children throughout the governor's "stay home" order, which makes specific allowances for food and agriculture work, including food service operations at schools.

And the program launched in the Cass City Public School District shortly after schools across the state were first closed has been running full steam since.

Cass City Public Schools Food Service Director Shari Bock, who is heading up a team of food service staff and volunteers, reported Sunday that workers were gearing up to fill orders for 1,500 meal kits early this week. Each kit contains one breakfast and one lunch per child for an entire week – a total of 3,000 meals.

The crew prepared and delivered 800 meal kits (enough for two meals per child for a week) in the first week, then saw orders significantly increase the second week,

with officials providing 1,305 kits (2,610 meals in all).

"My team is amazing," Bock said. "We have eight people delivering meals, nine of us packing meals, and volunteers at Novesta (Church of Christ) and Revive (Ministries)."

Local families that haven't signed up but wish to be asked to visit the website casscitypublicschools.org and fill out the meals request form under the Coronavirus tab. Meals are being packaged each Monday and Tuesday for the week. Residents can also (989) 872-5729 (the mailbox will be monitored daily) if there is an urgent request.

Among the other area school districts providing hundreds of meals for students in their respective communities are the Kingston Community Schools and Ubyly Community Schools.

In Kingston, families wishing to get on the meal list are asked to contact Mike Seaman at mseaman@kingstonk12.org. In Ubyly, send an email to jcandela@ublyschools.org or cwedge@ublyschools.org, or call (989) 658-8202 (ext. 57008).

Update information and resources are available on the website www.michigan.gov/coronavirus or by calling the state's hotline at 1-888-535-6136. Call 211 if you are in need of food, housing or have other assistance issues.

Obituaries

Keith Rabideau

Keith Thomas Rabideau, 87, of Cass City, died Sunday, March 22, 2020 in his home. He was born May 8, 1932 in Gagetown to Raymond and Lena (LaPratt) Rabideau.

Keith was baptized in St. Agatha Catholic Church. He graduated from Gagetown Schools with the class of 1950, as senior class president.

Keith had a passion for antiques. Over the last two decades he and Marilyn have enjoyed buying and selling collectables. Most weekends they could be found at one of the many auctions or estate sales across the state. His vintage wagon and Ford tractor were two of his favorite acquisitions. Keith liked to entertain his grandchildren by giving them wagon rides around the pond. He enjoyed bird watching and being outdoors.

Keith spent many hours walking in nature and watching the variety of bird species that gathered at his feeders.

Keith was known for his strong work ethic. He was very handy and could fix almost anything. In his early years, he installed and worked on furnaces. Keith had a short stint as a union organizer in the early seventies. He spent the majority of his career at several area foundries as a machinist, until his retirement in 1994. Always an early riser, he could be found working in his pole barn and around the property, even after retirement.

Keith will be remembered by many for his sense of humor and quick wit. He never missed an opportunity to poke fun with others and share his humorous side. Keith's proudest accomplishment was his children. The many family events where he was able to gather with children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, were his happiest memories.

Keith is survived by his partner, Marilyn Tyo; seven children: Marsha (Terry) Sutton, Rodney (Linda) Rabideau, Ricky Rabideau, Randy Rabideau, Deborah Leasher, Tammi (Brian) Roberts and Shelly (Scott) Miller; fourteen grandchildren: Courtney (Frank) Rabideau, Carly (Andrew) Yocius, Casey Rabideau, Grant Rabideau, Ethan (Kassandra) Leasher, Devon Leasher, Aaron Leasher, Samantha (Matt) Jezierski, Taylor Roberts, Madison Roberts, Brandon (Renee) Miller, Cole Miller, Dylan Miller and Dustin Miller; five great-grandchildren: River, Isabel, Haley, Berrek and Ayla; brother, Harlan Rabideau; sister-in-law, Nancy (James) Rabideau.

He was preceded in death by his parents; brothers: Gerald Rabideau and James Rabideau; sister, Jean Marecki; brother-in-law, Clarence Marecki; sisters-in-law: Phyliss (Harlan) Rabideau, Evelyn (Gerald) Rabideau.

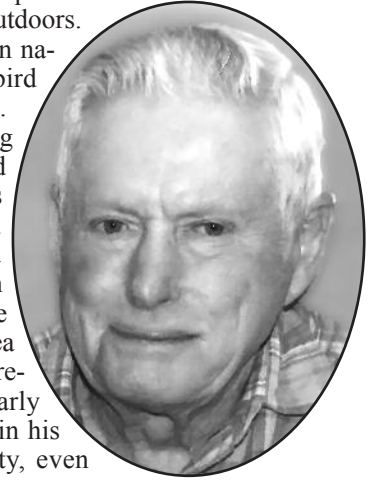
The funeral service will be held at a later date in Our Lady Consolata Parish, St. Agatha Catholic Church, Gagetown.

Interment will be in St. Agatha Cemetery.

Memorials may be made to St. Agatha Cemetery Fund (OLC/perpetual) or the St. Agatha food pantry.

Family and friends may share memories, prayers and photos with the family at www.kranzfuneralhome.com.

Arrangements were made by Kranz Funeral Home of Cass City.



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At 90, Plonta still not done with his Farver Road vision

by Mary Drier
For the Chronicle

Over the past 30 years, Pastor Duane Plonta transformed a once desolate area into a Christian facility complete with entertainment and thought-provoking displays.

And, Plonta is not done with expanding his creation. "I recently added a heated swimming pool, and I'm working on getting permits to build a gym for basketball," he said. "When it is done, it will be a nice place."

At age 90, Plonta is no longer able to tackle construction projects himself, so he will have to hire a contractor once the paperwork is completed so building can start.

Besides the gym, Plonta is expanding the park to include tent camping.

"To camp here will host \$10 a day. Some other campgrounds charge \$30 to \$60 a day. I don't know how some folks can afford that. I want everyone to be able to afford tent camping," he said. "This is a Christian campground, so there is no drinking or smoking."

Although the addition of camping and a gym are in the development stages, there is still much to do and see.

Plonta's first project at his Farver Road complex was building the Farver Road Baptist Church, 4330 Farver Rd., Gagetown, mostly by himself.

From there, he developed a Christian Theme Park, including a replica of Noah's Ark, Jonah and the whale, and more.

He also created the Michigan Veteran Memorial Wall, with more than 20,000 names of deceased Michigan veterans etched on 20 wall panels, that is housed in a 2,000-square-foot facility he built, and there is a memorial walkway lined with flags.

In addition, there are several lakes at the complex with paddle boats available, catch-and-release fishing, and some children's rides.

The facility boasts a carousel, barrel rides, an indoor swing, a mechanical bull, bounce houses, peddle-go carts, indoor playscape with slide, an outdoor wooden maze and 18 holes of miniature golf.

There is also the Gospel Bears – large, animated figures that "sing and play" Gospel music.

Nearly everything at the facility is free, but donations are accepted to offset costs.

More information is available by calling (989) 315-8043.



PASTOR Duane Plonta plans to expand his Farver Road facility near Gagetown to include a gymnasium and affordable camping for Christian families.



A BIG DRAW to the Farver Road complex are Plonta's Gospel Bears, animated figures that sing, move and play Gospel music.



THE FARVER Road facility also boasts a Noah's Ark display and a Veteran Memorial Wall (pictured above) with 20,000 names of deceased Michigan veterans etched on 20 wall panels.

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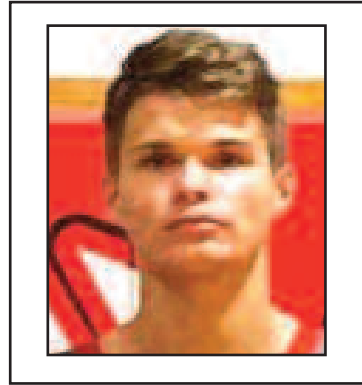
Kingston players pepper North Central Thumb League - Stars all-league picks



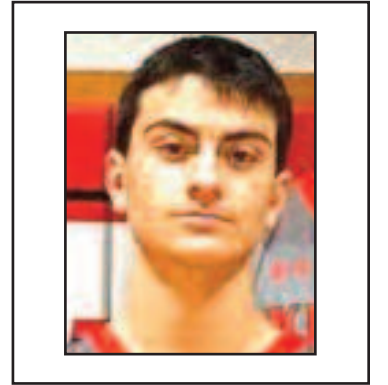
HANNAH JAMES
Kingston



PAYTON KOLACZ
Kingston



EVAN NEFF
Kingston



MARCO SAENZ de LACUESTA
Kingston

by Clarke Haire
 Publisher

Kingston Schools landed four dream team players on the 2019-20 North Central Thumb League - Stars all-league basketball listings following the balloting results of league officials.

The Cardinal boys finished the season with a lofty 21-1 record, but were denied the opportunity for an anticipated long post season run due to COVID-19 that canceled the Michigan High School Athletic Association district tournaments in 2020. The Cardinal girls compiled a record of 20-2, but they also fell short in their quest for district honors.

Senior Evan Neff and junior Marco Saenz de Lacuesta represented the North Central Thumb League - Stars undefeated champions on the boys all-league first team. Accompanying them on the prestigious squad are senior Issac Keinath, Deckerville, senior Jeffery Frost, Mayville, senior Jack Kaplan, Dryden and senior Ja-Marion Fricks, International Academy of Flint. The Defensive Specialist in the North Central Thumb League - Stars is Dryden senior Ronny Hudson.

Neff, 6'2", ends his career as a 3-time all-league first team shooting guard. He averaged 20.3 points, 6.2 rebounds, 2.5 steals and 1.8 assists while shooting 47 percent from the floor and 34 percent from 3-point range in 2019-20.

"In six conference games Evan didn't play in the 4th quarter. Evan expanded his overall game this year. Evan is a great shooter, but can also take you off the dribble to create his own shot. He had great court vision and made other players better. He put on about 15 pounds of muscle in the offseason, which helped his overall game flourish. He was an improved rebounder with great instincts. He is a great player and a better person.

We will really miss Evan," said Kingston Coach Dave Lester.

Marco Saenz de Lacuesta, 6'0", was a pleasant addition to the Cardinals. The exchange student from Spain averaged 9.8 points, 4.3 rebounds, 2.9 assists and 1.9 steals. The point guard shot 60 percent from the floor and 36 percent from 3-point land.

"Marco was outstanding for us this year. He is easily one of the most fundamentally sound players in the Thumb. His knowledge of the game is incredible. Great ball handler, good shooter and could get to the basket whenever he wanted to. Above average passer with great court vision. In six games he didn't play in the fourth quarter, either. He really fit in well with our team," Lester said.

Kingston seniors Aaron Koehler and Quinn Boucard highlighted the North Central Thumb League - Stars all-league second team that also included Alton Davis, Genesee 10th grader, Nate Schenkel, Dryden 11th grader, Ja'Zavion Stevenson, International Academy of Flint 11th grader and Amien Flowers, International Academy of Flint 10th grader.

Koehler, 6'1", averaged 6 points, 2.8 rebounds, 3.9 assists, and 2.3 steals while Boucard averaged 7.6 points, 5.8 rebounds, and 2.2 blocks. He connected on 49 percent of his shots.

"Aaron had a solid year for us. He is one of the best defenders in the Thumb. He can defend all five positions and shut down everyone's best player all year for us. In my mind he was deserving of first team all-league. He was a great leader for us as well. We will miss Aaron's competitiveness and will to win," said Lester, adding, "Quinn had a great year for us. He played big altering many shots and had a nice touch around the basket. This is his 4th year of organized basketball. His improvement was impressive."

Kingston senior Jack Green was

North Central Thumb League-Stars honorable mention as were sophomore Ethan Bowerman, Deckerville, junior Austin Middleton, Mayville, Senior Ronny Hudson, Dryden, senior Ajibola Adigun, International Academy of Flint, junior Brandon Winiarski, Peck and senior Trenton VanConant, Peck.

In the girls all-league balloting, North Central Thumb League - Stars co-champs Kingston and Deckerville each had two first team picks.

Junior Hannah James and senior Payton Kolacz highlighted the Cardinals choices as did seniors Addison Williams and Claire Watson for the Eagles. Completing the North Central Thumb League - Stars all-league first team are senior Samantha Bissett, Peck, freshman Ryleigh Zinn, Genesee, and senior Hannah Peyerck, Dryden.

James' stats for the Lady Cardinals included 11.8 points, 4.9 rebounds, 4 assists and 4.2 steals per game. Her season high in points was 20 (Peck), assists 7 (Peck),

steals 9 (Marlette).

"Hannah is versatile and can play multiple positions effectively. She is a solid defender and shared the point guard duties. She led the team in scoring average, steals, and 3-pointers. Hannah is the Daughter of Dave and Stacey James," Kingston Coach Jay Green said.

Kolacz averaged 9.5 points and 7.1 rebounds. Her season high in points was 23 (Genesee), rebounds 10 (Cros Lex).

"Payton was our most improved player and teamed with Hannah to be our MVP during the months of February/March. Payton is one of the most athletic players in the Thumb and used that speed and jumping ability to impact games on both ends of the floor," Green said noting Payton led the team in rebounds and field goal percentage and is the daughter of Dan Kolacz and Jamie and Greg Hormel.

The North Central Thumb League - Stars all-league second team consisted of Brooke Mooney

- Kingston senior, Emma Engler - Peck senior, Hayle March - Genesee senior, Madison Knag - Genesee sophomore, Ella Kage - Dryden junior and Ella Watson - Deckerville senior.

Mooney averaged 11.1 points for Kingston. Her season high in points was 21 (Mayville), rebounds 14 (Cros-Lex), assists 9 (Mayville).

"Brooke is an athletic forward who is a good finisher around the basket and disruptive on defense. She led the team in free throw percentage and was second in scoring. Brooke is the daughter of Adam and Stephanie Peters," said Green.

Receiving honorable mention recognition were Kingston senior Anna Ahern and sophomore Isabel Hurd, Peck junior Jenna Stull, Dryden senior Kylie Devlaminck, Deckerville sophomore Karly Kappen and junior Riley Shutz, and Mayville sophomore Carly Hoag and senior Julia Smith.

####

DNR reduces amenities at state parks, recreation areas and trails

To protect public health, violations of social distancing guidelines may result in misdemeanor fines, penalties

To help carry out Gov. Gretchen Whitmer's "Stay Home, Stay Safe" Executive Order and further protect public health and safety, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources is closing many amenities offered in state parks and recreation areas, effective now through at least April 13.

State parks and recreation areas currently remain open to provide residents with local opportunities to get outdoors; however, extensive travel should be minimal - and reserved only for essential needs - and effective social distancing (of at least 6 feet between yourself and another person) is required so that unsafe conditions do not develop and state-managed lands can remain open.

"We are doing everything possible to protect the health and safety of visitors and staff at state parks and recreation areas," said DNR Director Dan Eichinger. "No matter how people are choosing to get outdoors, it is critical that everyone follows the social distancing guidelines. If they don't, we will be forced to close public access to all state-managed lands."

Closures and reduction in services include:

- * Many park amenities have been closed in order to minimize the chance of people gathering in groups and/or maximize the environment for effective social distancing. Current closures include, but are not limited to, concessions, playgrounds and play equipment, viewing platforms, fishing piers, GaGa ball bits, volleyball and basketball courts, designated dog areas, disc golf courses, radio-controlled flying fields, pump tracks, and picnic tables and shelters.

- * All bathroom buildings and vault toilets will be closed in all state parks and recreation areas, including those at campgrounds, boating access sites, trailheads at state-designated trails, etc. People are encouraged to plan accordingly to avoid needing a restroom during a visit. Note: Over the next few days, vault toilets will be closing. Many locations, where available, will be transitioning to portable toilets that will be cleaned by local vendors.

- * There will be minimal trash service available. Visitors are encouraged to bring trash bags, if needed, to carry trash home and minimize litter.

- * No hand washing stations will be provided. Please carry hand sanitizer or sanitizing wipes containing at least 60% alcohol, as well as trash bags to carry out used wipes.

- * Additionally, grooming of snowmobile trails (the season closes March 31) and grooming, brushing, grading and clearing of all nonmotorized trails and ORV trails are suspended until at least the end of the order. When out on any trail, be aware of surroundings, including the potential for washouts or debris. To report anything that could be a risk to other trail users, call 517-331-0111.

- * For the duration of this order, the DNR is unable to reimburse trail sponsors or grant sponsors for any trail-related work.

Follow the DNR's COVID-19 response webpage for the latest closure information related to events, meetings and facilities, including campgrounds, harbors and other sites.

Executive order mandates social distancing; fines/penalties possible

To help uphold the "Stay Home, Stay Safe" Executive Order, individuals must maintain a minimum of 6 feet between themselves and other people. Anyone not following the social distancing requirement may face misdemeanor violation/arrest penalties, including up to 90 days in jail and/or a fine up to \$500.

Social distancing practices are a top priority for any time spent outside an individual's home or place of residence. They include:

- * Go out only if you're feeling healthy.
- * Keep at least 6 feet between yourself and another person.
- * Long-distance travel is discouraged unless it is essential.
- * Wash hands often with soap and warm water for 20 seconds. If those aren't available, use a hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol.
- * When driving, keep windows slightly open to provide air flow.
- * If the parking is full when attempting to visit a park, recreation area, boating access site or trailhead, leave and choose a different location.

Information around this outbreak is changing rapidly. The latest information is available at Michigan.gov/Coronavirus and CDC.gov/Coronavirus.

Cass City Red Hawk

ATHLETE OF THE WEEK

LANDON SCHENK

Meet senior Landon Schenk, Knights Insurance Athlete of the week. Schenk recently put the finishing touches on a terrific 2-year career as a starter in the post on the Cass City varsity basketball team. Schenk is the type of player that does his job without complaints and is not afraid to mix things up under the basketball. In his senior year he averaged 8 rebounds and 7 points that earned him all-conference honors. Landon is the son of Jim and Kathy Schenk.

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Greater Thumb East basketball stars named

Dream teams include 5 from Ubly

2019-20 All-Conference Boys Basketball

FIRST TEAM

Tyler Nelson	Sandusky	Senior
Matt Carlson	Sandusky	Junior
Mike Anderson	Harbor Beach	Senior
Dylan Kadar	Harbor Beach	Junior
Austin Peruski	Ubly	Senior
Casey Sweeney	Ubly	Senior
Gaden Muxlow	Brown City	Freshman

SECOND TEAM

Kenton Stoutenburg	Sandusky	Senior
Zach Franzel	Sandusky	Junior
Evan Smaglinski	Harbor Beach	Senior
Parker Jahn	Harbor Beach	Senior
Matt Daws	Brown City	Senior
Andrew Sniesak	Memphis	Freshman
Joshua Nim	Memphis	Sophomore

HONORABLE MENTION

Lucas Feehan	Sandusky	Junior
Brenden Duff	Sandusky	Junior
Luke Woodke	Harbor Beach	Sophomore
Grant Smaglinski	Harbor Beach	Sophomore
Kyle Sweeney	Ubly	Sophomore
Cole Hagen	Ubly	Junior
Levi Peruski	Ubly	Junior
Curtis Stanley	Brown City	Sophomore
Kilian Pangerl	Brown City	Junior
Ethan Moots	Brown City	Junior
Jacob Nutaitis	Memphis	Senior
Landon Lesch	Memphis	Junior
Peyton Dale	Marlette	Senior
Collin Miller	Marlette	Sophomore
Grant Roberson	Marlette	Sophomore
Hank Barker	Capac	Senior
Joe Montney	Capac	Junior
Kayden Braun	Capac	Junior

FINAL STANDINGS
Greater ThumbEast
Boys Basketball

Team	Conf	Ovr
Harbor Beach	10-2	13-7
Sandusky	10-2	13-9
Ubly	8-4	11-9
Brown City	8-4	10-12
Memphis	3-9	11-10
Marlette	2-10	3-18
Capac	1-11	2-19

2019-20 All-Conference Girls Basketball

FIRST TEAM

Katelyn Sweeney	Ubly	Senior
Josie Gusa	Ubly	Junior
Dajnae Leipprandt	Ubly	Junior
Claire Woodke	Harbor Beach	Senior
Abby Bolsby	Sandusky	Senior
Olivia Jacobson	Sandusky	Senior
Juliana Hanson	Brown City	Junior

SECOND TEAM

Ellie Peruski	Ubly	Senior
Annika Kirsch	Harbor Beach	Senior
Madison Long	Sandusky	Sophomore
Jordan Millsap	Brown City	Sophomore
Jordyn Boyne	Marlette	Senior
Ashlyn Perales	Marlette	Sophomore
Natalie Maday	Capac	Senior

HONORABLE MENTION

Sam Souva	Ubly	Junior
Leandra Wolschleger	Harbor Beach	Junior
Maya Pfaff	Harbor Beach	Junior
Taryn Arntz	Harbor Beach	Junior
Ally Guibord	Sandusky	Junior
Bethany Ketchum	Marlette	Sophomore
Hollie Hartwell	Marlette	Freshman
Jona Mullin	Capac	Senior
Skylar Schocke	Capac	Senior
Isabel Woodall	Brown City	Junior
Katie Koch	Memphis	Junior
Kosette Bartels	Memphis	Freshman

FINAL STANDINGS
Greater Thumb East
Girls Basketball

Team	Conf	Ovr
Ubly	12-0	23-1
Sandusky	10-2	19-5
Harbor Beach	8-4	14-6
Brown City	5-7	9-14
Marlette	5-7	7-14
Capac	2-10	3-18
Memphis	0-12	4-17

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Worship Service 10:50 a.m.

Sunday Evening Service 6:30 p.m.

Wednesday Family Night 6:30 p.m.

Pastor: Phil Burkett • www.casscitymc.org



Associate Pastor: Joel Schwendinger

Cass City United Methodist Church

872-3422 - 5100 Cemetery Rd., Cass City, MI 48726

www.casscityumc.org

Worship: 11:00 a.m. (Summer 9:30 a.m.)

Sunday School - Sept.-May 9:30 a.m.

Community Dinner - Monthly (2nd Wed. at noon)

Pastor: Bob Demyanovich

Community Baptist Church

(Independent Fundamental)

4446 Ale St., Cass City, MI 48726 • 989-872-4088

Sunday School 9:45 a.m. • Worship Service 11:00 a.m.

• Afternoon Service 2:00 p.m.

Wednesday - Pray/Bible Study & Youth Group 6:00 p.m.

Pastor: Rev. Nathan Whipple

Deford Community Church

1392 N. Kingston Rd. • 872-4055

(1/4 mile south of Deford on Kingston Rd.)

Sundays - 10 a.m. • Wednesdays - 7 p.m.

Pastor: David Cooper • Assoc. Pastor: Ross Foley

DefordCommunityChurch.org

Evangelical Free Church of Cass City

6430 Chestnut Blvd., Cass City, MI 48726

• 872-5060

• Sunday School 9:30 a.m.

• Worship at 10:30 a.m.

• Midweek Bible Studies

Pastor: Jim Allred - Like us on Facebook!



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Sunday Morning Worship Service 11:00 a.m.

Sunday Evening Service 6:00 p.m.

Wednesday Prayer Meeting & Bible Study 6:30 p.m.

AWANA Clubs 6:15 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.

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Pastor: Christian Wright

Website: www.fbccc.us



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4631 N. Van Dyke, Cass City, MI 48726

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Sunday Service: 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.

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Cass City grad Vargo: Naval career great experience

by Ryan Riley
Petty Officer 1st Class

With a career spanning 18 years, Hospital Corpsman 1st Class Brandon Vargo, of Cass City, now serves as Navy Medicine Readiness and Training Command (NMRTC) Bremerton's leading petty officer for the Bremerton, Wash.-based Naval Hospital career counseling team.

Over the course of that 18 years, the Cass City High School and Craven Community College graduate has spent 15 years in Navy medicine.

"I came into the Navy in a total different direction than I am now," said Vargo. "I originally came into the Navy through the nuclear training pipeline, but after 'A' school and power school, I just knew I wasn't where I belonged."

He initially joined the Navy to see the world and wanted to stay Navy, but was not happy being in the nuclear community. He then jumped on the opportunity to change jobs as soon as the option

arose.

"I was at a crossroads and not quite sure what I was going to do," Vargo recalled. "That's when I was able to train with many different ratings. It was during some on-the-job training at Naval Hospital Groton that I was first introduced to Navy medicine."

Vargo went to Hospital Corpsman "A" School and then to train as a surgical technician before reporting to Naval Hospital Cherry Point, N.C. "From there, that's where the real story began," he said.

Seeing the world is exactly what he has done, and continues to do.

Since joining the Navy medicine community, Vargo has been either stationed or visited nine states across the United States — Illinois, South Carolina, New York, Connecticut, Virginia, North Carolina, California, Hawaii and Washington — and during deployment visited Hong Kong, Dubai and Bahrain.

He cited his time aboard the Wasp-class amphibious assault

ship USS Essex as being a notable tour of great professional achievement.

"I was on the shipboard surgical trauma training team, completed the helicopter underwater escape training, did multiple mass casualty drills, did a West Pacific deployment, and got triple qualified all as a member of Fleet Surgical Team 1," he said.

Triple qualified refers to Vargo earning his enlisted surface, air, and information warfare specialist

devices.

Even with all of those accomplishments under his belt, Vargo said the best part of his Navy medicine career is "fulfilling the duties of a command career counselor where your days are long, the job is tedious and it's never boring."

Vargo was hand-selected as command career counselor based on his past performance. So, he dropped his surgical technician designation to work full-time helping sailors at NMRTC Bre-

merton navigate their careers with such duties as coordinating reenlistments, handling contract extensions, and navigating the selection process for duty assignment orders.

To sum up his long career in one sentence, Vargo said, "It's been quite an experience and the greatest part was being able to interact and affect so many people's lives both from a patient care aspect and a Navy leader aspect."



NAVY MEDICINE Readiness and Training Command (NMRTC) Bremerton's Hospital Corpsman 1st Class Brandon Vargo, command career counselor leading petty officer, poses for a photo in his office in February. NMRTC Bremerton in Washington supports more than 60,000 military families in West Puget Sound, shaping military medicine through training, mentoring and research to ensure a ready medical force and operationally ready force. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Meagan Christoph)

LaCroix, Howard top Owendale-Gagetown graduating Class of '20

Owendale-Gagetown School officials recently announced the district's 2020 valedictorian and salutatorian.

Kaitlyn R. LaCroix is this year's valedictorian, having earned a cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 3.752, while Chase W. Howard was named the salutatorian with a GPA of 3.709.

LaCroix, the daughter of James and Amy LaCroix of Owendale, was inducted into the Owen-Gage Chapter of the National Honor Society (NHS) in her sophomore year and currently serves as the chapter's president.

She's been a member of the 3.0 Honors Club each year as well as being on the honor roll, and has received several academic awards in various classes throughout high school. LaCroix served as secretary of her class the past two years, student council vice-president in her junior year and is currently the council's president.

LaCroix has also been active in athletics as a member of the basketball and softball teams.

In addition, she has been a member of the band all through high school.



Kaitlyn LaCroix



Chase Howard

She was elected the 2019-20 homecoming queen, served as a member of the Post-Secondary Action Council as a freshman, was on the prom committee as a junior, and has been on the yearbook staff.

During the past two years, LaCroix has been enrolled in the health science program at the Huron Area Technical Center, where she has become certified in CPR, been a member of Health Occupations Students of America (HOSA), and has completed hours to become a CNA (certified nursing assistant). She also has been a dance instructor at Step It Up Studio, where she has participated in dance since she was seven years old.

LaCroix has participated and volunteered at many school and community events, including blood drives, Lions Club breakfasts, Fleece and Thank You Fundraiser, food drives for families, Veterans' Day activities, and senior citizens' luncheons. She has also assisted with several elementary school activities such as Santa's workshop, Easter Egg hunts, movie nights, daddy-daughter dances, and Scholastic book fairs.

Her future plans include attending Delta College in the fall and then transferring to Saginaw Valley State University after two years.

Howard, the son of Kendall Howard of Owendale and Carla Weber of Allendale, was inducted into the local NHS chapter as a junior year and currently serves as the chapter's treasurer. Also on the honor roll throughout high school, he is a member of the 3.0 Honors Club and has earned several academic awards. He served as class representative to the student council his sophomore year and as class vice-president in his junior and senior years.

Howard has been a member of the golf team each year. He also has participated in band throughout high school, playing trumpet and baritone.

He has been a member of the yearbook staff since his sophomore year and currently serves as a co-editor. Howard was a member of the prom committee his junior year and, as a senior, was elected homecoming king. He served on the Post-Secondary Action Council for three years and was vice-president in his junior year.

Howard has attended the Huron Area Technical Center the past two years, taking dual-enrollment classes through Mid-Michigan Community College.

He has participated/volunteered in many community events, including Lions Club breakfasts, blood drives, senior citizens' luncheons, and Veterans Day activities. He's also assisted with elementary school events such as Santa's workshops, Scholastic book fairs, movie nights and daddy-daughter dances.

Howard's future plans include attending Saginaw Valley State University in the fall to pursue a career as a nurse anesthetist.



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